

**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 MARCH 16, 2011**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** T. Bartholomew, M. Bouchard, R. Lake

Chair Bruce Jenkins called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m. Brian Wilfley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minutes**

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

**Public Comment**

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said people can lose their jobs because of proposed cuts to Caltrain service and the blame for this resides with former leadership in San Mateo County who put efforts in BART to the San Francisco International Airport. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) will go bankrupt building BART to San Jose. Caltrain should be allowed to use capital funds for operating the system.

**Chairperson's Report – Bruce Jenkins**

No report

**Update on Caltrain Service Suspensions, Station Closures and Fare Increase for Fiscal Year 2012**

Mr. Wilfley said the memo from the ad hoc committee (Bendix, Tekchandani and Wilfley) was a collaborative effort. CAC members received a copy of the memo for review prior to the meeting. He said the committee stands ready to make whatever changes the CAC deems appropriate.

Director, Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard said a multitude of things have transpired which would be addressed under her staff report. She said the CAC discussion at the meeting is absolutely necessary for staff and she could respond to any comments from discussion of the memo and provide additional information on the topics in her report. The CAC has created resolutions, which sometimes don't leave room for expansive opinion and she wasn't certain that in this particular area, the CAC wants to resolve something. What has been done very appropriately with the memo is for the CAC to outline and frame some of the issues to provide a springboard for discussion that would be reported to the JPB at their April meeting.

Chair Jenkins asked if there would be a vote on the memo. Ms. Bouchard said she understands this is not the intent of the ad hoc committee.

Sepi Richardson said the ad hoc committee did a fabulous job. She was concerned that the committee was formed after the last meeting and the selection of the ad hoc committee should have been done at the meeting. Ms. Bouchard said the last meeting ran well beyond the time many members could remain at the meeting and due to the urgency of the issue the ad hoc committee was formed afterwards.

Gerald Graham said the committee did an excellent job and it is the power of the chair to appoint an ad hoc committee. He submitted a report to cut expenses and improve ridership:

1. Northbound rush hour trains can be terminated at Millbrae, where patrons may transfer to BART if going to San Francisco with a few trains continuing north to serve San Bruno, South San Francisco and Bayshore stations. Southbound non-rush hour trains could be terminated at Mountain View and a transfer made to VTA's light rail, which continues to Diridon Station because few passengers travel beyond Palo Alto.
2. At least one Monday through Friday round trip should be retained for Gilroy service.
3. Certain obstacles to patrons should be modified or abandoned including penalties for unintentional ticket infractions, especially for tourists, foreign language patrons and seniors. Clipper could be improved by keying in the destination zone when tagging on to eliminate tagging on and off problems. There should be the ability for occasional riders to pay for more than 24 hours of parking similar to BART's policy at certain stations.
4. Weekend and evening service must be preserved for workers.
5. There should be recruitment for volunteer station assistants similar to Amtrak to serve at San Francisco, San Jose and Millbrae stations to assist passengers unfamiliar with ticket machines.

Francois Granade said most transit agencies have penalties that are not technically fines; if a person gets caught without a ticket, she or he pays the transaction with the transit agency so no one is taken to court. Caltrain is different and some passengers with ticket issues end up in court and it is not an efficient use of the judiciary system. He said Caltrain is putting an unfair emphasis on preventing problems with non-ticketed passengers. He has seen foreigners receiving help from conductors.

Cat Tucker commended the work of the ad hoc committee. She said her mindset is to advocate for riders, which does not support staff's position. She said the memo should not say the CAC understands the problems and reluctantly supports staff because she advocates for riders; they can't speak for themselves and she must speak for them. She said it is unacceptable to make any cuts and urges the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and other agencies to help fund the issues. If she could vote on the memo, she would vote no because of the tone of the memo.

Ms. Richardson said the CAC voted on past letters.

Mr. Wilfley said the language is a draft memo and the intent was to supply reasoning and language that could be adopted by the committee. He said he would be in favor of voting to adopt or not to adopt as a recommendation of the CAC or as a memo that was accepted by the CAC from the ad hoc committee to allow the memo to go forward in other than draft form.

