



## Muni Metro Core Capacity Study Community Working Group

July 24th, 2025 6:00 p.m.

Union Square conference room and Microsoft Teams meeting

CWG Members	Project Staff	Other
Cyrus Hall Lian Chang Kath Tsakalakis Karl Aguilar Adrienne Leifer Alice Duesdieker Mark Sawchuck Aaron Leifer Rick Laubscher Krista Judge Jean-Paul Torres	Liz Brisson (SFMTA) Mariana Maguire (SFMTA) David Sindel (SFMTA) Chester Fung (HNTB) Michael Randolph (SFMTA) Chester Fung (HNTB)	Kathy Seitan (Observer) Peter Strauss (Observer) Paula Katz (Observer) Karen Kennard (Observer) Julia Daniel (Observer)

### Meeting Summary

#### Capacity-Expanding Upgrades to Old Infrastructure

- CWG member asked whether there is a funded project to improve the N Judah.
  - Staff responded that the SFMTA has funding to do near-term upgrades to improve N Judah transit performance. The scope of improvements is not yet defined. A public process is anticipated to begin soon to seek community feedback on desired improvements. Separately, the N Judah has old rails that need to be replaced. The SFMTA does not currently have funding for this. Some funding for capacity-enhancing components of this rail replacement could possibly be funded through a Core Capacity grant.
- The CWG member also mentioned the L and N are functionally in mixed traffic; they see people driving in those transit lanes all the time, the lanes are not solid red colored.
  - Staff commented that we have a graphic that shows the spectrum of levels of transit priority; colored lanes provide greater protection for transit than non colored transit lanes.
- CWG member asked about modifying 4-way to 2-way stops. This has to be done in an appropriate manner because there are some dangerous 2-way stops. There are tradeoffs between transit priority and pedestrian safety. We need to look at removing cars; they cited the example of 8<sup>th</sup> and Irving.
  - Staff responded that this is good feedback, and that staff will refine messaging to indicate we would only change a 4-way stop to a 2-way if accompanied with traffic calming. The treatment would also depend on the location – in locations with more trips and more pedestrians, 2-way stops may not be appropriate.

- CWG member asked about how to make transit signal pre-emption that is already in place work better – St. Francis and 9<sup>th</sup>/Judah are very complicated. Something needs to be done there to make these locations work better.
  - Staff responded that we have looked at St. Francis a bit more specifically in the Study. It is difficult to optimize this location because there is so much traffic in many directions. Modeling with transit preemption and more frequent M and K service in the future leaves no time for cars and is anticipated to create gridlock. We may need to switch from pre-emption to a dedicated phase for transit here. The recommended capital program can install new infrastructure for transit signal pre-emption at traffic signals. If there are changes we can make to signal timing at existing locations that have pre-emption to allow this technology to work better, we don't need to wait 10-15 years to pursue.

## Crossing Gates

- CWG Member asked what is the concern for setting precedent [with crossing gates].
  - Staff responded that there is a concern that if SFMTA puts them in some locations, then we might be asked to put them in other locations where they may not be appropriate. SFMTA's rail operations are regulated by CPUC. However, other transit agencies that have crossing gates typically only have them at some intersections, not all intersections.
  - CWG Member said they think crossing gates make sense at Ocean. What about the maintenance of the gates?
    - Staff noted that creating new maintenance needs is a downside but we do not think it is a fatal flaw. We have not yet calculated costs; one option could be to see if we could enter into an agreement with Caltrain to support maintenance of any SFMTA crossing gates, given Caltrain already has to maintain crossing gates for other locations in their service area.
  - CWG Member commented that the intersections where crossing gates make sense are limited. Communication should be clear about why an intersection is chosen.
    - Staff responded that these are unusual intersections – ones where drivers might be surprised by a stoplight.
  - CWG Member said that some of her neighbors in the Lakeside reviewed the conceptual illustration of Ocean. They liked the bulbouts; however, people in general just don't want cars to move slower. The CWG Member likes the crossing gates and conceptual improvements at Ocean. They asked whether at this location a stoplight could work instead? Traffic lights may be more acceptable to neighbors than a crossing gate.
    - Staff responded that there is a possibility, but crossing gates don't change the calculation on how an intersection works – crossing gates are just a big visual reminder not to cross. Crossing gates also supersede traffic signals.
  - CWG Member commented that in this situation its about visibility of the train being the issue; if you can't see the train, sometime people will blow lights. Do trains travel through a crossing gate at higher speed?
    - Staff responded that in this location the trains would not be going fast because they would be decelerating to prepare to stop just past this intersection. The crossing gate would eliminate the need for a double stop. Acceleration and deceleration time can be significant for rail vehicles.

