

Bay Area council statement on commuter shuttle program

As you know, the Bay Area Council played a leading role in assembling the coalition of employers and companies (not just tech industry, but a range of industries) that use and operate shuttles. And that over more than five years we represented those employers and companies in working with SFMTA to develop an innovative and voluntary program allowing shuttles to use city bus stops for loading and unloading passengers. An important element of that program are fees that the shuttle providers pay to the city to manage, administer and enforce the shuttle program. Under Proposition 218, the city is only able to charge for recovery of the cost of that program. The fees were set based on a formal study to identify and apportion the costs.

That we're aware, the SFMTA is very pleased and supportive of the program. It's working, and has become a model for other cities/regions in the country. The shuttle providers have been good partners and have responded to every request from the city. And we continue to monitor the program to ensure the shuttles are operating safely, in coordination with city transit services and in a way that reduces impacts on neighborhoods. These were key tenets of the overall program and agreement.

Meanwhile, the shuttles are eliminating 2 million single-passenger car trips annually from San Francisco's congested streets and avoiding 2000 metric tons of harmful tailpipe emissions. And the companies that provide this important service are doing it at their own expense, to the tune of millions of dollars a year. In addition, the operators pay all the same state and local vehicle, license and other regulatory fees and taxes, including fuel taxes, that pay for the maintenance of the roads and streets they're using. Just like everyone else. Our past polling has shown strong support (70%) among San Francisco voters for the shuttles.

We're not familiar with the legal basis for any argument or proposal that would allow for additional fees for the use of public streets beyond what already exist. We are aware that a member of the SFMTA Citizen Advisory Committee and a vocal opponent and critic of the shuttles – Sarah Vaughan – has cited some past legal brief involving taxi medallions, but we're not familiar with the specifics of that case, the legal brief itself, and whether it is at all relevant to shuttles. Or, anyone else who uses public rights of way. As I mentioned, would that mean that NBC/KNTV would have to pay a fee for its TV trucks operating on public streets as part of news gathering that generates advertising dollars for the network? What about delivery companies? What about restaurants that deliver pizza?

Shuttle operators and the many employers that use their services to transport thousands of employees daily will continue to work with SFMTA and the city to ensure the program they developed through a thoughtful, collaborative partnership continues to work safely and effectively, providing fee revenue for the city and minimizing impacts on neighborhoods and streets.

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