

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT
2150 Webster Street, P.O. Box 12688, Oakland, CA 94604-2688

BART ACCESSIBILITY TASK FORCE

Committee Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2026

1. Roll Call of Members:

1. Herb Hastings, **Chair** - ABSENT
2. Joshua Saunders, **Vice Chair**
3. Hillary Brown, **2nd Vice Chair**
4. Anita Ortega
5. Bruce Yow
6. Catherine Callahan
7. Clarence R. Fischer
8. Danny Kodmur
9. Daveed Mandell
10. Esther Waltz
11. Janice Armigo Brown
12. Roland Wong
13. Ryan Manriquez
14. Sam Buman
15. Shana Ray
16. VACANT
17. VACANT
18. VACANT

BART Customer Access and Accessibility Department Staff:

Elena Van Loo
Ryan Greene-Roesel

BART Director (s), BART Staff, Speakers, and members of the public:

Director Robert Raburn
Brian Batista (BART staff)
Marty Watts (Aira Staff, Guest)
Aleta Dupree (Guest)
Jerry Grace (Guest)
Sara Desumala (Guest)
Bryce Maples (Guest)

Lucinda Mortimer (Guest)
Mark Romoser (Guest)
Julie Newton (Guest)
Sequoia Ford (Guest)
Marco Moser (Guest)

2. Public Comments

Director Raburn highlighted a recently completed project at Bay Fair Station, where a fenced accessible path now leads directly to the accessible fare gates near the station agent booth. He noted that this design will help reduce fare evasion.

Aleta Dupree shared that it is sometimes challenging to ask for the elevator location (s). She emphasized the need for greater awareness when interacting with people with disabilities, including those with hidden disabilities.

Aleta Dupree suggested holding BATF public meetings at BART Headquarters.

Sara Desumala noted that she has witnessed fare evasion and asked what actions BART can take to address it.

Bryce Maples introduced himself and expressed interest in becoming an appointed BATF member.

3. Approval of the August 27, 2026 meeting minutes

Clarence R. Fischer motioned for approval of the August 27, 2026 meeting minutes. Esther Waltz second the motion.

- Motion passed with thirteen (13) in favor, zero (0) against, and zero (0) abstention

4. Fourth Quarter: Compilation and Analysis of BART Customer Complaints Related to Accessibility.

Elena Van Loo presented on the agenda item with the Memorandum included in the BATF September 2026 agenda packet.

The BATF committee discussed the item. A few comments, concerns, and suggestions were provided:

- Hillary Brown mentioned that she was happy that the Civic Center/UN Plaza BART Station elevator was working again but there was no announcement when the elevator was out of service.
- Clarence R. Fischer suggested including quarterly estimates of ridership and showing the percentages as part of the report.
- Esther Waltz shared that she feels glad when she hears announcements confirming that all elevators are in service.
- Joshua Saunders noted that he is glad to see accessibility complaints decreasing compared to previous quarterly reports.
- Ryan Manriquez thanked staff for the presentation and said he was pleased to see the quarterly reports trending downward. He noted that under “Communication/notification problem (system delays/incidents),” there were three complaints in the fourth quarter and none in the second or third quarters and requested more information about the nature of those complaints, such as whether they were related to general system delays.
- Ryan also noted that fare gate complaints have steadily decreased since the rollout.
- Roland Wong noted that he has been seeing fewer elevators out of service and appreciates the quicker maintenance response and faster turnaround times.
- Daveed Mandell noted that statistics don’t always tell the full story and pointed out that some people may choose not to file complaints about elevators or escalators being out of service.
- Daveed Mandell suggested that BART revisit its policy on changing escalator directions, noting that such changes can create challenges for riders who are visually impaired or blind.

Aleta Dupree said she has not formally filed a complaint and is unsure how to do so.. She suggested prioritizing escalators in the upward direction, as she sometimes needs to use the stairs, which can be difficult for other riders. Aleta also noted that priority seating complaints have declined but emphasized that people with hidden disabilities rely on those seats.

