Muni Funding: Go for 10!

Report from the Muni Now, Muni Forever campaign's *Muni Forever* summit

Due largely to decreased city tax revenue and the expiration of COVID-19 emergency funding, Muni is facing a budget deficit that necessitates the passage of a local funding measure in 2026.

In September 2025, the Muni Now, Muni Forever campaign convened the *Muni Forever* summit to hear from transit riders and better understand positive framings for a future ballot measure to fund Muni. This report outlines what we heard, and proposes a framework for a Muni funding measure that not only addresses the immediate deficit, but also charts a path toward delivering improved transit service that San Franciscans need.

What we need

A thriving city demands a thriving public transit network. According to San Francisco Controller Greg Wagner, "A well-functioning Muni is critical to San Francisco's economic recovery."

An unaffiliated 2024 poll found that **64% of San Franciscans take Muni at least two or three times per week**, and **half of all San Franciscans would like to ride Muni more often than they currently do**. Public transit improvements were ranked as the most important investment in improving transportation in San Francisco.[1]

Top priorities for riders

1. Expand services by at least 10% to meet the needs of riders
2. Eliminate crowding on transit vehicles
3. Make Muni faster and more reliable
4. Expand accessibility of transit (Accessible boarding zones at all stops, improved elevator and escalator reliability, enhanced staff training for seniors and people with disabilities)
5. Provide greater transparency, accountability, and oversight for voters and riders (clearer budget breakdowns, clearer audits, greater input for riders, and board accountability)
6. Provide basic amenities (seating, lighting, trash cans, shelters, ambassadors) at more stops
7. Improve safety and comfort for riders (more ambassadors, cleaner facilities)

More, not less

It will be extremely difficult to pass a local funding measure in 2026 that does not present a clear vision for the future of Muni. Polling indicates that **72% of San Franciscans think we should focus on long-term improvements to public transit, rather than simply keeping public transit running in the short term.**[2] In order to pass two simultaneous transit funding measures next year (local and regional), voters will need to see that they are not just being asked to pay more for less.

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[1] GrowSF & FM3 Research. (2024, May). *Q2 2024 poll on street safety, Muni, and transit.* https://growsf.org/pulse/growsf-pulse-may-2024/

[2] Metropolitan Transportation Commission & EMC Research. (2025, February). *Bay Area regional transportation measure voter survey report.* https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-02/Regional%20Transportation%20Measure%20Voter%20Survey%20Report%20Feb%202025.pdf

Go for 10!

Muni is currently operating only about 90% of the amount of service it was offering in 2019.[3] Based on our outreach, San Franciscans overwhelmingly want, at minimum, a return to pre-pandemic levels of Muni service – a 10% increase to current operating levels. We therefore set this as a baseline for what we aim to generate from a local funding measure. Achieving this would cost approximately $110m per year.[4] In order to fill the $152m deficit that is expected even after the regional measure passes, that means the local funding measure should generate **$262m per year** in order to achieve this goal.

What it means for San Francisco

Through our outreach, we were able to discern the top transit priorities for riders. While we calculated our figures based on what it would take to increase current levels of service by 10%, the agency could realistically choose to spend that extra money on a variety of potential improvements.

> *Go for 10* to fund a **10% increase in current revenue service hours delivered.**
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> *Go for 10* to increase frequency and **reduce crowding on Muni's ten most packed bus routes.**
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> *Go for 10* to **restore lost routes like the 10, 2, and 14X.**
>
> *Go for 10* to hire **over ten times more Muni Transit Ambassadors** to improve safety and offer help to Muni riders.

These are just a few examples of what Muni could do with a funding measure that generates $262m per year. Exact framing of how those funds can and should be used is something that can be worked out by the agency following more insight on voter sentiment and feasibility.

Going for 10 wins at the ballot

If this proposal were placed on the ballot as a variable rate parcel tax, it would require a rate of just under $0.50 per building square foot to generate the amount of revenue needed to achieve these goals.
Last year, four other California cities each passed similarly-sized measures, each winning over 75% of the vote.[5] By making a clear case that this funding will go beyond the status quo, the City has a real opportunity to save Muni from its constant cycle of cuts and improve service for its half-million daily riders.

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[3] US Department of Transportation: National Transit Database, based on annual vehicle revenue miles https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles/city-and-county-san-francisco

[4] Calculations based on National Transit Database operating expenses data, adjusted for inflation

[5] Alameda USD Measure E ($0.585/building sq ft, 76.15%), Albany USD Measure G ($0.55/building sq ft, 78.86%), Berkeley USD Measure H ($0.54/sq ft of improvements, 88.26%), Piedmont USD Measure P ($0.50/sq ft of building improvements, 81.07%)