



Joe Sangirardi - *Ride the Vote!*

2024 San Francisco BART Board candidate questionnaire

1. What office are you running for?

BART Board, District 9

2. What is your name?

Joe Sangirardi

3. Do you have a section on your website that details your platform? If so, please provide a link.

www.joesangirardi.com

4. How often do you ride BART?

I use BART 3-4 times a week.

5. How else do you usually get around? Please tell us when and why you use cars, Muni buses, bikes, walking, wheelchairs, or any other mode you frequently use for transportation.

I take Muni nearly everyday, use my bike 4-5 times a week and use scooters and Baywheels 5-6 times a week.

6. If elected, what would be your top priorities for BART?

My top three priorities are 1) winning back BART riders by making BART safe, clean, and reliable, 2) advocating for a 2026 ballot measure to fix BART's broken, antiquated, fare-reliant funding model, and 3) making BART an engine for San Francisco's economic recovery from the pandemic. These priorities are in support of my ultimate goals: to make BART a major tool in our fight against climate change, to support and

encourage carbon-free and carbon-light lifestyles, to build housing around transit (TOD), to support people with disabilities who rely on transit like BART to get around in their daily lives, to protect middle class union jobs and support the transit mobility of working class people, to better integrate public transit in the Bay Area, and to make BART a world-class transit agency we can be proud of.

7. San Francisco's **Transit First Policy** states that within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile. If elected, how will you use your position on the BART Board to advance the Transit First Policy?

As a baseline, BART needs to provide safe, clean, reliable and frequent service. Several of these areas - safety, cleanliness, and frequency - have been severely and negatively impacted due to a severe drop in ridership and revenue since the pandemic. The result is that while the Bay Bridge is already back at capacity most days of the week, BART ridership recovery is hovering around 43%. We must treat public transit operations - the presence of reliable service - as infrastructure that people can organize their lives around. Public transit must be competitive with private car ownership and it's a priority of mine to fight for that to be the case for BART.

8. What role do you think law enforcement, fare enforcement, community ambassadors, and private security should play, if any, in patrolling transit? What should BART do to improve safety and the sense of safety for riders?

San Franciscans are experiencing a public safety crisis on their streets, in their homes, and in their public transit system. Addressing safety concerns must be a top priority for elected officials and law enforcement agencies. Improving public safety is a particular priority for BART as it struggles to regain ridership in the wake of the pandemic.

Data shows that crowd density on transit has an inverse impact on antisocial behavior. Said another way - the more people who use transit, the lesser the prevalence of antisocial behavior. But with 42% ridership and a very slow recovery rate, BART will not reach that necessary ridership level in the next several years which means public safety measures - like the presence of BART police, ambassadors, and crisis intervention specialists - are more essential than before the pandemic to deter antisocial behavior like drug use on trains and those suffering from psychotic episodes. I support all 3 of these teams in their efforts to provide safe travel for riders.

9. BART is facing a budget deficit of up to \$385m starting in 2026. How would you work towards financial stability for BART? What new revenue sources would be on (or off) the table? If new sources of funding aren't found, how should BART address the deficit?

BART faces an existential fiscal cliff in 2026. Around one third of its current operating budget comes from emergency funding from the federal government that runs out in 2026. Due to BART being a fixed-rail system and already running a bare-bones service schedule, it's expected that this loss of 30% of operating funds will result in service reductions of 85%. This is all due to an antiquated funding model from the 1970s that makes BART 80% reliant on fare and parking fees, dramatically out of line with the industry average for public transit systems being only ~10-25% reliant on fares.

That means BART has been very vulnerable to the impacts of remote work - more so than just about any other transit agency in the country. This inequitable funding model is broken and threatens BART's existence. I am running, in large part, to champion a ballot measure in 2026 to fix this and save BART. At the core of my campaign is climate change and equitable transit access, but also SF's economic recovery. SF doesn't recover simply because of BART, but it will NOT recover without BART. I plan to campaign for this measure and earn back the trust of voters by making BART safer, cleaner, more reliable, and making BART resilient with new revenue streams. BART could contribute to solving the city and region's housing and economic needs while diversifying its revenue base if it pursued developments on land it owns, since it gets to keep the property tax from such developments. I think BART should think bigger when developing around its stations so it can become less reliant on fares, help people adopt carbon light or carbon free lifestyles, and ensure that BART is around for the next century with a sustainable revenue model.

