

# Linking Equity + Sustainability: A Student Transportation Plan for San Francisco Unified School District

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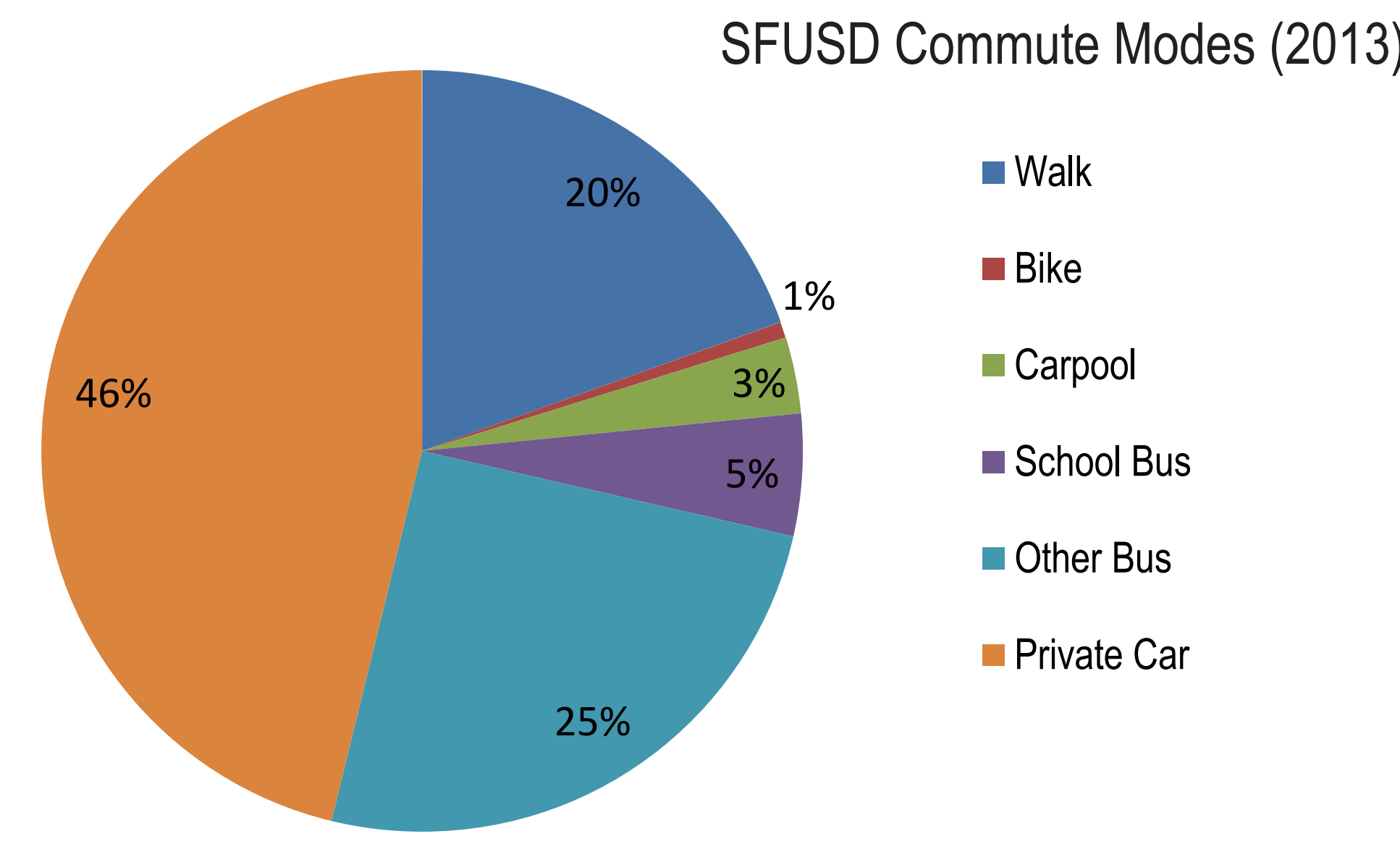
## QUESTION How can we improve SFUSD's current alternative transportation efforts to increase sustainable commuting among District families?

### CHALLENGES Three major challenges illuminate the need to address equity in sustainable school transportation efforts in San Francisco.

**School choice**  
SFUSD uses a choice lottery system to give all families access to top quality schools, language immersion, and other specialized programs. Furthermore, students are not guaranteed access to their neighborhood schools. This means that students travel across the city to reach educational opportunities. In San Francisco's school choice context, equitable access to education will not be achieved without safe, reliable, and affordable transportation.

**Limited transportation resources**  
School bus service was recently cut, and now serves just five percent of SFUSD students. Limited resources are available to support alternatives to yellow bus transportation through the Safe Routes to School Partnership in the Department of Public Health, The Department of the Environment, and the Municipal Transportation Agency. These programs rely on short term grant funding and many only operate in a small selection of schools.

**Diverse school contexts**  
Sustainability goals are set based on District level data. However, the aggregate distribution of commute modes does not capture the reality at individual schools. Topography, transit service, street safety, caregiver availability and other factors determine the transportation options that are available to students.



### FINDINGS The impact of transportation on SFUSD families is not well understood. These maps demonstrate the imperative to include affordability, access, and safety in a context-specific vision for sustainable transportation.

**Many families travel from across the city to attend this bilingual school. How can more sustainable transportation options be made available to them?**

CLARENDON ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

**In this exemplary picture of sustainable transportation, are the transportation needs of families at this school being met?**

**How does transit service impact student enrollment at this school?**

**What sustainability goals are appropriate in this context?**

BESSIE CARMICHAEL K - 8

**How do transportation factors weigh against other factors for families who decide to enroll here?**

**Why is the rate of driving so high despite the concentration of students living nearby?**

COMMODORE SLOAT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Are high walking rates attributable to favorable conditions or barriers from using other modes?**

**What transportation and other factors lead to the exceptionally strong neighborhood-draw at this school?**

VISITACION VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### RECOMMENDATIONS SFUSD need an equity-focused student transportation plan in order to achieve sustainability.

**SFUSD POLICY** Institute a high-level policy that sets a vision to ensure that all students have access to sustainable transportation that is healthy, safe, affordable, and reliable.

**MESSAGING** Simplify and centralize messaging about all transportation options.  
Provide a clear point of contact for questions about transportation.  
Create school specific information materials with details about transportation resources.

**TRANSIT** Provide strong support for the expansion and institutionalization of the Free Muni for Youth program.  
Develop strategic partnerships at MTA to advocate for transit design and investments that serve youth.

**SCHOOL BUSES** School bus service should be integrated into a comprehensive transportation strategy, and opportunities to integrate sustainable transportation alternatives into the special needs transportation program should be explored.

**Safe Routes to School Partners ALIGNMENT** The SF Safe Routes to School Partnership needs to operate in a broader framework and vision set by SFUSD, and design programs and evaluation to serve district goals.

**FOCUS GROUPS** Use parent focus groups and surveys to gather data about transportation needs at each school, and the effectiveness of existing outreach.

**Researchers ACCESS AND EQUITY** Research is needed to:  
Understand the impacts of transportation service and infrastructure on school choice in SFUSD.  
Assess ways to ensure that equity and sustainability initiatives are mutually reinforcing.  
Learn how transit, walking, biking, and carpool programs can be adapted to meet the needs of families.

