# The Other 9-to-5

IMPROVING LATE-NIGHT AND EARLY-MORNING TRANSPORTATION FOR SAN FRANCISCO WORKERS, RESIDENTS, AND VISITORS







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# Foreword



San Francisco is a 24-hour, world-class city, and our transportation system needs to reflect that reality. Our nighttime economy—\$4.2 billion in size employs over 52,000 people and generates over \$50 million in annual tax revenue. Moreover, nightlife—bars, clubs, live music,

arts, theater, and so forth—is part of San Francisco's cultural heart. Residents, both San Franciscans and residents of other cities, come here late night and early morning to go out and to travel to or from work.

Yet, as important as our nighttime economy is to our cultural and economic life, our nighttime transportation system doesn't reflect that fact. Instead, the system is structured as if everyone went home before midnight and woke up after sunrise. Nighttime public transportation is often inadequate or non-existent. For many years, we didn't have nearly enough taxi service. Nightlife patrons as well as late-night and earlymorning workers have suffered as a result. Our lack of viable transit options encourages people to drive, puts significant financial burdens on workers, and puts both patrons and workers at risk of crime.

Last year, I convened a hearing on our city's nighttime transportation needs and authored legislation creating the Late Night Transportation Working Group, charged with studying the problem and making recommendations to move toward a more robust and reliable nighttime transportation system.

This report reflects those recommendations, and I'm grateful for the efforts of the Working Group.

—SCOTT WIENER Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors





# **Executive Summary**

Between June 2014 and February 2015, the San Francisco Late Night Transportation Working Group (Working Group) met five times to study the existing conditions of all-night transportation in San Francisco, survey the needs of impacted stakeholders, evaluate a lengthy list of potential solutions, and develop recommendations regarding next steps to improve late-night and early-morning transportation for San Francisco workers, residents, and visitors.

Our work to understand the transportation needs of late-night and early-morning travelers included a widely distributed community survey, which received over 2,800 responses, stakeholder meetings, and input from Working Group members. This investigation and related research into the existing conditions of all-night transportation led us to identify five major need areas: 1) availability and coverage; 2) speed and reliability; 3) safety and security; 4) awareness and comfort; and 5) cost and equity.

For each need area, we worked with stakeholders and subject matter experts to make relevant findings and develop recommendations for short-, medium, and long-term actions to help address the need. Those findings and recommendations are listed on the following pages.

# AVAILABILITY AND COVERAGE

### Findings

- Buses are the only public transportation choice during early-morning hours.
- All-night bus service provides a more skeletal network than daytime bus service. Local Muni bus service is more robust in frequency and coverage than regional bus services.
- The last regional look at the all-night bus network across multiple operators was a decade ago.
- It is not currently feasible for BART, Muni Rail, and Caltrain to operate longer rail service hours than what is currently provided.
- The existing bikeshare system has very limited coverage.
- Technology allows for more reliable, quick pick-ups by taxi and ride-sourcing services, while traditional taxi hailing is less reliable and takes longer.

### Recommendations

- 1. Promote, monitor, evaluate, and adjust new all-night bus services to build a case for additional permanent service expansion.
- 2. Begin a process to refresh all-night bus service.
- 3. Seek public-private partnerships to fund all-night bus expansions.
- 4. Expand the bikeshare system.
- **5**. BART, Caltrain, and the SFMTA should produce white papers further documenting the operations constraints preventing longer rail hours.
- 6. Champion funding for and pursuit of subsequent phases of project development work for any rail infrastructure that could enable future operation of 24-hour services through the Bay Area Transit Core Capacity Study.

# SPEED AND RELIABILITY

### Findings

- The difference between transit and driving travel time is greater during all-night hours.
- Low bus service reliability is a common complaint.
- Timed transfers are not always dependable, particularly across systems.

### Recommendations

**7.** Begin regular review of all-night transit service reliability metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.



# SAFETY AND SECURITY

### Findings

- Personal security concerns suppress overnight trips.
- Collisions resulting in severe injury are significantly more likely for those traveling overnight than their daytime counterparts.
- Lack of secure bicycle parking deters all-night trips by bike.

### Recommendations

- 8. Begin regular review of all-night transportation safety and security metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.
- 9. The SFMTA should identify safety-focused customer amenities that could be used to improve perceptions of personal security at bus and light-rail stops.
- 10. Create a program to define and implement location-specific safety and security upgrades

# AWARENESS AND COMFORT

### Findings

- Available information about late-night and early-morning transportation choices is difficult to find and understand.
- Knowledge of late-night and early-morning bus service is low.
- Real-time transit information is particularly helpful, but is not always available or accurate.
- Inaccuracy of real-time bus information presents an additional challenge to users.
- A substantial number of privately-developed transportation information applications exist.





• Transit system cleanliness is a common concern.

• Taxi and ride-sourcing passenger loading and unloading can be chaotic on major nightlife streets.

### Recommendations

**11.** Begin regular review of all-night transportation cleanliness metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.

**12.** Develop and launch a comprehensive information campaign regarding all-night transportation.

13. Create a program to define and implement location-specific awareness and comfort upgrades.

# **COST AND EQUITY**

### Findings

- All-night commuters are more likely to be low- and moderate-income.
- Travel options with greater availability, reliability, and comfort are more expensive.
- Ride-sourcing vehicles are not well equipped to transport people in wheelchairs.

### Recommendations

- 14. The SFMTA should develop shared-ride taxi regulations.
- 15. Consider subsidies to low-income workers for taxi fares during hours when all-night public transportation options do not serve travel needs.

# **NEXT STEPS**

We suggest implementing these recommendations through five umbrella initiatives described below. As conveners of the Working Group, OEWD and Entertainment Commission staff should launch a two-month scoping period with relevant agencies and stakeholders to further define the scope, schedule, budget, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholder participants in implementing these five initiatives.

