



Citizens' Advisory Council

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Date: September 12, 2025

To: San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force

From: Aaron Leifer, Chair – SFMTA Citizens' Advisory Council
Chris Arvin, Vice Chair – SFMTA Citizens' Advisory Council

CC: Keka Robinson-Lugman, Secretary – SFMTA Citizens' Advisory Council
Christine Silva, Secretary – SFMTA Board of Directors
Kamini Lall, SFMTA Deputy Chief of Staff
SFMTA CAC Members

Subject: SFMTA CAC Officers' Response to MTA Commission Streamlining Memorandum
Dated September 5, 2025

Members of the San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force,

As the Chair and Vice Chair of the SFMTA Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC), we're writing regarding your evaluation of the CAC in your "Infrastructure, Climate, and Mobility Bodies" memo dated September 5, 2025. We appreciate your efforts compiling this memo and would like to respond to some of your statements with more context about how the CAC operates and the value it brings to the city. We disagree that the body should be considered for elimination or combination with the SFMTA Board of Directors (MTAB).

Since the SFMTA and its CAC were established by a voter mandate in 1999, the CAC has served an important and unique role, allowing members of the public to regularly meet directly with SFMTA staff to review and provide feedback on upcoming agency decisions that will directly impact their lives. Members of the CAC have brought unique, valuable perspectives to inform SFMTA decisions; our body has included transit riders from every district, users of active and shared mobility methods, drivers, people with disabilities, small business owners, parents, and more, from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

This unique opportunity we have as members of the public is complementary to—not redundant with—the MTAB. Our feedback can help guide project decisions before they are brought to a vote. The MTAB reviews and discusses our recommendations during their regular board meetings. MTAB Directors often have follow-up questions during these meetings and find value in understanding how we formed our recommendations as a group.

In your memo, you stated that “overlap [between the CAC and the MTAB] creates an extra layer of review that slows down MTA actions and decision-making,” and that “major items must be heard by two separate bodies with different meeting cadences, which result in months-long review and approval timelines.” We’d like to offer corrections to these statements:

1. Except for the annual budget, there is no requirement that any item be brought to the CAC before it is voted on by the MTAB. The assertion that the CAC results in “months-long review” is without merit. The CAC is not an extra layer for review, but rather, an additional opportunity for in-depth feedback from members of the public.
 - a. The agency’s regular budget process—the solitary case of the charter mandating CAC review—is a process planned out many months in advance. SFMTA staff are aware of this requirement and account for it in their budget process timeline. This budget process is controlled by a timeline set in the charter, so the CAC can’t slow down this decision making. The CAC can and does make recommendations on the budget without delaying either staff decision making or a vote by the MTAB.
2. The CAC also receives presentations on topics that do not go before the MTAB. In these cases, these are topics that do not have a scheduled MTAB vote, do not fit in the busy MTAB agenda, but are important to our members and members of the public. Our input on these topics can still inform staff and guide agency programs.
3. The CAC officers (Chair, Vice Chair) also meet monthly with the SFMTA Chief of Staff’s office to ensure that our calendar of presentations aligns with the most important items on the MTAB calendar. This helps to ensure a minimum duplication of staff effort and that our recommendations will be heard at the MTAB in a timely fashion.

We appreciate your memo’s consideration that the CAC can bolster public trust of an agency with an annual budget of more than \$1 billion—an agency that has, at times, suffered from lower levels of trust with the public. Considering the financial crisis the agency is facing, we feel our role of promoting public engagement and trust is more important than ever.

We thank you for your time and consideration and sincerely hope that you will choose to retain the SFMTA Citizens’ Advisory Council now and in the future. Please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Aaron P. Leifer
SFMTA CAC Chair
District 8 Representative
[Redacted]



Chris Arvin
SFMTA CAC Vice Chair
District 5 Representative
[Redacted]