Evading Reality

BART has focused on fare evasion as a way to build riders’ confidence that management is doing all it can to provide a safe and functional system. High paid management even comes to downtown stations to stand around while BART police ticket people.

The media reports that this is paying off. Fewer people evade at downtown S.F. stations (until 10am). That is true. And more revenue has been collected in the mornings than before. But what’s the full story?

How much has this cost in police overtime? And what about the time spent by Lakeside personnel? If they aren’t missed at Lakeside, what are they doing when they’re supposedly working?

What has the impact of credit card Add Fare machines been? If you’re headed to work in the morning and have to add fare and there is a line of 10 or 15 people, will you stand in line, add fare, come back in and get in line to tag out or “evade”?

At BART, reality is what they try to sell.

Thirsty?

The BART Board of Directors just approved a fare increase of 18% over the next seven years. But with all the talk about fare evasion supposedly costing BART around $15M every year, it seems obvious that fares are already too high. Further squeezing workers and the poor won’t do much; the real money is not in our pockets. However the Bay Area does have 106 billionaires who have more money than they can possibly spend in a lifetime.

If you’re thirsty, why look for water in the desert when there is a mountain spring nearby?

Our Voice or Theirs?

BART management put out a call for workers to join management in the San Francisco Pride Parade. Why would we join with management, acting like we are all one happy family?

Why would we march with those who raise fares and don’t defend the REAL interests of riders?

Would we march with them, at contract time?

Pride is an enjoyable celebration. If we want to join in, why not be with family, friends and other workers - like the workers at AC Transit whose contract is expiring at the end of the month. We can represent ourselves, not management.

Gimme Shelter

BART’s real estate developments are sold to the public as a solution to the “housing crisis” in the Bay Area. These buildings are supposed to provide a certain percentage of “affordable housing” to people who qualify as “very low” and “low income”. That sounds nice but what does it mean?

In Alameda County a family of four is low income if it has an annual income of $80,400 a year. Very low income is $51,150. BART housing is certainly not for the working people of the Bay Area!

Pushing Paper Tickets Into Extinction

The BART Board approved the surcharge for paper tickets from 50¢ to $1.00. The goal is to force the 15% of riders who still use them to switch to Clipper cards.

Using Clipper cards means less maintenance of fare gates and ticket machines than using paper. If maintenance needs are reduced, maintenance staff will be reduced as well. If this happens, AFC techs will need guaranteed retraining and the ability to move into other jobs. Treasury may not have to make as many pick-ups. Is BART ready with jobs for these workers?

It may be a cost-saver. But what about visitors who do not want to spend $3.00 for a Clipper card while they are here? And who says that people want their rides tracked electronically?