



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Poll: Overwhelming Support for More Police on BART, Greater Focus on Cleanliness and Stronger Enforcement of Rules

With changes, analysis suggests BART could add up to 300,000 trips over the course of the workweek

San Francisco—BART riders and others who have stopped using the system or reduced their use dramatically say they would return in significant numbers if crime, safety and cleanliness issues are addressed, according to new polling released today by the Bay Area Council. Concerns about crime far outweigh remote work as the reason they are not riding. The findings offer an encouraging path forward for a system that is teetering on the brink of a fiscal cliff as BART ridership hovers at historic lows following the pandemic.

A Bay Area Council analysis of the poll findings suggests that by taking a much stronger and swifter approach to crime, safety and cleanliness, BART could see up to 300,000 more trips over the course of the workweek, pushing ridership above 50% of pre-pandemic levels.

Key Findings

- 79% say they feel more comfortable riding BART when there is a uniformed police officer or security present
- 73% say BART should prioritize adding more uniformed police on trains and in stations
- 62% say BART should improve fare gates to prevent fare evaders; 66% want fare gates to fully enclose station entrances
- 79% say BART should eject people from the system that violate the [passenger code of conduct](#), which prohibits drugs, smoking, drinking and other illegal or unacceptable behavior
- 65% say BART should focus on core operations and leave social service issues to other public agencies
- 90% put high priority on more frequent cleaning

Riders and residents overall are crystal clear about what the main barriers are for them to returning to BART. Among all respondents, including those that never or rarely ride BART, 78% said they would ride BART more often if it was significantly cleaner and safer. This number is particularly striking when compared to the far fewer 46% of respondents who stated they would ride BART more often if they had to commute to work or school more frequently.

There is similar enthusiasm for returning to BART among the 37% of respondents who were regular BART riders before the pandemic but have since dramatically curtailed their use of the system or dropped off completely. These riders may represent BART's best opportunity to bring more riders back to the system more regularly, with 59% saying they would ride BART a lot more often with safety and cleanliness improvements. But they also generally harbor much stronger levels of dissatisfaction with the system than others who are not BART riders.

“There can be no higher priority for BART and the future survival of the system than to direct every ounce of energy and resources into making the system safer and cleaner,” said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council, which was instrumental in the creation of BART in the 1950s and has long been a champion for the system. “We specifically call on BART to immediately and significantly increase police and security personnel on trains, vigorously enforce the rider [code of conduct](#), and install new fare gates within a year. BART must treat this like a crisis, because it is a crisis. BART is the mass transit backbone of our region and there's too much at stake for BART and our region not to be more aggressive in addressing the reasons legions of riders are staying away. BART deserves credit for recent moves to increase police presence and ramp up cleaning, but riders and others are saying they must do more and they must do it now.”

[See the BART poll findings>>](#)

[Read the full BART poll questionnaire>>](#)

The concerns about safety and cleanliness are reflected in overall sour views of the system, with 49% giving BART an unfavorable rating compared to 30% for SF MUNI, 23% for AC Transit and 15% for Caltrain. The poll by EMC Research surveyed 1,000 residents in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco and northern San Mateo counties encompassing BART's service area. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points.

Having a more visible police presence across the system is critical to bringing riders back. A vast majority of all those surveyed say they want more police officers on trains and in stations, they want more frequent cleaning of train cars and stations, and they want BART to strictly enforce an existing code of rider conduct which outlaws gate-hopping fare cheats, drinking and smoking, drug use and other illegal and dangerous behaviors.

These attitudes shouldn't come as a big surprise. According to the poll, 53% of residents know of someone who has been a victim of crime on BART, 46% say they have witnessed crime on BART, and 18% say they personally have been a victim on

crime on BART. Meanwhile, 44% of BART riders said they have never or rarely seen a police officer.

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About the Bay Area Council

The Bay Area Council is a business-sponsored, public-policy advocacy organization for the nine-county Bay Area. The Council proactively advocates for a strong economy, a vital business environment, and a better quality of life for everyone who lives here. Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council is widely respected by elected officials, policy makers and other civic leaders as the voice of Bay Area business. Today, more than 300 of the largest employers in the region support the Bay Area Council and offer their CEO or top executive as a member. Our members employ more than 4.43 million workers and have revenues of \$1.94 trillion, worldwide. Learn more at www.bayareacouncil.org.