

JPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building
1250 San Carlos Avenue San Carlos, CA 94070

MINUTES – MARCH 19, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: P. Bendix, G. Graham (Vice-Chair), F. Granade, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins (Chair), M. Kiesling, J. Shukis, B. Wilfley

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Richardson

STAFF PRESENT: P. Boland, M. Bouchard, M. Espinosa, R. Lake

Chair Bruce Jenkins called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Brian Wilfley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 20, 2008 were approved by the committee.

Chairperson's Report

Chair Jenkins had no report.

Public Comment

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, reported:

- Passengers grab discarded credit card receipts from ticket vending machines and use for boarding. He suggested that "Not good for passage" be printed on receipts or have an option on the vending machine to print/not print a receipt.
- Contractor is piling/compacting dirt at the California Avenue station as part of the pedestrian underpass. This pile of soil appears to be above the sub grade and the newly installed fiber optic manholes. There is potential for runoff in both the manholes and adjacent ballast. A similar situation exists north of Fair Oaks between the Burlingame and Broadway stations.

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, reported:

- Distributed a comment sheet regarding the new evening schedule, clock synchronization and southernmost cars being closed on the weekend.
- Heard that the condition of the platform at the College Park station is deplorable.

Deputy Director, Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard introduced the new Assistant General Manager of Amtrak Mark Collins. He was recognized for establishing a base operation that will help Caltrain move forward into the Caltrain 2025 program.

Presentation – Findings of the Caltrain Marketing Survey

Marketing Manager Pat Boland reported on the onboard passenger survey which was conducted during weekday, off peak and weekend times between October 2-17, 2007 in order to find out who Caltrain passengers are, passenger demographics, trip purpose, frequency of use and how well passenger needs are being met.

- Eighty percent of trains were surveyed in both English and Spanish with 82 percent of 4,204 surveys returned.
- Frequency of Caltrain usage varied from 66 percent of the total riding four plus days a week to 41 percent of weekend customers riding less than once a month.
- Customer satisfaction for the overall experience was rated 4.02 out of 5.00 for weekday riders.

- Caltrain information is accessed primarily with printed material on the train and through the Caltrain Web site.
- Demographics for weekday include: an average age of 37.5, ridership of 43 percent female and 57 percent male, 85 percent full time workers, 43 percent college graduates, 36 percent post-graduate, 95 percent English-speaking, and mean income of \$109,000.
- Key changes since the 2003 survey include a decrease in car availability and increased retrieval of information on trains and the Caltrain Web site.
- The next step involves attracting more customers to evening trains, special events, and increasing ridership with group sales and transit promotions.

Comments/Questions

Mr. Wilfley asked if there is a point where Caltrain cannot handle more weekday peak passengers. Ms. Bouchard said this is called crush load when passengers cannot fit through the doors of a crowded car. Crush load has occurred after baseball games. Analysis leading up to the purchase of new cars and looking out through 2025 to 2030 is based on driving and satisfying ridership demand.

Mr. Boland said the tolerance for a crush situation is greater after a baseball game because passengers will stand for the express ride to San Carlos.

Ms. Bouchard said that with the potential future of electric multiple units (EMUs) technology, and local trains that can go end-to-end in 74 minutes, people will have a tolerance to stand when it's a shorter trip.

Michael Kiesling said there is a lot of hot air behind 511.org but only 1 percent of riders use the service for information. Mr. Boland said some properties have bought into 511.org, others have not. Trip planning on the bus side is complicated and 511.org could not keep up with the schedule changes. He said there is supposed to be a new 511.org site and this will be revisited. The Caltrain Web site receives a lot of hits for special events.

Francois Granade said Caltrain has a lot of recognition and there isn't that much of a need to plan from place to place. He said Caltrain's Web site is extremely simple to use compared to the 511.org site. The Caltrain Web site should be kept simple and it is important to be able to access schedules by using two clicks.

Mr. Boland said the Caltrain Web site will be kept simple. He hopes that the site will be able to get a subscription system to get special event and schedule change information out as requested and customers can receive the information on mobile devices and computers.

John Hronowski asked about the Go Pass. Mr. Boland said it is a membership pass provided by employers for employees for a set amount to ride an entire year within any zone.

Presentation – Bicycle Master Plan

Marisa Espinosa, Manager of Planning and Research, reported on the Bicycle Master plan which will focus on improvements for bicycle parking and access to Caltrain stations. The plan is to be finalized by July 2008.

- Caltrain carries over 2,300 bicycles on board each weekday; 7-10 percent of passengers bring their bikes on board; each bike car has space for 16-32 bikes, depending on type of car (Gallery or

Bombardier); there is more demand for on-board bicycle capacity than supply thus the focus of the plan is on wayside solutions due to rolling stock limitations.

- Challenges include safety and security, availability of storage, no uniform design of bike parking facilities and that bicycle boarding impacts dwell times and operations.
- There is a range of bicycle facilities in the Caltrain corridor; examples include Warm Planet Bikes valet parking at the 4th and King station, lockers at Mountain View and racks at the Palo Alto station.
- Key elements of the plan include system-wide parking and access design guidelines, recommendations for capital improvements and bicycle program management (customer service and information).
- Funding sources will be identified later and will include competitive grants from multiple sources for project implementation.

