



San Francisco Paratransit Coordinating Council News & Notes

FALL 2011

SF Paratransit: A Busy Year

Once again it has been a busy year in the San Francisco Paratransit program. A number of multi-year projects have reached full implementation, and the benefits to our program have been significant. The biggest project with the most longevity has been the Paratransit Taxi Debit Card System. The debit card implementation has taken a very long time, but we are happy to report that the results have been worth the wait. All paratransit taxi customers were issued a debit card, our new electronic fare payment card, in the fall of 2009. SF Paratransit stopped selling scrip (the old form of payment) in December 2009. To allow for a long transition period between the two fare payment systems, paratransit taxi scrip was allowed to be submitted for reimbursement up until the end of January 2011. Since the full implementation of the debit card, the Paratransit office is better able to enforce program rules, expenditures have been reduced significantly and ramp taxi driver incentives have been implemented based on reports provided through the debit card system.

The debit card data shows what many ramp taxi customers already know – that a handful of ramp taxi drivers provide the majority of the ramp taxi trips. The number of outstanding drivers has increased over the past few months with advent of ramp taxi driver incentives. We are happy to report that over \$28,000 worth of incentives have been disbursed to ramp taxi drivers for the first three quarters of 2011. Along with incentives, SFMTA has developed an enforcement plan for ramp taxi medallion holders who are providing minimal ramp service. The enforcement plan includes providing SFMTA Taxi Services monthly reports which detail all paratransit ramp taxi wheelchair pick-ups. Taxi Services will enforce a progressive discipline for underperforming ramp taxi drivers. We expect to see noticeable improvements in the paratransit ramp taxi service over the coming year.

There are also major initiatives underway in the paratransit van program. The Paratransit Broker is currently in the process of procuring on board computers for all SF Access and Group Van vehicles that will improve communications and fleet management. A competitive solicitation process for new van provider contracts was also conducted this year and MV Transportation was the highest ranked proposal. They will begin service in January.

Thank you to everyone who participates in the SF Paratransit program and helps make this the outstanding program that it is.

In Memory of Griffith Humphrey and Russell Green

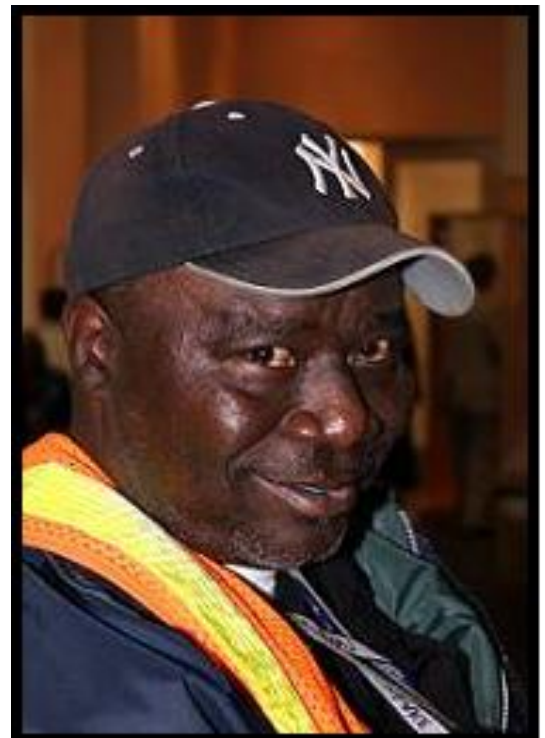


This past year, two beloved PCC members passed away – Griff Humphrey and Russell Green. Griff Humphrey was a PCC member for over 23 years and his impact on the PCC cannot be overstated. Griff was a lawyer and had a keen mind and paid attention to detail. Griff read each and every document that was generated by the PCC, he wrote the PCC By-Laws and he led the effort of the Resource Allocation and Analysis Subcommittee which generated the Paratransit White Paper, SF Paratransit's strategic planning document. Griff had a remarkable talent for getting along with everyone, even during heated policy debates. Griff's brilliance, insightful comments and warm personality will be missed by all.

Although Russell Green was a PCC member for only a short time, he made a big impact. Russell wasn't afraid to ask challenging questions or to speak up when he felt there was a need. Russell also was quick to provide a compliment for good service. Russell loved making jokes and had quite a sense of humor and positive outlook on life. Below is a haiku about Russell written for the 2010 PCC Appreciation Luncheon.

