



### Muni Metro Core Capacity Study Community Working Group

Thursday, November 16, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams meeting

CWG Members	Project Staff
Julia Adams	Kansai Uchida (SFMTA)
Karl Aguilar	Liz Brisson (SFMTA)
Tammy Chan	David Sindel (SFMTA)
Lian Chang	Mariana Maguire (SFMTA)
Alice Duesdieker	
Dylan Fabris	Chester Fung (HNTB)
Cyrus Hall	
Sally Hatchett	
Krista Judge	
Rick Laubscher	
Adrienne Leifer	
Alex Madrid	
Taylor Mogavero	
Bert Polacci	
Mark Sawchuk	
Jean-Paul Torres	
Lisa Yu	

### Meeting Summary

**1. Community Working Group member introductions**

**2. SFMTA presentation**

- a. Kansai Uchida, Liz Brisson, and David Sindel presented.

**3. Discussion**

- a. Adrienne Leifer commented that passengers often prefer to sit near the operator for security and may be wary of 3-4 car trains.
- b. Alex Madrid asked for improved customer information about escalator and elevator outages.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that is something the project team can pass along to staff who manage those systems.
- c. Dylan Fabris asked whether the study would include vehicles longer than the current fleet.

- i. Kansai Uchida replied that the study may look into that, which might be beneficial in places where there isn't room for a full additional car.
- d. Adrienne Leifer asked whether it would be possible to have reconfigurable interiors on trains with more standing room at peak and more seats off-peak.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that it was something the study can look into. When designing the new fleet, there was an effort to have fewer seats due to high ridership. Now, SFMTA is testing some with more seats.
- e. Sally Hatchett commented that even with current two-car trains, passengers often have to step off the train directly into traffic.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that needing to lengthen platforms is a tradeoff for longer trains and improved safety. The current L Taraval project added or lengthened platforms at many stops, for example.
- f. Adrienne Leifer commented that a surface-only K/L route was tried in 2020 and had been tried before, and both times the change was reversed. She asked whether there were lessons learned from those past service changes.
  - i. Kansai: We will explore the possibility of surface-only routes in our long range study. We'd look at several different possibilities, not just this one. We heard concerns about additional travel time, accessibility of the transfers, and the inconvenience of switching vehicles and boarding locations. We would look for strategies to mitigate those as we look at the idea of surface-only routes.
  - ii. Rick Laubscher commented that yes, there had been attempts at a K/L service before, and that having five lines converge in the subway has long caused operational problems. It was based more on fiscal considerations in the 1950s than operational considerations. In the 1960s-1970s there was lots of research on what to do with the new Market Street subway and how to improve operations of having so many lines feeding into one trunk line that was a choke point. One proposal was for a West Portal Avenue subway to SF State. It was approved by a majority of voters, but not the 2/3 margin required for a bond issue.
  - iii. Kansai noted that the capacity analysis presented at tonight's meeting did not assume specific lines being restructured, as the study has not progressed to that point, but simply calculated the capacity benefit associated with the number of additional cars in the subway due to longer trains replacing shorter ones. That is, the capacity benefits shown would apply regardless of which line(s) are converted to surface only.
- g. Adrienne Leifer commented that current ridership varies by day of week due to workers with hybrid schedules often working from home on Mondays and Fridays.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that even pre-pandemic, the SFMTA used midweek data for this type of planning analysis because there was always a difference



