

4. Complaints and Complaint Handling

- Muni's Customer Services unit converts passengers' complaints, comments, questions, and compliments into Passenger Service Reports (PSRs) and distributes Proof of Payment (POP) related reports to the POP program in both electronic and hard-copy. Relatively few of Muni's PSRs concern the POP program or fare evasion. In the 46-month period from January 1, 2005 to October 31, 2008, Muni received a total of 65 PSRs coded as "Fare Evasion" and 329 PSRs coded as "Non-Enforcement of Fare Collection." Combined, these PSRs accounted for less than 0.5 percent of all Muni PSRs. By contrast, in 2007, the Muni received 1,791 PSRs coded as "Abusive Speech/Manner."
- Despite Muni's relatively few fare evasion-related PSRs, the POP program's review of fare evasion-related PSRs is subject to redundancy and breakdowns in internal controls. The POP program does not maintain a log or otherwise aggregate PSR data; it lacks standards for responding to passengers; and it does not review closure times or have a standard for PSR closure. Furthermore, POP Supervisors are duplicating effort, with the same Transit Fare Inspection Supervisor/Investigators (Supervisors) filing the same PSR more than once, or more than one Supervisor investigating the same PSR.
- The POP program should improve its handling of PSRs to ensure that it handles rider concerns in a systematic, consistent, and appropriate fashion. The program should work with Muni's Customer Services unit to train all Supervisors on Muni's Trapeze PSR system and should discontinue the handling of PSRs in hard-copy. POP management should review and sign-off on all PSRs prior to PSRs being designated as closed. The program should develop performance objectives for PSR handling and hold staff accountable to achieving those objectives.

Complaints Regarding Fare Evasion

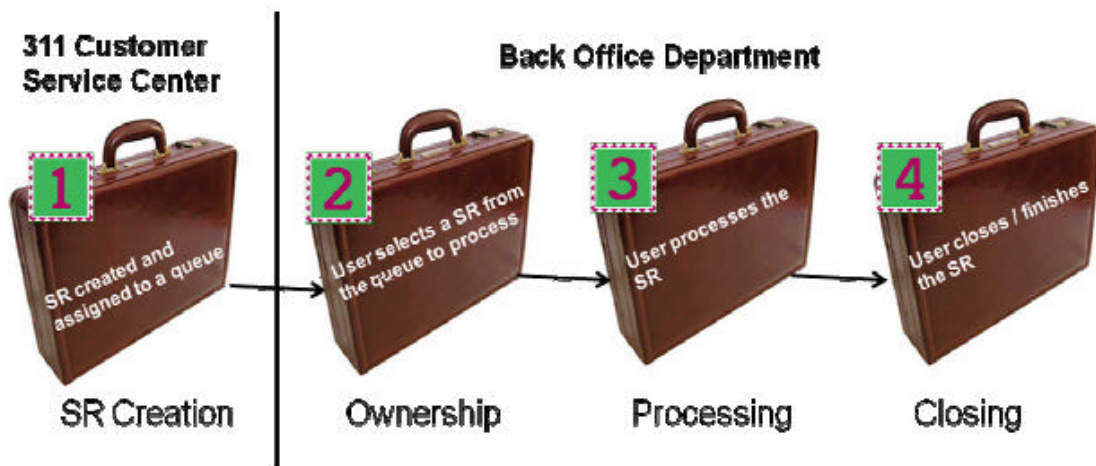
Muni receives complaints, comments, and compliments through a variety of channels. The Muni Customer Services unit inputs this feedback into Muni Passenger Service Reports (PSRs). Since the opening of the 311 Customer Service Center in March 2007, 311 has become the primary feedback avenue, accounting for a Muni Customer Services unit-estimated 98 percent to 99 percent of all PSRs.

