



PUBLIC COMMENT

BART Board Meeting

October 26, 2023

Item 3

From: aleta dupree <tsjoan@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 6:12 PM
To: Board Meeting <board.meeting@bart.gov>
Subject: Comments from daylight

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

Good Morning Board President Janice Li and Members.

Aleta Dupree for the record, she, her.

I proffer you my thoughts concerning the work and mission of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

“The Name of the Game.”

I consider the Swedish music group ABBA (an acronym representing Agnetha, Anni-Frid, Benny, and Bjorn). In 1977 I heard one of ABBA’s signature works, “The Name of The Game”. I have never been to Sweden, my only experience with Swedish things are pancakes, meatballs, and enjoying meals at a famous furniture store chain called IKEA. At the time “The Name of the Game” was released to the world, I was in New York. The musical works of ABBA were broadcast often on various radio stations in New York, such I often listened to on a small clock radio that had been gifted to me.

I can’t say I really understand much of the meaning of ABBA’s “The Name of the Game”. I can’t say I’ve ever been particularly good at games, though I did play decent rounds of Space Invaders and Joust, which resided in stand up cabinets with cathode ray tube technology. I can’t say I was particularly competitive at anything. I was often without direction, and sought after developing skill sets to claim excellence in.

And so as I grew into my teens, I often found myself and my younger sister riding the Long Island Railroad on weekends, by ourselves, and along with that, The New York City Subway. And so the idea came to me, that I can be very good at this, using this legendary and historic transportation system that is the Subway. I knew a few others who shared similar interests, we’ve learned much from each other. I wasn’t a particularly good student, but much as people talked of so called street smarts, I developed a talent for using the Subway. Today I not only use that System but also attend and speak at their Public Meetings, which are held at Number Two Broadway, New York, NY, 10004.

I can’t say I ever approached using Public Transportation from a gaming perspective. I had made a few trips as a teenager on Friday nights to the Meadowlands Racetrack, using New Jersey Transit buses. And the Subway offered me access to the historic Rockaway Playland as well. I admit to still being fearful of riding the Cyclone at Coney Island. I did not really know about this transportation system that is BART, given that I had not yet been to California.

I can’t ever say that using BART and other systems of Public Transportation has been a form of gaming to me. Yet I do make plans, and use various strategies to navigate such systems. Such has its challenges given that I am a person of profound disabilities. I did take on the challenge of climbing the long stairways to the top of the 48 foot tall 61 Street Woodside Station in Queens, to access the “7” subway

service. Perhaps someday I will feel like I can climb to the top of the 87 foot tall Smith and 9 Street Station in Brooklyn. Such will surely require preparation and commitment, and I do not know what the future will bring to me concerning that.

As much as I love fun and games, there are things I do take very seriously. Even so, such pursuits can be enjoyable and fulfilling. I do take my Grand Central Terminal, which is located in New York City, very seriously, and speak of that often in Meetings and out on the road. I do take the matters of BART very seriously as well. And the basis of my writings and speakings comes from an ideal that I indeed take very seriously, I ask of you to do so as well, that BART is The Peoples System.

“On Access.”

I reflect on your most recent Meeting, convened on 12 October, 2023. I admit to you that at the beginning of the Meeting, I was not happy. You see, when I accessed the Zoom application, the raise hand icon did not appear on the screen. I reinstalled the application and still the hand icon did not appear. I also tried the phone line, and when I followed the instructions I was still not recognized in the early opportunities for Public Comment. And so I called into the office of the District Secretary, and relayed my concerns. To be honest, I wondered if the problem would be fixed. It seemed that the person answering the phone had no idea who I am, despite me identifying myself very clearly, and might not have understood the importance of my concerns at the time.

And so the problem was resolved, and I was able to render Public Comment later on. But this problem should never have happened in the first place. I feel if the Agenda provides for Public Comment remotely, then the Meeting should not be conducted until clear lines of communication have been tested and established.

To be unable to provide Public Comment as prescribed on the Agenda is something deeply disturbing to me. And so how can people such as myself be sure of being able to share our thoughts through the prescribed Public Comment Process? I ask that despite the disrespectful things you often hear in your Meetings, that you not be apprehensive of hearing the words that I, Aleta Dupree, (she, her), share with you for the public record. I bring to you respectful thoughts at a minimum, and hopefully ideas that are engaging and even entertaining.

“On Oakland.”

Recently I made my usual trip to the Oakland International Airport for a flight. I usually take BART to the Coliseum Station. At that point I either use the AC Transit 73 bus or the BART Oakland Airport Connector. It was cloudy that day, and I considered the possibility of rain. I decided to take the Airport Connector and I noticed the vehicle was waiting in the station for a protracted period of time. I decided to wait outside the fare gates, not wanting to commit to paying the higher fare, considering the possibility of going downstairs for the bus. And I did get on the next vehicle to the airport, and a few minutes later we found ourselves stopped in mid stream.

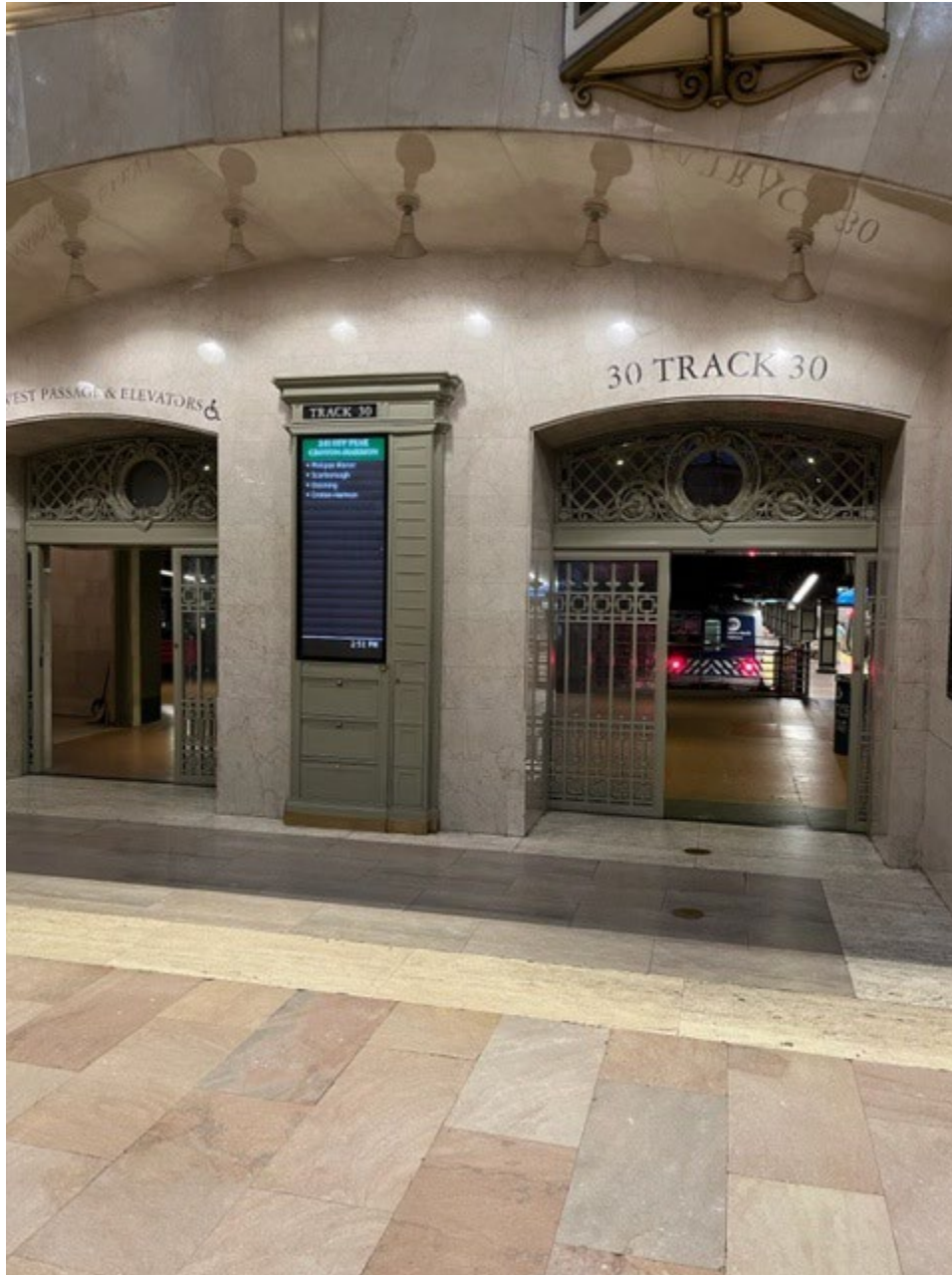
During that time I thought of a story I read about the Roosevelt Island Tramway, an aerial tram system located in New York City. On the afternoon of 18 April, 2006, the tram system failed. Sixty nine people were trapped, some for as long as eleven hours, and the people onboard lowered to the ground in a complex mid air rescue operation. And it was not the first time that system had failed in the middle of a trip. I wondered, how would those of us suspended high over Hegenberger Road would be returned to

the ground, in the event the Airport Connector could not be restarted.

