

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**  
**PENINSULA CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS BOARD (JPB)**  
**SAN MATEO COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING**  
Bacciocco Auditorium, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070

**MINUTES OF APRIL 20, 2016**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** J. Berk, C. Cobey (Chair), A. Lee, G. Scharff, B. Shaw, C. Tucker

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** A. Levin, Y. Mills

**STAFF PRESENT:** J. Averill, M. Bouchard, N. Debessay, J. Lipps, M. Martinez

Chair Chris Cobey called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 16, 2016**

Motion/Second: Scharff/Shaw

Ayes: Lee, Scharff, Shaw, Tucker, Cobey

Absent: Berk, Levin, Mills

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jeff Carter, Millbrae, said the bridge removal at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street started last weekend. Before work started, there were signs stating 22<sup>nd</sup> Street would be closed, and it was not clear that the train station would stay open. Work is being done on the bridge now and one sidewalk on the north side is left open so people can access the station, which is appreciated by the customers that they still have access to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street station.

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, thanked staff for the updated schedule. He hopes it has a dramatic effect on on-time performance (OTP). There seems to be an effort by conductors to announce the stops that limited-stop trains will be making, which is good for customers. He was on Train 152 out of San Francisco, a Bombardier train set, and he could not understand anything that crew was saying over the public announcement system. Some conductors talk into the top of the microphone instead of into the front, and this may be a cause why it is hard to understand the announcements. He said the northbound Churchill crossing in Palo Alto has a jump in the line and may need to be tamped down.

Jonathan Berk arrived at 5:46 p.m.

**COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

Greg Scharff said there was one fatality in February and March. He asked how often a person gets hit by a train by trespassing versus doing it on purpose. Nahom Debessay, Manager, Rail Compliance, said it depends on the circumstances and he does not know what gets reported to the public while the police investigate the situation.

Mr. Scharff asked if the individuals are called trespassers whether or not the hit is intentional. Mr. Debessay said they are not differentiated.

Mr. Scharff said he would like to know the statistics of how many are intentional and how many are accidents so he can tell people Caltrain is safe and has the right procedures in place.

Mr. Berk said he does not understand why doors are kept shut at 4<sup>th</sup> and King and people are not allowed to go from the station to the train. Late running trains are completely out of hand. He said JPB uses a five-minute rule and a 10-minute to count trains late, but if late was defined as even one-second late the way late is meant to be defined, 50 percent of the trains would be considered late. He said he cannot rely on the train arriving at the time it is supposed to.

Mr. Scharff said it would be an interesting to agendize a policy discussion about what late means and what the reasons are behind five minutes or 10 minutes as opposed to exactly on time.

Annie Lee said it would be interesting to see the OTP for peak versus off-peak trains. She thinks peak trains during commute hours will have worse OTP. A different measurement is to weight it by the number of people on the train, which may be a more meaningful statistic. Mr. Debessay said he has numbers for peak hours versus non-peak and can share it.

Ms. Lee said yesterday she was trying to get on Train 376 from San Francisco but there was a service disruption due to a mechanical failure. There are still significant issues with communication at the stations. There were no trains arriving at the station and two peak-hour trains that were full and not leaving the San Francisco station. There were hundreds of people there who had no idea what was happening and received no information about when a train might come, which train it would be or if it would make all local stops. When a train arrived, conductors were not making many announcements, and when they did they were just screaming inside the station. People standing outside the station could not hear the conductors. She said there is probably a public announcement system in the station and the conductors should use it. She said she appreciates the third bike car and is happy that the peak train she takes is replaced by a Bombardier set. It is more bearable than the other train. There is space in the aisles to walk by standees, there are two doors in each car so it is easier to get on and off, and is in general a more pleasant experience.

Cat Tucker asked if the Board is going to fill the San Francisco vacancy on the CAC. Josh Averill, Assistant District Secretary, said they have someone in mind but it is not yet confirmed. Staff anticipates Board action in May.

