



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of October 1, 2026

Correspondence as of September 25, 2026

Subject

1. National Survey of Transit Fare Enforcement — Response Needed
2. Re: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response – *Corresponder response*
3. Re: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response – *Staff response*
4. RE: National Survey of Transit Fare Enforcement — Response Needed – *Staff response*
5. September 17th - South County Connector Issues
6. VTA's BART Phase II: October 2026 Construction Update
7. Tonight on Caltrain after giants game
8. What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer
9. Re: What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer – *Staff response*
10. Re: September 17th - South County Connector Issues – *Staff response*
11. Re: Tonight on Caltrain after giants game – *Staff response*
12. Draft Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study Report

From: [Eccleston, Tucker](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@caltrain.com\]](#); [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Cc: [HASNINE, MD SAMI](#); [Badhon, Farhan Anjum](#)
Subject: National Survey of Transit Fare Enforcement — Response Needed
Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2026 5:00:51 AM

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Hi Caltrain Board and Secretary's Office,

My name is Tucker Eccleston and I'm a researcher at Virginia Tech. We're working with the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) to conduct a national study of transit fare enforcement policies, technologies, and outcomes (TCRP Project A-54).

Although this message is being sent to Caltrain's general board and secretary addresses, we are specifically hoping that Theodore Burgwyn, Chief Operating Officer and/or Bruce Thompson, Fare Programs Operations Manager can respond to the following survey (linked below) or direct it to the appropriate person. Given their roles, we'd especially value their perspectives on Caltrain's fare enforcement policies, fare-program operations, and related practices. The results will help the TCRP produce guidance for the transit fare enforcement policies and methods of the future.

Survey: https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50AXHH9b6hHx98a

This survey has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, and you are welcome to share with colleagues of a similar background. If you have any questions, you can reply back here or email Dr. Md Sami Hasnine at hasnine@vt.edu. We're appreciative of your consideration and participation.

Kind Regards,
Tucker Eccleston, EIT

BS '26 | MS '27
Virginia Tech Civil Engineering
Graduate Research Assistant, *The Hasnine Lab*
President, *ITE Student Chapter at Virginia Tech*
tuckereccleston@vt.edu

From: [Roan Weigert](#)
To: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response
Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2026 1:30:16 PM

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Dear Caltrain BOD Public Support Team,

Thank you for your response. However, for the record, it has been a full month since my August 17 report, well beyond your 7–10 business-day timeframe.

Best,
Roan Weigert

On Wed, Sep 16, 2026 at 10:04 AM Caltrain BOD Public Support
<CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com> wrote:

Dear Roan Weigert,

Thank you for contacting the Caltrain Board of Directors and for taking the time to share your concerns regarding onboard Wi-Fi service.

We acknowledge receipt of your correspondence and the concerns you raised regarding your experience on Train 313, as well as your previous reports. Your comments have been noted and were shared with the appropriate parties for awareness and review.

Regarding your question about response times, our standard response timeframe for website submissions is 7–10 business days.

Additionally, our records show the following related contacts:

- Customer Service Recording Form: 1018344 – voicemail left on 8/3
- Customer Service Recording Form: 1018867 – call placed on 8/3

Thank you again for bringing this matter to our attention. We appreciate your engagement and will ensure your comments are directed to the appropriate staff for follow-up.

Best,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Roan Weigert <weigert.roan@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, August 17, 2026 10:18:14 AM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)

To: Board (@[caltrain.com](mailto:board@caltrain.com)) <board@caltrain.com>

Subject: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response

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Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

I am writing to place on the public record a recurring service failure on Caltrain's electrified fleet: the onboard Wi-Fi is repeatedly non-functional.

Most recent incident: Train 313, southbound from San Francisco to San Jose, departing 9:55 AM on Sunday, August 17, 2026. The Wi-Fi was completely inoperable for the duration of my trip. I had an important business meeting scheduled during this ride that I was unable to conduct as a result.

This is not an isolated event. I have now reported this same problem three times:

1. Two prior reports submitted via the feedback form on caltrain.com. Neither received a response.
2. Onboard, the train crew told me Wi-Fi issues are not aware and offered no path to resolution.

