



San Francisco Green Party



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Local Platform

Transportation Plank

adopted by the General Membership on October 20, 2004.

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Preamble

The San Francisco Green Party believes that good local transit is an essential element of a safe, healthy, attractive, and livable city. Public transit should be an efficient, reliable and appealing option for all people, not just a last option for those who have no other choice. Walking and bicycling should be promoted as healthy and safe options for the able-bodied. Taxi service must be improved without compromising safety or livelihoods of the drivers. Cars should be accommodated gracefully in planning, but no longer given priority over other forms of transit. Traffic reduction is a goal. We advocate that drivers should pay more of the true costs of automobile operation and parking, which are currently subsidized at the expense of other means of transit. The majority of the cost of improving our transit systems should be paid for through progressive tax policies.

The southeast neighborhoods of our city bear a particularly high share of transportation costs in the form of air pollution from freeways. Although transit improvements are necessary in all our neighborhoods, the southeast neighborhoods should be compensated with an increased share of transit-related spending.

Several of the following proposals require changes in state law; we ask that our local legislators and representatives attempt to change California law to enable San Francisco to control these aspects of our transit policy.

This plank will be supplemented and amended by other planks we will adopt in the future, including a plank on Housing and Land Use.

Background

Our present transportation system has created a monopoly on a very basic need: mobility. Its primary function has been to nourish and coddle the massive energy and automobile corporations. This has resulted in a loss of power for the common person. Specifically, these industries have created false needs through advertising and manipulated statistics in order to foster a fruitless competition for status at the expense of good transportation for all.

Taking back the power to meet our own needs means we will have to overcome our addiction to the automobile as a symbol of freedom and success. This will be a process involving many different interconnected and interdependent factors which therefore need to be implemented in a coordinated fashion. This ever-evolving document outlines many local aspects of that process. It is a collection of policies intended to work in conjunction with each other to eventually create a vastly improved system of transportation that supersedes economic class and means.

This plank addresses a deep crisis which our mainstream leadership refuses to honestly acknowledge. To do so would seriously jeopardize the status quo, which is the bedrock of economic stability and profits for an elite few. Consequently, taking on this leadership means we are also taking on some hard and perhaps unpleasant challenges for many of us. However, to continue on our current path would mean slow suicide for us as well as the Earth over the next several generations.

A. Transit Justice

Many of our current means of funding transit are regressive: a much higher share of the incomes of working class people is consumed through sales taxes and fixed fees. We advocate moving to more progressive forms of funding. We support efforts to relieve the air pollution in the southeast neighborhoods of the city, which is caused in part by freeways with diesel trucks, and advocate for special attention to be given to improving transit in these neighborhoods.

The San Francisco Green Party advocates:

1. Recruitment of neighborhood residents for a major share of the new jobs created by transit projects which have an impact on those neighborhoods, such as the 3rd Street Light Rail.
2. Employment by Muni of an increased number of San Francisco residents for jobs at all levels, so that income from these jobs stays in the City.
3. Conversion of Muni buses in the southeast neighborhoods to electric or less-polluting technology such as CNG (compressed natural gas), to mitigate air quality problems caused by the freeways and other sources such as power plants. Such conversion will reduce particulate pollution in these neighborhoods.
4. Creation of a local progressive vehicle registration fee, which would mainly apply to luxury cars and/or multi-car households, combined with state subsidies for low income families to either turn to reduced-fuel forms of transportation, non-fuel, public transportation, etc, with the objective of dramatically reducing gas-dependent transportation. The fee could be based on the engine size, weight, fuel type and efficiency, and value of the vehicle. This fee could be partially offset by a

transportation tax credit for all San Franciscans, including those who do not rely on cars for transit. The net effect would be to raise revenue, while rewarding non-drivers and drivers of smaller, less-polluting, and more efficient cars. We want to ensure the total impact of these changes is not regressive and not adversely affect people with disabilities. This would be a much more equitable distribution of the tax burden, which currently taxes drivers and non-drivers equally to fund oil wars.

