

# **Commuter Shuttle Program Policy**

Updated January, 2017

## Introduction

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) implemented the Commuter Shuttle Program in 2016 to manage commuter shuttles with the objectives of minimizing conflicts with Muni, reducing emissions, improving traffic flow, enhancing pedestrian safety, keeping larger buses off smaller non-arterial streets, and limiting unsafe boarding situations.

Shuttles taking workers and students to jobs or schools have operated for decades in San Francisco and are allowed by state law. They have become more common in the past several years and the City has experienced the impacts that these vehicles can have on the transportation network without the presence of regulation. Prior to August 2014, San Francisco did not regulate commuter shuttles, which led to an increase in conflicts with Muni operations and complaints from residents. In response, the SFMTA launched a pilot program to regulate and manage commuter shuttles in San Francisco. The Pilot Program, which ran from August 2014 through January 2016, provided insight and a regulatory framework, helping to shape the current Commuter Shuttle Program.

In November 2015, the SFMTA Board passed legislation creating the Commuter Shuttle Program, which went into effect on April 1, 2016. A six-month evaluation of the program was conducted in the fall of 2016. Data collected and analyzed from the launch of the Program through September 2016 show that the Commuter Shuttle Program has improved shuttle vehicle behavior while minimizing the impacts of shuttle vehicles on the rest of the transportation network, despite a 15 percent increase in shuttle ridership and an increase in the number of shuttle vehicles on the road each day as compared to the Pilot.

The Commuter Shuttle Program allows shuttles to load passengers in a designated stop network in exchange for paying a fee and adhering to a set of rules and regulations, including:

- Requiring participating shuttle operators to phase in the use of newer vehicles, which ensures lower greenhouse gas emissions from the shuttle fleet overall
- Requiring buses over 35 feet long to travel on the arterial street network as defined by the California Department of Transportation
- Devoting SFMTA enforcement resources to the program, and recovering the costs as part of the fee for participation in the program
- Employing real-time GPS data collection and reporting to help better manage commuter shuttle operations and target enforcement
- Requiring data sharing from participating shuttle operators, and requiring that participating shuttle operators demonstrate for each vehicle that data feeds are regular and accurate before receiving a permit
- Requiring participating shuttle operators to comply with the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' March 2015 Labor Harmony Resolution, including the submission of a Service Disruption Prevention Plan that describes the shuttle operators' efforts to ensure efficient and consistent service in the event of potential disruptions, including labor disputes.

- Requiring participating shuttle operators to submit an accessibility plan which documents how they serve riders with disabilities and to comply with vehicle accessibility requirements issued by the SFMTA.

### Principles of the Commuter Shuttle Program

The following principles inform the Commuter Shuttle Program policy:

1. Provide a safe environment for all street users in support of the SFMTA's Vision Zero policy to eliminate all traffic deaths
2. Prevent service disruptions, including any related to labor relations issues
3. Ensure that commuter shuttles do not adversely affect operations of public transportation in San Francisco
4. Consistently and fairly apply and enforce any regulations/policies governing shuttle operations
5. Work collaboratively with shuttle sector to refine policies and resolve concerns and conflicts
6. Integrate commuter shuttles into the existing multi-modal transportation system
7. Establish a program structure that meets current needs and has the potential to evolve as the sector grows and evolves
8. Ensure more focused enforcement, ease of administration and on-going oversight

### Related SFMTA Strategic Plan Goals and Transit First Policy Principles

The Commuter Shuttle Program supports the following SFMTA Strategic Plan goals:

- 1.3: Improve the safety of the transportation system
- 2.3: Increase use of all non-private auto modes
- 3.2 Improve the transportation system's positive impact to the economy
- 4.4 Improve relationships with our partners and stakeholders

The Commuter Shuttle Program supports the following Transit First Policy Principles:

- 1: To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
- 9: The ability of the City and County to reduce traffic congestion depends on the adequacy of regional public transportation. The City and County shall promote the use of regional mass transit and the continued development of an integrated, reliable, regional public transportation system.
- 10: The City and County shall encourage innovative solutions to meet public transportation needs wherever possible and where the provision of such service will not adversely affect the service provided by the Municipal Railway.

### Six Month Review

The SFMTA conducted a six-month evaluation of the Commuter Shuttle Program. The status report was published in November, 2016. Key findings from the evaluation are:

- A reduction in the percentage of stop events occurring in shared Muni zones since the end of the Pilot (72 percent to 57 percent), reducing the potential for conflicts between shuttle vehicles and Muni buses.

