

Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building
1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070

MINUTES OF APRIL 20, 2011

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: F. Granade

STAFF PRESENT: M. Bouchard, C. Harvey, R. Lake

Chair Bruce Jenkins called the meeting to order at 5:44 p.m. Brian Wilfley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

A motion (Wilfley/Hronowski) to approve the minutes of March 16, 2011 was passed.

A motion (Richardson/Hronowski) to approve the minutes of April 5, 2011 was passed.
(Cat Tucker abstained.)

Public Comment

- Doug DeLong, Mountain View, said the ticket vending machine (TVM) on the southbound platform in Mountain View doesn't accept bills and he has reported this to customer service several times in the last month.
- Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said politicians are saying High Speed Rail (HSR) and Caltrain should be blended and HSR passengers should get off in San Jose and take Caltrain to San Francisco.
He said all HSR doesn't have to be on an aerial viaduct or in a tunnel.

Chairperson's Report – Bruce Jenkins

No report

Staff Report

Director, Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard reported:

- At its April 21 special meeting, the JPB will address the approval of a quarter on the base and daily and monthly parking fee increases for implementation by July 1 and approval of a conceptual Operating Budget balancing plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. The balancing plan to retain the 86-train level is not cast in concrete but there have been positive ongoing meetings with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and JPB partners. The issue is once it becomes solid, it is subject to action at the MTC and the SamTrans Board.
- Baseball season has begun without a hitch with the ring bearing ceremony and a Dodgers home stand. All shifts were covered with outstanding performance results.
- March 2011 preliminary average weekday ridership increased 4 percent from March 2010, which may be affected by high gas prices. February and March were transitional months with fare media to Clipper. It is not possible to purchase a multi-ride ticket from the TVMs machines because everything is on Clipper except one-way and round trip tickets. Farebox

revenue has increased 18 percent over March 2010 and a certain percent may be due to a fare increase. Year-to-date revenue is 12.3 percent over March 2010 and approximately \$2.5 million over budget. These statistics may have been a compelling reason the JPB requested staff to go back and find a way of not breaking a system that seemed very unbroken.

- There was a tragic incident at Charleston railroad crossing on April 15 in which a car that was occupied was struck by a northbound Caltrain train. Due to the ongoing investigation, staff cannot provide details on causes or circumstances. It is part of basic driver training and common practice that a driver understand and estimate that they can clear a grade crossing before attempting to pass over railroad tracks. Caltrain is very sorry for the loss.
- JPB Chair Sean Elsbernd reported JPB CAC recruitment began on April 11 and applications are due May 9. The JPB will appoint recommended applicants at the June 2 JPB meeting. Applications are available on the website. One seat is open from each JPB county.

Sepi Richardson asked how the JPB could make budget projections, have public hearings about shortages and then come up with \$2.5 million. Ms. Bouchard said a large portion of the solution for FY2012 is accounting for the continuation of Caltrain. There is about \$9 million including operator cost savings and anticipated revenue increases over budget that will be rolled forward into next year to be able to plug some of the \$30 million budget gap.

Ms. Richardson asked if the \$2.5 million over budget was part of the projections that were already done to make the \$30 million cut. Ms. Bouchard said it became apparent the revenue picture was turning as staff was working through the budget cycle and staff has accounted for that.

Mona Tekchandani said the fare increase went into effect in January 2011 and there was no way of knowing exactly what would happen with that fare increase in terms of ridership and revenue.

Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain was experiencing fare revenues in excess of budget before the fare increase began, largely due to the beginning of the recovery in ridership. As staff saw that trend continue, they accounted for that additional revenue for next year's budget and is counting on rolling that money into next year's budget regardless of a 76- or 86-train schedule.

Ms. Bouchard said the finance department can provide a presentation about budget information to the CAC.

Ms. Richardson asked how the JPB could be \$30 million in the hole and now suddenly everything is good. Ms. Bouchard said this is a matter of huge debate among the Board members, which is how the 48-train schedule came about. When staff begins the budget season there may be the concern that Caltrain is crying wolf again but there is no certainty that one of the JPB partners will not pull out its funding and in that case, how could staff project a \$30 million hole that just shows up when it actually did. Ms. Bouchard said staff needs to discuss actual financial facts with the public and is not crying wolf.

John Hronowski commented on the tragic railroad crossing incident on April 15 and said he recently renewed his driver's license. The manual says you cannot block railroad tracks and he said a car shouldn't be on the tracks unless it can clear the tracks. He asked if prior station closures were still on the table. Ms. Bouchard said staff was directed to find the cash to retain the existing service. If \$3.5 million is found and secured and Caltrain can increase the fare, service will be very close to the current service.

Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, referred to the tragic April 15 accident and said when there is an accident the railroad is shut down and no trains are moved. He asked if the railroad must be shut down or can some trains be moved to get people to the area up to the incident. He asked if Caltrain will need to go through these financial exercises again next year or will there be money to keep Caltrain going for another two years.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said it is the riders who actually save Caltrain, not the MTC. Some portion of closing the budget gap is from extra fares riders contribute and as long as Caltrain doesn't cut service drastically, riders will continue to help Caltrain with their fare dollars.

Ms. Bouchard said the April 15 incident was an extreme situation and there was a major fuel spillage and a signal mechanism was down, which was a true two-track shutdown. It was clear the tracks would not be open for a while and trains were sent out as all locals from San Francisco to the Millbrae Intermodal station. There was also a five-bus bridge from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. This incident was a training and learning situation with a debrief that will include a table-top reenactment of how trains moved through.

Ms. Bouchard said the staff report for the April 21 that outlines the JPB's proposals to close the budget gap is available on the Caltrain website.

Presentation: Annual Passenger Counts

Ms. Bouchard reported on the purpose, count methodology, 2011 count results, summary and next steps:

- The count is to gauge ridership from year-to-year, provide planning data, verify monthly reporting estimates in the board packet, and identify potential access issues.
- Headcounts are done on every weekday train for every day of the week averaged over five weekdays, which helps identify trends during the week. A single headcount is done on one weekend.
- The 2011 Annual Passenger Count costs approximately \$200,000.
- Average weekday ridership increased to 41,442, which is a 12.7 percent increase from 2010.
- Caltrain is unique in its bi-directional commute with a greater percent change in the reverse peak. Midday ridership decreases resulted from ridership movement from midday to the peak.
- Twenty-seven stations had increased ridership in 2011 and the top ten stations did not change.

Ms. Richardson said ridership at the South San Francisco station may be lower due to shuttles run by the major companies in that area. Ms. Bouchard said when Baby Bullet service came to the Millbrae Intermodal station, many shuttles serving the South San Francisco station began serving Millbrae instead.

- There were ridership gains of about 1,500 in each of the JPB counties even though San Francisco has only three stations.

Ms. Richardson asked why Morgan Hill only had eight riders. Ms. Bouchard said that was the increase in ridership.

- Gilroy extension ridership was declining prior to introduction of Baby Bullet service but Caltrain would be pleased to be able to serve Gilroy in 2012.

- Every train type increased ridership in the peak with locals having the highest increases.
- Maximum loads are on the top ten trains.
- Average trip length has remained steady at 23 miles.
- There was an increase in average weekday bike ridership of 37.8 percent and top bike boardings were at the San Francisco, Palo Alto and Mountain View stations.

Ms. Richardson said there are more jobs in San Jose but the peak is going from San Jose to San Francisco. Ms. Bouchard said density is greater in San Francisco with transit oriented to a central business district and San Jose is more dispersed.

Ms. Tekchandani asked what the difference is between max load and average weekday bike boardings. Ms. Bouchard said it is how many total bike boardings there are versus the point that it is absolutely the fullest.

- Saturday service increased 19.6 percent and Sunday service increased 23.1 percent.
- Pilot weekend Baby Bullet counts show robust and growing demand using an available crew and the service needs 245 extra riders per train. The ridership goal was an increase of 10.7 percent and current ridership has increased about 8.3 percent.
- Summary: Staff has been pleased with how the midday period has been maintained, and the way the ridership has been consistent in terms of its growth, suggests a recovery. Staff is happy bicyclists are using the increased bike capacity given them.
- Next steps: FY2012 budget remains challenging and the weekend Baby Bullet pilot demonstrates that faster weekend service attracts ridership. It is staff's proposal to retain the weekend Baby Bullet in FY2012 and it is a market Caltrain wants to continue to attract and comes close to recouping its marginal costs.

Ms. Bouchard said the 2011 Annual Passenger Count report will be posted online and the link sent to the CAC as soon as possible.

Paul Bendix said the economy is still in a downturn and asked what is happening. Ms. Bouchard said part of the problem is the cost of gas at \$5 per gallon. She said Highway 101 is still really crowded and she started seeing more people on the train when she couldn't get from San Francisco to San Carlos in an hour. She said this may be affected by local job recovery.

Mr. Hronowski asked about the duration of weekend Baby Bullet service. Ms. Bouchard said it was a minimum of three months from January to March. A recommendation was made to continue the pilot due to growth in ridership, costs would be saved in not having to run certain Giants specials and the timetable would have to be reprinted if service was eliminated.