Russel Green is gruff
Tough exterior often
But also sweet smile

Both Griff and Russell will be missed by the PCC and will be remembered in many ways.





Notes from the PCC Executive Committee Chair, Cheryl Damico

Each year, the chair of the Paratransit Planning Council (PCC) mentions the many group accomplishments over the past year. The fact is, as one of the most engaged citizen advisory councils, this is true. Many of our members are actively and directly involved in many causes, whether they are transit related or other issues concerning the well being of seniors and persons with disabilities. Personally, I am proud to be chair of this proactive body that empowers themselves by advocating for better paratransit policies and programs.

For our non-profit providers, this past year has been a particularly difficult. Cuts to the federal and state budgets have been a tremendous blow to many Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) centers that are reliant on these entities as their primary source of funds. ADHC centers in San Francisco are struggling to remain open despite these cuts to the budgets, and we don't know yet what the final result of the cuts will be. Members of the PCC have been vocal in their opposition to these budget cuts.

This year, the contract for SF Access services was up for a competitive bid. With negotiations now finalized, I am excited to welcome MV Transportation as our new SF Access provider. I offer many thanks to MPT for their years of dedication and service, especially as we transition into a new technological era. Being a paratransit rider since 1988, I have seen how far we have come since days of radio dispatch and Safari vans.

I would like to thank all the members of the PCC who have devoted their time, participating not only in our sub-committees and special projects, but in causes that affect the paratransit community; the PCC would not be what it is without your involvement. To all paratransit drivers, no matter what modality; you make it possible for us to live active lives.

In memory of Russell Green and Griff Humphrey.....long time colleagues, you will be missed.



Reliving 2011

by Marc Soto, Veolia Transportation Services, Inc.

It is hard for me to believe that I am writing yet another article for the PCC News & Notes. This year went by so quickly. As I look back at where I have been, so much has changed since 2000, the year I first started working at San Francisco Paratransit. In fact, a lot has happened even since my last article, so I would like to touch on a few of those events.

For starters, this is a good opportunity to thank the Paratransit Coordinating Committee for yet another year of hard work, input and commitment to the SF Paratransit Program. I know it can sound trite but the truth is that we rely heavily on the PCC's input and could not accomplish what we do each year without you. And I especially appreciate the respect, honesty and professionalism you display when we work together on issues no matter the topic.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank all our service providers and their drivers for all their collective hard work to keep the disability community in San Francisco mobile. They make the difference. I think that sometimes we might just think all we have is a job, but the fact is that it is really more than that – what we do positively impacts the lives of so many. For me, this has been more than a job; it's been a career that has taught me so much about people, technology, the power of the disability community and the best of government and what it can do. I would like to believe that our employees, service providers and drivers, who every day enrich in some way the lives of our riders, feel rewarded by what they do.

Professional working relationships are very important in this line of work. I feel that the PCC has established a strong working relationship with us. I truly appreciate that. But through the years, we also establish personal relationships with many of those who work with us. The hardest part of my job is when these relationships are lost. This past year, we lost Griff Humphrey and Russell Green. I had different relationships with both but in their own ways, very nurturing relationships. I miss them both very much as I miss all the wonderful folks in the disability community here in San Francisco, both on and off the PCC, who I have had the privilege to work with over the years. They have made me a better person in many ways personally and professionally.



I think you will agree with me when I say that the SF Paratransit program is one of the most complex in the country and certainly the most complex I have ever managed. Much of this is due to the SFMTA's desire to meet as much need as possible in the most cost effective way. Because of that, I can't think of any period of time in the last eleven years that we have not been busy with one project or another – sometimes multiple projects concurrently. The work and the challenges never cease. Equally, I have learned so much from this program; so thanks to all of you for that privilege.

