The Other 9-to-5: Improving Late Night and Early Morning Transportation for San Francisco Workers, Residents and Visitors

PRELIMINARY DRAFT FOR REVIEW

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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 nearly 60,000 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 early-morning workers have suffered as a result. Our lack of viable transit options encourages people to drive, leads to increased drunk driving, 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 All-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 All-Night Transportation Working Group (Working Group) met five times to study the existing conditions of all-night transportation, survey the needs of impacted stakeholders, evaluate a lengthy list of potential solutions, and make recommendations regarding next steps to address needs.

The Transportation Needs of All-Night Travelers

In order to understand the barriers and challenges to traveling during overnight hours, we conducted a widely distributed community survey in late Summer/early Fall of 2014, receiving over 2,800 responses. In addition to the survey, we captured feedback from stakeholder meetings and input from Working Group members. We complemented community feedback with existing conditions research to develop a comprehensive picture of all-night travel to, from, and within San Francisco.

Major need areas 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. For each need area, we coordinated with stakeholders and subject matter experts to establish findings regarding transportation needs and develop responsive recommendations.

Availability and Coverage

Findings

- During early-morning hours, bus is the only public transportation choice.
- 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 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, but traditional taxi hailing is less reliable and takes longer

Recommendations

1. Promote, monitor, evaluate, and adjust all-night bus service initiatives recently launched by BART and proposed for funding by SFMTA to build a case for additional expansion.
2. Begin a process to refresh and consider expansion of overnight bus services.
3. Seek public-private partnerships to fund all-night bus expansions.
4. Expand the regional bike-share system.
5. BART and SFMTA should produce white papers further documenting the operations constraints to longer rail hours.
6. Champion funding for and pursuit of subsequent phases of project development work for rail infrastructure needed to operate 24-hour services.
7. Consider extended Caltrain hours after completion of electrification project.

Speed and Reliability

Findings

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

**Recommendations**
8. Begin regular review of all-night reliability metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.

**Safety and Security**

**Findings**
• Personal security concerns suppress overnight trips.
• Collisions resulting in severe injury occur with a significantly higher frequency during overnight trips (on a per trip basis).
• Lack of secure bicycle parking deters all-night trips by bike.

**Recommendations**
9. Begin regular review of all-night transportation safety and security metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.
10. SFMTA should clarify agency policies for bus stop and light-rail station security infrastructure, such as cameras and emergency call-buttons.
11. Create a program to define and implement location-specific safety and security upgrades.

**Awareness and Comfort**

**Findings**
• Information that is available about late night and early morning transportation choices is difficult to find and understand.
• Knowledge of late night/early morning bus service is low.
• Real-time transit information is particularly helpful, but is not always available.
• Real-time transit information is not always accurate.
• Transit system cleanliness is a common concern.
• Taxi and ride-sourcing passenger loading and unloading can be chaotic on major nightlife streets

**Recommendations**
12. Begin regular review of all-night transportation cleanliness metrics and trends to develop data-driven improvements.
13. Launch a comprehensive information campaign around all-night transportation.
14. 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

15. SFMTA should develop shared-ride taxi regulations.

16. Consider subsidies to low-income workers for taxi fares during hours when overnight public transportation options do not serve travel needs.

Next Steps

To implement these recommendations, we suggest bundling them into 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 initiatives' scope, schedule, budget, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholder participants.

1. **Begin a process to refresh and consider expansion of all-nighter bus service** to develop modified service plans for the all-night bus network serving San Francisco and a few scenarios of expansion service levels.

2. **Develop pilot program for location-specific improvements using challenge grants** to identify improvements such as real-time transit displays, secure bike parking, taxi stands, loading zones, lighting, etc.

3. **Launch a coordinated information campaign to better communicate existing services** including development of a web portal.

4. **Establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice to develop a set of metrics that can be monitored regularly** (e.g. transit reliability, cleanliness, safety, and personal security) to develop data-driven recommendations.

5. **Continue convening the All-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 together and with other stakeholders in implementing these recommendations and improving late night and early morning transportation for all residents, workers, and visitors of San Francisco.
Introduction

Following a hearing on the state of late night and early morning transportation at the San Francisco Board of Supervisors’ Land Use 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 All-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 hours of additional research, coordination, and recommendations development by Working Group staff.