- 1. Begin a process to refresh and consider expansion of all-night local and regional bus service.
- 2. Develop a pilot program funded by challenge grants for location-specific improvements such as real-time transit displays, secure bicycle parking, taxi stands, loading zones, lighting, etc.
- 3. Develop and launch a coordinated information campaign to better communicate existing services.
- 4. Establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice of metrics such as transit reliability, cleanliness, safety, etc. to be used to make data-driven recommendations.
- **5.** Continue convening the Late Night Transportation Working Group to review progress on implementing our recommendations, leveraging our collective expertise to resolve roadblocks as needed.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders in implementing our recommendations and improving latenight and early-morning transportation for all of San Francisco's residents, workers, and visitors.



# Introduction

Following a hearing on the state of late-night and earlymorning transportation at the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' Land Use & Economic Development Committee in April 2014, the Board adopted a resolution urging the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the San Francisco Entertainment Commission to jointly form and lead a working group to study this important issue.

Comprised of local transportation providers, representatives from late-night and early-morning businesses, nightlife advocates, labor unions, and other stakeholders, this working group was tasked with developing a set of recommendations to improve all-night transportation for San Francisco workers, residents, and visitors.

Between June 2014 and February 2015, the San Francisco Late Night Transportation Working Group (Working Group) met five times to study the existing conditions of all-night transportation, survey the needs of impacted stakeholders, and evaluate a lengthy list of potential solutions. These meetings were supplemented by countless additional hours of research, analysis, coordination, and recommendations development by Working Group staff.

This report represents the culmination of the Working Group's initial efforts, identifying both near-term actions to begin addressing nighttime transportation needs now, as well as longer-term, higher-cost efforts to achieve our all-night transportation vision.

This document is designed as a roadmap to guide policymakers, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders on next steps to improve late-night and earlymorning transportation in San Francisco. The report's next section identifies five major overnight transportation need areas, and discusses findings and recommendations to address each of these need areas. The report concludes with a discussion of next steps to begin to implement these recommendations.

We hope this report will aid local and regional policymakers, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders in understanding and addressing the needs and concerns of San Francisco's sizable population of latenight and early-morning travelers in 2015 and beyond.

### VISION FOR SAN FRANCISCO'S FUTURE ALL-NIGHT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

- Fast and reliable late-night and early-morning transportation choices that serve the needs of workers, residents, and visitors
- Twenty-four hour rail service complemented by a network of local and regional buses
- A transit network based on both coverage and demand
- Safe streets for all road users
- Improved perceived and actual safety while waiting for, riding, and walking to and from transit
- Easily accessible information about travel choices
- Clean transit vehicles and stations
- Safe, orderly and convenient passenger loading and unloading
- Transportation options that are affordable to all



# The Transportation Needs of All-Night Travelers in San Francisco

This study of late-night and early-morning transportation uncovered a diverse population of workers, residents, and visitors who travel to and from homes, jobs, entertainment activities, and other locations between 9pm and 5am, a period that we refer to in this report interchangeably as "all-night," "overnight," and "late-night and early-morning." Because public transportation options radically decrease around midnight each night, at certain points in the study it proved helpful to divide the "all-night" period into "late-night" (9pm–12am) and "early-morning" (12am–5am) hours.

In order to understand the barriers and challenges to traveling during these hours, we conducted a widely distributed community survey in late summer/early fall of 2014. The survey was opt-in and as such likely represents a population of respondents who travel regularly during late-night/early-morning hours. Over a six-week period, we received over 2,800 responses to the survey, which was available online and in a paper format, in English, Spanish and Chinese.<sup>1</sup> In addition to multiple choice questions, survey respondents were invited to offer comments in their own words about the challenges of traveling in San Francisco late at night and early in the morning. These comments humanize some of the most common nighttime transportation needs and some are pre-



sented at the start of subsequent chapters. We supplemented the survey with feedback from stakeholder meetings and input from Working Group members.

We also conducted existing conditions research to develop a comprehensive picture of all-night travel to, from, and within San Francisco. The major need areas we identified are organized into five categories: 1) availability and coverage; 2) speed and reliability; 3) safety and security; 4) awareness and comfort; and 5) cost and equity.

These need areas overlap in various ways. For example, low transit frequency and reliability can result in actual or perceived personal security concerns. In addition, the availability of public transportation options (which are more affordable than taxis, ridesourcing, or driving) has direct implications on cost and equity.

Figure 1 (below) gives a sense of the relative weight survey respondents placed on some of these concerns. The two issues respondents reported to most affect

1 The survey results represent a population of respondents that were interested in completing the survey. While its results are not scientifically representative of the total population of all San Francisco travelers or all late-night and early-morning San Francisco travelers, they are still valuable indicators of overnight transportation needs.



A lot BART doesn't run all night Somewhat Bus service is infrequent or unreliable Not much Bus trips take too long or require a transfer Taxis are too expensive Taxis are often unavailable Concerns about personal safety or security when walking or biking Caltrain doesn't run all night Lyft/Uber/similar services are too expensive Concerns about personal safety or security on transit Parking is hard to find Lyft/Uber/similar services are often unavailable Available services aren't wheelchair-accessible



overnight travel were that BART does not run all night and that bus service is infrequent or unreliable. A majority of respondents identified several other issue areas as affecting travel choices "a lot" or "somewhat," including bus trip duration or need to transfer, the cost of taxis and ridesourcing modes, traffic safety and personal security when walking and cycling, personal security when waiting for or while riding transit, and the limited availability of taxis.

# ALL-NIGHT TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

**How Many?** Every weeknight, about 250,000 overnight trips are taken in San Francisco. That's about 7% of overall daily trips and equivalent to three times the number of trips generated by a San Francisco Giants baseball game.

**Where?** Late-night and early-morning trips happen all over San Francisco. From 9pm–12am, more trips occur locally, particularly to and from downtown; from 12am to 5am, about two-thirds of trips are going to or from another Bay Area county (see Figure 2).

By What Mode? (see Figure 3)

• **Transit.** Transit's share of all trips made is consistent across different times of day—about 20%—even during late-night and early-morning hours. This likely represents a transit-dependent population that relies on transit services provided during overnight hours. Figure 2. Average weekday all-night trip-making: Local vs. Regional, 2010 (excludes out-of-region visitor trips)



 Carpool/Drive Alone. Higher shares of travelers drive alone during early morning (12am–5am) hours. There's a lower share of carpoolers, which may indicate that lower overall levels of travel make

Source: California Household Travel Survey, 2010

may indicate that lower overall levels of travel make it harder to find a carpool partner.