This year has had its share of accomplishments. For example, we finished delivery and installation of the remaining debit card equipment in San Francisco taxis and worked with CabConnect, the debit card software vendor, to fine tune the back-end system and we worked on launching the Shop-A-Round program including integrating it into taxi. We completed a competitive procurement process for van service providers and are now preparing to bring MV Transportation back into our SF Access program and assist with the transition from Mobility Plus for that service. Becky Chan, our long time finance manager, has retired and we have hired Samir Madhav to take on her responsibilities. We exceeded our goal of reducing the broker administrative costs by 3% and through use of the taxi debit card program, have achieved cost savings in the taxi program while absorbing a meter rate increase in September. And we launched our competitive procurement for Mobile Data Computers (MDC) for our SF Access and Group Van programs. These devices will help capture more timely and accurate data regarding service on those two programs and help us to improve service delivery particularly in the SF Access program. These are due to launch next year. Lastly, we are on process of giving our website a makeover, and before the year is out, we will order replacement vans for the first 20 cutaways purchased by SFMTA back in 2005.

As you can see, it's been quite the year. Could we do this without you? NEVER! Thank you for all you do, and please keep doing it. As they say, there is no rest for the weary, and we have to keep working together to make our program better and discover new ways of stretching our dollars. I wish all of you the very best during the upcoming holiday season!



Growing CoExistence between Bicyclists and Paratransit

With all the different vehicles on the road at any given moment, navigating a city as dense as San Francisco requires a special set of skills and patience. The expansion of bike lanes throughout the city has only added to this situation. While these new additions are promoting a sustainable mode of transportation, the design of certain bike lanes, particularly the separated lanes along Market Street, have hindered the ability of paratransit drivers to drop off their passengers at the curb.

The issue regarding accessibility for paratransit vehicles along bike lanes was first raised in 2010 by PCC Executive Committee member Ruach Graffis. Some SF Access and taxi drivers received parking violations while they were picking up or dropping off passengers at the curb in the bike lanes. Drivers also have not been able to access the curb along the separated bike lanes. Many felt that these tickets were unwarranted, as typically paratransit customers have limited mobility and require direct curb access. There is a concern that should drivers continue to be ticketed while loading/unloading in bike lanes may affect the customer's ability to use paratransit to meet their needs as well as negatively impact service quality.

Though these worries are valid, members of the bicycling community believed that allowing any taxis or vans into these separated bike lanes would impede their safety and block bike access. Finding a solution that satisfies the needs of both parties has been a top priority at SFMTA. Developing a plan that allows paratransit drivers to serve their customers while maintaining the accessibility of bike lanes for bicyclists has been an ongoing project at SFMTA over the past year.

During this time, staff at SFMTA Accessible Services have engaged in on-going dialogue with their colleagues in the Sustainable Streets division, including traffic engineers and planners, and members of the public, including the PCC and the SF Bike Coalition, to derive a resolution. After many discussions, SFMTA has developed a compromise solution, which includes issuing a bumper sticker to all taxis as well as paratransit vans indicating that the vehicle is authorized to pick up/drop off in a bike lane when there are not other options for disabled customers. SFMTA emphasized to drivers that they should only use bike lanes for pick-ups or drop-offs upon customer request and only if there are no other safe locations nearby.



SFMTA parking enforcement agents have received notice to not issue tickets when these vehicles are picking up or dropping off paratransit passengers in bike lanes. In addition, new educational material is being added to paratransit van and taxi driving training as well as SFMTA sponsored bicycling workshops to instruct taxi drivers and bicyclists on interact with fellow road users.

Bridging the divide between the interests of the paratransit and bicycling community has been a deliberative and ongoing process throughout the past year. Both groups recognize the importance of bicycles and taxis in promoting sustainable transportation throughout the city. We hope that this will help foster greater goodwill between bicyclists, drivers, and paratransit customers to further collaborate together.

Thoughts on ThinkBike

by Jane Redmond, PCC Member



On September 19 and 20, a delegation of Dutch bicycle planners and experts joined forces with the San Francisco Bike Coalition, city officials, and interested parties, including myself on behalf of the paratransit community, for the ThinkBike workshop. During this two day workshop, we discussed and provided feedback on how to make bicycle riding a much safer activity for all citizens of San Francisco. We were divided up into three teams, each with a focus on a specific area of the city. One team represented Market Street from 5th to 9th Street, another looked at Polk Street between Broadway and Union, and the third group concentrated on the "Wiggle", a multi-block route between Duboce Park and the Panhandle. The feedback generated would be used for long term citywide bicycle planning as well as the anticipated re-model of Market Street, called "A Better Market Street", which is to begin in 2015. At the end of the workshops, the general consensus was that streets had to be made wider to not only safely accommodate the existing riders but in anticipation of a greater volume of bicyclists as well as road re-surfacing to better differentiate between vehicular and bike traffic while improving the pedestrian experience with more greenery. Roland Wong and I, along with my fellow group members, presented these recommendations to the public, including SFMTA Director Ed Reiskin and David Chiu, President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, at a reception at the War Memorial Center.