This report represents the culmination of the Working Group’s efforts, identifying both near-term actions to begin addressing night-time transportation needs now, as well as longer-term, higher-cost efforts that will eventually be needed to achieve our night-time transportation vision.

This document is designed to serve as a roadmap to guide transportation agencies, industry leaders, and other stakeholders on next steps to improve late-night and early-morning transportation in San Francisco. The report’s next section summarizes five major overnight transportation need areas identified, then goes in depth on our findings and recommendations to address each of these need areas. Finally, we conclude with clear actionable next steps to begin working towards these recommendations.

We hope this report will aid future local and regional policy-makers, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders in understanding and addressing the needs and concerns of San Francisco’s sizable late night and early morning workforce.

Vision for San Francisco’s future all-night transportation system

- Affordable transportation choices that are fast and reliable and serve the needs of late night and early morning workers, residents and visitors
- Twenty-four hour trunk rail service complemented by a network of buses
- Safe streets for all road users
- Waiting for, riding, and walking to and from transit feels and is safe
- Easy to access information about your travel choices in multiple locations
- Clean transit vehicles and stations
- Passenger loading and unloading occurs in a safe, orderly and convenient manner
The Transportation Needs of All-Night Travelers

Our 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 during these hours. For clarity, our work broadly focused on transportation 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 our 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. 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. In addition to the survey, we captured feedback from stakeholder meetings and input from Working Group members.

We complemented community feedback with existing conditions research to develop a comprehensive picture of all-night travel to, from, and within San Francisco. Major need areas 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 all overlap in various ways. For example, low transit frequency and reliability can result in actual or perceived personal security concerns. Additionally, the availability of public transportation options (which are more affordable than taxis, ridesourcing, or driving) has a huge implication on cost and equity.

Figure 1 gives a sense of the relative weight survey respondents placed on some of these areas. The top two issues reported to most affect 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.

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1 The survey results represent a population of respondents that were interested in completing the survey. While its results cannot be considered scientifically representative of the population of all San Francisco travelers or all late-night and early-morning San Francisco travelers, they are still valuable indicators of people’s overnight transportation needs.
Figure 1: Survey responses to “How much do these issues affect the choices you make regarding travel to, from or within San Francisco between midnight and 5am?”
All-Night Travel at a Glance

How Many? Every weeknight, about ¼ million overnight trips are taken in San Francisco. That’s about 7% of overall daily trips, equivalent to three times the number of trips generated by a San Francisco Giants game.

Where? Late night and early morning trips happen all over San Francisco. From 9pm-midnight, more trips occur locally, particularly to and from Downtown; from midnight to 5am, about 2/3 of trips are going to or from another Bay Area county (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Average Weekday All-Night Trip-Making: Local vs Regional, 2010 (excludes out of region visitor trips)

How?

- **Transit.** Transit’s share of trips stays about the same across different times of day—about 20%—even during late night and early morning hours. This figure likely represents a transit-dependent population that relies on the lifeline transit services provided during these hours.

- **Carpool/Drive Alone.** Higher shares of travelers drive alone during early morning (12-5am) hours. There’s a lower share of carpoolers, which may indicate that lower overall levels of travel make it hard to find a carpool partner.

- **Walk/Bike.** There’s a lower share of walk and bike trips during early morning (12-5am) 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 times of day.

- **Taxis/Ridesourcing.** Taxis are represented in the “Other” category of this chart, and given that this data is from 2010, ridesourcing had only barely emerged as a new mode. Data from both SFMTA’s taxi user survey and from Lyft’s pickups by time of day both indicate that there is more use during all-night hours, allowing for trips that are inconvenient on transit to be made during these hours.

Figure 3 – Average Weekday Mode Share By Time of Day (2010)

The Other 9-to-5: Improving late-night and early-morning transportation for San Francisco workers, residents and visitors
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.”