- Walk/Bike. There's a lower share of walk and bike trips during early morning (12am–5am) hours, which could indicate actual and perceived safety and security concerns. It also could indicate that walk and bike trips are less practical for the longer-distance regional trips that dominate travel during these hours.
- **Taxis/Ridesourcing.** Taxis are represented in the "Other" category of Figure 3. Note that this chart is based on data from 2010, when ridesourcing had only just emerged as a new mode. Data from both SFMTA's taxi user survey and Lyft's pickups by time of day both indicate that there is more use during all-night hours, accounting for trips that are inconvenient or not possible to make by transit at these times.



#### Figure 3. Average weekday mode share by time of day (2010)

# 1. Availability and Coverage

"For San Francisco to be a true world class city, it needs a world class transit system."

"The west side is a transit nightmare after 9 pm."

-LATE-NIGHT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

### WHAT WE FOUND

**Buses are the only public transportation choice during early-morning hours.** BART, Caltrain, and Muni rail services all close down at night to conduct essential maintenance work to keep each system safe and operational. Muni, AC Transit, and SamTrans buses provide the only all-night transit service in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> There is currently no Golden Gate Transit bus service to or from the North Bay during these hours.

**All-night bus service provides a more skeletal network than daytime bus service. Local Muni bus service is more robust in coverage and frequency than regional bus service** (See Figure 4, below). During early-morning hours, Muni operates bus service on what it calls the Owl network every thirty minutes. Almost the entire city is within one-half mile or less of a Muni Owl stop. AC Transit and SamTrans generally operate less frequently than Muni, with buses

2 SamTrans' all-night bus service is provided by a third-party transportation contractor.

#### Figure 4. Snapshot of Local and Regional Transit Service Coverage by Time of Day (Weekdays): Top: Local/Muni; Bottom: Regional Transit Operators



Source: AC Transit, BART, Golden Gate Transit, Muni, SamTrans every 60 minutes during the week. AC Transit operates buses every 30 minutes on weekends and is piloting latenight weekend service with some 20-minute headways.

The last regional look at the all-night bus network across multiple operators was about a decade ago. The original All-Nighter network was created as a result of the Regional Measure 2 bridge toll increase approved by Bay Area voters in 2004. MTC worked with several transit operators to develop the network and established a 10% farebox recovery ratio performance requirement in order for operators to continue to receive a subsidy from this funding source. AC Transit, Muni, and SamTrans as well as two operators serving the Outer East Bay, County Connection and Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority, operated the original network. The routes serving the Outer East Bay were eliminated because they did not achieve the 10% farebox recovery performance requirement. No additional review, refinement, or adjustment of the regional network has occurred since, except for the AC Transit

sit/BART pilot program described on the next page.

It is not currently feasible for BART, Caltrain, and Muni to operate longer rail service hours than what is currently provided. Transit operators struggle with the major challenge of operating and maintaining railway infrastructure with high customer demand and usage. BART, Caltrain, and Muni close at night to provide a maintenance window that is essential to each system's overall safety and functionality. In addition, major funding backlogs must be addressed just to bring the systems to a state of good repair.



The existing bikeshare system has very limited coverage. Bikeshare can serve critical first and last mile connections to and from late-night and early-morning transit options, and can help address theft concerns that may prevent other overnight trips by bicycle. Bay Area Bike Share's current coverage in San Francisco is very limited; it operates about thirty bikesharing stations in San Francisco, most of which are along Market Street, the Embarcadero, and South of Market. There are currently no bikeshare stations in the East Bay or North Bay and San Francisco-based bikes cannot be returned to another city in the network.

**Technology allows for more reliable, quick pick-ups by taxi and ridesourcing services, while traditional taxi hailing is less reliable and takes longer.** Recent studies have found that the average pick-up time for taxi users using the Fly-Wheel smartphone app is just 3.5 minutes. The disparity between ridesourcing pick-ups and traditional hailing methods are more stark; ninety percent of those hailing TNCs are picked up in less than 10 minutes, while only 35% of taxis hailed without using an app pick up as quickly.

# WHAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

In recent months, Bay Area transit agencies have initiated two important efforts to expand all-night transit service. First, BART and AC Transit have partnered on a one-year pilot expansion of transbay bus service on Friday and Saturday nights. Under the pilot, buses to the East Bay leave San Francisco more frequently, travel beyond downtown Oakland and begin picking up passengers at 24th Street/ Mission BART. Additionally, the SFMTA has submitted an application for funding to provide an overall 30% increase in Muni Owl service, including new all-night Muni Owl service on portions of the 44 and 48 lines, increased frequency on the 108 line, and increased support to improve Owl service reliability.

Bay Area Bike Share plans to add 300 bikes at 17 new bikeshare stations in the Mission and Castro in 2015, as well



Working group members and friends test out the new BART-AC Transit Enhanced Late Night bus service.



as 60 stations and roughly 750 bikes in Oakland, Berkeley, and Emeryville by spring 2015.

To have 24-hour BART or Muni rail service, major transit capital expansions would be needed to provide additional tracks. A new multi-agency effort, the MTC Bay Area Transit Core Capacity Study (Core Capacity Study) will help define at least some of the needed infrastructure by studying a second transbay rail crossing and major new Muni rail investments. The effort will conclude in 2018 with a clear set of implementation steps needed to pursue these ideas.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMERGING MODES**

Emerging new modes of transport—ridesourcing, point-to-point car-share, jitney-like services—could provide additional options to address all-night transportation needs, but raise interesting policy questions beyond the scope of this report.

Alternative transportation options may complement public transportation for workers and others traveling on routes underserved, or not served productively, by transit. A new and evolving array of jitney-like, carpooling, car-sharing, and ridesourcing services now operate in San Francisco and may provide promising opportunities to address some users' all-night transportation needs. For services that require access to curb space for loading and unloading, SFMTA should proactively consider the right policy approach to providing such space in recognition of tradeoffs for using that curb space for other purposes.