Ms. Richardson said this letter could go forward from the ad hoc committee or as a letter from the CAC, in which case would require discussion and a vote.

Ms. Bouchard said anything on the agenda is subject to action. She said the ad hoc committee could say it drafted a report and after discussion there could be a vote or vote on a memo with amendments. The intent was to spark discussion.

Chair Jenkins said he understood the memo will be put forth for adoption by the CAC to be forwarded to the JPB.

Mr. Granade said he agrees with Ms. Tucker to have stronger language to express disagreement with the state of things. Something could be lost that is very useful and there is no logic to losing it because Caltrain is an excellent system with excellent fare recovery and growth potential. It is a political problem and no one would choose to cut but it is the role of the CAC and riders to try and defend Caltrain.

Mr. Wilfley said he was not trying to defend or attack the language of the draft memo but the memo reflects the hope that there is a funding adjustment that the worst case scenario doesn't happen. He said if there was to be a comment made on the memo it would be that the situation is terrible and if someone doesn't do something firm and fast it is inevitable, in his mind, that Caltrain will suffer a massive reduction in service in the sense of trains running but utility in the sense of people who give a hoot. He is not in favor of cutting Caltrain but he wants to see money on the table and for someone to step up and say, "Here is \$20 million," or he only sees very bad news.

John Hronowski said he appreciated the draft from the ad hoc committee. He is not in favor of any service cuts. He asked if this could be tabled because Ms. Bouchard said she had information to add to the discussion.

Ms. Bouchard provided current details on Caltrain issues:

- Attendance for the March 3 JPB public hearing on Caltrain's future filled the auditorium and lunchroom across the hall.
- Twenty-five hundred comments have been received on Caltrain issues, which speak to the relevance of the service.
- Of the 2,500 comments, 800 were against proposed closure of 10 stations.
- The 48-train schedule is a worst-case scenario.
- Since the March 3 JPB meeting, staff has been meeting with the MTC and the general managers of the three JPB agencies to overturn every rock. In a recent news article Executive Director of the MTC Steve Heminger said he thought a solution might be close.
- A \$30 million budget gap could only be closed with a combination of all sorts of things.

Ms. Bouchard referred to Ms. Richardson's comment about what is the use of CAC comments if there will be a 48-train schedule scenario. Ms. Bouchard said CAC comments as community members, riders and CAC members are important for staff to understand. If a rock is overturned and \$5 million is found, staff needs to understand where to add service if possible.

- Staff is very confident that there is some measure of funding that will be found that will enable a proposal that is measurably different than the 48-train schedule.

- Staff is working to develop proposals that would serve to maximize additional funding.
- Staff wants to schedule a special CAC meeting the week of March 28 to share a draft service scenario on what might be done given the level of funding that might be attained throughout the next two weeks. This would be the same proposal presented at the April 7 JPB meeting.
- A solution that addresses Caltrain's issues must be in place by July 1, 2011. Typically four months are needed to implement any changes from the time a vote is made and three months are now available for any timetable, connecting shuttles, etc.

Ms. Bouchard said CAC input is key because all input is important in developing a service scenario and staff is looking at things that were previously off the table with the 48-train schedule, which includes serving as many stations as possible and looking at midday and off-peak service, etc.

Ms. Tucker asked where the memo falls into the timelines. Ms. Bouchard said it is important for staff to hear preferences of the CAC in the development of the service plan. It would be valid to adopt the opinion of the CAC to be reported at the April 7 JPB meeting.

#### Public Comment

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, reported:

- Public comment didn't indicate a hue and cry against the possibility of a fare increase.
- Replace the senior discount with a low-income category.
- A bike brought on board should be charged a full fare in addition to the rider's full fare.
- There was no loud public cry to take away the 57-minute Bullet trains and the public may accept the idea of a 70-minute run time with three flavors of 70-minute end-to-end trains to cover almost all the stations.
- While the San Bruno grade separation is underway, a temporary station in San Bruno may not be needed and construction savings could be used to pay out of capital money for a shuttle to Millbrae Intermodal and do the same for the South San Francisco Station project when appropriate.

