

# RESCUE MUNI

# Transfer

No. 7,  
November 1998

## Muni Metro: *Slightly Better*

### Fall 1998 Muni Metro Survey Results

Is the Muni Metro getting better? 170 volunteers participated in a special *Muni Metro Survey* in September and October to find out. The results were decidedly mixed: on-time performance for the Metro improved somewhat, bringing its grade up to a **C**, but service on the streets is still much worse than that in the subway and crowding is a major issue. See how your line did on *Page 6*.

### RESCUE MUNI Endorsements

We voted to endorse Supervisors **Ammiano** and **Newsom**, and Propositions **E** and **I**. We also published a detailed report card on the Supe candidates. *Page 3*.

### Also Inside This Issue:

**Steering Committee Report:** The RESCUE MUNI leadership reports on its policy decisions on *Page 2*.

**Proposed Bylaw Revisions:** These need your approval. *Page 4*.

**1999 Budget:** We lobbied for full Muni funding this summer. Details on *Page 5*.

**POP = Entrapment?:** A rider tells his horror story of N-Judah Proof-of-Payment enforcement on *Page 12*.

**Bus Riders, We Need Your Help:** Tell us about traffic problems. Info: *Page 14*.

**Recommended Muni Metro Fixes:** The "Meltdown" may be over, but there's still quite a bit of work to do. Detailed proposals on *Page 15*.

November 1998  
**General Meeting**  
Nov. 5 (Thu), 6:30 pm  
Sierra Club, 85 2nd St.



RESCUE MUNI

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November 1998  
**Transfer**  
The Newsletter of  
RESCUE MUNI  
Metro Survey Results  
RESCUE MUNI Endorsements  
1999 Budget  
Recommended Metro Fixes  
Proof-of-Payment  
Bus & Traffic Survey

# Steering Committee Report

Ken Niemi tells us about RESCUE MUNI's policies decided in October 1998

The **Steering Committee** has approved the following positions as RESCUE MUNI policy since the last General Meeting.

In accordance with the Bylaws none of the following are RM policy unless consented to by the General Membership. We will discuss these, as well as the **Bylaw changes** listed on Page 4, at the **November 5 General Meeting**.

The General Meeting will be held at **6:30 p.m.** (note the time) at the Sierra Club, which is at **85 Second Street** between Market and Mission. Agenda items include:

- Metro Survey Report
- Bylaw Revisions (Page 4)
- G-Line to Golden Gate Park
- Metro "Quick Fix" Proposals
- Volunteer Opportunities

## Transfer

the newsletter of RESCUE MUNI  
November 1998 - No. 7

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- (1) Embarcadero-based transit supervisors should treat outbound J's, K's, and M's as interchangeable lines such that the appropriate order and balance in service is maintained at all times.
- (2) Two-car trains are the preferred mode of operation.
- (3) Proof-of-Payment should be implemented Metro-wide.
- (4) Vastly improved communication regarding proof of payment is needed. An example is large signs on all doors of streetcars telling riders using cash or tokens to board the first car or risk a significant fine. Riders with Fast Passes or transfers should board the second car to balance the load.
- (5) The terminus of the N-line should be Embarcadero Station and a one-car shuttle from Castro to Caltrain should be started. ★

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RESCUE MUNI (Riders for an Efficient,  
Safe, Consistent, Utilized, and Expedi-  
tious Muni), founded 1996, is a volun-  
teer-run, not-for-profit transit riders'  
association.

Hot line: **415-273-1558**  
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# Membership Form

We need YOU to help us Rescue Muni.

Join us by mailing this form to P.O. Box 190966, San Francisco, CA 94119-0966.

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Fax:**

**Email:**

**Muni lines you ride:**

**# riders in your household:**

**I would like to volunteer!** Y N

**Membership category:**

- \$5 Limited Income
- \$15 Basic
- \$40 Sustaining
- \$100 Contributing
- Other: \$\_\_\_\_\_

RESCUE MUNI may from time to time  
publish membership lists *with names  
only* (no phone numbers or ad-  
dresses). May we publish your name  
only as a member? Y N

**Signature:**

## Executive Committee

Chair: Ken Niemi  
Vice-Chair: Richard Mlynarik  
Membership Sec'y: Daniel Murphy  
Recording Sec'y: Howard Strassner  
Corresponding Sec'y: Eric Carlson  
Treasurer: Joan Downey  
Coordinators:  
Charlotte Breckenridge, David Pilpel,  
Andrew Sullivan

## Steering Committee

Chair: Andrew Sullivan  
Vice-Chair: Daniel Murphy  
Charlotte Breckenridge, Eric Carlson,  
Joan Downey, Richard Mlynarik, Ken  
Niemi, David Pilpel, Howard Strassner

## Standing Committees

**Muni Metro:** addresses scheduling and  
reliability of Muni's light rail lines. Meets  
second Wed. of every month, 6 p.m.,  
at the Sierra Club, 85 Second St., 3d  
floor (chair: Howard Strassner,  
661-8786, [ruthow@juno.com](mailto:ruthow@juno.com))

## Other Committees/Initiatives

**Bus Service** (chair: Luanne Schulte,  
642-1969)

**Membership** (chair: Daniel Murphy,  
665-4074, [daniel@well.com](mailto:daniel@well.com))

**Surveys** (chair: Andrew Sullivan,  
673-0626, [andrew@sulli.org](mailto:andrew@sulli.org))

Any member may form a committee.  
If it meets at least four times per year,  
the committee may request appointment  
of a representative to the Steering  
Committee, the policy-making body of  
RESCUE MUNI.

# Life on Other Transit Systems

Ken Niemi asked friends from elsewhere in the Bay Area how long their commute takes, and whether they get a seat. The facts speak for themselves...