Brian Shaw said he was on the train that was behind the train that had a mechanical breakdown. The conductors did a great job telling people what was going on and dealing with the situation. He noticed a homeless encampment near 4<sup>th</sup> and King that comes and goes. It has been cleaned up again. He appreciates the people responsible for cleaning that area. He said he is curious to know what criteria the JPB

uses to decide whether a Gallery or Bombardier train set is used and when. His normal train, the 7:12 a.m. out of San Francisco, is now a Gallery, and it is a zoo. It would be nice to understand how this decision is made. The train is much more crowded.

Chair Cobey said he was on a train that was behind a train that experienced a mechanical breakdown, and the conductor's announcements on his train were really good and clear. He said going by the time on a smart phone, the train he normally takes from San Jose north at the end of the day closes the doors at least one minute before the departure time.

Mr. Berk said it is ridiculous for that to happen in San Jose, but it has been cleaned up at 4<sup>th</sup> and King.

#### Public Comment

Roland Lebrun, San Jose, said there was a medical emergency on his train. The train stopped at Redwood City to let the next train go by on the other track, but staff didn't tell the passengers until the other train was gone. The passengers moved to the other platform, but by that time the system recovered and the train showed up on the correct platform, so the passengers missed the train again. The people making announcements were providing information contrary to what was actually happening. Mechanical breakdowns won't get better until the JPB gets new trains. Staff pointed the finger at Transit America Services, Incorporated (TASI), but it is not TASI's fault. The equipment is unreliable. He said when passengers coughed up \$4 million in fares, plus the \$11 million from bonds, customers were told that after the JPB got the new Bombardiers cars, the JPB would break up train sets and provide longer Gallery trains. The money is accounted for and the Bombardier cars are unaccounted for. There has been no news whatsoever.

Jeff Carter, Millbrae, said the doors being closed at 4<sup>th</sup> and King has been going on for ages. He has complained about it before. San Francisco is the only station that has the doors that keep people from getting on the trains. He does not understand why conductors keep the doors closed until a minute or two before the train leaves. He got to the station 30 seconds before the train was supposed to leave, but the station doors were closed and the train was still in station and the conductor told him the train already left.

#### **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Chair Cobey said he reported to the Board on the Brown Act and urged the San Francisco representatives to fill the CAC vacancy.

#### **OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA PROPERTIES AND PROGRAM GROWTH**

Jeremy Lipps, Social Media Officer, presented:

- Social Properties
  - Caltrain has a presence on numerous social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and others
  - Caltrain has 52,009 followers across the primary networks
  - Total monthly impressions in October: 3,425,610
  - Total monthly clicks to website in October: 8,000

Chair Cobey asked what the difference is between Constant Contact and Word Press. Mr. Lipps said Word Press is a short-form paragraph blog platform. Constant Contact is an e-mail management system that staff uses to send out newsletters and event invites, and to communicate with elected officials along the Peninsula.

Mr. Shaw asked if Press Releases are done through Constant Contact. Mr. Lipps said no, they are e-mailed to a media list through Microsoft Outlook.

Chair Cobey asked why staff calls these social media entities "social properties." Mr. Lipps said each one is unique and managed by different companies. They are digital assets that he controls.

Chair Cobey asked if one of Mr. Lipps' responsibilities is to blog. Mr. Lipps said he administrates and distributes the blog, but the content mostly comes from other staff.

Chair Cobey said he saw an article about Bay Area Rapid Transit's (BART) social media. Mr. Lipps said BART has traditionally run a functional twitter account, but recently they broke character and began "speaking the truth." Mr. Lipps said the JPB prides itself on having spoken the truth from the beginning and does not hide reasons for breakdowns. The JPB prides itself on transparency and honesty.

Chair Cobey said Quora is the most informative source of information on Caltrain.

Mr. Berk asked how to find out what is going on when a train is not running. Mr. Shaw said to use Twitter.

