

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

MINUTES – MAY 21, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: P. Bendix, F. Granade, J. Hronowski, G. Graham, B. Jenkins, M. Kiesling, S. Richardson, B. Wilfley

MEMBERS ABSENT: J. Shukis

STAFF PRESENT: M. Bouchard, M. Collins (Amtrak), C. Dunn, R. Lake

Chair Bruce Jenkins called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and Brian Wilfley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wilfley said he did not ask the question at the bottom of page two of five. Chair Jenkins said he asked the question. The minutes of the April 16, 2008 meeting were approved by the Committee with this correction.

Chairperson's Report

Chair Jenkins attended the meeting of the Transbay Joint Powers Board (TJPB) for the Transbay Transit Center last week. The TJPB awarded a contract for \$105 million for the engineering and technical drawings to Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects. The Board elected Nathaniel Ford to the position of Chair and Elsa Ortiz as Vice Chair.

Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said he appreciates special service trains but doesn't think Caltrain can deal with crowds. He asked why longer trains were not used for Bay to Breakers and the KaBoom concert because there is no shortage of equipment on weekends. He suggested having a sweeper train available for overcrowding. There were no announcements or electronic messages noting overcrowding on trains. He suggested having Bay to Breakers service on a Sunday. He said Caltrain special service may be the first introduction of Caltrain to passengers and it should be a good experience.

Rail Transportation Deputy Director Michelle Bouchard said Bay to Breakers ridership was an anomaly and increased by 50 to 75 percent over what was seen in the recent past. It is a challenge to predict exactly how many passengers will be riding on any one given day. Caltrain uses historical information and trends to plan for expected ridership and contingency plans. Amtrak crews made a ground call and bolstered the existing service plan with an additional train to San Francisco, which allowed for three Bay to Breakers specials, where two were planned. Ms. Bouchard said debriefing exercises were carried out immediately after Bay to Breakers service and lessons learned will be implemented with future service, given resources and constraints of crew and rolling stock. Customer safety and security are a priority and Caltrain's goal is to retain and gain as many customers as possible.

Presentation – Caltrain Passenger Counts

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- Caltrain passenger counts are done in February of each year as a planning exercise to allocate operating costs to JPB partners, to provide a measure relative to previous years and evaluate service changes, to maximize rolling stock efficiency and identify potential access issues.
- Headcounts were done on every weekday train on every single passenger boarding and deboarding and averaged over five weekdays. Counts are done on one weekend.
- The Baby Bullet model, with reduced peak running times, has increased ridership and helped to deploy rolling stock, crew and infrastructure resources far more efficiently than pre-Baby Bullet and allowed Caltrain to go from 76 to 86 and then to 96 trains per average weekday. Two additional trains for evening service after 7:30 p.m. were added in March 2008 for a total of 98 trains.
- Between 2004-2008 there has been nearly a 10 percent gain over each year in average ridership, which is approximately a 45 percent gain.
- Ridership in 2007 and 2008 shows robust service with a 12 percent increase in reverse peak and a 17 percent gain in evening service.
- Ridership between 2004-2008 by time periods shows in excess of 6,000 in traditional peak hours and an overall increase of 44.8 percent for peak and off-peak markets.
- Ridership by station groupings indicates changes in growth or lack of growth. All stations have seen growth with the Baby Bullet model.
- Overall 2008 station-by-station ridership has increased by 10 percent at all stations except Bayshore, South San Francisco, Hayward Park and College Park with a combined decrease of 203 riders with shifts to Millbrae because of BART and Baby Bullet service.
- Top 10 station rankings for number of trains have remained basically the same in 2007 versus 2008 but there has been double-digit growth in many of the Baby Bullet stations including Mountain View, San Jose Diridon and Millbrae.

Sepi Richardson asked if the Millbrae station increase from 2007 to 2008 is actually a shifting of ridership rather than a real increase of ridership to the station. Ms. Bouchard said there was a shift of 203 riders from four stations but an increase of 508 at the Millbrae station so 300 of that was real growth.

- There was 44.8 percent growth systemwide from 2004 to 2008 but some station ridership has grown dramatically due to longer distance markets: San Jose Diridon increased 132 percent, Mountain View increased 106 percent and Millbrae increased 111 percent. February Caltrain counts are reflective of a count that is roughly 16 percent lower than what Caltrain experiences in a peak month of a peak season.
- Top 10 north and southbound trains during peak hours and season are above 90 percent capacity, which will be eased with delivery of eight new Bombardier cars in September 2008.

~~Mr. Wilfley~~ Chair Jenkins asked if there was 2004 data for the top 10 north and southbound trains. Ms. Bouchard said she will get the data.

- Baby Bullets are averaging the highest ridership by train type followed fairly closely by the express local combinations, which speaks to Caltrain's ability to define some markets and diversify ridership.

Mike Kiesling asked what percentage of capacity is crush load. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain has put 1,800 people on a five-car train, which is nearly three times seated capacity. She said this is far more than crush. If there are standees comfortably standing and people in the vestibule, this amounts to about 200 people per car when it's about 130 seated. She said shorter travel times that will be afforded by electrification and electric multiple unit trains (EMU), and passengers will probably put up with standing for a little while.

