

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

**MINUTES SEPTEMBER 16, 2009**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** P. Bendix, G. Graham (Chair), F. Granade, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins, S. Richardson, M. Tekchandani, C. Tucker, B. Wilfley

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** T. Bartholomew, M. Bouchard, N. McKenna

Chair Gerald Graham called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. John Hronowski led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Graham welcomed Cat Tucker from Gilroy, representing Santa Clara County. Brian Wilfley was reappointed to represent Santa Clara County and John Hronowski was reappointed to represent San Francisco County.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee (Wilfley/Tekchandani) approved the minutes of July 15, 2009.

**Public Comment**

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said some trains have signs on the locomotive or cab car indicating the number of bike cars, which is appreciated by the bike community. There was a High Speed Rail (HSR) meeting last month in Menlo Park hosted by Congresswoman Anna Eshoo and staff responded well to public questions and comments. Mr. Carter said there has been a lot of talk about horn noise and realizes it is a safety issue and Caltrain must follow Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements. He asked if there are any approved studies that show required decibel level produce the intended affect. He said people should direct their comments to the FRA and not Caltrain because the FRA is directing Caltrain to make the change. Mr. Carter said one of the problems in reporting train fatalities is the media, which blames Caltrain. He said people need to learn to stay off the tracks.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said there is a Caltrain project to extend Caltrain from the current 4<sup>th</sup> & King terminus to the Transbay Terminal. He said planning is underway for this \$400 million project. Mr. Chow said the former chair of California High Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA) was able to convince some people to write letters to the federal government a few months before construction was to begin stating this project should not receive stimulus funds because it needs to be restudied and a new location is preferred.

**Chairperson's Report**

No report.

### **Committee Comments**

Francois Granade said it is interesting how the two previous public speakers commented on how the world perceives Caltrain. He asked if someone from the CAC should write a corrective letter to the two newspaper agencies explaining the complexity of fatalities on Caltrain and misinformation about HSR. Deputy Director Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard encouraged the CAC to relay the message because they are ambassadors to the community.

Mr. Granade said he found one-half of an eight-ride ticket in the ticket vending machine (TVM) yesterday and today found a complete ticket that was purchased with a credit card. He thinks there is a common problem with people losing their tickets because they don't realize the 8-ride ticket comes in two parts and a credit card receipt is printed along with the ticket.

Mr. Granade said there should be an option on the TVMs to let the customer choose to receive a receipt. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain has a committee to address TVM issues. Staff hoped the 8-ride ticket would be one single ticket, but there was a printing issue having a single 8-ride ticket. Ms. Bouchard will speak to staff to quantify this issue and report back to the CAC.

Sepi Richardson asked how refunds are handled. Ms. Bouchard said there is a refund policy, and will report back to the CAC.

Ms. Tucker said she resides in Gilroy and sits on the Gilroy City Council. She commutes to Santa Clara by car and family members rely on public transportation. She said there needs to be a change in corporate America so that the demand for work hours can be accommodated in the train schedule. Ms. Tucker said she is eager to help the CAC in anyway she can.

Mr. Hronowski said he is happy to be back on the CAC. He noticed the ticket-by-mail drop box at the 4<sup>th</sup> & King Caltrain Station will be removed effective October 9 and all inquiries are to be directed to Caltrain's pass sales and service in San Carlos. He asked why the drop box was being removed. Ms. Bouchard said staff wanted to make sure all ticket-by-mail requests were received by Caltrain and not being forwarded and, consequently, delayed by Amtrak.

Ms. Richardson is concerned about state budget impacts on public transportation. She emphasized there needs to be dedicated funding for public transportation. She said it is not fair to keep raising fees and cutting service for the public who depends on the service. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain is not funded by state funding sources in terms of operation, but the three partners that make up the JPB. She said the capital budget took a huge hit with the elimination of state funding this year. Ms. Bouchard said staff is focusing on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. There is extreme concern about funding for operations next year.

Mona Tekchandani said there have been four service disruptions since the July CAC meeting. She said some are maintenance-related and asked if there was a systemic issue causing disruptions. Ms. Bouchard said she is aware of no systemic issues in the mechanical department. She said the capital budget includes approximately \$9 million for state-of-good-repair on vehicles alone. The fleet is mostly 25 years old, which is five years from the service life cap of the vehicles.

