

Report on Phase II of Late Night Transportation Working Group

I. Introduction

San Francisco is a 24-hour city, with a number of key industries operating outside of the 9am to 5pm workday. The City’s nightlife and entertainment sector, for example, generates \$6 billion in consumer spending annually and employs over 60,000 people. Numerous other industries operate overnight, including hotels, hospitals, janitorial and security services, and many production, distribution and repair businesses, among others.

While the industries that comprise the City’s overnight workforce are diverse, San Francisco’s late-night and early-morning workers share one constant: limited public transportation options that may make their commutes to and from work significantly longer and more challenging than if those trips occurred during traditional daytime commute hours. Whether heading home late at night, or leaving for work early in the morning, workers who travel between 9pm and 5am must contend with unique challenges related to transit availability, personal safety and security, system navigability, and other concerns.

In order to better understand and address the late-night and early-morning transportation challenges facing San Francisco workers, residents, and visitors, in 2014, then-Supervisor Scott Wiener authored a resolution urging the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the San Francisco Entertainment Commission to launch a Late Night Transportation Working Group comprised of local transportation providers, representatives from late-night and early-morning businesses, nightlife advocates, labor unions, and other stakeholders.

Following nine months of intensive research and analysis conducted with the assistance of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, the Working Group released *The Other 9-to-5: Improving Late-Night and Early-Morning Transportation for San Francisco Workers, Residents, and Visitors* in February 2015. This groundbreaking report identified fifteen recommendations to improve overnight transportation that were distilled into five immediate-term next steps.

Since the publication of *The Other 9-to-5*, Working Group staff has worked to implement all five of the next steps. This report is intended to serve as a final report on this “Phase II” work, as well as to offer some further recommendations to continue to improve late-night and early-morning transportation in the San Francisco Bay Area moving forward.

II. Implementing the Next Steps from *The Other 9-to-5*

In *The Other 9-to-5*, the Late Night Transportation Working Group distilled its fifteen recommendations to improve overnight transportation into the following five next steps. The report recommended that Working Group staff:

1. Begin a process to refresh and consider expansion of all-night bus service;
2. Use challenge grants to pilot location-specific improvements in neighborhood corridors;
3. Develop and launch a coordinated information campaign on existing services;

4. Regularly monitor all-night transportation metrics in order to make additional data-driven recommendations; and
5. Continue to convene the Late Night Transportation Working Group.

In the years since the report’s publication, Working Group staff have made significant progress in the simultaneous implementation of all of these next steps, as well as in implementing two other recommendations discussed further below.

A. Begin a Process to Refresh and Consider Expansion of All-Night Bus Service

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

Working with consultants at Nelson\Nygaard, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority led a first-of-its-kind comprehensive review of late-night and early-morning travel to, from, and within San Francisco. After conducting a transit demand analysis, which identified key work trip origins and destinations during the overnight period between midnight and 5 a.m., the Transportation Authority team evaluated existing AllNighter service using service design guidelines that included service availability, ridership, reliability, and legibility. The analysis also incorporated detailed ridership data, highlighting existing routes that are especially productive and routes where ridership is particularly low.

Using that research, the Transportation Authority and Nelson\Nygaard developed a set of local and regional service improvement concepts across multiple transit agencies. Working with service planning staff from the transit operators, the team identified several tiers of recommendations for improvement of overnight transit service, including both cost-neutral and cost-incurring proposals. These concepts were subsequently presented to the Working Group for their review and endorsement.

Highlights from the Working Group’s service planning recommendations include:

- Splitting the circuitous Muni 91-Owl route and extending service to Daly City to improve reliability and connectivity;
- New service to job centers along the San Francisco Embarcadero to Fisherman’s Wharf;
- More frequent buses on the busy Geary corridor;
- Reconfiguring service on the Transbay AC Transit 800 and connecting 801 and 802 routes to better align with ridership demand between major destinations;
- New pilot SamTrans service in the dense residential and employment corridor between Daly City and Millbrae; and
- Ongoing monitoring and improvements to on-time performance for all operators.

A memorandum providing further details regarding these recommendations as well as additional, lower-priority recommendations, has been attached as an appendix.

Moving forward, transit agencies should work to implement cost-neutral recommendations as expediently as possible. Additional steps for agency staff will likely include detailed service planning, outreach to affected riders, and securing necessary agency approvals. Working Group stakeholders should work with operators to identify potential funding sources to support the adoption of cost-incurring service recommendations. These sources could include transit agency operating budgets (to the extent funds are available), a potential Regional Measure 3 bridge toll increase, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s Lifeline Transportation Program.