Brian Wilfley said he is struck by the disconnect between the level of detail at which staff understands how the system functions and functions well and the remarkably simplified reporting in the press. He asked if this is another chance to try and convey some of the real subtle but very positive features of Caltrain, which are true and powerful. This is also a chance to explain why Caltrain is a roaring success and the recent problem is entirely on the funding side.

Ms. Bouchard said a lot of Caltrain's success has been overshadowed by its difficulties.

Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said he appreciates passenger counts being done each year. He said if Caltrain ever gets to point-to-point fares, ridership data can be collected on tickets purchased through TVMs. He asked if there is any preliminary count information on the weekend Baby Bullet service to Giants games. Ms. Bouchard will follow up.

Mr. Carter asked how the Baby Bullet will replace one of the Giants special trains. Ms. Bouchard said typically on the weekends there is a special train that does not operate on any other schedule so sometimes there are two trains operating and one typically arrives in San Francisco around 11:30 a.m. and right now the Baby Bullet is arriving at 11:35 a.m.

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, asked if it would be possible to get some used Bombardier cars from Metrolink to relieve capacity when there is a capacity problem during busy months. He said the limited trains on average are carrying almost as many riders per train as the Baby Bullets but they may be turning more often and not travelling as long. He said a positive thing about the schedule rejected by the JPB was it was homogenized by having an almost all limited train schedule. He asked about providing more limited trains on the weekends during the busiest times of the day, which would also reduce the cost of operating the service due to less crew time involved.

Committee Comments

Mr. Wilfley said it is remarkable that Caltrain is as open with its multifaceted community to which it offers service in terms of how it goes about deciding what to do with itself. This has historically yielded tremendous benefits. Caltrain's efforts to be so open will serve to inform the public about Caltrain's potential problems in the future. He said some people will say Caltrain has cried wolf about its \$30 million deficit and others will understand and digest the situation.

Ms. Richardson said she understands the need for transparency and asked if all negotiations with the JPB agencies could have been done in a way to avoid media fanfare and public fear and mistrust. Ms. Bouchard said Executive Director Michael Scanlon talked about the burgeoning SamTrans issues in the last fiscal year in preparation for FY2011. He said it could be dealt with in two steps or all in one step. This meant addressing \$30 million deficit in FY2011 or taking the path to organize a plan, which was the path taken. She said there is no way information could or would have been shielded in view of transparency with a public agency. If it is recognized that a sustainable source of funding is really the end game, there needs to be a fundamental understanding of how the JPB has been operating to-date.

Cat Tucker said there is divisiveness among the JPB counties about why some counties had more stations shut down than others. This perpetuates negativity and a good public relations effort is needed. She said the worst-case scenario for service changes wasn't crying wolf and was a way of logistically looking at the situation for solutions. She appreciates the outreach efforts in the south county area. She doesn't know if the Joint Powers Agreement could be changed and said a lot of people drive from Hollister and Monterey to take the train from Gilroy.

Mr. Bendix said there is only so much Caltrain and SamTrans staff can do with public relations but he said everyone could send an innocent question to your favorite media including television hotlines or local Peninsula newspapers and ask, "Why, in bad economic times, has Caltrain ridership grown by almost 13 percent."

Ms. Richardson said referencing HSR, there has never been talk about transferring people from San Jose to San Francisco. The suggestion is to upgrade the Caltrain corridor in a way that could accommodate HSR trains. She was at a recent meeting and the discussion included comments about phased implementation, trenching and tunnels. She said HSR has two companies that handle public relations and they don't coordinate information. She said Caltrain should have its own public relations representative on HSR issues.

Ms. Tekchandani asked about positive train control because it would help with push notification and enhance customer satisfaction. Ms. Bouchard said staff is looking to enhance customer information well in advance of that and has talked about the Predictive Arrival Departure System (PADS), which is connected to the dispatch system. The dispatch system is scheduled for implementation in the fall/winter timeframe. PADS would follow within the first two quarters of calendar year 2012, which is the system that will allow information to be pushed out to personal digital assistants.

Gerald Graham said there have been slight, unobjectionable increases in fares but parking fee increases have been disproportional and have increased in the last 10 years from \$1 to a proposed increase to \$4. This represents a 400 percent increase but salaries have probably not doubled or increased four times. It is noted that parking fees are not part of the fare structure but a fee, which is incomprehensible. He said these increases will affect people's ability to use Caltrain.

Chair Jenkins encouraged the CAC to read the JPB minutes on the Caltrain website in order to understand all details involved with JPB financial issues.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting:

Wednesday, May 18, 2011, 5:40 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 2nd Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.