

SFLCV November 2020 Election BART Board Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in the San Francisco League of Conservation Voters endorsement process. Please limit answers to the below questions to 2-3 paragraphs at most (250 words). We are accepting responses until August 18, 2020 at midnight. Please note that your responses will be posted publicly on our website at www.sflcv.org.

Please enter your contact info here (Name, District, Campaign contact, Phone, Email, FPPC#) *

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What are your qualifications for the BART Board of Directors and why should the San Francisco League of Conservation Voters endorse you? *

I brought 25 years of San Francisco City government experience to BART and it has helped to improve collaboration and coordination.

When faced with filthy and unacceptable conditions at the 16th Street BART Plaza, I rolled up my sleeves grabbed a broom and started sweeping. Quickly, Hillary Ronen joined me and we swept weekly for 4 months until BART Management acquiesced and dramatically increasing custodial shifts from 24th to Embarcadero. I also secured the first formal training and certification for new and continuing custodians. Similarly, I moved into Civic Center because of rampant narcotics use in the hallway connecting east and west entrances. This Station has much improved.

Led effort w Lateefah to expand youth fare 50% discount from ages 6-12 to include youth before their 19th birthday. We advocated strongly for the first-ever low-income rider 20% discount that began its pilot phase in July. Proposed the Ambassador program for non-sworn unarmed personnel to provide a safety presence on trains and platforms. Championed Elevator Attendants, Pit Stops and our Escalator repair and Canopy program in the core. Eager to expand our effort to remove armed police from responding to societal challenges. Proud to be part of the pro-environment, progressive working majority w Li, Saltzman and Simon. We blocked BART to Livermore and I've supported our move to using cleanly generated electricity, improve station lighting and becoming the largest issuer of Green Bonds through Measure RR. As President I led effort to successfully transition to our new GM Robert Powers who is doing an excellent job and has been much more visible and engaged with riders and media.

Most of all, fighting for our core capacity improvements instead of further suburban extensions.

How has COVID-19 changed the situation that BART faces? *

Like other transit systems, we have suffered 88% reduction in ridership since Covid-19. We have worked hard to maintain our service network and 90% of our front-line employees are coming to their shifts which is amazing. We have only had 8 employees test positive and, through contact tracing, confirmed that none were exposed in the workplace. Two of our directors repeatedly want to focus on furloughs which is irresponsible. Once we lose the capacity to grow service we will not be able to slowly win back ridership if and when there is a vaccine or other measures to dramatically reduce new infections. Certainly we need a Democratic House and Senate and President to provide the resources to sustain transit, especially since 65% of our operations are funded by firebox revenues -- and we don't have other subsidies to soften the blow.

Our leadership team has been nimble in moving engineering and mechanic staff from operations to capital funded projects, such as Measure RR and railcar procurement, Redding operating expenses without laying off workers.

Alicia Trost, our Chief Communications Officer and GM Powers have done excellent work developing the 15-step Welcome Back program and we need to continue these efforts so that riders are wearing masks and everyone is confident that we are maintaining intensive cleaning and disinfection of railcars and other touchpoint throughout the system.

What should BART do to better meet transportation needs in SF and across the region? *

Our Core Capacity program is the fundamental recognition that 2/3 of our riders have begun or ended their trip at one of the four downtown stations. Even with reduced ridership and explosion of individuals working from home, we have needed to reinvest in our system that's turning 50.

It is a miracle that this Administration, after years of delay, finally agreed to a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) guaranteeing \$1.17 billion for our new Core Capacity program, including: a new CBTC Train Control system, desperately needed new electrical substations and 306 new railcars in addition to the 775 already being added to our fleet (replacing 669 old vehicles).

What are the top three things BART can do to improve its customer experience? *

1. Continue our robust efforts to address homelessness, behavioral health problems and substance abuse within our system. We can approach defunding BART PD because officers do not have the tools or training to address these issues. I'm looking forward to our new partnership with Salvation Army as they have beds and treatment and will not be responding to people with a waiting list which is much of what we got from our contracting with SFHOT. Our leadership, including Tim Chan and Armando Sandoval, can map what expanded programs in SF and throughout our system can accomplish. We have learned a lot from partnerships in SF and Contra Cost County and we could have a national model.

I worked for two years to overcome former General Manager Grace Crunican's opposition to Ambassadors, unarmed non-sworn personnel on our trains and platforms. Ultimately, it took a new GM and BART PD Chief to acknowledge that officers were not visible in trains or on platforms and that many of our riders were uncomfortable interacting with armed officers based upon consistent data as to the disproportionality of Black riders being cited. Ambassadors can help to de-escalate many situations and individuals who are homeless have been more open to these personnel as they are not seeking to cite or arrest them.

