



BART Celebrating 36 years of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

BART Accessibility Task Force (BATF) - July 23, 2026



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - 101

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush
- **ADA** is a federal **civil rights** law
- Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities under five titles:
 - 1) Employment
 - 2) State and Local Government
 - Public Transportation
 - 3) Public Accommodations
 - 4) Telecommunications
 - 5) Miscellaneous Provisions

Harold Willson



Harold Willson was a pioneering disability rights advocate who became the first person in a wheelchair to ride a train on the San Francisco Bay Area Transit (BART) system. His activism, demonstration, and collaboration with system directors directly led to mandatory ADA upgrades, including elevators in every station.

Photo above - Harold Willson (left) smiles at Eric Staley (right) on a BART train in 1972 — Photo courtesy of Kaiser Permanente Heritage Resources

ADA Historical Photos



Photo of protestors sitting in wheelchairs protesting in front of the White House - 1972



Photo showing George H.W. Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law, July 26, 1990



Diane Coleman in Los Angeles sitting in her power wheelchair with protest sign which reads "Accessible Transportation Now"

Thank you, BART Accessibility Task Force (BATF)



Photo to the left, BATF members

Left to right:

1. Clarence R. Fischer
2. Janice Armigo Brown
3. Joshua Saunders
4. Shana Ray
5. Esther Waltz
6. Danny Kodmur,
7. Daveed Mandell
8. Herb Hastings
9. Bruce Yow
10. Roland Wong
11. Hillary Brown
12. Sam Buman
13. Catherine Callahan
14. Anita Ortega
15. Ryan Manriquez (not in photo)

Thank you for providing valuable feedback and guidance to the BART Board of Directors and staff on disability-related issues, and for advocating on behalf of people with disabilities and seniors to ensure the BART system is accessible to everyone since its beginning in 1975. We truly could not have accomplished this without BATF.

BATF's Accomplishments:

- Hale Zukas was honored as disability activist at Ashby BART Station – 2012
- General Disability Awareness tri-fold pamphlet given to the BART Police Department to use as a reference - 2014
- Advocated for accessibility to the new Fleet of the Future (FOF) floor plans – 2015
- Hearing Loops installed within the BART stations – 2017
- 10 new appointed BATF members – 2023 to 2026
- New Out-of-Service elevator signages for all BART stations – 2024
- Advised on the new next generation accessible faregates – 2025
- Improved “chime” faregate tones to make BART stations easier to navigate for people who are low vision or blind – 2026

Fun Photos

Photo to the right,
Chris Mullin to the
left, Roland Wong to
the right



Photo to the left, Herb
Hasting waving inside
the front of the new
trains

Photo below, Zoom group photos of BATF members and members of the public during COVID 2020





Photo above, a few BATF members on a field trip at a BART station

Photo below, two people in power wheelchairs riding the old BART train



Photo to the right, from left to right, Herb Hastings, Clarence R. Fischer, and Roland Wong



Photo below Janice Armigo Brown standing inside the new BART train next to the hearing loop logo



Photo above, Hale Zukas inside Ashby BART Station, platform level



Photo above, two people who are visually impaired, inside the new BART train at a sensory orientation that BART hosted

