

Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be unedited for spelling, grammar, and format and published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .doc or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM. (REVISED Deadline: 8/22/24)

Candidate Name: Dana Lang

Email: Dana@DanaForBART.com

Phone Number: (510) 333-4836

Office & District Sought: BART Board, District 7

Campaign Website: www.DanaForBART.com

Social Media Handles

- Twitter:
- **Facebook: Dana Lang For BART Board**
- Instagram:
- **LinkedIn: Dana Lang**
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$100,000

Funds Raised To Date: \$55,000

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland or Alameda County?

I grew up in East Palo Alto, CA and have lived in Oakland since 1977. I was a grant writer for the City of Oakland under Mayor Elihu Harris, then worked at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission advising and assisting all 25 of the Bay Area’s transit

operators to receive their grant funding for operations and capital projects for so that our community can maintain and expand transportation options.

2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?

Affordable housing is needed to keep legacy residents from being forced out of our community. Our residents need affordable housing that allows residents to use their buying power here and to allow for prosperity and the vibrancy that Oakland is known for.

Another great challenge facing Oakland is keeping residents and business safe while holding police accountable for misconduct. Oakland is a beautiful place with residents who have a long history of participating in politics, advocacy, and community. Our people are our biggest strength.

Bright spots are that Oakland remains culturally vibrant with residents who are committed to making change and love living here. Oakland has wonderful infrastructure, including BART, AC Transit, Capital Corridor Railway, and the Oakland Airport. Oakland's business districts and restaurants--and Lake Merritt, Oakland Museum, and the Oakland Zoo are top regional attractions. Oakland is in the process of creating more affordable, high density housing and mixed use transit oriented development near BART stations, which will encourage travel by transit and take cars off the road.

3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

I seek this office because my career as a public servant has uniquely prepared me for helping BART at this critical time when BART faces a \$400 million funding deficit in the next fiscal year. I am prepared to work immediately to return BART to financial stability.

I earned a BA in Economics from Wellesley College, an MBA from Cal Berkeley's Haas Business School, and I have spent my 24-year career securing hundreds of millions in transportation and security grants in the Bay Area. BART needs a transportation professional to get it back on the right track. To earn back riders, we need to make sure that BART is safe, clean, and reliable.

Securing new funding for transportation is something I have built my career upon, including serving as the Federal Transit Administration liaison for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, security grants coordinator for the SF Muni Railway, grants unit manager for the SF Police Department, and small business affairs officer for the San Francisco International Airport. Each of these agencies faced dilemmas or crises at some point during my time there, and I was very instrumental in securing millions in new funds to support operations and capital projects.

4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?

For the past five years, I have served on two transit-related boards. For the past two years I have served on the BART Police Community Review Board, and as Vice Chair I have worked on recent progress made in collaboration with Chief Kevin Franklin. I am also a Board Member of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) and served as chapter president for several years. Twenty years ago, I founded COMTO's Transportation scholarship program which has provided \$400,000 to nearly 200 minority college students seeking careers in transportation; many of the students were able to get jobs as a direct result of this program.

While working as a grant professional, I've coordinated internship programs, mentored students, and worked with Cal Berkeley and COMTO to host transportation career forums for students and young professionals. I currently volunteer with the Cal Alumni Association's Alumni Outreach Committee and am Co-Chair of the Cal Berkeley African American Initiative to help students from modest backgrounds attain and afford a world-class education.

BART and AC Transit

5. What is your vision for the agency in 15 years? What specific and measurable steps will you take to advance toward realizing that vision in the next 4 years?

By focusing on increasing BART's safety, financial stability and cleanliness, BART will see increased ridership and could avoid the downward spiral of reduced service and cuts to workforce. Over the next few years, I will use my experience in transit security and safety to guide and stabilize the system, while seeking ways to expand ridership, which has suppressed ridership revenue.

In order to gain ridership BART must build trust through maintaining safety, cleanliness and financial stability. Coordination with other transit agencies is demanded by the public, as well as transparency in project development.

The Bay Area is investing in more high density transit oriented development near BART stations and transit villages, and this should take cars off the road and expand use of BART as a transit option. As people move towards the service core of our cities, and away from outlying development, BART will become even more essential. BART's move to San Jose will also enhance this movement, and within 15 years BART will be more financially stable, cleaner, safer and have more robust in service.

6. Please describe how you plan to address ridership if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) your agency faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable). Please discuss your perspectives on:

- a. Rider safety (including perceptions of safety)

BART has a safety perception issue. Before the pandemic, half of BART's operating cost was paid by ridership fares and, while trains were full, they felt safe. People are now afraid of using BART because it is often dirty and doesn't look cared for. Homeless people who need housing assistance often sleep on the train, and this keeps riders away from transit. Train stations seem empty and that makes riders feel vulnerable.

I will use my experience in public safety and transit security funding to seek resources to promote safety, and I will use my experience as Vice Chair of the BART Police Civilian Review Board to inform and promote policies that create a safer transit experience. I will work on coordination with cities so that they can work with BART to provide services to homeless people who are on trains so that they are assisted and not criminalized. I want to continue to support ambassadors, crisis intervention specialists, and other monitors at the stations to help riders feel safe.

