

Transit Forum - Moderator Script

6:28pm start [4-Min Video Intro](#) at 1:15 in, and run until 2:30 to help people quiet down and focus.

6:30 pm - Welcome and Meeting Rules

Welcome: Thank you for attending a conversation about the BART-Caltrain connection.

For those of you new to this venue, library rules ban food or drinks (other than water) in this auditorium. However, there is a vending machine and water fountain located near the bathrooms at the entrance from the parking structure. This event is being streamed by [Social Ground Foundation](#) on YouTube at youtube.com/@MilpitasPRT

Let's start by recognizing your elected representatives, and candidates for those roles. So, if you are a candidate or elected representatives, please stand so we can have you each state your name and role. Let's start with ...

As you can see on MilpitasPRT.com/forum, lots of organizations have been invited. For example, we have representatives from Laborers Local 270 and the South Bay Progressive Alliance. If you are here as an unofficial or official representative of a group, please stand so we can hear your name, organization, and role you play in that organization. Let's start with you. What's your name, organization, and role you play in that organization? [At 10 seconds per self-introduction, we could afford the time for 12 to 20, before moving on to Rules.]

Meeting Ground Rules: Work on consensus basis * Step up / Step back * Try on the process * Don't interrupt / raise hands / use a stack * Turn off cell phones * Talk to everyone (not facilitators) * Expect unfinished business * Leave your ego at the door * Lead by example

My name is Belinda Quesada from KCXU-FM, and I will act as moderator for tonight's conversation. Instead of raising hands to speak, you will need to come to the open seat in the inner circle. If none is open, please start a line over there.

Our initial panelists include Rob Means from the Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) company LoopWorks. Although VTA was invited, their CFO Greg Richardson emailed that “Unfortunately we are not able to make it to the forum discussion this week.” If someone from the audience would like to fill in and present VTA’s perspective, please take a seat here.

The panelist seat to represent transit users was offered to various organizations [Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, Seamless Bay Area, SPUR, Silicon Valley Transit Users, Transbay Coalition] before a student and frequent transit user accepted.

Likewise, the panelist seat to represent the environment was offered to various organizations [Sierra Club (Loma Prieta), Green Party of Santa Clara County, Citizens Climate Lobby] before Jonathan Karpf (a member of the California Faculty Association’s Board of Directors) accepted.

6:35 pm - Common Agreements

Invited attendees agree that:

1. Our Climate Crisis is worsening quickly.
2. Shifting 10% of trips to public transit could substantially reduce CO₂ emissions.
3. The BART Burrow is expected to cost roughly \$12B.
4. The BART Burrow completion date of 2037 is well past when dramatic reductions in CO₂ emissions are required.
5. VTA operations are currently funded with revenue from four voter-enacted local sales tax initiatives (1976 Sales Tax, 2000 Measure A Sales Tax, 2008 Measure B Sales Tax and 2016 Measure B Sales Tax) that account for [80% of VTA’s budgeted operating revenues](#).
6. Although the VTA Board has the authority to redirect funding scheduled for the BART Burrow, they are unlikely to do so without an alternative example to see and ride.
7. We want more and better public transit.

During this discussion, we will use an [open fishbowl conversation format](#) that permits audience members to join in by taking a vacant seat here in the inner circle. Once you’ve made your point or said your piece, please return to your original seat so others can participate.

6:40 pm - Where We Are, and How We Got Here

Per-capita transit ridership in the region actually fell by 12 % between 1991 and 2016. In 2020, COVID hit which caused ridership to plummet. Although rising again, it still remains below 2019 levels.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission which oversees the entire Bay Area, issued a report and plan for recovery. Entitled [Survive & Thrive: Roadmap to a Sustainable Business Model for Bay Area Public Transit \(May 24, 2023\)](#), it outlines a path supported by MTC and the region's transit operators to adapt the Bay Area's transit system to a new, sustainable business model that aims to grow ridership. Unfortunately, it does not mention advanced transit technologies like Personal Rapid Transit. Also, the plan looks a lot like what we have – including big subsidies from taxpayers.

[quote from Preface of Survive & Thrive: The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level framework for describing the actions and investment strategies that are underway and anticipated over the next decade to help transit agencies across the Bay Area survive an impending fiscal crisis, adapt to post-pandemic realities, grow ridership and successfully transition to a new, financially sustainable business model.]

The state-level measure (SB 1031) to address impending financial crises across the Bay Area was sidelined, and there is no back-up plan for the critical services provided by public transit. Here in Santa Clara County, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) continues moving forward with a \$12B mega-project that won't address our congestion and Climate problems until 2037 or later – if we can pay for it!

Who would like to start tonight's conversation by outlining where we are with regard to finances and service levels, and how we got here?

7:00 pm - Options Moving Forward

[We may want someone to jot notes on an easel pad or big computer screen.]

Daniel Borenstein, Bay Area News Group Opinion Editor, opined "*As we editorialized in 2021, 2022, and 2023, as costs keep rising and VTA transparency remains abysmal, the BART extension should be subjected to complete and rigorous independent review. But it's become clear that VTA leaders are not about to let that happen.*"

As leader of the Milpitas advanced transit project, LoopWorks wants a public conversation about the future BART-Caltrain Connection. Out of this

conversation, we may find sustainable solutions to our transportation and transit problems.

Some transit rules-of-thumb to know are:

- Headways, the time between buses or train arrivals, must be 10 minutes or less to attract a moderate level of riders. Transit intended for short-distance travel should be frequent, and transit intended for longer-distance travel can be less frequent, and generally is used less.
- In terms of rider priorities, the fare-box price of public transport comes well after reliability, punctuality, frequency, comfort, security and geographical coverage. Yes, the price comes after all these other factors in importance.

[In both the Senate/Assembly Joint Transportation Committee hearing (with 10 expert witnesses) and its **Background Paper**, no mention was made of advanced transit technologies like Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) or Automate Transit Networks (ATN). According to the **Background Paper**, “the price of public transport comes well after reliability, punctuality, frequency, comfort, security and geographical coverage, in terms of priority criteria.”]

Given our current situation, who would like to start our discussion of possible solutions?

[construction of the Eastridge to BART Regional Connector Project = \$653M/2.5 miles = \$261M/mile]

7:30 pm - Converge on New Agreements

[We may want someone to jot notes on an easel pad or big computer screen.]

The PRT community believes that a 3-mile BART-Caltrain Connection would provide better service than the BART Burrow, sooner, and for only \$1B.

LoopWorks believes that a grid of PRT guideways covering an area 2 miles wide and 5 miles long (10 square-miles) could offer 8 neighborhood stations for each square-mile. Thus, \$1B could provide 80 podcar stops that would serve residents, visitors, and workers with 24/7 non-stop service to both major transit centers - BART and Caltrain.

Given our discussion so far, would we like to make any additional agreements?

7:50 pm - Wrap Up and Next Steps

As we approach the end of this public conversation, it seems safe to conclude that ...

As for next steps, does anyone have suggestions or, better yet, commitments for actions to take?

8:00 pm – Socializing/Networking

We have arranged to have this auditorium available for the next 30 minutes. You are invited to stay and talk with others - especially your elected representatives – about your impressions and vision for the future.

8:30 pm - end of event and Auditorium rental time