Bryce Maples asked whether there have been any complaints about elevator overcrowding.

Sara Desumala mentioned that the elevator door closes too quickly when entering or exiting.

5. Nominations and Elections for Chair, Vice-Chair, 2nd Vice-Chair

Elena Van Loo led the agenda item.

Chairperson nominations and elections

- Hillary Brown nominated Ryan Manriquez as Chairperson and he accepted.
- Daveed Mandell nominated Joshua Saunders as Chairperson and he accepted.
- Esther Waltz nominated Hillary Brown as Chairperson and she declined.

Voting results for Chairperson

Ryan Manriquez – nine (9) votes
Joshua Saunders – four (4) votes

Ryan Manriquez is the new Chairperson starting on October 1, 2026.

Vice-Chairperson nominations and elections:

- Daveed Mandell nominated Joshua Saunders as Vice-Chairperson and he accepted.
- Esther Waltz nominated Hillary Brown as Vice-Chairperson and she did not accept.
- Janice Armigo Brown nominated Clarence R. Fischer for Vice-Chairperson and he declined.
- Esther Waltz nominated herself for Vice-Chairperson.

Voting results for Vice-Chairperson

Joshua Saunders – twelve (12) votes
Esther Waltz – one (1) vote

Joshua Saunders is the new Vice-Chairperson starting on October 1, 2026.

2nd Vice-Chairperson nominations and elections

- Hillary Brown nominated herself as 2nd Vice-Chairperson
- Clarence R. Fischer nominated himself as 2nd Vice-Chairperson
- Esther Waltz nominated herself as 2nd Vice-Chairperson.

Voting results for 2nd Vice-Chairperson

Clarence R. Fischer – ten (10) votes

Hillary Brown – two (2) votes

Esther Waltz – one (1) vote

Clarence R. Fischer is the new 2nd Vice-Chairperson starting October 1, 2026.

Elena Van Loo announced the new BATF Officers starting October 1, 2026 to September of 2027:

- Ryan Manriquez will serve as Chairperson
- Joshua Saunders will serve as Vice-Chairperson
- Clarence R. Fischer will serve as 2nd Vice-Chairperson

6. Overview of planned Aira Pilot, a Visual Interpretating Service for Blind and Low Vision Customers

Ryan Greene-Roesel presented on the agenda item with the Memorandum included in the BATF September 2026 agenda packet.

The BATF committee discussed the item. A few comments, concerns, and suggestions were provided:

- Roland Wong asked whether, during the pilot, Aira agents would be available to interpret a rider's location and assist them as they navigate the BART system through the smartphone.
- Ryan Manriquez shared several highlights and considerations. He asked whether Aira would have access to camera views for turn-by-turn navigation and whether GPS would be used similarly to a door-to-door service. Ryan also noted that reliable cellular and Wi-Fi access will strongly affect the quality and success of the program, and he encouraged BART to prioritize Wi-Fi coverage at underground stations.
- Shana Ray said that Aira would be very helpful for guided assistance, especially in locating escalators and elevators within the BART system. She agreed that widespread Wi-Fi access is important so riders can fully use Aira and navigate more easily.
- Joshua Saunders shared that he is visually impaired and noted that he can see the writing on the signs but would like assistance reading them.
- Danny Kodmur asked whether the interpreters have been trained in providing visual descriptions specifically for people who are low vision or blind. He also inquired about where the interpreters are based and if they are familiar with the

Bay Area. He further asked whether the number of interpreters changes based on the number of people requesting Aira services.

- Clarence R. Fischer asked about subscription plan options after the Aira pilot ends in January. He also asked whether Aira would be informed in advance about BART service impacts—such as construction or minor or major delays.
- Hillary Brown shared that she is legally blind and said she is looking forward to trying the Aira pilot program.
- Daveed Mandell congratulated Ryan Greene-Roesel on getting the Aira pilot program underway. He also asked whether the Aira pilot program can be used outside of the BART system.