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said the \$30 million deficit is about one-third of the budget and asked if Caltrain could run at a full schedule for six months and then do the worst-case scenario, which would give Caltrain more time to find money to bridge the budget gap. He said charging bike riders a bike fare could kill bike ridership.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said the 48-train schedule is unacceptable. Caltrain's financial issues stem from SamTrans' inability to provide further subsidy; it's not Caltrain losing ridership and revenue. He is against Caltrain running short trains cutting off north of Millbrae Intermodal or south of Mountain View. There isn't sufficient signage in San Jose and these types of small customer service issues will turn people away. He said station-to-station fare pricing can be done with Clipper, which could eliminate unfair zone pricing.

Mr. Wilfley said the final proposal to put before the JPB is not known because funding is not known. In view of that, any proposal that comes before the JPB will need to be self-consistent and it's difficult to edit out or edit in any one thing. He suggested taking the ad hoc committee memo to staff as input and to incorporate comments made by each CAC member. He said the final recommendation to the JPB may be on the actual presented solution to the problem.

Ms. Bouchard said this was a great suggestion. In terms of getting the point to the JPB, they will see the minutes of this meeting and the next.

Chair Jenkins asked if there would be a special CAC meeting. Ms. Bouchard said staff is looking at a meeting on March 28, 29 or 30.

Ms. Richardson said the memo is too gentle with too many “ifs.” She said people support Caltrain and it is successful but she does not support cuts and has said many times Caltrain needs a stable source of funding. She is very frustrated that nothing has happened year after year until now with a \$30 million deficit. The memo must state firmly that people want Caltrain to operate, stations must be protected and management must do everything possible to find a stable source of funding. Priorities could be listed in a bulleted form in the memo rather than the lovey-dovey approach offered in the memo. She will support staff recommendations and interim steps but does not support sending the memo to the JPB in the form presented to the CAC. Caltrain should not be dependent on employers or the VTA. Station closures and service cuts must stop.

Chair Jenkins suggested Ms. Richardson argue these points at the California Transportation Commission.

Mr. Bendix said he could not see what direct action Ms. Richardson was advocating and asked if she meant shutting the system down if a stable source of funding isn’t found. He said Caltrain is faced with cuts and everything is based on, “if,” because details are not available. He asked that she provide some kind of guess as to what should be done in a general policy way. He said short of details, he could see scrapping the memo and commenting on whatever staff comes up with when they have a budget available.

Ms. Richardson said she supports staff recommendations for the urgency they feel in closing the budget gap. At the same time, she asked what the priority is because people don’t want stations to close.

Mr. Bendix said the CAC can oppose fare cuts, station closures and changes in the schedule across the board in the noblest way, but the CAC will have to say yes to the JPB eventually because that will eventually happen and it’s a matter of selective response.

Mr. Granade said if the memo doesn’t begin with, “This is unacceptable,” and ends with “This is not acceptable,” he would not be inclined to vote for it. He does not want to have to provide an opinion between a bad solution and another bad solution because he is not a professional and may not know. He said staff can do a good job and has done more with less. He prefers to have bullet points in the memo but not a list of preferences. It is important to speak about Caltrain in a proactive, positive attitude. He likes the idea of having propositions that all may not agree with but they are ideas to consider. Caltrain has not reached the elasticity of ridership and may be able to do something for low-income riders.

Mr. Graham said the memo does set priorities and there may be disagreement on the tone presented. He said the CAC may need to agree on priorities and the forms of service cuts, revenue enhancement or expense reductions and perhaps redraft the memo in a different tone.

Ms. Tekchandani said a redraft might not be necessary because it was based on a scenario that is somewhat unlikely. She suggested the CAC hold on this and hear the presentation planned for the special meeting and create a draft based on that presentation. She suggested each member take 60 seconds to voice their final comment on the memo and then close discussion.

Mr. Hronowski said the memo should be tabled until the presentation is heard at the special meeting.

