



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of March 5, 2026

Correspondence as of March 4, 2026

Subject

1. BART Board adopts Alternative Service Plan outlining budget balancing details
2. Re: Request for Timeline on Quiet Car Pilot
3. March 5 Item #5 Public Comment (South County Connector Caltrain Service)

From: Mark Nagales <mark.nagales@bart.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 11:10 AM
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Cc: Navdeep Dhaliwal; Bradley Dunn; Mark Nagales
Subject: BART Board adopts Alternative Service Plan outlining budget balancing details

Some people who received this message don't often get email from mark.nagales@bart.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Caltrain Board Members and Staff,

We appreciate your continued interest in BART's budget planning. Yesterday, the BART Board voted to adopt an Alternative Service Plan outlining a budget balancing strategy for Fiscal Year 2027 and 2028. Details can be found in the press release below.

If you would like to schedule a briefing in the coming weeks, please let me know.



Date: 02/26/2026

Contact:
BARTmedia@bart.gov

BART Board adopts Alternative Service Plan outlining budget balancing details

On Thursday, Feb. 26, the BART Board of Directors adopted an Alternative Service Plan outlining specific budget balancing details to solve a \$367M deficit for the next fiscal year if no new funds become available to BART. BART is facing a structural deficit of \$350M to \$400M because ridership is still down 50%

compared to pre-pandemic levels and BART's current funding model relies heavily on passenger fares.

The plan includes specific cuts and financial strategies needed to balance both the FY27 (July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027) and FY28 (July 1, 2027-June 30, 2028) budgets. The plan includes service cuts, station closures, fare increases, a 40% reduction in system support services, laying off 1,200 employees, and a series of deferrals and one-time resources. The plan does not name specific stations to be closed and makes clear the BART Board will be responsible for all decisions on station closures.

BART has already made budget cuts across all departments and instituted a series of cost controls, including rightsizing service, labor savings, operational efficiencies, and reducing BART's office space footprint. At the same time, BART has also worked to increase revenue by installing new fare gates, leasing out BART parking lots, and offering new fare products such as Clipper BayPass. View a detailed list of cost savings implemented by BART at bart.gov/scalcli

Alternative Service Plan Details

To take place in January 2027:

- 3-line service (Yellow, Blue, and Orange line service only, with limited peak service in only the peak commute direction on the Red and Green lines).
- 30-minute frequencies on every line.
- Closing at 9pm seven days a week.
- This service plan represents a 63% reduction in train hours.
- 30% fare and parking fee increases (the estimated average fare would increase from \$4.98 to \$6.38).
- Target approximately \$30M in savings over 6 months from non-service budget reductions to fleet and non-fleet maintenance, police, cleaning, and administrative support functions.
- Continue deferrals of priority capital allocations and retiree medical contributions.
- Balance remainder of FY27 with one-time resources and financial deferrals.

Following the January 2027 cuts, staff will continuously assess ridership and revenue impacts and the performance of all District functions to determine if further reductions can be safely and legally implemented.

To take place in July 2027 if reasonably safe:

- Target over \$175M in annual cost reductions through a cumulative 70% reduction in service hours:
- Maintain 3-line service, 30-minute frequencies on each line, closing at 9pm.

- Close up to 15 stations and/or up to 25% of system track miles.
- The BART Board will be responsible for all decisions on station or line segment closures.
- Increase fares and parking fees up to a cumulative 50%. The estimated average fare would increase to \$7.26.
- Target annual operating expense savings of more than a cumulative \$130M from non-service budget reductions to fleet and non-fleet maintenance, police, cleaning, and administrative support functions.
- Continue to defer retiree health contributions; defer most remaining capital allocations.

Contingency:

- If at any point it is determined BART can't safely or legally operate with available resources, stop passenger service,
- Use existing District tax revenues to secure system assets.
- Work to determine system's future.

Use of the State Loan

BART can't use state loan money to avoid station closures and service cuts if no new revenue becomes available because without new revenue, there is no way to pay the loan back. The state loan primarily helps with cash flow if a November 2026 transit funding measure is successful. It is a bridge loan that gives BART reassurances money will be available to continue to deliver the best service possible until the sales tax dollars from the successful ballot measure become available for BART's use. This is projected to happen in July 2027 but could take longer. If a funding measure succeeds, BART will use \$97M in loan funds to help balance the FY27 budget.

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Remote: Thursdays & Fridays

From: [Helene Grossman](#)
To: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Request for Timeline on Quiet Car Pilot
Date: Monday, March 2, 2026 6:36:33 PM

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Thanks very much! This looks wonderful!

Could you let me know what date/timeframe we can expect this to roll out? It says 2-3 months from final internal sign-off. Has that sign-off happened yet, or when will it happen?

Thank you,

Helene Grossman

On Thu, Feb 26, 2026 at 9:02 AM Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com> wrote:

Dear Helene Grossman,

Your message to the Caltrain Board of Directors was forwarded to me for response. A copy of this correspondence will also be shared with the Board. Thank you for following up and for sharing your thoughtful perspective regarding the Quiet Car pilot.

For the most recent update on this item, we encourage you to refer to the presentation provided to the Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee on February 18. The presentation includes information regarding the status of the Quiet Car pilot exploration and next steps. You may review it here: <https://www.caltrain.com/media/36640/download>

Thank you again for reaching out and for your support of Caltrain.

Sincerely,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Helene Grossman <helenegrossman@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2026 2:45:35 AM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Board (@[caltrain.com](#)) <Board@caltrain.com>
Subject: Request for Timeline on Quiet Car Pilot

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Dear Members of the Caltrain Board,

I am writing to follow up on the Quiet Car pilot that Caltrain committed to exploring in

August. I was told that Caltrain aimed to "roll it out in the coming months," but it has now been six months, and there has been no visible progress or timeline shared. What is the current status, and when can riders expect next steps?

