

**A REPORT BY
THE 2019-2020 CONTRA COSTA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY**
725 Court Street
Martinez, California 94553

Report 2003

Contra Costa BART Rider Concerns

Primary Findings from the 2018 Customer Satisfaction Survey

APPROVED BY THE GRAND JURY

Date May 15, 2020



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ACCEPTED FOR FILING

Date MAY 15 2020



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JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report 2003

Contra Costa BART Rider Concerns

Primary Findings from the 2018 Customer Satisfaction Survey

TO: BART Board of Directors

SUMMARY

The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system is one of the Bay Area's most vital transportation links. Carrying roughly 450,000 travelers every day, it is the fifth most-used transit rail system in the United States, behind only New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Boston. BART links four of the Bay Area's nine counties and the region's two largest airports.

The BART system represents a public investment currently valued at almost \$15 billion and is of vital importance to the local and regional economy. BART has planned expansion to San Jose, replacing all of its cars and acquiring a new control system.

The riders from Contra Costa County (the County) have specific issues with the BART service. BART's Customer Satisfaction Surveys reflect that many County riders feel safety and cleanliness have declined, and fare evasion has increased in the BART system. The Grand Jury investigated the reasons behind Contra Costa County rider dissatisfaction with three core issues - safety, cleanliness, and fare evasion.

Although BART has many current initiatives to improve these three core issues, the Grand Jury found that surveys indicate a downward trend, rather than improvement. The Grand Jury recommends that BART should consider developing plans to increase rider satisfaction in all three areas. The Grand Jury also recommends that BART consider continuing with its commitment to add 19 police officers per year over the next five years, creating a police presence on all County trains and at all stations.

To reduce fare evasion, BART should consider identifying funds to modify or replace fare gates and establish a timeline for implementation. BART has published a strategic plan that expires on June 30, 2020. BART should consider how the target of 85% customer satisfaction stated in BART's strategic plan will be achieved. BART should

also consider a survey process that includes non-riders to improve the accuracy and value of its Customer Satisfaction surveys.

METHODOLOGY

In the course of its investigation, the Grand Jury:

- Interviewed BART management, staff, and employees
- Reviewed responses from BART staff to Requests for Information (RFIs)
- Reviewed reports, newspaper articles, documents posted on BART's website (www.bart.gov), and other Internet documents

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLAIMER

One or more jurors recused themselves from this investigation due to possible conflict of interest and did not participate in the investigation, preparation, or approval of this report.

BACKGROUND

In 1957, the California Legislature created BART as a Special District. BART's Mission Statement is to: "Provide safe, reliable, clean, quality transit service for riders." It has operated as a public transit system in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1972. The rail system includes 48 stations across four counties – Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and San Francisco.

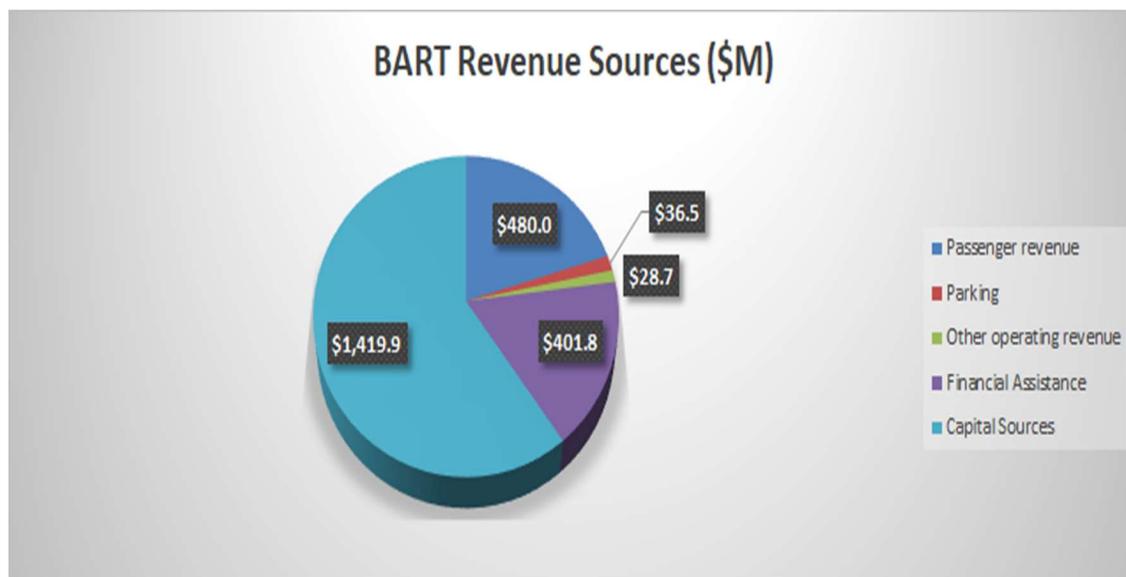
BART has expanded the system over the years, adding the following routes:

