



# **PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **BART Board Meeting**

**November 17, 2022**

**Item 8**

**From:** aleta dupree <tsjoan@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 8, 2022 3:23 PM  
**To:** BART Board <BoardofDirectors@bart.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments from the underground

Secretary April Quintanilla, please forward this message to the full BART Board for the next Regular Meeting.

Greetings President Rebecca Saltzman and Members.

Aleta Dupree for the record, (she, her).

I bring you my thoughts concerning the ongoing work of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

“The Last Train.”

I again consider the work of Mr Jeff Lynne, a highly acclaimed musician from the United Kingdom, in particular the neighborhood of Shard End in the city of Birmingham. I think of his 1979 work, Last Train to London. I do not remember when I first heard it. While I have not ever been to the United Kingdom, at the time the song was released, I was in New York. In various videos of Last Train to London, one can see London and it's many interesting places. There are scenes of Public Transportation such as their iconic double decker buses, and a historically significant landmark rapid transit system known as The London Underground.

In a video I saw of Last Train to London, I was particularly struck by a scene taking place in New York. Mr John Travolta, in his signature work Saturday Night Fever, taking place in 1977, was riding overnight trains on the RR line of the New York City Subway. I was pained in seeing that, Mr Travolta in a difficult situation, and the subway cars covered in graffiti. I wondered at the time, would the lights go out on that legendary and historic transportation system that is the Subway.

Mr Lynne spoke of 9:29 pm in his song, I thought to myself, would that have been the time of the last train to leave Grand Central Terminal, in New York City, before its proposed demolition. I lived through those difficult times. I consider myself fortunate that today I can return to New York and use these transportation systems steeped in history and tradition, and still living up to legendary and stately ideals.

I ask that you consider the importance of BART, and to not let BART deteriorate to the point where we contemplate when the last train will depart. There is much we at BART can learn from other systems, and those who lead them. I ask that you remember the importance of your General Manager, Bob Powers, who I believe shares the same goal that I have, of building the best BART that we can. It is essential to remember things much bigger than ourselves, and for BART to be a system that is first and foremost about People.

“Where it came from.”

I consider that over the years, there are many establishments I have heard of, and come across, that have the word “people” in their names. I think back to the centennial of the San Francisco Municipal

Railway. I noticed there were some decals on various vehicles that said, "The People's System." I didn't give it much thought at the time. But I found myself looking for something bigger and more profound to attach those words to.

I think back to the early 1980's, when I began flying between New York and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, several times a year. I had generally begin flying on Eastern and Delta, from the John F Kennedy International Airport. Yet I was intrigued by a new airline that began operations at Newark International Airport, in New Jersey. That airline enterprise was branded as PEOPLExpress.

I don't recall if I ever took a trip on PEOPLExpress. I do remember things changing in the air travel community. I think of the then unfinished Newark Terminal C, once a bare collection of steel beams, being completed and put into use. Sadly PEOPLExpress did not last very long. I came away though with the idea that this new airline was founded with the clear intent of being about serving the People, whomever they might be.

And so I was using BART more frequently, especially through the Transbay Tube. I began attending BART Board Meetings, and met Grace Crunican, your previous General Manager. I considered Jay Sarno, a famous hotel builder in Las Vegas, and his penchant for unusual names. Mr Sarno felt building a circus was not quite enough, so he built Circus Circus. And Mr Sarno, in wanting to build a place where people could feel bigger than themselves, left the apostrophe out of the name of his signature property, calling it Caesars Palace.

And so I thought as well about the United States Constitution, of which I have had various pocket versions over the years, and now in a phone app version. The first three words of that defining document of our Nation are We The People. And so over time I came to realize that BART is The Peoples System. I believe in the ideal of a BART that displays the ideals of being legendary and stately. Gerry Rafferty comes to mind, to experience Forty Second Street in New York City and its many interesting places, including Grand Central Terminal. I contemplate a BART that is steeped in history and tradition, following the examples of great systems of transportation such as the London Underground and the New York City Subway. Most of all BART needs to consider its primary mandate, to serve the People of Bay Area Soil, in keeping with the ideal of BART indeed being The Peoples System.

"On Recognition."

I bring to you the importance of recognition, that our community of Bay Area Soil is indeed very diverse. Yet I still see in some of our internal documentation that our demographics are limited. And I reiterate to you that definitions are prone to pitfalls. Because I am a person not of definitions, I am concerned about exclusion, and my fair use of the System being abridged or denied.

I often speak of the matters of Subway pushing, something that is of unspeakable and tragic magnitude, and absolutely never acceptable. But I wonder on BART, if I was pushed into the trackway, would there be an appropriate response and rescue. I am concerned though, that some would say, I know that person. That's the person who wears a skirt, and a Raiders t shirt. That's the one who goes to the Meetings and talks about New York City all the time. That's the one who mentioned taking the COVID-19 vaccine. And so could that lead to me being left on the tracks instead. I ask of you that safety and service should be available to all who enter upon BART, and available to all equally.

"Forward thinking."

I consider a few weeks ago my week long trip to Chicago. And I often speak of highlights of my trip to Chicago. Chicago to me was more than enjoying lunches and dinners with friends, and visiting the famous museum known as the Art Institute. A major highlight for me was riding on Public Transportation in Chicago, the rapid transit system known as the "L". The buses of CTA and Pace. And I visited three major rail terminals in Chicago, and used the rail system known as Metra. I was even reminded of my visits to Grand Central Terminal, not just the architecture, but also seeing the areas where the trains are staged for service. And one major reason why I choose to visit Chicago is to ride buses and trains, and my hope is to do so once again in New York.

And so I look forward to once again riding on BART. Many ask me, what do you do when you visit the Bay Area. I tell them first and foremost that I am going to ride on BART, and use my Clipper Card. You, see, BART is essential for me to be able to achieve my goals of getting around the Bay Area to do the things I need and want to do. And I want the best BART we can have. A BART where people can enjoy their trip uninterrupted, to be safe and timely. A BART that people will want to return to, time and time again. I ask of you to consider the importance of BART, and to remember things bigger than yourselves. It is true to that I take my New York City Subway, and Grand Central Terminal very seriously. Such are defining institutions of the great world class city that is New York. But there is an overriding reason that I look forward to riding on BART. It is simply this, BART is indeed The Peoples System.

The future is now.



Thank you.