What We Found

**Bus is the only public transportation choice.** BART, Caltrain, and Muni rail all close down at night to do essential maintenance that keeps each system safe and operating. From around 12-1am to 4:30-6am (these times vary by operator), Muni, AC Transit, and SamTrans buses provide the only all-night transit serving San Francisco. There is 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 frequency and coverage than regional bus services** (Figure 4). 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 every 60 minutes during the week. AC Transit operates buses every 30 minutes on weekends and is piloting late night weekend service with 20-minute headways.

![Figure 4 - Snapshot of Local and Regional Transit Service Levels by Time of Day (Weekdays): Top: Local/Muni; Bottom: Regional Transit Operators](image)

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2 One important exception to the ranges identified here is that, on Sundays, BART rail service does not begin until 8am.

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The last regional look at the all-night bus network across multiple operators was 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 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 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.

It is not currently feasible for BART, Muni Rail, and Caltrain to operate longer hours than what is currently provided. Transit operators struggle with the major challenge of owning old systems. Major backlogs in funding must be addressed just to bring the systems to a State of Good Repair. The systems close at night to provide a maintenance window to do maintenance that is essential to the system’s overall safety.

The existing bikeshare system has very limited coverage. Bike-share 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 from happening by bicycle. Bay Area Bike Share’s current coverage in San Francisco is very limited: it operates about thirty bike-sharing stations in San Francisco, most of which are clustered along Market Street, the Embarcadero, and South of Market. There are currently no bike-share stations in the East Bay.

Technology allows for more reliable, quick pick-ups by taxi and ride-sourcing services, but traditional taxi hailing is less reliable and takes longer. Recent studies have found that the average pick-up time for taxi users using the FlyWheel smartphone app is just 3.5 minutes, but that the disparity between ride-sourcing pick-ups and traditional hailing methods are more stark—90% 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, local transit agencies have initiated two important efforts to expand all-night 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, traveling beyond downtown Oakland and begin picking up passengers at 24th Street/Mission BART. Additionally, SFMTA has submitted an application for funding to provide new all-night Muni OWL service on the 44 and 48 lines, increased frequency on the 108 line, and increased support to improve OWL service reliability, providing an overall 30% increase in Muni OWL service.

Bay Area Bike Share plans to add 300 bikes at 17 new bikeshare stations in the Mission and Castro in 2015, as well 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 provide the first tangible step to define the needed infrastructure by studying a second transbay rail crossing and major new Muni rail investments. By the effort’s expected conclusion in 2018, a clear path of implementation steps needed to pursue these ideas will be defined. While the prime purpose of the Core Capacity Study is focused on identifying investments to address peak hour transit capacity constraints, the types of investments to be prioritized could serve complementary purposes to...
enable future 24-hour rail service. BART would need not just a second transbay crossing, but also additional tracks in the East Bay to provide a distribution system connecting to the new transbay crossing.

What’s Next?

Over 90% of the respondents to our survey identified the absence of all-night BART service as an issue that impacts their decisions to travel between midnight 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 the City’s emerging 24-hour economy. While 24-hour rail is decades away and would require substantial funding for major new capital investments that have not been identified, we must take all appropriate and timely steps to work toward its implementation.

Given the long lead time that would be needed to enable 24-hour rail service, we recommend moving forward on two paths: considering better bus service and expansion of the bike-share system in the short- and medium-term, while beginning conversations about ways to extend rail hours and to continue defining the major capital improvements that would be needed to enable 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 expansion.** During the time period that the Working Group met, the BART/AC Transit bus pilot launched service and the Muni OWL Expansion proposal was developed and submitted for funding consideration. These are important positive steps that provide incremental improvements to overnight travelers. The success of these expansion efforts could be the foundation for considering additional expansion.

2. **Begin a process to refresh all-night bus service.** Given the changes that have occurred in the Bay Area over the last decade, the time to reconsider and refresh the existing late-night and early-morning bus service from a regional perspective is overdue. We recommend scoping and carrying out a new initiative to work with stakeholders to develop modified service plans for the all-night bus network and several scenarios of expansion service levels. In addition to expansion, it may be possible to adjust schedules in ways that better serve needs even with 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. The existing transit options clearly do not meet all night-time travelers’ needs, yet transit operators must make challenging resource decisions regarding how to distribute limited operating funds across daytime and nighttime hours. Achieving the all-night transportation vision we have established will be best achieved by growing the pie of available funding and working in partnership.

