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BART Bond a Possibility

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

agency's critical capital needs.

BART officials are considering bringing what they call a "Fix it first" bond measure to voters in the three BART counties of San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa to upgrade or replace aging infrastructure.

If the BART board of directors agrees to place the measure on the ballot, and if the measure garners enough votes, funds would go toward a number of systems: upgrading train control, traction and electrical power, mechanical, communication and fare collection systems. With upgrades, trains that serve the busy Pittsburg-Bay Point line would be longer and run more frequently, alleviating some of the current congestion during peak hours.

If the agency opts to go forward, board members will need to finalize their Transit Expenditure Plan and ballot measure language prior to July 2016, in preparation for the Nov. 8, 2016 election.

Of particular interest to local city council members is potential parking garage improvements at the Lafayette station that could be included in the transit expenditure plan, but that solution quickly looked less than optimal.

The concept of a stacked garage at the station to help put a dent in the parking problem has come up on various occasions. Murray made it clear, however, that there is a system-wide parking problem. "The board is not a proponent of parking," she said, explaining that they would prefer to spend money to keep the system running, rather than on parking lots. Murray acknowledged that while it's not a priority, BART leaders are looking at a number of options like remote lots with shuttles during peak periods, carpooling and working with Uber and Lyft drivers.

Because parking is inadequate throughout the system, council members expressed concern that even if BART adds more parking capacity in Lafayette, drivers from Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek and beyond could be using it.

"My sense is this doesn't solve our problem; that other BART riders would flock to a Lafayette parking garage," said Council Member Mike Anderson.

Considering the situation if the bond measure doesn't pass, Council Member Mark Mitchell asked, "How do you prioritize what you don't do?"

"Less service for more money," Murray replied.

BART Manger of Financial Planning Pam Herhold highlighted the parking situation and ridership from the Lafayette station: 1,500 parking spaces, and a whopping 3,400 on the waiting list for a

Are residents willing to pay for better, more reliable BART service?

It's no secret that BART is grappling with aging infrastructure and increased ridership. A staggering 110,000 trips on a typical weekday start or end in Contra Costa County. Now at over 40 years old, the system is stressed and in need of some serious upgrades: tracks and train control systems are key issues, along with escalators, ticket machines and the stations themselves.

Upgrades to the control system could get trains to run closer together, increasing their frequency. BART board member Gail Murray, who represents District 1, which includes municipalities from Martinez to Lafayette to San Ramon, recently gave a presentation to the Lafayette City Council, explaining the details of a potential bond measure the transit agency is considering, emphasizing the

reserved parking space. A total of 4,000 riders on average every day hop on or off at this station.

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[back](#)

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