- 1997 – Daly City to Dublin/Pleasanton
- 2002 - Daly City to San Francisco International Airport and Millbrae
- 2014 – Coliseum to Oakland Airport (cable car system)
- 2018 – Bay Point to Antioch (eBART extension)
- 2020 – Warm Springs to Berryessa (under construction), in cooperation with the Valley Transit Authority

BART is divided into nine voting districts, each represented by a director. Contra Costa County has portions of four districts. The directors are elected officials who serve a four-year term on the Board of Directors (the Board). The Board appoints a General Manager who oversees the transit system's day-to-day operations. BART plans to begin service to Santa Clara County in late 2020. Santa Clara and San Mateo counties are not part of the BART Special District and do not have representation on the Board.

The transit system's \$2.3 billion annual budget (Figure 1) has the following components:

Figure 1. BART Revenue Sources (2020)



Source: SFBART District Adopted Budget FY2020, pg. 16

Capital Sources include all planned capital expenditures paid for with funds BART expects to receive in Fiscal Year 2020, as well as capital funds awarded in prior years. BART's capital budget is funded with federal, state, and regional monies, allocations from the operating budget, and regional transit bonds.

County residents have a large and continuing investment in BART. That investment includes fares and parking fees, parcel taxes, Measure RR bond repayments, and bridge toll money allocated to BART. Capital improvements are also funded with money provided through state and federal grants.

Contra Costa Revenue Contributions to BART

According to BART, fares are a significant source of revenue – 60% to 70% of operating costs. In most transit systems in the United States, fares account for about 20% of revenue. Fare evasion costs BART at least \$25 million annually. This is an issue for a transit system like BART that counts on a large portion of its operating revenue from fares.

Contra Costa County riders are paying more each year in fares (Table 1) while overall fare revenue is falling. As overall fare collections decline, the percentage of total fares paid by County riders increases. It is important to note that the Contra Costa County fares shown are only those collected within the County. If the round-trip rides of all commuters were considered, the fare revenue of County riders doubles.

Table 1. Fare Collections 2017 to 2019

	FY 17 Total Fares	FY 18 Total Fares	FY 19 Total Fares
Contra Costa County (Millions)	\$73.3	\$73.4	\$74.4
Doubled based on round trip (Millions)	\$146.6	\$146.8	\$148.8
All Counties (Millions)	\$510.0	\$510.8	\$485.0
Contra Costa County (Percentage)	14.4%	14.4%	15.3%
Doubled based on round trip (Percentage)	28.8%	28.8%	30.6%

Source: Budget Pamphlet Fiscal Year 2019, March 2018;
Budget Pamphlet Fiscal Year 2018, March 2017

BART Survey Instruments

BART routinely surveys its riders to determine how satisfied the riders are with its service. These surveys take many forms:

- Station Profile
 - The Station Profile survey has been an important source of ridership data for BART over the years. BART uses the data as a management tool to plan for the future. (<https://www.bart.gov/about/reports/profile>)
- Customer Complaints
 - BART's Customer Service Department receives a quarterly breakdown of customer complaints. (<https://data.bart.gov/group/customers>)
- Customer Satisfaction
 - BART's Customer Satisfaction Study (CSS) is a tool BART uses to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction. Every two years the study surveys BART riders to determine how well BART is meeting customer needs and expectations. These surveys are conducted by an independent research firm. (<https://data.bart.gov/group/customers>)
- Quarterly Performance Reports
 - These reports track performance indicators including service reliability, passenger environment, train cleanliness, customer complaints, and crime. (<https://www.bart.gov/about/reports>)
 - The ratings are compiled using rider responses to BART's Passenger Environment Survey questionnaires. The questionnaires are handed out

on trains by employee survey takers who work throughout BART operating hours, including evenings and weekends, to mirror ridership patterns. They collect between 5,000 and 6,000 questionnaires per quarter. (<https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2019/news20190821-0>)

These surveys inform BART management on how to best maintain and improve the customer experience. The CSSs have shown a recent decrease in overall customer satisfaction. BART's CSS does not survey non-riders systematically. Non-riders are former riders and those who have never ridden BART.

The Grand Jury investigated the key areas of County riders' dissatisfaction with BART. The Alameda County Grand Jury previously investigated the 2018 CSS pertaining to three counties - Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco. The current investigation focuses on Contra Costa County riders only, comparing the results from the 2016 and 2018 CSSs, and uses trend analysis to examine the top areas of increased dissatisfaction identified by County riders. The Grand Jury studied the following issues and BART's responses to the 2016 and 2018 CSSs:

- Trending of major concerns of County riders
- Concerns of County riders compared to riders from other counties within the BART system
- BART's actions to address the concerns of County riders
- BART's initiatives to improve the rider experience for County riders

DISCUSSION

The 2012 biannual Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) rated BART's customer satisfaction (percent of customers who are very or somewhat satisfied) at 84%. Since then, satisfaction has decreased with each survey to a low of 54% in 2018. This report draws from the 2016 and 2018 CSSs and focuses on the level of satisfaction for County residents who ride and pay for BART.

Areas of Contra Costa County Dissatisfaction

BART provided County-specific data from the 2016 and 2018 CSSs, using the zip codes in the responses. About 25% (1,300) of the total number surveyed in each year were Contra Costa riders. In the survey, riders rate more than 40 attributes (characteristics) of BART service. Examples of areas rated include cleanliness, parking, and police presence.

Each attribute is rated on the same scale, where 1=Poor, 4=Neutral, and 7=Excellent. Questions have varied somewhat from survey to survey. The Grand Jury examined the data for Contra Costa riders only and identified trends of concern. Some attributes in the surveys were combined into the general areas of safety and cleanliness.

Three areas stand out:

- Safety: Crime and personal security
- Cleanliness: Throughout the system, from stations to inside trains
- Fare Evasion: Lost revenue and illegal

Table 2 displays the satisfaction trends for County riders in the three main areas of concern cited above. Included are specific attributes that had low satisfaction scores in 2016 and lower scores in 2018.

Table 2. Comparing 2016 to 2018 for Contra Costa County

Area of Concern	2016	2018	Unfavorable Trend
Personal Security	3.77	3.22	-0.55
Train Interior Cleanliness	3.87	3.34	-0.52
Fare Evasion	3.27	2.83	-0.44
Police in Stations	3.50	3.09	-0.41
Station Cleanliness	3.70	3.30	-0.40