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3 Advancing funding for these capital investments would also need to be considered in context of tradeoffs with other competing transportation funding needs.

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4. **Expand the regional bike-share system.** San Francisco should continue to work with Bay Area Bike Share to expand access to bike sharing, especially along corridors with significant concentrations of late night and early morning businesses.

5. **BART and SFMTA should produce white papers further documenting the operations constraints to longer rail hours.** While a short answer to this question is available on BART’s website, there appears to be a thirst for greater understanding of the question in order to understand whether maintenance innovations or capital investments could enable longer hours. Such a white paper should cover topics including: the considerations involved in periodic decisions to extend hours during special events, the impact of extended hours service on system maintenance and performance, improvements to the existing system that could enable limited service during maintenance windows, and the approximate scope and cost of any studies or other resources that would be needed to better answer these questions. After production of this paper, all-night transportation stakeholders should come together to discuss with BART and SFMTA and decide any next steps.

**Medium-Term and Long-Term**

6. **Champion funding for and pursuit of subsequent phases of project development work for rail infrastructure needed to operate 24-hour services.** As the Core Capacity Study concludes, direction on next stages of development for major capital investments will be established. A typical capital project development path would proceed through additional conceptual engineering, preparation of environmental review documents required by federal and state law, preliminary and final design engineering, securing new right-of-way (if needed), and construction. A project of this magnitude will need a concerted regional effort to move forward, and all-night transportation stakeholders’ advocacy can help raise the urgency of moving this investment forward.

7. **Consider Extended Caltrain Hours after Completion of Electrification Project.** Caltrain is in process of a major upgrade to modernize their system—electrification. Implementation of electrification will strain the agency’s resources and will be an insurmountable constraint to expanding overnight service for the next several years. After completion of the electrification project, anticipated by 2021, longer Caltrain hours should be considered.
Emerging new modes of transport—ride-sourcing, point-to-point car-share, jitney-like services—could provide promising solutions to all-night transportation needs, but raise interesting policy questions beyond the scope of this effort.

A variety of alternative transportation options may complement public transportation options by serving workers and others traveling on routes underserved, or not served productively, by transit. A new and continually evolving array of jitney-like, carpooling, and ride-sourcing services now operate in San Francisco and may provide promising opportunities to address some users’ all-night transportation needs.

Should the City develop transportation policy related to these new mobility modes, it would likely need to consider everything from the possible unforeseen consequences of creating a special “super permit” to enable point-to-point car-sharing services to the best way to regulate mobility services that require access to curb space for loading that is often in short supply.

Given the complexity and scope of these questions, this report does not contain recommendations related to emerging alternative transportation options.

**Longer Rail Transit Hours: National and International Examples**

Around the world, very few rail transit systems operate 24-hours per day. Those that do were designed differently than BART, Muni Metro, and Caltrain and have extra sets of tracks such that some tracks can be maintained while others are operated. New York City, Chicago, Copenhagen, and Berlin all currently operate some rail service 24-hours per 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 just on weekends. London is poised to open 24-hour weekend Tube service in Fall 2015.
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.”

What We Found

The gap between transit and driving travel time is greater during all-night hours. During rush hour, traffic congestion, limited parking availability and high parking costs, combined with fast rail services, result in many people choosing transit as their preferred mode of travel over driving. By contrast, during overnight hours, the bus options that remain can take anywhere from 50% to three or more times as long as making the same trip by car.

Low bus reliability is a common complaint. Transit reliability is a common concern during all times of day and can be affected by a variety of factors including: 1) how well scheduled travel time matches actual run time; 2) whether enough operators report for work on any given day; 3) vehicle breakdowns; and 4) traffic congestion (more relevant to daytime operating conditions than nighttime). Over 90% of respondents in our online survey stated the infrequency or unreliability of bus service played a significant role in impacting their all-night travel choices.

