



FALL 2020

Caltrain Pandemic Rider Survey

TOPLINE REPORT

Prepared by

COREY, CANAPARY & GALANIS

447 Sutter Street – Penthouse North

San Francisco, CA 94108

INTRODUCTION

This report provides topline findings from an onboard survey of Caltrain riders. The fieldwork was conducted October 26, 2020 through November 18, 2020.

Key objectives of the survey include:

- Reporting trip characteristics, such as peak/off-peak/weekend use.
- Reporting personal travel characteristics, such as frequency of Caltrain use and primary reasons for riding Caltrain.
- Reporting demographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, national origin, age, income, etc.
- Indication of ridership changes since the onset of shelter-in-place and related impacts from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Percentages included in this report may not total 100% due to statistical rounding.

Questions regarding this project may be directed to: Julian Jest, Caltrain, 650.508.6245.

Methodology

The survey was conducted onboard, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to Caltrain riders. Surveyors boarded pre-selected trains and attempted to distribute questionnaires to all riders on up to three randomly selected cars of the assigned train. Completed surveys were also collected by these surveyors (who stayed onboard during the train trip).

Specific steps were taken to ensure the highest possible response rate. This included using professional, experienced onboard surveyors on the project, making the questionnaire available in English and Spanish, and providing both an online option and a business reply mail-back option for persons who did not have time to complete the survey onboard.

Field interviewing on this project was conducted from Monday, October 26, 2020, through Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Weekday shifts were allocated to allow for surveying during morning and afternoon peak periods, as well as off-peak periods. Saturday and Sunday trains were also surveyed at various times of the day. The dates of the fieldwork were scheduled to avoid surveying during particularly heavy maintenance or other events that would unduly impact ridership.

Surveyors returned completed questionnaires to Corey, Canapary & Galanis' office following the completion of the fieldwork. Editing, coding, and inputting were done in-house once the questionnaires were returned.

Weighting

The existing data is weighted based on Strata as follows:

Weekday Peak ridership (trains leaving from start of service until 9 am and from 3 pm to 7 pm): 58%

Weekday Offpeak (trains Monday through Friday departing at all other times): 25%

Weekend (Sat/Sun all day): 18%

This weighting is based on the ridership figures for October 26-31, 2020, which was the first week of surveying, using the Caltrain onboard conductor counts for this period. For the final figures, weighting may be adjusted, as the weighting will include data for the first three weeks of November 2020 once it is available.

Because of this, *figures presented in this report may change in the final summary report, once November ridership data becomes available and weighting is applied.* The trends called out in the summary on the following pages exist in both weighted and unweighted data.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Note: 2020 results are from the current (2020 Caltrain Pandemic Rider) survey. 2019 results are from the 2019 Caltrain Triennial Customer survey.

Ridership Characteristics

- Riders are less likely to ride Caltrain frequently compared to 2019.
 - In 2019, 53% of riders used Caltrain 5 days per week or more. In 2020, that number dropped to 43%.
 - In 2019, only 8% of riders used Caltrain 3 days per month or less. However, in 2020, nearly a quarter of all riders (24%) use Caltrain 3 days per month or less.
- Riders are less likely to use monthly passes and more likely to use other types of fare payment.
 - While in 2019, 59% of riders used either a Go Pass or Caltrain monthly pass to pay for their fare, 39% of Caltrain riders used one of these passes in the 2020 survey.
 - A higher share of riders are using fare payment such as a regular one-way ticket (19% in 2020 vs 7% in 2019), Clipper cash (28% in 2020 vs 23% in 2019), or a mobile one way or day pass (8% in 2020 vs 5% in 2019).
- A smaller share of riders use Caltrain for work or school in 2020.
 - While in 2019, 87% were going to work or school on Caltrain (81% work, 6% school), 65% are going to work or school in 2020 (62% work, 2% school).
 - Notably a higher share of riders in 2020 were using the train for social or recreational purposes (20% in 2020 vs 9% in 2019).
- Respondents in 2020 are less likely to access Caltrain by driving and parking. While 24% drove and parked to reach Caltrain in 2019, only 12% did so in 2020. Conversely, while only 1% used SamTrans or another bus to access Caltrain in 2019, 11% used this mode in 2020.
- While 51% said they had a car available to make the surveyed trip in 2019, only 36% said they had a vehicle for the trip available in 2020. Moreover, those who said they use Caltrain because they do not have access to a car rose from 23% in 2019 to 46% in 2020. In 2020, this was the top reason given for riding Caltrain.

COVID Impact

- Most of those surveyed in 2020 (78%) said they had used Caltrain even prior to shelter in place in March 2020.
- About half (53%) say they ride about the same as they did prior to March 2020, while 32% ride less frequently, and 15% ride more frequently.
- Only 20% say they are more likely to ride for work purposes, while 17% say they are less likely to ride for work related purposes, and 63% say they ride about the same amount for work.

- Among safety measures to address COVID, 86% said mask wearing was among the most important safety measure taken. This was followed by social distancing (61%), cleaning (54%), and ventilation (34%). Only 0.2% said measures were not needed.

Demographics

- The average Caltrain rider in 2020 is slightly older (average 38 years) than in 2019 (average 36 years).
- The average household income of Caltrain riders has dropped from about \$158,000 in 2019 to about \$95,000 in 2020.
- In 2020, passengers are twice as likely to identify as Hispanic/Latino (12% in 2019 vs 26% in 2020) or Black (4% in 2019 vs 8% in 2020) compared to 2019.