Mr. Lipps said he uses @CaltrainMe on Twitter because that group pulls alerts from the Caltrain Twitter feed and from a crowd sourced Twitter feed called @CaltrainStatus. These updates are generated by users on the train. This is a great source to get real-time information.

Mr. Berk asked how far away Caltrain is from having an application where users can put in two stations and find out what train to take. Mr. Lipps said an application like that is in development and is about a year away. It will have Twitter integration, and real-time maps and updates.

Mr. Shaw said Twitter provides that information, but customers have to analyze the data themselves in order to make a decision about whether they should take another train. Caltrain Twitter is a whole lingo.

Ms. Lee said Twitter updates about Caltrain are really hard for the normal person to understand. She has to have a timetable in her other hand to look up the train numbers and abbreviations for all the stations.

- Other Platforms
  - Constant Contact – 2,280 subscribers
  - WordPress – 2,749 monthly visitors

- Expected Growth:
  - More than 100 percent

Mr. Shaw said communications from Caltrain are honest and try to make the information as real-time as possible. Twitter with Caltrain works. It has made a big difference to a lot of people.

Mr. Scharff asked for a breakdown of users on each platform. Mr. Lipps said Twitter is number one and then Facebook.

- #CaltrainSafe Campaign Results
  - Total spent: \$200
  - Total impressions: 12,650
  - Total engagement: 259
  - Cost per engagement: \$0.77
- Cutting Through the Noise
  - Tone is important and the social media officer has a warm way of engaging with customers
- Next Steps
  - Program expansion
    - Hire Social Media Specialist
    - Purchase social media monitoring and response software
    - Increased use of social media to support marketing and service goals
  - Customer service support
    - For every one call to Caltrain's customer service line, nearly 17 customers interact with the agency using social media
    - Customer service social monitoring and one-on-one response/customer support

Ms. Lee asked if social media complaints and concerns get tracked. Mr. Lipps said when he sees trends he can elevate the issue or he may be able to handle it himself. If necessary he will send a link to the customer to file a formal complaint, which has more impact. Sometimes customers are just using social media to vent.

#### Public Comment

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said he runs a transit information website at [transitunlimited.org](http://transitunlimited.org) or [transit.wiki](http://transit.wiki). It covers over 400 agencies. For Caltrain, he tries to integrate live feeds from 511 about real train times and Twitter feeds. Besides this, there are also applications for train fans to hear railroad radio. When things happen, he listens on the application to what is going on between dispatchers and train crews. Sometimes he updates Twitter with that information. This will tell him when single tracking is occurring, and which train by train number is being instructed to move or hold.

Roland Lebrun, San Jose, said he does not have a Twitter or Facebook account. He gets e-mail notifications from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Altamont Corridor Express, and Capitol Corridor. He asked why he can't get them from Caltrain

when something happens. Impressions are peaking because of mechanical failures and breakdowns. The JPB should focus on fixing breakdowns. This is a waste of the CAC's time. He said he has to drive to these meetings because the last train out of San Carlos does not stop at Tamien Station, and the CAC should be focusing on that type of issue rather than tweets.

Chair Cobey said he gets text and e-mail alerts that tell him when there are incidents on the line. It also tells him about breakdowns and equipment changes.

Mr. Lipps said it would be ideal to fix the trains, but until then he can provide valuable information to the 55,000 Twitter followers. Information in the tweets is very valid and the people reading them value them.

Mr. Scharff said Mr. Lipps is doing a great job. He has heard many different social media presentations and this is one of the better ones. He is impressed with Mr. Lipps.

Ms. Tucker said she remembers when this information was not on Twitter and can see the long-term benefit of this program.

#### **STAFF REPORT**

Nahom Debessay, Manager, Rail Compliance, said a five-page staff report is included in the agenda packet.

Chair Cobey said he appreciates the comparative data from the previous year. He would like to see the individual last 12 months of OTP data to see if there is a trend.

