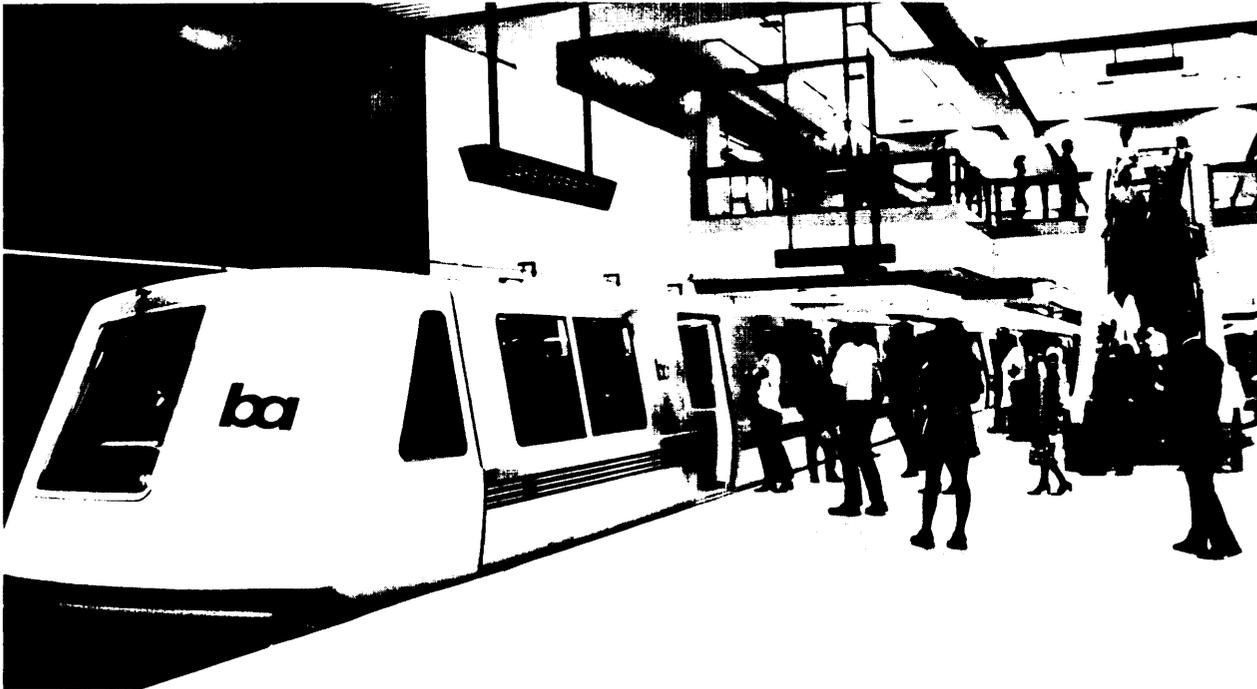


Summary and Highlights



- Conditions were favorable for regional rail rapid transit in the San Francisco Bay Area during the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system planning period of 1945 to 1962. There was a high-density, transit-oriented central city; a linear regional development pattern with numerous important subcenters; geographic barriers that constrained travel to a few congested corridors; and a “freeway revolt” that turned voters to BART as an alternative.
- The Bay Area has had an exceptionally fragmented political and institutional structure with no strong regional agencies until recently. San Francisco contains only 17 percent of the nine-county population; there are almost 100 cities. The State traditionally has stayed out of regional affairs. Strong traditional rivalries between the leading cities have hindered regional solutions, despite the strong need for regional approaches to many of the area’s problems.
- The city of San Francisco has made an extraordinary commitment to transit. Its voters led the region in passing the largest local bond issue of any type in U.S. history with no promise of State or Federal assistance. San Francisco was the first city (1911) to assume public responsibility for transit operations and it provides the highest per-capita transit subsidy in the country (\$12 per person in 1974-75). Its transit system offers more service per square mile than any other city, and its per-capita ridership is second only to New York City.
- Two apparently competing hypotheses have been offered by different observers to explain how the decision to build BART was made. The “conspiracy theory” claims that a small group of businessmen conceived BART as part of a grand plan to

shape San Francisco into the center of a vast business empire. The “rational planning theory” claims that BART evolved through a model planning process as a result of enlightened and courageous leadership that considered BART to be the best solution for the Bay Area’s transportation and land development problems. Both explanations are substantially correct.

- Despite the major challenge brought by the taxpayer’s suit in 1962-63, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BARTD) failed to correct problems in management that were at the root of later serious difficulties. BARTD’s board had no real ability to evaluate or oversee the work of the consultant team and little inclination to do so. The contract gave the Parsons, Brinckerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel team exceptional authority with no incentive to economize.
- BARTD’s relationship with the public changed dramatically during the periods before and after the bond issue election of 1962. The initial public relations effort was well organized and successfully built up a strong pro-BART consensus by election day. Following the vote, the relationship steadily deteriorated as the inflexible construction and financing program was undermined by spiraling inflation and costly delays.
- The quality of the original planning and engineering work has proven to be remarkably good when allowance is made

for unforeseeable events such as Vietnam-fueled inflation, the advent of participation politics, and other shifting values. The cost estimates were surprisingly accurate; ridership forecasts were only moderately overoptimistic; growth and land development forecasts were exceptionally well prepared.

- By contrast the implementation effort was marred by poor management of the system engineering processes, including technological development, testing, and operations planning.
- Again by contrast with earlier efforts, the BART extension studies have provided examples of successful procedures for community participation, and evaluation of alternative systems. The difference can be attributed in part to lessons learned, in part to new actors including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and perhaps in part to the fact that BARTD must again sell its plans to the voters if it wants to build extensions.
- MTC is one of the more important new (1970) metropolitan agencies nationally. It has virtual veto power over all regional transportation projects, authority to allocate about \$35 million per year of regional taxes among the competing transit operators in the nine-county region, and responsibility for determining how the funds are to be used. MTC has major influence over programming of all regional transit and highway projects.