



***By Jim Knowles***

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Rebecca Saltzman has been an environmental and transit advocate for years and now she's running for the BART board of directors in District 3.

Saltzman works for the California League of Conservation Voters as a government affairs

manager. In that job she meets with a network of environmental groups and with the state legislature to try to pass or oppose bills.

Saltzman said she's proud of legislation in the past year signed by Governor Brown that upholds drinking water standards throughout the state, a bill protecting state parks during the funding crisis in the past year, and the implementation of a cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse emissions.

Saltzman is not just an advocate for public transportation but a regular rider on BART and AC Transit. So when Bob Franklin left the District 3 seat this year, she decided to run.

One area that she would like to improve is the bus-to-BART connection that many commuters make.

"I often take the bus to BART and I want to make sure there's more planning from the perspective of the riders," Saltzman said. "It needs to be convenient and reasonably priced."

BART and AC Transit should work on synchronizing scheduling so that buses don't leave the BART station just before a train arrives, Saltzman said.

BART decision-making should be more open to the public, she said. BART's meetings are generally in the daytime, but they should be in the evening so that people can attend after work.

"I will work to make BART meetings more accessible by pushing for evening meetings," she said.

Pending decisions by BART should be publicized more in the stations and trains in advance so people can have a say, said the UC Berkeley grad.

One of BART's biggest issues is financial, because BART is 40 years old and its equipment, trains, computers, escalators and stations need to be repaired or replaced.

BART's 669 cars will be replaced by 775 new ones, and the funding is in place for 410 of those

new cars. But BART still has to come up with the funds for the other 365 cars.

So Saltzman said her overall goal is to make BART fiscally sustainable.

“Priority Number 1 is the maintenance of BART,” Saltzman said. “BART has a \$7.5 billion unfunded maintenance liability.

Saltzman is a supporter of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and believes BART should continue working with cities to develop housing, retail and offices around BART stations.

“People want to live around transit,” she said. “And it’s a big draw for business.”

The candidate also supports late-night BART service, so that both people who work late and people going out for entertainment can take BART home instead of driving.

BART has to do track maintenance at night, so it can't operate 24 hours a day, but expanding service a little more and adding bus links are things Saltzman favors. BART has plans to start operating late-night buses starting next year from San Francisco heading out on both the Pittsburg and Fremont lines.

Saltzman is endorsed by numerous representatives and organizations, including the Alameda County Democratic Party and San Leandro Mayor Stephen Cassidy and City Council members Michael Gregory, Pauline Cutter, Jim Prola, Ursula Reed and Diana Souza.

Saltzman said she toured the San Leandro BART station with the mayor and City Council members several months ago and is glad the city is incorporating the stations into their plans.

Saltzman noticed that the station has good pedestrian access on one side with good crosswalks, but that it's not accessible on the other three sides where there are parking lots and train tracks. She thinks the station could stand better lighting and better ways of keeping the pigeons out. Art would improve the station, as it has at the Berkeley station, she said.

More pedestrian and bicycle access, and more bike lockers at the stations, will improve BART, Saltzman said.

“All the parking lots are at capacity,” Saltzman said. “We need bike lockers so people can leave their bikes during the day. I think BART is moving in the right direction on this.”