City	Mode	Min. time	Avg. time	Max. time	Distance (miles)	Seat?
Rockridge	Walk/AC	15	17	25	10	98.0%
N. Berkeley	Walk/BART	35	40	60	12	
Benicia	VanPool	40	45	50	33	100.0%
El Sobronte	Drive/BART	40	45	55	26	100.0%
Albany	AC Transit	45	50	65	12	99.9%
Pleasant Hill	VanPool	45	50	60	26	100.0%
Fremont	Drive/BART	60	65	105	45	100.0%
Mountain View	Drive/CalTrain	70	75	100	36	100.0%
Palo Alto	CalTrain/Muni	75	80	100	33	100.0%

# November 1998 Transit Calendar

We know the Fall 1998 calendar is right there on your fridge. But just in case it fell off during the fall cleaning, November events are listed here:

- 11/3 Election Day** - Don't forget to vote!
- 11/5, 6:30 PM RM General Membership Meeting** **Sierra Club**  
Planned topics:  
1. "G" line streetcars to Golden Gate Park  
2. Progress report on Muni "improvements" to Metro:  
ATCS, turnback, Breda cars, E line, POP, etc.
- 11/10, 5PM** Public Transportation Commission 401 Van Ness
- 11/11, 6PM** RM Metro Committee Sierra Club
- 11/16, 6PM** RM Executive & Steering Committees Sierra Club
- 11/24, 5PM** Public Transportation Commission 401 Van Ness

**Dress for success!**

Studies show that frequent wearing of the RESCUE MUNI t-shirt improves your personal on-time performance. Order now at [www.rescuemuni.org](http://www.rescuemuni.org).



# Fall 1998 Endorsements

Daniel Murphy has tips on whom, and what, to vote for on November 3

RESCUE MUNI members gathered to evaluate candidates for the Board of Supervisors on October 1st, and voted to endorse incumbents Tom Ammiano and Gavin Newsom. Members also backed Proposition E, an alternative plan for replacing the Central Freeway, and Proposition I, which backs a study of rail lines on the Bay Bridge.

Seven candidates for supervisor attended the forum. In addition to Ammiano and Newsom, members heard from Supervisors Amos Brown and Mark Leno, challengers Denise D'Anne, Jim Reid, and Rose Tsai, and a representative from Donna Casey's campaign. Ammiano and Newsom each got 83% of the vote; no other candidate got more than one-third.

In addition to voting on endorsements, attendees rated candidates on an A-F scale (just like we grade service on Muni lines) in several categories. Below are the average grades in each category, as well as the overall averages.

Members backed Proposition E and Proposition I by an overwhelming majority, as recommended by the RESCUE MUNI Steering Committee.

RESCUE MUNI received wide press coverage for its endorsement night; both daily papers and several local TV stations covered the outcome. Not long afterward, Supervisor Gavin Newsom appeared on Mornings on 2 in a RESCUE MUNI t-shirt. ★

	Regular rider?	Knowledge of Muni	Muni policy	Record on Muni issues	Independence	Overall eval	OVERALL AVERAGE
Endorsed:							
<b>Ammiano</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>Newsom</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+</b>
D'Anne	B	C+	B-	C+	B+	C+	B-
Leno	C	C+	C+	C	C	C+	C+
Reid	C	C+	B-	D+	B+	C+	C+
Casey	D	C-	C	D+	C	D+	C-
Tsai	D-	D+	D+	D	B-	D+	D+
Brown	F	D+	D+	C-	D	D	D

Also:

- YES on E** (Central Freeway Alternative)
- YES on I** (Study Rail on the Bay Bridge)

**Don't forget to VOTE on November 3!**

# Proposed Bylaw Revisions

Howard Strassner describes proposed changes in RESCUE MUNI's rules

The following are bylaw revisions approved by the RESCUE MUNI Executive Committee and submitted to the membership for approval. Members will have the opportunity to approve or reject these at the General Meeting on November 5.

Most of the recommendations correct our original extreme limitation on voting. Our original restrictions were written to prevent special issue voters from exerting too much influence on RM. With the revisions: Every member can vote by mail for Executive Committee (Excom), Steering Committee (Steercom), and Bylaw changes; Every Member present at a General Membership Meeting can vote for the above and Endorsements and Policy Positions; Active Members can also vote by mail on the latter; We have a provision for tie votes for Excom and Steercom elections; and a Standing Committee can nominate any RM Member for election.

NOTATION: ~~deletion~~ (addition)

IV - 3. Steercom endorsements of candidates for public office or ballot initiatives shall not be final until ratified at a General Membership meeting by a vote of no less than two thirds of the Members ~~eligible to vote~~ (voting) in accordance with ~~VII-2~~ (VIII -3).

VI - 4. Standing Committees may name any one of their members to the

Steercom. Standing Committees may nominate any ~~of their members~~ RM Member as (a) candidates for elected Excom and Steercom seats.

VII - 2. Current, ~~present Members who attended at least one prior General Membership meeting during the past year,~~ may vote. ~~Active Members may~~ vote by mail-in ballot or at the meeting (for Excom and Steercom members and Bylaw Amendments. In the event of a tie the tied candidates will all be considered as elected.)

VIII - 2. The Excom and Steercom shall provide a written report of all of their actions taken during the last quarter, as a consent calendar, before each meeting. All actions of the Excom (except for meeting schedules) and (all) Steercom (policy positions) are subject to override at the next General Membership meeting if a majority of those ~~eligible to vote~~ (voting), in accordance with ~~VII-2~~. (VIII -3.), object.

(VIII - 3. Current, present Members may vote. Active Members may vote by mail-in ballot or at the meeting.)

X - I. c) The proposed Amendment shall be adopted after approval by two-thirds of the Members, ~~eligible to vote~~ (voting) in accordance with VII-2., at a General Membership Meeting called with the published Amendment on the agenda, after two weeks' notice, including printed or electronic distribution.

more investigation is necessary before we can recommend particular action. Because these lines travel out away from the Muni Metro "barn" at Balboa Park, it becomes difficult in terms of scheduling to change operators as they would often end up going on overtime or not getting a mandated break due to safety laws. But we do feel that Muni can be do much better simply because the current performance is so poor. If Muni cannot practically eliminate bunching and gaps on the Metro system where it is isolated from traffic congestion and transit supervisors are already present, how can it ever improve the poor performance by buses and electric trolleys?

