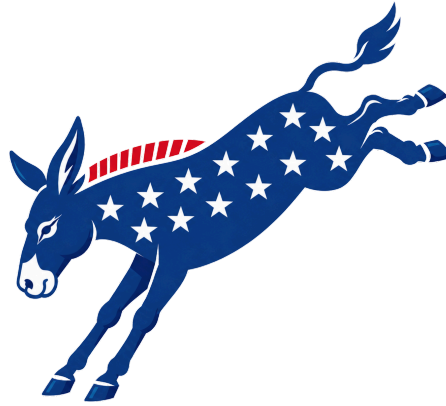




El Cerrito Democratic Club

★ Since 1952 ★

October 2026 Newsletter

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ECDC

PO Box 192

El Cerrito CA 94530

Newsletter Editor: Courtney Helion

1. El Cerrito Democratic Club General Information

Since 1952, the El Cerrito Democratic Club (ECDC)—one of the oldest Democratic clubs in the state—has provided a forum for area residents to discuss and take action on issues and campaigns of local, national, and international importance. Our General Membership Meetings are open to all and usually held on the fourth Tuesday of each month except October and December, when we typically have our annual dinner and holiday party.

Our monthly General Membership Meetings are generally in a hybrid format accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remotely via Zoom.

For monthly meeting and calendar reminders, you are invited to download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) invites to your computer:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/tZUpCOCvqDkpEtH10GiVZ7NcegZqDI_tJeMI/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGpqjwjHdKXsxGCRpwcBo_CXe3wpnpej7d1zU_CChZpNS31M-V4I5ZWl8z6

For those of us who've been able to come to Hana Gardens, it's been wonderful to be in community and gather in person. Whether you join us in person or by Zoom, we encourage you to come a few minutes early to mix-and-mingle with fellow ECDC members.

The El Cerrito Democratic Club and its activities are supported by volunteers and the annual dues of members. Please see the "Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions" section towards the end of this newsletter for directions on how to join the ECDC or renew your membership. El Cerrito Democratic Club executive board officer elections occur annually each January.

Special thanks to our 2025 volunteer officers:

El Cerrito Democratic Club Officers (2025)

- President – Neil Tsutsui
- Past President – Champagne Brown
- Executive Vice President / VP Membership – William Ktsanes
- VP Media – Madeline Kronenberg
- VP Programs – Ruthie Abelson Olivas
- VP Publications – Courtney Helion
- VP Records – Leslie Reckler
- VP Treasurer – Ed Crowley

The specific duties of officer positions are described in section "VII. Officers" of the Bylaws posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.

If you're interested in participating more actively in the ECDC, please consider volunteering with the Club and/or joining the Executive Board.

Help is always greatly appreciated!

- Courtney Helion, VP Publication

2. November Meeting Information, 11.17.2026

November's meeting will be a week earlier due to the Thanksgiving holiday. 6:30-8:00 at Hana Gardens and on Zoom.

3. September Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

President Tsutsui called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Review and Approve the September 2026 Meeting Agenda

On the motion of Ruby McDonald and the second of Ed Crowley the agenda was approved with one abstention.

Review and Approve the August 2026 Meeting minutes

On the motion of Ed Crowley and the second of Michael Nye the minutes were approved with one abstention.

