Place Your Bets

It’s sign-up season for Station Agents and Train Operators. On a system-wide bid, it’s not just a matter of what looks good at the time of the bid. It’s also what the summer might bring.

There are also the surprises of high seniority people transferring to the line or taking a particular bid. And that causes ripples across the line. For high-seniority workers, those ripples just pass on by. But move down the seniority list and it’s a different story.

You have to look beyond the now. In summer, life changes and higher seniority people might want to change their shifts. There are a lot of unknowns when you change lines. A good winter/spring bid can turn into its opposite in the summer.

We have more control than on a craps table or a roulette wheel, but sometimes it doesn’t feel like it…

More Than S.F.

San Francisco is the destination of many BART riders and BART management often acts like S.F. is BART’s only destination. The decision to replace the escalators at four downtown stations is necessary. But those aren’t the only stations in need. The downtown S.F. stations may be the busiest ones, but the majority of riders rely on other stations that serve where they live as well.

How many stations have faced a situation where both the elevator and escalator on the same side are out? What are people who are unable to navigate those long stairways supposed to do? They get off the train, find out there isn’t a way down. They then have to wait for the next train and at the next station, either take a bus or catch BART back to the station and hope that they can get down to the street?

That’s some customer service!

Not Bright Enough

Whoever is coming up with staffing needs in System Service must not be very bright. Ever since the managers from RS&S came over and got rid of all scrub crews in the East Bay, workers have pointed out the insanity of that idea.

In the bid they finally put a few people back on East Bay brightening crews. It’s better than nothing. But c’mon! Hire enough to hit every station in the District at least once a week. Maybe then System Service Workers could focus on what they were hired for: to CLEAN.

Do They Even Question the Low Bid?

BART is moving ahead with its S.F. canopy project. Shimmick Construction Company was the low bidder and got the project. Low bids win. But is that the only consideration? How about the company’s record? Shimmick worked on the Twin Peaks Tunnel project and was fined $65,000 by state regulators over the death of a worker. A worker operating a crane with no training hit a steel beam and it fell, killing another worker.

It was not just this one tragedy, but Shimmick Construction has been linked to nearly 50 workplace safety violations since 2008, including citations for serious violations related to the death of a forklift worker in 2016.

Does that mean anything to those who run BART? Or is worker safety (or passenger safety) just one of those irritating things that gets in the way of their cost-cutting? The BART Board minutes say, “A review of Shimmick’s business experience and financial capabilities has resulted in a determination that Shimmick is a responsible Bidder”

Where Did That Check Go?

All workers know what this is like: you get your Direct Deposit set up so you don’t have to deposit each check. Then you get autopay set up for PG&E; EBMUD; health, house, and car insurance; a car note; credit card, mortgage or rent; school tuition payments for the kids or college debt; Netflix; Comcast; AT&T bills and on and on and on and on.

The net result? We don’t even see the money. It’s just numbers flying through our bank accounts. More often than not we feel like postal workers delivering our hard earned checks to the corporations.