Shop-a-Round Shuttle

by Roxana Lara, Shop-a-Round Coordinator

The SFMTA has received two federal grants to fund a new grocery shopping shuttle service for seniors and people with disabilities, called Shop-a-Round. Shop-a-Round

shop@round

SFMTA

is designed to provide a convenient, low-cost shuttle to make shopping easier for seniors and persons with disabilities who may not be eligible for paratransit but who have a hard

time using Muni for their grocery shopping trips. The Shop-a-Round service takes groups of riders on a single van to grocery stores and farmers' markets throughout the city and costs \$2.00 per one way trip. In addition, drivers provide assistance, carrying up to three bags of groceries from the store to the vehicle and from the vehicle to the residence entrance.

In order to qualify for the Shop-a-Round, you must meet **one** of the following requirements:

- Be eligible for SF Paratransit ADA services
- Be disabled and have an RTC Discount ID Card
- Be age 65 or older

Currently there are over 300 registered Shop-a-Round riders and we have expanded outreach efforts citywide. Throughout the city, we are working with local senior centers and assistance living facilities to coordinate outreach events. At these events, we have been conducting "demonstration trips," where newly registered people are able to sign up and go shop the same day. These trips have been a positive way to reach out to new customers.

In addition to the Shop-a-Round van shuttle, a new Shop-a-Round Taxi adjunct service has been recently implemented. There are presently 26 Shop-a-Round Taxi participants who have been issued a unique debit card to use specifically for Shop-a-Round Taxi service. For \$10, individuals receive \$60 worth of Shop-a-Round Taxi value loaded onto their Shop-a-Round Taxi debit card.

For more information, please call the SF Paratransit office at 415.351.7094. We hope to see you aboard!



A Message from Ed Reiskin, SFMTA Director of Transportation

As the new Director of Transportation at the SFMTA, I am excited to be working alongside the staff at SFMTA Accessible Services and our Paratransit Broker, Veolia Transportation, as well as the Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC), as we continue to deliver exceptional paratransit service. I fully recognize the crucial importance of paratransit service in the daily lives of seniors and persons with disabilities. In the coming months, I look forward to meeting with you and collaborating on paratransit projects.

I also want to congratulate the PCC for all of your hard work over the past year. There were quite a few significant accomplishments in 2011, including full implementation of the paratransit debit card fare payment system, ramp taxi driver incentives and the reprocurement of van provider contracts.

The van provider contracts are managed by Veolia on behalf of the SFMTA. In its role as Paratransit Broker, Veolia conducted the competitive solicitation process for the new SF Access service provider contract. This process began in June 2010 with the publication of the Request for Proposals. The SFMTA received two proposals, and after a review and evaluation process, which included PCC members, MV Transportation was ranked as the highest qualified proposer. Following a series of negotiations, a five-year contract with MV Transportation was signed, and MV Transportation will begin operations as SF Access on January 8, 2012. Until then, MPT will continue to operate and serve the paratransit community.

I have the highest confidence that this transition will be smooth and seamless. MV Transportation and MPT have been working closely together to ensure that customers will not be affected. Moreover, MV Transportation has made assurances that it will hire as many current MPT employees as possible and will acquire the current paratransit trip reservation hotline from MPT. I express my deep appreciation to Veolia Transportation and the members of the PCC who participated in this process.

To all who play a role in ensuring the delivery of vital paratransit services on a daily basis, I thank you for making the SF Paratransit Program the innovative success that it is. As we embark on a new era at the SFMTA, I look forward to working with our SFMTA Accessible Services staff, Veolia Transportation, and all of you on the PCC to improve mobility for everyone throughout our city.



Paratransit Service Levels, 2010-11

Last year, the paratransit program provided a total of 904,598 trips to ADA-eligible individuals. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA) paratransit program is administered by the Paratransit Broker, Veolia Transportation, and includes the SF Access and group van services, and taxi services (including wheelchair accessible ramp taxi service).

