

# 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](http://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've been civically engaged since a young age and have a penchant for politics and public transportation. As a political science major and former editor journalist, I covered state and local politics for my university paper, and also covered congressional politics for The Hill newspaper in DC. In my career, I've spent the last 5 years in the nonprofit advocacy space, pushing for investments in education, particularly childcare, early childhood education and Pre-K, and afterschool and summer learning programs. So my experience as a policy professional and my familiarity with state and local politics situates me well to take on a governing position with the BART Board of Directors.

I would be honored to have the SFLCV endorsement because I think I embody your environmental and conservationist mission through and through. To start, I'm an Eagle Scout, and have spent a formidable part of my life taking advantage of nature and the outdoors through the lens of "leave no trace." I've participated in trail conservation projects in Virginia and while backcountry hiking and camping in New Mexico, I've led and participated in roadside trash clean-up efforts, and to date, I'm an active participant in the SFPUC Adopt a Drain program, which ensures that storm drains in San Francisco are clear of debris. I don't own a car, and I'm an avid cyclist who relies on public transportation and Amtrak for my occasional commutes to and from Sacramento. With my bike, I've visited nearly every park and open space in San Francisco, and I use my bike as my main mode of transportation and recreation—not just for the health and wellness benefits, but for the environmental ones as well. I'm a vegetarian, I'm a regular composter, and I stand firm on the 3 R's—with the greatest emphasis on "reducing" waste.

Endorsing me is an assurance that you'll have a candidate who cares deeply about the environment, protecting it, and leaving San Francisco in a better condition for future generations. As a bike advocate who volunteers his time refurbishing bikes to donate to the community through the lens of equity, I believe in accessibility to cycling and the need for better infrastructure and bolstered safety of existing bike infrastructure. Accessibility and safety are key components in encouraging more people to bike in San Francisco and reduce their dependence on cars. And lastly, my goal as BART Director is to improve the reliability and safety of BART to instill new confidence and satisfaction in ridership and re-establish BART as a go-to mode of transportation around the Bay and a better alternative to ride-sharing and private transportation, which congests roads and pollutes our air.

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

BART is faced with unprecedented budget constraints due to its drop in ridership and its heavy reliance on fare revenue to operate and survive. Additionally, BART is facing an issue of ridership confidence, as riders want to feel safe without the fear of getting sick. BART has subsequently increased their cleaning protocols, and stations appear cleaner than ever, thanks to around the clock servicing. Trains are cleaned daily with electrostatic disinfection and a careful wipedown of all touch points and surfaces, face masks are required (though not everyone appears to be in compliance), and better air filters are being installed in train cars to quickly circulate the air and remove harmful viruses and pollutants.

Revenue loss due to a drop in ridership is a major focus of my campaign. A short-term strategy to shore up funds for BART and an impending \$950 million deficit over the next three years is to call on the federal government to step in for relief funds. But a conversation needs to be had about long-term financial sustainability, which I think is lacking under current BART leadership. This year's budget cuts have completely zeroed out the line items for "grant development" and "sustainability" which are critical components in ensuring BART is financially viable for generations to come. My focus will be to work with the other directors as well as city and state lawmakers and leaders to identify new funding streams and grants to drive down BART's reliance on fare revenue and put BART on track to being a more equitable, affordable, and accessible transportation choice for Bay Area residents.

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

BART should fast-track the development of high-density, affordable housing on BART-owned land around their stations. With a growing population in the Bay Area, an influx of cars and congestion on our roads, and the growing number of car sales in the midst of the pandemic, we need to provide people with accessible and far-reaching public transportation options to move people around the Bay. BART is already well-situated to move people from the suburbs to the cities and vice versa, but a lack of affordable housing in certain areas pushes people further away and leaves them reliant on private transportation options. The affordable housing component of BART's TOD plan coupled with AB 2923 are meant to move this development along quicker, but as we know, housing projects can be stalled and delayed for months or years. Advocating for legislation that cuts down on the inevitable red tape that would delay these projects is a logical next step in ensuring BART can meet its goal of 7,000 affordable housing units on BART property by 2040. But even then, that number is too low, and when BART revisits the plan in a few years, I plan on moving the goal line and increasing those numbers.

