

Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 8



City and County of San Francisco

**SCOTT WIENER**  
**威善高**

February 16, 2016

Tom Nolan  
Chairman, Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors  
One South Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: Proposed changes that will undermine commuter shuttle program

Dear Chairman Nolan:

I write to urge the MTA Board of Directors to proceed with the permanent Commuter Shuttle Program, as approved by the Board of Directors last year, without making changes to it. The changes to the program that several of my colleagues are advocating - and that some technology companies have been badgered into accepting, against the interests of their workers - would undermine the program and ultimately harm the thousands of San Francisco residents who rely on these shuttles. These proposed changes are designed to lead to the end of the shuttle program by making the shuttles so difficult to use that riders simply choose other options or leave San Francisco. Indeed, the ultimate goal of some of the shuttle opponents is to encourage technology workers to move out of San Francisco by making it as hard as possible for them to get to work. I encourage you to keep this well-studied and well-designed plan intact and not to move down a path that may unravel the plan.

I first want to commend the MTA for its strong work putting this plan together. As the representative of the district that likely has the largest number of shuttle riders and the largest number of impacted neighborhood streets, I have followed this process carefully since before I took office. We need a shuttle program that balances the needs of our neighborhoods, the needs of the thousands of San Francisco residents who rely on the shuttles to get to work, and our critically important goal of reducing vehicle trips by encouraging people to utilize group transportation options. The MTA permanent plan strikes this balance. Over the past several years, MTA staff have worked hard to respond to concerns expressed by my constituents about shuttle routes and impacts. While resolving every concern is impossible, MTA has worked diligently to address as many as possible. I commend the agency for its continued responsiveness, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness.

The appeal before the Board of Supervisors is limited to the CEQA categorical exemption issued by the MTA in connection with the program. Unfortunately, opponents of the shuttle program - a number of whom are quite explicit that they want the shuttle riders to leave San Francisco - have hijacked the CEQA appeal process to take an initial step toward ending the program by making the shuttles so difficult to ride that workers stop using them.

Shuttle opponents are attempting to undermine the program in various ways through the changes they are proposing. Most significantly, they are pushing for a "hub" system under which riders would have to travel to and from a central location to connect to a shuttle to the South Bay. This hub system - in addition to unfairly burdening a small number of neighborhoods with massive numbers of shuttles each day - will add as much as an hour or hour and a half of additional daily commute time to what is already a three-hour daily shuttle commute. The result of a hub system will be a dramatic drop in shuttle ridership and more workers driving to work rather than taking a bus.

The other significant change shuttle opponents are seeking is to push toward a manufactured link between the shuttles and our housing affordability crisis. Our housing crisis results from decades of not creating enough housing for our growing population, as well as a system that makes it incredibly difficult, lengthy, and expensive to create housing, including affordable housing. Rather than address the root causes of our city's lack of housing affordability, shuttle opponents are making the baseless argument that the shuttles are causing housing prices to spike. Even if the number of shuttle riders were sufficient to impact housing prices - and they are not even arguably sufficient, given their relatively small number, less than one year's worth of San Francisco's population growth - multiple surveys have made clear that if the shuttles were to disappear tomorrow, an overwhelming majority of these workers would remain San Francisco residents and either drive to the South Bay - thereby clogging our roads with cars - or find a different job in or closer to San Francisco.

So, even if the shuttle opponents' offensive argument were correct - that we should manipulate transit policy to force a certain class of San Francisco residents to leave the city - their effort to link these shuttles to housing prices simply has no basis. The same argument the shuttle opponents are making can be made about any effort to improve transit. Are we now going to try to find a link between Caltrain modernization and gentrification? After all, an improved and faster Caltrain will make it easier to live in San Francisco and work in the South Bay. In fact, the same argument - that transit equals gentrification - was made in the early 1970s, when some Mission residents opposed BART's plan to build stops at 16th and 24th Streets.

Are we really going to set a precedent that improved mass transit equals gentrification and that we therefore need to make it harder for people to access mass transit? Please do not go down that misguided route.

In understanding what is really going on here, it's important to look at not just what shuttle opponents say, but also what they do. Despite protestations of some of my colleagues that they're just trying to "improve" the shuttle system, their arguments and actions say otherwise. Supervisor Jane Kim has disparaged the shuttles as "rolling gated communities." And, just last week, Supervisor Kim and Supervisor David Campos, with several other Supervisors, voted to put San Francisco on record that it should be illegal under state law for MTA to even enter into an agreement to allow the shuttles to use Muni stops. If my colleagues are advocating that MTA shouldn't even have the power to allow the shuttles to use Muni stops, it is abundantly clear what they are trying to accomplish through the revisions before you today.

We have serious housing problems in San Francisco, but undermining mass transit - whether public transit or employer-provided shuttles - is not a solution to that problem. In addition to our

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housing crisis, another crisis we face in the Bay Area is a transportation crisis - clogged roads and bridges and jam-packed, aging, and inadequate transit systems. We need more transit, not less, and that means transit in all its forms, including employer-provided shuttles. The Bay Area is projected to grow by over two million people between now and 2040. We cannot absorb another million cars on our region's roads. We need to do everything in our power to allow people to live without cars. By buying into this attack on the shuttle program - couched as it is in benign terminology such as "studies" - the MTA will undermine this critical goal.

I ask that you keep the commuter shuttle program intact and that you reject the proposed changes.

Sincerely,



Scott Wiener  
Member, Board of Supervisors

cc: Ed Reiskin, Director of Transportation  
Gillian Gillett, Mayor Lee's Transportation Policy Advisor  
Nicole Elliott, Mayor's Office  
Tilly Chang, Executive Director, County Transportation Authority