



Safety Equity Initiative

Safety Equity Action Plan

December 2024

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Summary

The SFMTA Safety Equity Action Plan is based on data from surveys and Muni rider harassment reports. Working with interdisciplinary staff throughout the SFMTA, the Safety Equity Action Plan outlines our commitments to the following improvements:

- Improvements to harassment reporting mechanisms, specifically the Muni Feedback form
- Better lighting at priority Muni stops where customers are more vulnerable to harassment and safety issues
- Muni service plans that incorporate safety and harassment data and feedback into cost-neutral service decisions to help reduce rider vulnerability
- Prioritizing staff presence on Muni vehicles and at Muni stops and stations where customers are more vulnerable to harassment and safety issues
- Ongoing research to continually expand our database and deepen our understanding of harassment on Muni
- More robust and culturally appropriate external communications and community engagement

Introduction

Traveling on Muni is one of the safest ways for people to get around San Francisco and 72% of riders rate Muni as good or excellent.

The Safety Equity Initiative is part of the SFMTA's MuniSafe effort to make Muni even safer for riders, bystanders and staff overall. Through this work we continually identify opportunities to implement policy and security solutions that address the needs of our riders.



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The Safety Equity Initiative specifically aims to reduce harassment on Muni and create a more secure environment for all Muni riders, including SFMTA staff.

The SFMTA has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and assault. Thanks to long-standing efforts and coordination with law enforcement, crime on Muni is low. However, there may be situations our riders and staff encounter while using Muni that can be uniquely challenging to address and require a different approach, including:

- Encouraging reporting to help us collect as much information to address possible risks
- Using reporting information to implement mitigation measures and bolster long-term prevention
- Building awareness about the many forms of harassment and what types of incidents should be reported, especially those that may not be obvious or that people may not consider serious

Through the Safety Equity Initiative, we aim to address criminal actions as well as non-criminal actions and perceptions of safety often driven by anti-social behaviors and uncomfortable interactions that leave riders feeling fearful.

We work to:

- Build solutions into our programmatic work across divisions and projects to embed rider safety into the SFMTA's work at all levels
- Constantly improve our enforcement and prevention
- Support a culture of safety among our riders and staff, with the recognition that we all play a vital role in supporting each other as allies in safety.
- Improve information about non-criminal incidents

In 2022 the SFMTA launched the [Safety Equity Initiative](#) to reduce harassment on Muni, introducing mechanisms to specifically report harassment directly to the agency.

In 2023 the Initiative partnered with UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies to launch a comprehensive, longitudinal rider safety survey, measuring experiences and perceptions of personal security and harassment on Muni and at Muni stops. And in 2024 we launched a second rider survey, in compliance with California State Bill 434.



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Data from harassment reports and safety surveys, in addition to discussions with community members, help the SFMTA identify and prioritize improvements that can reduce rider harassment, outlined in this Safety Equity Action Plan.

Action Plan

Purpose and Methodology

The SFMTA has developed this Safety Equity Action Plan with steps to address the findings, trends and recommendations from our surveys and harassment reports and set goals for success.

The Action Plan has been greatly informed by the rider survey results from our partnership with UCLA in 2023. The survey gathered data on Muni rider behavior, experiences with harassment that both happened to riders or that riders witnessed, and riders' perceptions of safety while using Muni.

Safety Equity Initiative staff shared the data and findings with other SFMTA teams working on capital improvements, services changes, system staffing and public communications to identify opportunities to incorporate improvements in existing projects, programs and campaigns that can help reduce harassment and improve Muni customers' sense of safety.

The data helped staff identify neighborhoods, routes and locations to prioritize safety improvements, and shed light on the experiences of our most vulnerable customers.

Staff used this information to create implementation plans and evaluation metrics for the FY24-25 and FY25-26 budget cycles, as described in the following sections.

The Safety Initiative Action Plan consists of six major work areas:

- [Expanding Data Collection to Inform our Work](#)
- [Improving Reporting](#)
- [Improving Lighting at Muni Stops](#)
- [Integrating Safety into Service Planning](#)
- [Staffing](#)
- [Communications and Community Engagement](#)



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Expanding Our Data to Inform our Work

We aim to establish a regular cadence of rider safety surveying. We are working with key community partners and state officials to ensure our efforts continue to align with efforts to expand state data collection and reporting requirements.

We are incorporating the requirements of California Senate Bill (SB) 434 – now a state law that went into effect in 2024 – into our Safety Equity work.

SB 434 was partially inspired by the work SFMTA has already done through the Safety Equity Initiative. The law sets a new standard for the ten largest transit operators in California to collect and publish information about how people experience harassment on public transit.

