CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)
PENINSULA CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS BOARD (JPB)
SAN MATEO COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
Bacciocco Auditorium, 2nd Floor
1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070

MINUTES OF JULY 18, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT: K. Gardiner, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins, A. Levin, D. Lindsey, Y. Mills, A. Sweet

MEMBERS ABSENT: P. Bendix (Chair), C. Tucker

STAFF PRESENT: J. Averill, T. Bartholomew, M. Bouchard, M. Lee, N. McKenna

Due to the absence of Chair Paul Bendix and no current Vice Chair, John Hronowski served as Chair. The meeting was called to order at 5:54 p.m. and Kevin Gardiner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Director, Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard asked the new CAC members to introduce themselves to the committee: Adina Levin, Menlo Park; Dee Lindsey, San Bruno; Alex Sweet, San Francisco; and Yvonne Mills, Los Gatos.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
A motion (Jenkins/Gardiner) to approve the minutes of May 16, 2012 was approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Andy Chow, Redwood City, said the governor signed the High Speed Rail (HSR) bond today. In addition to the construction of the HSR in the Central Valley, it approves Caltrain electrification funding. He said the Bay Rail Alliance strongly supports Caltrain electrification and has been advocating for it for over 30 years.

Jeff Carter, Millbrae, said he is pleased about HSR and is looking forward to Caltrain electrification. He asked why it will take until 2019 to complete. He said there is a policy now that everyone must present a ticket prior to entering the platform at 4th and King and it is silly since proof of payment is supposed to be random. He is wondering why it needs to be done. He understands it helps after baseball games to weed out passengers who are too intoxicated to be on the train. He asked if this was a Transit America Services, Inc (TASI) policy or if there was some other reason for this policy.

Martin Sominer, Palo Alto, said it was publicized the Caltrain project is supposed to be done by 2019 or 2020, but California High Speed Rail Authority Chairperson Dan Richard said it would be done in five years which is 2017. Mr. Sominer thinks it should be in three years, by 2015, to at least have off-peak and weekend service using electric trains. He said he does engineering and this project isn’t that hard. He asked the committee to work with HSR and Caltrain to get it done.
by 2015. Mr. Sominer also said he would prefer if Caltrain gate-checked passes at Palo Alto rather than en route because it would be more convenient for the passengers.

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT – JOHN HRONOWSKI
Chair Hronowski welcomed the four newest members.

UPDATE ON CALTRAIN MODERNIZATION – MARIAN LEE
Director, Caltrain Modernization Marian Lee thanked the JPB CAC for helping to reach the milestone of landing a funding plan to realize electrification for Caltrain.

Ms. Lee said this is the beginning of probably more frequent conversations between staff and the CAC as we ramp up this program. Over the last few weeks the Assembly and Senate were rassling with approving the budget for HSR. The JPB has had a vision for quite a while to electrify the diesel system. The driving reason is it is a much more sustainable system, not only from the environmental side, but also because it allows staff to address the structural deficit with the budget. Electrification gives the ability to provide more service, which equates to more riders, which equates to more fare revenue. Switching from diesel, which is very expensive, to electric allows staff to reduce annual operations and maintenance costs. This modernization of our system helps us deal with our financial issues aside from being green and thinking about what part we play in providing a cleaner environment.

Ms. Lee said staff has had the dream for a very long time but could never find the money. As HSR was developing, they made a policy decision to use the Caltrain corridor to get to downtown San Francisco, a location they are required to reach by law. This was good news for staff because in order to use the corridor it needed to be electrified. HSR brought a new funding source thereby supplementing local funding with the money they brought for their project.

Ms. Lee said now that there is a joint goal to support both Caltrain and HSR trains in the corridor staff has to figure out how to design the system to do that. Staff and HSR recently came to an agreement on a locally built vision about how the system should evolve in the corridor to support both systems. That local vision is called the “blended system” which means the existing tracks will primarily be used versus an original concept that would have possibly expanded our system two-fold and would have had great impacts in sharing those tracks between the two services. With that very critical agreement staff was able to support the HSR Program because it embraced our local vision, and it was with that agreement that HSR pursued funding from the State.

Ms. Lee further called out the support of the budget and thanked Senator Elaine Alquist, Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, Assemblymember Jim Beall, Assemblymember Nora Campos, Assemblymember Paul Fong, Assemblymember Rich Gordon, Assemblymember Jerry Hill, Senator Mark Leno, Assemblymember Fiona Ma, and Senator Leland Yee, the representatives from the Bay Area region. There was particular leadership by Governor Jerry Brown and Senator Darrell Steinberg. Ms. Lee said there is much thanks to San Mateo County, especially the cities, counties and advocacy groups. Their support, testimony and dedication all had great influence on the outcome of the votes.
Ms. Lee said what was approved was Senate Bill 1029 which appropriates $705 million specifically for Caltrain modernization. These funds will be available for the blended system. It specifically uses that language in the Trailer Bill that approves this budget which is important for our communities because there is absolute opposition to building anything else but the blended system.