*A proposed fix for crowding*

The serious crowding problems described in the Metro Survey report are caused by a lack of streetcars that can work in the tunnel using the new train control system. Muni has about two dozen or so old streetcars (the orange and white Boeings) which have not been converted to use the Advanced Train Control System (ATCS). Muni has pulled these trains out of service as putting them in the tunnel caused more problems, i.e., the Metro Meltdown, than they were worth.

However, Muni has not given us an adequate explanation of why these streetcars cannot be operated on the street. RESCUE MUNI will continue to investigate this situation as those 20 or so Boeings are the only hope in the short term to reduce extreme and unacceptable crowding. We will have to wait until January and February to have a significant increase in the number of Breda streetcars available from the manufacturer as they are produced at a steady monthly rate.

As we wait for those new streetcars, which would only help service if Muni kept all Boeings that work with ATCS in operation instead of retiring any of them, RESCUE MUNI believes that Muni can do a little better by no longer sending two-car trains to CalTrain. We are in a crisis situation through this winter; wasting a two-car train on a route where there is very little rela-

tive ridership is not acceptable. The Metro tunnel is incredibly crowded and a Castro shuttle can help alleviate some of that overcrowding and finally make use of a turnback that has sat there unused since the early 1990's when it was built at great inconvenience to Metro riders and at significant cost. We also feel that this shuttle would increase reliability for CalTrain riders since the shuttle would not be subject to variables on the surface which the N-Judah faces after it leaves the subway tunnel at Church and Duboce. ★

**A "no-excuses" budget" from page 5** by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). It illustrates how Muni riders have paid an historically high inflation-adjusted Fast Pass cost compared to the Muni budget. If the Fast Pass continues at \$35 through the end of this year (through most of 1999), this relationship will return to the level seen through most of the 1980's.

But the real question remains the relative value of the service riders are receiving for the cost compared to the 1980's and early 1990's. We continue to hear from members that Muni service, even on the buses which were not affected by the Muni Metro Meltdown late this summer, is not yet anywhere close to the level of reliability provided in the mid-1980's to early 1990's. Riders have paid far higher fares in real terms in the 1990's but received far less in service than in the 1980's when fares were lower. This is why we continue to push for enforceable service standards and accountability at Muni.

*RESCUE MUNI would like to thank the CCSF Controller's Office for the budget information and member Steve Marino for the historical Fast Pass information. Take a look at our web site for a pictorial review of the Fast Pass - and its fare increases over the years. ★*

specific train. Add on variations in travel time and the amount of time one needs to commit just to move around our very small city using a Metro system that faces little if any street traffic congestion problems.

RESCUE MUNI once again asks Muni to improve its supervision over the Metro cars as they leave Embarcadero Station. We believe that the transit supervisor there should be able to make all decisions regarding car designations and that any changes necessary to keep the cars running in order should be made as the cars enter the station going inbound and that NO changes should be made to outgoing cars at West Portal Station as all changes should have been made at Embarcadero. Riders depend on the announcements of the ultimate destinations of the cars and make real-time choices. Muni causes significant problems for riders by changing car destinations at West Portal Station. By the time cars come out of the Muni Metro Turnback (MMT) going outbound they should be in the proper sequence as balanced by service levels per line.

In particular, we expect that Muni can

improve on-time performance for the J-Church, K-Ingleside, and M-Ocean View lines by continuous re-designation of these cars as they come into Embarcadero Station. These three lines have very similar travel times and all go to Balboa Park Muni Station. Therefore, Muni should be able to treat these three lines as a joint Metro operation for staffing purposes. In Table 2 are examples of the terrible performance among these three lines as observed by RESCUE MUNI platform volunteers.

Clearly, Muni allowed riders on each of these three lines to suffer from unacceptable wait times while sending more than a sufficient number of cars on the other two lines. Even during the situation when the wait between cars on a particular line was only 11, 12, or 14 minutes, Muni's sending four to six cars on the other two lines during this period resulted in wasted capacity: we paid operators to travel on lines where there served practically no one versus improving the quality of the ride for others.

RESCUE MUNI is also extremely concerned about the variation in service on the L-Taraval and N-Judah lines. However,

# A "No Excuses" Budget

Ken Niemi describes our successful lobbying efforts on Muni's budget for 1999

RESCUE MUNI members spoke out during public comment hearings this summer in support of fully funding the Mayor's budget request for Muni for the 1998-1999 budget year. But in keeping with our demand for accountability, they added the twist that Muni must report back to the board and people of San Francisco on a regular basis during the year on how Muni service is improving with the significant budget increase.

We also met with staff of Board of Supervisors to follow through on our positions. We won on both issues with full funding of the Mayor's and a requirement for quarterly reporting to the Board of Supervisors on results. We will closely monitor these reports to insure that Muni is reporting improvement in outputs, not just inputs. For example, Muni will continue to in-

crease the number of transit supervisors out on the streets. Is bunching reduced? We hope so but will be watching!

RESCUE MUNI would also like to thank the members who showed up early that Saturday morning for the Board of Supervisors' Finance Committee public comment hearings and joined Steering Committee members Andrew Sullivan and Ken Niemi. Unfortunately, the Finance Committee was hearing comment on the entire city budget all in one day without a pre-announced order. Muni ended up coming towards the end so only Andrew and Ken were able to devote their Saturday to wait out their turn at City Hall.