Bryce Maples asked whether interpreters will be able to speak other languages such as Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, French, etc. He also noted that the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) feature could be useful within the BART app.

Julia Newton asked about the costs associated with the Aira pilot program related to BART. She also asked whether Aira will be free regardless of a person's income level or whether they already have an existing Aira subscription.

7. Signage and Wayfinding Update

Jumana Nabti presented on the agenda item with the presentation included in the BATF September 2026 agenda packet.

The BATF committee discussed the item. A few comments, concerns, and suggestions were provided:

- Hillary Brown mentioned she was selected to be part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's workshop on signage and wayfindings.
- Joshua Saunders mentioned that he will be participating with the East Bay Center for the Blind on a project focused on tactile signage for people who are blind or have low vision.
- Ryan Manriquez noted that coordination across multiple counties and transit agencies is impressive and creates a vital bridge for riders traveling throughout the Bay Area. Ryan also asked about the source of additional funding and whether there is a role for BATF to advocate for more support for the project.
- Daveed Mandell suggested that some riders may prefer route numbers rather than bus ID numbers, as they may not remember or recognize the bus ID. He recommended including both the bus ID and route number on tactile signs. He also asked what information a rider might miss if they are unable to scan the QR code and whether BART has considered adding audio features to signs.

- Sam Buman noted that updating the maps and schedules in the display cases has improved compared to how it was in the past.

Jerry Grace noted that AC Transit frequently changes its bus routes and encouraged everyone to stay aware of these updates.

Sara Desumala mentioned that when she scans the QR code, the text appears too small to read and should be in a larger font. She also feels the QR code is not designed with visually impaired or blind riders in mind.

Aleta Dupree said she looks forward to seeing signage and wayfinding move from pilot to full implementation. She emphasized preserving historical signs at certain BART stations while supporting standardized signage across the system.

Director Robert Raburn asked about the average timeframe for replacing signage in garages or parking lots, noting that a customer received a courtesy citation because the proper sign was missing or had been removed.

Bryce Maples shared his travel experiences navigating transit in other countries and emphasized the importance of signage and wayfinding for people with disabilities. He encouraged BART to prioritize signage and wayfinding over parking.

8. Member Announcements

Ryan Manriquez had a few announcements:

1. Ryan Manriquez thanked the appointed BATF members for believing in him as the new Chairperson.
2. He noted that September is Transit Month in the Bay Area, a time to celebrate the buses, trains, and ferries that connect communities, and encouraged BATF members to visit the Transit Month website for events and ways to get involved.
3. Ryan also recognized the International Week of Deaf People.
4. He shared that on September 21, 2026, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority will launch Transit Ready, a free program designed to help older adults and people with disabilities build the confidence and skills to independently use local bus and train systems.

Danny Kodmur reported that security cameras have been installed at El Cerrito Plaza, giving the station agent visibility into both elevators—whether heading toward Richmond or toward SFO/Berryessa—which was not possible before. He noted that this upgrade addresses previous concerns about riders being stuck in elevators without camera monitoring.

9. Staff Announcements

Elena Van Loo congratulated Ryan Manriquez, Joshua Saunders, and Clarence R. Fischer on their appointments as the newest Officers.

Elena Van Loo announced that third-quarter travel reimbursements end on September 30, 2026 and reminded BATF members to contact her directly if they need to update their Clipper Access card (formally RTC).

10. Chairperson Announcements

No Chairperson announcements.

11. Future Agenda Topics – Members Suggest Topics - Next Meeting Scheduled: October 22, 2026

- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
 - Universal design – accessibility
- Hallidie Plaza Accessibility Improvements (Not a BART-led project)
- New member recommendation – Bryce Maples
- Approval of the BATF meeting scheduled dates
- Approval of the BATF Meet and Greet flyer – January 28, 2027

12. Adjournment

Sam Buman moved to adjourn the September 24, 2026 meeting. Esther Waltz seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm until the next regularly scheduled meeting, Thursday, October 22, 2026.