More broadly, San Francisco needs to provide policy leadership on the City's vision for how these modes can complement existing transportation options. Given the nature, complexity and scope of these issues, this report does not contain recommendations related to emerging alternative transportation options.

While the prime purpose of the Core Capacity Study is to identify investments to address peak hour transit capacity constraints, the prioritized investments could serve complementary purposes to enable future 24-hour rail service. In addition to a second transbay crossing, BART would need additional tracks in the East Bay to connect to the new crossing.

# WHAT'S NEXT

Over 90% of survey respondents identified the absence of all-night BART service as an issue impacting their decisions to travel between 12am and 5am. Twenty-four hour rail service in the Bay Area would address some of the most frequently cited needs of existing all-night travelers. It would also induce more travel and support San Francisco's (and the region's) emerging 24-hour economy. While the rail infrastructure needed to operate twenty-four

hour rail is decades away and would require substantial funding for major new capital investments that have not been identified, appropriate and timely steps must be taken to understand its potential role in improving late-night and early-morning service and work towards implementation of that vision.<sup>3</sup>

Given the long lead time needed to enable 24-hour rail service, we recommend moving forward on two

<sup>3</sup> Advancing funding for these capital investments would also need to be considered within the context of tradeoffs with other competing transportation funding needs.



paths: considering better bus service and expansion of the bikeshare system in the short- and medium-term, and engaging in detailed planning about ways to extend rail hours and to continue defining the major capital improvements required for 24-hour service in the long-term.

### Short-Term:

- 1. Promote, monitor, evaluate, and adjust new all-night bus services to build a case for additional permanent service expansion. While the Working Group met, BART and AC Transit began their bus pilot service and the Muni Owl expansion proposal was developed and submitted for funding consideration. These important positive steps provide incremental improvements to overnight travelers and could be the foundation for additional service expansion. BART and AC Transit staff should seek input from the Working Group to identify measures of effectiveness to evaluate the success of the pilot. We recommend using these measures to conduct a midway evaluation with reporting prior to the pilot's conclusion in January 2016.
- 2. Begin a process to refresh all-night bus service. Given the changes that have occurred in the San Francisco Bay Area over the last decade, as well as those that are planned or underway now, the time to reconsider and refresh the existing late-night and early-morning bus service from a regional perspective is overdue. A new initiative should be undertaken with stakeholders to develop modified service plans for the all-night bus network that contemplate several scenarios of expanded transit service. For example, some Working Group members have suggested considering nighttime service changes to connect San Francisco State University to Daly City BART, and the Ferry Terminal to Fisherman's Wharf, among other possible expansions. Service design criteria for this exercise should be developed in recognition of varying densities of land use patterns across the region and should consider the appropriate provision and location of transfer facilities. Participating bus operators should include: AC Transit, Golden Gate Transit, SFMTA Muni, and SamTrans. Given the structure of AC Transit's network, with timed transfers to local lines serving parts of the East Bay not served directly, the AC Transit local nighttime service network should be considered through this effort. In addition to expansion, it may be possible to adjust schedules in ways that better serve needs within existing funding levels.
- 3. Seek public-private partnerships to fund all-night bus expansions. During Working Group meetings, we uncovered different perspectives about late-night and early-morning public transportation funding. Existing transit options clearly do not meet all nighttime travelers' needs, yet transit operators must make difficult decisions to allocate limited operating funds across daytime and nighttime hours. The all-night transportation vision we have established will be best achieved by increasing the available sources of funding and working in partnership with other public agencies and the private sector. Funding from industry groups most in need of additional overnight bus service could be passed to transit operators to fund service supplements defined through number 2, above.



### LONGER RAIL TRANSIT HOURS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

Around the world, very few rail transit systems operate 24 hours a day. Those that do were designed differently than BART, Caltrain, and Muni Metro and have extra sets of tracks to allow portions of the system to be maintained while others are used. New York City, Chicago, Copenhagen, and Berlin all currently operate some rail service 24 hours a day. Other systems like Boston stay open past 2 am every night, while still other systems like Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. stay open past 2 am only on weekends. London is poised to open 24-hour weekend Tube service in Fall 2015.

- 4. **Expand the bikeshare system.** San Francisco should continue to work with stakeholders to expand access to bike sharing, especially along corridors with significant concentrations of late night and early morning businesses and transit users.
- 5. BART, Caltrain, and the SFMTA should produce white papers further documenting the operations constraints preventing longer rail hours. While a short answer to this question is available on BART's website, greater understanding of the complexities and nuances of this issue is needed to understand whether maintenance innovations or near-term capital investments could enable longer rail hours for each of these services. Such white papers should cover topics including: the considerations involved in periodic decisions to extend hours for special events, the impact of extended service hours on system maintenance and performance, the potential use of single-tracking and skip-stop operations to facilitate maintenance during service hours, improvements to the existing system that could enable limited service during maintenance windows, and the approximate scope and cost of additional studies or other resources needed to better answer these questions. Transportation stakeholders should discuss these papers with the transit operators and decide on any next steps.

#### Medium-Term and Long-Term

6. Champion funding for and pursuit of subsequent phases of project development work for any rail infrastructure that could enable future operation of 24-hour services through the Bay Area Transit Core Capacity Study. Direction on next stages of development for some of the major capital investments that are necessary prerequisites to 24-hour rail will be established at the conclusion of the Core Capacity Study. A typical capital project development path would proceed through conceptual engineering, preparation of environmental review documents, preliminary and final design engineering, acquisition of right-of-way if needed, and construction. Beyond additional capital investment, additional analysis will be needed that takes into account the benefits and costs of 24-hour rail service to define its potential role in improving late-night and early-morning service. All-night transportation stakeholders' advocacy can help communicate this issue's urgency and the many benefits that 24-hour rail could provide for local workers, residents, and visitors.



# 2. Speed and Reliability

"It's the unreliability of the buses more than their infrequency." "I am forced to take the car if I want to stay out late."