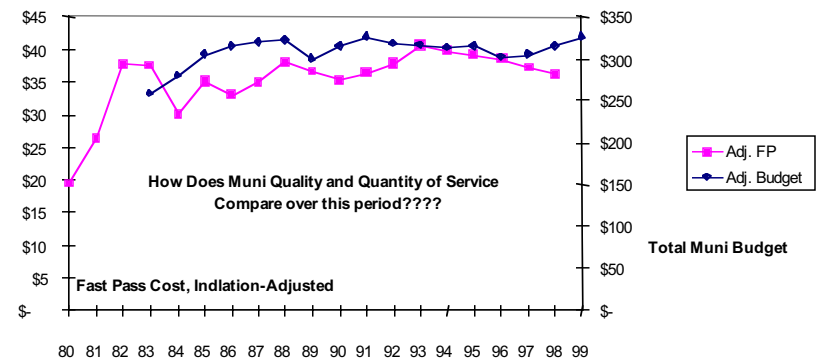
Below is a chart showing in constant 1999 as adjusted using Bay Area price data dollars (using an estimated inflation rate for 1998 and 1999) posted

*Continued on page 17*

Table 2: J-K-M Management

9/16: 7:01-7:38 PM	37 min between K's; 5 J's & only 2 M's went by
9/16: 7:52-8:12 PM	20+ min between J's; 4 M's & 2 K's went by
9/17: 9:15-9:37 PM	22+ min between M's; 2 J's & 2 K's went by
9/18: 8:08-8:36 PM	26 min between J's; 2 M's & 2 K's went by
9/18: 8:24-9:00 PM	36 min between K's; 2 M's & 3 J's went by
9/21: 10:37-11:03 AM	26+ min between M's; 3 K's & 2 J's went by
9/21: 10:46-11:14 AM	28 min between J's; 3 M's & 2 K's went by
9/21: 10:59-11:37 AM	38 min between K's; 4 M's & 4 J's went by
9/21: 11:25-11:37 AM	12 min between M's; 3 J's & 1 K went by
9/22: 7:15-7:29 PM	14 min between J's; 4 M's & 2 K's went by
9/22: 7:29-8:03 PM	34 min between J's; 3 M's & 2 K's went by
9/22: 7:48-8:24 PM	36 min between K's; 3 M's & 4 J's went by
9/22: 7:53-8:21 PM	28 min between M's; 3 J's & 0 K's went by
9/22: 8:21-8:47 PM	26 min between M's; 3 J's & 2 K's went by
9/22: 8:38-8:56 PM	18 min between J's; 2 M's & 2 K's went by
9/24: 8:16-8:27 PM	11+ min between M's; 4 J's & 1 K went by
9/24: 8:22-8:43 PM	21 min between K's; 5 J's & 3 M's went by
9/29: 5:45-6:14 PM	29 min between K's; 3 J's & 2 M's went by
9/29: 6:14-6:42 PM	28+ min between K's; 3 J's & 1 M went by
9/30: 5:04-5:24 PM	20+ min between J's; 2 M's & 2 K's went by

Muni Total Budget (\$ million) and Fast Pass (\$) in 1999 dollars



# Muni Metro Survey Results

Is Muni Metro getting better? **Andrew Sullivan** tells all.

The performance of Muni Metro, San Francisco's streetcar system, has come under increased scrutiny this fall as the Municipal Railway has implemented major changes to its operations. In August, the railway turned on its long-delayed, \$70 million Advanced Train Control System to automate the operations of streetcars in the tunnel, extended N-Judah service to CalTrain, and began proof-of-payment fare collection, all on the same day; the resulting "meltdown" caused major delays and brought Muni under an intense media spotlight. Since mid-September, however, Muni has claimed that the system is now more reliable than before ATCS was installed. Rescue Muni conducted a special **Metro Survey** this fall to find out if these claims are accurate.

The results of our survey were decidedly mixed. **Muni Metro showed some improvement in on-time performance.** The Metro system as a whole, and most streetcar lines, delayed our participants somewhat less often than in the spring. No line performed better than it did in our first survey in February 1997, however, and the grades assigned continue to describe a system that is quite unreliable. In addition, we found that **riders experience unacceptable levels of crowding** far too often, and that travel

times are quite inconsistent, particularly in the tunnel.

Survey participants experienced delays **28%** of the time, less than this spring's score of 35% but more than the 24% of riders delayed in 1997. This earned Muni Metro a score of **C**. Reliability was worse in rush hour, but again not as bad as it was in the spring, with **39%** of PM rush and **31%** of AM rush riders experiencing delays. As we have noted before, this means that riders who take Muni to work are delayed at least every other day, or every day if they transfer or use Muni for more than just commuting.

## Methodology

This survey attempts to measure Muni Metro's reliability from the rider's perspective. For two weeks in September and October, volunteers recorded how long they waited for the streetcars that they used every day, and a few watched vehicles go by and recorded the headways. **170** volunteers recorded **1,896** separate vehicles, over twice the number of Muni Metro responses in the spring and five times as many as in 1997.

For each ride, we calculated waiting time and compared it to the frequency advertised on Muni's street map posted at most

# Proposals to Fix Muni Metro

**Ken Niemi** describes how Muni can move beyond its return to mediocrity

The worst of the Metro Meltdown is over. It was a terrible period that should not have been as bad as it was. The good thing for Muni and sad thing for riders is that, by contrast, today's service seems so much better. Yet, as Andrew Sullivan described in his report on the results of our special survey of Metro, service remains mediocre. In this article I will describe what RESCUE MUNI recommends and describe what we have learned from watching Metro service from the platform.

To summarize our positions, also listed in this month's Steering Committee Report: (1) We want Embarcadero-based transit supervisors to treat outbound J's, K's, and M's as interchangeable lines such that the appropriate order and balance in service is maintained at all times. (2) We believe that two-car trains are the preferred mode of operation. (3) We believe that Proof-of-Payment should be implemented Metro-wide. (4) We believe that vastly improved communication regarding proof of payment is needed. An example is large signs on all doors of streetcars telling riders using cash or tokens to board the first car or risk a significant fine. Riders with Fast Passes or transfers should board the second car to balance the load.

(5) We believe that the terminus of the N-line should be Embarcadero Station and that a one-car shuttle from Castro to Caltrain should be started.

## Improving On-time Performance: Managing the Minutes

For those waiting for a specific train, the variation is atrocious and Muni has done little if anything to fix this problem. During RESCUE MUNI's platform observations, done on several evenings from the middle of September to the end of September at Embarcadero and Van Ness Stations, we saw transit supervisors on the platform with their clipboards just like our RM volunteers had. Yet we rarely saw any action taken to re-order the cars, even when there were long periods between cars on a particular line. Muni leaders have long made statements in public that once they had more transit supervisors working, we would see less bunching and gaps. Our platform survey results, shown in Table 1, suggest that this is not working yet.

