

What The City needs from Muni's next boss

It seems fair to say that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's next executive director and CEO should be someone who is not Nathaniel Ford.

In what Muni officials and Ford describe as a mutual agreement, he is exiting his job as the highest-paid public official in San Francisco at the end of the month. His departure leaves the troubled transit agency in a particularly challenging phase. Muni faces a seemingly nonstop fiscal crisis and is falling far behind a growing backlog of needed capital spending. It is also just entering the enforcement stage of a highly contentious contract arbitration that could yet trigger wildcat strikes or courtroom rejections.

What Muni and its beleaguered riders need from their next transit-traffic-parking chief is an in-it-for-the-long-haul, 100 percent commitment to solving the problems. Success would require a



Reiskin



Ginsburg



Rohan

long-term vision that translates into a practical plan for improvements — and the willingness to stay to see it through. Especially imperative would be a strong leadership ability, winning the trust of both rank-and-file Muni employees and the SFMTA board — most of whom Ford had obviously estranged by the end of his 5½ years here.

To give credit where due, Ford did make Muni somewhat better — just not nearly better enough. Not long after arriving from Atlanta, he made it all too clear he was strongly interested in using San Francisco as a stepping stone

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to some even-larger city's better-paying transit post. The SFMTA board was discussing buying out his contract as early as March, while Ford eagerly pursued a job in Washington, D.C.

Regrettably, the board had just given him a three-year contract extension in January, so it was stuck paying him \$384,000 of our taxpayer money to go quietly, including three months of a \$3,000-per-month family health care policy. This comes at a time when Muni is balancing its \$22 million deficit by making parking fees and monthly transit passes more expensive.

The last thing Muni needs is another

out-of-town transit executive "star" who shows up here with one foot already out the door. So at least it is encouraging that the SFMTA board wants to find a local hire this time — someone with proven experience in successfully leading a Bay Area public agency, even if not necessarily a transit specialist.

The first replacement possibilities being floated include Ed Reiskin, chief of the San Francisco Department of Public Works; Phil Ginsburg, head of the Recreation and Park Department; and Carter Rohan, the SFMTA's executive deputy director and interim boss. Reiskin deservedly seems like the early favorite. Ginsburg has already announced he doesn't want the job, and Rohan spends a lot of time in Texas because his family lives there.

All three appear to have the type of qualifications San Francisco needs for its Muni turnaround leader. If none of them get the job, it should be somebody like them.

FROM READERS

Intoxicated sports fans a transit safety issue

I am a regular Caltrain commuter, traveling between San Mateo and San Francisco five days a week for work. During the baseball season, intoxicated fans regularly create an unpleasant environment for others. Recently I saw this unpleasantness turn violent in a way that was all too predictable.

When the fight began, Caltrain continued down the tracks, with conductors unaware of what was taking place. There were no cameras and no way to alert the conductor of an emergency. Crowds made it impossible for bystanders to move to a safe place.

Trains full of intoxicated fans with zero police or Caltrain presence create a grave public safety issue. It is only a matter of time before an innocent person will be seriously hurt or killed if this continues.

I know I am not the first to raise this concern. The conductors I've spoken to claim they've voiced their concerns for years.

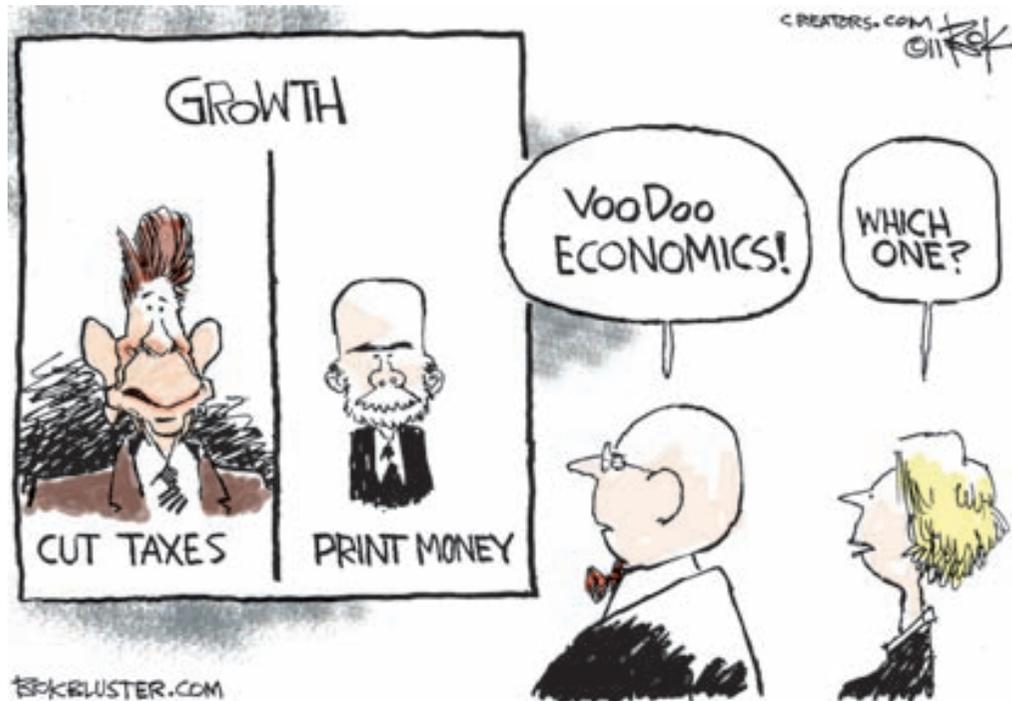
I'm told fights on postgame trains are a regular occurrence. Not reconciling this issue is criminally negligent.

Kory Stewart
San Mateo

Expensive memorial event

I'm a big fan of the job that the police and firemen do and the risks that they take to protect our citizens. However, at a time of significant budget shortages, including

TODAY'S CARTOON By Chip Bok/Creators Syndicate



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possible layoffs within those departments, who paid for the recent \$2 million to \$3 million memorial event for the fallen firemen?

How much was spent to assemble 200 fire engines, thousands of firemen from around the country, provide police escorts and close major highways during the Friday commute? Did this event have the surviving family members' interests foremost in mind? Or was it intended to demonstrate the influence of a powerful union?

What did this cost the citizens? Does anyone dare touch this politically sensitive subject?

Walter Keefe
San Francisco

Credit forced on cabbies

I am sympathetic to the anger cabbies feel about the credit card fees they are charged. This is because they are forced to accept credit cards.

Other businesses that don't like

to pay these processing fees can choose to be cash-only. Let the cabbies who don't mind the potential of losing some business make that choice as well. Cabbies shouldn't be forced to cater to people who can't be bothered to carry cash.

If given the freedom of choice, and cash-only cabs were to lose enough business, the market will dictate that they need to accept these fees and take credit cards as payment.

Marc Schoenfeld
San Francisco

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