-LATE-NIGHT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

### WHAT WE FOUND

The difference between transit and driving travel time is greater during all-night hours. During daytime peak hours, traffic congestion, limited parking availability, and high parking costs, combined with fast rail services, result in many people choosing transit over driving. In contrast, travel by bus during overnight hours can take anywhere from two to three or more times as long as making the same trip by car.

Low bus reliability is a common complaint. Transit service reliability is a common concern during all times of day and is affected by a variety of factors including: 1) how well scheduled travel time matches actual travel conditions in light of customer demand, traffic, amd other factors; 2) vehicle breakdowns; and 3) traffic congestion (more relevant to daytime operating conditions than nighttime). Over 90% of survey respondents stated that the infrequency or unreliability of bus service played a significant role in their all-night travel decisions.

**Timed transfers are not always dependable, particularly across systems.** Bus schedules during all-night hours have been coordinated to offer several transfer points between and across different systems. Yet survey respondents identified the unreliability of timed transfers as a common concern. Managing a transit system and facilitating successful transfers can be challenging as it requires that all buses arrive on time. Due to low service frequencies late at night, operators prioritize making sure all connections happen over adherence to schedules, so that no one is left stranded. AC Transit supervises the Downtown Oakland transfer location to ensure all buses are held for transfers.

# WHAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

SFMTA's Muni Owl proposal includes funding for additional service hours, an additional roadcall maintenance vehicle, and additional supervision to improve service coverage and reliability.

# WHAT'S NEXT

Additional data is needed to better understand and address transit speed and reliability.

### Short-Term

7. Begin regular review of all-night service reliability metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements. A comprehensive analysis of transit service reliability trends and possible contributors was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we recommend that regular monitoring and reporting of reliability metrics be included in a



new initiative to establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice with regular public reports. This reporting can help identify all-night service performance trends.

# 3. Safety and Security

"It's stressful as a single female trying to get home late at night."

"I've seen peers make the reckless and dangerous choice of driving intoxicated after a night out."

"The safety of biking late at night is another conversation entirely."

-LATE-NIGHT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

#### WHAT WE FOUND

Personal security concerns suppress overnight trips. About 60% of survey respondents indicated that they often or sometimes choose not to travel between midnight and 5am because of personal security concerns (Figure 5, below). This percentage was even higher among female respondents at about 70%. Common personal securityrelated concerns cited include unruly or unsafe conditions on buses, unfriendly or intimidating conditions waiting for buses and walking to bus stops, and concerns or past experience with theft of bikes locked at bike racks.

Collisions resulting in severe injury are significantly more likely for those traveling overnight than their daytime counterparts. Although the larger volume of overall trips means that many more severe and fatal collisions happen during daytime hours, late-night and early-morning trips are respectively five and seven times more likely to re-

sult in severe injury than daytime trips (Figure 6, below).

Relative to other big California cities, San Francisco has the second highest levels of overnight collisions and speed-related collisions, but among the lowest DUI-related collisions.<sup>4</sup> Speeding and Driving while Under the Influence (DUI) are more frequently the primary collision factor during late-night and early-morning hours than during daytime hours.<sup>5</sup>

Survey respondents commented that bicycle traffic safety concerns deter late-night and early-morning bicycle trips, and that driving under the influence of alcohol still occurs (and that a lack of better transportation choices may be a contributing factor).

20%

4 California Office of Traffic Safety, 2012 rankings. <a href="http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media\_and\_">http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media\_and\_</a> Research/Rankings/>

5 Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS). San Francisco: 2003-2012.



FEMALE

Figure 5. How often do you choose NOT to travel to, from or within San Francisco between midnight and 5AM because it







MALE

0%

Lack of secure bicycle parking deters all-night trips by bike. Survey respondents frequently expressed that concern about bicycle thefts during all-night hours affected their choice to bike to destinations.

# WHAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

Traffic safety has recently been at the forefront of policy attention in San Francisco. The Vision Zero policy to end all severe and fatal traffic collisions in San Francisco by 2024 was adopted by multiple city agencies in 2014. The policy focuses on engineering, enforcement, education, evaluation, and policy efforts to address the primary collision factors resulting in severe and fatal traffic collisions in San Francisco. Efforts advanced through Vision Zero and related initiatives to improve traffic safety overall will also improve all-night traffic safety.

Pedestrian-scale lighting can improve both traffic safety and personal security. In 2014 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted an official Street Light Policy to help guide the design and installation of adequate pedestrian-level lighting on City streets. San Francisco's Better Streets Plan encourages prioritizing such lighting on streets with high pedestrian volumes and key civic, downtown, and commercial streets.





Bicycle lockers, cages, and stations can provide a higher level

of security during hours when parking at regular bicycle racks is perceived as vulnerable to theft. The SFMTA's Long-Term Bicycle Parking Strategy (2013) recommends priority locations for installation of long-term bike parking. The SFMTA also provides bike racks designed for short-term storage free of charge, upon request.

# WHAT'S NEXT

To address this need area, efforts should be pursued on two fronts: gathering and monitoring data to better understand and address traffic safety and personal security trends, and launching a new initiative to develop location-specific improvements to address safety and security.

# Short-Term

8. Begin regular review of all-night transportation safety and security metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements. A comprehensive analysis of safety and security trends and possible contributors was beyond the scope of this effort. We recommend that regular monitoring and reporting of safety and security metrics be folded into a new initiative to establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice. This reporting can help uncover performance trends. Specifically for traffic safety, the San Francisco Department of Public Health should analyze the primary collision factors related to nighttime traffic collisions to inform appropriate counter-measures; this research would support efforts San Francisco is pursuing to advance the City's Vision Zero policy.

Additional metrics might cover the number of incidents occurring on transit or at transit stops/stations, any geographic patterns regarding incidents, and other metrics that should be developed in consultation with transit operators and the San Francisco Police Department.

9. The SFMTA should identify safety-focused customer amenities that could be used to improve perceptions of personal security at bus and light-rail stops. The SFMTA should clarify what interventions are available to improve personal security at stops and stations.