- A reduction in the proportion of stop events on non-arterial streets from 26 percent to 9 percent since January 2016.
- Continuous real-time GPS tracking data for all vehicles registered in the program has enabled the SFMTA to identify any vehicles travelling on restricted streets (non-arterial or streets restricted per the San Francisco Transportation Code) resulting in:
  - A 91 percent decrease in the total number of shuttle vehicles operating on restricted streets each month (3,696 shuttles in April 2016 to 334 shuttles in August 2016).
  - A 92 percent decrease in the daily average of shuttle vehicles operating on restricted streets. In April 2016, an average of 195 shuttles operated on restricted streets per day compared to 15 shuttles per day in August 2016.
- The percentage of registered vehicles model year 2012 or newer has increased from 59 percent at the end of the pilot to 76 percent in the current program. Over time as new vehicles, which are required to meet 2012 California emission standards, are registered in the program and older vehicles are retired, the percentage of vehicles meeting stricter emissions standards will continue to increase.
- All permitted operators have a Service Disruption Prevention Plan in place, documenting labor harmony efforts. Since April 2016, there have been no disruptions to shuttle services resulting from labor disputes.
- The detail of SFMTA Parking Control Officers that is specifically focused on Commuter Shuttle Program enforcement issued 2,267 citations worth \$360,895 to permitted shuttle vehicles between August 2014, the first month of the Pilot, and August 2016. Parking citation revenue goes to the SFMTA general fund.

## Commuter Shuttle Program

The Commuter Shuttle Program applies to privately-operated transportation services that move commuters to, from, and within San Francisco. Participation in this program is voluntary. Key elements of the program include the following:

- Permitted shuttle vehicles are authorized to stop in designated commuter shuttle zones for the purpose of loading and unloading passengers;
- Shuttles over 35 feet in length operating under a permit may only travel on Caltrans-designated arterial streets when in San Francisco;
- To operate in the permit program, any new shuttle vehicle must meet 2012 California emissions standards;
- Shuttle operators must provide a Service Disruption Prevention Plan describing how they deal with service disruptions, including those due to potential labor disputes; and
- Shuttle operators must provide the SFMTA with continuous real-time GPS tracking data for all vehicles registered in the program

### Program Eligibility

Services that are arranged by an employer, building, or institution to provide transportation from home to work, work to home, last-mile to work, or work site to work site are eligible to participate. These services warrant a program because:

- Service is routine (following set schedules) and involves a relatively uniform number of vehicles
- Service reduces greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled by replacing drive-alone trips
- Operations are conducive to sharing curb space with Muni at certain stops
- Operators are commercially licensed and subject to regulation, including safety and insurance requirements, by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and comply with commercial CPUC requirements
- Operations complement, but do not duplicate, existing public transportation services

### Commuter Shuttle Network

SFMTA's Commuter Shuttle Program requires that permit-holding shuttles longer than 35 feet travel only on streets designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as arterials. By requiring larger vehicles to use arterials, a large portion of shuttle vehicle travel is shifted off of smaller streets. Permit-holding shuttles shorter than 35 feet long are permitted to travel on non-arterial streets, as long as the streets do not have other restrictions. No commuter shuttles are permitted to travel on 3-ton weight-restricted streets or 9-passenger capacity-restricted streets.

There are currently 111 shuttle zones in the shuttle network of which 80 are shared Muni-commuter shuttle zones and 31 are permitted commuter shuttle-only white zones. The current program allows up to 125 zones in the City.

### Changes to the Shuttle Zone Network

The SFMTA monitors the existing commuter shuttle stop network and makes changes on a regular basis in order to optimize service and minimize shuttles' impact on residents and community stakeholders. The SFMTA considers stop changes based on staff observations and feedback from residents, shuttle operators, and shuttle riders. Staff plans to pursue stop changes in a number of particularly congested corridors in the coming year.

When problems in the shuttle stop network are identified, SFMTA staff evaluates potential alternatives based on a set of engineering criteria, including:

- **Safety:** The SFMTA avoids placing shuttle zones where shuttle vehicles could block turning drivers' view of pedestrians in the crosswalk, and proposes locations that minimize conflicts with people walking, biking, or driving.
- **Impact on Muni:** The SFMTA's Transit Division reviews all shuttle stop changes. The SFMTA does not establish shared Muni-shuttle stops in locations with frequent Muni service, and works to remove shuttles from existing shared stops where conflicts are observed and feasible alternatives are identified.
- **Length:** Shuttle zones must be long enough to allow shuttles to pull fully to the curb and avoid blocking bicycle or travel lanes.
- **Parking:** Staff works to minimize restriction of parking and to avoid establishing shuttle zones across driveways whenever possible.
- **Community input:** The SFMTA conducts outreach among residents and stakeholders and frequently makes changes to its proposals based on feedback received through the public hearing process.

