



Councilmember Ben Bartlett
City of Berkeley, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR

July 10, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Ben Bartlett, Mayor Jesse Arreguin, Councilmember Sophie Hahn, and Councilmember Cheryl Davila

Subject: Send a letter to the Board of Directors of BART Requesting That BART Rename the Ashby BART Station the Mable Howard BART Station

RECOMMENDATION

Send the attached letter to the Board of Directors of BART requesting that BART rename the Ashby BART Station the Mable Howard BART Station.

BACKGROUND

Mable Howard, a well-known South Berkeley community organizer and activist, moved to the Bay Area towards the end of World War II with her husband, Rolly Howard, and their two children. Working in the shipyards of Hunters Point, Mable fought to allow women to join the workers' union, demonstrating her dedication to social justice in every sector of her life. She and Rolly eventually settled down in South Berkeley and became an integral part of the local community.

In 1968, Mable Howard, known to those close to her as "Ma Howard," brought a lawsuit against BART, alleging that the planned above-ground tracks through her South Berkeley neighborhood would encourage and exacerbate the segregation of black and white neighborhoods.

With above-ground tracks serving as segregation-enforcing barriers in other communities, Mable understood the importance of maintaining the community's current landscape. With courage and determination, Mable organized the community and managed to convince BART to build the tracks underground. This turn of events meant

that many properties in South Berkeley retained their value and the city embraced its diverse community, rather than segregation. Up until her death in 1994, Mable served as an active leader of political and community projects in the Berkeley Area.

This little known figure in our city's history has slipped through the cracks as Berkeley has grown. Despite this, she permanently altered the face of this city and today, Berkeley shines as a beacon of progressive ideals, in part due to her commendable efforts to ensure that we treat all races with equal respect. Renaming the Ashby BART station the Mable Howard BART Station would celebrate, and appropriately commemorate the accomplishments of Ma Howard. It is imperative that we recognize her crucial contributions to our community, and remind our community of this strong woman of color who fought to make our city, and the world, a better place.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Ben Bartlett, District 3 (510) 981-7130

ATTACHMENT

1. Draft letter to the BART Board of Directors

Dear Lateefah Simon and Bart Board Members:

We are writing to request that the Board of Directors for Bart consider renaming the station currently known as the Ashby Bart Station, the Mable Howard Bart Station in honor of Mable Howard's extensive contributions to the Berkeley community.

Towards the end of World War II, Mable Howard, her husband, Rolly Howard, and their two children came to the Bay Area. Working in the shipyards of Hunters Point, Mable fought to allow women to join the workers' union. She and Rolly eventually settled down in South Berkeley and became an integral part of the community.

In the 1968 Mable Howard, known to those close to her as Ma Howard, brought a lawsuit against Bart, alleging that the planned above-ground tracks through her South Berkeley neighborhood would encourage and exacerbate the segregation of black and white neighborhoods. With above-ground tracks serving as segregation-enforcing barriers in other communities, Mable understood the importance of maintaining the community's current landscape. With courage and determination, Mable organized the community and managed to convince BART to build the tracks underground. This turn of events meant that many properties in South Berkeley retained their value and the city embraced its diverse community, rather than segregation. Up until her death in 1994, Mable served as an active leader of political and community projects in the Berkeley Area.

Renaming the Ashby BART station the Mable Howard BART Station would celebrate, and appropriately commemorate the accomplishments of Ma Howard. It is imperative that we recognize her crucial contributions to our community, and remind our community of this strong woman of color who fought to make our city, and the world, a better place.

Thank you so much for your time.

Best,

Berkeley City Council