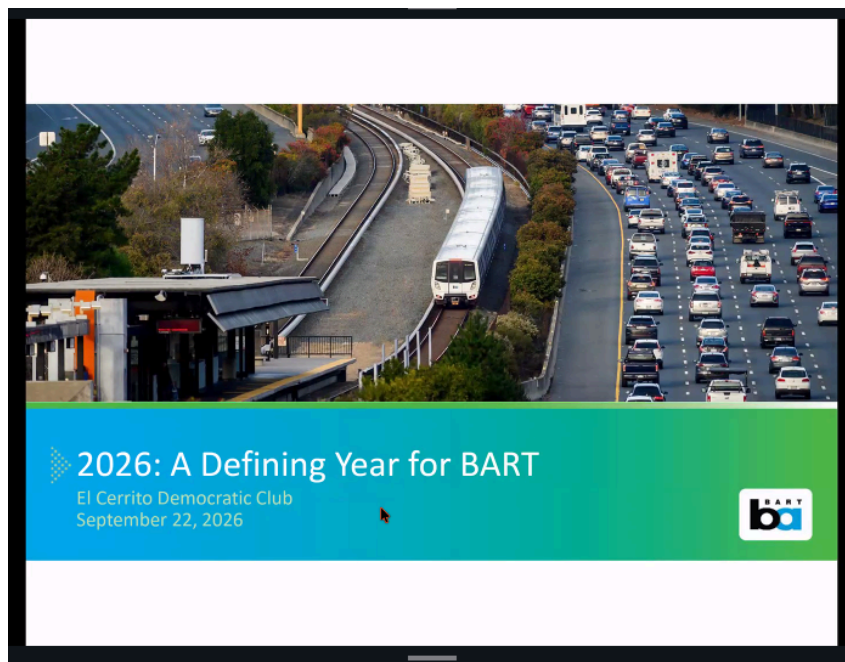
Officer reports

- President (Neil Tsutsui)
 - Stephanie Singer's article was missed in the first version of the newsletter. The newsletter was redistributed. Her article focuses on the importance of making sure your ballot is counted. Please read it. Mail your ballot seven (7) days before election day. Don't forget to sign the ballot envelope and try to have it mirror the signature on record. You can drop your ballot in a drop box or vote in-person.
 - Dinner tickets on sale 10/17/26 6-9 p.m, Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Avenue, El Cerrito. Jesse Arreguin is the speaker. Buy your tickets online. \$65 pp going to \$80 on October 4th. [BUY TICKETS HERE](#)
 - Buy an extra ticket to give to a young Democrat. Grow the ranks of younger members. Let Neil know if you are interested. ecdc.pres@gmail.com
 - Endorsements are done. Time to start walking. Walk lists from PDI will come from CoCo Dems. Pieces from endorsed campaigns can be combined. Never campaign pieces in the mailbox.
 - Memberships are expiring at the end of the month. Please renew on the website. <https://ecdclub.org/join/>
- Executive VP (William Ktsanes) No Report
- Membership (William Ktsanes)
 - 184 members
- Media (Madeline Kronenberg) No Report
- Publications (Courtney Helion) No Report

- Treasurer (Ed Crowley)
 - Cash Balance: \$4153.11 +\$940.99 Dues and Dinner, -\$74.19 Bank fees, Opavote and PayPal fees.
- Records (Leslie Reckler) No report
- Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas) Annual Dinner is the next meeting speaker program.
- Contra Costa Dems (Champagne Brown)
 - Endorsements are complete and are on the CoCo Dems' website.
<https://contracostadems.com/endorsements/>
 - District 1 main endorsements EC City Council. Gabe Quinto and Carolyn Wyisinger. Contra Costa College: Cameron Sasai. WCCUSD: Caitlin Garibaldi, EBMUD: Harpreet Sandhu.
 - Annual Solidarity Gala Sunday \$200. This is the only fundraiser CoCo Dems does throughout the year. They raise funds to support candidates. Spending \$60,000 to win their elections. Walk pieces, mailer, text program. Digital.

Program: “2026: A Defining year for BART”, BART Leadership

Henry Symons, Principal Government & Community Relations Representative for BART



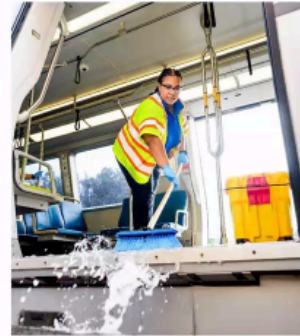
The New BART – Safer and Cleaner



New Fare Gates Systemwide
Make Riders Feel Safer



Focus on Presence
Crime Against Riders Fell 61%
Since End of 2024



Customer Satisfaction at 91.4%

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

2

\$10 million a year. -67% safety incidents. - 47% safety delays. 91% satisfaction rate.
Announcements (2 minutes each)

The New BART – Improvements for Our Riders



New Ways to Pay through
Tap and Ride and Clipper START



Improved LED Lighting



Better Schedule Alignment
with Peer Operators

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

3

Tap and Ride, Improved Lighting, Sync with AC Transit to work on efficient transfers and connections.