- 10. Create a program to define and implement locationspecific safety and security upgrades. Improvements that effectively address safety and personal security will vary based on geographic area and should be developed with stakeholders who regularly live in, work in, or visit a particular corridor and are personally invested in its success. We recommend that the City develop a challenge grant pilot program to encourage stakeholders to work with city agencies to audit existing conditions in their area and define projects that can respond to location-specific needs. Relevant safety and security interventions can include:
  - Bus stop redesign to improve personal security. Through a demonstration project with potential for replicability, stakeholders could use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles to redesign a bus stop (and immediately surrounding areas) that has identified overnight security challenges.
  - Expand Community Ambassadors or similar program to all-night hours. San Francisco's Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs runs the Community Ambassadors Program, which deploys trained staff to provide a visible, non-enforcement safety presence in a given area. There are currently three community ambassador programs in place around the City, each consisting of 12 paid team members. The programs operate on weekdays from around 11 am to 8 pm. Funding is principally provided by the City and additional funding would be needed in order to expand the program to overnight hours. Castro Community on Patrol, begun in 2006 to serve the Castro neighborhood, is a model of a successful volunteer organization that provides unpaid, trained volunteers as additional "eyes on the street" to work with city agencies, law enforcement, community groups, businesses, and residents for a safer neighborhood.

Install real-time transit displays in bars, restaurants,

### CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design strategies. Many of these are already regularly implemented in transportation and other public realm improvements in San Francisco.

Specific improvements can include:

- Providing adequate lighting levels at proper heights for lighting people's faces while avoiding lights that are too bright or create strong glare, deep shadows, or blind spots for potential observers.
- Using low landscaping that beautifies without blocking observers' view.
- Using surfaces and materials that are easy to clean and keep free of graffiti.
- Avoiding features that communicate the presence of potential criminal activity, such as chain-link fencing, security grilles, and razorwire fence topping.
- Using shoulder-level, open-type fencing instead of walls that block views.



and other late-night establishments. This can be as simple as tuning a TV or computer monitor posted in a late-night establishment to a real-time transit information website, like NextBus or 511.org, or developing more customized displays with vendors. Installation of these displays is low cost and could substantially reduce the amount of time that transit riders need to wait at bus stops where actual or perceived personal security concerns exist.

- **Install additional bicycle racks.** While the SFMTA is not currently proactively identifying additional bike rack installation locations, the agency will install racks based on requests. Stakeholders can work together to identify needed installation locations in their area.
- **Pursue traffic safety improvements.** This could be informed by data analysis (see recommendation #9) and could include improvements such as pedestrian-scale lighting.

# 4. Awareness and Comfort

"Late-night buses are often crowded, filthy and unsafe. People get into fights or harass others." "Ghost buses. Hate them. Inaccurate NextBus times."

-LATE-NIGHT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

#### WHAT WE FOUND

Available information about late-night and early-morning transportation choices is difficult to find and understand. MTC's 511 website offers some basic information about buses that operate during late-night and early-morning hours which are collectively branded as the "All-Nighter" network. The website links to an interactive trip planner and a downloadable PDF map that is also available in paper format. This effort was launched in 2006 and while the information available is up to date, the website's branding and usability are outdated and the site is hard to navigate (Figure 7). Individual transit agency websites also provide information about their respective all-night services, but this information is not always collected in an easy-to-use manner and is not aligned with the service of other operators. While some signage exists at stops and stations, there are opportunities for improvements.

**Knowledge of late-night/early-morning bus service is low.** Given the lack of information, it is not surprising that knowledge of late-night and early-morning bus service is low. Almost half of people surveyed either did not know where all-night buses run or that they exist at all (Figure 8, below).

Real-time transit information is particularly helpful, but not always available or ac-

**curate.** Real-time transit departure information is extremely popular, since it allows people to make informed decisions about whether to wait for a bus or choose another way of getting to their destination. Knowing when the next bus is coming is even more important when buses are scheduled at infrequent intervals, as is the case during all-night hours, yet not all bus shelters serving Muni Owl lines have real-time displays. Existing displays at bus stops in San Francisco also do not currently show real-time predictions for late-night and early-morning AC Transit and SamTrans service.

**Inaccuracy of real-time bus information presents an additional challenge to users.** Many people complain of a phenomenon known as "ghost buses," when the arrival time for a bus disappears, only to reappear a few minutes later. Ghost buses occur when a bus is at the end of a route or terminal and not moving. Predictions from the terminal are based on scheduled departure times until the bus starts moving; predictions are then based on actual

Figure 8. "Are you aware of Muni and transbay buses that run all night?" (Source: Late Night Transportation Survey Results, Fall 2014)



vehicle movement. As a result, if a bus does not depart the terminal as scheduled, then the system will drop predictions for the bus, and will instead offer inaccurate arrival estimates until the bus starts moving again.

A substantial number of privately-developed transportation information applications exist. Transit operators all provide information about schedules and real-time information in open source formats. A wide variety of web-based and smart phone-based apps use publicly-provided data, as well as other data sources, to provide this information.

**Transit system cleanliness is a common concern.** Many survey respondents expressed a desire for a cleaner transit



Figure 7. All-Nighter logo developed when services launched in 2006



system. While all transit operators engage in ongoing efforts to maintain a clean system, each specific operator decides how to allocate limited resources between tasks such as cleaning and other functions across daytime and nighttime hours.

Taxi and ridesourcing passenger loading and unloading can be chaotic on major nightlife streets. Unlike other cities, San Francisco does not have a taxi stand culture. Taxi stands are designated areas where taxis queue and wait for new fares, helping travelers find empty cabs more efficiently. A new taxi stand may be requested from the SFMTA at a cost of \$2,000 per year, and typically in-



cludes signage. Yet, taxi stands are not very common, generally existing only at downtown hotels and a few longestablished locations. As such, survey respondents indicated a chaotic environment on streets with high concentrations of nightlife businesses, with little management of loading zones and long queues of double-parked vehicles interrupting traffic flows.

# WHAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

MTC's 511 Traveler Information Program is in the process of next generation planning and redefining the role that 511 should play in providing traveler information in the future. As part of MTC's efforts known as "511 NextGen," a new 511.org website will be developed in 2016, which will provide the opportunity to redesign the presentation of regional transit information, including late-night bus service. In early 2015, this strategic planning effort will seek feedback from multiple stakeholder groups including all-night transportation stakeholders.

Regarding system cleanliness, BART recently replaced all of its upholstered seats with vinyl seats that are easier to clean and is engaging in a "station brightening" program to deep clean stations more often. Muni is planning to hire additional cleaning staff in 2015. As part of AC Transit's cleanliness program, a set of key performance indicators have been developed that will be used to monitor cleanliness over time.

# WHAT'S NEXT

We recommend moving forward on the following three fronts.

# Short-Term

- 11. Begin regular review of all-night transportation cleanliness metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements. A comprehensive analysis of cleanliness trends was beyond the scope of this report. We recommend folding regular reporting and monitoring of cleanliness metrics into a new initiative to establish an allnight transportation monitoring practice. This reporting can help address performance trends that emerge.
- **12. Develop and launch a comprehensive information campaign regarding all-night transportation.** The campaign should involve the coordinated distribution of relevant information and include the following components:
  - All-night transportation website to provide routes, schedules, and real-time information about all-night services. While a number of apps now exist that provide real-time transit updates—and all transit operators provide real-time information as open source data for anyone wishing to develop an app or web site—there is still a need for a more comprehensive approach to information about all-night transporta-

tion options. The site must be easily accessible by people on the go, with a robust mobile site or app to facilitate access on a smartphone. To make such a website successful requires additional work to define its functionality, as well as to ensure that it is set up in such a way as to enable regular maintenance and updating.

- **Targeted information in multiple formats.** The Working Group's efforts revealed many facts about our overnight transportation system that are not well-known or could benefit from further publicity. We recommend that key facts and "need to know" information be developed in multiple languages for specific user groups, including employees, patrons, and visitors using all-night transportation services, including:
  - » Public Service Announcements, e.g., the dangers of drunk driving and how to avoid smartphone theft;
  - » Facts about your "rights" as an all-night transportation user, e.g., that taxis are required to accept credit card payments and that a rider may bring a bike on an AC Transit bus even when the bus rack is full, based on operator discretion;
  - » Facts for businesses, e.g., how to set up a real-time transit display on a TV monitor, how to request a loading zone or bike racks, employee transportation options such as shuttle services, how to receive support from MTC 511 to form vanpools or find carpool matches; suggestions to place recommendations about available transportation choices for patrons on business websites; and
  - » How to find real-time information about all-night transportation choices.
- Improved signage for late-night services to improve legibility, wayfinding, and awareness.
- 13. Create a program to define and implement location-specific awareness and comfort upgrades. Improvements to address awareness and comfort needs will vary based on geographic area and should be developed with stakeholders who regularly live in, work in, or visit a particular corridor and are personally invested in its success. We recommend that the City develop a challenge grant pilot program to encourage stakeholders to work with city agencies to audit existing conditions in their area and define projects that can respond



to location-specific needs. Awareness and comfort-related upgrades could include:

• Installing upgraded taxi stands with painted curbs, additional signage, and staffing by queue supervisors or security officers. This could include piloting a "pop-up" taxi stand that serves another function (for example, as a bus stop) except during designated all-night hours.

• **Considering late-night street closures.** In commercial corridors with vibrant nightlife, pedestrian safety and comfort may be a challenge at closing time, when large numbers of patrons—many of whom will have, no doubt, been drinking-simultaneously exit multiple venues, crowding onto often narrow sidewalks. Cities such as Austin, Texas, and Vancouver, British Columbia, have used temporary late night street closures as a strategy to improve pedestrian safety in particularly active corridors.

• Identifying locations for additional real-time information displays. This could include identifying opportunity areas at Muni bus stops, outside BART stations, or other places with substantial all-night activity.

# 5. Cost and Equity

"I sometimes give up shifts because it's exhausting to spend two hours at night getting home."

-LATE-NIGHT SURVEY RESPONDENT

### WHAT WE FOUND

**All-night commuters are more likely to be low- and moderate-income.** While less than 40% of daytime commuter households traveling to or from San Francisco make less than \$87,500, almost 60% of overnight commuter households make less than this amount (Figure 9, below).

Travel options with greater availability, reliability, and comfort are more expensive. Transportation costs are often a substantial amount of overall costs for households at all income levels, but such costs can be particularly burdensome for lowand moderate-income households. During latenight and early-morning hours, options like driving alone, taxis, and ridesourcing provide faster travel at substantially higher costs. For example, Muni's bus fare is \$2.25 and AC Transit's transbay bus fare is \$4.20, while the average taxi fare in San Francisco is \$17. As a result, people with limited incomes must either suffer the longer travel times and lower frequency of public transportation options, sacrifice a greater portion of their income to pay for taxi or ridesourcing fares, or use a car.





**Ridesourcing vehicles are not well equipped to transport people in wheelchairs**. The CPUC regulates ridesourcing companies, which are currently not required to provide the same equipment that taxis must provide to properly transport people in wheelchairs.

### WHAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

The emergence of ridesourcing as a new transportation mode similar to taxis, as well as the regulatory and policy



environment surrounding this mode, is evolving rapidly. Questions regarding how San Francisco should consider these modes within the City's overarching transportation goals are broader than this study. Creating regulations regarding transporting wheelchair users falls under this broader category but are an ongoing part of the CPUC's regulations development process.

### WHAT'S NEXT

The most impactful ways to address cost and equity needs are to advance the recommendations surrounding availability and coverage of public transportation discussed earlier. We also recommend moving forward with efforts to improve the affordability of taxis.

#### Short-Term

14. The SFMTA should develop shared-ride taxi regulations. In 2013 the SFMTA Board of Directors amended the Transportation Code to enable taxicab drivers to charge a flat rate of up to \$11 per person for trips involving two or more passengers sharing a cab to or from different origins or destinations. Before such a program can be implemented, however, the SFMTA must adopt regulations guiding its development. By reducing the cost of taxi rides for shared trips, a shared-ride program would better enable all-night travelers to afford taxi rides. Such a program would work best with a smartphone taxi-hailing app that could facilitate shared rides among people with similar origins or destinations and enable easy payment of shared fares.

