

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

Federal Glover: eBART extension to East County breaks ground

By Federal Glover
For the Contra Costa Times

Posted: 10/28/2010 10:37:27 AM PDT

Updated: 10/28/2010 10:37:27 AM PDT

On Friday, I will be speaking at the long-anticipated groundbreaking for the eBART extension at the Pittsburg/BayPoint BART station.

East County residents have long awaited BART's tracks to extend deep into East County. It has been almost 50 years since BART was formed and I need to remind my fellow commissioners at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the BART board and the Contra Costa Transit Authority that if not for East County, BART might never have come into existence.

A short history lesson is needed.

In the beginning, BART was billed as the train of the future with its electric third rail, wider tracks and computer-run train system. It would move noiselessly and smoothly barely noticed by the adjoining neighborhoods. The system would encircle the bay, easing congestion on the region's roads and bridges.

The local funding went to the six Bay Area counties for a vote. One by one, the counties opted out. Only in San Francisco and Alameda counties was the vote

certain to pass. In order to make it a viable transit system, it was felt Contra Costa County needed to buy in.

Two county supervisors supported the proposal to put BART on the ballot; two opposed. Enormous pressure was brought upon the swing vote, Supervisor John Silva. The mayors of San Francisco and Oakland -- and other political heavyweights -- begged for Silva's support. Silva didn't like that the tracks stopped at Concord.

In

the end, just hours before the Board of Supervisors was supposed to decide whether to put BART on the ballot, a deal was made over a handshake and a promise that Contra Costa County would be the first to get additional service as the transit system grew. Silva voted yes.

In other words, without a promise of extending the Concord line farther eastward, BART might never have been built.

Even then, after BART began operating, it took another 25 years of ferocious lobbying by Nello Bianco, one of the county's representatives on the BART board, to get the tracks to go over the Willow Pass.

Back in the 1960s, decision makers saw East County as a far away part of the county with a few small towns, a shuttered military base and a bunch of ranches and orchards. They didn't think East County could ever support a BART station. Nobody believed population projections that predicted a boom in East County.

The eastward extension was put off "... and put off. It took 25 years but BART finally opened the Pittsburg-Bay Point BART station in December, 1996.



We focus on automating Marriott® Hotels' global invoice process. So they don't have to.

Learn more at RealBusiness.com

Ready For Real Business **xerox**

Print Powered By **FormatDynamics™**

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

But East County continues to grow by leaps and bounds.

And the cost to build BART continues to grow even faster.

I always believed that BART's original plans to far East County would eventually become necessary.

When BART was extended to the San Francisco airport, San Mateo County helped pay for the extensions to Pittsburg and Dublin/Pleasanton.

The extension to Santa Clara County is being paid by that county and federal dollars. It is not costing East County residents any extra taxes.

Extending conventional BART any further into East County is cost prohibitive.

The \$462 million it cost to extend eBART the 10 miles to Antioch will be 60 percent less expensive than to build conventional BART that distance.

It will be a 10-minute ride to the Pittsburg/Bay Point transfer station compared with the 40 minutes it sometimes takes to drive the same distance during commute hours.

Waiting to build conventional BART to Antioch would mean no rail service for who knows how long it would take to raise the money.

When I was put in a position to influence transit policy by joining the Metropolitan Transit Commission's executive committee, my colleagues from Marin and San Francisco and San Mateo didn't know where East County was. They didn't know about the needs of Highway 4 and the need to extend BART to Antioch and points eastward.

They had to be convinced that there was a need for

the widening of Highway 4 and building a rail alternative to East County. It took many meetings, public and private, phone calls and conferences to convince them to allocate federal transportation funds for East County transit needs.

In the meantime, Antioch has become the county's second largest city. East County houses a third of the county's residents. The need to get a rail line into Antioch became more urgent.

Now we have eBART and the widening of Highway 4 happening at the same time.

It is interesting to note that while the riders from Pittsburg and Bay Point make up 42 percent of the riders from the Pittsburg/Bay Point station, 58 percent come from points farther east. Antioch commuters by themselves make up 35 percent of the BART riders on the Pittsburg line.

After Antioch, we need to look immediately at extending eBART to Oakley and Brentwood.

East County deserves the eBART line; East County needs eBART.

Federal Glover is the District 5 county supervisor. Reach him at dist5@bos.cccounty.us.



Time Sensitive Offer
The Daily Deal - San Francisco \$59 for Two Rooms of Carpet Cleaning and Two Rooms of Protectant Application from Oxi Fresh (\$118 Value)

Get this and other Daily Deals at:
www.PrintGroupon.com/81

50% OFF
Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning





Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™