MEMORANDUM

TO: San Francisco Planning Department
SUBJECT: Parking Policy Recommendations

Although San Francisco offers a variety of transport options, a significant number of residents and workers rely on their cars and use parking spaces. Of the total number of parking spaces in the city, roughly half are on-street parking, most of which are used by residents, and around a quarter are off-street residential spaces. Thus, residents account for the bulk of parking demand. Parking demand in certain areas also exceeds supply, which means that drivers often cruise to find a parking spot. This in turn contributes to traffic delays and congestion as well as increased greenhouse gas emissions.

To address its parking challenges, the city should implement effective parking management strategies including pricing and regulatory reforms instead of expanding parking supply. To make more informed decisions however, the city should update its parking inventory and collect more data including occupancy surveys and parking behavior. For instance, while the city has data on the number of residential permits issued, it does not have information on the number of on-street parking in the 27 zones.

The recommendations outlined below are categorized based on the type of parking and are ordered in terms of the ease of implementation.

On-street parking

Regulate parking locations

The absence of effective parking management often leads to a shortage in some areas and an oversupply in other areas. The city can regulate where cars can park at certain times of the day to encourage drivers to use underutilized parking spaces.

Implement performance parking

Smart meters should be installed with prices adjusting to meet the target occupancy rates. An 85% occupancy rate target is usually set to minimize cruising, with the remaining parking slots left for those who put a higher premium on it. The city can survey the occupancy rates in different zones and set the initial price levels depending on the time of the day. The prices should be reviewed periodically. However, the city should also balance the price adjustments to address concerns from business owners who are worried that overpriced parking might drive away customers. Pricing on-street parking to reflect demand may result in changes such as postponing trips, decreased congestion, higher turnover rate with more cars able to use the parking space, and carpooling.

Increase prices of residential parking permits

Current parking prices are too low and do not reflect the true cost of the parking space. Residential parking permits (RPP) cost only $60 annually. However, based on land values, parking should cost at least $700 a year. By keeping costs low, the city is effectively subsidizing cars and driving. Raising RPP prices to its proper value will certainly be met with strong push back from residents. To avoid this, RPP prices can be pegged at a certain percentage of the land value. Charging fees that are commensurate with the land values in the neighborhood also addresses concerns that households with more modest incomes might

be priced out. In addition to increasing RPP charges, the city should also consider capping the number of permits it issues, with RPP holders authorized to lease their spots to non-residents. Limiting the parking supply can discourage car ownership.

While municipal parking revenues are currently allocated to MUNI, a portion of the additional parking revenues generated should be reinvested in the community. This will increase the acceptability of the RPP price increase among residents. The funds should be allocated to parking benefit districts and business improvement districts and spent on sidewalk improvements and other revitalization initiatives.

Off-street parking

Eliminate minimum requirements

Imposing minimum requirements often result to an oversupply of parking. San Francisco's zoning code requires residential developments to have one parking space per unit while commercial parking standards vary depending on the type and floor area of the building. Although minimum parking requirements are originally intended to address parking demand, it led to developers building more parking than necessary. Requiring minimums often made it more difficult and expensive to develop affordable housing.

Shift to open option parking

Without minimum requirements, developers who are more familiar with the parking needs of their clientele have more flexibility to decide how much parking they will provide and how they intend to use their properties. For instance, rental apartments near transit lines or elderly housing developments do not need a 1:1 parking to unit ratio. Turning to a market-based approach can lead to a host of benefits including the promotion of other forms of transport.

Impose maximum requirements in strategic areas

Maximum parking requirements should be implemented to discourage car dependency. The city can establish maximum requirements in certain zones. Downtown and commercial areas with access to public transit and other mobility options should have lower maximums compared to areas with poor transit access.