All potential shuttle stop changes are brought through the Transportation Advisory Staff Committee process, in which staff from across the SFMTA and other City departments have an opportunity to provide comments. Proposals then go to Engineering Public Hearing, where members of the public can testify about the change. Prior to the hearing, the SFMTA posts notices on poles, sends postcard mailings to nearby addresses, and reaches out directly to key stakeholders. Staff considers feedback received before and during the public hearing and makes changes if feasible alternatives are identified. Proposals then go to the SFMTA Board for final approval.

## Commuter Shuttle Program Permits

### Permits

Shuttle operators must apply for a permit to participate in the Commuter Shuttle Program. Permits must be renewed each year. Permit renewal takes place at a set time each year, so that a shuttle operator that joins the program mid-year is required to renew during the general renewal period. However, new applications are accepted on a rolling basis, as are applications from an existing permit holder to add or change fleet vehicles covered by the permit.

To be approved for a permit to operate vehicles in the Commuter Shuttle Program, the shuttle operator must provide the following information:

- Company name, designated point of contact, and contact information
- Copy of applicable California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) certifications, registrations and permits
- Documentation of compliance with CPUC insurance requirements
- Copy of the most recent Safety Compliance Report from the California Highway Patrol (CHP)
- Anticipated number of permit authorization stickers that will be requested for shuttle service
- Service Disruption Prevention Plan, including description of policies to promote labor harmony
- Routing information, including streets used and frequencies
- Acknowledgement of data feed requirements and specifications
- Accessibility Plan, including data on vehicle accessibility features and company procedures for accommodating riders with disabilities
- Compliance Plan with information on training and complaint follow-up procedures
- Signed agreement to comply with all terms of permit

Shuttle operators are required to keep the above information current, even when not applying for or renewing a permit.

#### Shuttle Permit Authorization Stickers

For each vehicle used in the Commuter Shuttle Program, shuttle operators must apply for a shuttle permit authorization sticker. Permit authorization stickers contain a unique six-digit number in the form XX-XXXX. The first two digits identify the shuttle operator, and the last four identify the specific vehicle and its length. Stickers with a third digit of 0 are issued to vehicles 35 feet in length or less, while stickers with a third digit of 5 are issued to vehicles over 35 feet in length.

A permit authorization sticker may be used only on the vehicle listed on the application for that permit authorization sticker, and may not be transferred to any other vehicle. A total of four stickers are provided for each vehicle and they must be affixed to the front, rear, and each side as specified by the SFMTA in the permit terms and conditions.

Permit authorization stickers must be renewed each year. Sticker renewal takes place at a set time each year, so that a permit authorization sticker approved mid-year must be renewed during the general renewal period. However, new applications are accepted on a rolling basis, as are applications from an existing permit holder to add or change fleet vehicles covered by the permit. Permit authorization stickers are assigned to an individual vehicle as identified by their license plate number.

To be approved for a permit authorization sticker, shuttle operators must demonstrate ability to transmit GPS data and provide the following information for each vehicle for which they wish to have a permit authorization sticker:

- Manufacturer and model name
- Size (length, weight, and passenger capacity)
- Model year
- Fuel used
- License plate number
- Vehicle registration information

## Permit Terms

The permit authorizing shuttle operators' (Permittees') commuter shuttles to participate in the Commuter Shuttle Program and make use of the zones in the Commuter Shuttle Program's shuttle zone network ("Designated Stops") contains but is not limited to the following conditions and requirements:

