



# **PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **BART Board Meeting**

**January 12, 2023**

**Item 7**

**From:** aleta dupree <tsjoan@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 26, 2022 6:50 PM  
**To:** BART Board <BoardofDirectors@bart.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments from the transformer

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

Greetings New Board President Janice Li and Members.

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

I bring to you my thoughts concerning the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, doing business as BART.

“Staying Alive.”

I consider the words of Barry, Robin, and Maurice Gibb, British musicians of legendary resume and stature originally from a place called the Isle of Man. I think of their signature work Stayin’ Alive, brought to the world in 1977.

I think of hearing Stayin’ Alive, when watching Saturday Night Fever for the first time, in 1977, at a large movie theater in Valley Stream, in Nassau County, New York. There are opening scenes of bridges in New York City, and a graffiti scarred “B” train on the elevated West End Line of the legendary and historic New York City Subway. Mr John Travolta is walking along 86th Street in the Bensonhurst neighborhood in Brooklyn, carrying a can of paint and eating a folded New York style pizza.

And so what does a signature song of The Bee Gees and Mr John Travolta walking in Brooklyn under elevated Subway tracks have to do with BART. You see, there are many of us who ride BART, we’re just trying to stay alive. Mothers and brothers quietly in their seats on BART, just needing to stay alive. People like myself who are different, scanning for threats, just wanting to stay alive on BART, and wherever else we might need or want to go.

But I have to tell myself, it’s all right, that’s OK. Surely many will look the other way. We’re going nowhere, and not knowing the reason why, saying somebody help us, and not hearing an answer. There are some who seek to disturb the many of us who ride on BART, causing trouble for those of us who are just trying to stay alive. No one is promised today or tomorrow. But I don’t think being preoccupied with staying alive is what BART should be all about.

“On Matters of Concern.”

I often listen to you in your various discussions and deliberations, and I am bewildered at times. It seems to me that you as a Board, are concerned with people of certain groups more than others. And that is disturbing to me. It seems to me that you are more concerned with those who are causing trouble in the system than those who use the system in its intended manner. It seems like you are more preoccupied with those who skip payment of fare and break the rules than those of us who pay fare and are following the rules and get to the other side.

And so I wonder, how much more am I at risk, especially because I am different. It is true that forty years ago I did skip fare on the New York City Subway. I'm sure many on that legendary system of Public Transportation that is the Subway had their rightful concerns upon seeing me act out in that way. But I do pay my fare on BART. Yet I wonder if BART is more tolerant, perhaps unintentionally so, to those who jump fare gates and consume prohibited items, than to someone such as myself who simply wears a skirt.

I ask that you consider the many who just want to get to the other side. I impress upon you that my wearing of a skirt is not an act of protest or disobedience, but simply being my honest self. Yet I do wonder if I may be separated from the system for wearing a skirt, and yet the consumption of inebriating, impairing, and noxious substances seems tolerated, perhaps ignored. I ask you remember the fare paying public who uses BART, who every day are just trying to stay alive. It is for this reason. BART is The Peoples System.

"Above the Rules?"

I admit to you that at times in watching your discussions in Meetings, that I am disturbed. You see, sometimes I see some of you getting into it with each other either on the dais, or on Zoom. I think to myself, are members of this Board above the rules of BART? You see, I am an ordinary user of BART and other systems of Public Transportation. Even though I speak at Meetings around the country, I am still subject to the rules of such systems as anyone else is. You see, I believe in the importance of leadership by example. I ask that there not be favored constituencies. Yet I do wonder, because I am different, and wear a skirt, that such might impair me in being able to use the System in its intended and reasonable manner.

I ask that you remember the importance of your General Manager, Bob Powers, and the executive team. I reiterate to you that in 2019, when Grace Crunican retired, I spoke and wrote letters to you as to what I wanted to see in a General Manager. And I believe that you listened, and you appointed Bob Powers. I am not able to speak for Bob, but I do believe that Bob and I share the ideal of building the best BART that we can. I ask that you share that ideal with me. For I depend on highly trained professionals to get me to the other side. I ask that you not attempt to intrude upon the proverbial flight deck, but instead to be informed, and to give clear direction. Such needs to be in a manner that respects the value of persons. I ask that you not get upset at each other or disrespect the presiding officer. I respect the clock and not speak out of turn. It is because I wish to speak at many more Meetings and I can't do that if I wear out the welcome. I expect the same of all of you, and no one should be led to think they are above the rules.

"On Organizing."

As we move into the new year, the task of organizing committees is upon us. I ask that you practice diversity among yourselves in preparing committee rosters and choosing presiding members. It is true that sometimes I disagree with some of you, and at times with all of you. I do believe, however, that every one of you should hold at least one position of committee chair or vice chair. I feel that diversity of viewpoints is essential in agenda development and facilitating productive conversation. I am simply an ordinary user of BART, and it is essential to remember that no part of BART is an island, and that BART's constituency is of a worldwide nature.

I ask of you in this new year to consider the importance of BART, and it's meaning to the People of Bay

Area Soil. I'm sure I will be addressing many, if not all of you in your various Meetings to be convened going forward. I ask that you recognize me when I come forth to speak with you in Public Comment, as per your long held traditions. For I do not seek to air dirty laundry or hear myself speak. I do feel I have much to share about BART, given the complex and diverse nature of the organization that BART is, and how all its parts affect me personally. I am different from you, but no less. I ask that you remember and uphold the good name of BART, and to conduct yourselves accordingly both on and off the clock. I ask that you be mindful of tradition and history, and to aspire to ideals that are legendary and stately. For I believe that one can never have enough Grand Central Terminal, which is located in New York City. Yet always remember this distinctive ideal, BART is indeed The Peoples System.

Great traditions are evident in their longevity.



Thank you.