



April 9, 2026

BART Board Meeting

PUBLIC COMMENT

Item 7

Comments from the following:

Aleta Dupree

Good morning Board President Melissa Hernandez and Members.

Aleta Dupree for the record, she, her, with Team Folds,

I prepare for you my comments in pertinence to the work and mission of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

On Sharing.

The sharing of cooking in the all electric kitchen, powered by renewable energy.



I relate to you on sharing, and my recent experiences thereof. I feel it germane to share of my experiences, even beyond BART, and Public Transportation in general, in order to provide context as to who I am. Such reflects

basic ideals that are foundational to the things I share with you in spoken and written form.

I consider recent Meetings, both in BART and in other public bodies. I have come to share over time the recent commemoration of my 60th birthday. This I have done in several Meetings, inserted into my subject matter Public Comments. And this year I spent my birthday in the Bay Area. Last year I had a birthday lunch with a close family member who had a birthday commemoration about two weeks prior. It was actually on my birthday that we had lunch together in the Oyster Bar, which is a famous restaurant on the lower level of Grand Central Terminal, a legendary and historic public transportation facility that is located in New York City. Yet there were weather challenges in New York and the surrounding area this time around, and the Oyster Bar is only open on weekdays. This year my birthday fell during a weekend.

I attended a few parties in the Bay Area, some with over a hundred people. And the overarching theme of these parties was about welcoming and mingling with people who are different. These were not parties specifically in my honor, but instead venues where everyone had a place of honor, and equally so. At some of these events, people wore costumes. You see, there is an event that takes place in the spring. A story is told, typically in the form of a play or a pageant, about the travails of a community facing tyranny. After the play is performed, the entire short story is read before the assembly in the meeting hall. And when a certain name is mentioned, the people activate various kinds of noisemaking devices. This is performed to drown out the name of the person posing an existential threat to the community. Afterwards a meal is served, including fruit filled pastries in tri-cornered shapes. Later in the week I went to another party, and finger foods were prepared and freely offered. Not long after that I went to another event, with wine tasting and karaoke. I took very small portions of wine, and water was provided to clean the glasses out between tastings, and then poured into appropriate receptacles, as we did not use spittoons. We were treated to several renditions of songs by the Grateful Dead, which I enjoyed very much.

I decided to perform Right Down the Line, by Mr Gerry Rafferty, a legendary Scottish musician who surely was thinking of New York City in many of his songs. I gave a brief intro in saying, "I am sharing of things inspired by a famous railroad station in New York City, and it is not Penn Station, you do the math, hit it." And I began performing Right Down the Line, and reflecting on New York City, considering the importance of that famous transportation system that is the New York City Subway. Mr Rafferty surely spoke of taking long trips on the lines of the former Independent System, especially the "A" service of the Eighth Avenue Line. "Through the Park Avenue Tunnel and into the light" came to mind as well. During the instrumental bridge I performed air guitar, in channeling both Mr Rafferty's inspirations and my own regarding New York City in the 1970's. As the song was fading away, I closed with saying something like this, "that was Right Down the Line, by Mr Gerry Rafferty, in sharing of Grand Central Terminal which is a legendary and historic railroad station that is located in New York City, and by the way, I just turned 60, thank you very much". I received a standing ovation upon the song's conclusion, and I worked the room on the way back to my seat.

I admit that I do not have much experience with karaoke. It was about seven years ago that I previously performed karaoke, and I think I performed Right Down the Line that time as well. And almost twenty years ago I went with a few friends to a Korean style karaoke bar in central Las Vegas. I had never done karaoke before then. Around that time I had begun enjoying Korean food frequently, especially a spicy tofu based soup called sundubu. Yet it was in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1989 that I first partook of Korean food. You see, it was common for our military personnel to be deployed to South Korea at that time. I served with a young man who had performed a deployment to South Korea who during that time married a Korean woman. I first met him in my unit in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, at the time his wife was pregnant. And when his wife gave birth he mentioned to the unit they we could visit at the base hospital. And so on that weekend I went over to the hospital and the young man was there, with his wife and the baby. We spent about an hour together making small talk, including

about Korean food. Then I asked my friend and teammate, how many visitors have you had? He paused a bit, and then he said, you're the only one. I was surprised by that at first, yet a few minutes later reality set in, I found myself not surprised at all.

And about twenty years ago I met with a group of about fifteen older women, mostly wearing skirts, who were visiting Las Vegas. It was on a Sunday morning, some had been to church, and we were looking for a morning meal. Sunday brunches in Las Vegas are known for being crowded, and sometimes costly. And I came up with something completely out of left field, to have Korean food. The group, to my surprise immediately embraced the idea. And we carpoled to my favorite Korean restaurant. We occupied a few tables in the corner, the place was quiet, and the group learned very quickly about Korean food. Most of the people in the group had never had Korean food. We stayed about an hour and a half enjoying our meal and we were able to pay with separate checks. The staff was perfectly fine with taking care of about a dozen separate credit card transactions, a few paid with cash as well. We ensured generous tipping, and then we went on our separate ways for the rest of the day, I went home and took a nap.

And so what do stories of sharing have to do with BART? Such is indeed susceptible to questioning. You see, at times I have enjoyed the riding of BART with others. Sometimes that takes place with members of your Board and District Staff. Sometimes I end up in spontaneous conversations with others who happen to be riding BART at the same time as myself. Sometimes I find myself during my trips on BART meeting up with people I know as well. I find that I have more experiences of sharing on BART than any other transportation system. I consider a song called Sharing Love, by Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards, slower than most of their other works yet still with the distinctive guitar and bass lines. I do not know if any of you have any experience with the music of Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards. This I share of often just as I do with the music of Mr Gerry Rafferty. Some in BART are big fans of the Grateful Dead. I am a person of many interests, and Public Transportation helps me to get where I need and want to go. Yet I find myself sharing of this ideal, which is indeed reflective of the principle of sharing, that BART is The Peoples System.