5. Gradual elimination of subsidies for automobile commuters, such as free or below market rate parking in areas where commuters park. Current subsidies mask the true costs of commuting by car, encouraging driving over more environmentally and economically sustainable modes of transit.
6. Increasing the share of transit costs to be paid by developers at the time of new development, based on the anticipated impact of the development on public transportation costs (including street traffic). In addition, the Planning Department should aggressively collect all past unpaid fees from developers.
7. Increasing the share of public transit costs that are paid by the largest businesses which profit the most from our current car-oriented culture, including the ballpark, utilities, and other businesses with gross receipts exceeding \$5 million per year.
8. Planning on a regional level that incorporates more dense housing development (see section G) along corridors rich in public transit. Planning should take into account the transit impact of commuters as well as residents: areas such as San Francisco, which have a higher daytime population due to commuters, should receive a higher share of funds and have greater representation on regional planning committees.
9. Democratic reform of the commissions that determine our transit policy and spending priorities. Representatives on each committee should reflect the diverse range of people being served by transit. Representatives on the most important commissions should be democratically elected, pending campaign finance reform, and other commissions should be appointed by a variety of elected officials (e.g., district supervisors).
10. Amendment of San Francisco's environmental review procedures, as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), so that traffic changes that are a result of improvements to the environment for pedestrians, transit, and bicycle riding are not subject to lengthy and time-consuming environmental impact reports, provided that such improvements would not result in an increase in car vehicle miles traveled.

B. Muni and Regional Transit

In order to increase use of Muni, public transit needs to be safe, efficient, affordable, reliable, and appealing. Muni's performance should be improved to the point where it's an attractive option for most people going about their daily business, not just those commuting to and from work. Funding for Muni should be increased and operating costs should be shifted to sources other than the riders. Public transit should eventually be free to riders, funded by all citizens as are public parks, public schools, and public libraries. Increased Muni ridership benefits everybody: businesses get the added benefit of more mobile customers, drivers benefit from less congestion, and everybody enjoys better air quality.

The San Francisco Green Party advocates:

1. Creation of a citywide bus rapid transit (BRT) network to ensure that people can reliably travel between most neighborhoods in half an hour or less. This would entail the development of a system of dedicated bus lanes and traffic lights controlled by Muni operators along major transit corridors.
2. Gradual replacement of the citywide BRT system with light rail. Light rail should then be expanded into neighborhoods that will benefit from improved rider experience and faster movement. Expansions that have the least per-rider cost and that help the lowest-income riders should be the first priority.
3. Immediately roll fares back to \$1 (\$35 for Fastpasses) and make Muni free to youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Continue to roll back fares towards zero as new funding sources become available.
4. Ensure that as long as riders have to pay fares, frequent riders receive a substantial discount for use of the Fastpass, which speeds boarding time and encourages casual ridership.
5. As long as riders have to pay fares, expand Proof of Payment to all Muni routes to decrease boarding times.
6. Expand programs which enable employees to pay for public transit with pre-tax earnings.
7. Maintain infrastructure in good repair so less money is spent on equipment failures and emergencies.
8. Eliminate redundant Muni stops on the same line that are only one block apart, except in hilly areas where this would pose a major inconvenience for riders.
9. Ensure faster service by allowing all Muni buses and trains to control traffic signals as they approach. Replace stop signs along the busiest Muni routes with controlled traffic lights.
10. Create clearer marking for transit priority corridors and lanes and enforce them more aggressively, especially parking violations in bus and rail lanes. Gradually designate more lanes as transit priority lanes.
11. Establish timed, no-wait transfers at key junctions between Muni lines.
12. Expand Nextbus or equivalent service to all lines.
13. Transition the Muni fleet to cleaner-fuel and electric buses, and buy new low-floor vehicles to ensure easier boarding.
14. Extend Caltrain downtown, electrify it, and coordinate Muni bus arrivals and departures with the Caltrain schedule.

