

Letter: WCSO appreciates public's support

To the community,

Sheriff Chuck Allen and the entire staff at the Washoe County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the citizens and visitors of Washoe County for the outpouring of gratitude that has been shared with all of the employees at the Sheriff's Office.

"The tragedy that occurred in Dallas only exemplifies the measures that law enforcement officers go to each day they put on their uniform and go to work," Allen said. "Men and women who have sworn to protect the Constitution of the United States of America and defend the freedom of the citizens they protect are no different than you and me, moms and dads, sisters and brothers."

Since taking over as sheriff of Washoe County in January 2015, Allen has worked with other law enforcement agencies to strengthen the relations between law enforcement and the community. Allen has met regularly with leaders of religious groups and other citizen groups to forge relations within Washoe County.

"Our hope in reflecting on the recent tragedies is that we will continue to strengthen the dialogue between the diverse sectors of our community. My hope is that we would all work for improved community relations for the future of Washoe County and those relations would spread well beyond the borders of our region," Allen said.

Employees at the sheriff's office have been showered with words and tokens of appreciation from the community over the last few days and the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Facebook page has been inundated with gratitude and encouragement from the public.

“I have heard many stories of Deputies working within Washoe County receiving handshakes and citizens recognizing them for the work they do,” Allen said. “It just goes to show what a great community in which we live and work. I sincerely want to say ‘thank you’ to our community for supporting all law enforcement officers.”

Deputy Jeff McCaskill, Washoe County Sheriff’s Office

Letter: Sierra Valley Electric help B&B

To the community,

Sierra Valley Electric Inc. was the Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor for Bread & Broth’s dinner on June 26.

Sierra Valley Electric Inc. is locally owned and operated and has been serving the South Lake Tahoe community since 1975. Owners Sandy Herback and Bob King and their employees have a strong sense of community and adopting a dinner to feed the hungry of our community is just one of the many ways the company tries to be involved in all aspects of the Tahoe south shore community.

At Sierra Valley Electric’s dinner, the B&B volunteers served a hot and nutritious meal with the help of two very hard working Sierra Valley Electric employees. According to Mary Ann Valle, the sponsor crew coordinator, Ralph Duron and Nick Chandler were two of the hardest working sponsor volunteers that have helped at the B&B Monday evening dinners. After helping with bagging food giveaway bags, serving dinner and prior to cleaning up cleaning up, Chandler commented that the

dinner was “great for our community!”

Bread & Broth would like to express our sincere thanks to Sierra Valley Electric Inc. for the great job they do providing service to the South Tahoe community and their support over the years sponsoring Monday evening meals at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

As a nonprofit, all volunteer organization, B&B depends on our partnerships with generous local community supporters like Sierra Valley Electric Inc.

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at carolsgerard@aol.com or (530) 542-2876.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Stop worrying about GMOs

By Henry I. Miller, Los Angeles Times

Karma can be so cruel. Just think how many times anti-GMO activists have protested against the imaginary risks of food that has been genetically modified. Now a favorite snack of those same protesters, the sacred granola bar, has been found to pose an actual health risk.

Anti-genetic engineering campaigns are among the activities bankrolled by organizations such as the Clif Bar Family Foundation, which uses the considerable profits it receives from selling “healthy” and “natural” snack foods to denigrate the products of modern farming and extol supposedly superior organic alternatives. Like Clif Bars.

The truth is that paying the “organic tax” – the price premium associated with organic products – makes you no healthier. Recalls of organic foods amounted to 7 percent of all food units recalled in 2015, even though organic farms account for only about 1 percent of agricultural acreage. In early June, several types of Clif Bars were recalled from stores because they contained organic sunflower kernels potentially contaminated with a bacterium called listeria. Food poisoning from this nasty bug kills hundreds of Americans every year.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Calif. public employee pensions a problem

By Kerry Jackson, Orange County Register

In January 2013, Gov. Jerry Brown bragged about the state’s new commitment to fiscal responsibility. He talked about “living within our means and not spending what we don’t have.” A year later, in his State of the State address, Brown insisted that “fiscal discipline is not the enemy of our democracy but its fundamental predicate.”

