

**SIERRA CLUB**  
**SAN FRANCISCO GROUP**

85 Second Street, Box SFG, San Francisco, CA 94105

June 22, 2010

Board of Supervisors  
City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Re: Increase in Parking Tax

Dear Supervisor,

The Sierra Club urges you to support the Metropolitan Transportation Agencies request to place a measure on the ballot to increase the parking tax. In addition because of the low level of support for the 2006 attempt to raise this tax we urge a more complete approach as follows:

The following talking points should be used to assuage the fears of residents who drive:

- The parking tax has no impact on parking fees because most long term parking is provided by privately owned garages and lots and each of these individual entrepreneurs or corporations have set their parking fees as high as possible, at a level that maximizes their total revenues. They know that if their parking fees were any higher many of their customers will park at a competitor's lot; car pool more or use transit more frequently and their revenue will decrease. In 2006 parking tax campaign the garage operators spent \$250,000 to preserve these revenues
- City policy limits the construction of new parking lots downtown and this preserves the profits of the previously existing garages at a windfall rate. This makes it is fair for the City to collect and increase the parking tax.
- City owned garages usually charge a little less than nearby private garages because the City cannot frequently adjust their rates and so these rates will not change.
- The City provides most short term parking and these rates, for downtown parking, are set to be relative to Muni fares while the neighborhood rates are set to be similar to curbside meters and so these rates will not change.
- If fares are not increased downtown short term parking fees will not be increased.

The benefits of the parking tax have to be explained to Muni riders:

- When Muni gets funding from any other source they don't have to raise fares or cut service so frequently.

The campaign has to be run better and the measure has to be written to build broad support:

- Start working with transit advocates as early as possible. In 2006 because of insufficient preparation the undersigned was the only one available to run the campaign and the results were not good.
- Supervisors should consider sharing the new revenues with our schools system, similar to the way the original legislation shared the revenue with seniors.
- Supervisors should consider exempting medical parking lots and garages from the tax increase because hospitals keep these parking fees moderate, as a service, and a tax increase may require a fee increase to cover costs and seniors will object. As a thank you the hospitals could support the tax increase on others.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Agency could announce a future fare increase which will not be necessary if the parking tax is increased.
- Since the anti tax increase folks can easily outspend the pro increase activists by 20:1 City legislators and agency spokesmen should use every legal means to frequently explain to voters the benefits of a parking tax.
- This measure is important for Muni's future, even if it raises less than \$24 million a year and we have to be inventive.

Very truly yours,

Howard Strassner, Emeritus Chair Transportation Committee  
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CC: MTA