Notably, all three transit agencies operating all-night service in San Francisco have already begun more detailed service planning and implementation steps to move forward with the Working Group’s recommendations. SamTrans recently launched a one-year pilot overnight route between Daly City and the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) that is aligned with the Working Group’s recommendations. SFMTA and AC Transit are both in the process of developing more detailed cost estimates for the Working Group recommendations and determining which they will be able to move forward in the near term using their existing operating budgets. These improvements would be in addition to recent service expansions implemented prior to completion of the Working Group analysis, including a BART-funded pilot of more frequent AC Transit All-Nighter service introduced in 2014 and new Muni Owl routes added in 2016.

B. Use Challenge Grants to Pilot Location-Specific Improvements in Neighborhood Corridors

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

In November 2015, OEWD launched a Request for Proposals soliciting proposals from neighborhood stakeholder groups for \$40,000 in challenge grants to support corridor assessments and potential location-specific improvements. Notice of the RFP was posted on OEWD’s web site and was distributed to all of the San Francisco Community Business Districts as well as to the members of the Late Night Transportation Working Group. While several CBD stakeholders expressed interest in applying for challenge grants, no proposals were submitted before the RFP deadline, likely owing to limited capacity to undertake and commit matching funds for this project.

Following the closure of the RFP period, stakeholders from two business districts, the Lower Polk Community Benefit District and the Union Square Business Improvement District, expressed that they

remained interested in participating in this project, even though they had been unable to submit timely RFP responses. Given the significant concentrations of late-night and early-morning workers in both neighborhoods, OEWD elected to conduct location-specific assessments in both corridors.

OEWD engaged BAE Urban Economics to develop a survey instrument and survey overnight employers and employees in both corridors, in order to gain insight into the location-specific needs in each area. BAE compiled those survey results, along with additional information about both corridors, into a report issued in September 2016. The BAE report identified several areas of interest among survey respondents, including safety and security improvements, pedestrian-scale lighting, and access to real-time transit information; at the same time, survey response rates were relatively low, owing to challenges securing the participation of overnight workers through their employers.

While neither business district engaged in this process has elected to pursue a project based on the results of this survey, several relevant City initiatives are currently underway. For example, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is in the process of replacing 18,500 City-owned high pressure sodium streetlights with LED fixtures that will improve street lighting throughout the City. Additionally, SFMTA is currently exploring how to improve its display of real-time information at transit shelters, online, and through other display methods.

Moreover, as City agencies and partners pursue future street improvement plans and projects along bus routes within the AllNighter network, the Working Group recommends that City staff consider the needs identified in the BAE report for improved overnight safety and security as well as enhanced access to transit information and, to the extent feasible, integrate elements into projects to address these needs. Safety upgrades are particularly important on corridors that are also part of the City's Vision Zero High-Injury Network. Potential improvements could include crosswalk and other pedestrian safety upgrades, increased pedestrian-scale lighting, improvements to bus stop signage and amenities, and access to real-time transit information where appropriate.

For neighborhood and industry stakeholders, BAE's survey instrument has been published online for future use by anyone who is interested in assessing their local workforce's transportation needs.

C. Develop and Launch a Coordinated Information Campaign on Existing Services

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

In order to combat low public awareness of existing all-night transportation choices, OEWD worked with transit agency marketing staff and consultants at Circlepoint to design a marketing strategy to target late-night and early-morning workers, residents, and visitors. The strategy included the modernization of the AllNighter logo and system map covering Muni, AC Transit, and SamTrans AllNighter routes, and the launch of a brand new AllNighter web portal as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's redesign of 511.org.

The strategy's core concepts focused on overnight workers, emphasizing the role of AllNighter service for trips to and from work shifts. The strategy's messages were designed to be customizable to reach a variety of different audiences and highlight any of the system's overnight routes. All of the messaging directed audiences to visit the AllNighter page on 511.org for more information.

This strategy was deployed in a multilingual, multichannel information campaign supported by \$200,000 in funding from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The campaign was initially launched at a press conference in summer 2016, with a second, larger phase in May and June of 2017.

Over these two phases, the campaign included a cable television commercial, radio advertisements, print ads in neighborhood newspapers, ads on local buses, trains, and in BART and Muni stations, social media promotion, and the distribution of branded collateral to a variety of audiences. These efforts yielded dramatically increased traffic to 511.org's AllNighter resources during both campaign phases.