Simply put: if you need to be someplace on time, whether for a formal appointment like getting to work or a class or just to meet a friend or see a movie, you have to allow a wait time of two to three times the average headway (the time between trains) to be 95% sure it will arrive if you need a

Table 1: Line Performance from Platform Observations (minutes; Embarc & VN)

	time	max obs	average	standard	std dev. as
		headway	headway	deviation%	% of average
<b>L-Taraval Outbound</b>	5-7 PM	28	7.1	6.1	86%
	7-9 PM	29	11.6	8.8	76%
<b>N-Judah Outbound</b>	5-7 PM	19	9.2	5.5	60%
	7-9 PM	36	8.5	7.2	85%
<b>J-Church Outbound</b>	5-7 PM	23	10.0	6.5	65%
	7-9 PM	34	9.5	8.0	84%
<b>K-Ingleside Outbound</b>	5-7 PM	29	10.7	8.5	79%
	7-9 PM	37	15.2	10.5	69%
<b>M-Ocean Outbound</b>	5-7 PM	35	14.1	8.5	61%
	7-9 PM	33	12.5	9.4	75%

Table 1: Summary Findings

route	Fall 98	Fall 98	chg in	2/98	2/97
	% late	grade	% late	% late	% late
J	33%	<b>D</b>	-10%	42%	22%
JKLMN*	1%	<b>A</b>	N/A		
K	33%	<b>D</b>	-9%	41%	27%
KLM**	22%	<b>C</b>	6%	14%	7%
L	47%	<b>F</b>	-6%	53%	22%
M	38%	<b>D</b>	6%	31%	30%
N	35%	<b>D</b>	-7%	42%	33%
<b>total</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>24%</b>

\* Subway between Van Ness & Embarcadero

\*\* Subway between West Portal & Embarcadero

# Bus Riders: We Need Your Help

*Ken Niemi needs your traffic and congestion reports*

In the last TRANSFER I called for RM members who notice traffic problems affecting their bus lines to write in. This includes items such as regular double-parking or violation of transit diamond lanes, etc. We've received several thoughtful replies so far but need far more if we are going to have an impact to improve the bus lines. We also need broader activity on the part of bus riders in terms of committees to deal with the operation of their lines. In contrast Metro riders have met monthly in their committee and developed quite a list of observations as to how Metro service could be improved and RESCUE MUNI is meeting with Muni officials to push those ideas. Of course, RESCUE MUNI is also working on broader issues that effect both Metro and bus/trolley service. But those are longer-term improvements.

What can be done immediately is to get action on areas where traffic congestion, violation of diamond lanes, etc. can be taken. If you're a bus rider waiting for improvement on your line, please help us to help you and others

on your line. Send us a note with specific traffic problems that your line faces and we'll bring them to the attention of Muni and the Department of Parking and Traffic.

*Please report these problems when you observe them causing your line to be slower than it could be (if they are not slowing down Muni, there's no need to report them):*

- (1) Violations of diamond lanes;
- (2) Repeated double parking;
- (3) Bumps in the road that cause electric trolleys to slow considerably;
- (4) Traffic congestion...Need for a new/extended diamond lane?
- (5) Traffic congestion: Need to re-route Muni line?
- (6) Traffic congestion blocking intersection: Need Officer to direct traffic?
- (7) Other

Mail your observations to:

RESCUE MUNI

Attn: Ken Niemi

P.O. Box 190966

S.F., CA 94119-0966

or send email to [rmerkennemi@aol.com](mailto:rmerkennemi@aol.com).

Thanks!

stops. We calculated the percentage of riders delayed, the average waiting time, and the average normalized waiting time - waiting time over advertised frequency - for each line. For data collected by watching vehicles go by (537 observations), we used a system of weighted averages to calculate these metrics for a hypothetical rider arriving at random. We then assigned letter grades based on the percentage of riders delayed, and we compared these with the 1998 and 1997 Riders' Survey results.

To compare service in the tunnel with service on the street, we identified all rides taken just in the tunnel. Based on their origin and destination, we assigned over 800 trips to "JKLMN" (Van Ness-Embarcadero) and "KLM" (West Portal-Embarcadero) segments and compared wait times to the minimum posted frequency of the lines in question.

We also asked riders to record their destinations and the time they arrived there, and to measure maximum crowding on their ride based on a scale of 1 (empty) to 5 (crush-loaded). With the arrival data, we calculated average travel times for all trips taken, a selection of which are published here. We also compared the average travel time for all trips with the minimum recorded; the resulting ratio is a helpful if rather rough measure of the typical rider's expectation of enroute delays. The crowding data helped us identify routes and times of day that are overloaded and unreliable as a result.

## Key Findings

### On-time performance

In the fall of 1998, Muni Metro delayed passengers 28% of the time. Of the 1,896 vehicles tracked, 519 had waiting times longer than the frequency advertised on the system map. This represents an improvement since the spring, when 251 of 712 rides (35%) were delayed, but is worse than in 1997, when 92 of 375 (24%) were.

The survey showed a striking difference between on-time performance in the tunnel and on the streetcar lines throughout

the city. While service between Van Ness and Embarcadero ran on time 99 percent of the time, earning a grade of **A**, the segment between West Portal and Embarcadero earned a **C** with 28% of riders delayed, and all above-ground lines were graded **D** or **F**. A major reason for this was out-of-order dispatching at Embarcadero, a very old problem noted by several volunteers.

As in the spring, the worst line in the Muni Metro system was the L-"Terrible", graded **F** with 47% of riders delayed and the system's worst rating for average crowding. Poor as this grade was, this did represent a small improvement (6 percentage points) from February. The most-improved line was the J-Church, graded **D** with riders delayed 33 percent of the time; this was 10 percentage points better than in February. Most lines on the street (J, K, L, N) did show improvements in on-time performance since the spring. The J-Church was the most improved, by 10 percentage points; other lines improved by smaller margins. The M-OceanView was the exception, continuing a worsening trend that began in 1997. (See Chart 1 on page 10 for details.)