Ms. Lee went on to say staff focus is now on project delivery which has to do with the Early Investment Program outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the nine parties. There are three elements of the Early Investment Program. The first is the advanced signal system which is a total upgrade of the current signal system and incorporates an unfunded Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) mandate for Positive Train Control (PTC). If something enters the corridor, an automatic system comes in and stops everything. It is supposed to make Caltrain property and other properties much safer. The second component is the electrification infrastructure: the poles, wires, electric power facilities, and putting those elements into place so they can support electric trains. The third component is the conversion of diesel vehicles to electric vehicles. Those three components cost approximately $1.4 billion.

Ms. Lee said the dates published are target dates. Staff has not done the due diligence to figure out if they can finish the components before these dates but they are the dates being targeted. The advanced signal system date is a pretty good estimate. There is a delivery team on board which estimated the completion date to be by the end of 2015. The target date for the electric conversion and vehicle procurement to have electric trains running on the corridor is set at a very conceptual date because staff has not yet landed on the exact delivery model, so this is a date being used at a very broad level. Staff has to immediately update and recirculate the environmental document on clearing the infrastructure and train service level. The JPB has made a commitment to all of the cities along the corridor that staff will update and recirculate the document and do the necessary outreach so people will know exactly what is going to be put in the corridor. At the same time, a team will be built that will implement the components of the Early Investment Project.

Ms. Lee said there is a second phase of investment which needs to happen by 2029: the additional infrastructure necessary to support HSR trains. Examples include HSR stations, grade separations, and passing tracks at strategic locations. These are infrastructure add-ons that would potentially be necessary and required to support the HSR system. There is no funding for these now and these are not needed now because the HSR trains won’t be here until 2029. Those elements still need to be defined. Staff is in a planning process with all of the cities to figure out where all the HSR stations, passing tracks, and storage and maintenance facilities are going to go. Staff will continue these planning activities while in project delivery mode with Caltrain electrification. There are some current planning studies being done to look at the 40 at-grade crossings. Staff is doing an analysis looking at potential passing tracks. These studies are moving forward and are to conclude in the late summer or early fall timeframe. Staff is working closely with city and county staff to get their input. There are very thoughtful discussions about this schedule and staff has to find the right balance of not going too slow but not going so fast that it loses the stakeholders engagement. Staff will do the best they can to do this expeditiously but are very mindful of the local partnership.
Ms. Bouchard said one of the things unique to the corridor that doesn’t necessarily exist in other places in the planned HSR network is that Caltrain is an operating railroad carrying in excess of 50,000 passengers a day. When we talk about constructing over the course of a certain period of time one of the “to be determined” decisions is what impact to the riding public and existing Caltrain service will have to be withstood in order to get to that end game. A few years ago a very unpopular decision was made to close down the railroad on the weekends while work was being done. Although it was very successful, that project was far less invasive than the HSR and electrification projects.

Ms. Levin said she heard electric trains might come on incrementally and asked how that would work. Ms. Lee said staff was considering replacing old trains as they break down with the new electric vehicles on an as-needed basis. While there is a mixed fleet of diesel and electric Caltrain would use the diesel for baby bullet trains and the electric for local stops. Electric vehicles are lighter and can stop and go faster. As a local train it would stop more often so this would enable us to fully utilize the performance attribute of the electric vehicles.

Ms. Levin said the benefit to riders might be faster service from point-to-point or more service to the stations, and asked when the schedule options and schedule decisions come into play. She said the media is focusing on the costs to community, grade separations, passing tracks, construction, and other negative comments. Ms. Lee said the environmental document will scope out what the project is and it will help staff to think through the tension between having faster service or more station stops because doing one or the other compromises one or the other.

Ms. Levin asked if the information presented in the fall will have schedule options or consequences relating to grade separations and passing tracks projects. Ms. Lee said staff did a blended system capacity analysis several months ago which is proof the tracks can be shared with HSR and in doing that an assumed schedule was produced. The studies that will come in the fall are based off of that assumed schedule. This is a schedule that works when both HSR and Caltrain are using the tracks at the same time. What will be in the environmental document is what the schedule will be when it is only Caltrain using the tracks.

Ms. Levin said the information is good but it is missing something from a public understanding perspective. She said when you start talking about passing tracks people start to get very concerned. Being able to explain the schedule along with what benefit people might get from passing tracks by evening out the Caltrain schedule and how they would help un-bunch the trains and provide more regular Caltrain service which can then better connect to BART and Valley Transportation Authority is a key piece for public understanding why the passing tracks are needed. Putting those explanations together will help people understand and focus on the benefits.

