

Muni's new Clipper card signals end of cash fares

But youth, senior passes come with much rigamarole

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

THE way to pay fares is changing, Muni proclaims. The riding public groans.

Which one of the near 700,000 daily Muni transactions doesn't hold the horrifying potential of The Ride From Hell? If you go Muni, you know.

So, when Muni decreed that the payment of fares was shifting to an electronic system, riders braced for trouble. Will the Muni-imposed deadline of November 1 for full electronic fare payment compliance bring chaos? Would the arrival of plastic card payment for transit simplify the traveler's life, or would Muni once again be dope-slapped by commuters and politicians for strewing defeat in the path of victory?

Enter Clipper — a credit card-size piece of plastic linked to Bay Area regional transit systems — valid on Muni, BART, AC Transit, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit and Ferry and soon on SamTrans and Valley Transit Authority.

The majority of Muni riders — over 18 but not yet 65 — will need an Adult Clipper, available at all Muni Metro station ticket vending machines and 88 retail outlets in the

city. The Adult Clipper card is free. Muni will start charging \$5 for one in June. Free is good, but the Clipper must be obtained with at least a \$2 minimum loaded fee — fare for one ride and timely transfers (within 90 minutes of initial use). Clipper can be loaded at the station ticket vending machines, the retailers and even by phone. Cash loads are recognized by Clipper immediately. Credit card loads take three days to kick in. For \$60 you get the equivalent of the

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Clipper is read electronically, opening the fare gate.

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EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

YELLOW GREASE



ILLUSTRATION BY AKIKO SMITH

The TL, with 7% of San Francisco's food service establishments, has the potential to be a significant supplier of FOG — raw material for converting to biodiesel.

TENDERLOIN GUSHER!

Cooking oil from 216 eateries could become a steady source for biodiesel

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN AND MARJORIE BEGGS

TWO centuries ago, the discovery of gold in the Sierra and the visionary forging of the railroads helped transform Yerba Buena, a sleepy coastal fishing village, into metropolitan San Francisco.

Today, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is poised to mine a new resource — fats, cooking oil and grease (FOG) systematically gleaned from the city's 3,100 food service establishments. About 7% of those eateries are in the Tenderloin, making our little corner of the city a potentially rich strike, if not a gusher.

SFGreasecycle, PUC's 3-year-old program of free pickup of FOG from restaurants, has two big designs: It wants to cut the city's \$3.5 million annual tab for clearing clogged sewers by collecting and recycling greasy food preparation byproducts. Otherwise, eateries tend to dump them down the nearest drain where they don't always slide to oblivion through the elaborate, interconnected 1,000 miles of pipes beneath city streets. The greasy stuff hardens, sometimes to a concrete consistency, blocking pipes, attracting rodents and roaches, and raising a powerful stink.

The other purpose is also green — as in

dollars and environmental sustainability. Captured FOG, once filtered, refined and processed, can be converted into biodiesel fuel or biomethane, then funneled back to the city's fleet of vehicles, fire trucks and Muni buses at half the current cost of a gallon of commercial crude oil diesel fuel, or used as a catalyst in the production of electrical power.

SFGreasecycle has been lobbying food service establishments to set aside old cooking oil — called yellow grease — for free city pickup since 2007. So far, 980 have signed on, last year generating 212,000 of the yellow stuff. Of those 980, only 27 are in the Tenderloin, leaving untapped a possible 45,000 gallons of FOG a year in the central city. It might not compare with BP's gulf gusher, but the Tenderloin sustainable contribution could be more like that pumping, pumping, pumping action you see around Bakersfield, the slow but steady kind that made Beryl Buck a big fortune.

The city, getting serious about reducing gunk in the sewers, wants to make it illegal not to clean up. Sept. 14 a unanimous PUC authorized General Manager Ed Harrington to submit an ordinance to the Board of Supervisors requiring all restaurants and commercial kitchens in San Francisco to have grease-capturing devices tough enough to trap FOG. Current regulations limit how much oil and grease commercial kitchens can pour down the drain but, says the ordinance, in bureaucratic understatement, the limit "has not been completely effective" in keeping FOG out of the sewers. Also, grease-capturing devices, even if installed, often aren't well-maintained.

The devices won't be cheap, but the city is offering restaurants a 14% cut in their

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