[CHART OF WEB TRAFFIC]

Given the campaign's success, we recommend that transit agencies continue to reuse – and periodically refresh – the campaign concepts in future efforts to increase awareness of the AllNighter system. The campaign concepts are designed to be evergreen and are being shared with agency marketing staff for their future adaptation and use. Notably, SamTrans recently launched a new pilot overnight bus route using branding adapted from the AllNighter campaign concepts.

D. Regularly Monitor All-Night Transportation Metrics in Order to Make Additional Data-Driven Recommendations

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

Working with transit agency staff and other stakeholders, the Transportation Authority developed a set of metrics to track in order to identify and assess trends in overnight transportation performance over time. The Transportation Authority has agreed to conduct ongoing data monitoring of these metrics in conjunction with its biennial updates of the Congestion Management Program, which include a multimodal performance analysis. Transportation Authority staff plans to lead the data analysis with support from transit agencies to collect the needed data; staff is currently developing a project charter to be signed by all of the transit operators in order to establish agreement on the data monitoring process, timeline, metrics, and roles. The Transportation Authority will release the next round of overnight transportation data monitoring as a follow-on report to the 2017 Congestion Management Program update.

While transit reliability and performance metrics were comparatively easy to develop, it proved infeasible to develop systematic metrics related to transit vehicle cleanliness and safety. With respect to cleanliness, operators expressed that while they had established practices for drivers to clean their vehicles, they did not conduct any systematic data collection or have any objective evaluation standards in this area. Data for safety and security is widely dispersed between transit agencies and various jurisdictions' law enforcement agencies; moreover, accurately and efficiently attributing individual incidents to the transit system (especially off-vehicle incidents, such as those occurring at or near stops) appears untenable.

Moving forward, Working Group stakeholders should monitor the Transportation Authority's all-night data analyses over time in order to identify any emerging trends related to overnight transportation. Over time, the Transportation Authority should evaluate the efficacy of the metrics and consider revisions to these metrics as appropriate.

E. Continue to Convene the Late Night Transportation Working Group

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

The Other 9-to-5 recommended continuing to convene the Working Group, given the important role that the group's diverse collection of stakeholders played in informing the first phase of overnight transportation work. In total, the Working Group has met ten times over the past two years. Five of these meetings occurred during the implementation phase, and the Working Group provided important feedback at every step of the implementation process.

Given the outcomes reached on each of the priority next steps identified above, however, there is less need to convene the Working Group on a frequent basis. At the same time, the group has provided an important and unique public forum in which to discuss and gain feedback on critical issues impacting the overnight workforce. Moving forward, we recommend less frequent meetings of this group, or infrequent meetings of a similarly positioned group convened around late night transportation issues, to discuss any further developments in this work as they arise. Future meetings could, for example, review progress in implementing service planning recommendations or evaluate the performance metrics published in the biennial Congestion Management Program reporting.

F. Additional Recommendations

- i. Produce White Papers Documenting the Operations Constraints Preventing Longer Rail Hours**

While a short answer to this question is available on BART’s website, greater understanding of the complexities and nuances of this issue is needed to understand whether maintenance innovations or near-term capital investments could enable longer rail hours for each of these services. Such white papers should cover topics including: the considerations involved in periodic decisions to extend hours for special events, the impact of extended service hours on system maintenance and performance, the potential use of single-tracking and skip-stop operations to facilitate maintenance during service hours, improvements to the existing system that could enable limited service during maintenance windows, and the approximate scope and cost of additional studies or other resources needed to better answer these questions. Transportation stakeholders should discuss these papers with the transit operators and decide on any next steps.

Following the release of *The Other 9-to-5*, Working Group staff developed a proposed outline for transit agencies to follow in developing their white papers, which was reviewed by the Working Group prior to its distribution to transit agency staff. To date, BART and Caltrain have provided white papers, both of which were reviewed and discussed at a Working Group meeting, with feedback subsequently conveyed to the agencies. Overall, Working Group feedback for both papers focused, to varying degrees, on a desire for further discussion and exploration of future strategies and resources that could be pursued to reduce the length of maintenance hours required of each system.

In January 2018, SFMTA assigned staff to complete the agency’s white paper. Staff anticipates the completion of this paper in April, at which point it will be circulated to Working Group members and published online.

ii. Develop Shared-Ride Taxi Regulations

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

Since the Working Group’s formation, staff has worked with taxi industry stakeholders to identify potential opportunities and barriers related to shared-taxi ride services. Staff worked to support SFMTA’s Taxi Services Division in its development of mobile e-hail application criteria, which include a requirement for the application to provide a shared ride option, as well as the development of cab sharing regulations. The proposed regulations were discussed with, but have not yet been adopted by, the Taxi Task Force.