Chair Jenkins asked if the memo should be tabled until after the special meeting. Ms. Bouchard said that is possible and said the memo has suited its purpose to provide good feedback beyond her expectations. She said it would be beneficial to hear a final comment from each member, which would be taken under advisement.

Mr. Hronowski said he is against any service reductions and station closures and does not want trains curtailed in Millbrae or Mountain View. He said the memo should be tabled until after the special meeting presentation.

Mr. Wilfley is satisfied with discussion thus far and tabling consideration of the memo. He reiterated that Caltrain is being asked to make a "Sophie's choice," and it is toying with catastrophe to do so. The fact that Caltrain's benefactors have turned their backs on Caltrain is maybe, "Shame on them and shame on us for not seeing through it before, and not somehow securing dedicated funding." His own opinion has changed in that regard rather dramatically in favor of dedicated funding. He hopes a lot of money is found very soon.

Mr. Granade said he could not vote for any motion that would clearly state that any cuts are acceptable. Caltrain is a successful, growing system with lots of potential and it does not make sense to reduce it. The only solution he would support would be a solution that would not involve cuts. It is a political problem and not the CAC's to solve. The people who are making the political decisions have to assume them.

Ms. Tucker does not support any cuts. She said many citizens in the Gilroy area bought the fact that there are 10 stations in Santa Clara County and VTA has the money to fully fund them. Because of their Joint Powers Agreement, they are not able to fund at the level they should be funding. The question was why Santa Clara couldn't pay for their stations not to be closed and this should be discussed. She agreed with end-to-end pricing. She said another key component is increasing ridership.

Mr. Graham said there are some stations that are not being fully utilized including Hayward Park and there are few cars in that parking lot. The low ridership stations could be used for rush hour trains. There may be other stations that could be closed to save money. He likes the idea of station-to-station pricing. He thinks there should be as much work on the expense side as the revenue side. Mr. Graham thinks Caltrain is underpriced when compared to BART and other systems and feels fare increases are a sensitive thing but thinks two bits are not much to ask.

Ms. Richardson supports staff's suggestions for any interim measure but focus has to be on a stable source of funding. She does not support cuts.

Ms. Tekchandani said in reference to a stable source of funding, she wanted to talk more about the second to last paragraph in the memo, which is customer service. She said it is critical in importance that if there is something on some sort of November ballot in 2012 based on what the press is saying, there has to be a full-out assault on trying to win hearts and minds up and down the Bay Area before anybody casts a vote. She doesn't want Caltrain to be the second best in farebox revenue. She doesn't want to see cuts but the reality may be some. She wants everyone to think about customer service as a really important mindset because sometimes that does not come across when just talking about what should be reduced; this has to be about winning people over before they cast a vote.

Mr. Bendix said he would like to build on those comments with a slightly different spin. Public information is incredibly important. There is a level of misunderstanding, unawareness and foolishness around Caltrain and its achievements. He still hears people talking about bringing BART to the Peninsula. He said there is a big uphill battle and if there are 18 months to help fight that battle, it would be an excellent use of all of our energies.

Chair Jenkins withheld comment for now.

#### **Staff Report – Ms. Bouchard**

- Asked for a hand vote on scheduling a special meeting. Availability is best on March 29 with March 30 as the second choice. This will be confirmed.
- Ridership is not the problem because February was the second month of the fare increase implemented in January and average weekday ridership is up 4.7 percent, which is hovering around a consistent 5 percent increase. February revenue increased 18.3 percent and is up 11.5 percent for the year compared to 2010. Revenue is about \$2 million over budget. This may be helped by gas prices. Anything Caltrain can do in this year is another dollar that can be rolled into next year. Things have been done to control costs within Caltrain including a hiring freeze with the contract operator with the exception of essential positions. The hope is to maintain as much of that ridership as possible moving forward.
- She expressed thanks to the ad hoc committee to accomplish an understanding of the CAC's perspective and to come back for a special meeting.

#### **Committee Comments**

Mr. Graham said there were no trains southbound that anyone working in Silicon Valley could use on President's Day. The first train arrived at 9:29 a.m.

#### **Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting:**

A special meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 29, 2011, 5:40 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA.

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