



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of February 4, 2021

Correspondence as of February 3, 2021

Subject

- 1 Caltrain Electrification
- 2 University Ave Beige Pole Color
- 3 Caltrain ridership

From: John Selin <jpselin@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2021 5:43 PM
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>
Subject: Caltrain Electrification

Directors:

I am writing to you regarding the visual impact of the traction power substation under construction at the corner of El Camino Real and Hillsdale Blvd in San Mateo. There are many others like this on the route that have the same impact. Please see the attached photo which is taken from the west side of El Camino Real.

Let me first introduce myself. I am a retired Civil Engineer with over 35 years experience in railroad and rail transit design and studies, including work for Caltrain, though not on the electrification project. I have participated in many Environmental Impact studies where there have been public comments about visual impacts, and I was generally unsympathetic about them. However, seeing this structure, still under construction, I am truly offended by its size and stark ugliness.

I reviewed the EIS/EIR to see how the visual impacts of these structures were addressed. In general they were given what I would call short shrift. For this particular structure, the text basically brushed off the impacts by stating that the west side was commercial property (which it is) and that the structure would not be visual from the residential properties on the east side (this is incorrect).

Obviously I understand the need for these structures, though I do not understand why they are so tall. But at this point all that can be done is to minimize the visual impacts. I request that you have Caltrain staff look into alternatives. They will probably need outside help, but you have on-call engineers who should be able to provide the required expertise. I suggest tall trees. I know that tree branches and high voltage electricity aren't compatible with each other, and I'm not an arborist, but I've seen trees that grow very tall and straight up with branches that do not spread horizontally. So perhaps this is a possibility.

I know from social media that I'm not the only person who is shocked by this construction, and I have encouraged them to contact you as well. Thank you for your consideration.

John Selin



From: [Martin J Sommer](mailto:Martin.J.Sommer@caltrain.com)
To: CalMod@caltrain.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](mailto:Board@caltrain.com); city.council@cityofpaloalto.org; [Pat Burt](mailto:Pat.Burt@cityofpaloalto.org)
Subject: Re: University Ave Beige Pole Color
Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 9:47:09 AM

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Hi Brent,

How are you doing with this request? Were you able to put a number on repainting the top half of one or more poles at the University Ave station? If it is easier, the whole poles could be repainted. I have noticed that the other two stations in Palo Alto, are either black or the standard forest green.

Martin

On 1/15/21 8:48 AM, CalMod@caltrain.com wrote:

Hi Martin,

Thank you for the call on Wednesday morning. It was helpful to get a better understanding of your concerns. As I committed on the call, I will bring your request to my management team for consideration. I aim to get you a response by the end of next week.

Have a great weekend,

Brent Tietjen, Government and Community Relations Officer

SamTrans | Caltrain | TA
1250 San Carlos Ave.
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306
tietjenb@samtrans.com

From: Martin J Sommer [<mailto:martin@sommer.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 13, 2021 9:59 AM
To: CalMod@caltrain.com
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>;
city.council@cityofpaloalto.org; Pat Burt <pat@patburt.org>
Subject: Re: University Ave Beige Pole Color

Hi Brent,

Thanks for talking this morning. Yes, please try to put a number on repainting the top half of one or more poles at the University Ave station. Once we have this number, I will reach out to the City Of Palo Alto, for potential funding sources.

Best regards,
Martin

On 12/22/20 7:49 PM, Martin J Sommer wrote:

+cc: Pat Bert

Brent, please take a look at the attached photo. I don't think this is what the City, nor the design engineers, had in mind.

Please tell me, how I can help correct this situation.

Thank you,
Martin

On 11/25/20 10:05 AM, martin@sommer.net wrote:

Hi Brent,

Perhaps your new funding source obtained on Nov 3rd can help this situation. Can you please look into this, and let me know? The visual impacts you are creating, are not good.

Thank you,

Martin

--

Martin Sommer
650-346-5307
martin@sommer.net
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer>

"Turn technical vision into reality."

On 2020-11-25 09:50, CalMod@caltrain.com wrote:

||

Hi Martin,

Unfortunately, the project budget does not accommodate camouflaging of the poles. Caltrain worked with Cities and regulatory agencies to mitigate the impacts of the infrastructure through the Project's [Environmental Impact Report](#) in 2014.