BART in El Cerrito



- In August, nearly 7,000 BART trips end in El Cerrito on the average weekday
- The El Cerrito Plaza TOD broke ground on 70 units of family affordable homes in November of 2025
- Larger project includes 743 units and a new public plaza
- BART helped fund the recently completed El Cerrito del Norte Complete Streets Project



Rendering of the El Cerrito Plaza TOD now under construction

4

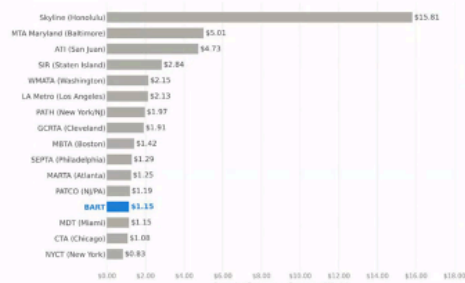
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

BART Operations are Efficient



- BART has one of the lowest operating costs per passenger mile for heavy rail operators
- Operating costs are growing below inflation and at the slowest rate of peer agencies
- Only 40% of BART's operating costs scale directly with service levels
- Cutting BART operating expenses requires disproportionate service reductions and puts revenues from fares at risk

US Heavy Rail Operators Cost Per Passenger Mile (FY24)



5

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

Reduced operating costs by \$560 million.

▶ BART is Facing a Deficit



- Due to remote work and post-pandemic travel patterns, fare revenue is down, and BART faces a \$370M+ structural deficit
- The current Operating Budget maintains current service levels, makes \$18M in cuts, and assumes passage of a regional transit measure
- If passed, the transit measure will provide BART ~\$310M annually beginning in FY28.
- Without new revenue, BART has initially approved an Alternative Service Plan that would include service cuts, station closures, employee layoffs, etc.

BART's operating ratio*

FY27 forecast.....	36%
FY26.....	32%
Pre-COVID	71%

* Percentage of costs paid by passenger fares, parking revenue, advertising, and other sources

7

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

▶ Recent Ridership Growth



- Back-to-back years of double-digit ridership growth
- In July, BART began running longer trains during peak commute to reduce crowding
- August ridership ended 14.2% higher than last year
- September 15, All Aboard Transit Day, was the highest ridership day since 2020 with 242,090 trips



8

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

Accountability and Oversight at BART


- BART's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducts performance audits and investigates allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse
- An Audit Committee advises the BART Board and works with the OIG to implement efficiencies in operations, reporting, and complaints
- In 2026, an independent financial efficiency review was conducted of BART, Muni, Caltrain, and AC Transit.
 - Findings show BART saved more than \$516M in operating costs through service reductions, workforce controls, and operational efficiencies between 2019 – 2025
 - BART reduced capital costs by \$549M and increased revenue by \$99M
 - Implementation of recommendations for additional cost cutting and increased revenue are underway

6
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

Good of the Order

Sept 30th 6-8 p.m. Candidate Forum for El Cerrito City Council, League of Women Voters

Ruby McDonald would like ½ hour added to the meeting time for more discussion of the issues at this critical time. Discussion ensues. The Executive Board will look at when it may be appropriate to extend meeting time or build discussion into the programming.

Sunday, September 17th Indivisible event at Arlington Park Clubhouse. 5:30 p.m.

Oct 8th. Joint Candidate Forum Veteran's Hall starts at 6 p.m.

Adjourn

President Tsutsui called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m.

Next Membership Meeting: ANNUAL DINNER! October 17, 6-9pm.

4. Information for Saturday, October 17th, El Cerrito Democratic Club Annual Dinner

October Meeting Agenda

6:00 pm – Assemble and Mingle

7:00 pm – Dinner

7:20 pm – Call to order, Welcome & Remarks

7:30 pm – Presentation by **California State Senator Jesse Arreguin**

8:00 pm – Dessert

9:00 pm – Adjourn

Purchase your tickets here! <http://tiny.cc/ECDCtickets>

5. Supporting Young Dems, Complimentary Annual Dinner Tickets

Several long-time ECDC members are sponsoring Annual Dinner tickets for younger Democrats. If someone wants one of these free tickets to the Annual Dinner, they can contact Neil Tsutsui at ecdc.pres@gmail.com and he will add them to the list.