Bruce Jenkins said some train windows, excluding Bombardier windows, are opaque. He said Doug DeLong knows a vendor that removes etched graffiti from windows. Ms. Bouchard has been in contact with Director of Maintenance David Olmeda and the maintenance department has been going through iterations of different types of soap. Bombardier cars are aluminum and a specific type of cleaning solution is used in the washer on those cars. Maintenance staff is in the process of developing a cleaning rub for the stainless steel gallery cars. Mr. Jenkins will have Doug DeLong contact Ms. Bouchard.

Paul Bendix said there is stimulus money available and he encourages everyone to contact their local government officials to urge this money be allocated to the Transbay Terminal project.

Ms. Richardson said projects need to be shovel ready to qualify for stimulus funding.

Mr. Jenkins attended a Capital Corridor meeting today and said Gene Skorpowski Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority is retiring.

Chair Graham suggested Mr. Granade reply to the press articles on rail fatalities. Mr. Granade agreed to follow up on this request.

Chair Graham asked if Caltrain maintenance puts a film on windows similar to BART to protect the glass from graffiti etching. Ms. Bouchard said a film is put on the inside of the SamTrans buses but she is not sure it would be a solution on the outside of the trains.

### **Presentation: Rail Safety**

Public Information Specialist Tasha Bartholomew presented the following details on the “Don’t Shortcut Live” Rail Safety Education and Outreach Program:

- Caltrain’s outreach program has been in place since the 1990s, and efforts were redoubled in 2006 when the “Don’t Shortcut Life” program was created.
- The program is modeled after Operation Lifesaver, which is an international organization working to increase public awareness about the dangers around railroads and to educate drivers and pedestrians to make safe decisions at crossings and around train tracks.
- Education is a key component in addition to engineering and enforcement.
- There are seven Caltrain staff members certified to give rail safety presentations.
- Key messages delivered at the presentations are: Anytime is Train Time; Trains Can’t Swerve and There is Absolutely No Trespassing.
- Rail safety outreach is for everyone within San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties; open to all ages and community groups; and tailored to each individual group.
- Staff has presented more than 200 presentations to more than 13,000 people.
- Community outreach staff are currently working with schools along the Caltrain right of way and, as of today, several rail safety presentations have been scheduled through the end of October.
- Safety events include an annual event in May in conjunction with Operation Life Saver, “The Gate Means Wait” public service announcement, Suicide Awareness Walk and Rail Safety Relay.

- September is “Rail Safety Month” and events included a Caltrain Board proclamation, media workshop, radio public service announcements and the San Mateo Grade Crossing Improvement celebration.
- Since May 2009 there have been 11 fatalities. The majority of fatalities each year are suicides.
- Caltrain held a press conference in August to acknowledge that suicides are a community problem; Caltrain is part of the community; and the community needs to find solutions to address mental health, depression and death by suicide.
- From a law enforcement perspective, the Transit Police have the High Intensity Strategic Enforcement Program (HISEP), which targets areas where a high level law enforcement presence is needed for people who may be trespassing or walking around lowered gates.
- The Transit Police have received crisis intervention training that recognizes people who may be a threat to themselves or others in the vicinity of the railroad. Thirteen lives have been saved this year as a result of this training.
- Caltrain’s most effective role in the partnership is as a convener to bring community groups together and have an open conversation and discussion to address mental health and suicide prevention. Staff has been contacted by more than 45 different organizations interested in working with Caltrain on this issue. Staff is contacting these organizations and hopes to have a meeting scheduled in late September.

Mr. Wilfley asked if Caltrain partners with mental health people in presentations to groups or relies on them to schedule independent visits. Ms. Bartholomew said staff is working with staff from Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital. Mr. Wilfley would like notification of the September meeting date.

Ms. Tekchandani asked if radio public service announcements are aired on stations focused on young people. Ms. Bartholomew said this is a good suggestion.

Ms. Richardson said there is social networking through Facebook and Twitter and perhaps staff should consider this means of getting the message of suicide prevention to larger groups. Ms. Bartholomew said the Community Relations Officer and Public Information Officer are currently discussing this.

Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain security and transit police have knowledge of how Twitter works and have reviewed how Twitter can be used for security purposes.