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

Transit advocates in San Francisco and across the Bay have reached out to me with some incredible ideas and feedback on how to improve the system both short-term and long-term, and provided examples of simple tweaks that can go the distance in enhancing peoples' experiences with BART. There are several moves BART can make to better meet transportation needs, but the most critical effort in this moment is to improve reliability, cleanliness and safety on BART. Work needs to be done to bring back BART's core network ridership post-pandemic, and that starts with a campaign around improving the public's perception of BART through concerted efforts to improve service.

Secondly, BART should divest funding away from armed police officers and instead invest money in unarmed ambassadors who are qualified in handling interactions with unhoused individuals or people in mental distress who use BART. BART PD makes up more than 15 percent of BART's budget, and the ambassador program is funded under the BART PD budget. What the system and trains need is coverage, and paying for armed officers to deal with non-criminal situations—which make up the bulk of rider complaints and concerns—is too costly and unnecessary, and I think more and more people have come to the same conclusion. Let's get more ambassadors aboard trains and in stations, let's promote an approachable and skilled public safety system that benefits everyone and can serve as a crime deterrent, and let's have police on standby to respond to serious crimes.

Lastly, BART can re-open their restrooms at all stations and eliminate excursion fares, which charge passengers a \$6.20 fee for entering a station and then exiting shortly after in the case that, say, their train is delayed or they don't want to take the trip after all. These fares are unfair, inequitable, not clearly defined, and hardly benefit riders.

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

Firstly, there needs to be a regular meeting among stakeholders from all of these transit boards and agencies so that there's an understanding of the incongruence between fares, scheduling, and service across networks. One of the most frustrating parts of riding BART to Richmond to get on Amtrak is the long waits between connections, or the likelihood of missing a connection because of a delay that isn't communicated across agencies.

Secondly, integration of fares is dependent on restructuring the way fares are calculated. BART and Muni both rely on Clipper, but the fact that you have to tap out of one fare gate to tap into another is senseless and time consuming. Developing a distance-based structure or zone for transit would alleviate the confusion and better integrate the networks together. For instance, a flat fare for travel on BART or Muni across the San Francisco network would mean we could take down the station barriers between Muni and BART and people could make their connections seamlessly without the effort of having to tap in and tap out with Clipper repeatedly.

Thirdly, integrating BART and Caltrain fares, along with increased Caltrain frequency and schedule coordination with BART—allowing for better-timed transfers at Millbrae and San Jose— would essentially establish a full-fledged regional network around the Bay.

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

For starters, BART should extend the discount pilot program for low-income riders extended indefinitely. And fare enforcement at Embarcadero Station needs to be halted because the potential for implicit bias and racial profiling by enforcement officers is just too high. Not to mention the personnel costs are not worth the cost of money reclaimed from fare evasions. I think the boldest strategy BART can take is to stop passing the cost of fare increases onto riders, on which the bulk of BART's riders are low income and people of color. Instead, BART could consider increasing parking lot fees to be more in line with what the market can bear, as well as identifying new funding streams to offset the dependence on fare revenue.

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've made it clear in my campaign that I think the bulk of our time and money should be spent on improving BART's core network. Measure RR is crucial in improving the infrastructure and integrity of BART, but service, reliability, and safety should be our priority.

That being said, I do support the concept of a second transbay crossing and the potential to link up Amtrak or HSR to San Francisco as well. A second transbay crossing provides redundancy in the service network, should there be congestion in the transbay tube, but it also primes BART for the inevitable population growth in the Bay we're going to see over the next few decades. The proposal for the second crossing is being considered, but the reality of a completed project is far away—if complete, it will be barely in my lifetime. I would support the project in full, but only under the condition that the development of the second crossing was coupled with the promise of affordable housing development around new and existing stations.

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

Spending priorities for the short-term should be focused on improving the reliability of BART's core system, improving bike accessibility on trains and in stations (as well as bike infrastructure on roads leading to and from stations), and investing in an more robust ambassador program that provides adequate coverage at every station.

Long-term spending priorities should be focused on sustaining BART for generations to come and curbing its dependence on fare revenue. This means making strategic investments and efforts early on in terms of grant development, policy/budget asks, or potential ballot measures in order to identify new and substantial funding streams.



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