

BART's New Antioch Station Is Very Popular -- and Doesn't Have Enough Parking



Cars parked on a roadside just outside Antioch's new BART station. **(East County Today)**

By all accounts, people in eastern Contra Costa County love the brand-new eBART line from Pittsburg-Bay Point to Antioch. In its first week of operation, the service has far exceeded its projected ridership.

But here's something they don't like: The 1,012-space parking lot at the new Antioch station has been filling up in a hurry every weekday. That has led late-comers to try parking just about any old where so they can catch the new train.

This week, "any old where" has included nearby bicycle lanes and roadsides with tall, dry -- and potentially very combustible -- grass.

BART held a meeting Friday to discuss short- and long-term steps it can take to provide more space for commuters and how to deal with illegal and potentially dangerous parking.

BART spokeswoman Alicia Trost said that among the questions raised at the meeting are whether it's possible to find under-used parking nearby. Among others who have floated that idea is a local resident who posted a video suggesting using a partially empty shopping mall parking lot: <https://youtu.be/WAsfTEVM1Oc>

Trost said BART is also evaluating whether it could build additional parking on unused portions of its Antioch property. Among the factors the agency would need to address is how much parking could be provided, how quickly and at what cost.

In the short term, though, BART is going to do what it can to shut down outlaw parking around the Antioch property.

"We are going to be blocking off the illegal spaces people were discovering this week," Trost said. She added that many of the impromptu roadside parking areas pose a high fire danger.

"People were parking on top of tall, dry grass," she said. "Hot engines can spark a fire, so that is an extreme danger."

Many drivers chose to leave their vehicles in bike lanes around the stations, prompting Antioch police to write dozens of parking citations this week.

Trost said that by putting those areas out of bounds, commuters will be prompted to drive to either the new Pittsburg Center station or the Pittsburg-Bay Point station. She said the Pittsburg Center parking lot, which has 245 stalls, did not fill up during eBART's first week. And she said that Pittsburg-Bay Point had spaces open until after 10 each morning, a situation she called "completely unheard of."

"A lot of people who were driving to Pittsburg-Bay Point are going to Antioch," Trost said. "So the idea is it will smooth out. People are going to figure out if they just cannot get to Antioch early enough" they can try the other stations.

Of the 1,000-plus parking stalls, 225 are set aside for monthly and daily passholders and for those using the Scoop carpool app. There are very long waiting lists to get reserved parking at the station, but Trost says the Scoop option has been very lightly used so far.

So far, the parking woes have not put a dent in eBART ridership. The service was projected to record about 5,600 trips a day -- the total of entries and exits at the Pittsburg Center and Antioch stations. The total trips for eBART for the first three workdays this week ranged as high as 7,441, or 33 percent over the initial projection.

Trost said that the strong first-week ridership on the new line has been matched by a decline at Pittsburg-Bay Point, the old end of the system's Yellow Line.