Mr. Shaw said he hopes as the issues in the customer experience taskforce section get worked on the CAC will receive updates. He is most concerned about the incident management issue. He appreciates this is part of the taskforce's workload, but he would like a written memo or a presentation and to have it agendaized at a future meeting. This committee should not be providing technical information, but should be a sounding board.

Chair Cobey said there are six subheads under the taskforce update and all say the taskforce is spearheading efforts to do various things. He would like to know where progress has been made on these issues.

Mr. Berk said every one of the CAC's requests has been prioritized and it shows real progress.

Ms. Tucker said it is excellent that these are being documented. She would like to see more accountability. Everything on the list says "short term." Maybe some have already been addressed. She asked how hard it would be to say instead of six to 18 months, more accountability instead of everything being done in the 18<sup>th</sup> month. She suggested time points with expectations during that six to 18-month window. Mr. Debessay said things will be clearer when staff shares their progress with the CAC.

Mr. Scharff asked how many people are on the taskforce. He asked if TASI is the consultant. Mr. Debessay said TASI is the operator. The taskforce consists of employees from the JPB and TASI and has representatives from each department.

Mr. Scharff asked how the taskforce works and if it meets on a regular basis. Mr. Debessay said they meet as a committee bi-weekly.

Michelle Bouchard, Chief Operating Officer, Rail, said the taskforce was launched after an incident that occurred in September that brought to light things about the customer experience that were not satisfactory. The taskforce has numerous tracks, including incident response, conductor training, fares, and others. The executive director is very keen on improving the customer experience on Caltrain. This is how the JPB will do business going forward. A subgroup meets on whatever frequency needed to accomplish their goals. It depends on the topics being discussed and how many people are involved. This is a small organization with many interdisciplinary issues. Customer experience is the intersection of many things including communications, operations, and others. The incident response taskforce subcommittee will have many more operations people from TASI and from JPB, whereas the customer survey subcommittee will have a different cross section of the group.

Mr. Berk said he is happy to see progress is being made.

#### Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Millbrae, said it sounds like the taskforce has no representation from the CAC. He asked if there is a forum for the taskforce to take input from the CAC and customers so they can get more input regarding Caltrain incidents and service. This CAC is the most productive generation of CACs. There is mention of the 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue grade separation and moving the Hillsdale station farther north. He asked why it is necessary. This moves the station farther away from bus connections. It is difficult getting from the train to the bus at Hillsdale because customers have to navigate Hillsdale Boulevard over to the shopping center. Moving it north will make access even more difficult. He said connecting with SamTrans buses at Millbrae is very difficult.

Roland Lebrun, San Jose, said 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue does not need grade separating. They are trying to connect a new shopping center to Bay Meadows and are using this as an excuse to elevate the tracks and open up 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> avenues. If it ends up with four tracks there and makes it possible to have a midline overtake he would support it. He said the Board was presented with the Customer Satisfaction Survey, but it should have been presented to the CAC. It was the worst ever survey in the history of Caltrain. He said a Gallery train broke down and was stuck in the middle of the tracks, and behind it was a full Bombardier train. He said the JPB used the Bombardier train to push the Gallery train out of the way, but the customers on the Bombardier train had to get off the train. Behind the Bombardier was another Gallery train, which was already full, so the customers who got off the Bombardier train had nowhere to go and there were a bunch of angry customers.

Ms. Tucker said there are three major items for the May meeting and asked if they are time sensitive or if they can be moved. Mr. Averill said the Caltrain Modernization update and the budgets are time sensitive, but he will have to check on the survey.

Mr. Shaw said it might be better to move the survey to June so the CAC can give it enough time for discussion and will not lose a quorum.

Mr. Scharff said perhaps the survey can be agendized for May and if the CAC runs out of time it can be bumped to June if it is not an inconvenience to staff.

**DATE, TIME AND LOCATION OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

May 18, 2016 at 5:40 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building,  
2nd Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA.

Adjourned at 6:49 p.m.