Yet here we are in the middle of 2016, and few states’ fiscal health are worse than California’s. The Mercatus Center’s 2016 ranking of states by fiscal condition places the Golden State 44th overall, the same position it held last year.

The state is below average in cash needed to cover short-term liabilities – it ranks 47th – and total debt has hit \$118.17 billion, says the report. California ranks 46th in long-run solvency, meaning it’s woefully short on “assets available to

cushion the state from potential shocks or long-term fiscal risks.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Trying to understand race relations

By Garry Bowen

A few *Lake Tahoe News* editions ago, I wrote a memorial about local Spider Sabich’s early World Cup win, then suffering the indignity of being shot to death in Aspen, Colo., under tragic circumstances. As similar episodes keep recurring over and over in this culture, allow me to memorialize another, more professional experience, in light of our more tragic, national week, from about that same time period.

A few months after Spider’s win at Heavenly in 1968, I landed a job in Denver as a communications consultant. Within a few months of learning the ropes I was engaged by a project in the emerged city of Lakewood, Colo., as they were the first city in the U.S. to incorporate from scratch with a large population base of over 100,000 people. First time in the U.S. until then and none again since that time – unprecedented.



Garry Bowen

The learned importance of that project could shed some needed light on the ongoing and current conflicts between this nation's police departments and at least one of their constituencies, in this case the black citizenry.

I was fortuitous in working with Lakewood, as upon incorporation they were immediately out of both the jurisdiction of Jefferson County (sheriff) and the Denver Police Department. In short, they had to mobilize their "law & order" before they even had a city government in place. The gentleman that took on that job, whose name was Ronald Lynch, was, at the time president of the International Association of Police Chiefs in Washington, D.C., lobbying on behalf of police departments on this continent (including the U.S., Canada, and Mexico – borders are indeed somewhat irrelevant to their work).

In the course of learning how to develop an innovative communications system, it was very useful to understand their daily activities. Lynch took this position precisely due to the immense challenge of starting from scratch, as Lakewood was to be the first public safety department in this country.

Nothing was off the table, as this was an incredible opportunity to look over the entire field of policing, which Lynch shared with me in the process of communications, and in my work in facilitating the needed tasks of day-to-day activities.

One of the things determined by the creation of one of the first public safety departments in the country was concerning recruitment: Lynch was of the studied opinion that when a department advertised for "law enforcement", what was attracted were "enforcers", showcasing a trait that may not end up to be that attractive, as policing is not really about security, but about keeping the citizenry secure, a vastly important distinction given our current unwieldy situations.

The other need-to-know was in the sociologic arena – various studies had concluded that an over-emphasis on patrolling “disadvantaged” neighborhoods (while leaving gated communities to their own devices) was going to be problematic, as the levels of trust would need to be structurally shored-up not to cause undue stresses.

Given the structural inequities in share, in compensation, in treatment, it should be apparent that a proliferation of weapon indulgence should be overall curtailed, but is not.

Weaponry was an issue as part of Lakewood’s considerations, as at that time, more than 90 percent of officers had never drawn a weapon, and approximately the same high percentage of those drawn were never fired.

That belies the dignity of most public safety service, as the lack of respect is further eroded, to the increasing detriment of “making people feel secure”, while increasingly relying on an errant idea that security is somehow more important. Security is more often associated with the protection of property than with the protection of people; therein lies the problem, especially when you’re the wrong color, or live in the wrong area of town.

San Francisco (and other cities as well) has begun to revisit these issues, as it is readily apparent that some in police ranks over these decades have not gotten this message, short-changing the maturity needed to be “firm but fair”.

Culturally, added fuel derives from the long-standing and ridiculous rating of our Negro population being characterized in founding documents as “three-fifths” of a person, a rating not extended to the patently immature institutional conduct of not being changed or called-out due to so-called benefits for some that want to keep holding on to ill-advised “tradition”.