Reliability also varied significantly by time of day. Muni Metro was much less reliable at rush hour, when it is the most crowded; 31% of morning and 39% of evening rush-hour riders experienced delays, earning those periods a score of **D**. These time slots were significantly improved from the spring, however; the score for PM rush in particular improved from 57% to 39% late, probably as a result of the implementation of ATCS. (See Chart 2 for details.) Half again as many riders were delayed in the evening rush as were delayed during mid-day periods (25% delayed, graded C) or evenings and weekends (both graded B with 19% and 18% delayed, respectively).

### Crowding

Participants also rated crowding on the streetcars and travel times. Crowding was particularly pronounced at rush hour and on the segments in the tunnel; in the evening

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## Volunteers Needed!

We need your help with the following projects:

- RESCUE MUNI needs to become a nonprofit corporation. We need a volunteer lawyer to help us determine the correct tax-exempt status and to fill out the paperwork.
- We need help laying out the *Transfer*, the Newsletter of RESCUE MUNI.
- We also urgently need a Fashions Coordinator to distribute our durable, colorful, oh-so-modern "Don't Be Late" t-shirts.

Interested? Call us at 273-1558, or send email to [transit1@rescuemuni.org](mailto:transit1@rescuemuni.org).



rush, for example, almost half of streetcars were crush-loaded. All lines to and through West Portal suffered from extreme crowding; the K, L, M, and "KLM" segment all were rated "4" or "5" on our 5-point scale around half the time. Even on nights and weekends, the level of crowding was remarkably high, with cars crush-loaded 17 and 18 percent of the time, respectively.

In our view, this is an unacceptable level of crowding, one not experienced by commuters on any other transit system in the area. Many participants commented that they could not board one or several cars due to crowding. In many cases, the high level of crowding (which results primarily from insufficient capacity, but also from misallocation of resources) contributes to poor on-time performance. Many riders have noted to us that they have abandoned the Muni Metro because of crowding as much as late streetcars; the recent increase of Fast Pass use on BART by several thousand trips per day is surely one result of this problem.

#### Travel times

Riders in the subway also experienced long and erratic travel times, with the average trip taking **1.6** times the shortest time recorded for the trip taken, and with average travel times in the subway (JKLMN and KLM segments) more than **twice** recorded minimums. Outside the tunnel, service was much more consistent, with the average trip under **1.4** times the minimum. (An ideal score would be 1.0, with all trips taking the same amount of time; this should happen in the subway.) This confirmed what we already knew anecdotally: one cannot count on Muni to get to one's destination on time, even if it arrives at the stop within the published interval.

#### Rider Comments

As always, riders gave us ample comments on system reliability, operator and staff courtesy, comfort and convenience. Many riders reported trouble:

- [N] *Late to work. 25-30 people had already been waiting .5 hr ... At arrival at Church/*

*Duboce at 8:35, trains sat there :10, then another :10 at subway entrance. Not ONEWORD from driver the entire time!*

- [N] *15 min. Breda Car Breakdown—typical*
- [L] *complete mess up at West Portal with no trains moving for 20+ min.*
- [N] *Crowded, hot, stuffy, extremely unpleasant. What can be done to improve this unbearable situation?*
- [N] *Gave up.*
- [N] *Stuck at tunnel for 15 min with high pitched sound because steps were stuck in down position. Back PA system did not work.*
- [KLM] *Changed jobs outside of S.F. to no longer have to use Muni to commute*
- [Overheard on the streetcar] *I don't feel bad about driving anymore.*

One reported a serious safety violation:

- [KLM] *Very crowded. In doorway. At Powell St. the doors on BOTH sides opened and I almost fell out under the car...driver was reading a book and not paying any attention*

Others reported better service:

- [KLM] *Surprisingly good, fast service!*
- [N] *This is a significant improvement in the service I have experienced over the last 3 years. Despite the improvement, needing 50-60 minutes (incl. wait time) for a 6 mile commute seems ridiculous.*
- [N] *I hate to admit it, but after the first few weeks of chaos, the new system seems to be working pretty well. I like the fact that you can tell how long before a train I coming, at least in the subway.*

And one reported a remarkable episode of rider-operator cooperation:

- [N] *Car blocking track at Carl & Cole, passengers moved it, delayed ~5 minutes*

#### Policy Implications

This survey shows both the benefits and the limitations of Muni's Advanced Train Control System and the Muni Metro Extension and Turnback as a means of running Muni Metro on time. With ATCS, Muni is in fact running more trains per hour through the system, and they are in fact running closer to on-time than they did in the spring. But because they are still dispatched out of order and they are almost

ation should not be regarded as intentionally violating the law. How many people have been ensnared in this hypocritical procedure? Why doesn't Muni make an automatic fare box available to cash paying riders on the second car? No recourse was given, and I was not allowed to go to the front of the train and pay my fare according to the new procedures.

Two more police boarded the train near Church St. So, there I was, a law abiding citizen, off to a luncheon at the Hyatt Regency where my wife was speaking for the San Francisco Children's Council, being attended by 4 police officers. Don't they have more important things to attend to in the City, like crime, vandalism, and dangerous drivers (who repeatedly pass Muni trains on the right nearly hitting innocent passengers getting off). Is this what our police department is for?

Why isn't there a fare box available on the rear car, so that cash customers can use it? Why is a flawed policy enforced with a vigor which we rarely see anywhere else?

Needless to say, it was a most upsetting experience, and I was not the only one to suffer because of it. It certainly ruined my day. The police insisted that they had to write the citation, and they made me feel like a criminal, instead of explaining the procedure and giving me a warning. At first, I could not believe what was happening. There was no place to purchase a ticket and I was being accused of not buying a ticket. I was supposed to know about this procedure of boarding the front car.

Since that time I have thought of several obvious ways to deal with this new arrangement which would avoid mak-

ing cash-paying passengers into felons:

1. Put signs at the loading areas that people can read while they are waiting to board;

2. Put signs over the fare box which are direct and explicit: "NO CASH RIDERS ON THIS CAR!" and it should be in about 4 major languages;

3. Have a public address announcement which goes off every couple of stops to inform riders in the back car that they have to go up to the front car.