For many of us, a Quiet Car would be truly life-changing. My current commute often involves switching seats multiple times per ride to avoid extended phone conversations. What should be productive or relaxing time becomes stressful. A clearly designated quiet space would allow riders to work, study, read, or simply relax without disruption. It would make an enormous difference in the daily experience of thousands of commuters.

Ironically, I have recently found myself driving instead of taking Caltrain simply to guarantee a quiet environment. I would much prefer to return to rail -- and a Quiet Car pilot would meaningfully influence that choice.

This proposal is modest and low-cost. As a pilot, it does not require a full systemwide overhaul -- just some signage / expectations posted on the onboard digital screens. The purpose of a pilot is to test, gather feedback, and iterate quickly. But without a timeline or plan after six months, the concept of a "pilot" loses its meaning.

Could the Board provide a projected timeline so riders understand what to expect?

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this request. I look forward to seeing this promising project move forward!

Sincerely,
Helene Grossman

From: [Council Member Zachary Hilton](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: March 5 Item #5 Public Comment (South County Connector Caltrain Service)
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 3:18:43 PM
Attachments: [CM Zach Hilton South County Caltrain Service-8.pdf](#)

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Caltrain Board,

Public Comment Letter attached for March 5 Item #5 Public Comment **(South County Connector Caltrain Service)**

Zach Hilton
Gilroy City Council Member
www.zachhilton.com
#HiltonForCouncil @zachhilton_ca



ZACH HILTON

Gilroy City Council Member

Livable Gilroy for All

March 3, 2026

Caltrain South County Connector

I've seen the **January Caltrain South County Connector** ridership numbers (**Monday-Friday 4 Trains North in morning and 4 Trains South in evening**) Gilroy 133 riders/day, San Martin 38 riders/day, Morgan Hill 143 riders/day, Blossom Hill 83 riders/day, Capitol 44 riders/day. It's not fiscally responsible to fund Caltrain South County Connector at **\$15 million for 441 riders/day M-F** when they aren't serving the current commute travel patterns and while VTA is facing a fiscally constrained FY26 and FY27 Transit Operating Budget. Caltrain is heading into a deficit for FY27 that can only be solved by them taking a State Loan. These five stations south of Tamien are not electrified and Caltrain doesn't own the tracks, Union Pacific Railroad does. South County Caltrain service doesn't have the impact needed to relieve congestion on U.S. Route 101 today or historically.

Although VTA Staff has stated they will not cut frequent/daily Gilroy VTA bus service in order to keep Caltrain service, I remain concerned that Caltrain Staff will still try and pursue this option. All while VTA is facing a fiscally constrained FY26 and FY27 Transit Operating Budget and Caltrain is heading into a deficit for FY27 too. The demographic of riders I am currently hearing from that use VTA vs South County Caltrain are contrasted between those whose incomes need frequent/daily public transportation on VTA for their jobs, groceries, healthcare, and aging in place, may be sacrificed for those with significantly more means that are attending private prep-schools and commuting an average of 3 days a week on Caltrain.

We continue to talk about this at our South County VTA agenda preparation meetings with VTA staff and Caltrain staff. Caltrain and VTA aren't focused just on Gilroy and Morgan Hill. We are focused on moving the most people on mass transit from Gilroy to Diridon. We track and budget the ridership/cost from both agencies and have been comparing them for a long time. When ridership is low, services get cut, that's a given.

Seated capacity for each of the 4 diesel trains that make up the **South County Connector** as configured currently (3 cars, including 1 bike car) is 394-415, with space for 24 bikes. Each car has between 114 and 144 seated capacities and the standing room capacity ranges from 472-498. **Total max seated capacity of the South County Connector service is 1,660.** Standing room max capacity 1,992. Caltrain FY26 cost of South County Connector from a calculation in April 2025 is

\$14,451,619. More trains or increased frequency will increase that cost. That's not worth it for the current or future budget cycle. Caltrain operations should not be funded from VTA Transit funds, 2000 Measure A funds, or 2016 Measure B Caltrain Corridor Capacity. There are no grants that would be beneficial in funding this current level of service and ridership. Caltrain is currently using Federal funds to operate the South County Connector and that is about to run out.

Gilroy isn't the starting point for traffic any longer. San Benito County and Monterey County drivers contribute to it as well. In 2023 [Caltrans Average Annual Daily Traffic \(AADT\) at Cochrane in Morgan Hill was 142,000 vehicles per day](#) and in 2019 Caltrans Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) at Cochrane in Morgan Hill was 148,000 vehicles per day. **South County Connector riders don't relieve traffic congestion as they represent 0.003% of the vehicles per day.**

Per the [1996 Restated Joint Powers Agreement](#) (JPA Sections A and B) make VTA "responsible for all net operating costs of the Gilroy service" and "obtaining all Gilroy Service capital projects". It does not obligate Caltrain or VTA to operate service to Gilroy, though it assumed there would always be a market.

The State provided funding for one battery powered train (not four) which will serve as a pilot and it is supposed to run on the electrified system from Diridon to SF. The last update I received is this is not going to happen in FY26 or FY27.

VTA, Caltrain, and South County communities do minimal to increase Caltrain South County Connector ridership, so the expectation that ridership on Caltrain will increase is not a reality today. It's not fiscally responsible to fund \$15 million for 441 riders/day M-F. I am proud to represent Gilroy on the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and Caltrain Local Policy Maker Group (Alternate) (LPMG) in 2026.

Sincerely,



Zach Hilton
Gilroy City Council Member

www.zachhilton.com

#HiltonForCouncil @zachhilton_ca