PSR Process

311 is the first point of contact for most members of the public who are providing POP feedback to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA). Figure 4.1, below, from 311’s Managing Service Reports manual, illustrates the recommended major steps involved in handling PSRs. Step 1 is handled by 311, where approximately 98 percent to 99 percent of all SFMTA PSRs originate. Step 2 is handled by the Muni Customer Services unit. For POP-related PSRs, the POP program handles Step 3 “Processing” and 4 “Closing.”

Figure 4.1

311 Customer Service Center’s Recommended Service Report Handling Process for Departments



Note: SR = Service Request.

Source: “Managing Service Reports,” 311.

311 Customer Service Center

The 311 Customer Service Center receives complaints, comments, and compliments via phone, web, and email. Upon receipt of a phone call, the 311 operator will enter the details of the call or email, including preliminary coding, into the center’s Lagan e-form.

Muni Customer Services Unit

Muni Customer Services unit staff log into the Lagan system to retrieve all SFMTA-related feedback. Currently, the Muni Customer Services unit must manually move all information from the 311 Lagan system into its own Trapeze feedback processing system. In the process of this translation, the staff will verify that the 311 staff assigned the proper numeric code, and update the code if necessary. If the commenter provided an

address, the Muni Customer Services unit will mail a letter acknowledging the receipt of the PSR.

When the Muni Customer Services unit determines that a PSR is actionable, it will then forward that PSR to the relevant department electronically via Trapeze and in hard copy via interoffice mail. In addition, the Muni Customer Services unit e-mails copies of actionable PSRs to departments that are not active Trapeze users for review and follow-up.

POP Program

The Muni Customer Services unit recommends that SFMTA divisions, including the POP program, follow the following steps for processing PSRs:

1. Identify what resolution action is appropriate,
2. Respond to this (Muni Customer Services unit) email with your planned action,
3. Advise us if you would like us to follow up with the customer regarding the matter (or if you prefer to contact the customer on your own) and
4. Provide us an update when/if the issue has been fully resolved.

The POP program does not have Trapeze access, so it handles the hard copies it receives via interoffice mail. The POP Administrative Support Staff passes the PSRs to the Supervisor-level Administrative Sergeant. Based on the information in the PSR, the Administrative Sergeant determines which team will be assigned the PSR. If she cannot determine a team, she will follow up with the passenger via phone or post mail. Otherwise, she will forward the PSR to the Supervisor responsible for the TFI involved in the PSR, if any. The Supervisor is then responsible for investigating the PSR, addressing any concerns with the relevant TFI, and contacting the passenger, if possible. Upon completion of the investigation, the Supervisor returns the PSR to the Administrative Sergeant with a handwritten account of the investigation on the PSR. Some complaints are copied to POP program management. The Administrative Sergeant files the hard copy with the Administrative Assistant. The POP program emails the Muni Customer Services unit to indicate when a PSR is closed.

PSR Process Summary

Figure 4.2, below, illustrates the POP PSR process flow in greater detail.