#### Medium and Long-Term

15. Consider subsidies to low-income workers for taxi fares during hours when all-night public transportation options do not serve travel needs. A model exists in paratransit service, where rides are subsidized for people with disabilities using federal funds (\$5 for \$30 worth of rides).

# **Next Steps**

The preceding chapters present fifteen recommendations that the Working Group believes will help achieve our vision of improved all-night transportation in San Francisco. To implement these recommendations, we suggest bundling them into five umbrella initiatives described below. Most immediately, OEWD and Entertainment Commission staff, as conveners of the Working Group, should launch a two-month scoping period with relevant agencies and stakeholders to further define the scope, parameters, schedule, budget, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholder participants for the next phase of this effort.

# 1. Begin a process to refresh and consider expansion of all-night local and regional bus service

As a first step to address our recommendations regarding public transit's availability and coverage during overnight hours, we recommend conducting a comprehensive review of local and regional all-night bus service. The goal of this effort should be to review the current network, propose modifications to the local and regional network serving San Francisco if warranted in light of evolving travel demands and needs, and consider scenarios of local and regional expanded service levels with cost estimates.

### 2. Develop a pilot program funded by challenge grants for location-specific improvements

The Working Group has identified a number of location-specific strategies that could be implemented to improve the safety, security, and comfort of traveling through a particular neighborhood, commercial corridor or area. After defining the parameters of a challenge grant program, we recommend identifying at least two corridors or areas to implement improvements during an initial pilot period. The results should include a feasible plan developed in at least two corridors, implementation of short-term items, cost estimates and implementation plans for longer term items, write-ups of "lessons learned," and an evaluation to inform further rounds of challenge grants.

### 3. Develop and launch a coordinated information campaign to better communicate existing services

To increase awareness of existing transportation choices, we recommend the development of a coordinated information campaign. This campaign should produce accurate and easy to understand all-night travel information available through multiple communication channels, including physical collateral and signage as well as a flexible, sustainable website with comprehensive travel information.

# 4. Establish an all-night monitoring practice to be used to make data-driven recommendations

Comprehensive data analysis on late-night and early-morning transportation trends (and how those trends compare to daytime conditions) was not possible given the scope and schedule of this effort. For need areas identified related to transit reliability, cleanliness, and safety and security, we recommend that a regular transportation monitoring practice be developed to monitor data and diagnose trends. We recommend a coordinated effort across relevant agencies to define an appropriate set of metrics to collect relevant data, identify trends, and make public reports that are useful and meaningful.

# 5. Continue convening the Late Night Transportation Working Group

The Working Group's efforts to date were very broad in scope, seeking to define all transportation needs affecting overnight travel and feasible strategies to address these needs. Going forward, our work will unfold in more defined channels and some Working Group members will be more interested in and have more expertise to participate in some initiatives than others. We recommend that the Working Group continue to be convened periodically while the more detailed specific initiatives are pursued. We believe that the Working Group should hear about progress in implementing our recommendations, leveraging our collective expertise to resolve obstacles as needed.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders to implement these recommendations in order to improve latenight and early-morning transportation for workers, residents, and visitors in San Francisco.

# **Terms and Acronyms**

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit): Public transportation agency providing bus service primarily in western Alameda and Contra Costa counties but also to San Francisco and other areas across the Bay.

**Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART):** Public transportation agency providing regional rail transit service connecting San Francisco with Oakland and other parts of Alameda and Contra Costa County and with northern San Mateo County.

Caltrain: Regional commuter rail operating in the Peninsula corridor, from Gilroy to San Francisco.

**Golden Gate Transit:** Regional bus service operating primarily in North Bay counties of Marin and Sonoma, but including service to/from San Francisco and Alameda County.

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC):** The Metropolitan Planning Organization for the nine-county Bay Area charged with regional transportation planning, funding and coordination.

Muni Metro: Muni's light-rail system, consisting of seven lines: the J, K, L, M, N, T, and S.

**Ridesourcing:** Use of a transportation network company to provide transportation for a specific trip.

SamTrans: Bus service operating primarily in San Mateo County, including service to/from San Francisco.

**San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA):** Transportation planning and funding agency charged with long-range countywide transportation planning and administering transportation funding sources including the Prop K local transportation sales tax.

San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni): The public transportation system of the City and County of San Francisco, consisting of bus lines, light-rail lines, cable car lines, and a historic streetcar line.

**San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA):** Public agency that oversees Muni, bike and pedestrian programs, taxis, parking and traffic control operations in San Francisco.

**San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD):** Agency that supports local workforce development, business attraction and retention, neighborhood commercial revitalization, international business and development planning.

**Transbay:** Term referring to the connection between San Francisco and the East Bay, across (or under) San Francisco Bay.

**Transportation Network Company (TNC):** Company that uses an online-enabled platform to connect passengers with drivers using their personal, non-commercial vehicles. Examples include Lyft, Uber and Sidecar. TNC is the designation for these services under the entity that regulates them in California, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

# **Additional Resources**

ALL NIGHTER NETWORK: Bus service from approximately 1 to 5 am in San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa and San Mateo counties. http://transit.511.org/allnighter; system map at http://transit.511.org/accessible/providers/all-nighter.pdf

WHY DOESN'T BART RUN 24 HOURS? BART webpage explaining why the agency's trains do not run all night or at least longer hours. http://www.bart.gov/guide/latenight

**NIGHTLIFESF:** Resource portal sponsored by the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development to attract and support nightlife businesses in the city. **http://nightlifesf.org** 

LATE-NIGHT TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP HOMEPAGE: Additional presentations and information collected for Working Group meetings. http://nightlifesf.org/working-group-formed-to-study-improving-late-night-transportation/

**SAN FRANCISCO ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION:** City agency charged with promoting, enhancing, and regulating entertainment and nightlife. http://www.sfgov.org/entertainment



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