- **SF Access: 188,047** SF Access trips were provided last year by Mobility Plus Transportation. That included **119,574** trips for ambulatory riders and **68,473** trips for wheelchair users.
- **Group Van Trips: 315,332** group van trips were provided last year by Centro Latino, Continuum, Delancey Street Foundation, Kimochi, Medsam, Self Help for the Elderly and Mobility Plus Transportation for transportation of groups to or from senior centers, nutrition programs, adult day health care centers, or work sites. These trips include **42,771** group trips and **8,151** grocery shopping trips for seniors funded by the Department of Aging and Adult Services.
- **Taxi Trips: 383,545** on-call paratransit taxi trips were provided last year by Alliance Cab, American Cab, Arrow Dispatch/ Speck, Bay Cab, Big Dog Cab, Black & White Checker Cab, Comfort Cab, Crown Cab, DeSoto Cab, Fog City Cab, Green Cab, Luxor Cab, Metro Cab, National Cab, Regents Cab, Royal Cab, Serra Cab, SF Taxi, Town Taxi, USA Cab, Vina Cab, and Yellow Cab.
- **Intercounty Trips: 14,587** trips were provided to paratransit users to or from Muni's service area in San Francisco, to or from destinations in Alameda County, Marin and Contra Costa County. These trips are provided by East Bay Paratransit Consortium in the East Bay and Whistle Stop Wheels in Marin County.



How to Get Prepared for Earthquakes or other Disasters ***Some Helpful Tips for Seniors and People with Disabilities*** *From the SF Department of Emergency Management*

1. Setup a Personal Support Network – If you require assistance to live independently, designate someone to check on you in an emergency. This person will make sure you are okay and will help you to evacuate if necessary, or shelter safely in place at home.
2. Assemble some basic Emergency Supplies – These should include:
 - Flashlight (electricity may be out; put the flashlight near your bed)
 - Battery Operated Radio (to listen for information about the disaster)
 - Bottled Water -- Enough to Last for 3 Days (tap water may be contaminated or unavailable)
 - Non Perishable or Ready-to-Eat Food -- Enough to Last for 3 Days (dried fruit, canned tuna, stew, beans, nuts, crackers, etc., plus a manual can opener)
 - Utensils for the items above
 - Extra glasses
 - A coat and change of clothes
 - An insulated blanket and gloves
3. Prescription Medications – Try to always maintain an extra 3-day supply of any prescription medications.
4. Have an "Out-of-Area" Contact (and call to advise of your status) – Following a disaster, it will be easier to get connected to an out-of-state telephone line versus a local telephone line, given the volume of calls within the local/affected area. Use this out-of-area contact person to relay messages between you and the people who care about you including family members, friends, your personal care assistant and others who may want to reach you or know about your well-being. Let everyone know how to reach this contact person.

For more information on emergency planning for seniors and people with disabilities, check out www.72hours.org, www.preparenow.org or call the Older Adults/Disability Information Line: (415) 626-1033.

Select Poems from Paratransit Customers



by Genya Ehrlich

Once there lived an old lady
And she wasn't very steady.
She couldn't get on the bus
She couldn't stand in the bus
She couldn't sit in the bus.
Alas, she couldn't use the bus
at all.
So she went to the Paratransit
famous hall.
And what do you know?
She got a debit card with which
she could go
To any place in the city
In a cab.



Tickets Please!

When I rode this "F" trolley the last time, it was the Spruce Street #42 and I had to stay alert no matter where I was going, to be sure the motion sickness never got hold of me or else that was the end of the line! "Philadelphia 1947 Colors," read the sign on the one I rode to Hyde and Market Street today, and I looked down at my cane and my Clipper Card and laughed at the way I was perched on the seats "for the disabled and elderly." Whatever became of the boy who gave up his place to this ancient pack of bones who has ridden out his ticket on this long journey home?

