

**WALK SAN FRANCISCO**  
**2015 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Aaron Peskin

Candidate for: District 3 Supervisor

PERSONAL WALKING EXPERIENCE

*1. Please describe what role walking plays in your life.*

Long distance backpacking trips and Himalayan treks have been the most joyous parts of my life. I've walked the entire 218-mile John Muir Trail on multiple occasions and literally trekked over 1000 miles in the Indian and Nepal Himal. In San Francisco, the district that I'm running in (District 3) is made up of a collection of distinct neighborhoods that are best explored on foot, and I have been walking the slopes and stairways of Russian and Telegraph Hills, the alleyways of Chinatown and the beautiful expanse of our northeastern waterfront for decades. Walking and riding MUNI have always guaranteed me direct contact with a diversity of neighborhood residents who give me updates on what's happening on the ground in the district. Walking is how I see and hear from the community, and I love being out and about in the district.

BIG PICTURE

*2. Describe your vision of a healthy, safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation system for the city and the role that walking plays in that vision.*

I have always been a champion of making our public transportation system more efficient, accountable and better funded. In 2007, a Republican billionaire bankrolled a ballot measure designed to roll back the vision of a well-connected, multi-modal transit system that San Franciscans championed in the City's 1973 Transit First Policy. I authored Proposition A in response, a charter amendment that implemented widespread transportation agency reforms and netted our public transit system over \$200 million.

District 3 is famous for its criss-crossing network of cable cars. I regularly scale the hills on our streetcars with tourists, families with children and commuters en route to work. Safety continues to be a pressing concern, with more and more unregulated Transportation Network Companies (TNC's) on the road recklessly ignoring Vehicle Code 21756. The consequences of drivers illegally passing streetcars while they unload passengers have been devastating, with pedestrians and cable car drivers seriously injured after being hit by negligent motorists.

I have also been an advocate for a more efficient MUNI system through the addition of rolling stock and operators, rather than the uniform subtraction of bus stops. Particularly in neighborhoods like Chinatown, home to a high density of seniors and families without cars, pedestrians depend on safe and comfortable rest stops in close proximity to their homes and senior centers, places of worship, parks and schools. Part of the importance of fully funding the recommendations of the Transit Effectiveness Program (TEP) will be the additional pedestrian & streetscape improvements that are included within MUNI Forward projects to accommodate

more frequent ridership, like bus bulbs which also act as traffic calming and provide pedestrians with safe boarding areas.

I was also the lead advocate for the New Jefferson Street Improvement Project, which created the first pedestrian promenade and “shared street” to accommodate the heavy tourist loads along Fisherman’s Wharf. Shared streets encourage a mix of transportation modes, force cars to slow down and provide much needed public open space for residents and tourists to enjoy.

### VISION ZERO

*3. If elected, what steps would you take to ensure the implementation of Vision Zero projects? In your answer, please explain how you would address trade-offs that may result from building a safe transportation system (e.g., the removal of parking in order to improve visibility of pedestrians at intersections, or the removal of vehicle lanes to slow traffic and shorten pedestrian crossing distances, etc.).*

I am a proponent of Supervisor Kim’s Vision Zero Policy for San Francisco and would push to target implementation in neighborhoods with the most vulnerable populations, such as low income communities of color, seniors, the disabled and youth. Enforcement should be a top priority in District 3, which has the second highest rate of pedestrian injuries and fatalities outside of District 6. SFPD must work more closely with SFMTA/DPT to enforce violations of the Vehicle and Transportation Codes, including stepping up enforcement of Don’t Block the Box and targeting the top 5 most deadly driving violations. A car in the hands of a reckless or rushed driver is a deadly weapon and yet SFPD has been slow to increase its citations to curb such deadly behavior. If we know cars are blocking the box at Pine and Market or speeding along high injury corridors like Stockton Street, then we should be targeting these areas for regular enforcement.

Education is also crucial, given that many drivers use District 3 as a throughway to other parts of the city and Marin County. If re elected, I would prioritize funding capacity building and technical assistance for community organizations that are the experts at grassroots and culturally competent outreach in their neighborhoods. If we are really going to challenge prevailing beliefs and behaviors, community leaders and organizations must be consulted and partner with the City on long term cultural shifts.

Finally, I would prioritize engineering investments that have been vetted by the communities they impact. When I was at City Hall, I had a reputation for getting things done and cutting through bureaucratic red tape to win considerable service increases and infrastructure investments for my district. We already know what needs to be improved to save lives it is a question of political will to get it done. We don’t need another Pedestrian Strategy or WalkFirst Plan. We need our city agencies to share resources and partner to get the projects into the

ground as quickly as possible. The Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan is a perfect example of a comprehensive strategy that just needs to be implemented. The SFMTA has made some strides with an advanced stoplight and lead pedestrian interval at Kearny and Clay, but those are near term solutions to address a known dangerous intersection. It took the death of 77 year old Ai You Zhou to spur the city to consider long term improvements at this intersection. This is unacceptable. The circulation study conducted by the SFCTA in partnership with Chinatown community organizations has highlighted the need for a scramble signal at this intersection, as well as signal retiming along Kearny Street. The lights are currently timed at 30 mph, which doesn't help encourage motorists to drive at the legal 25 mph. Kearny and Jackson is another intersection that I would prioritize for engineering improvements if I were re-elected, as I did when I first pushed to install scramble signals on Stockton Street 15 years ago.