Timed transfers are not always dependable, particularly across systems. The schedules of buses operating during all-night hours have been coordinated to offer several transfer points between and across different systems. Yet survey respondents indicated lack of dependability of timed transfers as a common concern. Managing a transit system for transfers can be challenging as it requires all buses to be arriving on time to make the transfer happen on time. Particularly because of the low frequency of service late at night, operators prioritize making sure all connections happen over timeliness of connections, so no one is stranded late at night.

What’s Already Underway

The SFMTA’s Muni OWL proposal includes funding for additional service hours, an additional road-call maintenance vehicle, and additional supervision.

What’s Next

To further address this need area, we recommend gathering and monitoring data to better understand and address reliability.

Short-Term

8. Begin regular review of all-night 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 effort. As a next step, we recommend that regular monitoring and reporting of reliability metrics be folded into a new initiative to establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice. This reporting can serve as a place to diagnose and respond to performance trends revealed.
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.”

What We Found

Personal security concerns suppress overnight trips. About 60% of survey respondents indicated that they always or sometimes choose not to travel between midnight and 5am because of personal security concerns (Figure 5). This percentage was even higher among women respondents at about 70%. Common personal security-related concerns cited include:

- Unruly or unsafe conditions on buses
- Scary or intimidating conditions waiting for buses and walking to bus stops
- Concerns or past experience with theft of bikes locked at bike racks

![Graph showing how often respondents choose not to travel at 12-5 am because it feels unsafe.]

**Figure 5 – Survey respondents perceptions of safety: all respondents (left); male vs. female (right); source: Late Night Transportation Survey Results, Fall 2014**

Collisions resulting in severe injury occur with a significantly higher frequency during overnight trips (on a per trip basis). 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 result in severe injury than daytime trips (Figure 5).
Relative to other big cities in California, San Francisco ranks as having the second highest levels of overnight collisions\(^4\). 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\(^5\). Relative to other big California cities, San Francisco is ranked as having the second highest level of speed-related collisions, but among the lowest DUI-related collisions.

Survey respondents commonly cited concerns in this area included noting that:

- Bicycle traffic safety concerns deter late-night and early-morning bicycle trips
- Driving under the influence of alcohol still occurs, particularly because of a lack of better transportation choices

![Figure 6 - Severe and fatal collisions by time of day (left) and normalized per 1 million vehicle trips: 2003-2012 (Source: SWITRS)](image)

**Lack of secure bicycle parking deters all-night trips by bike.** Survey respondents frequently expressed that lower activity levels and darkness make all-night hours a common time for bicycle theft that affects 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, by improving traffic safety overall, will also improve all-night traffic safety.

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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. SFMTA’s Long-Term Bicycle Parking Strategy (2013) recommends locations to prioritize for installation of long-term bike parking. SFMTA also provides bike racks designed for short-term storage free of charge, upon request.

What’s Next

To address this need area, we recommend moving forward 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 that can address safety and security.

Short-Term

9. **Begin regular review of all-night transportation safety and security metrics and trends to make data-driven decisions.** A comprehensive analysis of safety and security trends and possible contributors was beyond the scope of this effort. As a next step, 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 serve as a place to diagnose and respond to performance trends revealed. Specifically for traffic safety, the San Francisco Department of Public Health should analyze the primary collision factors related to night-time traffic collisions to inform the appropriate counter-measures to address.

10. **SFMTA should clarify agency policies related bus stop and light-rail station standards for security infrastructure such as cameras and emergency call-buttons.** These interventions seem to have some potential to address safety and security concerns, though also require up-front capital investment and ongoing maintenance. SFMTA should clarify its agency policy on this infrastructure to inform whether such strategies can be added to the toolbox of strategies to respond to improve personal security at stops and stations.