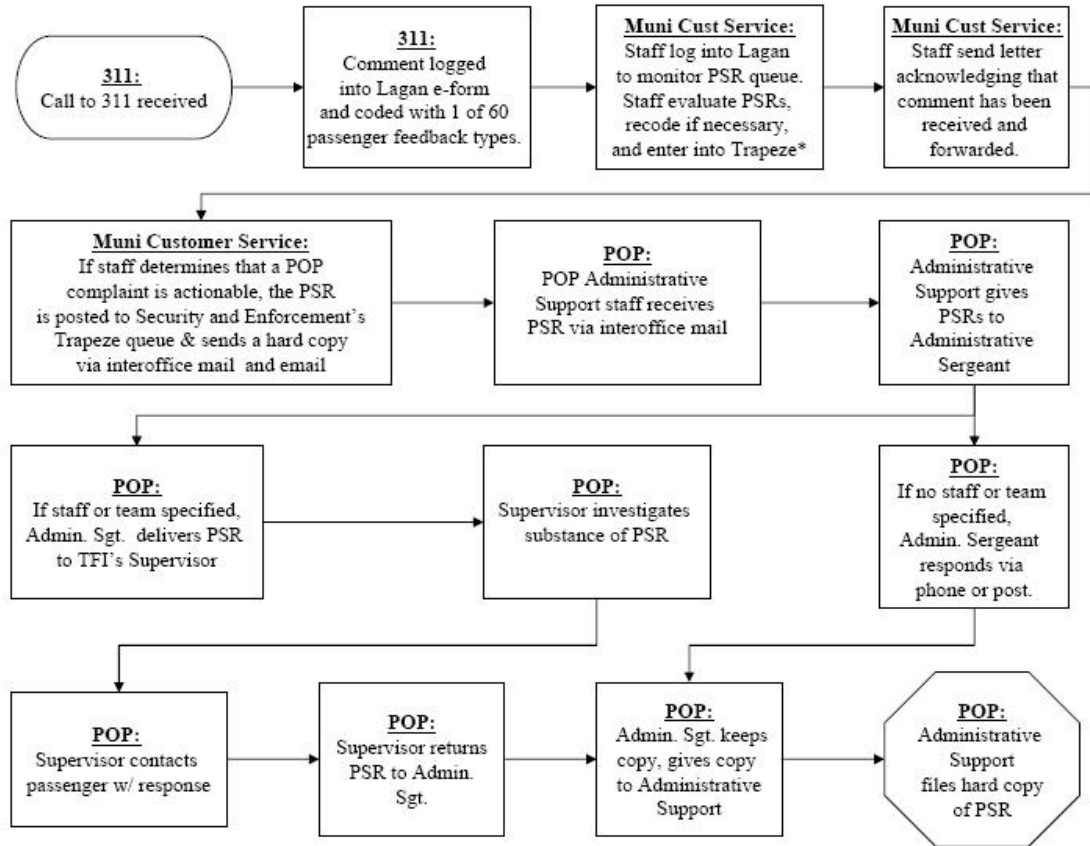
311 and PSR Volume

The implementation and growth in popularity of 311 increased Muni's overall PSR volume. 311's publicity, awareness, and ease-of-use have generated a steady rise of 311 calls and a corresponding steady increase in Muni-related calls. Muni's PSR volume

increased from 13,614 PSRs in 2005 to 29,876 PSRs in 2008, an increase of 115.0 percent.

Figure 4.2

Process Flow: POP Program PSRs



* By the end of 2009, the Muni Customer Service unit expects products, services, and non-transit operator related feedback will stay in Lagan, while transit operator related comments will continue to be entered into Trapeze.

Source: Budget Analyst, based on SFMTA staff interviews

Few Complaints Are Aimed at POP, but POP Can Improve How it Handles Those Complaints

The Budget Analyst found that very few of Muni’s PSRs concern proof of payment or fare evasion. However, the POP program can improve how it handles the ones it does receive.

Few Passenger Service Reports Concern Proof of Payment

Muni receives relatively few PSRs related to fare evasion or proof of payment. From 2005 through 2008, a total of 62 PSRs—less than 0.1 percent of all Muni PSRs—were

coded as “Fare Evasion,” and 329 PSRs—or 0.4 percent of all Muni PSRs—were coded as “Non-enforcement of Fare Collection.” Combined, less than 0.5 percent of Muni PSRs involve fare evasion. Annual counts for POP-related PSRs and total PSRs are included in Table 4.1, below.