It has been said that prejudice is the “greatest time-saver” ever invented, as it saves some from having to think at all –

as we are where we are as a culture, such thinking can be seen now as soul-searching, provided one is able to put in any thought, or has the soul to search for the better parts of who we all are.

Garry Bowen has more than a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health.

Letter: League praises Martis Valley West vote

To the community,

Thursday night's vote by the Placer County Planning Commission to reject the proposed development at Martis Valley West is great news for all who love Lake Tahoe.

By voting to not adopt the Martis Valley West Specific Plan and to reject its inadequate environmental review, planning commissioners showed that they had clearly heard the valid concerns expressed by hundreds of community members and stakeholders, who for months have expressed alarm that the proposal offered no solutions to the negative impacts of the project.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe has repeatedly expressed grave concerns about the project, notably its addition of significant traffic impacts – and traffic-related pollution – to the Lake Tahoe Basin. Approval of the project would have set a dangerous precedent. Developers must not be allowed to get off the hook of proposing projects that threaten Lake

Tahoe without providing solutions or adjusting their proposals to reduce such threats.

We encourage the Placer County Board of Supervisors to heed the wisdom of their planning commission and to demand that the Martis Valley West project's proponents go back to the drawing board to develop a project that represents better community planning with stronger safeguards to protect Lake Tahoe.

This decision should send a message that while lake-friendly redevelopment has a welcome place in Tahoe's future, principled decision makers will reject projects that significantly threaten the lake's clarity, including those coming down the pipeline in the near future.

Darcie Goodman Collins, executive director of League to Save Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Daly's damage ongoing in Amador

By Larry Weitzman

For the past two years I have been writing about corruption in El Dorado County. Many of my critics say my facts are wrong or I cherry pick data. Some critics simply pooh-poohed the information saying I don't know what I am talking about or I am not to be believed. But a 95 page, very thorough (it is the third in a series) 2015-16 Amador County Grand Jury report totally supports my conclusions about the misdeeds of Terri Daly before she became EDC's CAO in 2010.

Daly remained EDC CAO for about 4½ years until she became an

overwhelming embarrassment to the EDC Board of Supervisors.



Larry Weitzman

One of those columns discussed a long-term Amador County lease that Daly modified to the severe financial loss to Amador County. Now this new Amador County Grand Jury report issued two weeks ago details failures, corruption and incompetence of CAO Daly in procuring a new lease for Amador County's Health and Human Services Department. Her actions parallel what she did during her tenure as EDC's CAO.

Problems started for Daly in March 2008 when she accepted from the lessor \$400,000 if she would eliminate the county walk-out clause which allowed Amador to terminate the lease, which cost \$1.5 million annually, five years early and further extend the lease for another five years (a total of 10 years). For \$400,000 paid to the lessee (Amador County), the lessor was able to increase the value of his building as determined by the Amador County assessor \$3.3 million. And the lessor shortly after this transaction did sell the building for at least a \$3 million higher price. Amador County because of the lease extension was now obligated for an additional \$15 million to \$18 million.

Below are seven of the most damning of the 19 findings that were made by the Amador County GJ. Notice how the grand jury is critical of how CAO Daly tried to use a subterfuge to hide the money and how she broke county rules and intentionally kept county officials – also a violation of county rules and policies – from knowing about this transaction and writing

recommendation to the BOS.

“Finding 1 (F1) the grand jury did not find any compelling nor financially sound reasons in the March 4, 2008, HHS building lease to justify why the HHS director, the county counsel, the CAO and all county supervisors decided to amend the Oct. 17, 2006, HHS building lease. The March 4, 2008, HHS building lease significantly increased the value of the HHS building to the LLC (the original property owners). The LLC sold the HHS building for \$3.3 million over the assessed value shortly after the renegotiated lease was approved.

“F9. Since at least January 1997 to present, Amador County has had written policies and procedures to direct employees, department heads, executive staff and elected officials, including the Board of Supervisors, in acquiring property either by lease or by purchase. However, the HHS director, the county counsel, the CAO, and the county supervisors chose to ignore them by deliberately keeping the GSA Director and Auditor from reviewing the March 4, 2008, HHS building lease before the BOS approved the lease.

