

Office of the Mayor
City & County of San Francisco



Gavin Newsom

March 20, 2007

Chair James McCray Jr. and Directors,
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority
1 South Van Ness Avenue, Floor 7
San Francisco, California 94103

Chair McCray and Directors:

I write this letter to request your support for comprehensive parking reforms that will be discussed at today's MTA meeting (agenda item 15). These reforms, which change our city's historic policy of providing free parking to city representatives, advance good-government principles that will improve the way our local government operates.

When I took office in 2004, I reversed a long-standing policy of providing free parking at City Hall for Mayor's Office employees. Our office instead established a monthly parking fee for employees. I instituted this new policy out of a strong belief that my employees should not receive preferential treatment from fees that all other San Franciscans have to pay. Such free parking policies represent a perk that provides privileges for some at the expense of local taxpayers.

The recommended changes to historic parking fee practices that are before you today advance important reform. I believe these practices—however well-intentioned—have lacked fairness and limited adequate oversight of parking fees. I therefore agree with the staff's recommendations to modify these policies. Limiting free parking for city representatives and contractors to those circumstances where absolutely necessary and appropriate, as well as abolishing the practice of Parking Authority employees signing off on their own tickets, is long overdue.

I would however ask that the MTA exceed the staff recommendations in one area. Currently, Commissioners do not have to pay for parking in the Civic Center Garage while attending their public Commission meetings in City Hall. In many respects this makes sense since Commissioners spend hours per week serving the public with no salary. However, I would ask the MTA to evaluate the costs and benefits of replacing this parking policy with the provision of a Muni fast pass to Commissioners. Such a change would serve to promote our city's Transit First policy and may demonstrate budget savings.

I am hopeful that the MTA will approve these policy changes and oversee their speedy implementation. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Miguel Bustos in my office (554-6604 or Miguel.Bustos@sfgov.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom

cc: SFMTA Executive Director/CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr.