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## Price Increase for BART Parking

By Cathy Tyson



Cole Martin after a long day at the office, happy that he was able to snag a spot at Orinda BART. Photo C. Tyson

There's only so much supply and lots of demand for parking spots at Lamorinda's two BART stations. Not only do locals have to duke it out with folks from Moraga, but a surprising number of other commuters from Walnut Creek to Pittsburg.

Hard to imagine, but before 2005 parking at BART was free, then it went up to \$1 per day and has been going up ever since. In Lafayette there is additional, if limited, metered street parking. In Orinda there are virtually no street spaces, aside from the overflow lot, a bit of a walk up hill to Santa Maria Way. Both cities strongly discourage BART patrons from parking in residential neighborhoods.

In mid-July parking fees are increasing at Lamorinda's two BART stations by 50 cents per day, bringing both Orinda and Lafayette stations to \$2.50 per day for a parking space, for those who arrive early enough to snag one - generally by 7:30 a.m. While this is cheaper than a Bay Bridge toll which runs from \$4 to \$6 depending on the time of

day, and clearly way cheaper than paying for parking in San Francisco, it's not inconsequential. When you add in the fare, workers lucky enough to labor Monday through Friday will spend about \$60 per week just to BART to the office.

BART officials state that parking lot usage is evaluated every six months and if the station is full, then the price for a spot goes up by 50 cents. Revenue generated from new fees will be placed into a special account to be used only for programs for improved station access. A number of patrons would have preferred that revenue be spent to acquire additional parking.

"There are no immediate plans to add parking spaces at the two stations, said BART spokesperson James Allison. "In terms of 'improved station access,' that is a general description of our renewed efforts to make it easier for customers to get to BART." He clarifies that while that includes park and ride services, there is nothing specific planned at this time for the two Lamorinda stations.

"Because one driver/no passengers vehicles are a key source of greenhouse gas emissions, most of our efforts will be focused on improving bus connectivity, expanding drop off/pick up areas and improving pedestrian and bicycle access," said Allison. One such improvement is shuttle infrastructure upgrading; \$250,000 has been earmarked for designated pickup/drop off locations, signage and shelters to be spent throughout the BART system, along with funds to expand bike storage for up to 20 additional locker spaces in Lafayette and improved pedestrian links at Orinda.

One entrepreneurial homeowner who lives very close to the Lafayette BART station recently advertised a spot in her spacious driveway for \$99 per month on Craigslist. For those locals looking to opt-out of parking, there's always the County Connection, which services both Lamorinda BART stations.

Recent college graduate and Lafayette resident Cole Martin commutes every morning to his job at law firm Gordon & Rees on Battery Street, so he gets off at the Embarcadero station. To be at the office at 8:15 a.m. he usually arrives at BART by 7:30 a.m. He's not too worried about the rate increase and says it won't stop him from driving to the station. Regular commuter Jeremy Hauser of Moraga doesn't start work as an associate at TBWB Strategies in San Francisco until 10 a.

m., so the lot is always full for him; he gets a lift from a family friend or takes a taxi.

The good news - weekend parking is still free at both stations. For those looking to purchase a monthly permit it will cost \$84, but that doesn't guarantee a space will be available.

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