Bruce Jenkins asked if anyone considered who might be the supplier of rolling stock. Ms. Lee said staff has to go through that process.

Ms. Mills asked if plans have progressed to the point to determine how electricity will be provided. Ms. Lee said staff still needs to figure that out as they set out to complete the environmental document.
Ms. Sweet asked if staff needs to coordinate the Caltrain electrification infrastructure planning with the HSR infrastructure planning so they are done in tandem or if HSR infrastructure will start after the electrification is completed in 2019. Ms. Lee said by law HSR trains have to get to downtown San Francisco. In order to do that staff has to define the infrastructure program to allow that to happen. The whole thing is being coordinated with HSR but their focus area is different based on the 2019 timeframe than the 2029 timeframe. Both Caltrain and HSR will be focused on making sure things like the poles, the wiring, and the height will work for both trains because they don’t want to have to rip anything out later to make adjustments. The only exception might be later when HSR determines where their stations, storage and maintenance facilities will be the poles or wires in that area might need to be moved. The review and coordination is there now, but when we start to think about the 2029 events we may have to shift the focus a bit.

Mr. Gardiner asked if the extension to downtown San Francisco is part of the Caltrain electrification phase or part of the HSR 2029 phase. Ms. Lee said it is probably neither. It is not in the Early Investment Program with the $1.4 billion because it would have taken up all that money. San Francisco is trying to get New Starts Money which is a separate Federal funding source. San Francisco wants to build as soon as possible and they may have their own reasons for wanting to do it sooner than 2029 but it is not packaged with Caltrain’s or HSR’s plan for 2019.

Chair Hronowski asked if there is an FRA law requiring grade crossings to be eliminated if trains go above a certain speed. Ms. Lee said there is such a law and the speed is over 125 miles per hour. She said today Caltrain operates up to 79 miles per hour and the fastest being considered right now is 110, so Caltrain is not legally required to include grade separations but may do them anyway.

Mr. DeLong congratulated Ms. Lee, the staff and the team who accomplished this task. Some of the supporters from the legislature now have bull’s-eyes on their backs because of this vote and their opponents in the upcoming election are making an issue out of it. Regarding Caltrain electrification, he said the Caltrain Board has already awarded a contract for the advanced signaling system but they only funded the initial phase—the design—because they didn’t have the funding. Now there is funding to pay for the implementation of the signal system. He said the rub is going to come when there is both the electric fleet and the diesel fleet on the property at the same time but there aren’t enough parking spots for all the rolling stock. He said another issue is trying to do all this construction along the right of way when there are 50,000 riders and close to 100 trains. He said Caltrain has a good record of figuring out how to do that safely and he’s sure they will do that with this one as well, and it is wonderful news that Caltrain has that problem to solve now.

Ed Schlosser, Mountain View, asked if the higher speeds with HSR will require grade separation even though the speeds Caltrain is proposing won’t. He said the electrification will be done before there are any possible additional grade separations, so he presumes electrification with the towers and wires will be coordinated with all the at-grade crossings. He asked when the grade separations for HSR have to be done, how much of all the electrifications structure at all the
at-grade crossing will have to be ripped up and replaced when we have to separate grades. Ms. Lee said the speed of up to 110 miles per hour is for both HSR and Caltrain trains. The vision is when HSR trains are in urban corridors like ours, they will slow down, but when they do leave the corridor they can go to higher speeds of over 200 miles per hour in the sections where tracks are fully grade-separated and in a contained system for HSR. Based on the existing environmental document and analysis, the speeds Caltrain and HSR will operate in the urban areas do not trigger the requirement for grade separations, so the electrification project thus far does not include them. Some of the cities in the communities have said the information is outdated so staff will update the environmental document to see if it will be a problem and if it is it will be changed accordingly. While a grade separation may not be required, that does not mean one won’t be built. If a city feels they want to eliminate a traffic condition there’s nothing that stops a city from doing a grade separation but it can go in parallel with the modernization program.

Mr. Sominer said of the three key parts, PTC, electrification, and rolling stock, he got the first date of 2015 but didn’t catch the second and the third date. He asked if they are in serial versus in parallel why they can’t be done in parallel to save a lot of time. Ms. Lee said it will be done in parallel. The 2019 date is the target goal for electrified service, which means it is the latest by which vehicles and infrastructure would have to be in place. When the project delivery team does the due diligence they will see about the 2019 timeframe. Mr. Sominer asked if there’s a chance of seeing electric cars on the tracks before 2019 if even only a small subset like weekends. Ms. Lee said one of the immediate steps will be getting a team to help Caltrain deliver this and one of the first questions is what the most efficient way of getting things done in parallel is. Once staff gets some more information put together it will be shared with the public but for right now the best guess is 2019.