Table 4.1
Proof of Payment-related PSRs, by Category, 2005 to 2008

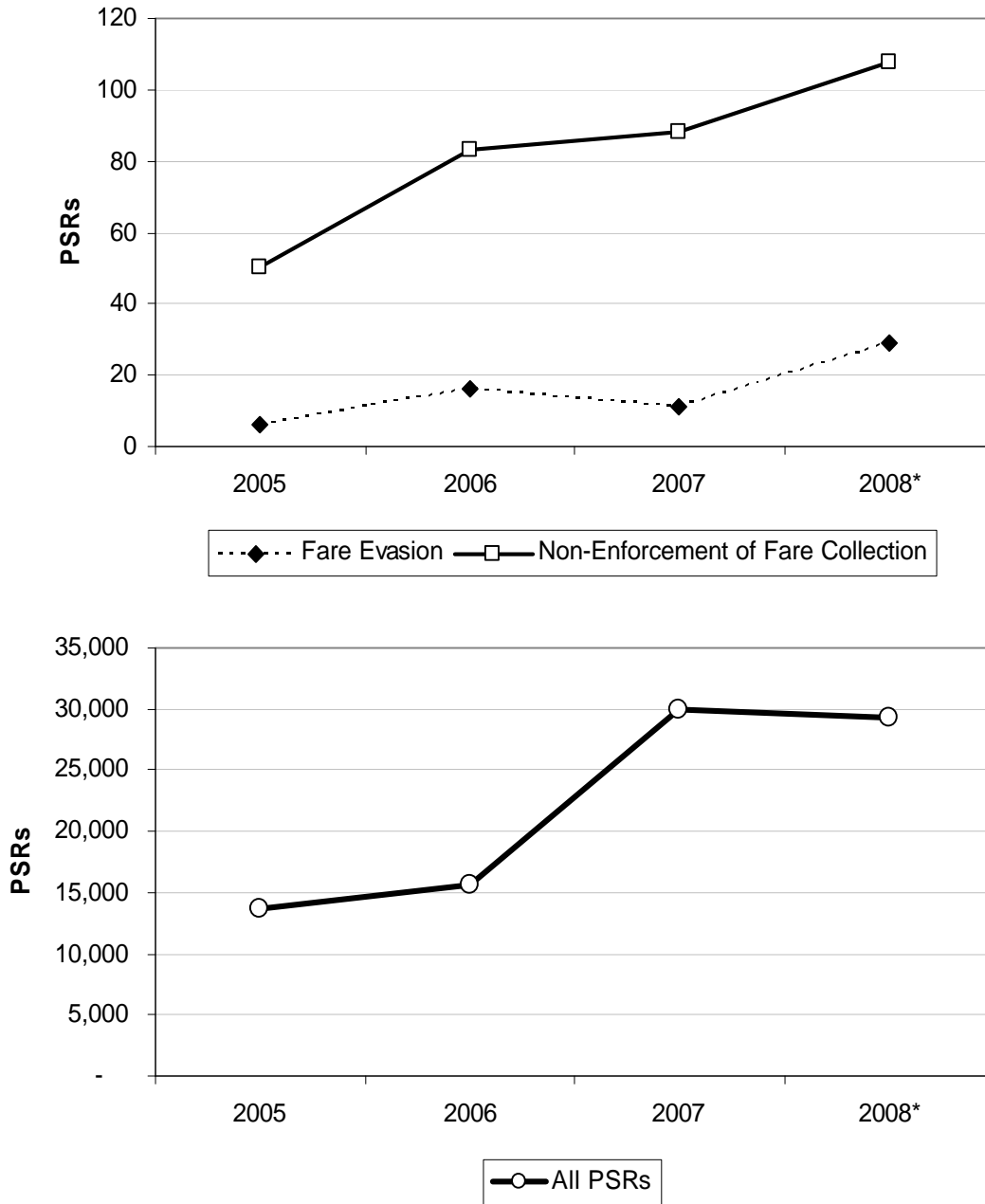
	2005		2006		2007		2008*		2005-2008	
	Total	% of total	Total	% of total	Total	% of total	Total	% of total	Total	% of total
Fare Evasion	6	0.04%	16	0.10%	11	0.04%	29	0.10%	62	0.07%
Non-Enforcement of Fare Collection	50	0.37%	83	0.53%	88	0.29%	108	0.36%	329	0.37%
All SFMTA PSRs	13,614		15,553		29,876		29,273		88,316	

*2008 Evasion and Non-Enforcement of Fare Collection statistics through October 31, 2008. All PSRs through December 31, 2008.