2 = Very dissatisfied 3 = Somewhat dissatisfied 4 = Neutral

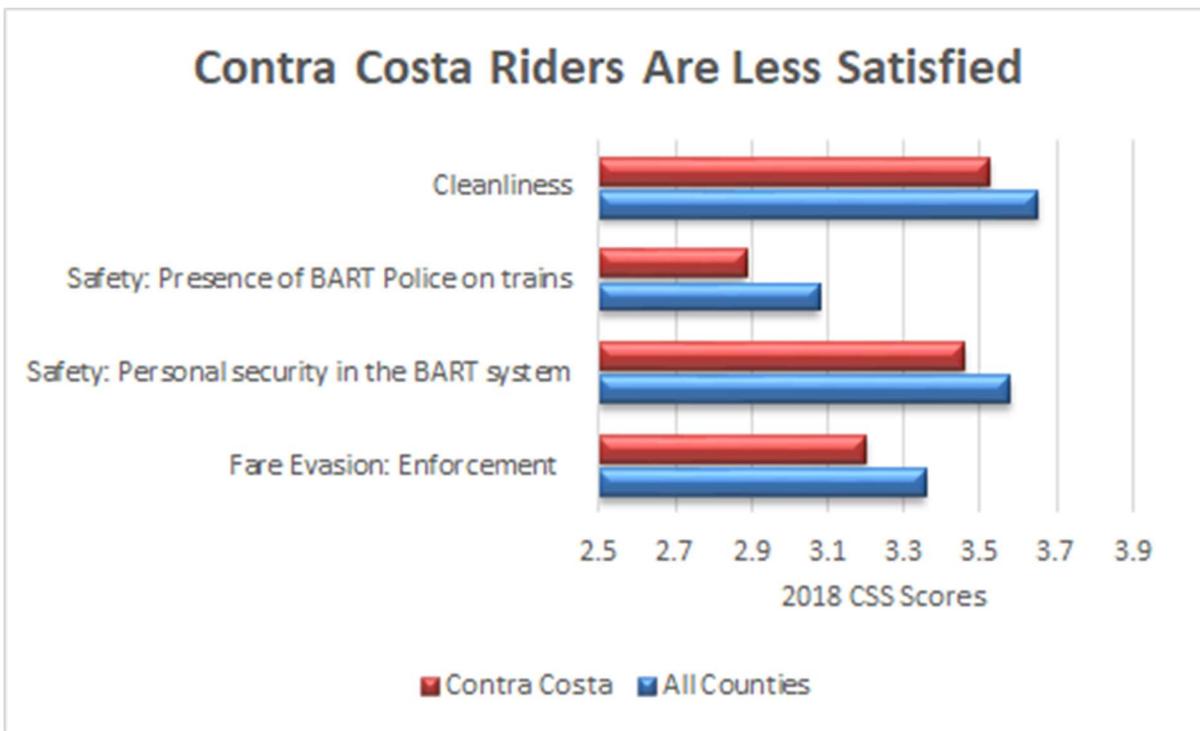
Source: BART Customer Satisfaction Survey (<https://data.bart.gov/group/customers>)

Safety, cleanliness, and fare evasion are the primary issues of Contra Costa County riders and scores for those attributes declined between 2016 and 2018.

Contra Costa Responses Compared to Other Counties

The survey results from the 2018 CSS for all respondents were compared to the responses from County riders (Figure 2). Note that Contra Costa County riders are included in the All Counties responses. Figure 2 indicates that County riders consistently rate BART lower than all riders.

Figure 2. Main Satisfaction Issues for Contra Costa County Riders



2 = Very dissatisfied 3 = Somewhat dissatisfied 4 = Neutral

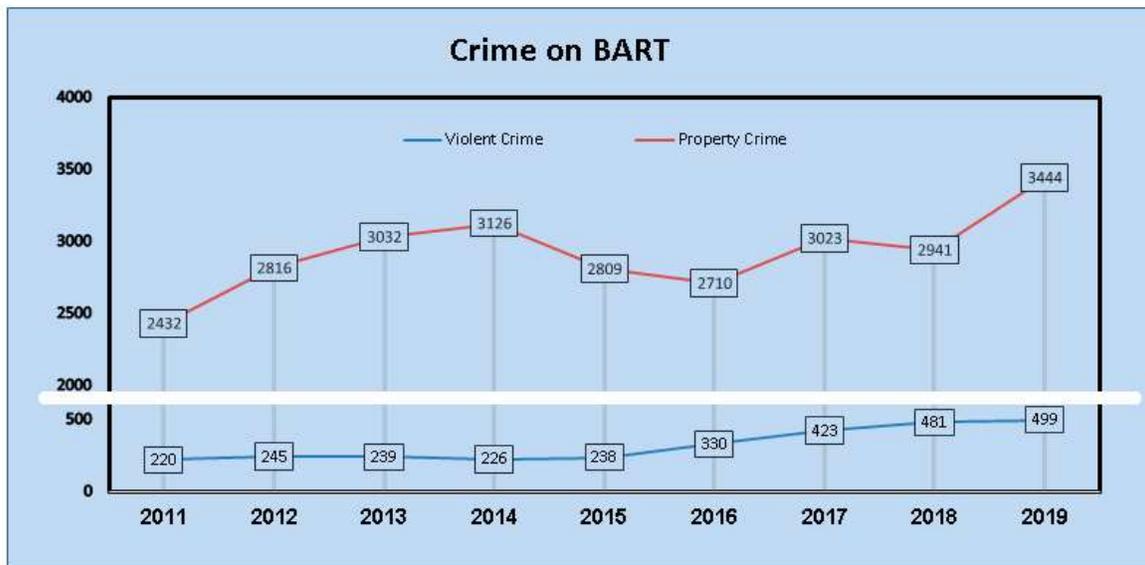
Source: BART Customer Satisfaction Survey (<https://data.bart.gov/group/customers>)

Safety

Survey attributes of safety include BART police on trains, police inside and outside of stations, and personal security. For all of these attributes, the CSSs reveal that Contra Costa County riders are more dissatisfied than riders system-wide (Figure 2) and that satisfaction is trending down (Table 2).