Aligning our ongoing data collection with the requirements of SB 434 allows us to benchmark our progress against our own metrics and against a comparable, consistent set of data from peer agencies across California.

SB 434 also allows for state funding for surveys and focus groups to gather additional quantitative and qualitative information, which is crucial to support the SFMTA's Safety Equity work particularly in our current financial environment.

Improving Reporting

Based on feedback about challenges related to reporting harassment on Muni, the Safety Equity Initiative team asked the SFMTA's Digital Communications team to help spearhead improvements to our Muni Feedback reporting form.

We partnered with U.C. Berkeley's Berkeley Innovation, a human-centered design consultancy, to improve the user experience with the form and remove barriers to reporting, including reordering and reducing the number of fields customers must fill out. We also looked at ways to potentially prepopulate certain information.

We expect to implement Berkeley Innovation's recommendations for the harassment portion of the Muni Feedback form in 2025. We will then use and build from what we've learned to make improvements across the board to the Muni Feedback form and Muni Feedback process, making it easier for customers to communicate with us on a multitude of issues, and easier for staff to proactively address customer feedback.

Improving Lighting at Muni Stops

One of the key recommendations of the SFMTA/UCLA rider safety and harassment study was to improve lighting at Muni stops.

SFMTA staff working on capital improvements through our Muni Forward program have developed the Muni Stop Lighting Project, which is currently conducting a proof-of-concept demonstration of a solar light at a new Muni



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boarding island on the M Ocean View – one of the Muni lines our survey respondents also identified as an area of focus.

The proof-of-concept will help determine if solar lights are a viable option to deploy in additional Service Equity and Safety Equity priority locations and eventually citywide, or if other lighting options should be tested for a mix of lighting solutions. Once testing is complete, the project team has committed to prioritizing installing new lighting first in areas identified by our safety and harassment data.

Improving lighting helps increase safety for customers waiting at Muni stops at night by allowing them to see their surroundings better and be seen, which can also help reduce “pass ups,” when Muni vehicles pass a stop without stopping to pick up customers. It can also deter a would-be harasser. Improved lighting may also allow a customer to see suspicious activity and take precautions before an incident occurs.

Integrating Safety into Service Planning

Our surveys found that addressing crowding on Muni vehicles, long wait times and reliability of connections at night would help improve riders’ sense of safety. In response, we are now better integrating the data we gather into Muni service planning. The SFMTA’s service planning team has committed to including this information to help make service decisions for service changes that happen two to three times a year citywide.

Improvements may include cost-neutral service changes to address crowding on lines with higher reported harassment and cost-neutral changes to the Muni Owl (late night) network to improve conditions for customers waiting and transferring. For example, improving timed Owl transfers would help reduce wait time at stops. Reports and survey data show harassment occurs more at Muni stops at night. Reducing these wait times helps make Muni safer.

As we continue to gather data, Safety Equity Initiative staff will work with service planning staff to make appropriate adjustments to help reduce harassment and improve Muni rider safety.

Staffing

Survey respondents also strongly favored increasing or directing staff to Muni lines and stops where customers have reported more harassment or perceived safety concerns. This recommendation is echoed in harassment reports.

The data we’ve collected allows us to make deeply valuable improvements to where we prioritize staff presence and activity. This means we can be more effective with our existing staff.

We plan to increase uniformed presence on priority Muni lines and at locations where harassment reports and the survey respondents reported higher rates of harassment, and where vulnerable populations are more likely to ride.



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For example, we will focus more staff presence on school tripper routes because we know youth experience higher rates of harassment. We are also directing more staff to the top ten Muni lines where survey respondents reported having seen or experienced higher rates of harassment or other personal safety issues.

Our staffing plan also includes working with community members to improve how SFMTA staff interact with the community. Staff presence, whether in SFMTA orange ambassador vests and hoodies, or in official uniforms, can be a strong deterrent to harassment. But some respondents reported that uniformed staff can also be an intimidating presence for the same people we aim to help. We are committed to working with the community members to ensure our staff show up in ways that best support the communities we serve.

Our customer-facing staff are an invaluable resource to communicate with riders and share information. They receive safety and de-escalation training regularly and can help diffuse situations and encourage reporting. We also are engaging these staff to work with community members and share their skills. For example, we aim to host Muni Safety Clinics with our customer-facing staff and community-based organizations.

In addition to prioritizing staff deployments to safety “hot spots” identified by survey respondents, the Safety Equity Initiative works to build deeper relationships among our customer-facing staff and the public and socialize staff presence as a benefit to riders and allies in keeping Muni safe.

Communications and Community Engagement

Finally, recommendations from survey respondents included improving public education about our efforts to make Muni even safer through extensive and ongoing public communications campaigns and community collaboration. These efforts aim to create more community-centered Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaigns, safety and anti-harassment materials.