I just don't get it.

I was originally planning to use the heading "I am jaded", or "something's got to give". I consider your Meetings, and the flow of business thereof. I think about where do I fit in, and my standing to share. I often consider that my standing might be compromised, because things said by others in Public Comment seem to me to have greater weight to you than the things I say. I think of the peculiar nature of you being a directly elected Board as opposed to a Board made up of appointees. Because of your directly elected nature, and my not being a District resident, that technically leaves me unrepresented. I often leave your Meetings saying to myself, "whatever happened to respectful public comment?" I admit that there is an agency that I have pretty much stopped attending their Meetings because to me their Public Comment sessions were getting out of hand. And where is someone such as myself supposed to fit in?

I submit to you that if I was the Presiding Officer I would be quite strict in the application of the rules of Public Comment. I would not be afraid to ask for conclusion of remarks. I would have the microphone turned off if need be. I would not hesitate to have offenders removed from the room. I wish we had a code of conduct for our Meetings, and make expectations clear. Yet I'm not seeing an appetite on your part to do so. I wonder, are some of you more interested in satisfying particular constituencies, especially those who got you elected to your offices? Yet some of you do take the things I say seriously. I am a person of expectations, and I would not hesitate to ask pointed questions in an afternoon of Public Employee Evaluations. I would be enjoying white tablecloth lunches and have plane spotting streaming silently on the big screen. I might have on a Raiders t shirt, or one that says Grand Central on it. Some might not like me in the moment, and perhaps accuse me of

being arrogant and impetuous. I might share of the wisdom of Mr Gerry Rafferty, who was surely thinking of New York City in working on his songs.

I consider the old saying, “you can and you can’t, you will and you won’t. You’ll be damned if you do, you’ll be damned if you don’t”. This quote is often ascribed to Lorenzo Dow, an itinerant American preacher in the early 1800’s. And so I seek for my speakings to be more than heating up the room on a hot day. Yet I might be at a disadvantage here, not just due to my lack of District residence, but my history of skipping fare on the New York City Subway in 1980-81. Yet I consider my riding of the “G” service on the Subway, and many of us are wearing skirts at the same time. Perhaps the “G” has the highest percentage of skirt wearing riders of any rapid transit line in the country. Yet the ridership of the “G” is very diverse, even among those who wear skirts, and we all might not be on the same wavelength when it comes to our views and mindsets on life. I have read that the “G” has an average weekday ridership of more than 160,000 people. And that is almost as much as our entire BART. I often share of the “G” service in respectful Public Comment before the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

People often ask me, “what are you attempting to achieve when you speak at Meetings?” I mention that I shape conversations. I do this despite being simply an ordinary member of the Public, in some cases with limited standing. Some in the public realm have told me that I should not be speaking at Meetings. Yet I have never been denied the opportunity to speak when the appointed time comes. I am not seeking special treatment but I simply want a reasonable expectation of equal treatment. I feel that the constituency of people from outside the BART district needs to be heard and considered as well, and with equal standing. Yet when it seems that disrespect is indulged instead of countered, such leads me to think that those of us who offer thoughtful and respectful Public Comment are not being taken seriously. To me, disrespectful and disorderly conduct makes a mockery of the system that we depend upon to share our thoughts with the hope of building something better.

I feel that in order to build the best BART that we can have necessitates taking into account those who share their thoughts with appropriate respect. Such needs to be in conformance with basic rules of conduct, even if not officially codified. Yet I see this most basic issue sorely lacking in our BART. And our BART has challenges to say the least. I ask that you never treat Meetings as “dog and pony shows”, but instead with the intention of getting the serious business of running a railroad done. And some of you do take me seriously in your Meetings and out on the System. I know your leadership team of Bob Powers and Michael Jones to be focused very seriously on building the very best BART that we can have, with a safety first and always perspective. I ask of you to fully support Bob and Michael in this most important work. You see, the common denominator that brings New York City and the surrounding mega region together is the Subway. It is said, when the Subway stops, New York stops. The Subway has the unique distinction of being The System that is Legendary and Stately. And I seek for our BART to be treated with this same level of importance. I admit that if I were the Presiding Officer, I would probably lead Meetings with an “iron hand”, and expecting procedures to be followed with meticulous accuracy. Some might not like me in the moment but I want first and foremost what is best for our BART. My platform is simple, a BART that is safe, timely, and affordable. A BART that seeks after the fullest levels of inclusion. A BART that people not only use but enjoy as well. And this can all be summed up in one basic statement that I hold dear, that BART is indeed The Peoples System.

Wisdom of fluid dynamics.

“Winding your way down in Baker Street, light in your head and dead on your feet. Well another crazy day, and you’ll drink the night away, and forget about everything”. - Gerry Rafferty sharing of the challenges of life in the area of Forty Second Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, in New York City in the 1970’s.

Michael Dunn, in trying to make up for the shortcomings of his buddies: “It’s my fault brother, I’m the one who should be expelled.”

Brother Thadeus, the headmaster, played by Donald Sutherland: “You all acted as one, Mr Dunn, and as one you shall bear the consequences”. - A reflection on life at the St Basil Catholic High School, 4 Avenue and 43 Street, Brooklyn, New York.

(Heaven Help Us, 1985).

“I said he’s a fairy I do suppose, flying through the air in pantyhose. He may be very sexy or even cute, but he looks like a sucker in a blue and red suit.” - The Sugar Hill Gang.

A statement of the obvious.



This is the official name of a legendary and historic railroad station that is located in New York City.
Thank you.