15. Improve transfers between all public transit systems in the City: in particular, allow direct Muni-BART transfers at Civic Center and Embarcadero stations, and improve connections at Balboa Park and Glen Park stations.
16. Maintain 24-hour OWL service on major routes to ensure people can safely walk the distance to the nearest line. If ridership is low, run idle paratransit buses at night on these routes to save money.
17. Institute "class pass" programs at the city's colleges in which fares are prepaid as part of school fees, similar to the program at UC Berkeley, but not subsidized by students. Institute student discounts on Fastpasses for all students, to cover those unable to participate in these programs.
18. Include the cost of a monthly Fastpass in residential parking permits to give drivers the option of taking Muni at no additional cost.
19. Improve transit service in the southeast part of SF. Specifically, build a new Caltrain station at Oakdale Avenue to better serve the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. Improve the Bayshore station with direct connections to the Third Street light rail and Geneva Avenue buses to better serve the Visitacion Valley neighborhood.
20. Direct more regional funding toward Muni's operating costs rather than expensive capital projects.
21. Improve scheduling such that Muni drivers and other transit operators work shifts and hours they deem reasonable. In addition, all Muni employees who work split shifts (both rush hours) should be considered full-time and earn equivalent hourly rates and benefits.
22. Build the "G line" and run it from Market Street, and then along the N-Judah line to 9th Avenue and into Golden Gate Park. Operate historic streetcars on this line. This would be relatively inexpensive compared to other new light rail projects, and provide a more convenient way to the park than driving for many people, especially those coming on BART from outside the City.
23. Mandate that BART charge for parking at all BART parking lots, and lower fares for the riders.
24. Improved access to MUNI for persons with disabilities.
25. Encourage the simplest possible transfer between new transit services.

C. Parking

Parking has a huge impact on our transportation system. Every car occupies space at its owner's residence and three to four spaces elsewhere. Space used for the storage of private automobiles amounts to vast areas of pavement and building space that could be used for parks, natural areas, public recreation, housing, retail, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, transit lanes, or many other public benefits. With 210 million square feet in San Francisco dedicated to car parking, even a reduction of 10 percent in the amount of space we need to store our cars would free up 21 million square feet! Providing so much parking also subsidizes car use by San Francisco residents and visitors and discourages use of transit, walking, and bicycling. Parking also reduces population densities, requiring people to travel

greater distances to meet their needs, and obstructs efficient and safe travel by walking, bicycle, and transit.

The San Francisco Green Party recommends that the City:

1. Allow conversion of garages in private homes to living quarters. In most areas of the city, current law forbids a homeowner from adding a housing unit unless the homeowner also adds a parking space. These "in-law" units, in converted basements, garages and carriage houses, will provide housing that will in most cases be less expensive than standard apartments and closer to jobs and transit than housing outside the City. Such units will also reduce the use of automobiles by reducing storage capacity, and thus reduce congestion on City streets.
2. Legally protect all existing "in-law" units and protect tenants who currently live in these units from eviction.
3. Prohibit new public parking facilities in the downtown district north of Townsend and Division, east of South Van Ness and Van Ness Avenues, and within 500 feet of a transit preferential street anywhere in San Francisco. A few cities in the U.S. and many in Europe have reduced parking in their downtowns as a means to reduce traffic and promote alternatives to the automobile; San Francisco should emulate these successful programs.
4. Increase the tax on commercial parking lot operators. Currently, a 25 percent tax on parking lot operators' receipts (which are exempt from the regular sales tax) generates roughly \$50 million a year, not nearly enough to compensate for the impact of such parking facilities on public transit and urban livability. The tax should be increased substantially to devalue the use of land as parking lots, to discourage driving, and to generate public funds. Such taxes are progressive user fees, paid primarily by non San Franciscans who commute to high-paying jobs, offering collateral benefits to transit passengers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
5. Eliminate parking requirements for new housing, starting with affordable, senior, and SRO housing, and institute maximum parking limits for new housing. The specific maximum limits should vary by neighborhood, ranging from a high limit of one parking space per housing unit in less transit-friendly areas such as parts of the Sunset and Bayview, to a low limit of .25 parking spaces per housing unit in neighborhoods such as downtown, North Beach, and the Mission, which are densely populated, already congested with traffic, and well-served by transit. Parking requirements in new housing are subsidized by developers for the private benefit of relatively wealthy housing consumers. These changes will result in lower housing prices for consumers as well as higher profit margins for developers. Parking requirements should never be an impediment to housing construction.
6. Allow non-independently accessible parking to meet parking requirements for new housing, until such requirements are eliminated. Require that parking be sold and rented separately from multi-unit housing, so that people who have no need for a parking space are not mandated to purchase one when they buy or rent a condominium or apartment.
7. Reform the residential parking permit program to provide parking for people who truly need it, and raise revenue by charging a fair price for that parking. Our current practice of giving a large number of permits to one individual at very low cost severely undervalues precious urban space. While it costs hundreds of dollars a month to store a few thousand pounds of private property, it's free in

