



Victor Flores - *Ride the Vote!*

2024 San Francisco BART Board candidate questionnaire

1. What office are you running for?

BART Board, District 7

2. What is your name?

Victor Flores

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

<https://www.victorfloresforbart.com/policy>

4. How often do you ride BART?

2-5 days out of the 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.

Bike and BART are my primary combinations, but I also use AC Transit and Muni if I need to to areas BART doesn't reach. My household only has one car which I use once or twice per week. I also use Capitol Corridor to go to Sacramento.

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

Fiscal sustainability. We can't do anything without resources. We need to diversify revenue and what our rider looks like. We also need to pass a regional funding measure to help us implement new actions to increase our revenue. We must also

incorporate a Rail+Property funding model, as Hong Kong MTR Corp does to ensure we aren't entirely dependent on fares or the taxpayer.

Community Hubs. In my vision, community hubs are centers with housing, retail, office space, active programming, and more in some combination. This should create an enjoyable environment because it is unburdened by car-centric planning. The active programming can be implemented first to create reasons for each station to become its own destination point and encourage non-commute trips.

Reimagine TOD. BART's current TOD plan is acceptable. However, we should seek to maximize the amount of housing that gets built using every tool available to fund developments. We should engage with local communities to identify and incorporate their needs into the mixed uses. We should also build support in those communities, but we should not limit projects based on local opposition because each project is expected to be a 100-year decision. Once our sites are developed, we can't add units out of thin air.

Public Safety. We need to expand our ambassadors' ranks and improve cleanliness at stations and trains. We also need to fill police officer vacancies and bring SEPTA's Hub of Hub model to BART. Investing in all of these tools will reduce quality-of-life calls while freeing up officers to respond to violent and serious crimes.

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 BART Directors, they get appointments to the county transportation committees, which control funding that goes to city and county transportation projects. This is one area I would leverage the office to implement the Transit First Policy. As an elected leader who interacts with other officials and has a larger platform than the average community member, I'm committed to being a partner in advocacy for prioritizing non-car modes of transportation because it will improve the quality of life for all residents and support the use of BART and our transit partners.

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?

We need an all of the above response that prioritizes unarmed staff to deal with quality of life complaints and fare evasion so that our armed officers are available for serious and violent crimes. This looks like expanding our ambassador's ranks and filling vacancies for police. I also want to start a program like SEPTA's Hub of Hope so that our unsheltered community has access to resources rather than using state force to remove them. Accountability needs to happen but it doesn't always need to be fines and incarceration. I'm committed to creating accountability measures that also have diversion and restorative components because we need every single tool to ensure both riders and BART staff are safe.

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?**

We have to capture the value of our real estate and grow our holdings. I see Hong Kong's MTR Corps Rail + Property policy as a model to follow and ensure that all future developments include BART as an investor rather than just a land lessor. BART should capture the value of its real estate to reinvest the profits into transit operations, capital, and future real estate development. Doing so would also give us the funds for our own affordable housing units so we aren't entirely reliant on competitive and finite subsidies like Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, etc. We currently own 250 acres of land across the Bay Area, which means we have diverse markets that can be better integrated within the region's primary transportation network. By accelerating real estate development and pairing it with my station activation plan (Community Hubs) we can turn stations themselves into destination points. We will also diversify our ridership as more people use it for non-work-related trips. Failure to get additional funding to cover our deficits will result in across the board cuts to service that will negatively impact BART for years. This is not an option.

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?

I will prioritize growing our revenue by diversifying and prioritizing funds that don't come at the riders' expense. If we want to be competitive with single-occupancy vehicles, we need to be affordable and convenient. As long as we keep the traditional funding model of relying on fares to fund the bulk of our operating budget, we will remain stuck passing the We need BART to become financially sustainable and start identifying a path towards freezing fare hikes and making them more competitive. We also need to use the Community Hub Program to create a pipeline of entrepreneurs going from start-up to brick-and-mortar so that we can capture retail revenue as well. If we think of BART as only transit, then we will leave a lot of opportunities on the table.

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?

One thing BART can do to improve access is gear its capital improvements towards making each station a center of community activity rather than a place to go in and out of. By making this part of our advocacy and partnership with other public agencies, we can also be a catalyst for positive change in every neighborhood. This means prioritizing the most vulnerable such as children and those with different accessibility needs because when we make our system accessible to the most vulnerable, we make it better for everyone. Clipper START is a great program that I want to see expanded to provide free transit to youth. I also want to see and expansion of the "Not One More Girl" Campaign.

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

The underlying challenge to creating seamless transfers between BART and other transit agencies is funding. As service is cut due to a lack of funding, coordinating transfers becomes more difficult due to longer headways. MTC's Regional Network Management is currently working on some of the things we need to prioritize such as

integrated fares, wayfinding, accessibility, and the transit network. Each item helps a rider get to their transfer quicker by addressing multiple barriers.

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

I see the new fare gates as an imperfect tool for issues not rooted in transit. The relevant part is reducing fare evasion since BART operations have mostly depended on fares. People have generally been supportive because they believe it will reduce crime and prevent unsheltered people from using the system. The downside to fare gates is accessibility, slowing down access to board, and making a station feel less welcoming. That being said, I see public safety as a top priority to ensure riders and BART workers don't go through any harassment or violence. I would prefer moving to a proof of payment system once we reach the end life of the new fare gates, knowing that, as a society, we have a lot more work to do to meet the needs of our most vulnerable to reduce homelessness and provide more mental health services.

14. District 7 includes the Bayview-Hunters Point and Treasure Island neighborhoods of San Francisco, as well as part of Alameda County, which can each have different needs when it comes to public transit. What do you consider the biggest similarities and differences between the transit needs of District 7's San Francisco neighborhoods and the rest of the district? If you are elected, how will you balance the transit needs of each of the neighborhoods you represent?

The biggest similarity between many neighborhoods in District 7 is the fact that the past urban planning decisions all negatively impacted them. Many neighborhoods such as West Oakland, Bayview-Hunters Point, and North Oakland, have highways and overhead tracks that help isolate neighborhoods while exposing them to air and noise pollution. One of the differences between San Francisco and Alameda County is that San Francisco elected officials have far more power over transit due to their oversight and the centralized government, while in the East Bay, we have multiple jurisdictions, fragmented funding, and more elected officials representing smaller constituencies. Many neighborhoods aren't as close to BART stations so I will need to work with our transit and municipal partners to address service gaps and improve access routes to BART. I will balance the transit needs by looking at the regional needs and combining that with the local needs and support the integration of those needs so that a local project in Emeryville or Alameda scaffolds into the regional work that will connect everyone.

15. San Francisco's neighborhoods in BART District 7 are all physically distant from direct access to BART, blocked either by the Bay or by freeways, with limited transit access. How can public transit generally – and BART specifically – better serve these outer neighborhoods of San Francisco?

Public transit can better serve outer neighborhoods in San Francisco by being incorporated into the City's land use planning from the beginning and ensuring all of our transit is adequately funded. If we treat transit as an afterthought, it will reflect in its service. With longer distances, from a planning perspective, we also need to plan for grade separation and transit prioritization so that transit riders aren't slowed down by single occupancy vehicles. On a larger scale, we also need to consider what type of infrastructure we must get rid of, such as highways, to reconnect neighborhoods to the rest of the city.

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.



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