Crime levels are a key element when assessing BART safety. Both violent and property crimes are increasing in recent years (Figure 3). The Grand Jury's investigation indicates that a few high-profile incidents have led to the widespread perception that BART is not safe. As a result, some riders are avoiding BART, especially on nights and weekends when crimes are more likely to occur. From 2015 to 2018, BART ridership declined by up to 17% on weekends. (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3v14m47j> , p.28).

Figure 3. Reported Crimes on BART



Source: (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3v14m47j>, p.28).

Reported property crimes (burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson) have risen between 2011 and 2019, and violent crime (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) also rose. BART crimes rose to 3.5 per million riders in Fiscal Year 2018, more than double the rate since 2011. BART has a target of fewer than 2.0 crimes per million riders.

Over the past two years, Priority One (emergency) response time by BART police has averaged under its goal of five minutes. The Grand Jury investigation did not reveal a goal for non-emergency response times, which average about 20 minutes.

BART's Actions to Improve Safety

BART contracted with the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of North Texas to prepare its *Five-Year Strategic Patrol Staffing Plan* study in August 2018. The study recommended hiring 94 Police Officers and putting 66 of them on trains. BART has a plan to hire 19 police officers each year for the next five years. Eleven of the first 19 officers hired are to be on trains. Budget approval has been granted for only the first two years. BART has increased compensation for officers and BART hired 24 additional police in 2019, which is more than in any previous year.

If the plan is fully implemented, BART police presence and visibility will increase. BART anticipates this will help deter crime, improve response times, and provide a greater sense of security to riders. In addition, police can assist with issues of cleanliness and fare evasion. Additional unsworn uniformed personnel, including Community Service

Officers and Ambassadors, are being hired to assist the police. The Ambassadors receive de-escalation and anti-bias training and started to ride trains on evenings and weekends in February 2020. The goal is to improve the rider experience and respond to issues they encounter.

Cameras are at some stations and trains and may deter crime. BART is installing them system-wide in phases. BART personnel assert that videotaping may provide evidence for the prosecution of serious crimes. Visible camera feeds in the stations may deter crime from occurring and reduce police response time.

Cleanliness

Survey attributes of cleanliness include outside and inside the stations, restroom and elevator cleanliness, enforcement of the no eating and drinking policy, and the condition and cleanliness of train seats, floors, and windows. All Contra Costa County scores for cleanliness attributes were lower in 2018 than in 2016 (Table 2). County scores were lower than system-wide scores for all cleanliness attributes in 2018 (Figure 2).

BART's Actions to Improve Cleanliness

BART is actively addressing the cleanliness issue. It has budgeted for or hired 21 additional janitorial staff. In 2018, cleaning teams were trained by the Cleaning Management Institute (a BART contractor), received their certification, and were strategically deployed. The addition of elevator attendants in downtown San Francisco has improved cleanliness. It is expected that the transition to new trains will help with cleanliness as there are fewer seats and the seats are designed to be easier to clean.

Other measures that BART is taking which may impact cleanliness are more police, the Ambassador program, and addressing homelessness. BART's expectation is that new trains and a new operating system may improve train cleanliness by reducing congestion during rush hour periods. Recent limited BART surveys indicate some improvement in satisfaction with cleanliness, but that improvement will need to be verified in the next CSS. BART Police enforce state laws against eating and discarding trash within the system.

Fare Evasion

Table 2 and Figure 2 reveal how County riders who participated in the CSS feel about fare evasion on BART. County rider satisfaction scores regarding fare evasion declined between 2016 and 2018 and were lower than for all riders in 2018.

BART relies on fare revenue for its operating budget at a higher rate than other transit agencies. County riders are paying more each year due to fare increases, while overall fare revenue is falling. Fare evasion costs BART at least \$25 million annually. BART collects less than 2% of the fines that fare inspectors issue for fare evasion.

BART's Actions on Fare Evasion

BART has considered several options to address fare evasion. It is hiring more fare inspectors and has tested new designs for fare gates, part of BART's station hardening program. Station hardening is changing infrastructure other than the fare gates to prevent fare evasion. This includes installing higher barriers.

