

**Caltrain Centralized Equipment Maintenance and Operations Facility (CEMOF)
Monitoring Committee
San Jose City Hall, 200 E. Santa Clara, 8th Floor, San Jose, CA**

**SPECIAL MEETING
September 22, 2009
Minutes**

Members Present: Chris Escher (Arena), Art Lloyd (JPB), Sally Logothetti (Garden Alameda), Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio (San Jose City Council) Mike Smith (Shasta/Hanchett Park), Ben Tripousis (VTA), Chris Tulin (College Park)

Staff Present: Michelle Bouchard, Todd McIntyre, Nancy McKenna, David Olmeda, Mark Simon

Other Staff: Melrose Cacal (City of San Jose)

Chair Mike Smith called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

TRAIN HORNS

Chair Smith thanked staff for attending tonight's meeting to discuss the horn issue. He said Caltrain must strive to honor its commitment and agreement to the shared objectives. Chair Smith said some improvements should include new protocols to mitigate neighborhood impact, immediate communication before activities begin and the creation of on-line communication.

Executive Officer of Public Affairs Mark Simon made the following points:

- Caltrain did a terrible job communicating the horn issue and staff apologizes to everyone.
- In 2001 horns were moved from the top of the train to underneath the train to reduce the noise level.
- A routine safety inspection in July reflected the horns were not meeting Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements of making distinct tweets and toots. Caltrain cannot operate out of compliance.
- The easiest way to fix this issue was to put the horns back on top of the trains.
- The horns had to be dialed down to 98 decibels and this required testing using a decibel meter one hundred feet away and four feet off the ground. The testing had to be done at CEMOF.

- The current project requires repiping the horns underneath the train and will require more testing of the horns.
- A prototype is being done so all the horns can be retrofitted on all the equipment. As of today three locomotives are completed. It takes six hours to replace equipment not including testing.
- Staff cannot give a completion date of when all the work will be completed because we are not sure.
- Staff has received over 600 complaints from people up and down the right of way.
- Up to this incident, 100 percent of calls from the hotline have been answered within the 72 hours and all horn incidents have been responded to.

Noise Due to Flagman on Mainline at CEMOF

Deputy Director Rail Operations Michelle Bouchard made the following points:

- Any time there is work happening along the right of the way it is a requirement of the engineer to sound the horn, this is a safety warning.
- Recently there has been work done in the area by Union Pacific (UP) north of Stockton Street at the concrete plant, and by Caltrain on an antenna at the south end of the yard. Both of these areas would cause the engineers to sound their horn.
- All of Caltrain's work was done during the day; UP work will do some work at night which would cause noise and there is freight service that runs late at night.

Chair Smith asked if staff could explain where the horn work is being done.

Director of Maintenance David Olmeda said the testing can not be done when two trains are next to each other or near a wall. Locomotives are tested at the south end of the facility on the storage track and the forward cab cars are tested at the north end of the facility.

Mr. Simon said all the testing is done at CEMOF because there no longer is a shop facility in San Francisco.

Mr. Simon said the horn testing was done between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Chair Smith said he was under the impression the work was going as late as 10 p.m. Mr. Olmeda said on the onset testing was up until 10 p.m. and after complaints were received testing stopped at 8 p.m.

Chair Smith asked going forward when will testing occur. Mr. Olmeda said Amtrak has been instructed to stop testing at 7 p.m.

Sally Logothetti asked about due diligence, finding a safety violation, the hours of operation and length it takes to do testing. She asked if staff will consider an earlier cutoff on testing.

Mr. Simon said all trains are in compliance now. Caltrain's first priority is safety. The issue staff has is how to quickly resolve the impact of everyone along the Caltrain line and the urgency of resolving this issue makes the testing hours hard.

Tessa Woodmansee, San Jose, asked how this safety issue was missed over the past five years. Mr. Simon said he doesn't know, but it was found and it had to be fixed.

