

Orlando Nell
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MTC

Attn: Board of Directors / Clipper Executive Board
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale St Ste 800
San Francisco CA 94105-2179

Subject: Proposal for Enhanced Clipper Card Design, Photo Integration, and Veteran Recognition Program

To the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission:

My name is Orlando Nell, and I am a regular user of Bay Area public transportation systems, including SFMTA, BART, and Caltrain. I am writing to respectfully propose a series of improvements to the Clipper Card program that would enhance usability, strengthen identity verification, and better reflect the diverse communities that rely on transit throughout the region.

While I am not a veteran myself, I come from a family and community with strong ties to military service. Several people close to me, including family members and friends, have served in the United States Armed Forces. Through them, I have seen firsthand the importance of recognition, respect, and accessibility in everyday systems such as public transportation.

With that in mind, I would like to propose the introduction of a dedicated Veteran Clipper Card, along with broader enhancements to the Clipper system as a whole.

First, a Veteran Clipper Card should feature a distinct and dignified design that reflects the service and contributions of veterans. Rather than using the standard card format, this version could incorporate a refined American flag theme or a clean "Honoring Veterans" design. With the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States, this presents a meaningful opportunity for the Bay Area to recognize those who have served in a visible and respectful way. A thoughtfully designed card would not only serve a functional purpose, but also provide a sense of pride to those carrying it.

Second, I strongly encourage the implementation of optional photo integration on Veteran Clipper Cards. Currently, many riders must present a separate identification card during fare inspections, particularly on systems like Caltrain. By embedding a photo directly onto the Clipper Card, similar to existing RTC or paratransit cards, this would eliminate the need for redundant identification checks. It would streamline the inspection process, reduce friction for riders, and improve efficiency for transit staff.

Third, the Veteran Clipper Card should serve as a standardized, region-wide form of eligibility verification. At present, fare recognition for veterans can vary between agencies and operators, sometimes relying on informal judgment when presented with military identification. A dedicated Clipper Card would remove this inconsistency and establish a clear, uniform system across all MTC partner agencies. This ensures fairness, clarity, and respect for veterans regardless of which service they are using.

Beyond the veteran-specific proposal, I would also like to recommend expanding photo integration to Youth and Senior Clipper Cards. In many cases, fare inspectors must verify eligibility manually, which can be challenging, especially for youth riders who may not carry formal identification. Adding optional photos to these cards would provide immediate verification, reduce fraud, and simplify the overall process for both riders and staff.

Finally, I encourage the Clipper program to explore more frequent use of limited-edition or commemorative card designs. Other major transit systems, such as LA Metro with its TAP card program, have successfully used special-edition cards to engage riders and celebrate regional events. The Bay Area has already seen success with past designs, such as the Super Bowl 50 Clipper Card, and there is strong potential to expand this concept. Future designs could commemorate events like Independence Day, Pride Month, or major regional milestones, including the 250th anniversary of the United States. These designs not only generate public interest but also create a stronger cultural connection between riders and the transit system.

Public transportation should be efficient, intuitive, and representative of the people it serves. By introducing a Veteran Clipper Card, modernizing identity verification through photo integration, and embracing thoughtful design improvements, the Clipper program can take a meaningful step forward in all three areas.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your continued work in supporting mobility across the Bay Area.

Sincerely,

Orlando Nell