The Safety Equity Initiative is developing new PSA campaigns including:

- Reporting and anti-harassment campaigns geared toward specific communities in partnership with community-based organizations based on most vulnerable communities identified through the survey.
- What types of incidents to report. This is important to demystify the notion that harassment is only obvious, overt acts and that less serious incidents aren't worth reporting. Any incident that makes Muni riders feel unsafe is worth reporting so that we can take efforts to make Muni feel safer for everyone.
- How reporting issues helps the SFMTA improve safety. We must help Muni riders understand how their reports do make a difference and lead to change.
- How to contact support services for people who are unhoused or experiencing mental health issues. In addition to filing a harassment report, if desired, this information allows Muni riders to seek timely, compassionate intervention for vulnerable individuals who may be in distress.



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We work with community members to co-create messages and resources that help them feel safe, and design targeted campaigns that:

- Encourage reporting harassment
- Increase education about safety resources and tips, like how best to alert operators when a rider needs help
- Increase awareness about how Muni operators respond to safety issues and the role they play, though the actions they take may not be obvious.

Crucially, the Safety Equity Initiative emphasizes working with community partners to develop culturally appropriate messages that resonate with our diverse communities and messages that reflect lived experiences. These tailored messages are more meaningful to the communities we serve, stick with people better and improve the SFMTA's communication and outreach. We work closely with communities including women, transgender and nonbinary people, people of color, youth, seniors, and people with disabilities or additional mobility needs.

Our research also revealed that many Muni riders are still unaware that there are ways to report these incidents. Our newest campaigns implement more robust tactics to make this information more noticeable to Muni riders, including working with community partners to create a drumbeat of information sharing in multiple formats.

Next Steps

The Safety Equity Initiative will publish quarterly public updates on the status of the Safety Equity Action Plan. As data increases, staff will review and revise the Plan as appropriate, in coordination with internal and external partners, to respond to any shifts in patterns of harassment and Muni rider experiences.

Got feedback or want to partner with us? Subscribe for updates at SFMTA.com/SafetyEquity or email us at TellMuni@SFMTA.com. **DO NOT submit harassment reports to this email address.*

Reporting an incident on Muni? Call 311 or use SFMTA.com/Harassment.

Reporting

Reporting is the cornerstone of the Safety Equity Initiative. It provides information and insight we do not otherwise have and increases the information and data we can use to direct resources like staffing or prioritize projects like lighting improvements.

Prior to launching the Initiative, the SFMTA was unable to capture specific reports of rider harassment. Not surprisingly, our data set was extremely limited.



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To help address this, we took several measures. We added a harassment category to the Muni Feedback form and worked with 311 to support reporting. External communications efforts focused on encouraging riders to report incidents they see or experience while using the Muni system.

Any behavior that makes a Muni rider feel unsafe when using Muni is worth reporting to the SFMTA.

Reporting incidents of harassment or assault on Muni via 311 is NOT an alternative to 911. For emergency response, always call 911, or ask someone to call for you.

However, incidents that make riders feel unsafe often do not rise to the level of an emergency or a crime that would involve law enforcement. These are the kinds of situations the SFMTA wants to hear about.

Even things that feel “small” or “inconsequential” can be worth reporting, such as unwanted looks or aggressive, insulting speech. According to our research, these incidents tend to go unreported because:

- Riders believe there’s no way to report them
- Riders brush off the experience
- Riders perceive incidents as a “victimless crime”
- Riders assume nothing can be done

But, with the information in a report, we can work to reduce and prevent unwanted behaviors from happening in the future.

Process to Submit a Harassment Report to the SFMTA

Muni riders can submit reports about anything that makes them feel unsafe while using Muni via 311 or the Muni Feedback form at [SFMTA.com/Harassment](https://www.sfmta.com/Harassment).

- Calling 311 is the best option for non-English speakers or anyone who may need free language assistance.
- Customers can also fill out the Muni Feedback form.
- All harassment reports to the SFMTA can be made anonymously, but if you do provide contact information we keep it private and do not use it except to follow up with you directly.

Know Your Rights

San Francisco is a sanctuary city. City employees cannot use city resources to assist or cooperate with any ICE investigation, detention or arrest, or ask about immigration status.



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Reporting an incident to the SFMTA does not implicate you legally.

We can only contact you if you provide contact information and request follow up. But we will not share your contact information.

We cannot file a police report on your behalf.

If we can confirm that a criminal act took place on Muni we may take legal action separately as an agency but we will protect your right to privacy.