most neighborhoods to store a private car on the public streets. This is a disservice to people most in need of on-street parking and who should be willing to pay for it. People should pay market price for on-street parking. However, any transition to a system where people pay higher prices should protect current residents by grandfathering in current prices until people move. A good portion of the money generated by parking fees should remain in the neighborhood to be used for neighborhood amenities as advised by local committees. Parking in front of driveways should be permitted as reserved, personal parking, but users should pay a premium.

8. Convert certain public garages and lots to housing. Above-ground parking lots are a menace to lively street life and can cause great disruption to transit and bicycle traffic. The city should identify a few garages and parking lots and acquire the property, or otherwise cause the property to be converted to housing.
9. Mandate car-sharing parking pods in every neighborhood and in new developments, preferably in highly visible and accessible locations. Car-sharing permits residents to have access to cars without having to invest in permanent ownership. The pay-per-use system of car-share cooperatives and nonprofits saves residents money and reduces car use.
10. Encourage businesses to be "green." Free parking forces customers who do not drive to subsidize customers who do drive. The San Francisco Green Party encourages businesses to charge for parking or provide a financial benefit equal to the subsidized cost of parking to customers who do not drive.
11. Ban parking garages in city parks. Institute a moratorium on new municipal parking garages and lots. The city should meet transportation needs through balanced provision of alternatives to driving, and, in the short term, more intensive use of existing parking lots.
12. Charge market rates at all off-street parking facilities owned or operated by San Francisco in areas well served by Muni, with a few exceptions for spaces reserved for night shift workers, emergency personnel, or workers who are required to use their personal vehicles for their job.
13. Eliminate free VIP parking at the airport.
14. Dramatically increase the cost of new curb cuts to make way for new driveways to garages. Curb cuts for new or widened driveways result in the elimination of public parking space, often in the removal of trees, and the transformation of sidewalk right-of-ways into driveways. The cost of new curb cuts should be proportional to the length of the cut, and increase with each tree removed. All trees removed should be replaced, on the same block wherever possible. Mandate that trees be indicated in plans, and inspections conducted prior to issuing building permits.
15. Enforce existing zoning laws against the paving of front yards to provide parking.
16. Convert one car space at the forward-facing end of some city blocks to motorcycle-only parking, especially in areas in which motorcycle-parking is practically non-existent. Priority should be given in cases where a large car or SUV parked in the space would block drivers' vision and present a safety hazard to pedestrians and other drivers. Install physical barriers to protect motorcycles in such parking spaces from being hit by careless drivers.

17. Allow dedicated motorcycle parking on sections of curbs between driveways that are too small for cars. Many of these areas are currently painted red. These spaces should be illegal for cars, but legal for motorcycles, and different markings (e.g., striping on the curb or street) should be used to indicate this.
18. Any new parking should be constructed underground.
19. Require neighborhood notification for any decrease in on-street parking or increase in off-street parking.

D. Taxis

Taxis account for a significant portion of the trips made each year in San Francisco. Taxis operate almost continuously; they therefore contribute proportionally less to most forms of air pollution than private automobiles, as cars produce more air pollution in the first half hour of operation. San Francisco's cabs should thus be acknowledged as a vital part of the city's Transit First policy.