Mr. Carter said he is hoping electrification can be done in parallel and be completed as soon as possible. He has waited 30 years for this. He said he understands electrification will be compatible with HSR and Caltrain. He heard about PTC, also called Communications Based Overlay Signal System (CBOSS). He said the typical rail systems in Europe use a commonly used system between HSR and regular systems. He has heard rumors through internet blogs that CBOSS will not be compatible with HSR. He hopes Caltrain will go with the global standard system and it will be compatible with HSR and not specific to Caltrain only. He said there is a lot of bad information out there and some people are trying to spread lies regarding HSR. Grade crossings shouldn’t be gargantuan. He said he uses one in Millbrae which is half the distance than the grade crossings proposed for Palo Alto. He doesn’t understand why they’re proposing such large grade separations which are scaring the local residents.

STAFF REPORT – MICHELLE BOUCHARD
Ms. Bouchard reported:
- Welcomed the new CAC members.
- The TASI transition was safe with not a single employee injury. They have been able to provide all of the service and there have not been any terminations due to equipment shortages or personnel shortages. Staff is still working on some improvements with TASI. TASI has a very compelling way of doing business which emphasizes safety and customer service.
• We are regulated by the FRA and the California Public Utilities Commission. The regulators have been on property almost every day and have been complimentary on how the transition has been so far. Caltrain has not received any compliance violations.
• A change to the fare system related to the Clipper Card was implemented on July 1. Tickets purchased through the Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) had a $0.25 increase, no fare increase through Clipper. The discount for the eight-ride ticket was reduced from 15 percent to 7.5 percent. There was an increase in GO Pass pricing and the sales period for monthly passes was lengthened. No customer complaints about the fare changes have been received.
• Special event services included the Golden Gate Bridge celebration which was the day after TASI took over the service. Normally there are 7,000 riders on Sundays, but that Sunday there were more than 14,000 riders and we did not have any issues.
• Bay to Breakers service for the Santa Clara station had 2,000 riders.
• There were four additional trains for July 4th fireworks and 3,000 riders were carried on the four southbound trains.
• Caltrain’s Giants baseball service carries between 4,000-5,000 passengers each game.
• There has been robust growth in weekend service.
• June 2012 weekday ridership was up 13.4 percent which is an all-time high of over 50,000. This may be due to fuel prices but it shows signs of local economic recovery.
• Fare box revenues hit an all-time high exceeding $5.7 million in the month of June. The fiscal year ended with nearly $60 million in fares which is a 22.1 percent increase from the previous year.
• The adopted FY 2013 Operating Budget contemplates increasing service from 86 to 92 weekday trains.
• Peak trains are being added to help alleviate overcrowding. The new schedule adds 12 strategic stops at Palo Alto and Sunnyvale stations to help spread out some of the loads from the more popular peak period trains. The projected implementation date is October 1.
• Nine employees participated in the Out of the Darkness Walk and raised more than $12,000 for the event.

Mr. Jenkins said the train crews seem to be very good and he is impressed with the announcements about feet and baggage off the seats. The cars look good, clean and shiny. There is a problem at Millbrae with the baggage. It might be better if there was a designated area where baggage could be loaded adjacent to the car with the luggage racks.

Ms. Levin asked what the net change of revenue minus expenses was. Ms. Bouchard said staff hasn’t audited the books for the final total.

Ms. Levin asked if there will be any preview of agreements in principle on the 2014 budget. Ms. Bouchard said staff had agreements in principle in the past but does not have anything for 2014 nailed down at this time.

Mr. Gardiner asked if checking the tickets at the San Francisco gate is working out. Ms. Bouchard said staff developed a plan to gate check at San Francisco in order to identify folks who didn’t have fares before they got on the train so they could purchase tickets from the TVM.
at the station. The other reason for this is to prevent conflicts with conductors checking tickets en route and having to give citations and delay the train. Clipper is more common so gate checking gives conductors an opportunity to interface with customers and solve any tag on and tag off problems before they get on the train. Staff is monitoring this system to see if there are trains or situations where this plan is inappropriate, and there are some bugs still to be worked out but it is a positive step forward with respect to revenue retention and conflict reduction.

Ms. Mills asked if Clipper has been contemplated to move from a zone system to a stop system. Ms. Bouchard said it is not off the radar but staff is still working out bugs with Clipper. There are pros and cons with a point-to-point system regarding retaining fare and cutting down on fare evasion. With only four zones it is much easier to cut down on fare evasion with the zone system. There are many factors to review before staff can make a decision to switch to a point-to-point system.

Mr. Jenkins left at 7:11 p.m.

Ms. Levin asked how much this was helping with revenue retention. Ms. Bouchard said the number of people being sent back to buy tickets is being counted. We don’t have a dollar figure to announce.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS
None

DATE, TIME AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING:
August 15, 2012 at 5:40 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 2nd Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA.

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.