11. **Create a program to define and implement location-specific safety and security upgrades.** Improvements that can effectively address safety and personal security will vary based on geographic area and can most effectively be developed with stakeholders who regularly live, work, or visit a particular corridor and are personally invested in seeing it thrive. As a next step, 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. A toolbox of possible interventions should be developed. Stakeholders participating in an audit can consider their relevance in potentially addressing their area’s needs. Relevant safety and security interventions to be included in the toolbox include:

   - **Bus stop redesign to improve personal security.** Through a demonstration project with potential for replicability, use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles to
redesign a bus stop (and immediately surrounding areas) that has identified security challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Prevention through Environmental Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime Prevention through Environmental Design is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design. Many of these design strategies are already regularly implemented in transportation and other public realm improvements in San Francisco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide adequate lighting levels at proper heights for lighting people’s faces while avoiding lights that are too bright or that create strong glare, deep shadows or blind spots for potential observers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use low landscaping that beautifies without blocking observers’ view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use surfaces and materials that are easy to clean and keep free of graffiti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid features that communicate the presence of potential criminal activity, such as chain-link fencing, security grilles and razor-wire fence topping.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use shoulder-level, open-type fencing instead of walls that block the view.</td>
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| 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 within a given area. Currently, there are three community ambassador programs in place around the City, each consisting of 12 paid team members. The programs are active on weekdays from around 11 am to 8 pm. Funding is principally provided by the City and additional funding would need to be identified to expand the program to overnight hours. Castro Community on Patrol (http://www.castropatrol.org/), begun in 2006 and serving the Castro neighborhood, provides another model of a successful volunteer organization that provides unpaid, trained, volunteers as additional “eyes on the street” to work with city government, law enforcement, community groups, businesses and residents to create a safer neighborhood. |

| Install real-time transit displays in bars, restaurants, and other late-night establishments. | Installation of these displays is low cost, but could provide a substantial benefit in reducing the amount of time transit riders need to wait at bus stops where actual or perceived personal security is lower. |

| Locations for installation of bike racks. | While SFMTA is not currently proactively identifying additional bike rack installation locations, the agency will install racks based on request. Stakeholders could work together to identify needed installation locations in their area. |
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.”

What We Found

Information that is available about late night and early morning transportation choices is difficult to find and understand. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s 511 website houses some basic information about buses that operate during late night and early morning hours. Branded as the “All-Nighter” service, 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 feels its age (Figure 7). Individual transit agency web sites also provide information about their respective all-night services, but this information is not always collected in an easy-to-use manner.

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).

Real-time transit information is particularly helpful, but is not always available. Real-time transit departure information is extremely popular, since it allows people to make informed decisions about whether or not 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 coming at infrequent intervals, as is the case during all-night hours, yet not all bus shelters serving Muni OWL lines have real-time displays.

Real-time transit information is not always accurate. Many people complain of a phenomenon known as “ghost buses,” when the arrival time for a bus is dropped, then re-appears a few minutes later. Ghost buses occur when a bus is at the end of the line or terminal and not moving. Predictions from the terminal are based on scheduled departure times until the bus starts moving, when predictions can be made based on vehicle movement. If the 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.

Transit system cleanliness is a common concern. Many survey respondents expressed a desire for a cleaner transit system. For all transit operators, there is a tradeoff in resource allocation of how much is dedicated to cleaning versus other functions though all operators engage in ongoing efforts to maintain a clean...
The Other 9-to-5: Improving late-night and early-morning transportation for San Francisco workers, residents and visitors

system. For example, BART recently finished replacing all its upholstered seats with vinyl seats that are easier to clean and is engaging in a “station brightening” program to deep clean stations. Muni is planning to hire additional cleaning staff in 2015.

**Taxi and ride-sourcing passenger loading and unloading can be chaotic on major nightlife streets.** Unlike other big cities, San Francisco does not have a taxi stand culture. Taxi stands are designated areas where taxis may queue and wait for new fares, helping travelers find empty cabs more efficiently. The majority of San Francisco’s existing taxi stands are located in front of downtown hotels, with additional stands scattered around the City. A new taxi stand may be requested from SFMTA at a cost of $2,000 per year, and typically includes signage. Yet, taxi stands are not very common, generally existing only at hotels and a few long-established locations. Absent a good match of loading zones to all-night destinations and regular management to encourage use of loading zones, survey respondents indicated a chaotic environment on streets with high concentrations of nightlife businesses, with long queues of double parked vehicles interrupting traffic flows.