Source: Muni Customer Services Unit.

Although Fare Evasion-coded PSRs remained at 0.1 percent of all Muni PSRs in 2008, the 29 PSRs through October 31, 2008 represent a near-tripling of Fare Evasion PSRs from the year before. Overall, Fare Evasion PSRs increased 383.3 percent between 2005 and 2008, outpacing overall growth of PSRs of 115.0 percent in that period. The increase in 2008 may be due, in part, to the increased number of citations issued by TFIs in 2008. By contrast, Non Enforcement of Fare Collection PSRs grew at approximately the same rate (116.0 percent) as PSRs overall (115.0 percent). Annual changes from 2005 to 2008 are illustrated in Figure 4.3, below.

Figure 4.3
Changes in PSRs, 2005 to 2008



* Fare Evasion & Non Enforcement of Fare Collection Statistics through 10/31/08.
Source: Muni Customer Services unit.

POP's Handling of PSRs Has Shortcomings

The POP program does not systematically process or close POP-related PSRs. One POP staff member described the previous method of handling PSRs as “haphazard.” The POP program’s current processing of PSRs also has some limitations.

- Longer narratives are cut off in the hard copy PSRs, omitting many details at the end.
- The POP program does not maintain an electronic PSR log, and does not aggregate PSR types, responses, response times, or PSR closure information.
- The POP program cannot enter closure information into the SFMTA Trapeze system. Instead, the POP program must email closure information to the Muni Customer Services unit.
- The Muni Customer Services unit has a standard closure time of 30 days for PSRs. The POP program does not track its closure time, but works to meet the 30-day target. However, in 2008, several passengers did not receive responses from POP within two months of filing their feedback.
- The POP program only began retaining the hard copies of PSRs in 2008, including any results of Supervisors’ investigations.

These limitations and shortcomings have led to redundancy and inefficiencies. The Budget Analyst reviewed closed PSRs that were investigated redundantly by separate Supervisors and others that were filed twice by the same Supervisor. Some reports lacked relevant details due to the “Details” field being cut short in the hard copy. Other closed reports lacked any description of the Supervisor’s investigation.

Conclusions

Fare evasion complaints comprise a small portion of Muni’s complaints. In 2007, while Muni received 88 complaints coded “Non-enforcement of Fare Collection” and 11 complaints coded “Fare Evasion,” it received 4,710 complaints coded “Gaps or Delays in Service,” 2,765 complaints coded “Insufficient Service Schedule,” and 1,791 reports coded “Abusive Speech/Manner.”

Despite Muni’s relatively few fare evasion-related PSRs, the POP program’s review of fare evasion-related PSRs is subject to redundancy and breakdowns in internal controls. The Budget Analyst was not able to review POP-related PSRs prior to 2008 because the POP program only began filing or otherwise retaining copies of the PSRs in 2008. The Budget Analyst observed PSRs filed twice, PSRs being reviewed by two separate Supervisors without coordinating with one another, and customers receiving feedback more than two months after their submission.

Recommendations

In order to assure systematic, consistent, and appropriate review of POP-related Passenger Service Reports, the Deputy Director of Security and Enforcement and the POP Operations and Investigations Manager should:

- 4.1 Discontinue the handling of PSRs in hard-copy and transition the POP program to the SFMTA's computerized Trapeze and 311's computerized Lagan systems, when access to those systems becomes available.
- 4.2 Provide training and access to Trapeze and Lagan to all POP Supervisors when access to those systems becomes available.
- 4.3 Review and sign-off on all PSRs prior to PSRs being designated as closed.
- 4.4 Develop, maintain, and periodically review an electronic log of PSRs, including date received, date closed, responsible Supervisor (if any), TFI (if any), a standardized action taken, and a standardized incident type.
- 4.5 Create written policies and procedures that codify the above and hold staff accountable.

Costs and Benefits

Implementation of these recommendations would reduce inefficiency and increase productive time by eliminating duplication of effort among POP Supervisors.