To this end, the San Francisco Green Party recommends that the City:

1. Implement one of the following options, which would create a professional class of drivers with city-sponsored health care and other benefits:
 - i. Municipalize the taxi system. Cabs would be owned by the City and driven by employee drivers. Under this system, drivers would be paid an hourly wage plus commission for any fares over 15 to 20 per shift; or,
 - ii. Provide drivers with city-sponsored benefits, but maintain the existing system of private vehicle ownership.
2. Retain the cap on gate fees that companies charge drivers as long as taxis remain in private hands.
3. Establish centralized dispatch. Currently cab companies either have their own dispatch service or affiliate with one. However, because independent cab drivers (and not their passengers) are clients of cab companies who are responsible for dispatch, there is currently no direct incentive for cab companies to improve dispatch efficiency.
4. Subsidize taxis for the purpose of supplementing Muni. People who work unusual hours need dependable and affordable transportation. Taxis can fulfill this need; in many cases, this would be cheaper for the city than expanding bus service along certain routes at certain times.
5. Incorporate taxis into any future local and regional Translink pass systems to ease the transition from buses and BART to cabs.
6. Require taxi companies to take credit/debit cards.

7. Create cab stands at the termini of Muni lines, major transit junctions, commercial areas, and in parts of the city underserved by Muni OWL service and other forms of transit. Cab stands are good for drivers, riders and the environment.
8. Create transit-only streets that can be used by Muni and cabs. (see section G).
9. Require that all cabs be replaced by low-emission or zero-emission vehicles once such vehicles appropriate for taxi purposes become available; the new vehicles would be phased in as old cabs are retired.
10. Require that cabs be inspected a minimum of two times in the first year and thereafter four times a year. The average cab in San Francisco is driven about 100,000 miles per year, and cars that are tuned up generate less pollution.
11. Require drivers be trained to avoid bikes.

E. Pedestrians

At some point in the day, almost everyone is a pedestrian. The advantages of walking are borne out in both the health of pedestrians and the health of the environment itself. The San Francisco Green Party challenges the city to lower the number of households with cars from the current rate of about 30 percent. One part of our proposed solution is to improve three main areas of pedestrian welfare: safety, health and access. At the same time, we should increase the number of retail stores, libraries, schools, restaurants and other services within each neighborhood - perhaps on the ground floors of buildings that once had garages - in such a way as to make every neighborhood self-sufficient or nearly self-sufficient.

The San Francisco Green Party encourages the City to:

1. Require police and parking control officers to enforce laws which improve pedestrian safety and convenience. Aggressively enforce violations of pedestrian rights-of-way such as parking on sidewalks.
2. Dedicate more City funds to pedestrian projects such as safety awareness, zebra striping, lighted crosswalks, and countdown signals. Redesign crosswalks in high-density neighborhoods with many pedestrians (e.g., Haight Street, Chinatown, and others) to allow for diagonal crossing during a traffic signal cycle in which lights are red in both directions.
3. Combine doubling of speeding fines in problem areas, such 19th Avenue, with increased enforcement of speed laws. As success is achieved in these areas, step up enforcement in other parts of the City.
4. Make walking more attractive by planting more trees along sidewalks, ensuring their well-being, and enforcing laws to prevent them from being trimmed improperly and/or destroyed. Increase the number of benches on sidewalks, while complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The City must pay for upkeeps of its own trees.

5. Encourage changes in state law such that pedestrian injuries and deaths as a result of moving violations result in much more severe penalties. Currently, unless intent can be proved, motorists are only charged with moving violations.
6. Tow vehicles that block the right of way of pedestrians when violations are observed by parking control officers, rather than waiting for someone to call DPT.
7. When designing sidewalks, use level of service standards that account for pedestrians in motion, not just those waiting to cross streets at intersections or in pedestrian crosswalks. Such a change would encourage planners to design wider sidewalks.
8. Increase traffic-calming measures that improve safety for pedestrians. Such measures include narrowing streets, planting trees, and pedestrian bulbouts, among others.
9. Construct pedestrian bulbouts in such a way that bike lanes go through them, or in such a way that bikes waiting to go through intersections serve as a buffer between pedestrians in the crosswalks and cars (which wait behind the bikes).
10. Enforce existing laws regarding operation of motorized vehicles on sidewalks. The only legal vehicles are motorized wheelchairs traveling at eight miles per hour or less, and cars and motorcycles entering or leaving garages.