Most important: It is a ridiculous policy for off peak periods, anyhow, when most riders pay cash to ride. Since that time, I have seen several N-Judahs go by my house all weekend with people standing in the front car while the back car was practically empty. It also increases loading time, when everyone has to board the front door and very few people can use the second car. Such was the case on the day I was cited.

Attacking the people who ride and support Muni is not the way to win support for the system. The same thing has happened to many other innocent people. If you need police force or the threat of it to implement a simple procedure, there is something wrong with the procedure. It will continue to snare people who are occasional riders, can't read English, or are new to the city (visitors and tourists). I hope something can be done about this soon, and I feel an apology is in order, not just for me, but for all the innocent people who have been trapped in this situation.

Yours truly,

Sanford Siegel



# POP = Entrapment?

Sanford Siegel forwarded us this letter on Proof-of-Payment on the N-Judah line

October 5, 1998

From: Sanford Siegel

To: Emilio Cruz, Director, Muni

CC: RESCUE MUNI

Dear Sir,

On Friday, October 2, I had one of the most upsetting, unjust, and humiliating experiences of my life on the N-Judah line, and it regards the new "proof of payment policy" and the way in which it is enforced. I have been a strong supporter of public transportation all of my life. I am a property owner, a teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District, and have lived in San Francisco for 30 years. Although I am an occasional rider, I strongly support a good public transit system. I was active in working with Muni two years ago to improve the UCSF Keystop and to save the trees at that location. My main means of transportation is bicycling and walking. My wife commutes on the N-Judah almost daily.

I waited for the eastbound N-Judah at Arguello and Irving (UCSF) with my son on Friday, October 2, about 11:15 AM. After some time, a two car train arrived, and there were many people waiting. A long line went to the first car front door, so I went to front door of the second car, which was more than half empty. The first car was quite full, so that seemed like the most logical thing to do. I was paying cash and had two dollars ready for both of us. When I got on the car, fully prepared to pay, I found that there was no driver and the fare box was locked behind a glass door. Several other passengers encountered the same situation. There was no sign

over the fare box saying that cash paying passengers must enter the first car. I and my son took our seats, and I kept my money handy since I knew there was a "proof of payment policy." I figured, when and if a Muni employee entered the car, I would give him/her the money and get my ticket. I should also mention that I have always paid my Muni fares, as I think they are the greatest transportation bargain in the world, and I certainly had every intention of paying this one.

Two stops later, at Stanyan Street, two policemen boarded the car and demanded "proof of payment." I showed them my money and said there was no one to give it to and the fare box was locked up. I offered it to them, and instead they asked for my ID, which I gave them. Immediately, they began writing up a citation. I was outraged. They did the same for several other passengers, and I argued with them about the whole procedure. The other passengers cited also had intended to pay.

This was "entrapment", a situation purposely designed to put people in jeopardy of breaking the law when they have no intention of doing so. I was told there was a small sign on the outside of the car explaining the requirement that cash paying riders should enter the first car. Obviously, I did not see it. When one is quickly boarding a streetcar, one does not stop to read small signs on the side of the door, especially when one has been riding the cars for years and things have been basically the same as far as procedure. In any case, someone caught in this situ-

all one car trains, the level of service for individual lines has not improved much at all. Of course, service between Van Ness and Embarcadero is excellent, because for users in this area the specific line does not matter - but this is small consolation for commuters from outside the central city.

That crowding is an issue is itself not big news, but the severe level of crowding identified by our volunteers suggests that Muni's decision to take 20 cars out of service is adversely affecting service. Many riders noted severe, and in some cases unsafe, levels of crowding that make the Muni experience particularly frustrating. Crowding was most severe for riders in the central city, because cars on all lines were full by the time they got to their stop; this lack of sufficient capacity makes it very difficult to depend on Muni at rush hour.

RESCUE MUNI has proposed several "quick fixes" to Muni, that we believe would improve service in the short term. (These are described in greater detail elsewhere in this TRANSFER.) In brief, we recommend:

- Dispatching trains in order at Embarcadero, particularly J/K/M;
- Running two-car trains whenever possible;
- Extending proof-of-payment Metro-wide, with *much better communication* to riders about procedures for paying cash fares; and
- Replacing the N to CalTrain with a fre-

quent, one-car Castro-CalTrain shuttle.

## Conclusions

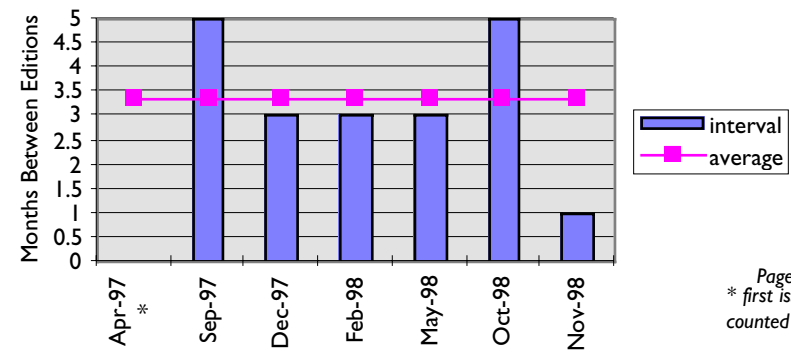
Muni Metro is getting better - and it isn't. Inside the tunnel, service is distinctly more reliable and frequent than it was in the spring - but crowding is such that riders often can't get on. Outside the tunnel, service is not as bad as it was in the spring, except on the M-Ocean View - but on no line is it even as "good" as it was in February 1997. Travel times can occasionally be quite fast in the tunnel - but one needs to plan on long travel times, due to the frequency of delays. Meanwhile, Muni boasts of improving trains per hour at Embarcadero while refusing to do the one thing, dispatching cars in order, that would most reduce the occurrence of delays.

And so the old questions remain. Can Muni reasonably claim to have improved service, having reduced available cars by 20 percent? Can a railway under such conflicting political and bureaucratic pressure operate effectively? Can we expect the railway to meet, under its "no-excuses" 1999 budget, real performance benchmarks based on the rider's experience? Do Mayor Brown and Emilio Cruz have a rational plan for bringing Muni Metro service levels at least back to where they were when the Mayor took office? Will Muni remain the huge issue it is now in next fall's mayoral race? We shall see. ★

## Practicing what we preach...

Some of you may have noticed that this *Transfer* came a bit sooner than expected - in fact, it was *bunched* with the fall issue. We're sensitive to this concern, so we ran the numbers.