*4. What would you do to ensure there is enough funding for pedestrian safety improvements and Vision Zero projects?*

I have always been a strong advocate for funding SFMTA, with the caveat that there is oversight and accountability. The first action undertaken by our Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2003 was to repeal the adjusted increase in our state Vehicle License Fee and bring it down to 1998 levels. The reality is that a world class public transportation system and long term pedestrian safety improvements are costly and worth public investment. As a lifelong environmentalist and pedestrian safety advocate, I would advocate for the City to take advantage of the flexibility granted by Senator Mark Leno's SB 1492 and put a vehicle license fee bill on the ballot that would help fund badly needed street upgrades.

POLICY/LEGISLATION

*5. The most dangerous transportation behavior in the city is speed, as it exponentially increases a victim's risk of injury or death. Two key strategies that have effectively reduced speeds in other states and countries are automated speed cameras and decreased speed limits. Unfortunately, the State of California doesn't permit automated speed enforcement and only allows speeds lower than 25 mph in school zones. Do you support these strategies? If so, how will you work with your community and State legislators to change these (and similar) laws so the City can use these strategies to save lives?*

I absolutely support lowering speed limits in school zones and senior zones. Chinatown has the highest density of seniors who don't own vehicles in the City, and they are constantly at risk from drivers speeding or failing to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. The City should be doing more to press the State Attorney General and our state legislators to allow automated speed enforcement, at the very least in known high injury corridors and intersections. As a city that has adopted Vision Zero, we have an opportunity to be a policy leader at the state level and partner with allies in other dense urban areas like Los Angeles to make reforms. California

has the highest number of pedestrian collisions in the country, so clearly it's time to give additional resources to enforcing the existing laws let alone strengthening and improving them.

### SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

*6. Given the student assignment policy, 41% of San Francisco elementary school students live within walking distance of school. Unfortunately, only 25% take the short journey. Studies have shown that children who walk to school enjoy key health benefits and academic advantages, as well as getting more quality bonding time with parents. What would you do to increase the number of children walking and biking to school, and what would you do to increase safety around local schools?*

There are already many families in District 3 that depend on walking and MUNI to get to school. I would continue to work with community and parent organizations to organize around pedestrian safety issues, including advocating for ongoing and regular bilingual programming through the Safe Routes to School Program. Given that for most families, Walk to School Day is everyday, the City should be partnering more closely with SFUSD to standardize safety protocols. Engineering improvements should be prioritized for schools, particularly ones that are not within residential enclaves and struggle with geographic proximity to fast moving arterials. There is no reason that it should takes years for parents to get a speed bump or other traffic calming project at their school it's really just unacceptable.

### WALKABILITY/WALKING MODE INCREASE

*7. The City has established a goal to steadily increase the percentage of all walking trips and walking trips for commuting in the next 5 years. Do you support this goal? If yes, what would you do to help the City realize it?*

Absolutely. Walking is an affordable transit mode and a functional necessity in San Francisco. There are those who certainly walk for recreation, but the fact of the matter is that everyone is a pedestrian at some point in the day. More people would walk more often if they felt safer. The City can increase its walking trips by being accountable to its Vision Zero policy and creating citywide connections, as well as protected networks of residential alleyways.

Ensuring future development prioritizes neighborhood commercial space for accessible small businesses on the ground floor of projects is critical to encouraging pedestrian foot traffic, as well. As Supervisor, I was a champion of preserving the connectivity and character of our neighborhoods and fought against big box chain stores with mega parking lots that encouraged more car trips. Walking is still the best way to patronize your small businesses and connect with your neighbors on the street.

8. *Walk San Francisco believes that everyone deserves equal access to enjoyable places to walk. Walk SF is working with community groups and the City to install 'Intersection Murals' that will advance this goal, as well as other Pavement to Parks projects that reclaim wide/dangerous intersections for public use (e.g., Persia Triangle). How important are these projects to you, and how will you support them?*

I love this idea. I think that school and senior zones should be given priority for intersection murals that create way finding and traffic calming simultaneously these projects offer great opportunities for neighborhood groups to engage in intergenerational collaboration, as well. District 3 has some lovely hidden open space projects, like the Broadway Gardens, which I helped create during my time in office. They should all be accessible via safe and enjoyable pedestrian routes.

#### OTHER EXPERIENCE

9. *Have you championed or strongly supported any other initiatives that are in line with Walk San Francisco's mission of walking in San Francisco safe, so that our community is healthier and livable?*

The Central Subway is a community led transportation project that I have advocated for, as well as the city's Free MUNI for Seniors and Youth programs. I have also secured millions of dollars for renovating our neighborhood parks, including safe and clean public restrooms for park & plaza users.

10. *Is there anything else you'd like to share with the people of San Francisco, all of whom walk or travel with an assistive device at some point?*

I served on the Board of Supervisors for eight years, including four as Board President. I am a committed neighborhood advocate and I have demonstrated through my long legislative track record that I will go to bat for our City's most vulnerable residents and work to pass a values based budget.