Thanks,

**Brent Tietjen, Government and Community Relations
Officer**

SamTrans | Caltrain | TA
1250 San Carlos Ave.
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306
tietjenb@samtrans.com

From: martin@sommer.net [<mailto:martin@sommer.net>]

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 1:55 PM

To: CalMod@caltrain.com

Cc: Board (@caltrain.com)

[<BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>](mailto:BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com);

city.council@cityofpaloalto.org

Subject: Re: University Ave Beige Pole Color

Thanks Brent,

What about the idea of camouflaging the upper part of the poles, similar to what is done with cell towers? For some reason, these poles have been created with an extremely hard industrial look. This is nothing like, the esthetics put into other electrified rails systems throughout the world.

Martin

--

Martin Sommer
650-346-5307
martin@sommer.net
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer>

"Turn technical vision into reality."

On 2020-11-13 10:09, CalMod@caltrain.com wrote:

||

Hi Martin,

Thank you again for contacting Caltrain on this question.

As Jim previously mentioned, the selection of the pole color was done in coordination with the City of Palo Alto and the Historic Resources Board and Architectural Review Board in 2019. These color selections are final and poles cannot be replaced or painted a different color after installation.

Thanks,

Brent Tietjen, Government and Community Relations Officer

SamTrans | Caltrain | TA
1250 San Carlos Ave.
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306
tietjenb@samtrans.com

From: martin@sommer.net [<mailto:martin@sommer.net>]

Sent: Friday, November 6, 2020 10:20 AM

To: CalMod@caltrain.com; Board (@caltrain.com)

<BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>

Cc: city.council@cityofpaloalto.org

Subject: Re: University Ave Beige Pole Color

Dear Caltrain Board,

The more beige poles that go up at University Ave station, the more unsightly it becomes. At ground level, you might think the beige color matches the station, but from the view of local buildings, you are completely destroying the view of our Santa Cruz Mountains, and local green vegetation on Stanford campus.

Can you please look into a way to fix this? Perhaps, painting any height above 10 feet, to be the standard forest green? Telecom poles can be camouflaged, the same applies here.

Please look in to it, and let me know some options.

Thank you,
Martin

--

Martin Sommer
650-346-5307
martin@sommer.net
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer>

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On 2020-09-30 12:05, calmod@caltrain.com wrote:

Dear Martin,

Thank you for contacting Caltrain Electrification. The selection of the beige color was done in coordination with the City of Palo Alto and is a common color for poles located near stations. Most poles are a neutral chrome color along the project area but in some cases, such as near stations, Caltrain staff worked with local cities to identify pole colors that aligned with certain station areas. Once the poles have been procured and placed, we are not able to change the colors of those poles.

Thank you again for reaching out to us.

Best,

The Caltrain Team

On 2020-09-25T10:17:50-07:00, Martin J Sommer
<martin@sommer.net> wrote:

Good morning,

Please see the attached picture, of a beige pole placed last night.

This creates a real eye sore!!

Questions: 1) Why are you using a beige color vs the std forest green (that blends with the trees), and 2) can these beige poles please be painted forest green, before electrification occurs?

I know that this is a "big ask".

Thank you,

Martin

--

Martin Sommer

650-346-5307

martin@sommer.net

<<mailto:martin@sommer.net>>www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer

<<http://www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer>>

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From: Ethan Young <ethan7young@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 1:39 PM
To: Board (@caltrain.com); Pine, Dave [dpine@smcgov.org]; Public Comment
Cc: letters@padailypost.com
Subject: Caltrain ridership

I noticed that the trains are 97% to 99% empty yet running every hour on the hour every day

Caltrain can increase its ridership by providing free rides for one month, at the end of the month a lot of people will continue to ride the train and start paying the typical Fare.

Now that Caltrain will be receiving 108 million dollars annually in taxpayer subsidy perhaps Caltrain should offer some free rides.

https://padailypost-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/padailypost.com/2020/11/04/voters-approve-sales-tax-to-fund-caltrain/amp/?amp_js_v=a6&_gsa=1&usqp=mq331AQHKAFQArABIA%3D%3D#aoh=16123876724838&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=From%20%251%24s&_share=https%3A%2F%2Fpadailypost.com%2F2020%2F11%2F04%2Fvoters-approve-sales-tax-to-fund-caltrain%2F

Ethan Young
Stanford

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