SFMTA

- on those days (which is now more pronounced) but agreed there is a need for additional attention to how commute patterns are evolving.
- h. Dylan Fabris asked what trends for downtown usage this analysis assumed.
    - i. Kansai Uchida replied that the model assumes a mostly full return on the 2050 time horizon. Because this is a long-term study, the city expects that downtown will return to being a major destination as business cycles pass and uses change.
  - i. Alex Madrid asked whether the team had talked to businesses or riders about this work.
    - i. Kansai Uchida replied that a Muni rail rider focus group will be done later in the study, as well as additional outreach in subsequent phases.
  - j. Cyrus Hall asked whether there was a timeline of when the Muni Metro system reaches various capacity points, and whether a sensitivity analysis would be done. He asked what the SF CHAMP does well, and what does it not do well? He noted that the N Judah forecasts change dramatically on the segments from east to west of 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and wondered whether there should be more gradation.
    - i. Kansai Uchida replied that SFMTA has additional forecasts including a 2035 scenario, which shows that the N Judah is among the first segments to go over capacity. SF-CHAMP data is stop by stop; it was aggregated into segments for this analysis.
    - ii. Liz Brisson replied that SF-CHAMP is one of the most sophisticated models of its type and represents the transit system in detail. She related the quote “Models are always wrong and sometimes useful.” but that travel models are typically good at showing relative change between different scenarios, given assumed land use changes.
    - iii. Kansai noted that the SFMTA is still crunching numbers on some parts. SF-CHAMP has a tendency to overestimate T ridership and indicates possible crowding on the northern portion of the line in the 2050 Business as Usual scenario. The study is working on balancing that with observed Central Subway ridership. The Muni Forward group is also currently doing a speed and reliability study on the T.
  - k. Alice Duesdiker noted that Muni Metro ridership growth is expected because of population growth, and commented that although there are tradeoffs for longer platforms, there isn’t space for additional people to be in cars.
  - l. Mark Sawchuk commented that because the N Judah is the busiest line, it is unlikely to be a surface-only line. He asked whether longer trains would be an S Shuttle to West Portal, or to SF State. He also asked whether if restructuring occurred, would stations be rebuilt for improved transfers.
    - i. Kansai Uchida replied that the proposal would be for longer trains as far as SF State, since significant growth is anticipated along 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and since the existing 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue land uses, like SF State, generate significant all day

- demand (as compared to peak hour commute demand). He acknowledged that Church and West Portal were not built as transfer stations; the advantage of this longer-term study is, if service restructuring concepts are advanced, there would be time to plan for significant station enhancements at any future transfer points to make transfers easier and more accessible.
- m. Cyrus Hall asked how the study interacts with other projects, especially a proposed Geary/19<sup>th</sup> Avenue subway, due to the long timeline.
- i. Kansai Uchida replied that the ConnectSF Transit Strategy looked at Muni Metro Modernization, Central Subway extension, a Bayview Caltrain station, and Geary/19<sup>th</sup> subway together. Geary/19<sup>th</sup> would be a second spine for system; riders on the westside may choose to transfer at 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue if it provided a faster trip downtown. It would provide resiliency with the Market Street Subway.
- n. Karl Aguilar commented that coupling helped in the 1980s and 1990s because of limitations of the original train control system. He asked whether it would be possible for two 2-car trains to use a platform at the same time.
- i. Kansai Uchida replied that the new signal system will allow for about 42 trains per hour, up from the 30 that can currently be operated without delays. The time it takes to couple trains becomes the limiting factor.
  - ii. David Sindel replied that two trains still use two “slots” in the subway, even if they stop at the same platform at the same time.
  - iii. Liz Brisson added that the system can only operate trains so close together.
- o. Jean-Paul Torres asked whether there is a capacity “sweet spot” that the study is aiming for.
- i. Kansai Uchida replied that planning capacity is 85% of maximum capacity, which provides a margin in case of delays or variations in demand.
- p. Bert Polacci asked whether the possible realignment at Parkmerced affects the study.
- i. Kansai Uchida replied the team is tracking that plan closely. It creates the potential for branching, but wouldn’t affect the overall capacity forecasts shown tonight.
- q. Alex Madrid asked whether a surface-only line could run on Market Street.
- i. Kansai Uchida replied that it’s an interesting idea that has come up before. It would alleviate the drawback of needing a transfer to reach downtown if a line is converted to surface-only, though it would add complexity as the overhead wiring and lanes on Market Street are used for both buses and streetcars.
- r. Adrienne Leifer commented that she would love a Portola streetcar, and asked whether another tunnel from the westside to downtown was possible.

- i. Kansai Uchida replied that the scope of this project is upgrades for additional capacity and does not include new lines. ConnectSF does prioritize potential additional tunnels, notably the Geary/19<sup>th</sup> subway.
- s. Sally Hatchett asked whether planning capacity is all seats taken, or standing room only.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that planning capacity is 85% of the car full with standees. At 85%, not everybody has a seat, but no one will be squashed at that capacity level, and there is some room to accommodate variations in demand.
- t. Rick Laubscher requested that the team integrate a study on using historic streetcars on the J Church (extended to downtown via Market Street) into this effort. He sent everyone a link to Market Street Railway articles on Muni Metro construction and history as background.
  - i. Kansai Uchida replied that the team is coordinating with all other efforts in the Transit Planning group, particularly Muni Forward. We would look into the idea of using historic and/or modern streetcars for surface operations.

#### **4. Adjourn**