JPB CAC

CORRESPONDENCE AS OF

March 17, 2026

From:	Daniel Karpelevitch
To:	Caltrain, Bac (@caltrain.com); cacsecretary [@caltrain.com]; Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject:	The "new" bike rules, and an off-ramp from the PR disaster
Date:	Sunday, March 15, 2026 7:03:57 AM

Dear Caltrain Board, CAC, and BATAC,

It's not often that esoteric details of bike rules on a train make the headlines of major newspapers. But in this case, all publicity is not good publicity. Talk of Caltrain being anti-parent for "banning child seats" is not good for Caltrain. We have already heard that Caltrain is "walking back" some of the policies for now. I would like to share my proposal for a modification to the rules that would allow them to still meet the goals of the organization while not causing a media firestorm or rider backlash.

Make the rules apply only to Limited and Express trains. This year, the only trains to have gotten an alert that the bike cars were at capacity were Limited and Express trains. Enforcing the rules on Local trains does not benefit anyone as there is not an issue with capacity. Also, allowing wider or longer bikes on Locals allows riders with those bikes to have a (slower) alternative to the Limited or Express train that they may have preferred to take. If someone who wasn't aware of the rules shows up at a station, they can be gently redirected to take next train which is not far behind, rather than being stuck with no options.

This would help heal the relationship with the public, which currently feels betrayed by the way the rules were framed and shared.

Best regards,
Daniel Karpelevitch

From: Brian Silverman
To: cacsecretary [@caltrain.com]
Subject: Downtown San Mateo and Redwood City grade crossings
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 10:24:26 PM

Hi CAC,

The downtown San Mateo and Redwood City grade crossings seem to have remained their degraded states after the changes last year, and I would like to bring your attention to the impacts to on time performance and potentially safety.

Southbound trains often leave San Mateo station very slowly, and Redwood City station somewhat slowly. I frequently ride various (weekday evening peak) southbound trains, and I haven't seen any consistent patterns across trains or particular weeks. Trains always go slow until they through all the grade crossings and then immediately accelerate more rapidly. When I watch out the window, the gates are usually still wobbling like they just finished coming down as the leading end of the train entered the grade crossings, although it's hard to tell from the passenger windows. I also observe engineers blowing the horn before the doors are closed at San Mateo to get the gates down in advance.

Some trains maintain a slow speed through all of the grade crossings, while other trains will gradually accelerate through all of the crossings. The acceleration is always less than normal when leaving every other station, and the acceleration always increases the instant the train enters the final grade crossing.

If my understanding of the crossing optimization system is correct, the reason the engineers do this is because the system prohibits accelerating towards a crossing to ensure sufficient warning time, and the engineers are required to obey that or PTC will activate and stop the train. Obviously it's not possible to leave a station with literally no acceleration, but it seems some engineers navigate this conflict differently than others. Some seem to minimize acceleration and speed throughout, while others accelerate gradually to time the train to enter each grade crossing just after the gates come down. Does this gradual acceleration, timed to arrive just after the gates are down, degrade the safety margins designed into the system? If not, could all engineers be trained on the procedure to reduce delays to trains and grade crossing users?

More fundamentally, the crossing optimization system seems counterproductive in these locations because the trains going slower results in more gate down time than if the train accelerated and cleared the crossings faster. Maybe the system could be disabled or modified so that slow-moving southbound trains activate all the crossings immediately?

Thank you for helping make Caltrain better,
Brian Silverman