Francois Granade asked if the maximum load numbers given, for example 110 percent, are the rider numbers or the number of people who loaded at the station. Ms. Bouchard said the numbers are at the maximum load point, not total boardings.

- Average trip length has increased slightly from 2007 but would show a vast increase if compared to 2004.
- County-by-county comparison indicates fairly even ridership growth among the three counties.
- Gilroy extension ridership decreased significantly due to the dot com bust and south county freeway improvements on Highway 101, which doubled capacity.
- Weekend ridership has surpassed pre-Baby Bullet numbers with doubling of Sunday service.
- Since the Baby Bullet was introduced in 2004 revenue and ridership have continued to increase despite fare increases but Caltrain may be reaching a point that additional fare increases may cause some riders to change their mode of choice. This could result in a temporary loss of ridership.

Mr. Wilfley suggested, given that Baby Bullet trains are largely full, Caltrain doesn't have the opportunity for people to add long distance trips anymore and new riders may be purchasing shorter trips. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain continues to see average fare per passenger increase but, perhaps, at a decreasing rate. This may speak to some sort of cap being reached.

Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain has proven that many aspects of the service are attractive and the deficit has been reduced. However, capacities in the peak are full, terminal capacity, rolling stock and signal systems are capped out in many respects and Caltrain must explore creative ways to attract and retain riders. Station upgrades and state-of-good repair are ongoing projects that will help to maintain service reliability. Caltrain is focusing on Caltrain 2025 to electrify the railroad and adopt EMU technology to provide shorter trip times and allow more stops.

Mr. Wilfley asked where the eight new cars would be placed. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain is operating with four-car consists with the goal of lengthening all four-car consists. Additional cars will create more flexibility for spare cars to potentially be able to outfit consists to six cars.

John Hronowski asked if the new Bombardier cars will be compatible with current Bombardier cars but not with the gallery cars. Ms. Bouchard said this was correct.

Paul Bendix said Ms. Bouchard's presentation was very good and an interesting overview of the state of the railway.

Public Comment

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said some station parking lots are full and some underused and asked how parking lots could be utilized to increase ridership. Ms. Bouchard said Baby Bullet stations approach 100 percent full during peak of the peak periods. Caltrain is always searching for parking solutions and is currently redeveloping parking lots through a deal with the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. A shuttle between the Belmont station and Hillsdale has resulted in an average of 79 riders using available parking at Belmont.

Staff Report

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- For April 2008, Caltrain total ridership increased by 15.8 percent when compared to April 2007. Total revenue for the same period increased by 17.5 percent.
- On time performance is close to surpassing the 95 percent goal.
- There were 6,000 back and forth riders for Bay to Breakers.
- KFOG KaBoom concert ridership on May 10 decreased 25.3 percent.
- Upcoming Giants special service includes Kids Are Giants Too on May 30.
- Transit police from San Mateo County and Amtrak police resources have consolidated into a Transit Police security force, which will help with security coverage at Giants games.
- Caltrain is bracing for record ridership during upcoming peak months.

Chair Jenkins asked how security crews are holding up with the problem of intoxicated people before and after Giants games. Ms. Bouchard said overall safety of passengers is a major concern for Caltrain and more security police are riding the trains. Amtrak Assistant Superintendent of Commuter Operations Mark Collins said the consolidated Transit Police force has greatly improved security. There are quicker response times to alleviate problems and remove problem riders.

Ms. Richardson asked if the security officers were undercover or in uniform. Ms. Bouchard said most officers are in uniform.

Public Comment

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said he heard Caltrain reduced speed to 60 miles per hour on last Thursday's Spare the Air Day and asked how this lowered speed impacts the entire system. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain is required to impose a slow order above a sustained temperature of 95 degrees to determine if there is waviness in the rails due to the effects of heat. She said the major impact is due to the high rail inspection vehicle that must inspect the rail to make sure it is safe for passage.

Committee Comments

Ms. Richardson complimented Caltrain on the incredible service, especially during special events and on Spare the Air day.

Mr. Bendix said the wheelchair symbol on the northbound platform at the Sunnyvale station is too far down the platform. He said a conductor noted four stations with out-of-the-way wheelchair symbols. Mr. Bendix suggested, that in the course of maintenance, these wheelchair symbols could gradually be repainted.

Chair Jenkins recently told a conductor on ~~Train~~ Car #3840 leaving San Francisco that the bolster was so loud announcements could not be heard on the public address system. Ms. Bouchard will follow up.

Mr. Hronowski asked if there were significant delays last week with Bike-to-Work Day. Ms. Bouchard and Public Information Officer Christine Dunn were aware of no delays.

Mr. Kiesling attended the San Francisco Department of City Planning's presentation on raising the height limit in the vicinity of the Transbay Terminal. It explained how San Francisco is trying to secure more funding to fund the downtown extension.

Ms. Richardson said there is a lot of support to build a 49er stadium in Brisbane.

Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

Wednesday, June 18, 2008 at 6 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.