Next Steps When the SFMTA Receives a Harassment Report

When a harassment report is submitted to the SFMTA it is first received by our Muni Customer Service team. They assess the information, review any available video of the incident from the 11+ cameras on every Muni vehicle, provide an initial response to the customer if requested, and refer the case to the Security and Investigations Division as needed. They also collect the data from every report and add it to our internal safety database so we can track information over time.

If necessary, our Security and Investigations team investigates the incident further and develops a mitigation or prevention response as appropriate. They verify the incident if needed, identify the circumstances of the incident and any contributing factors and trends. Then they determine a response.

If the incident is actionable, Security and Investigations staff will prepare a bulletin with information about the incident and further instructions and share information with operators and customer-facing staff. These bulletins help operators and other customer-facing staff stay alert to potential problems and ready take appropriate steps including calling for assistance.

If the incident is criminal, the SFMTA will work with the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). In more serious cases, based on our bulletins, we've been able to assist SFPD in catching individuals committing criminal acts and succeeded in getting a restraining order on an individual.

Reporting has also helped us identify Muni lines and areas to focus security efforts.

Different types of incidents may receive different types of response based on multiple factors including if video is available, the apparent severity of the incident and whether it is actionable.

If the incident is not actionable – meaning no specific action can be taken to resolve it – the information is still deeply valuable to help the SFMTA achieve a clear picture of where harassment is taking place, what forms of harassment are taking place, and who is impacted. With this information we can make important decisions to direct staffing, adjust service, and design projects to include features that can help reduce harassment.



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We also hope to build a greater culture of safety by encouraging riders not to stay silent. Every report makes it possible for the SFMTA to know more and do more.

Safety Equity Initiative Accomplishments

In addition to increasing reporting that helps the SFMTA reduce harassment on Muni, the goals of the Safety Equity Initiative include:

- Expanding harassment data collection
- Improving our understanding of personal safety issues on Muni
- Enhancing security policies, systems and staffing
- Developing cost-effective solutions that help deter harassment
- Working with community partners to identify how harassment shows up for different communities so that our efforts to reflect their lived experiences and humanize the realities of harassment in ways that resonate and address community needs.

Some highlights of what we've accomplished with the Safety Equity Initiative since 2022:

- At the outset, we engaged our staff to get feedback and support for our efforts and received valuable input that's helped shape our work.
- We created staff recommended tear sheets with information on how to report harassment that operators, Fare Inspectors, Ambassadors and others can easily carry and hand out as needed.
- We formed a staff working group with customer-facing staff interested in providing advice and workshop ideas.
- We developed a "No Harassment" icon included on decals in all our vehicles that allows us to communicate to broad audience regardless of language and serve as beacon. SFMTA staff distributes materials with the "No Harassment" icon to members of the public. This is to encourage people to wear them both as an indicator that they won't tolerate harassment. And, as an indicator to other customers that they are allies against harassment.
- We've created new pathways for people to share information with us about their experiences. Information about where and when riders feel unsafe on Muni helps us target our efforts. We've significantly increased our data collection for on harassment on Muni.

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- On the Muni Feedback form and for 311 reports, we added a “harassment” category to explicitly track this data.
- To our annual rider surveys, we’ve added a question about harassment to track and compare data over time and across surveys.
- In 2023 we partnered with UCLA’s Institute of Transportation Studies to conduct a comprehensive study to show trends and concentrations of harassment across Muni.
- In 2024 we conducted additional quantitative and qualitative research, interviewing and surveying Muni riders to learn more about their experiences with harassment on Muni.
- To get information out about reporting harassment we did a full court press of PSAs and information campaigns with
 - Daily on-vehicle announcements and materials
 - Posted information at 1500 Muni stops
 - Thousands of text and email updates, and distribution of informational palm cards
 - Ongoing social media posts
 - Safety information packages for major event organizers like the SF Marathon, Outside Lands, Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, and the Downtown SF Partnership
 - And our first ever MuniSafe Day Out, which brought together over 100 staff from across the agency to go out on high-ridership Muni lines in Service Equity neighborhoods to talk to riders about harassment

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- Maia Moran (*former staff lead for the partnership with the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies*)
- The Security and Investigations Division
- The Office of Racial Equity and Belonging
- The Communications Division
- The Transit Service Planning Division
- Muni Customer Service
- Muni Operators
- Transit Fare Inspectors
- Metro Station Agents
- Muni Transit Assistance Program (MTAP) staff
- The Safety Equity Staff Working Group

Community-Based Organizations

- Chinese for Affirmative Action
- Good Samaritan Family Resource Center
- Girls and Boys Club of San Francisco, Tenderloin Clubhouse
- Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club
- Transgender District of San Francisco
- Lighthouse for the Blind
- Coalition for Community Safety and Justice
- Samoan Community Development Center
- B'MAGIC
- Stop AAPI Hate