

San Francisco Democratic Party
Endorsement Questionnaire
Melanie Nutter
BART Board Candidate, D8
August 13, 2018

PART I:

- 1) Commitment to BART: As a 20 year resident of San Francisco, a working mom, a BART rider and a transportation/sustainable cities advocate, I'm passionate about ensuring that our City has a thriving, robust transportation system. BART is the backbone of our regional transportation network – over 420,000 riders a day rely on BART to get around. Yet, the problems at BART have reached a tipping point. BART is at the nexus of so many of our city's most pressing issues, from affordability to a breakdown in public safety. I'm ready to work to fix BART and help make BART safer, cleaner, more modern, more affordable and more reliable.

If elected as the BART Board Director for District 8, I will also continue to be an enthusiastic champion and ally for labor on the Board. Our Union brothers and sisters are the unwavering backbone that makes our BART system a thriving and robust transportation option for all residents of the Bay Area. I will do my part to ensure that Union workers are heard, respected, involved and honored for the important work they do for our community every day.

- 2) Democratic Party: I began my journey as a lifelong Democrat when I volunteered on the Dukakis for President campaign before I could vote. Since then, I've participated in every election since I was 18. My commitment to the Democratic Party includes 10 years of service to the SF Democratic Party – first as a voter registration organizer, then as the Executive Director and as a two term elected member of the Democratic County Central Committee where I served as both a 3rd Vice Chair and 1st Vice Chair. In those roles, I helped to run a number of SFDCCC campaign offices for state and federal races. My most significant accomplishments for civic engagement and support of the party include running the "10,000 Stronger" campaign where we registered over 13,000 voters in 6 months in San Francisco as well as the creation of a number of successful fundraisers including the Unity Breakfast that broke fundraising records. I have

been a delegate to the CA Democratic Party convention for most of the conventions since 2004.

- 3) **Civic Organizations:** In the past 20 years in San Francisco, I've volunteered my time and taken on leadership roles in many civic organizations. I founded and am the Chair Emeritus for the Energy and Environment Circle for Full Circle Fund. I also served on the Planning Committee for the Urban Sustainability Director's Network (USDN) and Co-Chaired USDN's Innovation Fund. I'm currently serving as the Board Chair for Ecodistricts and am on the Board of Directors for the Meeting of the Minds. I also finished a 2-year stint as the Auction Chair for my son's school.

Other civic participation earlier in my career includes SF Women's Political Committee (Current alumni *Advisory Board, Fundraising Chair 2005-2006 and Vice President 2007*); **DemocracyAction** (*Vice President 2007 & Comm & Framing Chair 2005-2006*); **Richmond District Democratic Club** (*Board Member 2006-2008*); **Full Circle Fund** (*Chair, Environment/Energy Circle, 2008-2011*)

Qualifications & Experience: I'm running for BART Board because I believe that a robust, thriving, functional, safe, modern and reliable transit system is the backbone of a sustainable community. Providing viable public transportation is critical to those who live, work and play in the Bay Area and is essential for ensuring that our region and the state meet our ambitious carbon emission reduction goals.

As a proactive, solutions-oriented leader and advocate for robust public transportation, I will engage with the BART Management, my fellow Directors, the BART ridership, unions, community organizations and others to ensure that BART infrastructure continues to receive the necessary investments to function optimally while being a strong voice for my district and their needs on the Board.

In addition to the deep knowledge I've gained as a transportation and sustainable cities consultant over the past 4 years, I'm looking forward to bringing my local and federal government experience to the role. I served as the Deputy Director for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi from 2005-2010 and the Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment from 2010-2014.

Based on over 10 years of working in local and federal government, I know what it takes to build the coalitions to implement successful policies and programs and how to move a bureaucratic agency like BART. I am also proud to be the only working mom in the race and will bring this unique perspective if elected as the first woman BART Board member for the District 8 seat.

