MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT: K. Gardner, B. Jenkins, A. Levin, Y. Mills, A. Sweet

MEMBERS ABSENT: J. Hronowski, D. Lindsey, C. Tucker

STAFF PRESENT: J. Ackemann, J. Averill, M. Bouchard

Chair Paul Bendix called the meeting to order at 5:48 p.m. and Vice Chair Kevin Gardner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
A motion (Gardiner/Jenkins) to approve the minutes of August 15, 2012 was approved.

Communications Manager Jayme Ackemann said there was a safety violation on August 24 at the South San Francisco station. She said while a northbound train was boarding passengers, a southbound express train went through. This is a hold-out rule station which means if a train is at the station, all other trains must wait for clearance before they can go through. She said the incident is under investigation but appears to have been due to a lack of communication. No one was injured. Staff is working with the contract operator to determine the cause and resolution.

Alexandra Sweet asked what type of communication trains typically use to alert each other that one is stopped at the station. Ms. Ackemann said signaling using headlights and radio calls between the train conductors. She said fail-safes have been implemented as backups to insure communication takes place. If the conductors cannot reach each other, they will try to contact dispatch. If they cannot contact dispatch, the trains must slow to a crawling speed through the area.

Adina Levin asked what the status of the station upgrade is. Ms. Ackemann said there are several challenges including financial challenges and the fact that some of the tracks are owned by Union Pacific and any changes cannot affect their business.

Director of Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard said a few years ago there were 13 hold-out rule stations and now there are only 2, so significant progress has been made.

PUBLIC COMMENT
None
CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT – P. Bendix
Chair Bendix said he recommends the committee members read articles by the writer Will Doig from Salon.com who writes on matters of urban development and other topics pertinent to the committee.

PRESENTATION: SOCIAL MEDIA – J. Ackemann
Ms. Ackemann said there are a lot of tools in the social media network the JPB uses to create community. Different services are used together to drive customers to the Caltrain website. She said 24 out of the top 25 newspapers are experiencing record declines in readership, Facebook tops Google in Internet traffic, there are over 200,000 blogs, and social media is used to have a conversation with customers where traditional advertising is only one-way communication. Social media provides a relationship to build trust and loyalty with the customer base, and it provides a media outlet for stories, perspectives, and issues.

Ms. Ackemann said Caltrain uses the following media:
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/caltrain
- Google+: Search Caltrain
- YouTube: Search SMCTD
- e-Newsletter: Peninsula Transportation Insider
- Twitter:
  - Public Affairs: @Caltrain_News (for major service issues and changes)
  - Marketing: @GoCaltrain (for news, service changes, marketing initiatives, etc.)
  - External Resource: @caltrain (riders tweeting about service delays, etc.)

Ms. Ackemann said the Caltrain website will soon have a place to sign up for predictive train arrival text alerts.

She said Caltrain will use social media to provide information about major service impacts and delays, talk to customers and answer their questions, build community, provide crisis communication, and build support for the initiatives Caltrain is facing such as the need for dedicated funding.

Ms. Ackemann said Caltrain will grow its social media program by hiring a social media officer who can pull together the entire profile of social media services Caltrain uses, focus on improving existing communications, and develop new technologies for improved outreach. Caltrain will use social media to create a centralized repository for information during crises, conduct online TV and radio interviews when staff cannot be available in person, get rapid feedback from engaged users, and build relationships.

Ms. Levin asked if Caltrain will be using a social media aggregating tool. Ms. Ackemann said when the social media officer is hired he or she will make that decision.

Ms. Levin said frequently asked questions and a calendar would be good to add Caltrain’s Web media. Ms. Ackemann said a calendar is on the list of things to add.
Ms. Levin said it would be good to stream the meetings online or broadcast them. Ms. Ackemann said webinar options are being investigated.

Ms. Levin asked how public comments are relayed to the appropriate department. Ms. Ackemann said it is done manually by a few individuals but it will become the responsibility of the social media officer.

Mr. Jenkins asked if Twitter is the best place to go for immediate train status. Ms. Ackemann said @Caltrain_News is a good feed to follow and @caltrain is a rider-sourced feed that has good information. Ms. Bouchard said a live feed to the dispatch system is something that Caltrain is looking to place on the website.

Ms. Sweet asked who updates the feed on the external rider-sourced Twitter feed. Ms. Ackemann said Caltrain riders update the feed and if people wanted to participate they would need to get permission from the owner of the feed.

Ms. Sweet asked if Caltrain will make an application for smartphones. Ms. Ackemann said it is an idea that she will investigate.