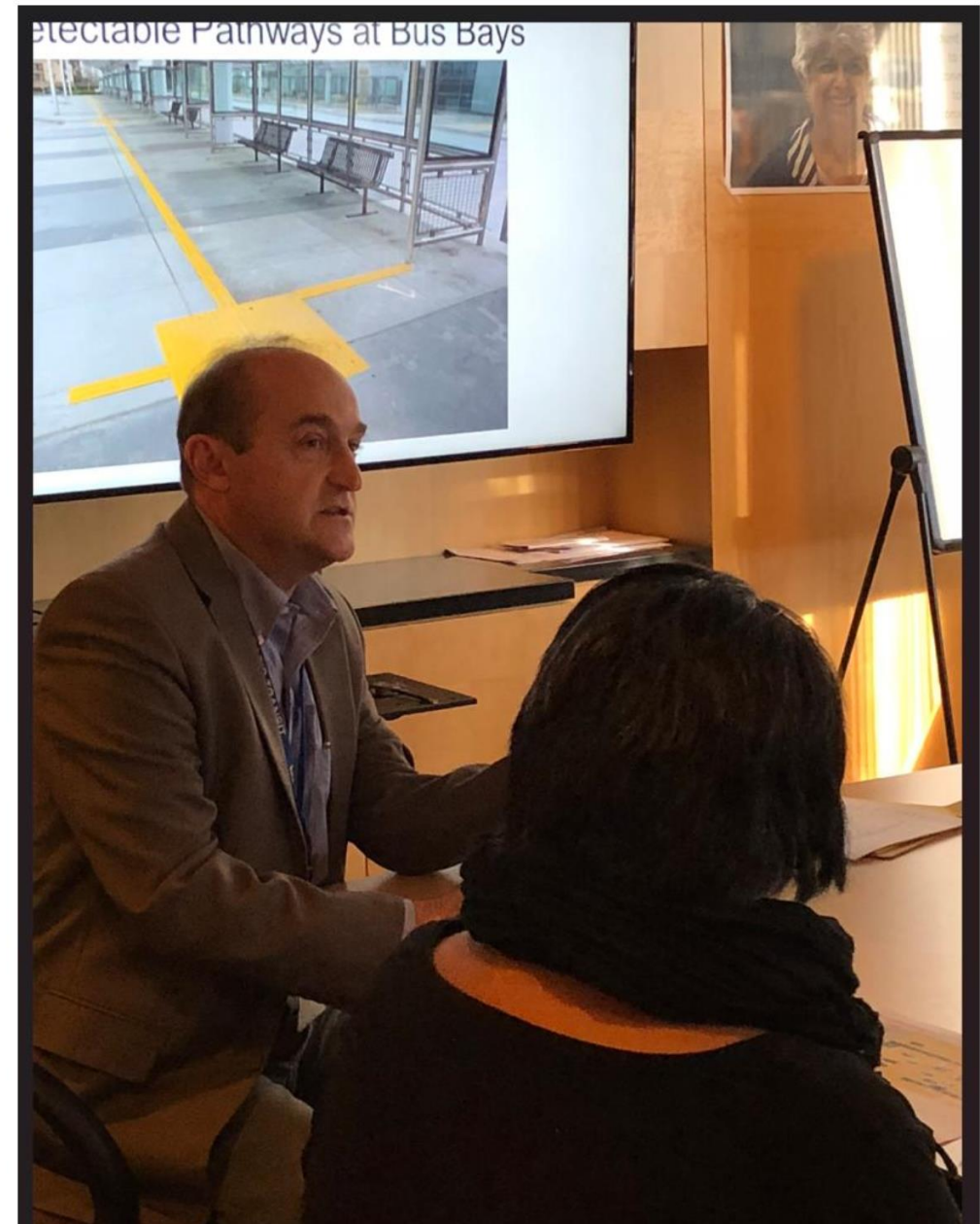


Photo above, Bob Franklin presenting at a BATF meeting

Photo below, Ryan Manriquez, center, with two of his friends





Photo above, Shana Ray, to the left, Joshua Saunders, to the right



Photo above, Rodd Lee, to the left, Danny Kodmur, to the right



Photo above, a group gathering discussing low vision/blind features at BART. Hillary Brown, upper left corner

This is not the end...



07.07.26 (<https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2026/news20260707-1>)

BART celebrates Disability Pride Month: How BART builds access into every ride



July is Disability Pride Month, marking the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. ADA law gives people with disabilities the ability to live, work, and move through the world with dignity and independence. For a transit agency, that mission is not abstract. Accessibility isn't an add-on at BART; it's foundational to how the system is built, operated, and improved.

This July marks 36 years since the ADA became law, and BART continues to invest in the features, training, and community partnerships that make the system usable for everyone.

A history rooted in advocacy



Harold Willson is pictured on a BART train. Photo courtesy of Kaiser Permanente Heritage Resources.

The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. BART's commitment to accessibility predates the federal law.

BART became the first major U.S. transit system to build elevator access into every station before the system opened in 1972. Elevators at every station was not in the original planning documents, but incorporated thanks to the work of pioneering disability rights advocate Harold Willson. His activism and direct collaboration with system directors led to mandatory accessibility upgrades across the system, including the requirement that every station have an elevator. Read more about Wilson's contributions to BART [here](#).



Hale Zukas pictured at Ashby Station in July 2020.

Another name central to BART's accessibility history is disability rights legend Hale Zukas, a key figure in the passage of the ADA itself. Zukas consulted directly with BART since the 1970s, and even helped design the button placement inside BART elevators so they'd be easy to reach for wheelchair users. Read more about Zukas in [this article](#).

Zukas cofounded the BART Accessibility Task Force (BATF) in 1975 and served as a member for 47 years. He passed away on November 30, 2022.

About the BART Accessibility Task Force



Photo caption: BART recently visited 19th St. Oakland Station with members of the Accessibility Task Force, including Chair Herb Hastings (far left), Roland Wong (second from left), and Sam Buman (far right) to walk through and take photos with the station's accessibility features. They were joined by Elena Van Loo (second from right), BART Sr. Admin. Analyst and liaison to the BATF in the Customer Access and Accessibility Department.

The [BATE](#) meets monthly to advise the BART Board of Directors and staff on disability-related issues and advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and seniors to make the BART system accessible to people regardless of disability or age.

One of the recent contributions of the BATF, along with other disability organizations, was endorsing a floor plan for BART's new train cars designed to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities. Their

consultations led to the modification of the cars' floor plan so that passengers with more than one wheelchair user in their group could sit together, with both wheelchair areas relocated to the center door of each car and floor-to-ceiling poles removed to maximize accessible paths. Other resulting features include the third door per car, wider aisles, and intercoms positioned at wheelchair-accessible height.

BATF members include Janice Armigo Brown, Hillary Brown (2nd Vice Chair), Sam Buman, Catherine Callahan, Clarence R. Fischer, Herb Hastings (Chair), Danny Kodmur, Daveed Mandell, Ryan Manriquez, Anita Ortega, Shana Ray, Joshua Saunders (Vice Chair), Esther Waltz, Roland Wong, and Bruce Yow.

We thank the BATF for their contributions to making BART a system that is accessible for all.

The BATF is actively recruiting new members. If you are interested or have questions email accessibility@bart.gov.

Did you know?

- In March 2026, BART rolled out [new fare gate tones](#) that are more pleasing and audible over station background noise, making stations more welcoming and simpler to navigate, especially for blind and low-vision riders.
- BART has [hosted sensory orientations](#) to help riders who are blind or have low vision navigate the system, most recently in March 2026.
- Every new and current BART Station Agent goes through Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Training.

Disability Pride Month is a reminder of how far accessible transit has come and a recommitment to the work still ahead. Learn more about BART's accessibility features and resources at bart.gov/accessibility.