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PCC Meeting Awards, 2010

Van Drivers

Gregg Arvanites
Cristobal Cruz
Jonnie Foster
Darrell Mayo

Agency

Medsam
Centro Latino
MPT, SF Access
MPT, Group Van

Taxi Drivers

Douglas Allen
William Wilkes
George Wade
Nuru Mamuye
Benyamin Asfour
Mohamed H. Algahim
Carl Russo
Rodney Glover
Graham Molyneux
Amilcar Pereira
Igor Nigulas
William Mabron

Agency

Luxor Ramp Taxi
Luxor Cab Company
Yellow Ramp Taxi
Arrow Cab Company
Serra Ramp Taxi
Serra Cab Company
SF Green Cab
National Sedan
DeSoto Cab Company
DeSoto Ramp Taxi
Black & White Checker
Yellow Cab Cooperative



WATCH THE 2011 DRIVER
APPRECIATION VIDEO ON
THE SF PARATRANSIT
WEBSITE @
WWW.SFPARATRANSIT.COM

Systemwide Van Driver of the Year: Sylvia Vasquez, MPT SF Access

Systemwide Taxi Driver of the Year: Fred Lein, Yellow Ramp Taxi

Jewel McGinnis “Tough as Nails” Award

Kaye Griffith for her continued commitment and efforts to serve the paratransit community and promote quality transportation services.

Muzzy Marcelino Award

Genya Ehrlich for her tireless advocacy work to improve accessibility on behalf of all seniors and persons with disabilities.

Golden Circle Award

Stu Smith and Genya Ehrlich for their 10 years of dedicated service on the PCC.



Golden Circle Plus Five Award

Laurie Graham for her 15 years of dedicated service to the PCC

Hall of Fame

Kate Toran and Ruth Lawner – inducted for their many years of dedication and hard work to improve Paratransit Services for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Special Commendations

Roland Wong, Luxor Cab Co., Marian Gan, Russell Green, Jeff Banks, Olivia Santiago, Jacy Cohen, Leon Schmidt, Carmen Magana

2011 PCC Executive Committee

Affiliated Elderly

Ruth Lawner, LaNay Eastman,
Jacy Cohen, Ursula McGuire,
Jane Bolig

Unaffiliated Elderly

Stu Smith, Erma Brim,
Griffith Humphrey, Kaye Griffin,
Jeanne Lynch, Melecio Torres

Affiliated Disabled

Olivia Santiago, Sandra Fancher,
Gilda Chico, Byron Yan,
Claudia Grubler

Unaffiliated Disabled

Cheryl Damico (Chair), Russell Green,
Joseph Flanagan (Vice Chair),
Jane Redmond, Roland Wong

Minority Representative

Iona Lawhorn

Low Income Representative

Genya Ehrlich

Non-Profit Providers

Ruach Graffis, Patrick McCollum,
Laurie Graham

For-Profit Providers

Pam Martinez, John Lazar,
Ameur Kallel, Scott Blum, Fred Lein,
Marty Smith (Secretary)

Public Agencies

Harvey Katz, Karen Rosen,
Laura Timothy, Elizabeth Grigsby

SFMTA Accessible Services Paratransit Staff

Annette Williams, Accessible Services Manager; Kate Toran, Paratransit Manager

At the 2011 Jewel McGinnis Memorial Luncheon, which was held at the Asian Art Museum, members of the PCC created some witty and clever limericks. Here are some of the favorites.

To write a limerick, the first line traditionally introduces a person and a place, with the place appearing at the end of the first line. This establishes the rhyme scheme for the second and fifth lines.

There once was an advisory group
Whose members were an outspoken troupe
They would advise the MTA
And never would sway
When they needed to stay in the loop

There once was a girl name Kate
A bureaucratic no one could hate
She treated all with respect
And never neglect
Her name should be on
the Golden Gate

There once was a fair maiden
named Jeanne
Who was so feisty sometimes
she would scream
She would point her finger
And then she would linger
She was fierce although never mean

There once was a cyclist named Neal
He really wasn't a heel
He came to each meeting
Often taking a beating
But it never dampened his zeal

Annette was a girl from Berkeley
Who never liked things to be murky
She sought only the best
For her paratransit in the west
And she didn't like to talk turkey

There once was a lad
named Marc
Who thought paratransit was a lark
Then he came to 'Frisco
And he couldn't let go
Even though it was no walk in the park

2011 Jewel McGinnis Luncheon at the Asian Art Museum



Bali

Art, Ritual,
Performance
Feb 25 - Sep 11
Asian Art
Museum

