

Tenderloin prevails over Muni

Daly compromise restores 2 of the 38-Geary stops

BY TOM CARTER

THE San Francisco County Transportation Authority dealt Muni a blow and gave the Tenderloin a little gift when it voted on Dec. 14 to restore two of the five controversial 38-Geary bus stops that Muni's Inner Geary Street Transit Plan proposed to eliminate.

The transit panel acted on the \$263,000 cost of the plan that would use Prop. K funds. The overall plan would streamline transportation between Van Ness and Market along the 38-Geary line making many changes, among them cutting five stops in the Tenderloin out of 19 in the corridor. This would save one minute on the 38 run, according to Muni.

At the authority's Nov. 23 meeting, Tenderloin activists' protests caused Muni to pull back the plan and try to work with the neighborhood representatives. But at four meetings in Supervisor Chris Daly's office (Daly did not attend), activists and Muni reached no agreement.

The proposed cuts were not actually part of the money issue before the transit authority on Dec. 14. But

Daly, citing the looming decrease in bus service to his low-income, transit-dependent neighborhood, proposed an option that would leave two stops intact.

Passing 9-1, Daly's compromise saves stops on Geary at Hyde and at Jones near the steepest streets in the neighborhood, and relinquishes the stops on O'Farrell at Polk and at Mason, and on Geary at Mason. Eliminating the stop at O'Farrell and Polk is a substitute for restoring the stop at O'Farrell and Larkin near Little Saigon. The O'Farrell/Mason cut was a substitute for the reinstated O'Farrell/Leavenworth stop.

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd cast the lone no vote.

Now the measure goes back to the Municipal Transportation Agency in altered form to be considered on Jan. 4.

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The 38-Geary line is Muni's most heavily traveled route.

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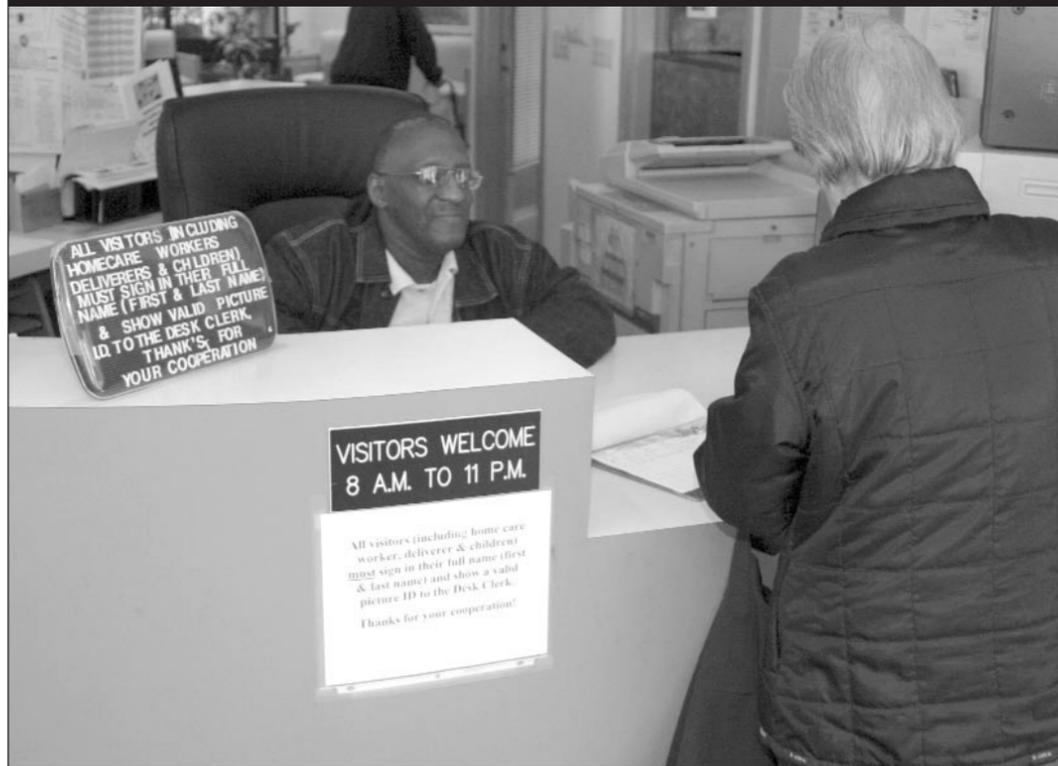
This is a double issue of Central City Extra. See you in February.

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

STRESS PART OF THE JOB



Paul Hickman mans the desk at the Dorothy Day residence hotel.

PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Desk clerks

Demand is rising at SRO hotels, but pay is dismal

BY TOM CARTER

THE demand for desk clerks in residential and SRO hotels is rising and more training sessions are being added as a stream of clerks leaves the ranks for higher-paying jobs while more single-room-occupancy hotels are approved for housing the homeless.

Conservatively, the 125 SROs in the Tenderloin employ more than 300 desk clerks in a job that requires savvy, patience and good communication but has low pay and a high turnover.

Desk clerking is basically an entry-level job. And for somebody getting on their feet, it can be a godsend leading to security guard or receptionist positions, to tourist hotels, sometimes even into management. While turnover at SROs is fairly regular, some clerks find contentment working in a comfortable residential hotel, and may stay 10 years.

(Residence hotels, as opposed to single-room-occupancy hotels, often with communal bathrooms, have a more stable population with one-bedroom apartments and bathrooms suitable for families and couples.)

The common \$9-\$10 hourly wage is a reason some SRO desk clerks surreptitiously charge a \$5-\$10 visitor fee, although the underhanded practice was outlawed three years ago. "We've worked on this (problem) a lot,"

says Sarah Norr, who organizes tenants for the Central City SRO Collaborative. "But it's a minority (of clerks) who are doing it to make up for their low salaries. The police are checking (this month) if the SROs on a list we gave them have the visitor policy posted that says you can't charge."

For all the pleasantries exchanged at an SRO hotel front desk, the strain of communications gone sour is a down side of the job. Interacting effectively is the backbone of the job. SROs have seen their share of ill-tempered, aggressive people causing arguments and confrontations – to say nothing of the inevitable out-of-control derelicts trying to barge inside.

Four years ago, only one-day trainings by the hotels existed. But it was evident more needed to be done to safeguard people and property in the Tenderloin and South of Market with their significant populations of substance abusers, drug traffickers, mentally ill and rowdies. A more professional standard for desk clerks was sought.

"There's a big demand for desk clerks in residential hotels and SROs," says Elizabeth Heuson, until this fall director of employment and training for the Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative, composed of five nonprofits that provide housing to the homeless. "And it's why we created our training in 2001."

Heuson, who now has the same title at Community Housing Partnership, says it's "one of the most difficult jobs in a residence hotel. It's 24 hours (three shifts), high stress, entry level, and low on the pay scale, lower than the living wage. A trained person starts usually as on-call relief. There's quite a bit of turnover – maybe half don't last a year."

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