4) Select endorsements of my race include:

London Breed, Mayor of San Francisco

Scott Wiener, State Senator

David Chiu, Assemblymember

Nick Josefowitz, Current Bart Director, District 8

Mary Jung, Former SFDCCC Chair

Petra DeJesus, SFDCCC Memer

Francis Hsieh, SFDCCC Member

Meagan Levitan, SFDCCC Member

Andrea Shorter, Commission on the Status of Women Commissioner

5) Your top concerns

Safety For All – Too often demands for public safety come at the expense of the liberty of young people of color. BART needs to address the random violence in the system in a way that engages the community, works with BART Police, and protects the rights of all riders. I will oppose the use of facial recognition software and other invasions of privacy and believe BART should develop a data policy to ensure privacy. I will advocate for a BART Ambassadors program to increase community engagement to provide additional eyes and ears on the system.

Cleanliness – I'm honored to have the endorsement of Mayor London Breed and plan to work closely with her and her office to partner on station clean up. Mayor Breed has made cleaning up Market Street a top priority for her first 100 days and I intend to work with her office to help find the necessary services to achieve that goal inside of BART stations as well. Through my existing working relationship with multiple city agencies and having spent a decade in government, I know how to form the coalitions needed to tackle this difficult challenge effectively.

Reliability and Modernity – BART as a system looks and feels old, because it is. The stations and trains are falling apart under the stress of increased ridership and underinvestment. We need to invest in our core system to provide riders with efficient, timely, affordable, and renewably powered transportation systems.

6) Healthy, liveable and sustainable communities

Engaging with city governments, community members, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders to create healthy, livable, and sustainable communities is what I've committed my career toward. Communities that have these qualities put people at their core and build all policies and programs around ensuring that residents from all walks of life are able not just to survive but to thrive. Access to quality jobs and education, access to clean water and air, access to healthy food, access to parks and open space, access to healthcare and access to affordable housing are key elements of a healthy, liveable and sustainable community. In addition, implementing policies and programs that reduce the negative impacts of urbanization on the natural environment as well as on urban infrastructure help makes a community sustainable for the longterm.

7) BART using its land throughout the Bay Area to develop affordable housing?

Yes. The housing crisis in San Francisco has continued without end for over a decade. Not enough affordable and middle income housing is being created, instead we continue to see more luxury development and displacement. The City of San Francisco needs to find a way to include the input of existing communities to provide increased housing options, while maintaining the character of our neighborhoods. BART owns a significant amount of underutilized real estate that can be developed into affordable and middle income housing which would allow the residents easy access to transportation to and from work and bring needed opportunities to the surrounding neighborhoods beyond unsightly surface level parking lots.

PART III

1) Programs and initiatives to address disparities: In this day and age of data sources, we are able to know a lot about economic disparity, disproportionate health impacts in communities and where investment goes (or doesn't). Through leveraging some of the tools that already exist (like this [Reddit map](#) or the [graphic done](#) by the Federal Reserve Bank Community Development Department) and keeping the data up to date, the BART Board can stay apprised about where inequities exist in our

community to know where they need to be addressed. Through this ongoing education and awareness, the BART Board can then track the communities that suffer from a lack of investment overall and ensure that those stations get the same level of investment as other stations at a minimum.

Also, the cost of BART is out of reach for those that rely on public transportation the most. I will advocate for free fares for youth, elderly, and those unable to afford it.

2) Budget priorities: Short term, I will advocate for investing in the core system to ensure a safe, clean, and reliable system. Station upgrades and place making to revitalize our decrepit looking stations. Infrastructure upgrades so that we can bring BART to modern standards. I will also work to begin the process in earnest on a second transbay tube. Specifically, I'm will focus on:

- 1.) Address quality of life issues at stations and on trains and support innovative urban design for place making at stations.
- 2.) Ensure that the current BART system is in a state of good repair.
- 3.) Support the rollout of Fleet of the Future & the Hayward Maintenance Complex.

3) Transit system reform: Yes! Nobody can look at the status quo and believe that BART is operating in accordance with its mission or in the best possible manner. Trains are delayed, stations are filthy, and riders do not feel safe. All while fares have continuously increased. BART suffers from severe lack of funding and underinvestment. We need new revenue streams to keep fares low while upgrading the system entirely.

