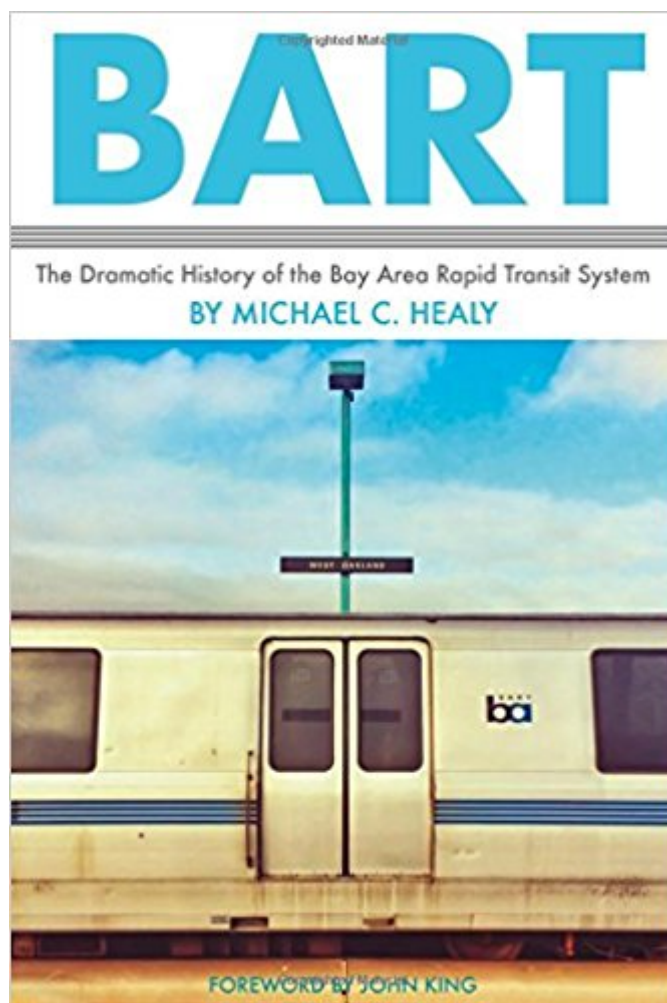


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Bart: The Dramatic History Of The Bay Area Rapid Transit System



Synopsis

The history of Bay Area Rapid Transit, as told by "Mr. BART" himself. When BART opened in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1972, it became a catalyst for a renaissance in modern rail transit, both nationally and internationally. The concept as sold to Bay Area voters was gargantuan: by adopting aerospace technologies such as microchips for ground transportation, the new computer-operated rail system would bridge counties and curb urban sprawl amid a booming automobile culture. But it all came within a gnat's eyelash of not happening. The question raised by pundits and taxpayers alike was: would this space-age plan actually work, or be the biggest boondoggle in the country's history? In the first-ever history book about BART, longtime agency spokesman Michael C. Healy gives an insider's account of the rapid transit system's inception, hard-won approval, construction, and operations, "warts and all." Written with a master storyteller's homey wit and sharp attention to detail, Healy recreates the politically fraught venture to bring a new kind of public transit to the West Coast. What emerges is a sense of the individuals who made (and make) BART happen. From tales of staying up until 3:00 a.m. with Bill Stokes and Jack Everson to hear the election results for the rapid transit vote or weathering scandals, strikes, and growing pains, this look behind the scenes of an iconic, seemingly monolithic structure reveals people at their most human-and determined to change the status quo.

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Customer Reviews

“The Metro. The T. The Tube. The world's most famous subway systems are known by

simple monikers, and San Francisco's BART belongs in that class. Michael C. Healy delivers a tour-de-force telling of its roots, hard-fought approval, and challenging construction that will delight fans of American urban history. —Doug Most, author of *The Race Underground: Boston, New York, and the Incredible Rivalry That Built America's First Subway* —“From Emperor Norton's 1872 dream of a transbay tunnel to the BART tube opening one hundred years later, Healy explores the nuanced history of the Bay Area's subway system through the convergent lenses of social, cultural, engineering, and political forces. In this exquisitely researched work, Healy not only brings the dramatic stories of BART's development to light, but shares the fragile web of energies, power, funding, and sheer will that created this monumental system of people-moving. —Anthea M. Hartig, executive director of the California Historical Society

When BART opened in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1972, it became a catalyst for a renaissance in modern rail transit, both nationally and internationally. The concept as sold to Bay Area voters was gargantuan: by adopting aerospace technologies such as microchips for ground transportation, the new computer-operated rail system would bridge counties and curb urban sprawl amid a booming automobile culture. But it all came within a gnat's eyelash of not happening. The question raised by pundits and taxpayers alike was: would this space-age plan actually work, or be the biggest boondoggle in the country's history? In the first-ever history book about BART, longtime agency spokesman Michael C. Healy gives an insider's account of the rapid transit system's inception, hard-won approval, construction, and operations, "warts and all." Written with a master storyteller's homey wit and sharp attention to detail, Healy recreates the politically fraught venture to bring a new kind of public transit to the West Coast. What emerges is a sense of the individuals who made (and make) BART happen. From tales of staying up until 3:00 a.m. with Bill Stokes and Jack Everson to hear the election results for the rapid transit vote or weathering scandals, strikes, and growing pains, this look behind the scenes of an iconic, seemingly monolithic structure reveals people at their most human-and determined to change the status quo.

The author, given his history as a BART employee with key access to the major players and behind the scenes activity of BART, is the perfect person to write this combination history and tell-all book about the San Francisco Bay Area's highly dysfunctional, yet desperately needed, public transport system. Michael Healy provides abundant detail around key decisions and events during BART's history, but also has an engaging writing style that makes this book a real page turner, rather than a dry book of statistics and dates. His telling of the internal mole hunt around a group of

whistle-blowing engineers is really like a well-crafted mystery tale that had me on the edge of my seat. But he also highlights some lighter moments, such as his unorthodox decision to hire Henny Youngman (Take my BART - please!) as a spokesman. And his retelling of the many (literally) backroom deals that created BART is riveting, especially where he shows how close BART was to never existing due to political machinations. But most of all, the author shows how many of the problems plaguing BART today (technical problems; poor management; union issues; arrogance leading to poor planning (no redundancies built into the system because the initial engineers boasted of an ongoing 0% failure level!)) have their origins in the heady mishmash of personalities, technologies, and ego that came together 50 years ago.

Michael C. Healey has written a very enjoyable, entertaining, and engaging book that I consider a pioneering work discussing the history of the Bay Area Rapid Transit or BART's commuter train system. Healey, BART's former media affairs manager and official spokesman, is a great story teller and showed that even a passenger train that will turn forty-five this September has a story to tell. I have grown up riding BART, so this book brings back many childhood memories as well as introduces me to brand new facts I have never known before. A partly autobiographical book in which he mentions himself in the first person and details his career as a BART employee makes this book especially entertaining to read.

This book gives a good description of the trials and difficulties that a transit system has in order to survive. The author does show an engaging writing style and familiarity with his subject (being head of media relations) does help. It is a fine addition to a library of mass transit systems. It is primarily about the operations and politics that happened behind the scenes. He does touch on most of the problems and people that influenced this emerging system.

This book provides a true behind-the-scenes look at critical moments in BART's history and gives a flavor for the grit required to deliver bold government initiatives. Even if you're not a train buff, this is an easy and engaging read.

Great book. Even purchased a copy for a friend.

Amazing history of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system for any transit geek like me and well worth the read!

Great

Thought it was a fascinating review !!

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