Yvonne Mills said Caltrain needs to make its own smartphone schedule application because the applications that exist are third party and are not always correct. She said if conductors don’t know what is going on with trains it does not represent well. She said it would be helpful to have information about how to purchase a ticket for the train because it can be confusing.

Dee Marie Lindsey arrived at 6:24 p.m.

Ms. Levin asked if real-time information will be available as a feed so other third-party applications can get the information and use it. Ms. Ackemann said marketing has been working on data and development needs, staff has worked with Google to provide that information, and developers can access information on the Caltrain website. Ms. Levin suggested Caltrain use and customize an existing application such as getsatisfaction.com rather than make one of its own.

Chair Bendix asked if text feed was similar to an airline notice that shows up on a smartphone if a flight is late. Ms. Ackemann said yes.

**STAFF REPORT – M. Bouchard**

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- Average Weekday Ridership was 48,634 in August, up 7.5 percent over August 2011.
- Revenue was just short of $6 million in August.
- On-time performance was 93.3 percent in August, up from 92.1 percent.
- There were 600 minutes of mechanical delays in August, down from a typical count of 900 minutes.
- The ratio of paper ticket users to Clipper users was 75:25 percent. Fare changes were implemented to encourage users to switch to Clipper reducing the share to 65 percent.
- Giants ridership was up more than 11 percent over August 2011.
• The two peak period trains being added will help alleviate crowding on Giants game days, and along with those trains and the four trains being restored, bicycle bumps are expected to go down. Caltrain will be tracking this information in January.

• Special service
  o An additional 4,000 riders were carried for Stanford football.
  o An additional 400 riders were carried to the 49ers event.
  o Upcoming events include the America’s Cup, Fleet Week, a 49ers game, and the Castro Street Fair.
  o Planning is underway to address the expected ridership from post-season Giants events.

• The San Bruno Grade Separation Project will be completed in 14-18 months.

• Caltrain has started using a new control system in test mode and it has gone well.

Ms. Mills asked if Caltrain works with Clipper on some of the issues it faces. She said more Add Value Machines should be added. She said there is no place where customers can use two forms of payment to pay for Clipper which is sometimes necessary to do to get employer benefits. She said customers are not able to find out how many rides are left on the Clipper cards so they can’t track how many have been used. She said when Clipper issues refunds or makes adjustments it affects the employee pre-tax benefits. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain works with Clipper on a monthly basis.

Ms. Sweet said she appreciates it when conductors remind customers to tag on and off.

Ms. Levin said to encourage bicyclists to use the shoulder trains a graph would help bicyclists visualize where bumps are. Ms. Bouchard said staff will try to indicate on the Web which trains will have Bombardier sets to help bicyclists plan.

Ms. Levin said Clipper is supposed to have a four-hour grace period to tag off but the time limit is much less than that. She said Clipper creates a significant fare increase without having the Day Pass option available. She asked if Wi-Fi will be installed on the trains. Ms. Bouchard said it is a budget problem because it is a substantial investment when weighed against things like State of Good Repair of the fleet which takes priority. She said she would welcome funding ideas. Ms. Mills said customers could be charged to use Wi-Fi like airline customers do and it would be worth it to them.

Mr. Gardner asked if the new trains will be communicated to be an alternative to the currently overloaded trains. Ms. Bouchard said staff has implementation meetings that focus on outreach and announcement plans.

PUBLIC COMMENT
None

COMMITTEE COMMENTS
Mr. Gardner asked if Caltrain has looked at electric charging stations for parking lots. Ms. Bouchard said she will ask the engineering department if they have looked into it.
Ms. Sweet asked if Caltrain has considered advertising onboard like Muni does. Ms. Bouchard said there are limitations to what Caltrain can advertise onboard due to a free speech ordinance.

Ms. Levin said Friends of Caltrain launched an Adopt a Station campaign to organize people to pay attention to the Caltrain Modernization news, station access issues, and station land-use decisions so they can help inform other people about these issues.

Chair Bendix said there has been an increase in wheelchair bumps but if wheelchairs turned sideways, and if they could go into the bike car during off-peak hours, more could fit. He asked for an update on the wheelchair bridge. Ms. Bouchard said a work order has been submitted and it will get moving very quickly.

Ms. Lindsey said she took a train on which announcements weren’t made about the train number or the stops it was going to make so she didn’t know it was the wrong train, and there are areas of improvement for conductors’ communication.

**DATE, TIME AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING:**
October 17, 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 7:09 p.m.