“F10. Between December 2007 and March 4, 2008, the HHS director, the CAO, the county counsel, and the chairman of the Board of Supervisors prevented the county auditor from executing the auditor’s duties as identified in the county’s GSA Purchasing Policy 5-100, the county’s GSA Contract Policy 1-310.

“F11. Between December 2007 and March 4, 2008, the CAO, the HHS director, the county counsel, and members of the Board of Supervisors deliberately excluded the GSA director from the negotiations and a review of the March 4, 2008, HHS building lease and from executing the GSA director’s duties as identified in the county’s GSA Purchasing Policy 5-100, the county’s GSA Contract Policy 1-310.

“F12. Amador County’s Board of Supervisors, the Board of

Equalization, former county supervisors and the county counsel knew that the March 4, 2008, HHS building lease with the LLC presented no risk to the LLC, that it had the highest per square foot cost of any commercial building lease in the county and possibly the Central Valley, that the March 4, 2008, HHS building increased in value because the county extended the term five years to twenty years and the county eliminated the county policy mandated early termination clause contingent on available county, state and federal funding for multi-year contracts.

"F14. The HHS director, the CAO, and BOS knew or should have known that by not publicly acknowledging the acceptance of the \$400,000 from the LLC and by depositing the \$400,000 in the County Reserve Fund under the guise of a HHS Reserve Fund, that it would be very difficult or nearly impossible for the general public, an independent auditor or a state or federal government agency to determine the original source of the \$400,000 if funds were transferred to other accounts.

"F15. The HHS director, the CAO, and members of BOS used deceptive methods to move over \$240,000 of \$400,000 LLC money to various HHS departments' trust accounts to hide the LLC money trail. About \$167,000 of the \$400,000 was traced back to paying the LLC for the HHS building rent, \$45,000 was traced to the county's CMSP Medi-Cal program, and about \$28,800 went general operating expenses funded by the Mental Health Trust Fund."

So where is the parallel between Daly's actions in Amador County and actions in EDC? Long term Amador County Auditor Joe Lowe was intentionally kept out of the loop by Daly with respect to this HHS lease. When EDC's county auditor was reviewing the CAO's business practices and requirements in 2013 on her failure to comply with EDC policies, Daly began a campaign of attacking the county auditor, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars including the Vandermyden, Maddox report on bullying which became an indictment of Daly and her cronies

and an exoneration of the county auditor, Joe Harn, of claims of him being a bully.

Another parallel is Daly violated BOS policy B-12. The policy intent of EDC was that the auditor-controller be given the opportunity to review all matters that potentially have a large financial impact. Daly did not give proper notice to Harn when she rammed through the recent 15 percent raise which now has decimated our county financially.

Daly then landed a job as assistant director at the Yuba County Water Agency at \$160,000 annually. Obviously a thorough background check was not performed. It's another failure of our government system.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: SLT proud of parade success

To the community,

The city of South Lake Tahoe hosted its first 4th of July parade. There were 78 vehicles and approximately 200 people either walking, biking, or dancing. American Legion Post 795 served as the parade marshals.

The city of South Lake Tahoe would like to say "thank you" to all the parade participants, businesses and volunteers for making the 4th of July parade a fantastic community event.

The following current and former U.S. Armed Forces members participated in the 4th of July parade:

- Naval Air Station – Fallon and the Nevada Army Guard Unit
- American Legion Post 795 members; Cmdr. Matt Panks, Judge Advocate John Lingar, Chaplain Curt Emre and past Cmdr. Blair Clark.
- Veterans Karl Johnson, Orly Larson, Gary Norton, Daniel Boone, Alan Morse, Joe Morse, James Taylor, Pat Maliska, Lee Maliska, Ed Pyre, Michael Varich, Adrianna Voss, Dennis Merritt, Dana Buschini, Gert Lehman, Bill Malloy and gold star families..

There were multiple community volunteers and the parade would not have been possible without all their efforts.

