Our guest speaker, Debora Allen was elected to the BART Board of Directors in 2016. She is a former CPA and CFO and served 6 years on CCCERA, Contra Costa County’s pension board.

The current BART unfunded pension and OPEB liabilities are almost $1 billion. If BART does not raise fares by Consumer Price Index this year, the projected 10-year operating deficit is expected to be $602 million. Even if fares are raised, a $327 million 10-year shortfall is projected. Not surprisingly, taxpayers cover these shortfalls.

Measure RR was passed in 2016 because it promised to be used only for needed capital improvements. As CoCoTax and others predicted, capital allocations from the operating budget are projected to decline over the next 10 years because of the added Capital injection from Measure RR.

Rider satisfaction rate is at an all-time low of 56%. Reasons reported are a perceived lack of safety and the effects of homelessness on trains and in stations. Riders often encounter homeless people stretched out sleeping on seats while paying riders have to stand. Riders also report that they rarely see BART police. There are usually 34 officers on duty at all times, but hiring of 94 more officers are needed to adequately cover BART’s 48 stations.

Ridership is on a declining trend, although only paid ridership is counted. Rampant fare evasion creates a significant loss of revenue. Part of the problem rests with a lack of effective evasion control. Additional problems include a costly, but badly needed, replacement of turnstiles. The penalty for evasion is merely a $75 ticket with no criminal effect. These tickets have been paid only about 10% of the time in the first year of the program. An estimate of fare evasion is about 5% which results in an estimated $30 million loss per year to BART. The most effective deterrent for now is to have an officer stationed just inside the gates, but there are not enough officers to do that.

Due to the passage of AB 2923, BART can develop parking lots into housing and commercial space without the local control of cities on parking replacement, density or building height. It is now up to BART to determine these features of a project, with parking replacement being the most contentious issue. In about eight years, BART will be extended through San Jose and to Santa Clara. In five years, all existing railcars are expected to be replaced.