**What’s Already Underway**

MTC’s 511 Transit is in process of defining the role that MTC should continue to play in providing transportation information in the future, recognizing that the public sector tends to be slower to respond to changing technology and trends that have totally changed how transportation information is provided in recent years, as compared to the private sector. In early 2015, this strategic planning effort will seek feedback from multiple stakeholder groups and will include seeking feedback from all-night transportation stakeholders.

**What’s Next**

To address this need area, we recommend moving forward on three fronts: gathering and monitoring data to better understand and address transportation cleanliness trends, launching a new initiative to implement a comprehensive information campaign around all-night transportation, and creating a new program to define and implement location-specific awareness and comfort upgrades.

**Short-Term**

12. **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 effort. As a next step, we recommend that regular monitoring and reporting of cleanliness metrics be folded into a new initiative to establish an all-night transportation monitoring practice. This reporting can serve as a place to diagnose and respond to performance trends revealed.

13. **Launch a comprehensive information campaign around all-night transportation.** The campaign should involve the coordinated distribution of transportation-relevant information and include the following components:

   - **All-night transportation web portal** to provide routes, schedules and real-time information about all-night services. While a number of apps have emerged to 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 remains a need for a more comprehensive approach to helping local workers, residents, and visitors navigate all-night
transportation 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 launch such a portal successfully requires additional scoping to further specify its desired functionality, as well as to ensure it is set up in such a way that it enables regular maintenance and updating.

- **Targeted information in multiple formats.** The coordination and research undertaken through the Working Group’s efforts revealed a lot of facts about our overnight transportation system that are not well-known or could benefit from further publicizing. We recommend developing key facts targeted at different user groups, including employees, patrons, and visitors using all-night transportation. Areas to cover could include:
  - Public Service Announcements, e.g. the dangers of drunk driving, how to avoid smartphone theft;
  - Facts about your “rights” as an all-night transportation user, e.g. taxis are required to accept credit card payments, you can bring your bike on an AC Transit bus even when the bus rack is full (based on operator discretion);
  - Facts for businesses, e.g. how to install a real-time transit display sign, how to request a loading zone or bike racks, employee transportation options such as vanpools or shuttles; and
  - How to find real-time information about transportation choices.

14. **Create a program to define and implement location-specific awareness and comfort upgrades.** Improvements that can effectively address needs will vary based on geographic area and can most effectively be developed with stakeholders who regularly live, work, or visit a particular corridor and are personally invested in seeing it thrive. As a next step, 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.** Stakeholder could work with public agency stakeholders to consider piloting a “pop-up” taxi stand that serves some other 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 become 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. Other cities, including Austin, Texas, and Vancouver, British Columbia, have employed temporary late night street closures as a strategy for improving pedestrian safety in particularly active corridors.

  - **Identifying additional real-time information displays.** This could include identifying opportunity areas at Muni bus stops or outside BART stations.
5) Cost and equity

“I sometimes give up shifts because it’s exhausting to spend two hours at night getting home.”

**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 50% of overnight commuter households make less than this threshold (Figure 9).

**Travel options with greater availability, reliability, and comfort are more expensive.** Transportation costs are often a substantial amount of overall household costs for people of all income levels, but transportation costs can be particularly burdensome for low and moderate-income households. During late-night and early-morning hours, options like driving alone, taxis, and ride-sourcing can provide faster travel, but at substantially higher costs. For example, Muni bus fare is $2.25 and AC Transit transbay bus fare is $4.25, while the average taxi fare in San Francisco is $176. As a result, people with limited incomes either must bear the longer travel times of public transportation options, sacrifice a greater portion of their income to pay for taxi or ride-sourcing fares, or own a car.

**Ride-sourcing vehicles are not well equipped to transport people in wheelchairs.** The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates ride-sourcing companies. Ride-sourcing companies 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 ride-sourcing as a new transportation mode similar to taxis has happened recently and the regulatory and policy environment surrounding this mode is also evolving rapidly. Questions regarding how the City of San Francisco should consider these modes within the city’s overarching transportation goals are broader than can be considered within this all-night transportation study. Efforts related to creating regulations regarding transporting wheelchair users fall under this broader category but are an ongoing part of CPUC regulations development.