Dreu Murin served as the parade emcee. Tahoe Production House provided a live stream video of the parade. Once the recorded link is available it will be provided.

Below is a list of all parade participants and businesses:

Adrianna Voss, Army

Air Drum Band

Alan Morse, veteran

Alana Sanchez

Allen Yahar

American Legion Post 795

American Red Cross Emergency Vehicle

American Red Cross-Disaster Action Team

Big 5

Bill Malloy, veteran

Blair Clark, veteran

Briana Biller

Brooke Laine

California Colors Auto Body and Towing

California Conservation Corps

California Highway Patrol

Carol & David Reed

Christmas Cheer All Year

Cindi Archer

City of South lake Tahoe Public Works

Convertible with Roberta B & Shellie M

Councilmember Hal Cole

Councilmember Tom Davis

Curt Emre, veteran

Dana Buschini, veteran

Daniel Boone, veteran

Dennis Merritt, veteran

Diane Roeser-Kinney

Don & Jennifer Johnson

Don Sharp (vintage truck)

Dreu Murin

Ed Pyre, veteran

El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel

Emerald Bay Towing/Pop Warner Football

Everything Tahoe.com

Fallen Leaf Lake Fire Department

Family Resource Center

First Baptist Church

Gary Norton, veteran

Gert Lehman

Gold Star Families – Patty Smith

Hi Lo's 4 WD Club

Jackie Durham

James Taylor, veteran

Jennifer Scanio

Jerry & Jill Carter

Jill Sharlow

Joe Morse, veteran

John Lingar, veteran

Karl Johnson, veteran

Kenny Curtzwiler, veteran

Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Lake Tahoe Presbyterian Church

Lake Valley Fire District

Lakeview Thrift Store

Lauren Thomaselli

Lee Maliska, veteran

Liberty Energy

LTCC Soccer Team

Matt Olivares

Matt Panks, veteran

Maureen Stuhlman

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Sass

Mayor Wendy David

Michael Varich, veteran

Michelle Daniels

Michelle Yahar

Nancy Dalton, for college board

Nancy Kerry

Naval Air Station – Fallon

Nevada Army Guard Unit

Orly Larson, veteran

Pat Maliska, veteran

Phil Blowney

Philip Graber, veteran

Rick Wood

Rosemary Manning

Ross Groelz DDS

Safu & the Clowns Army

Sami Miller

Sheriff Search and Rescue

Sheriff Team of Active Retirees

SISLT, A Fighting Chance

SITS

South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue

South Lake Tahoe Police Department

South Lake Tahoe Senior Citizens Center

South Tahoe Refuse and Recycling

Susie Alessi, city clerk

Sutter Capital Group

Swim for Africa

Swim for Africa

Tahoe Asphalt Inc.

Tahoe Derby Dames

Tahoe Production House

Tahoe Rentals LLC

US Bank

US Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The 4th of July parade was an opportunity to honor our local veterans and as a fundraiser for the American Legion Post 795.

To date \$700 has been raised and they are continuing to accept donations.

Tracy Franklin, South Lake Tahoe public information officer

Opinion: Important to protect Tahoe's bears

By Carl Lackey

When Gov. Brian Sandoval proclaimed July as Bear Logic Month in Nevada he challenged Nevadans to think like a bear.

That is what Bear Logic is all about, thinking like a bear.

Homeowners, vacationers and even day visitors need to think about their property and even their campsites as a bear would think about those things. Remove items that a bear would find attractive and bears will not become conflict bears.

A number of items can peak a bears "culinary curiosity" including bird feeders, pet food, barbecue grills and of course, trash. You cannot leave these things out in bear country and expect the bears and other animals to ignore them.

The battle to keep bears alive and wild is highlighted in July, but is actually a yearlong challenge. I have worked with homeowners associations and other property management concerns in the Lake Tahoe Basin and across the rest of western Nevada to educate residents about the advantage of using bear logic in their neighborhoods. To reward those neighborhoods that do their best to avoid attracting bears, NDOW has started recognizing some of these communities as Bear Logic Communities.