## Boarding Infrastructure for 3-Car Trains

- CWG Member asked about which stops were recommended for level boarding vs mini-high ramps.
  - Staff responded that along the inner portion of the M Ocean View, there are only a few stops that do not yet have level boarding. To accommodate 3-car service in the Lakeside, the Ocean and Eucalyptus stops would need to be consolidated. While we think it is feasible to upgrade stops on the Inner M for level boarding, we do not recommend doing so along the N Judah due to narrower street widths.
- CWG Member asked about whether consolidating stops is a part of the Capacity Study
  - Staff responded that in general, the Study's focus is not on consolidating stops. However, in some locations the technical needs of other capacity strategies are related.
    - For example, stops have to be located along straight tracks. There is a need for a longer section of straight track for a 3-car stop as compared to 2-car. That is why the Ocean and Eucalyptus stops would need to be consolidated to pursue 3-car service. However, because these stops are extremely close together, a 3-car stop would functionally feel like it serves both of the existing stops. The likely reason why they are separate stops now is because there is no direct path between the two locations – if there were only a stop at one of the streets, passengers would be likely to walk along the tracks, which is undesirable due to safety considerations.
    - There could be further consideration of whether to upgrade 14<sup>th</sup> avenue at West Portal for level boarding or remove the stop. We would want to understand community priorities in this location. Upgrading the stop for level boarding would mean less parking available in this location.
  - Staff added that for the Capacity Study, besides the question of feasibility, we are agnostic on the specifics of consolidation or other infrastructure questions. If it doesn't specifically affect capacity, it would be a future community process-driven decision.
    - The CWG Member added that they like the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue stop, and that they use it a lot.
  - CWG Member really likes the plan for Lakeside Village and finds it exciting to make a 3-car train work on the M Line despite how close Eucalyptus and Ocean are to each other. The concern from the Lakeside Village merchants was that they would lose the stop completely, but this looks good to them.
- CWG Member commented that in the past, stop consolidation entailed considerations on speed and the distance between stops. They asked if going to 3-car trains may change these considerations.
  - Staff noted that when the N re-railing happens, staff will have to take a look to confirm the locations of stops to build new boarding infrastructure. The Capacity study's recommendation is that, where feasible, mini-highs should be added where they do not yet exist and at the front of the stop, so that the cars do not have to stop twice. It may be that moving some stops a block in one direction or another might allow for a feasible location of a mini-high and should be considered in that context.
  - The CWG Member added that when this goes out to outreach, people will be upset if they lose their stop or if parking gets removed. Staff should think about how this is presented to the public.
  - Staff noted that tonight's discussion materials did not focus much on tradeoffs since we covered that in past meetings, but we have strived to be transparent in our upcoming outreach materials. The Study is not recommending stop consolidation at any specific locations.



- CWG Member commented that they are very familiar with the pain around consolidation. The interconnection between 3-car trains and consolidation hadn't been discussed in much detail as a part of the Study thus far.
  - Staff added that this is a good point, and maybe a visualization would be helpful in limited instances. If the train is longer, you are at both stops.

## Operational Flexibility

- CWG Member asked whether both J and M trains would stop in Parkmerced.
  - Staff answered that in either scenario (if the Parkmerced development is built or not) a new facility at Parkmerced/SF State would only be for 3-car M Short trains to downtown. New terminal facilities at Stonestown would be for the J, which would continue from Balboa Park through the Oceanview to SFSU and then Stonestown.
- CWG Member asked if the J line were extended, would you need more J trains? Increased frequency? They assumed we were not looking at a 2-car J.
  - Staff replied that J line frequency would be increased as needed to ensure adequate space for all riders. We are not considering a 2-car J within the scope of the 10-15 year capital program.
- CWG Member commented that it's hard for people to understand that the service options are not recommendations when you display them like they are on this slide. Also there are equity concerns.
- CWG Member said they support the M line being extended to Parkmerced regardless of whether the current development plan moves forward.
  - Staff said it would be a big lift to extend the M line if it is not provided by the developer.
  - Staff added that we would not be able to spend Core Capacity grant funds on the cost of extending the M line to Parkmerced.
  - CWG Member in chat said that Parkmerced should be redeveloped, but the M should not be extended into the development.
    - Staff replied that the Study is agnostic about the Parkmerced M line plan.
- CWG Member said that if these changes happen, a lot of communication will be needed for riders. There is an opportunity to restyle Balboa park. They find that station confusing, and it will be more so if the J is extended to Stonestown.
  - Staff agreed and also noted there is a nearer term effort to improve wayfinding at Balboa Park as a part of SFMTA's [Mobility Hub Plan for Southeastern San Francisco](#).
- CWG Member commented that this is very technical and challenging. This has been a problem we've discussed in the past; if we don't know all the details of the future service plans, do we need to share all three? Can we just communicate the same change? People will get hung up on reduced frequencies.
  - Staff replied that what's hard is that for 3-car M service, we would have to change M line service. People are excited about an extended J, but reducing frequencies is unpopular. We want to be transparent and ensure District 11 stakeholders are aware of the tradeoffs.
- CWG Member in chat said that an idea to avoid making these seem like likely options "on the table" by showing as many options as possible, such as 10 or 20
- CWG Member responded that they appreciate staff is being transparent about reducing frequency, but something that could help is to be more specific. Figure out what the differential is and share that specific information.
  - Staff added that our scenarios assumed less than 15 minute frequencies on an M Long
  - The group responded strongly that 15 minute frequencies is undesirable.
- CWG Member commented that people may not be able to move past that there are "options".