F. Bikes

Bicycling is quiet, clean, practically free, and personally healthful. Bicycling, like walking but to a lesser degree, is an antidote to alienation, encouraging interaction with and engagement in the public life of the streets. It provides independent, door-to-door transportation for every able-bodied person, and can even provide mobility for physically impaired people who find it difficult to walk. In a city where most trips are under five miles, bicycling should become a first-choice transportation means for at least 10 percent of all trips within the City. San Francisco should support all measures to remove the obstacles that prevent residents and visitors from enjoying easy, safe, and pleasurable bicycling to any destination in the City.

The San Francisco Green Party recommends the following measures to accomplish this:

1. Allocate substantial funds over the long term to bicycle planning, infrastructure, and promotion.
2. Build a complete citywide bicycle network that provides separated bike paths, bike lanes, and streets on which it is safe to bicycle.
3. Create more and better bicycle parking. Sidewalk bike parking should be as ubiquitous as possible without blocking pedestrians or violating ADA requirements. Workplaces should provide bicycle parking indoors, and showers and lockers for bicycle commuters. Every parking garage should comply with the law requiring secure bicycle parking and the advertising of such, and the law should be strengthened to require monitoring of the bicycle parking area by a security camera or attendant. All major transit stations should provide secure, covered bicycle parking.

4. Improve design of bike racks and bicycle access on Muni, BART, and CalTrain.
5. Include bicycle safety information in driver education courses. Fund mandatory bicycle education, including safe operation and social aspects, in our schools for children age 10 to 12.
6. Provide funding for bicycle cooperatives that offer less expensive bikes for sale and rental to those who can not afford them. These co-ops would also provide a place to repair and learn about bikes - especially health and safety. Co-ops could also sponsor teach-ins which would strive to reach out to potential cyclists and anyone who wants to participate in making transportation better for all.
7. Instruct San Francisco police to deprioritize bicycle violations at stop signs and red lights where bicyclists yield the right-of-way, and urge the California legislature to amend the Vehicle Code to adopt the Idaho vehicle code's unique treatment of bicycle behavior at intersections: yield at STOP signs and STOP (then proceed) at red lights.
8. Establish bike patrols that ensure that bike lanes are clear during all times, especially commute hours.

G. Streets and Cars

The San Francisco Green Party recognizes the need of many people to use cars for business and personal reasons. However:

- i. World fossil fuel supplies are dwindling and, as yet, there is no viable, cheap alternative to gasoline or natural gas.
- ii. The number of dwelling units in San Francisco has increased by approximately 34,000 while the number of cars has increased by 165,000 since 1955, having a severe impact on the quality of street life in the city.
- iii. Obesity is becoming epidemic across all ethnicities, and especially in children, in some part due to the fact that Americans are in the habit of driving instead of walking or biking.

The City and other entities should therefore:

1. Support nonprofit and cooperative car-sharing enterprises through parking policies that dedicate spaces specifically for vehicles owned in common (see section C).
2. Increase the price of parking a car, and allocate fewer development resources to building parking at the expense of housing (see section C).
3. Provide shared fleets of environmentally friendly vehicles at worksites for people whose jobs necessitate driving (e.g., building inspectors and visiting nurses).
4. Design ALL our streets to encourage slower and safer speeds and less competitive driving. This may include narrower street lanes (and wider sidewalks, bike lanes and more trees) so as not to give a freeway-like atmosphere to city streets.

5. Increase enforcement of traffic violations such as speeding and blocking intersections.
6. Support experimental programs such as "Way to Go Seattle" that paid families to leave their second car at home and only depend on one car or on alternative means of transportation.
7. Encourage state lawmakers to triple fines for any moving violation that occurs while the driver is talking on a cell phone.
8. Create more carfree areas and close JFK Drive in Golden Gate Park on Saturdays as well as Sundays.
9. Create more dedicated bus lanes (see section B), as well as zones (such as the downtown section of Market Street) with restrictions on private automobile use. Delivery trucks, public transit, taxis, paratransit, and bicycles would not be restricted in such zones.
10. Strictly enforce noise regulations against vehicles that violate noise pollution laws.