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6 Excluding trips to the airport.
What’s Next

The biggest ways to respond to cost and equity transportation implications are to move forward with the recommendations to address availability and coverage of public transportation options discussed in a previous section of this report. Absent satisfactory public transportation options, we recommend moving forward with options to increase the affordability of taxis.

Short-Term

15. **SFMTA should develop shared-ride taxi regulations.** In 2013, the SFMTA Board of Directors amended the Transportation Code (section 1124(b)(2)) to enable cab 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 could be implemented, however, SFMTA must adopt regulations guiding its development. By reducing the cost of cab rides for shared trips, a shared-ride program would better enable all night travelers to be able to afford rides in cabs. Such a program would be most successful if shared rides could be facilitated using a smartphone taxi hailing app that could people with similar origins or destinations, and enable easy payment of shared fares.

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

The preceding chapters present sixteen recommendations that the Working Group believes will set us on course towards achieving our vision of improved all-night transportation. 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 initiatives’ scope, schedule, budget, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholder participants.

1. All-Nighter bus refresh and expansion

As a first step to address our recommendations regarding public transportation’s availability and coverage during overnight hours, we recommend the undertaking of a comprehensive review of regional all-night bus service. The goal of this effort should be to develop modified service plans for the overnight bus network serving San Francisco and a few scenarios of expansion service levels with cost estimates.

2. Pilot program for location-specific improvements using challenge grants

Over the course of our work, the Working Group identified a variety of location-specific strategies that could be implemented to improve the safety, security, and comfort of late-night and early morning workers, residents, and visitors traveling through a particular neighborhood commercial corridor or area. After defining the parameters of the challenge grant program, we recommend identifying two corridors or areas to work on location-specific improvements during an initial pilot period. The end results desired would include: a feasible consensus plan developed in two corridors; implementation of short-term items; cost estimates and implementation plan for longer-term items; a “lessons learned” write-up; and an independent evaluation to inform a second round of challenge grants.

3. Coordinated information campaign to better communicate existing services

To respond to the needs we identified related to awareness of existing transportation choices, we recommend moving forward with the development of a coordinated information campaign to better communicate existing services. Ultimately, this campaign should produce accurate and easy to understand all-night travel information available through multiple communication channels, including a variety of physical collateral as well as a flexible, sustainable web portal with comprehensive travel information.

4. All-night transportation monitoring practice

Given the scope and schedule of this effort, comprehensive data analysis on late-night and early-morning transportation trends (and how those trends compare to daytime conditions) was not possible. For need areas identified related to transit reliability, cleanliness, and safety/security, we recommend developing a regular transportation monitoring practice to receive updates on data and diagnose trends. To launch this effort, we recommend a coordinated effort across relevant agencies to define a short set of metrics that can be used to identify trends and collect relevant data in a manner that is easy to share regularly.

5. Continue All-Night Transportation Working Group

The Working Group’s efforts during its initial period was very broad in scope, seeking to define all transportation needs that affect overnight travel and feasible strategies to address these needs. Now, with a path of next steps developed, the work will unfold in multiple trajectories and some Working Group
members will be more interested and have more expertise to participate in some initiatives than others. We recommend continuing to convene the Working Group, while engaging in additional strategic thinking about the frequency, agenda items, and roles and responsibilities of Working Group members. Generally, we believe the Working Group should be a place to hear progress on implementing our recommendations, leveraging our collective expertise to resolve road-blocks as needed.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders to implement these recommendations in order to improve late night and early morning transportation for residents, workers, 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):** 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:** Bus service operating primarily in North Bay counties of Marin and Sonoma, but including service to/from San Francisco.

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

- **Muni (San Francisco Municipal Railway):** 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.

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

- **SamTrans:** Bus service operating in San Mateo County, including service to San Francisco.

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

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

- **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. Throughout this report, we describe these services as “ride-sourcing” services.
Resources

- **All Nighter**
  Bus service from approximately 1 to 5 am throughout San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa and San Mateo counties

- **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

- **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](http://nightlifesf.org)

- **NightlifeSF All-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/](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