After about ten minutes we were back underway, and operated at reduced speed. I did make my flight, as I allowed appropriate time. Yet I asked myself, should I have taken the bus? I wondered, if there were problems with the Airport Connector, then why weren't there announcements in the station and alerts on the website? It is my hope we can have an Airport Connector that one can rely on without thinking of the possibility of being stranded mid stream. I ask that you consider that there are many with disabilities who use that system, who have concerns that need to be considered. I ask that you not forget that BART is a safety sensitive institution. Those of us who use the Airport Connector only want to get to the other side in a safe and timely manner.

"On Doing New Things."

This picture I took myself.



George Harrison said this.

“Go do it, go to go through that door. There’s no easy way out at all. And it only takes time, til love comes to everyone.”

I think back to when I heard a song by George Harrison, called Love Comes to Everyone. And one day I was sitting in front of my solar powered big screen television. I played the song, along with watching a video made silent of Grand Central Terminal. I was reminded of my first visit to that famous railroad station in the fall of 1980. And I wanted more than my first meal of oysters on the half shell, and admiring stately architectural features. I thought about Mr Gerry Rafferty, and wanting to get Right

Down the Line. And so I walked through one of these doors, and boarded a train much like the one shown here, and journeyed through the Park Avenue Tunnel and into the light. And I came away having discovered things much bigger than myself.

I ask that you as a Board, and our agency that is BART, to not be afraid of doing new things. Soon BART will be an all Clipper based system, and paper magstripe tickets will be a thing of the past. The old BART cars are being decommissioned, and today we experience new traditions with the Fleet of the Future. Can we at BART be mindful of history and relevant to the future? I seek a BART that values enlightenment, and listening to diverse thoughts and ideals.

I do often speak freely on the matters of BART, and always respectfully. Yet I do wonder at times, might my ideas, as respectfully presented as they are, cause me to be separated from the system? I ask that there not be favored constituencies on BART, and to not let partisan politics get in the way of the daily work that needs to be done. Perhaps I am not well understood, but I ask that you listen to Bob Powers and the leadership team, as they communicate in ways that are easily understood. I depend on that group and their expertise so I can look toward having the best BART that we can have.

I do ask myself, how do I get to the point of being fully included in the things of BART. Such comes from you as a Board, given that senior staff can only do so much. Politics can be difficult, yet I ask that you not limit yourself to constituencies that are close and familiar to you. I ask that equity and fairness not be solely predicated on definitions, but allow for those who do not fit definitions to be included. I seek a BART that continues the work of being welcoming, especially for those who approach for the first time. How can we make the best first impression for those who come on to BART? Such comes from practicing equity and welcome and understanding the importance of people.

Sometimes things can be overwhelming. I found myself in the Rosslyn Station of the Washington Metrorail. I was not able to bring myself to use the 207 foot long escalators in either direction. I went away feeling unfulfilled, even with being able to use the elevators. And so I asked myself what my next move would be. Yet a few days later I found myself back in New York, in Grand Central Madison. I sought to ride down on the 180 foot long escalators to the train levels. And I balked at first, yet then I saw a group of three board a few seconds before me, one appeared quite a bit older than me, I followed them and walked down about ten steps. And one of them said, are you in a hurry, given that they were taking up the entire width. I said, I am not in a hurry, and you are not blocking me. I mentioned my fear of long escalators and thanked them for their presence. One of them had a fear of heights. We shared good conversation on our minute and a half trip to the bottom. I walked away grateful for meeting nice people that I could share time with, people I had never met before and will probably never meet again. I might have been wearing my Raiders t shirt that day, and I was definitely wearing my skirt. And as I left that place, I said to myself, it definitely looks like BART, even with me holding to the ideal that one can never have enough Grand Central Terminal. Can we have a BART that values the importance of people as I have found in transportation systems in New York City, such as the Subway? I hope so, and it is because of an ideal that is indeed distinctive, that BART is The Peoples System.

There is no shortage of opportunities to get Right Down the Line.



Thank you.