Mr. Bendix said the media should have coverage from a mental health professional to point out that despairing people are angry people; and throwing yourself in front of a Caltrain engineer is a very hostile act, which reverberates through other people’s lives for a long, painful time.

Ms. Bouchard said if suicide by train can be eradicated it could remove trauma from the life of an engineer who has gone through this experience and has to travel the same route and see a memorial placed on the right of way.

### Public Comment

Andy Chow, Redwood City, suggested, in light of yesterday's fatality at Whipple Avenue in Redwood City, attention needs to be paid to safety between the interface of train and automobile. He said there is a problem at the Whipple Avenue crossing because it is so close to El Camino Real and people tend to stop in this narrow space adjacent to the tracks. He recommended Caltrain put a pre-crossing signal directly in front of the rail crossing similar to a crossing in Mountain View.

### **Staff Report**

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- The first phase of the bike project is complete with the addition of eight bike spots in 27 gallery cab cars and seven Bombardier cars. This resulted in eight of 15 gallery consists having two bike cars or 80 bike spaces. The second phase of the project involves full transition of three additional Bombardier cars that are not currently bike cars. This will result in the entire Bombardier fleet having two bike cars or 48 bike spots. Completion of the second phase project is anticipated by mid-October.
- Caltrain's safety officer determined that the horn was not able to elicit bursts that were clear and not connected to each other because air was bleeding off the pipe. This is an absolute necessity described in the Code of Federal Railroad Regulations as toots and tweets, which must be done at road crossings with two long bursts, a short burst and a long burst. In order to mitigate the situation immediately the horns were moved to their original location on top; and regulated to a low as possible decibel level as allowed. Staff understands there is a wider dissemination of sound to a larger area with the horn at the top of the train. An additional engineering project is underway to replace the horns underneath to have distinct bursts.
- Staff visited vendors and customers for the train control system project. Staff was able to secure ARRA funding for the purchase of a new train control system. This project is scheduled to be completed in November 2010.
- The South Terminal Project is out for bid. This is the rebuild of the Santa Clara Caltrain Station to remove the hold-out rule and install a center track platform that will allow for Capital Corridor to offload on Main Track 1, and to provide Caltrain service on the other side. The second piece of this project is the rework of the Diridon Station, which will include two additional passenger platforms and four platform tracks. This will replace the old locomotive repair maintenance facility and help shore up current capacity and building capacity for the future.
- Ridership on weekends is holding steady partially due to special event ridership. July 2009 ridership on an average weekday basis is down 11.6 percent from July 2008. Revenue is down 7 percent due to a 5 percent fare increase. This is the first month there have been double digit declines in ridership statistics.
- Service changes were effective August 31 and Amtrak was congratulated for a job well done. Parking fees were increased and staff station hours were reduced on August 8 at the 4<sup>th</sup> and King Caltrain Station. Public outreach efforts resulted in a smooth transition of services.
- Stanford football service begins this fall with special plans for the Big Game. Giants service is winding down.

- The TransLink soft launch occurred the second week of August. Staff will provide an update on the launch in a few months.
- Rail Transformation Chief Bob Doty will present an update on the Peninsula Rail Program at the October CAC meeting.

Mr. Wilfley asked if the train control system planned for roll out in 2010 is a positive control system or the Communications Based Vital Overlay Signal System (CBOSS). Ms. Bouchard said it is the basic back office train control system. She said the CBOSS project is moving forward, but the Positive Train Control (PTC) project must be completed by December 2015 to meet mandates.

Ms. Tucker asked if scheduling department staff uses Twitter to get messages out to passengers during delays. Ms. Bouchard said there have been discussions in the public affairs department.

Ms. Tekchandani said staff should solicit public comments on the Twitter issue.

Chair Graham said transit information is available on station signs. Ms. Bouchard said passengers want the information before they get to the trains.

Ms. Richardson said text messaging is a helpful way to disseminate information.

Ms. Tekchandani said it would be helpful to have a text subscription service for immediate transit information.

Ms. Richardson visited New York and had a behind-the-scene's subway tour. She asked where the Caltrain control system was located. Ms. Bouchard said it is located in San Jose.

**Date, Time, and Place of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, October 21, 2009, 6 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA

**Adjournment at 7:14 p.m.**