



Season 2, Episode 1: The MTA is at it Again

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

Thank you for tuning in on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Radio Public, PodBean and everywhere else fine podcasts are available.

Listener shout-out this episode goes to...George in Sacramento! I learned that George was a fan of this show from another fan of this show who told me that George had recently bought her a lovely Gilded Garbage Can mask as a gift. Thank you, George for listening and moreover for your impeccable taste in face masks.

You can be like George. Head over to the Gilded Garbage Can store, where you'll find GGC-branded masks, t-shirts, notebooks, mousepads, and a whole lot more. Show someone how much you care – pick up some merchandise and show your support for the podcast all at once. Visit [zazzle.com](https://www.zazzle.com) and search for Gilded Garbage Can.

Regular listeners to this show know one of our favorite topics at Gilded Garbage Can is the San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency, or MTA. This is the agency that oversees nearly all aspects of transportation in the city. From city buses (AKA MUNI) to parking enforcement; from oversight of taxis to parking meters, the MTA is a shining example of general short-sightedness and incompetence, but today, I am here to tell you, it is also an agency that is downright sneaky.

Let me set the stage...it's time for another episode of "City Hall hates cars and drivers but loves issuing parking tickets and does everything it can to extort money by tripping you up."

Parking meters in San Francisco are horrible! They are supposed to accept coins but are nearly always jammed. They are supposed to work with a "pay by phone" app, but the meter code is often missing or obscured so that's a 50-50 operation. They supposedly have NFC capability, but I've never seen it work. And these are the issues that plague individual meters; let's not even get started on city parking lots with "pay by space" meters...if you want to know more about that, check out the "Details, Details, Details" episode of Gilded Garbage Can.

Given all this, thankfully, parking meters in the city do accept credit cards. And, what's impressive is, they nearly always work. For years now, you pull up to your meter, insert and remove your card and the meter flashes a small amount of time that you adjust upwards until you get the time you want and then press, "OK." Again, this has been the way things have worked for years...

Recently, the brain trust at the MTA decided, "let's mess with those evil automobile drivers yet again." I can hear the project sponsor now, speaking before the steerco, as they sip chai lattes

and nibble avocado toast. “You see, automobile drivers’ minds are polluted with the Co2 they spew. They don’t care about our fabulously clean, issue-free city, where everyone has a place to live, and everyone can afford to be here; a city where non-denominational angels sing as you enter, and friendly residents greet you as you walk down immaculate streets that are free of litter and human waste and needles. So, to punish these evil drivers, I have a plan...” Evil laughter ensues as a second round of avocado toast is brought in with compostable plates and forks made of potatoes and everyone has a good ol’ time laughing at others because in the enlightened city of San Francisco, laughing at others is what you do.

So, what was the plan? Simple: The brain trust made a subtle change to the way meters work with credit cards by setting the default time from minimum to maximum. The meter that used to display 8 minutes, which equals 25-cents, as the starting point now displays 2 hours (or whatever the maximum time allowed is), which equals 2 or 3 or more dollars. The MTA is counting on people inserting their card, assuming the default is still 8 minutes, clicking “OK,” and not noticing they just paid for 2 hours.

I wonder why they did this...could it be that with fewer people out and about, the volume of tickets is down, so they need to make up the lost revenue? Could it be the parking enforcement officers union demanded more donut time? Whatever the reason, it’s just sneaky, especially since the meters here effectively **force** drivers to use credit cards.

Oh, and before any of the enlightened crowd pushes back citing that drivers bear the responsibility of checking and double-checking before pressing “OK,” I’d remind them that anytime “personal responsibility” is cited by anyone other than them, it is the enlightened crowd that typically decries that thinking as barbaric.

By the way, for those who still carry coins in the hopes of finding that 1-in-1,000 meter that isn’t jammed, be sure you never leave even a dime visible in your car or someone will break a window to grab it.

What do you think? Leave us a comment or two at GildedGarbageCan.com. Also check us out on Instagram – search for and follow [GildedGarbageCan](https://www.instagram.com/GildedGarbageCan), all one word, for those images that are worth a thousand words.

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