



# **PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **BART Board Meeting**

**May 25, 2023**

**Item 7**

**From:** aleta dupree <tsjoan@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 3:44 PM  
**To:** Board Meeting <board.meeting@bart.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments from the ground

Secretary April Quintanilla, please forward this message to the full BART Board for the next Regular Meeting and enter into the public record.

Greetings Board President Janice Li and Members.

Aleta Dupree for the record, she, her.

I bring you my miscellaneous thoughts concerning the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

“On Relevance.”

I bring forth my thoughts concerning relevance, and its application to matters concerning BART. I feel strongly that BART operates in a larger ecosystem of community, and is in no way an island. I believe in the importance of being informed by experiences, and considering wisdom learned from others, and in other places.

It's true that I speak often of other systems of Public Transportation, especially those in New York City. I was born in the City of New York, as were several generations of my elders. I cannot claim as long a resume on BART as some of you do. But I seek after common themes, which can be found in many places. Some of my experiences have been mundane, as I don't quite remember my first trip on the New York City Subway in 1970. I'm pretty sure that first boarding took place at 34th Street and 8th Avenue, (B Division, A, C, E, lines). Yet I consider, such first boarding might have been at Hunters Point Avenue, (A Division, 7 line). Then again, I don't remember my reaction, though I'm sure I sought after more. Yet some experiences have been profound, as with my first visit to Grand Central Terminal in the fall of 1980. And so I share not just of my experiences in that famous railroad station, but highlight the fact that Grand Central Terminal is located in New York City.

I do not seek to make unequal comparisons between transportation systems. I admit to some biases. I have heard from others, and share in such sentiments, and I personally believe that the New York City Subway is the greatest transportation system the world has ever seen. Some might disagree. Perhaps it is the unique features of the Subway rarely found anywhere else, such as the comprehensive express network. It might be the stately architectural features. It could be tradition and history. BART is indeed a system of unique characteristics, not really a Subway, or commuter rail. As for me, BART is simply BART. BART perhaps is a system that doesn't meet traditional definitions of what Public Transportation looks like, and I believe that is a good thing. I would have liked to have seen BART done differently in the beginning, such as standard track gauge, a four track mainline through Oakland, and a direct line to the Oakland Airport. Yet I do believe in the overriding mission of BART in serving the community that is the Bay Area. As much as I enjoy the New York City Subway, and Grand Central Terminal, I believe in this premise that BART is built upon, that BART is indeed The Peoples System.

“Unsafe Spaces?”

I admit to you my concerns about Meetings, and situations that strike me as being unsafe. You see, I am

always seeking safety, as I think anyone of reasonable mind should. And I often wonder, and perceive, to what degree am I being taken seriously by you as a Board. Some might ask, why do you think such things? I am concerned when I see what seems to be your paying more attention to those who disrespect you and cause tension at your Meetings. I ask of you to consider those of us who speak respectfully and thoughtfully before you, there is a small cadre of us who do so. And yet it seems that you court trouble more than you invite respect. That deeply concerns me, as such sentiments could cause people like myself who are different to be separated from the System simply because of who we are. I maintain to you that sharing is not just about the ideas themselves, but how they are presented. I desire a BART where respectful conversation can be welcomed and appreciated. I ask of you to share that ideal with me, and to practice it.

I can only share with you my thoughts and experiences as I know them. I can't claim to have any influence, but I do believe that my thoughts are relevant to the work and mission of BART. The only way that I know to bring forth my thoughts and ideas is to continue to engage with you respectfully in my speakings and writings through the Public Comment process. I am simply an ordinary user of BART, and seek to use the System in its intended manner. I ask of you to consider the broad based community of ordinary users of BART. I believe the future of Public Transportation is founded in both emerging and historically diverse communities, and I am part of that large and in some ways undefined population.

"Be Not Afraid."

I often hear of the many who are afraid to ride on BART. I have admitted to you my fear of flying on airplanes. And I found my previous refusal to fly on airplanes to be limiting, and so I began flying on airplanes. And so at times I have my fears of riding on BART. And yet if I refused to ride on BART, I would find myself quite limited. I think back to the days of the New York City Subway at its low point around 1980, with the graffiti, the broken lights, and all kinds of other things. I had much reason to be afraid, yet I used it anyway. I didn't just use it in the heavily trafficked sections of Manhattan, but ventured to its outermost reaches. And so I continue to use BART, even with me having profound disabilities. I feel an answer to dealing with fear about BART is to use BART, and use it often. I painfully acknowledge the possibility that I might be pushed into the trackway, and yet I know I need to ride on BART anyway. There are some who might object to my presence, and call for people such as myself to be separated from the System. I ask for you as a Board to set the example of empowered use of the System. I do not ask anyone to be fearless, as even after much flying, I am still afraid of flying. Yet I think it's better to be afraid to flying and go flying, than to stay on the ground. I acknowledge that everyone has their comfort levels, and I don't see myself going skydiving or hang gliding anytime soon. But I do feel that to enter upon and use BART should be reasonably achievable, and I hope that more would use this system despite their fears, much as I do. I advocate this antidote to fear of riding BART, and that antidote is to ride BART. I feel that riding of BART can be an activity practiced in a shared method, to invite others to ride BART as well, and to enjoy all that BART has to offer.

"On Bathrooms."

I thought I would share about bathrooms. I don't have any pictures of bathrooms to share with you, nor do I think it is necessary, and such might be subject to editing. I have used the bathrooms in the Powell Street and Lake Merritt Stations a number of times. I have always found the bathrooms to be sufficiently clean for my use. You see, as a person of profound disabilities, I am concerned about the condition of bathrooms. I have found the attendants who manage the bathroom facilities to be courteous and welcoming. I have never felt backhanded in any way upon approaching the bathroom facilities. I believe

that BART is setting an example of leadership in managing these important personal spaces. I think back to the summer of 2019, when I was in New York. I was in the legendary and stately transportation facility that is Grand Central Terminal. I went to use the bathroom on the Lower Level, also known as the Dining Concourse, which leads to Tracks 100-115. I found the facility to be very well maintained, sanitary, and well stocked. And so I think it is essential for the various systems of Public Transportation and their governing panels to share wisdom of such basic things. What I can say to you is if I found a bathroom to be in unsatisfactory condition, I would immediately share such issue with the appropriate staff, and I'm sure such would be rectified in short order.

"The sharing of experiences."

I think back to a recent gathering, and I was speaking with various members of the BART family. I was conversing with one who holds a position of leadership, whom I will not name. We mentioned things about various transportation systems and their leaders around the world. I found the conversation enlightening and informative. And then I asked this person, have you ever been to Grand Central Terminal, which is located in New York City? This individual replied to me that they had indeed visited that famous railroad station, and referred to it as a highly regarded and important public transportation facility. I knew that I was not alone in the ideal of working toward more reliable and equitable forms of Public Transportation. And I am not alone in holding this sentiment, which I ask of you to share and practice with me, that BART is unquestionably The Peoples System.

This is what welcoming looks like.



Thank you.