

Statement from Bay Area Council

Has your company done any research on whether the fleet of private buses impact traffic in San Francisco by delaying MUNI buses, blocking bike lanes, or double parking?

First, it's important to emphasize that the shuttles remove an estimated 2 million car trips a year from city streets, along with avoiding 2,000 metric tons of associated carbon emissions. So in terms of traffic impact, commuter shuttles are providing an enormous benefit (an SFMTA survey found that without shuttles, 50 percent of the 9,000 riders would turn to their car to get to work). Second, the companies for five years have been working in lock-step with SFMTA to develop a program that reduces any conflicts between commuter shuttles and MUNI buses and minimizes the impact of commuter shuttles on neighborhoods. In fact, during the initial 18-month pilot program, which the Bay Area Council helped develop, shuttle conflicts with MUNI declined 35 percent. And that we're aware, there hasn't been any serious accidents nor a single injury involving commuter shuttles and MUNI buses, bicycles, cars or pedestrians. As well, the companies all pay a per-stop fee to SFMTA to fund the shuttle program, including continuing research and analysis of the shuttle operations and impacts.

Have changes been made to mitigate such impacts?

The shuttle providers have been cooperating with SFMTA from the start to meet any and all requirements for minimizing conflicts with MUNI, reducing impacts on neighborhoods and making sure shuttles operate safely with bikes and pedestrians. Before the pilot program, there were an estimated 250 commuter shuttle stops citywide. During the program and in response to community concerns, that number was reduced by half to 125 stops. Throughout this entire process, the SFMTA and shuttle providers have been sharing data on the program, adjusting and tweaking the program as they learn more and better understand what impacts there are and responding to them. In fact, SFMTA is looking at some ways to reduce shuttle conflicts with bicyclists by increasing enforcement and relocating stops to other sides of intersections. This is not a static program.

Currently, the SFMTA is studying the idea of creating a hub model for commuter shuttles, which would dramatically reduce the number of allowable stops in San Francisco. Would you support such a model?

While the current program disperses the operation of commuter shuttles citywide, a hub model would concentrate shuttle activity in just a few locations. That certainly has the potential to create significant impacts on a few neighborhoods. We'll let SFMTA do what it needs to do regarding follow through on the hub model. We're not prejudging it and are focused on making the current program work and a success.

How many bus stops in San Francisco does your company use to pick-up employees?

The shuttle operators provide SFMTA with the data required under the program to manage street-level operations. Flexibility is critical to the success of the program. Getting locked into specific numbers based on individual company use could limit that flexibility. As I mentioned on our call, it also could be used to unfairly single out companies. Shuttle opponents have already worked hard to demonize some of the companies that provide shuttles, including organizing protests that have resulted in violence.