The Caughlin Ranch Homeowners Association on the west side of Reno and the Tahoe Village Homeowners Association in the Kingsbury area of Douglas County are the first two “communities” recognized under the program. These two neighborhoods have stood out in their ongoing efforts to educate their property owners on the importance of following bear logic practices. They have taken a consistent proactive approach to removing garbage and other food sources that attract bears to their neighborhoods.

“We are proud to be recognized by NDOW as a Bear Logic Community,” said Lorrie Olson, general manager of the Caughlin Ranch Homeowners Association. “NDOW has recognized our efforts to educate our residents on bear awareness and safety in dealing with this important issue.”

The Tahoe Village Homeowners Association located atop Kingsbury Grade was one of the first neighborhoods on the Nevada side of Tahoe to recognize the emerging bear/garbage problem in the early 2000s and work toward solutions. Bear proof garbage containers were installed and continuously improved and residents are continually reminded of their duty to protect the bears by removing attractants.

“The bears were here first,” said TVHA maintenance supervisor Mike Paulson. “We owe it to the bears to manage our trash properly.”

The challenge at Tahoe Village is a big one. There are over 1,000 units and 29 garbage receptacles that Paulson and his crew are responsible for. To complicate matters, many of the condominium units are rentals and during the summer the population of those units turns over bringing a whole new group of people each week.

The work of protecting the bears is ongoing. The key to success with any of these efforts is consistency. The bears will take advantage of any slip up by residents and

communities so being vigilant is important in these bear logic efforts.

I'm excited to add more communities to the list and wants residents or homeowners who want to know more to contact ndowinfo@ndow.org with the subject line of "Our Bear Logic Community."

Carl Lackey is the black bear biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Opinion: Ride the bus and you ride with big data

By Lisa Margonelli

When I first arrived in San Francisco in 1988 I often took a bus called the 22 Fillmore, which ran from Potrero Hill, around a hairpin corner above the Castro, out to the tony Marina. On one end dwelled ancient socialites in little hats, on the other old longshoremen, with so much wackiness in between that the route was rightly called the "22 Fellini." It was like the old canard about nudist camps: Everyone on the bus was an equal—especially because none of us knew when the next one would arrive.

Now San Franciscans are, on average, younger and more prosperous, and when they ride the bus they are looking at their phones, where they can track the 22 Fillmore in real time. They can also probably see a digital readout of arriving buses at a stop, or receive texts and social media updates from San Francisco's municipal transit agency. Any traveler can also open up all sorts of other smartphone and desktop

apps to navigate the system, like Google Maps, Moovit, Rover, and Routesy. These days, when you ride the bus, you ride with Big Data.

The world of apps for transit started with a great deal of promise. Evidence from Seattle suggested that merely letting riders know when the next bus would arrive could actually make people happier with their bus and more likely to take another trip. Fully integrated apps now let people plan trips that move from trains to buses and private cars or bicycles at the ends. Eventually, this data-rich universe may encourage city dwellers to give up their cars, reducing traffic congestion, pollution, and greenhouse-gas emissions. So on a recent trip back to San Francisco, I tried using some of the local apps to see how they changed my experience.

I was taking part in a big civic—and economic—experiment. Though there aren't yet any studies showing whether apps increase transit ridership, apps themselves are much cheaper than buses and trains and tracks and drivers. When apps are used to pay for fares (as they are in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Dallas, among other cities) they shift the cost of fare machines from the transit company to the riders. These complex changes in investment, risk, and time will continue as 10 percent of the world moves into cities in the next 15 years, and as self-driving cars start to prowl the streets. Uber has raised \$15 billion in venture capital to move into the space between public and private transit around the world. And in the long run, these changes could create a richer transit universe for everyone, or a poorer one accessible mainly to the rich.

I first pulled out my \$29 Android smartphone along the T line on Third Street. The app produced by Muni, the local transit system, required that I give it my email and create a password. Even though I'd given up my anonymity, the app didn't seem to know exactly where I was. So I walked toward where I thought the stop was, only to find a digital readout

saying that the next trains were coming in 12 and 14 minutes. Aha! Poorly spaced trains are a problem no app can fix.