BART estimates that it will cost about \$150 million to fully address fare evasion and the money is not yet available. Fare evasion may be reduced by deploying more police, Ambassadors, and cameras in stations.

Other Issues

Homelessness on BART

Another issue for County riders is the impact of homelessness on the BART system. This was first measured in the 2018 Customer Satisfaction Survey, so trending data is not available. The Grand Jury found that there is a perception that the homeless contribute to problems of cleanliness and safety. The attribute, Addressing Homelessness, received a score of 2.57 in the 2018 CSS, the lowest satisfaction score of all the attributes by County riders. A recent UCLA study states: "Notably, many of BART's key issues are tied to factors outside of the agency's control, specifically the homelessness and drug/opioid addiction crises, which likely affect passengers' perceptions of personal security and system cleanliness." (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3v14m47j>, p.80)

BART is engaged in dealing with the effects of homelessness, from outside and inside the stations, on platforms, and inside the trains. Concerns about homeless riders are often cited when assessing the rider's experience.

BART has an employee who coordinates with each county's Homeless Program. BART staff check for any individuals who remain on the train at the end of the line on each run. At the end of BART's operating hours, the individuals who remain are removed from that station and taken to a shelter or a hospital. More police and Ambassadors can assist by directing these people to other places for shelter or food. In July 2019, the BART Board approved a contract with Contra Costa Health Services for one dedicated Homeless Outreach Team in Contra Costa County. Outreach workers try to connect homeless on or near BART with needed social services.

Station Agents on eBART

There are no station agents for the two eBART stations in Antioch or Pittsburg Center. They are the only BART stations without station agents. In addition to being a resource for customers, agents can monitor and report safety, cleanliness, and fare evasion issues.

Overall Strategic Plan

BART has identified safety, cleanliness, fare evasion, and the impact of homelessness as Quality of Life issues, corresponding to the most significant concerns of the Contra Costa County riding public. BART has begun to implement several programs to address these issues, such as cleanliness teams, new fare gates, new train cars, homeless outreach, and station hardening.

BART's current Strategic Plan (2015-2020) sets a long-term goal to return to 85% customer satisfaction (<https://www.bart.gov/kpi/experience>). BART has not issued an updated plan to achieve this goal.

FINDINGS

- F1. Customer Satisfaction Surveys reveal that Contra Costa County riders are increasingly dissatisfied with safety, cleanliness, and fare evasion on the BART system.
- F2. BART is actively addressing safety and cleanliness.
- F3. BART has no published strategic plan beyond 2020.
- F4. Fare inspectors alone are not effective in deterring fare evasion.
- F5. BART has not allocated the funds to complete the fare gate modification program.
- F6. County riders want more police officers throughout the system – inside and outside the stations, and on trains.
- F7. Contra Costa County's revenue contribution to BART is increasing while overall fare collections are decreasing.
- F8. There is no evidence that BART has attempted to systematically survey non-riders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: The Grand Jury conducted the majority of its investigation before Contra Costa County and the State of California issued shelter-in-place orders. The Jury recognizes that County departments, agencies, and cities are currently addressing COVID-19 related matters and the Jury has adjusted implementation dates in the recommendations accordingly.

- R1. The BART Board of Directors should consider publishing an updated strategic plan to address improvements to safety, cleanliness, and fare evasion over the term of the plan by December 31, 2020.
- R2. The BART Board of Directors should consider continuing to modify or replace fare gates and establish a timeline and funding for implementation by December 31, 2020.
- R3. The BART Board of Directors should consider reconfirming its plan to add 19 police officers per year over the next five years, with 66 of them on the trains, by December 31, 2020.
- R4. The BART Board of Directors should consider constructing station booths and staffing the booths with agents at the Pittsburg Center and Antioch eBART stations by December 31, 2021.
- R5. The BART Board of Directors should consider developing a plan to systematically survey non-riders by county by December 31, 2021, and implement that plan along with the 2022 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

	Findings	Recommendations
BART Board of Directors	F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5

These responses must be provided in the format and by the date set forth in the cover letter that accompanies this report. An electronic copy of these responses in the form of a Word document should be sent by e-mail to ctadmin@contracosta.courts.ca.gov and a hard (paper) copy should be sent to:

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