

## San Francisco Parking Policy Letters

**Jonathan Lyens**

Dear commissioners,

On behalf of the FDR Democratic Club of San Francisco, for seniors and people with disabilities, I thank you for taking up the issue of disability parking. Our members I request that you formally oppose the recommendations of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to begin charging people with disabilities to park and impose time limits. Rather than reiterate the points that we made in testimony at your January meeting I am inclosing a copy of the letter we sent to you at the early part of 2014.

We ask that you reject these attacks on people with disabilities and send a strong message to San Francisco, and all local jurisdictions, that changes to disability parking should be something developed after careful consultation with a broad spectrum of the disability community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,  
Jonathan Lyens

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**Subject:** FDR Democratic Club of SF Opposition To SFMTA Disability Parking Proposals

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you to the Commission for considering the recommendations of San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) to implement drastic changes to the state's disability parking placard system. As President of the FDR Democratic Club of San Francisco, for seniors and people with disabilities (FDR Dems), I write to communicate the strong objections of our members to the SFMTA proposals to begin charging disability parking placard holders to park and impose time limits. It is important for the Commission to be aware that the SFMTA brings these proposals to Sacramento as City policy; though the proposals have never been voted on by any body of San Francisco elected officials. The FDR Dems believe this to be a subversion of the democratic process.

The FDR Dems are dedicated to the enfranchisement of seniors and people with disabilities into all aspects of society. At our meeting on November 6, 2013, the membership of the FDR Dems voted unanimously to oppose the SFMTA proposals to impose time limits and begin charging disability parking placard holders to park.

We oppose these recommendations because of the undue financial hardship placed on placard holders, and a rejection of the premise that the only effective way to deal with fraud and misuse is removal of benefits the program offers. Seniors and people with disabilities face much higher rates of poverty than many other communities. Indeed, the unemployment rate in the disability community remains nearly twice that of the non-disabled population; and seniors continue to make choices between which essential needs they can afford each month, like groceries and prescription drugs. Moreover, mass transit is not always a feasible alternative for people with disabilities, and as every driver knows, the cost of parking does not end with feeding the meter – it includes paying ever more expensive parking tickets. Placing this additional financial burden on disability parking placard holders will inhibit seniors and people with disabilities from equal participation in society. What's more, the FDR Dems reject the notion that fraud and abuse of the current system is so pervasive that the only effective solution is removal of these two benefits. We would draw an analogy to the position of some law makers in Congress, who believe the abuse of food stamps and unemployment benefits is so wide spread that the only option is cutting these already meager programs. We call upon the SFMTA to rethink their pursuit of these harmful policies and seek strategies that maximize benefits while limiting harm. Unexplored alternatives exist.

In addition to our concerns regarding the impact of these recommendations, we have serious reservations about the process the SFMTA used in formulating the entire package and the lack of community input during their formulation. The FDR Dems first became aware of this Committee after reading the outcome of its work in the local news media. In concert with the Committee, we held a community forum to discuss the policy recommendations on July 31, 2013, with nearly 40 attendees. At that meeting it was apparent that nearly all in attendance had serious concerns about the recommendations and the lack of involving the community in their formulation. In response to this concern, we were informed that the recommendations were final and would proceed as an “all or nothing” package. After prolonged discussion, and direct appeals to me from multiple members of the Committee, the FDR Dems decided to delay taking a formal position on the recommendations at our August 2013 meeting. This was done with the expectation that the SFMTA staff would engage with our members in a sincere effort to craft a reasonable package that would have broad based support. Unfortunately, this has not happened. Moreover, while actively lobbying organizations that represent seniors and people with disabilities to not oppose these recommendations, the SFMTA actively sought support from business interests more likely to be supportive, such as the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the City's Small Business Commission.

Our communities have achieved great strides in the past generation. However, major gains in full societal integration remain allusive. Implementation of these recommendations will set seniors and people with disabilities back years. The FDR Dems call upon the SFMTA to jettison these harmful proposals. Let us find a way to deal with the real issues of misuse without placing additional undue hardship on law abiding people with disabilities.

Regards,

Jonathan Lyens,  
President, FDR Democratic Club of San Francisco  
[www.frdemclub.com](http://www.frdemclub.com)