Julie Vennewitz-Pierce, San Jose, said since this work is being done at the facility it is breaking the shared objectives agreement. Mr. Simon said this was an agreement to live up to, but the work needs to be done.

Chris Escher said shared objective A-17 needs to be rewritten.

Mr. Simon said these are objectives and staff wants to achieve them to the extent possible and at the same time be a good neighbor. He said as an agency it is impossible to eliminate objectionable noise at all times.

Community Relations Manager Todd McIntyre said Amtrak has done a good job moving the first four trains out of Diridon instead of CEMOF and using ground power to the extent possible.

Ben Tripousis said this is more about notice and awareness and not practice. It is within the shared objectives of a rail facility and there was some expectations there will be noise and Caltrain has remained a very good neighbor. There needs a mechanism in place to communicate to the community. If the community knew ahead of time this would be less of an issue.

Lonna Smith, San Jose, understands the testing cannot be done inside the facility and outside of the facility certain structures interfere, but couldn't the testing be done at an open track area where no one is living.

Mr. Olmeda said logistically it would not be possible. The employee needs blue flag protection and on an open line he would not have that.

Chair Smith said this would have been so much easier if the neighborhoods were notified. He said there is a planning aspect to make sure it is mitigated to not have an effect on the neighborhood. Is it possible to do the work somewhere else, for shorter periods of time and tell the community?

Mr. Simon said this all gets back to a communication issue. Staff has done this, but hasn't communicated effectively.

Mrs. Smith said the testing went on until 10 p.m. at night and she was shocked that it was allowed to go this late and looking forward are there any assurances the work hours would be considered.

Ms. Woodmansee asked what the standard operating procedures for notifying the neighborhood are and was there a dialogue prior to the testing.

Mr. Simon said it is hard to develop protocols for special occasions. Staff is working on developing a notification process. For a minimum the chair would be notified. He said staff got wrapped up in an urgent matter and completely forgot the notification process. Mr. Simon said staff didn't realize that the noise level would be so high when the horns were replaced up on top.

Ms. Tulin said she is surprised staff doesn't have a concrete plan going forward. The committee needs to know what the timeframe of the work going forward is.

Mr. Simon said the work will be occurring from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and this will be disseminated to everyone. He suggested the committee send their comments to Mr. McIntyre on how the protocol should work keeping in mind this is an agency that doesn't have a lot of money for leafleting.

Ms. Woodmansee said there has been no response to any of her e-mails.

Mr. McIntyre said staff identified a breakdown in the communication with the public and this was all during the time of the reorganization and he is trying to answer as many questions as possible and as consistently as possible in a timely manner. Staff is in the process of updating a new website that is user friendly with a subscriber service.

Mr. Simon said staff is committed to working through and resolving this issue. There was no public affairs office prior to July 1 and there was no communication and transparency. Things will be done better.

Ms. Woodmansee said Manager of Customer Service Rona Rios did a great job communicating to her.

Chair Smith asked about the hotline. Mr. McIntyre said he and Ms. Rios are working together to resolve these issues.

Ms. Woodmansee said an acknowledgement of the complaint should at least be sent to the person.

Ms. Logothetti said the committee wants to be involved and be assured that they will be communicated to.

Mr. McIntyre said staff will work on a plan and present it at the October 28 meeting.

Chair Smith read a letter from Kay Gutknecht about her concerns on the horn noise and the hotline. She asked what specific action steps will be taken against the JPB and how the cooperative agreement will be implemented.

Ms. Woodmansee said the JPB agreement states the facility will operate without affecting the life of the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio said it has been acknowledged what has happened and going forward staff needs to be more responsive with information.

Mrs. Smith said she is not quite sure of Caltrain's sincerity of what is being promised. She would like to hear something more definitive moving forward between now and October.

Mr. Simon said a better contact list will be created and staff will begin to discuss ideas to bring to the October meeting.

The next meeting will be October 28, 2009 at 6 p.m.

Adjourn 7:45 p.m.