Transfer On-Time Survey



# Fall 1998 Metro Survey: Results at a Glance

Chart 1: Percentage of riders delayed (by route)

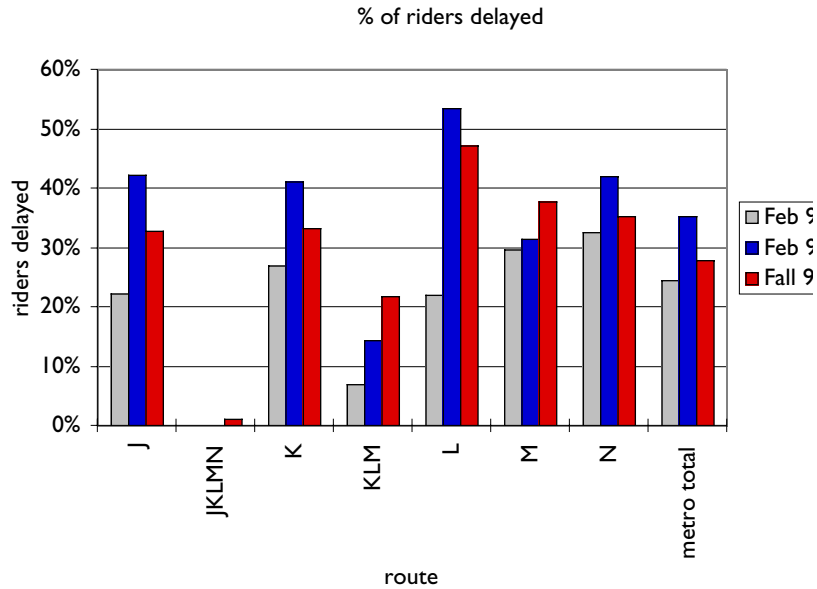
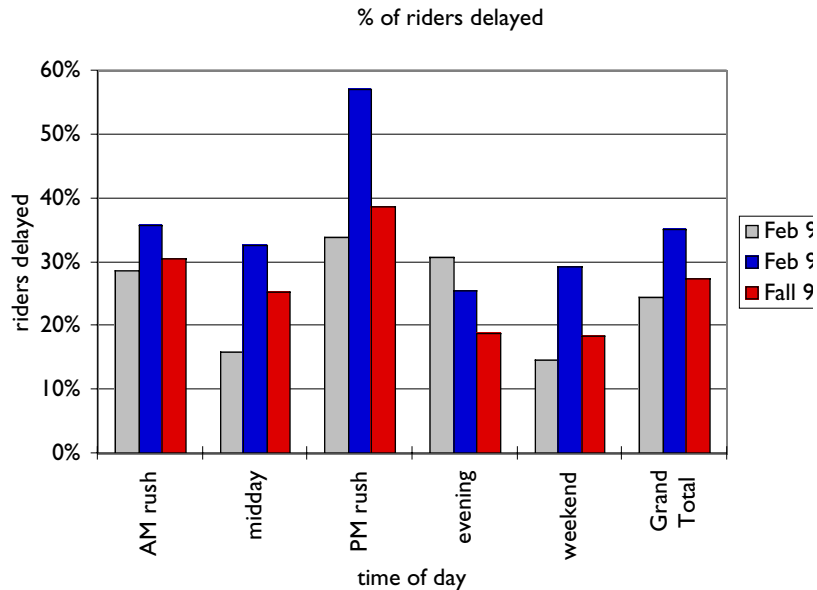


Chart 2: Percentage of riders delayed (by time of day)



# Fall 1998 Metro Survey: Lines Compared

route	%late	grade	2/98 %late	chg	2/97 %late	avg wait time	norm wait time	% min travel time	avg crowd- ing	total responses
F†	0%	*	13%	*	39%	0:04	40%	153%	2.93	14
J	33%	D	42%	-10%	22%	0:08	93%	139%	3.12	188
JKLMN*	1%	A				0:03	20%	207%	2.95	236
K	33%	D	41%	-8%	27%	0:12	84%	125%	3.22	84
KLM**	22%	C	14%	+7%	7%	0:05	80%	217%	3.58	578
L	47%	F	53%	-6%	22%	0:12	143%	125%	3.59	227
M	38%	D	31%	+6%	30%	0:12	91%	126%	3.51	125
N	35%	D	42%	-7%	33%	0:08	96%	130%	3.00	445
<b>total</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>0:07</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>166%</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>1,896</b>

\* Subway between Van Ness & Embarcadero  
 \*\* Subway between West Portal & Embarcadero  
 † Insufficient data - included for completeness only

Chart 3: Crowding (by time of day)

note: 1=empty, 3=standing room only, 5=crush-loaded

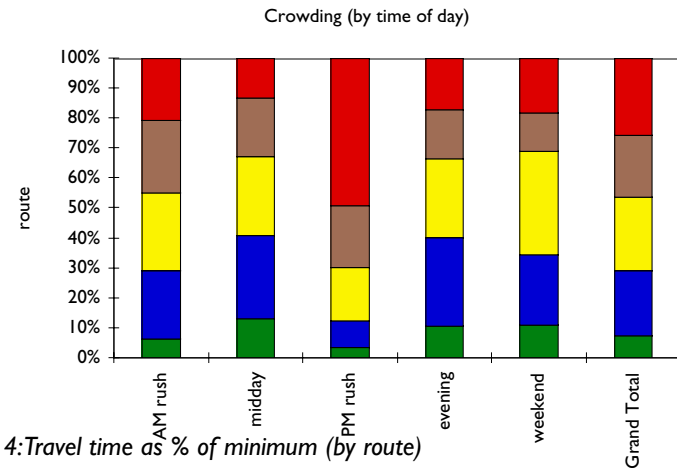


Chart 4: Travel time as % of minimum (by route)