Transit oriented development (TOD) makes stations feel safer and populated. Increasing housing at BART stations creates built-in ridership, and it helps increase available housing for our community. TOD also grows vibrant communities by becoming destinations for housing, goods, and services that feel safe and populated.

b. Cleanliness

Cleanliness on BART is a public health issue and affects whether people feel safe on BART. Keeping stations clean is a function of operations funding so that workers can be paid to maintain cleanliness. This must be a funding priority, and it hasn't been because ridership has declined to the point that funding has not been there. I will use my experience working with state and federal funding agencies to secure funding that allows BART to have sufficient funding to operate train service, maintain the trains, and not allow cleanliness of trains or station platforms or be reduced in the budget.

c. Coverage vs frequency

BART coverage is expanding with service to San Jose, and it has expanded to the Delta with eBART. The funding for these expansions came from the efforts of local officials to promote expansions, and who worked to secure funding through local means. Service frequency that gets our community to their jobs and services everywhere that BART operates is critical and need to be protected right now. Facing the \$400 million funding deficit, or "fiscal cliff" could lead to reduced service. This is why I am running--to make sure that that does not happen. I want to work with BART Board Director, Robert Raburn, who goes to Sacramento and Washington regularly to lobby for funds for BART. I want to help tell funding federal transportation agencies and law makers our community's story--that BART is the backbone of our transit system and a critical engine of the Bay Area economy. I would like to recommend measures that will allow BART to maintain fiscal stability now and as it faces the future.

7. Please describe how you plan to address operations if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) your agency faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable). Please discuss your perspectives on:

a. **Fiscal sustainability**

As stated above, if the \$400 million in funding disappears in 2026, BART will be forced to reduce service. I have the experience to help prevent this. Our citizens need to be able to rely on BART, and improving service by improving safety and cleanliness to win back ridership will help us secure steady fare revenue to help fund BART service. With additional lobbying and applications for transportation funding, we can keep our economy keep BART running through stable funding sources.

b. **Service reliability**

BART has made investments in new cars and has initiated a program to deal with health emergencies at the Embarcadero Station, a critical point in the system that tends to have a greater number of emergencies and that can cause big service delays along the entire system. These improvements have significantly reduced service disruptions. The greatest issue BART faces now is keeping operations running because of fiscal instability. Resolving budget deficits is the answer to continuing to maintain service reliability.

c. **Equipment and vehicle maintenance & upgrades**

BART has made investments in new cars, and this has solved many of BART's reliability problems, but BART needs to continue to fund maintenance in order to ensure reliability. That is why fiscal stabilization is so important.

8. Please describe how you plan to address public safety in the BART system if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) your agency faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable). Please discuss your perspectives on:

a. **BART Police policies:**

As Vice Chair of the BART Police Civilian Review Board, I have helped create and enhance policies, such as the police use-of-force policy. It is critical that this board promote policies that enhance safety for the public and enable consistent procedures when police interact with the public.

b. **Balance of sworn and non-sworn responders**

Currently there are more sworn than non-sworn responders, and BART's Progressive Policing Unit is very new. In the future there should be more Crisis Intervention specialists from this new unit, as well as Ambassadors, so that they are able to cover more territory within the system and create.

c. Specific opportunities to increase inter-agency partnerships

BART is the trunk of the Bay Area's transit system, and connects riders to other forms of transportation, such as buses, ferries and airports. Great value is created when agencies coordinate their schedules, ridership information, transfers, and locate other opportunities to improve the experience of riders of each system.

d. BART's role in addressing homelessness and mental health

BART must address homelessness and mental health because this issue impacts transit riders. BART has hired crisis intervention specialists and ambassadors to ensure that those experiencing mental health crises can be treated without it becoming a policing issue. BART must ensure that homeless persons are directed towards appropriate resources, and that those in crisis are treated safely and humanely.

9. What is your plan to address your agency's projected budget deficits in the coming years? (\$35M projected deficit in 2026 and the ongoing \$350M deficit thereafter for BART and \$49M in FY2026 for AC Transit)

I am the only candidate for BART District 7 who has worked professional at securing hundreds of millions of dollars to help stabilize budgets at government agencies for over two decades. I prepared me for helping BART at this critical time to work immediately to seek funding from federal and state funding agencies. I have worked with these agencies for the majority of my career, and I can work closely with BART staff and policy makers in Washington D.C. and in Sacramento to lobby for funding needed to support BART Operations to pay for the people who run BART and for Capital funding that pays for train and station maintenance and for Transit Oriented Development that will help make it easier and more appealing for riders so that BART can earn their fare money.

10. What is BART's role when it comes to real estate development? What has it done well so far and what will you guide it to do differently regarding how it develops its real estate assets?

The success of the development of the Fruitvale BART station, spearheaded by The Unity Council, really provided the blueprint of what is possible at all the stations in the system. BART staff and the Board of Directors should work with local leaders to implement this type of mixed use development that is right-sized to the community each station serves.

MacArthur BART Station is promising, but the pandemic disrupted growth and mixed-use investment, and it provides a lesson to BART to work with communities to make mixed use development that truly incorporates the community around it into the station. The station at Fruitvale feels like it is part of the community in a way that the MacArthur

station does not. The El Cerrito Del Norte Station is a great example of implementing a concept that incorporated community needs by ensuring riders ease of access to a local anchor tenant, Vons Supermarket with adjacent smaller businesses, that is well-utilized by the surrounding community. It makes the BART station feel safer. The station plan is open to the community and the San Pablo business district in front of the station. BART should work with communities at each station to encourage development of housing and business near stations, and it should design stations to flow into surrounding communities. BART property should be developed to create synergies with other transit, like at the Union City BART station and Richmond BART stations that connect to other train operators. And each station should continue to support bus Bays for local bus service so that everyone in each community can reach and use BART.