6. El Cerrito Annual Dinner Speaker: State Senator Jesse Arreguin



Senator Jesse Arreguin is a lifelong public servant, having been elected to the State Senate in 2024 after serving as Mayor of Berkeley and President of the Association of Bay Area Governments. Born in Fresno as the son and grandson of farmworkers and raised in San Francisco, he grew up invested in labor and civil rights movements. Facing housing insecurity as a child, he advocated for expanding safe and affordable housing while attending UC Berkeley, a cause he still champions today. As Senator, Arreguin chairs the Housing and Public Safety Committees and has advanced legislation protecting immigrants, improving transit, and reducing barriers to services.

7. Get Your Tickets for the Annual Dinner!



**EL CERRITO
DEMOCRATIC CLUB
ANNUAL DINNER**

**BUY TICKETS AT:
[HTTPS://ECDCLUB.ORG](https://ECDCLUB.ORG)**

**OCTOBER 17, 2026
6 - 9 PM**

*Arlington Community Church
52 Arlington Ave.
Kensington*

Ticket: \$80.00

*Dinner provided, please bring
drinks to share.*

8. 2026 ECDC Endorsements

Local Races	
El Cerrito City Council (two open seats)	Carolyn Wysinger
Stege Sanitary District (three open seats)	Ted Lam
Contra Costa Community College District, Ward 1	<i>No consensus</i>

Voter Initiatives	
Measure V: West Contra Costa Unified School District parcel tax renewal	Yes
Regional Transit Measure (half cent sales tax for BART and other transit)	Yes
CA Proposition 1 (housing & veteran bonds)	Yes
CA Proposition 2 (budget stabilization)	Yes
CA Proposition 3 (tax rates on high earners)	Yes
CA Proposition 4 (public financing of campaigns)	Yes
CA Proposition 5 (recall election reform)	Yes
CA Proposition 37 (middle income homebuyer loans)	Yes
CA Proposition 38 (immunology research bonds)	<i>No consensus</i>
CA Proposition 39 (elections, voter ID)	No
CA Proposition 40 (billionaire tax)	Yes
CA Proposition 41 (restrictions on new special taxes)	No
CA Proposition 42 (ban new wealth taxes)	No
CA Proposition 43 (2/3 vote on local special taxes)	No
CA Proposition 44 (90% clinic spending requirement)	No
CA Proposition 45 (CEQA environmental review)	<i>No consensus</i>
Statewide and Regional Races	
US House of Representatives District 8	John Garamendi
California Governor	Xavier Becerra
California Lieutenant Governor	Fiona Ma

California Attorney General	Rob Bonta
California Secretary of State	Shirley Weber
California State Controller	Malia Cohen

9. Future Events - *Mark Your Calendar!*

El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meetings and Events

ECDC Executive Board Calendar – The El Cerrito Democratic Club’s Executive Board (E-Board) meets monthly via Zoom for about an hour to handle routine club business, plan programs for the monthly General Membership Meetings and discuss newsletter content. As with the General Membership Meetings, the E-Board meetings are open to the public. The Zoom Link is
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89264608412?pwd=c2sySEl5ZEplL1lHVUM5bERCZGpEQTO9>.

ECDC November Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, November 17, 2026; hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link
<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>
Preliminary Program: TBD

Below is the ECDC E-Board Calendar for the end of 2026:

2026 El Cerrito Democratic Club Executive-Board Calendar (E-Board)				
Monthly ECDC Executive Board Meeting (E-Board)	Deadline for Submitting the General Membership Meeting Agenda and Articles for the ECDC Newsletter	Monthly Newsletter Completed	Monthly ECDC Newsletter Emailed (by 6:00 pm)	General Membership Meeting Date
Thursday 10/1/2026	Sunday 10/15/2026	Tuesday 10/20/2026	Saturday 10/24/2026	Annual Dinner! (October 17th)
Thursday 11/5/2026	Saturday 11/7/2026	Wednesday 11/11/2026	Saturday 11/14/2026	Tuesday 11/17/2026
Thursday 12/3/2026	Tuesday 12/15/2026	Thursday 12/17/2026	Saturday 12/19/2026	Holiday Party! TBD