4) Expanding services?: BART should invest primarily on making the core system operational. There is simply not enough money currently to continue expanding into suburbs. Expansions have come at a cost for those using the core system.

5) Fare evasion: Until BART has other alternatives to reduce fare evasion (through higher fare gates for instance), it's important to have a system of accountability. However, I question whether the current program is effective at retrieving lost funding and have doubts about if tickets should be issued and enforced. Those who cannot afford BART should be directed to discounted or free passes, not necessarily levied fines or arrested.

6) How to fix crowded systems: I will ensure an effective rollout of the Fleet of the Future which will alleviate some of the congestion on the trains in the short term due to increase doors for fast loading which will allow trains to run closer together. BART, MUNI, and other regional networks need to effectively work in harmony which means

modernizing our systems and expanding our connection points to move people as quickly as possible through the network. Our underinvestment in the maintenance programs has caused significant problems with delayed trains and non-operational service. We need to be constantly maintaining and improving our system moving forward.

8) Second transbay tube: It's clear that our roads and the BART system as it is today are both nearing capacity. Since BART first opened in 1974, the Bay Area's population has grown from 4.3 million people to 7.6 million people. Meanwhile there is no new capacity through the BART tube or across the Bay Bridge. In order to meet the capacity needs and provide Bay Area residents with a viable, safe, clean and more modern transportation alternative to driving, a second transbay tube should be approved. Ways to speed up the completion of a second tube include ensuring collaborative labor negotiations in 2021 as well as reforming the RFP process to make sure that the right contractors are employed early to get the project done on time. Studies on the exact route and an environmental impact report should be started immediately. The current projections for the project are 2040 but I would like to see that moved up as much as possible.

9.) Funding sources: I believe that the businesses and housing developments that are increasing the strain on BART should pay into the system's maintenance. This can be done at a level that does not inhibit the practice of transit oriented development or job growth but that does take into account the increased maintenance costs of adding riders to the system. Specifically, I'm interested in investigating the possibility of establishing benefit assessment districts in San Francisco to capture additional revenue from the companies that benefit from the service but that do not currently help to fund it. This idea needs more vetting but is an interesting one to explore that other transit districts use to generate additional revenue.

I also would support any Regional transportation measures that bring additional resources to BART.

9) Facial recognition: Safety on BART is my number one priority, but I will oppose the use of facial recognition software. Facial recognition software is too new and has been blamed for racial profiling which is an unacceptable unintended consequence. I believe that BART should develop a data policy to ensure privacy before any new digital system is put into place. There are better ways to ensure safety on our trains and I will advocate for a revived BART Ambassador program that will increase community engagement to provide trained accompaniment to sit in designated cars and walk people to their cars at night. The Ambassadors are unarmed community members that help to increase the eyes and ears in the BART station. I will also advocate for the hiring

of more officers, trained in de-escalation to walk the trains and have BART employees have a more visible presence on trains and platforms.

10) Cleanliness: I'm honored to have the endorsement of Mayor London Breed and plan to work closely with her and her office to partner on station clean up. Mayor Breed has made cleaning up Market Street a top priority for her first 100 days and I intend to work with her office to help find the necessary services to achieve that goal inside of BART stations as well. Through my existing working relationship with multiple city agencies and having spent a decade in government, I know how to form the coalitions needed to tackle this difficult challenge effectively.

11) Improving access: As a mother raising a child in San Francisco, I know how hard getting around by BART is when escalators and elevators are consistently out of order. Working, clean, and safe elevators at every station is some of the lowest hanging fruit when addressing BART's needs. Another issue is the location and placement of elevators at the far end of the stations. This makes it difficult for those in a wheelchair to catch a train when in a hurry due to the amount of area that needs to be covered to get to and from the elevator. Whenever possible, BART needs to find a way to centrally located new accessibility infrastructure. Access to public transportation for all is an issue of fundamental civil rights and it is an outrage that the failure to maintain these systems has become commonplace.

I'd be honored to receive the endorsement of the SF Democratic Party. I've been an ally and champion for Democrats, labor and workers and having this vote of confidence would mean that my commitment and support has been recognized by those I wish to serve. Thank you for the consideration.