



Transit Watch: Public Transit in Crisis



December 4, 2020

Friends,

Significant ridership and fare revenue declines due to the coronavirus pandemic threaten the viability and availability of transit services in the near- and long-term.

Our intention with Transit Watch is to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information about COVID-19 and its impact on public transit services and the communities they serve:

Check [this page on our website](#) frequently for the latest information on COVID-19 impacts to public transit in your community.

SF Transportation Agency Faces Huge Layoff As COVID-19 Fiscal Crisis Deepens

- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency officials say that more than 1,200 of its nearly 6,000 employees may face layoffs due to the impacts of the pandemic.
- The agency's budget scenario forecasts a budget deficit of \$68 million in the current fiscal year, which ends next June 30. The situation is projected to be far worse in the 12 months starting next July 1, with a shortfall projected at \$168 million.
- "Our buses are full...we're having to turn away hundreds of essential workers every day, and having to do another 20% service cut on top of the 30% service cuts we've already done," said Jeffery Tumlin, director of SFMTA. "That is completely devastating to everything we're trying to do as an agency."
- Tumlin said Monday that another round of federal aid is likely the agency's best hope to head off massive layoffs.
- Transit agencies nationwide have appealed for another round of operating aid. But that aid, like other pandemic relief, has been stalled by major disagreements between House and Senate leadership on the size of a new relief package.
- Read more from KQED: [SF Transportation Agency Faces Huge Layoff as COVID-19 Fiscal Crisis Deepens](#)

SFMTA Prepares for Massive Potential Layoffs as Budget Crisis Continues to Build

- The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency could lay off as much as 22% of its entire workforce, in order to close a budget deficit that seems increasingly insurmountable without dramatic action.
- Many of the workers most at risk will be the same people who have served on the frontlines during the coronavirus pandemic as bus and train operators, maintenance crews and engineers.
- Workforce cuts of this magnitude would significantly compromise Muni's ability to operate.
- "The future of Muni absent outside support looks very grim, which means the future of San Francisco's economy looks very grim" said Jeffery Tumlin, director of SFMTA.
- According to Tumlin, the agency has done almost everything it can to create savings outside of labor, including "exhausting" potential spending reductions in the capital budget that could be operationalized instead. "This is dangerous because it means eating your seed corn," he said.
- But any solution will be painful, not just for SFMTA and its workers but for the entirety of San Francisco.
- "Without public transit operators, nobody goes to work, school, shopping, doctor's office, church, nothing happens. That right there is a scary and terrifying domino effect on everybody," said Roger Marengo, president of the San Francisco Transit Workers Union Local 250-A.
- Read more from SF Examiner: [SFMTA Prepares for Massive Potential Layoffs as Budget Crisis Continues to Build](#)

Golden Gate Bus Drivers Losing Jobs at Troubled Transit Agency: 'We Won't Be Able to Stay Above Water'

- The Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, which oversees the bridge, buses and ferries, has opted to lay off nearly 150 employees due to the budget crisis created by the pandemic.
- They are the first in what may be a wave of unemployed Bay Area transit workers as other agencies, including BART, Muni and Caltrain, grapple with gaping budget holes and uncertainty.
- At a recent meeting, the District's board revealed the district was losing at least \$1 million per week, and faces a deficit of more than \$48 million.
- The agency considered cutting employees, raising tolls, or a combination of both in order to continue functioning in the face of these severe budget challenges.
- However, these drastic measures still may not be enough, as the district will deplete emergency funds and operating reserves before the end of year if ridership and bridge traffic does not increase.
- Read more from the SF Chronicle: [Golden Gate Bus Drivers Losing Jobs at Troubled Transit Agency: 'We Won't Be Able to Stay Above Water'](#)

For more information, please contact the California Transit Association at COVID-19@caltransit.org.