10. Since the pandemic, different Bay Area transit agencies have adopted a variety of fare policies to help recover ridership and revenue. This year, BART **raised fares** 5.5%, and will do so again at the start of next year. On the other hand, San Francisco Bay Ferry **lowered fares**, and has seen ridership grow quickly as a result. Petaluma Transit also expects to see **large increases in ridership** since using the city's general fund money to make fares free this year.

Currently, about **one-third** of BART's total revenue comes from fares.

What role should fares and fare increases play in the future of BART? Do you support raising fares to balance BART's budget and keep up with the cost of inflation, or should BART consider lowering or freezing fares to grow ridership? If you support raising fares, how

should BART address equity concerns for low-income riders? If you support fare-free public transportation or fare freezes, what alternative funding sources do you support?

Because BART is so reliant on fares for its revenue model, it has had to increase the fares it collects from a shrinking number of riders even while it cuts service, resulting in a vicious cycle in which revenues shrink even as fares increase and riders, especially low-income people who rely on BART to go to work and school, shoulder an unfair burden. I support the aim of making public transit either free or at least as low cost as possible, including BART, which is why I am focusing on advocating for the 2026 ballot measure to transition BART's revenue model from one reliant on fares to one that is funded by tax revenue.

11. How can BART work toward equitable access to public transit for all people, no matter their race, gender, abilities, neighborhood, income, or other characteristics? Do you support or oppose any existing or proposed BART policies or projects because of the effect they will have on equitable transit access?

Equitable access to transit, along with climate change, are at the core of my campaign. I believe that safety and cleanliness are equity issues. BIPOC folks and working class people disproportionately use BART and deserve to be safe on BART and deserve clean conditions when using BART, especially when they are already having to pay so much money to use it! I support infill stations like San Antonio and believe this is a way BART can materially address historically inequitable service, given that BART was originally built to serve as a white-collar commuter rail service. I support the lower fare programs for youth and elders on BART and, if the budget allows, would support expanding these programs and/or lowering fares across the board to make fares more equitable for lower income and BIPOC communities and those who are most reliant on transit. I am also a supporter of the San Antonio neighborhood infill station being championed by the San Antonio Station Alliance, which would provide equity-focused transit access to an area of Oakland originally left out of BART access in the longest urbanized stretch of BART without a station.

12. How can BART improve transfers between BART and other modes of transportation, including other transit agencies?

I am open to any number of options to make the rider experience seamless. There are many ideas around suggested, incentivized, or forced cooperation or consolidation, or the agency taking the lead in working with other agencies, but ultimately, this is about riders. A seamless experience is necessary for the future of public transit in the Bay

Area and I'm committed to making that a reality. I support programs like the Clipper Card to make the rider experience easier, or tap to pay, and plans to make transfers either automatic or complimentary.

13. Do you support BART spending \$90 million on new hardened fare gates? Why or why not?

I support the new fare gates to reduce fare evasion, which harms BART's financial stability.

14. BART District 9 contains several BART stations that double as stations for Muni Metro, but with limited exceptions, there is currently no way to directly transfer between the two agencies without first climbing back up to the concourse level. Do you think BART and Muni should work together to facilitate easier transfers between their platforms at these stations? If so, how?

Yes, I do. Sadly, making these changes at most of our stations would require a large capital investment and likely not one that will be available in the next several years, but I fully support making the transfers easier.

Note: This Ride the Vote! questionnaire is provided to the public for informational purposes only and does not imply endorsement by San Francisco Transit Riders. San Francisco Transit Riders does not endorse electoral candidates. Responses to this questionnaire are presented as submitted by the candidate unless otherwise noted.



San Francisco Transit Riders is the city's member-supported, grassroots, nonprofit advocate for excellent, affordable, and growing public transit. We believe that empowering everyday transit riders to speak up for rider-first policies will bring us the world-class transit system we need for a livable, sustainable, and accessible San Francisco.

www.sftransitriders.org

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