- Staff responded that the “Future Baseline” is what happens if we make no further plans.
  - The CWG Member replied that they had not absorbed that point through the graphics.
  - CWG Member noted that maybe there should be different colors used, or framing it as a doing nothing v. doing something.
- CWG Member commented that the complicated thing about the concept is frequency and routing
  - Staff replied that it seems that the CWG Member is framing things through the potential benefits.
  - Staff added that extending the J could get more people to more places as the benefit.
  - Another CWG Member responded that “getting more people to more places” is unsatisfying.
    - Staff mentioned that with this framing, the benefit would be in less technical, more layperson terms.
    - The CWG Member prefers the framing that the baseline is what happens if nothing is done, while the others won’t reduce frequency. We should focus on the idea to extend the J and increase frequency; when people push for details, we stress that we don’t know.
      - Staff clarified that the “3-car M Short to SF State and J extension to Stonestown” option still reduces frequency of the M Long, while increasing frequency for the J.
- CWG Member commented that “reliability” is a word that they would focus on. If the J connection provides more reliability, it makes it a net win.
- CWG Member commented that the graphic is bewildering and doesn’t know the “why”. The three scenarios lay out things that could all be different: frequency, reliability, crowding. They don’t understand the scenario maps, and can’t tell what we are trying to communicate.
- CWG Member commented that the way they understands the graphics is that it all discusses infrastructure. It raises more questions that would need a supplementary slide to answer the questions about trade-offs. It’s not advocating any specific service change in the future. Just say, “These are possible routings”, and nothing additional.

## Long Term Recommendations

- Staff added to the presentation that staff have had conversations with Paula about this section. While it’s not in the slide on what’s not recommended yet, we wanted to add that we looked more at the idea of a Surface LK line and we don’t recommend it. If the L and K no longer went in the subway, we would need more M and S frequency. However, turning S trains at West Portal requires using the crossover there. And, using the crossover stops trains from passing when it is being used. So it ends up not adding a lot of capacity while creating a significant downside for riders that would need to transfer.
- CWG Member commented that if you consider route restructuring further in the future, this needs to be accompanied by improvements to make transferring more seamless.

## Observer Comments & Final Comments

- Observer mentioned that 15-minute headways are too long for Muni Metro. J Church is nominally a 15 minute headway, but when trains are behind schedule, it can sometimes be more like 20 minutes. Any extension of the J line needs to be coupled with shortened headways.
  - Staff responded that as shown in our forecasts, the J is forecast to be over capacity in the future, and we would increase the frequency before it would get to that level.
- Observer commented on the L Taraval Improvement Project construction experience, and that some Taraval merchants are opposed to red transit only lanes. The westside doesn’t have as much traffic, so

merchants also want to be able to drive in transit only lanes. The community will be against 3-car trains because of a loss of parking. Communication is important due to past L Taraval experience.

- Staff responded that there is a significant trade-off between street space for 3-car trains and parking, and we are trying to be transparent about that in our outreach materials. The 3-car recommendation indicates that if we find ourselves in the low ridership scenario, we could defer this strategy. The agency's approach to outreach is always evolving to respond to what we learn from past projects.
- CWG Member mentioned that to help non-users of the system have buy-in, explain that we are actually helping them by moving more people on the train, and won't have to drive. They would love to see the agency make this point.
- CWG Member asked what the trigger point for longer-term potential recommendations like route restructuring would be.
  - Staff responded that staff would monitor ridership levels and subway performance. After TCUP is implemented, we will have a better idea about how many trains we can reliably run through the subway.