2. Restrooms!! I am so proud that our Powell Street Station renovation, in its beginning phases, will lead to our first new, staffed restroom in the downtown. Building upon the model of our joint PitStop program in SF. I will be working with Director Janice Li so that the remaining downtown stations are prioritized with clean, safe and staffed restrooms.

3. Second Crossing - you may chuckle but it's unlikely to improve my customer experience, given the lead time, but this is absolutely essential as future generations (my 13-year-old, Sid) shift mode from cars to transit to attack global warming. This project is at the top of my priorities for a second-term on the BART Board and I'm encouraged to see that we are soon going out to hire firms to work with us on the mega-regional study. Covid-19 has underscored how many essential workers need a transit option early in the morning and late at night and a second crossing provides critical redundancy so that we can meet this need. Social Equity is a centerpiece of this project and I have so many ideas about developing curriculum for Transit Citizenship for middle and high schoolers as we encourage our young people to consider the multitude of careers that will be available over the next 20-40 years especially as us Boomers retire.

What are the top three things BART should do to improve fare, schedule and service coordination with Muni and other transit agencies? *

I support MTC's study on fare integration and pledge to work with Muni (Jeff Tumlin, so awesome in this very tough time) and Julie Kirschbaum (amazing colleague, we worked together years ago, when I was a Supervisor, when she worked on an audit I requested of the J-Church) on service coordination. I'm endorsed by SFMTA Gwyneth Borden, who ran for D9 Director in 2016! We are close and she is very proactive and we work well together. This really does matter to riders.

What should BART do to better address the transit needs of low-income and transit dependent people and communities of color? *

Lateefah and I were shocked to realize that BART's 50% reduced youth fare only extended from age 6 to 12. This was crazy!!! We beat the drum on this at every turn and we pressed the former GM to speak up at MTC that BART should have a low-income rider fare. With help from MTC Directors Nick Josefowitz and Jane Kim and hard push by Grace Crunican we secured the 20% pilot, starting last month, that also includes Muni, GG Transit and VTA. For a system to have integrity we need to address income inequality and the numbers of our riders who are low and moderate income and struggling to stay in the Bay Area. This are top of agenda for me and Lateefah.

Had Faster Bay Area been on the ballot, we were working for funding to allow a 50% discount so we need to be creative to find other funding within BART and externally, if possible.

BART's legacy with the Bay Area Black Community and others is not good. The murder of Oscar Grant by a BART Police Officer and other killings of African Americans and BART's failure to redress these wrongs has worsened a bad situation.

When I served as Board President in 2019, among my priorities was ending six years of delays in completing an Oscar Grant mural at Fruitvale and then I insisted of GM Crunican that we also proceed to name the street under the Station Oscar Grant Way. Lateefah had been a strong leader, but as President I had the clout to get it completed. BART staff and directors also had never had a table at the Oscar Grant Memorial Scholarship Dinner and I organized Directors and staff to pay for our own tickets and show our recognition and support.

One of the best things about serving as a BART Director has been building a working relationship and friendship with Oscar's Mother, Wanda Johnson. We talk frequently and I have been so angry about the dismissive and racist statements at BART Director Debora Allen has made about Oscar, causing pain to Wanda and the entire family.

I sponsored the amendment to our budget requiring us to reimagine what public safety should be for BART and removing armed police interactions in situations that do not involve physical violence or robberies. The disproportionality of citations and arrests of Black and Brown riders has to end. I am ready to work with my colleagues to make big changes and redirect funding in more effective ways to create safety with integrity, not bias.

Lastly, I have been a consistent, effective advocate for Black, other minority, women-owned, veteran and other small businesses in contracting with BART. I am working on fundraising and media for the Proposition 16 (repealing Proposition 209 that banned affirmative action). Black businesses consistently have the best track-record hiring Blacks and other minorities. 209 has decimated public agency contracting to these firms. I am also proud to have secured the second-ever business preference for disadvantaged LGBTQ businesses.

What is your opinion of BART's service area extension program and recent actions there?
Under what conditions would you support extensions or additions to the BART system? *

I opposed the Livermore extension. As you've seen in my answers the focus has to be on our core. I worked to improve BART-VTA collaboration on the extension to Berryessa and also Phase 2 -- which I support

What are your spending priorities, given that there are always more needs than the funds to address them? *

Service, cleaning, capital reinvestment and ambassador program.



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