III. Moving Forward

Through the work described above, the Late Night Transportation Working Group has made significant progress to improve overnight transportation for San Francisco workers, residents, and visitors. At the same time, substantial future work is required in order to achieve the robust local and regional all-night transportation vision first articulated in *The Other 9-to-5*.

Moving forward, transit agency operators and other Working Group stakeholders can continue to fulfill the Group's recommendations through the following actions:

- Working to implement the cost-neutral recommendations identified in the Working Group's service planning work;
- Identifying funding streams to support the implementation of the cost-incurring transit improvements, and any other improvements that could increase the coverage, frequency, speed, reliability, and productivity of AllNighter service;
- Providing insights about overnight travel needs to inform future streetscape projects;
- Continuing to promote the availability of the AllNighter system through awareness-building efforts;
- Reporting relevant data to the Transportation Authority for inclusion in its regular analyses of all-night transportation performance and using trends in those metrics to inform policy decisions;
- Championing system improvements that could facilitate additional hours of service by rail providers; and
- Continuing to participate in the Late Night Transportation Working Group as appropriate

Additionally, as the landscape of emerging transportation services continues to evolve, transit agencies ought to consider whether some form of public-private partnership with taxis, transportation network companies, carpooling systems, shuttle providers or other services might boost access to local transit hubs or better address first or last mile challenges to increase use of the existing AllNighter system.

Such an analysis was beyond the scope of the Working Group's efforts. Notably, the Transportation Authority is currently conducting a set of Emerging Mobility Services and Technologies studies to develop a policy framework and evaluate how new transportation services are serving the city's needs, and is considering late night travel as part of that evaluation.

More broadly, the Working Group's efforts over the past three years make a strong case for a sustained, regional investment in improving our all-night transportation system. While the Working Group was initially formed by San Francisco stakeholders in order to improve late-night and early-morning travel to, from, and within San Francisco, future work to improve all-night transit should reflect a truly regional approach and should be led by a regional transportation planning agency with strong expertise in transit funding and interagency coordination.

After careful consideration, it is our recommendation that this work would be best led by staff at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the transportation planning, financing and coordinating agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Future work should include applying the Working Group’s transit productivity methodology to evaluate the needs of overnight workers traveling exclusively within the East Bay and the Peninsula (who were not included in the service planning analysis conducted by Working Group staff), coordinating the implementation of future information campaign efforts to promote the AllNighter system, identifying funding opportunities, facilitating interagency coordination to advance long-term regional efforts, and convening future meetings of the Late Night Transportation Working Group.

Over the last several years, the Late Night Transportation Working Group has provided an important platform to unite diverse stakeholders to advocate for a vision of 24-hour, reliable, efficient, and safe transit service for local workers, residents, and visitors. Through our work to-date, we have reached a number of significant milestones in improving overnight transportation in the Bay Area. With continued focus, further substantial progress can be made toward achieving this vision.

Appendices

Transit Service Planning:

- Memorandum of service improvement recommendations: http://nightlifesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Late-Night-Transit-Refined-Service-Concepts_FINAL.pdf
- Late night transit service evaluation memorandum: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/advy3so2o278ich/Late-Night-Transit-Service-Eval-Memo-FINAL.pdf>
- Late night transit demand analysis memorandum: <http://nightlifesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Late-Night-Transportation-Demand-Analysis-Key-Findings.pdf>

White Papers:

- Caltrain Late Night Service White Paper: <http://nightlifesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Caltrain-Late-Night-Service-White-Paper-Draft.pdf>
- BART Discussion Paper & Technical Supplement for San Francisco Late-Night Transportation Working Group: http://nightlifesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/BART.LateNight.20161003.Text_.pdf

BAE Urban Economics report on needs assessments for pilot neighborhoods Service Recommendations Memo: <http://nightlifesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Location-Specific-Assessment-Report.pdf>

Press release and information campaign collateral: <http://nightlifesf.org/new-campaign-to-increase-awareness-of-late-night-and-early-morning-bus-network/>

The Other 9-to-5: <http://nightlifesf.org/the-other-9-to-5-improving-late-night-and-early-morning-transportation-for-san-francisco-workers-residents-and-visitors/>