

Episode 6:

Welcome to Gilded Garbage Can, a podcast dedicated to defogging the image that is San Francisco.

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Today, we need to take up the topic of bus lanes. If you've driven or otherwise gotten around San Francisco lately, you see dedicated bus lanes popping up everywhere. In addition, there are at least 2 major road renovations happening – Van Ness, AKA the never-ending construction site, and just this week, Market Street, a project that seeks to ban cars, focus on mass transit and, as always, take years and years to finish over budget. It's definitely a song we've heard before...

So, what's the big deal with dedicated bus lanes and why would anyone be against them? These are terrific questions and I imagine that on the surface, there should be no reason to slam on bus lanes in San Francisco but, this is the Gilded Garbage Can and there is always more here than meets the eye (or the nose).

Here's my beef with bus lanes...they are constructed under the false pretense that somehow, by putting them in, people will, all of a sudden, flock to mass transit. But the pretense is wrong, because with or without bus lanes, MUNI, simply put, sucks.

Bus lanes only serve to reward incompetence and distract us. After all, it takes years to get them done so during that time, we don't complain about MUNI because – sure the bus is late – like always – but, when the magical bus lane is up and running, everything will be amazing. Bus lanes also make no sense on streets that run only 1 line every 10 to 15 minutes because, face it, they don't need one. Meanwhile, cars are funneling from 3 lanes to 2 or from 2 lanes to 1 in order to let that single, unreliable bus have an entire lane to itself AND, even with it, the bus still encroaches on traffic when it pulls away from its stops. Now if San Francisco were, let's say, Seoul, a city that runs dozens of different buses on the same streets, reliably and on time, then I'd be all for bus lanes, but here, it's just a waste of money with absolutely no purpose other than, I'll say it again, rewarding an incompetent transit system and pissing off drivers.

Win-win for politics; lose-lose for residents.

What we really need for MUNI is accountability. Run the buses on time, clean them for heaven's sake, and have the courage to eject disruptive passengers, like the guy who opens his fruit cup and drains the juice from it by pouring it on the floor – true story. If you want people to take mass transit here, you need to – as I said last episode – nail the basics. It's a really



simple concept. We don't need bus lanes; we need reliable buses. The layout of our streets will not drive people to ride MUNI. That was unintentionally clever, don't you think?

Of course, this is the same city that installed roundabouts at 4-way stop intersections and didn't remove any of the stop signs – now, that's really dumb. More on that another time...

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