



BASIC INFORMATION

Name: John Farrell

Candidate for: Board of Supervisors, District 7

PERSONAL WALKING EXPERIENCE

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

I am an avid walker. I walk daily with my three dogs around my neighborhood. My wife and I also choose to walk to the commercial strips near our home. In our free time, we enjoy walking along Ocean Beach and through the public pathways of the Golden Gate Park. Instead of driving my car, I walk to the MUNI Forest Hill Station for my downtown meetings.

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.

Walking and bicycling needs to become a more viable means of transportation. Many of our sidewalks need to be resurfaced, widened and buffered from traffic for pedestrian safety. Our streets need to be resurfaced and repaired from potholes as needed to ensure bicycle and pedestrian safety.

I envision a well-planned intricate public transit system that provides a safe, affordable, efficient, and sustainable way for commuters to travel anywhere in San Francisco without the need or desire for a car and that utilizes walking paths to enhance the overall system. We must have an increase amount of walking paths that are ecological and safely designed (well lit, free of debris, and policed) that offer an easy and desirable alternative. These walking paths must help separate pedestrians from other traffic (with the use of sidewalks, overpasses, underpasses, etc.) while accommodating wheelchairs and strollers. They will also help connect the outer lining neighborhoods of San Francisco to downtown.

Our current system has long been neglected and needs to be addressed. Safety and efficiency are our key issues as well as how we are going to handle future growth. We must make public transportation safer and more efficient by increasing policing and making sure areas are well lit. Our subway system needs to have minimum interruptions, especially during rush hour, and we must ensure there are enough vehicles to support the system. We must design our streets to better support its traffic in a more efficient and safe way. For example, street signals must be installed in high injury corridors. We must ensure the safety of pedestrians while keeping the steady flow of traffic. I support the undergrounding of the M line to increase the services to the 18,000 new residents expected at Parkmerced.

VISION ZERO

3. If elected, what steps would you take to ensure the implementation of Vision Zero projects? In your answer, please explain whether you pledge to prioritize safety improvements that narrow crossing distances and slow traffic (bulbouts, “road diets,” etc.) over other competing demands for street space, including parking or automobile lanes.

Pedestrian safety is my number one priority. Within the last two years, I have lost two of my friends in separate fatal accidents when they were struck and killed while walking across a San Francisco street. This has become a very personal issue for me. I would immediately ensure that all high injury corridors be addressed. I would advocate safety improvements and slow traffic methods in whatever ways that best meets each situation. Pedestrian safety must come first. I pledge to advocate improvements that increase safety through the use of better road designs; separating pedestrians from other traffic with the use of raised and highly visible crossings, sidewalks, refuge islands, raised medians, overpasses, underpasses, lowering the speed limit, narrowing the streets, removing obstacles that block drivers views, and include buffer zones such as rows of trees placed between roads and sidewalks.

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

As a former Assistant Assessor for Budget and Special Projects, Mayor’s Budget Analyst, and Senior Analyst for Harvey Rose, I am very familiar with the workings of the City budget and what needs to be done to secure revenue sources and appropriate fund allocations. My budget priorities would be to identify new tax revenue, hold City departments accountable in order to cut waste, and to prioritize essential services and programs, including Vision Zero and other pedestrian safety programs, to ensure they have sufficient funding.

My first step will be to have the Board of Supervisors direct the Budget Analyst, Harvey Rose, to conduct a zero-based budget. I believe, with this zero-based study, we can identify monies to fund our City’s Vision Zero and pedestrian safety improvement projects.

I have written numerous articles for the Westside Observer about the City not receiving its fair share of taxes such as the Presidio property and the Giant’s stadium that add to the City’s tax burden. These and many tax dodges like them take away necessary City funding for our pressing pedestrian safety needs.

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?

Yes, I support automated speed cameras and decreased speed limits and pledge to work with our Sacramento legislators as well as our local City officials and neighborhood groups to bring these safety changes to our City. I would put forth resolutions to urge State legislators to implement these strategies.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

6. Approximately 41% of San Francisco elementary school students live within walking distance of school. Unfortunately, only 25% take the short journey by foot. 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 and safety of children walking and biking to school?

I would work directly with school officials to set up programs to promote walking and biking to schools. Each school must adopt a program that provides parents with an easy and safe way for their children to walk or bike to school. Safety must be priority and we must incorporate a volunteer system in which prescreened adults watch over groups of children walking. Also we must expand the use of traffic guards to a wider radius and not just at the school corners. We must also ensure that these walking paths are well designed to ensure safety to these schools and can accommodate wheelchairs and strollers.

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?

Yes, I absolutely support this goal and I would help the City to realize it by setting an example as a Supervisor by increasing my walking trips and report on it to the public through the use of social media. I would also work with local communities to educate and promote walking. I would also foster ways to increase the use of local businesses by streamlining the permit process for parklets and encouraging pedestrian-only events throughout the City. I would be an advocate to improve our public transit system and pedestrian roadways making walking a safer, more desirable and feasible means of transportation. I would encourage MUNI free fare City events. I would work with local businesses to review and implement strategies that would encourage people to shop within walking distance. I would advocate cleaner and safer streets by design and increase of traffic guards as well as police patrol. I would help educate residents and work with local schools and agencies to promote walking. I would encourage the development of more promenades, parklets, and walking paths that are designed to better connect our City and promote walking.

8. Walk San Francisco believes that everyone deserves equal access to enjoyable places to walk, and that our street space can be better used by shifting excess street right-of-way from private automobiles to places for people to walk and gather. How do you feel about projects like these that improve our public realm, and how will you support them?

I agree. For example, I am a big fan of the weekend Golden Gate Park closure to vehicle traffic and would advocate more of this throughout the City. I would promote increasing the amount of walking paths as well as promenades that incorporate restaurants and shops making walking more appealing. I would also request a review on the permit process for parklets to see what can be done to expedite the process and make it more affordable. I would advocate improving our public transit system and route design to encourage walking throughout the City. There should be more pedestrian only zones throughout the City and I would endorse having “pedestrian only” events with local commercial strips to make these special events successful in promoting local businesses while encouraging people to walk.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

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

In 1997, I was co-chairman of Adopt-A-Muni, which revitalized the Forest Hill Station - the oldest in the Muni system. The station was in sad shape inside and out: graffiti-covered, rat infested, crime-ridden and dirty, with a platform ceiling that leaked heavily in the rainy season. Our group organized citizens in District 7 and one year later, by pulling funds in from the city, businesses and individuals and due to our direct efforts to clean it up, Forest Hill station became one of the cleanest, safest, and ADA compliant transportation facilities in the state. As a result of our efforts, Adopt-A-Muni received an award from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1998, and was named Best Transit-Related Organization in the State of California (MTA Grand Central Reward) by the MTA in 1999.

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 have always been a neighborhood activist and taken part in many events to help improve the City. One that stands out in my mind the most involved the safety of our frail elderly at Laguna Honda Hospital. In 2004, incidences of senior abuse at Laguna Honda Hospital led me, along with neighbors and doctors, to successfully overturn a policy that transferred drug patients and homeless from General Hospital to Laguna Honda. Further, the policy displaced our seniors and put our LHH doctors and staff, patients and surrounding neighborhoods at risk without proper safety measures.