1. Permittee must comply their Service Disruption Prevention Plan which is required as part of the permit application. The Service Disruption Prevention Plan must describe the Permittee's efforts to ensure its efficient operations while avoiding any potential disruptions to SFMTA operations by addressing the principles and concerns set forth in such Resolution. Upon issuance of a permit, Permittee must ensure its operations do not cause or contribute to any service disruptions. Failure to comply with this provision will result in denial or revocation of permits.
2. Permittee must comply with their Compliance Plan which details operator processes for addressing complaints and driving training procedures.
3. Permittee shall provide reasonable accommodation for riders with disabilities as specified by the Director.
4. Permittee must certify that all of their operators who drive a shuttle in San Francisco have viewed the SFMTA's Large Vehicle Urban Driving Safety video, which can be accessed at [www.sfmta.com/largevehicles](http://www.sfmta.com/largevehicles).
5. Permittee must indemnify SFMTA and the City of San Francisco for injuries or damage resulting from Permittee's use of Designated Stops, including associated bus shelters and other related sidewalk features.
6. Permittee vehicles must display a permit authorization sticker issued by SFMTA at specified location on all four sides of each vehicle at all times when operating commuter service in San Francisco.
7. Permittee must comply with operating guidelines:
  - a) *Muni priority*: Muni buses have priority at and approaching or departing Designated Stops.
  - b) *Yield to Muni*: Where Muni or other public transit buses are approaching a Designated Stop and when safe to do so, allow such buses to pass so they may stop at Designated Stops first.
  - c) *Stay within the network*: Permittees shall stop only at Designated Stops or other non-Muni zones, and may not stop at Muni zones outside the network.
  - d) *Active loading; no unnecessary idling*: Designated Stops may be used only for active loading and unloading; shuttles must load and unload riders as quickly and safely as possible. Unnecessarily idling is not permitted.
  - e) *Move forward*: Shuttle drivers shall pull forward in a Designated Stop to leave room for Muni or other shuttles.
  - f) *Pull in*: Shuttle drivers shall pull all the way to, and parallel with, the curb for passenger boarding and alighting; shuttle vehicles shall not be stopped or parked so as to obstruct the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic; loading and unloading shall not take place in a vehicle or bicycle lane, or in a manner that impedes travel in these lanes.



- g) *Comply with all applicable traffic laws:* Shuttles shall operate in accordance with all applicable state and local traffic laws.
  - h) *Circulation:* Permitted shuttle vehicles longer than 35 feet may travel only on the arterial street network as determined by the California Department of Transportation. All shuttle vehicles shall stay on the arterial street network and avoid steep and/or narrow streets to the extent possible. Permittees shall comply with all relevant street and lane restrictions.
  - i) *Training:* Permittees shall ensure that training for shuttle drivers addresses these operating guidelines.
  - j) *Follow instructions from officials and traffic control devices:* Shuttle drivers shall follow instructions from police officers, authorized SFMTA staff (including Parking Control Officers) and traffic control devices in the event of emergencies, construction work, special events, or other unusual traffic conditions.
  - k) *Use of Designated Stops limited to permit-related activity.* Shuttle vehicles that display a permit authorization sticker but are not making commuter shuttle-related trips may not use Designated Stops.
8. Provide data feeds per SFMTA specifications, and demonstrate for each vehicle that data feeds are regular and accurate before receiving a permit.
  9. Pay permit fees. Permittees shall pay all permit fees by the due dates, except that any stop-events made by permitted shuttle vehicles that are free for use by the public, and display the words "Free to the Public" on the loading side of the vehicle in letters at least four inches tall, shall be exempt from this permit fee requirement but subject to all other permit terms.
  10. Promptly pay any outstanding traffic citations and administrative penalties.
  11. Designate a representative to receive comments or concerns about driving issues by permitted shuttle drivers, and place a sticker on all permitted shuttle vehicles that states "How is my driving?" and provides a number to reach that designated representative.
  12. Demonstrate compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements imposed by the CPUC, including registration/permitting, insurance, vehicle inspection requirements, and driver training.
  13. All shuttle vehicles not already approved for use in the Pilot as of January 31, 2016 must be either model year 2012 or newer, or be equipped with a power source that complies with emissions standards applicable to the 2012 class of vehicle. As of January 1, 2020, all shuttle vehicles used by Permittees in the Commuter Shuttle Program must be model year 2012 or newer, or be equipped with a power source that complies with emissions standards applicable to the 2012 class of vehicle. After January 1, 2020, all shuttle vehicles used by Permittees in the Commuter Shuttle Program must be no more than eight model years old, or be equipped with a power source applicable to the class of vehicle eight years prior. SFMTA ensures compliance with this condition through the annual permit renewal process, which requires submittal of vehicle registration and, in the case of vehicles older than model year 2012, documentation to show compliance with applicable emissions standards.

An administrative penalty fee may be issued and/or a permit may be denied or revoked for failure to comply with permit terms.

### Permit Fees

The SFMTA charges each participating shuttle operator a permit fee based on the number of stop-events each provider makes each day. A “stop-event” is defined as an individual instance of a shuttle vehicle stopping at a zone in the shuttle zone network. For example, a shuttle service provider that has five vehicles making 10 stop-events each per day is charged for 50 stop-events per day.