That problem is important. As nice as information is, what riders really want is service. Candace Breakwood, assistant professor of engineering at CUNY, did research across three boroughs of New York from 2011 through 2013 and found that lines giving riders accurate information on arrival times increased ridership by as much as 2 percent on an average day. "When you aggregate that across NYC it's very significant," she told me. But she also looked at the impact of the weather, the economy, service changes, and multiple other factors and found what really increased ridership was more-frequent buses and shorter trip times. This is hardly a "Moneyball"-type revelation from the crunching of Big Data. "Yeah. Commonsense," Breakwood said.

Once the T arrived it was pleasantly crowded, with a mix of ages and ethnicities, and the ride on the tracks was mostly smooth. Some older black folks in suits were still enjoying Juneteenth, singing a song from another era. A younger woman with pink hair was drinking from a can. And a guy with long arms was waving them exuberantly as he talked on the phone. As we rolled past the ballpark it occurred to me that the city had spent a lot of money establishing itself as a party town, and the crowd of us here on the train was a truer reflection of that happy civic spirit—the 22 Fellini of it all—than many of the recent expensive infrastructure investments. An Asian grandmother with two little children boarded. The train lurched, they all nearly fell over, and then started giggling. The arm-waving man shot out of his seat and offered it to them. Our civic project rolled along.

What does this all have to do with apps? SF Muni plans to release a new app component this summer that allows passengers to comment on the etiquette of fellow riders, along with train cleanliness, trip time, crowding, and comfort. Rate My Ride encourages readers to swipe right or left—in homage to Tinder,

I guess. Muni employees will monitor these swipes and “target specific train routes and bus lines” for improvements, according to Paul Rose, spokesperson for Muni. “It’s one way to make it easier for riders to let us know how we can improve their transportation experience and further engage our riders,” he explained.

I tried to imagine myself swiping my fellow passengers on my phone, but to me the beauty of the bus is enjoying the way everyone gets along and ignoring the ways that we don’t. The singing was nice. I had no problem with a quiet drink. The seat hog at 23rd Street was an angel by Fourth and King.

So how do people rate other passengers’ etiquette, and how should the transit agency react to them? “There’s an idea that because apps are software they’re non-discriminatory and egalitarian. And if you put them in the hands of people they’ll naturally lead to good,” said David King, an assistant professor of urban planning at Arizona State University. But, King worries, it’s likely that the app will be hijacked by racist, sexist, or anti-poor opinions—just like platforms including Nextdoor.com, AirBnB, and Microsoft’s chatbot Tay, which became a raving fountain of hate-talk within hours.

What’s more, in the world of public services, some voices—particularly those perceived as white and middle class—are more powerful than others, attracting more sympathetic policing, more funding for potholes, more municipal love. Muni’s app will be available only in English to start, even though bus announcements are often in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The agency says they expect to release the app in other languages. It could be harmful to only collect complaints from English speakers, but wouldn’t the very idea of the city itself be challenged if we all secretly complain about each other in multiple languages?

Perhaps more important, if the core issue with increasing transit ridership is train frequency and travel time, should

Muni spend its precious resources tracking and responding to passenger etiquette? Transit needs to be more rider-focused, but the meaningful difference comes when public transit is more plentiful and convenient. And citizens change that through engagement in the budgeting and planning process, not by writing bad Yelp reviews. At the moment, apps offer riders an illusion of control. In the long push-pull over transit service, though, the apps aren't automatically a force for good.

On a trip back from the East Bay I used Moovit to calculate my route. Taking BART and bus, the app said, would take 86 minutes, while an ad offered a button to call an Uber that would cost \$21 and take 56 minutes. As it turned out, the app was wrong, and between BART and the 5 Fulton bus I got back home in 72 minutes for about \$6. And of course, I got the whole Fellini too.

Lisa Margonelli writes the Small Science column for Zócalo Public Square, where she is the science and humanities editor.