

# **Bicycle Advisory Committee**

**Correspondence as of  
November 17, 2016**

**From:** Jonathan Dirrenberger  
**To:** [transportation@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:transportation@cityofpaloalto.org)  
**Cc:** [colin@bikesiliconvalley.org](mailto:colin@bikesiliconvalley.org); [@Caltrain, Bac \(@caltrain.com\)](mailto:Caltrain_Bac (@caltrain.com))  
**Subject:** Bicyclist and Pedestrian Infrastructure Near San Antonio Caltrain Station  
**Date:** Monday, October 17, 2016 11:50:33 AM

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City of Palo Alto,

Note: Please forward this to the appropriate people if I've used the incorrect email (it's very hard to find email addresses on the City's website).

For the past decade, I have been working in Palo Alto and taking Caltrain from SF to San Antonio (sometimes Palo Alto or Mountain View stations) daily with my bicycle on-board. And before that, I lived for 3 years in Palo Alto and another 2 years in Mountain View where I regularly commuted through Palo Alto. Because of my experience, I've noticed a huge flaw in the Palo Alto bicycle network: it's very difficult to get across Alma/Central Expressway, especially at the southern edge of the city's boundaries near Mountain View. I'm especially concerned with the area near where San Antonio Rd/Ave crosses Alma/Central. Note that this is the only place for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross Alma/Central without going 3/4 mile in either direction.

For bicyclists coming down or heading up San Antonio \*Ave\*, the main bicycle route in this area (since going up the overpass on San Antonio Rd is not an option given how dangerous it is with its car-centric, freeway-like clover intersection design), the intersection with Central Expressway is terrible. First, when going north (e.g. coming from the pedestrian underpass at the San Antonio Caltrain station), there is no traffic light or sensor for bicyclists. So we're supposed to use the pedestrian crosswalk and press the pedestrian "beg" button? But we're not pedestrians, so that's mixed messaging. Why can't bicyclists get a light facing towards the Caltrain tracks that is triggered by bicyclists? Note that this is the same problem with crossing a few hundred yards down at the light with Mayfield Ave. It's clear bicyclists have been completely ignored in the design of this intersection, so I'm requesting that this be remedied.

And how about at least some bright green sharrow markings in this area? I have to admit, sharrows are a cop-out to truly safe bike infrastructure (protected bike lanes), but we have to start somewhere and I'll take what I can get.

Further, when heading south on San Antonio Ave (not Rd), the timing of the light at the intersection with Alma/Central takes a very long time to trigger, at least during the day. Can this timing be shortened? As I've said, both bicyclists and pedestrians can only cross here without going 3/4 mi out of their way, so doesn't it seem reasonable that they are giving some shred of dignity with at least these few spots giving them some priority? Further, the duration of the green for those (both cars and bicyclists) is very short, so that bicyclists can barely get through. Can't the duration be extended by 5 or 10 seconds?

Finally, the walkways to the tunnel under the tracks at the San Antonio Caltrain station must be widened. Even with just pedestrians this walkway gets clogged when trains drop-off passengers (and note that, in the morning, the northbound and southbound trains arrive simultaneously with the current Caltrain schedule). Then add-in bicycles to the mix and it's a mess. Further, even with the mirrors (which are often broken or misaligned), the corners are too tight and blind. If the City wants to get more people bicycling, you need to make the bicycle infrastructure not just safe but convenient. Expecting bicyclists to dismount and walk

descends from a 1970s-era car-centric mindset where city's design to make everything convenient for motorists at the expensive of bicyclists and pedestrians. This is epitomized by the too-narrow tunnel at the San Antonio Caltrain Station. Just like we don't ask motorists to put their car in neutral and push through certain areas, our default shouldn't be to ask bicyclists to get off their bike and walk. Thus, I would love to see these walkways widened (note: there is room) and hence the City can demonstrate it's commitment to bicyclists who have long been neglected from urban design, especially in this area with what amounts to the freeway design of Alma/Central and San Antonio Rd. Note that the pedestrian and bicycle tunnel at Homer and Alma is a great example of how this can be done, so I know you can do it if the willpower is there! So please, can this underpass be improved?!

Thanks for your time,  
Jonathan Dirrenberger

**From:** Sarah Husain  
**To:** [Caltrain.Bac \(@caltrain.com\)](mailto:Caltrain.Bac@caltrain.com); [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](mailto:Board@caltrain.com)  
**Subject:** suggestion for managing bike car capacity on Caltrain  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 15, 2016 9:28:09 AM

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Good morning—

My name is Sarah Husain and I commute on Caltrain with my bike from San Bruno to 4th and King every day. I'd like to applaud Caltrain for offering robust bike storage on the trains for those of us who bike both our first and last miles, as well as the bike parking study that is currently underway.

While that effort is currently in progress, I have a simple suggestion for more efficiently using bike car space. Conductors seem overwhelmed by passengers who crowd near the door. I get bumped sometimes and near-bumped regularly when I can *see* space for my bike. It's frustrating because I while I'm standing on the platform, I can see swaths of empty spaces on the train, just not where I need to board with my bike.

Often the operators on BART will make announcements for passengers to move to the center of the car to make space for passengers to get on. Making a similar announcement (at *multiple* stops) would greatly help nudge passengers toward the center of the car and make space for other passengers and bicycles. Nearly all of the passengers on my NB train are getting off at 4th and King and don't need to hover near the door for the entire trip.

Making another announcement to request passengers to reserve space in the bike car for people with bikes would also be great (I know there are some issues around this but I assume you have some language that accommodates the limitations to which Caltrain can request this from passengers).

Thanks so much. It's extremely frustrating to be bumped from my train, but even more so when I can see space but am denied because there isn't the space for me *where* I need it.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Husain