The permit fee covers the costs to SFMTA, including, but not limited to:

- Development of zone network, monitoring and updates
  - Evaluation of proposed stops
  - Sign installation
- Enforcement of the zone network and along shuttle corridors
- Signage and permit authorization sticker design
- Signage and permit authorization sticker production
- Sign installation and curb treatments
- Data management system development and management
- Permit processing and renewals
- Day-to-day oversight and administration
- Communications with shuttle operators and community members
- Billing, collection, payment processing

### Fee Collection

The SFMTA invoices approved shuttle operators at the time of permit approval and each month. Shuttle operators are required to update their estimated total stop-events in the first week of each month for that month’s invoice. The SFMTA does not issue refunds for estimated stop-events that are not made. Any invoices sent by the SFMTA are due and payable within 30 days of invoice date. Late payment is subject to interest and penalties.

Payment of all outstanding fees, penalties and outstanding citations must be made prior to the issuance of any continuing permit. The SFMTA may also impose an administrative penalty for lack of compliance with permit terms and conditions.

### Regulation and Enforcement

The SFMTA issues permit authorization stickers that identify permitted shuttle vehicles. Enforcement personnel rely on signage at shuttle zones and display of the authorization sticker on the front, rear, and sides of the vehicle to verify legitimate users of the shuttle zone network. Additionally, the authorization stickers each bear a unique identification number that is associated with the shuttle operator so that the SFMTA may easily contact the correct shuttle operator regarding any issues or concerns. Each shuttle must have a permit authorization sticker affixed in agreed-upon visible locations on the front, sides, and rear of the vehicle during permit-related operation in San Francisco.

SFMTA enforcement officers enforce compliance with the program, issuing citations for actions such as:

- Non-permitted shuttles using shared stops
- Any shuttle (permitted or not) using Muni stops not designated as part of the shared network

- Any shuttle (permitted or not) loading or unloading in a bicycle or mixed flow lane, which creates a hazard and/or unsafe conditions.

In addition to parking citations, other penalties associated with the program include:

- Interest imposed on late payments.
- Non-compliance with permit terms: The SFMTA may impose an administrative penalty fee and/or revoke a permit for lack of compliance or performance of any of the permit conditions.

The SFMTA retains the right to revoke or deny renewal of a permit based on ongoing failure to comply with the terms of the program, ongoing failure to pay bills, penalties, or citations, or other ongoing poor performance.

## Data

Permittees are required to equip each shuttle vehicle with an on-board device that provides the real-time location data as described in this section to the SFMTA and maintain a continuous feed of the specified data while the shuttle is used in San Francisco for commuter shuttle service. This GPS data provides the granularity and consistency of information needed to achieve the following:

- Focus enforcement efforts: queries to assess where stops are being made outside of the network
- Respond to complaints: identifying specific shuttle operators associated with complaints
- Audit: collect fees for stop-events made that exceed those estimated and paid for
- Respond to hot spots: identification of areas where there is a high concentration of shuttles may result in parking and traffic changes to address the high demand for loading/unloading space
- Prevent delay on key corridors: identification of delay hot spots could lead to suggested shuttle route changes

Engage in dynamic communications and routing: address public concerns, special events, emergencies, construction, and other routing needs with appropriate operators

Operator permits and permit authorization stickers are not granted until shuttle service providers demonstrate their ability to provide required GPS data on vehicles that would be part of the program. In addition, permittees must provide additional activity data to the SFMTA.

## Estimated Activity Data

Shuttle operators are required to provide the following data about their vehicles and the activity of those vehicles on a regular basis using the SFMTA Commuter Shuttle portal:

- Estimated vehicle activity data (to be updated regularly)
  - Daily stop-events by zone
  - Monthly vehicle miles traveled in commuter shuttle service in San Francisco (including any deadheading)
  - Average daily boardings in commuter shuttle service in San Francisco
  - Average daily occupancy for each vehicle upon arrival at destination

- Typical routes, and average number of runs per route
- Average number of daily shuttle vehicles in operation

#### Real-Time Location and Movement Data

Operators submit real-time GPS data to the SFMTA's system every five seconds while in shuttle service in San Francisco. The data fields that are required of shuttle operators include:

- Shuttle company
- Permit authorization sticker number
- License plate number
- Location latitude and longitude
- Time and date
- Vehicle status (Whether a shuttle is moving or at a stop)
- Stop ID when shuttle is at a stop