Comments/Questions

Mr. Wilfley asked if there is a model technique for converting people to not take bikes on-board.

Ms. Espinosa said one of the impediments is the lack of facilities available that matched the travel behavior of the patrons who wanted to bring bikes on-board. This may include a station with only racks and no secure lockers or riders who could leave a bike at a certain destination and not have to bring it on-board.

Mr. Wilfley asked what fraction of bike patrons only uses a bike on one end or the other on a trip.

Ms. Espinosa said Caltrain's bike patrons have a unique travel behavior with a staggered distribution of stops which creates a challenge for system management.

Paul Bendix said the disabled access car and bike car are often the same and the cooperation of the conductor to manage the lift for the disabled and bike boarding can lengthen dwell times. He said some conductors are on top of the situation and could teach others how to get the wheelchairs and bikes on and off. He said it would be helpful if the switch for the lift was located away from the railing, which forces the conductor to block both the stairway and deploy the lift. Ms. Espinosa said these are good observations and there are some anecdotes and data on how to reduce these kinds of conflicts.

Public Comment

Jeff Carter asked if there was any consideration to convert more Bombardier cars from 16-bike capacity to 32-bike capacity. Ms. Bouchard said no. She said Caltrain tries to educate the bike community regarding the balance required to achieve enough seats to accommodate seated capacity and also accommodate bike passengers and this is the compromise reached with Bombardier cars. Caltrain is trying to deal with dwell time issues on Bombardier cars by establishing a flow through signage. The bike study was commissioned strictly to deal with wayside issues because Caltrain has more ability to expand on the wayside and little ability to expand on-board.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said that he sees bicyclists, especially on weekends, that don't know where the bike car is located. He notices, particularly at the Mountain View station, that both passengers and bike passengers crowd the platform to board the north end car when there are other cars available for regular passengers. He said there could be an educational component to let people know that if you don't have a bike, move to the next car. Ms. Bouchard said the mini-high platforms at places like Mountain View provide a smaller area where passengers can filter through and passengers tend to stay right at that point. A bike advisory group has made recommendations to alleviate this crowding and Caltrain is looking at ideas that would be easily implementable.

Mr. Wilfley asked how many cyclists a day are needed to make the valet parking at the 4th and King station profitable. Ms. Espinosa said the current program is in a pilot phase and Caltrain is trying to ascertain what will make the business plan successful.

Support Resolution for Caltrain 2025

This references a status report on Project 2025 on the February 20, 2008 JPB CAC agenda.

Mr. Kiesling prepared and read a resolution in support of Caltrain 2025 which fully supports the Caltrain 2025 project by working to secure local, regional, State and Federal funding and support, to recognize the significance of the 2025 project to not only Caltrain but also rail transportation throughout the United States and to enable staff to take whatever steps necessary to implement the 2025 plan.

The committee unanimously approved support of the resolution.

Mr. Kiesling asked Chair Jenkins to point out the resolution in his CAC report at the April 3 JPB meeting.

Ms. Bouchard said, on behalf of staff, the vote of confidence by the CAC was very much appreciated.

Staff Report

Ms. Bouchard reported the following:

- Fare revenue for February 2008 compared to February 2007 increased 20.7 percent due to increased ridership and average weekday ridership increased 4.6 percent from February 2007.
- New train cars are scheduled to arrive in October 2008 with expectations of ridership to increase to 40,000 per month.
- Budget issues include high fuel prices and wage increases due to Amtrak labor agreements.
- On-time performance for February 2008 was about 90 percent due in part to a Union Pacific derailment on the Caltrain mainline, which delayed 70 trains. Amtrak was commended for doing their best to maintain service and getting the track back in service after 36 hours. An electrical issue in Burlingame that resulted in power being shut down also affected on-time performance.
- A seamless transition to the 98-train schedule was implemented on March 3, 2008.
- Giant's season begins with exhibitions games in late March.
- A free shuttle between the Belmont/Hillsdale stations was implemented on March 3 and has been an instant success with an average of 66 passengers per day. Vehicle parking at the Belmont station has increased from 17 to 47 vehicles.
- The annual Caltrain passenger counts are complete and will be reported at the next JPB meeting.

Committee Comments

Mr. Bendix said he sometimes hears a train whistle at 5:00 a.m., which is ten minutes before the first Caltrain run comes through Menlo Park. He thinks this is a freight train. This is an occasional topic at the Menlo Park City Council meetings. He asked if anyone would like to write a letter if this comes up again.

Mr. Wilfley said carbon was a major topic at a renewable energies conference he recently attended. He said, given what he has heard on High Speed Rail, electrified rail would be an enormous improvement in carbon emissions, especially in California.

Gerald Graham said a family member was having difficulty receiving a refund on a commuter check. Ms. Bouchard said she would pass along the information to the appropriate staff.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 16, 2008 at 6:00 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA 94070, Second floor, Boccaccio Auditorium.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.