Other Community Events

El Cerrito City Council Meetings – 6:00-9:00 pm, first and third Tuesdays of most months; hybrid format; in the City Council Chambers at City Hall (10890 San Pablo Avenue) and via Zoom; meeting materials and recordings available at <https://www.el-cerrito.org/113/City-Council>

Tentative Upcoming El Cerrito City Council Agenda Items: (select highlights)

- Tuesday, October 20th – 2026 Legislative Update; Annual Sundar Shadi Garden Club Awards; California State Legislative Update; Cal Cities Update
- Tuesday, November 17th – Quarterly General Fund Budget Update; Advisory Body Study Update
- Tuesday, December 1st – Public hearing on Integrated Waste Management Fees and East Bay Sanitary and Green Waste Collection and Processing Rates
- Tuesday, December 15th – State of the City Address; oath of office for newly-elected incoming and/or re-elected councilmembers
- Saturday, January 9th - 9:00 am; Council Working Retreat (Open to the Public)

Full agendas are available at <https://www.elcerrito.gov/482/Council-Meeting-Videos-Materials>.

Instructions for submitting comments to the City Council are here:

<https://elcerrito.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13983/Instructions-for-Public-Comments>

“Coffeetime” Discussions with El Cerrito City Councilmember William Ktsanes –

by appointment; 9:30 am-12:00 pm the first and third Saturday mornings of most months at El Cerrito Natural Foods Annex, 10387 San Pablo Avenue; other days, times and locations available upon request; click here to schedule an in-person meeting:

[Meet with William / https://tinyurl.com/Meet-William](https://tinyurl.com/Meet-William)



El Cerrito Farmers Market – 9:00 am-1:00 pm, every Tuesday and Saturday; El Cerrito Plaza, 9000 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; southwest corner parking lot between Trader Joe's and Wells Fargo Bank; www.contracosta.ca.gov/7549/Contra-Costa-Certified-Farmers-Markets



DPCCC and West County Dem Events

<https://contracostadems.com/events/>

West County Dems Monthly meeting - 6:00 - 7:30 pm, second Tuesday of the month; This is a local Democratic club chartered by DPCCC. Meetings are via Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83146226722?pwd=chRneSsxYkVnWWdTcTNQRnBBTmhhdz09>

For more info, contact the club. <https://www.westcountymodemocraticclub.com>

DPCCC General Membership Meeting - 7:00 - 10:00 pm, If you are not a DPCCC member and wish to attend, please RSVP to the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you are a DPCCC member, you should have received an email with details for the meeting about seven days in advance. If you did not, please email the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you know of other community events that may be of interest to our members, please submit them to Courtney Helion at ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for publication in future newsletters!

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

10. Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions

REMINDER! – ECDC annual memberships expire annually on **September 30th**. If you have not yet done so, please renew for 2026-27. **Now is the time!**

You can do so online at: <https://ecdcclub.org/join/>

Or by mailing a check to: ECDC Membership
PO Box 192
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Dues are \$5 for students, \$20 for individual members, and \$30 for two adults at the same address. The newsletter comes with membership and is delivered electronically by email. The added cost for a printed, hard-copy, postal mailed newsletter is \$18 (in addition to dues). Please make checks payable to “El Cerrito Democratic Club” and provide an email address for all individual members.

There have been some issues with double paying on Paypal. **To avoid paying us twice, please wait a day or more if you suspect your payment hasn’t gone through!**

If you have membership questions, please email William Ktsanes at membership.ecdc@gmail.com.

Thank you!

- William Ktsanes, VP Membership

11. Call for Newsletter Submissions

The El Cerrito Democratic Club Newsletter is published eleven months a year (each month with the exception of a combined December-January issue) in advance of the General Membership meetings. ECDC members, friends and supporters are invited to submit articles and announcements regarding local issues and events of interest. Submissions should be emailed to ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for review and editing.

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

12. Link to the ECDC Website and Bylaws

Periodically the Club updates our Bylaws. The bylaws were changed in October 2018 to meet DPCCC requirements; revisions were proposed and adopted during the January 2021, August 2022 and March 2023 ECDC meetings. The ECDC Bylaws are posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>