Caltrain publicly advertises free onboard Wi-Fi as a core amenity of the electrified service, on caltrain.com/wi-fi, in the electric train FAQ, and in the agency's own service announcements. Riders like me plan work travel around that published commitment. When the amenity fails repeatedly, and when both the online feedback channel and onboard staff decline responsibility, the advertised service is effectively fictional.

I respectfully request the following:

1. A written staff response addressing the measured Wi-Fi uptime on the electric fleet, and on Train 313's trainset specifically.

2. An explanation of why my two prior website reports received no reply, and what the standard response time commitment is.
3. Clarification of which department owns onboard Wi-Fi reliability, so crews stop redirecting riders to nowhere.
4. A remediation plan and timeline.

I understand this correspondence becomes part of the Board's public reading file, and I welcome that. I am also prepared to raise this during public comment at the next Board meeting if a substantive response is not received.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Roan Weigert



From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: [Roan Weigert](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response
Date: Thursday, September 17, 2026 9:41:57 AM

Dear Roan Weigert,

Thank you for following up. You are correct, and we sincerely apologize that it took a full month to respond to your August 17 report. We understand your frustration, as this was well beyond our usual 7–10 business-day response timeframe.

For future formal complaints, please submit your report through our [online contact form](#). This allows the report to be formally tracked and routed to the appropriate team for a response.

Again, we apologize for the delay and appreciate your patience.

Sincerely,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Roan Weigert <weigert.roan@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2026 1:29 PM
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Subject: Re: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response

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From: Roan Weigert <weigert.roan@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2026 10:18:14 AM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: Board (@[caltrain.com](mailto:board@caltrain.com)) <board@caltrain.com>
Subject: Recurring Wi-Fi Failure on Electric Fleet - Train 313, Aug 17 - Third Report, No Response

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Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Roan Weigert



Roan Weigert

628-246-6400

From: [Jason Dayvault](#)
To: [Eccleston, Tucker](#); [cacsecretary \[@caltrain.com\]](#); [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Cc: [HASNINE, MD SAMI](#); [Badhon, Farhan Anjum](#)
Subject: RE: National Survey of Transit Fare Enforcement — Response Needed
Date: Thursday, September 17, 2026 3:07:33 PM

Good afternoon Mr. Eccleston,

Thank you very much for reaching out.

Ted Burgwyn, Caltrain's COO, has agree to participate in the survey below. We will reach out directly if we have any questions.

Best wishes in your research!

All the best,
Jason

Jason Dayvault, Business Operations Project Manager (he/him)

166 N Rollins Rd, Millbrae, CA 94030

Cell: 650.730.7415 | Email: dayvaultj@caltrain.com

Website: [Caltrain](#)

Caltrain logo with Safety Tagline



From: Eccleston, Tucker <tuckereccleston@vt.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2026 5:00 AM
To: [cacsecretary \[@caltrain.com\]](#) <cacsecretary@caltrain.com>; [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#) <board@caltrain.com>
Cc: [HASNINE, MD SAMI](#) <hasnine@vt.edu>; [Badhon, Farhan Anjum](#) <farhananjum@vt.edu>
Subject: National Survey of Transit Fare Enforcement — Response Needed

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tuckereccleston@vt.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Hi Caltrain Board and Secretary's Office,

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Kind Regards,
Tucker Eccleston, EIT

BS '26 | MS '27
Virginia Tech Civil Engineering
Graduate Research Assistant, *The Hasnine Lab*
President, *ITE Student Chapter at Virginia Tech*
tuckereccleston@vt.edu

From: [Tyler McDowall](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: September 17th - South County Connector Issues
Date: Thursday, September 17, 2026 7:38:54 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tyler.mcdowall@live.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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514 was ~10 minutes late to San Jose, 814 left expecting 816 to accommodate so passengers waited 30 minutes for 816. When it arrived, it encountered a safety system failure and was annulled. Passengers were then forced to wait for 820. There's an hour between 816 and 820.

The end result is 514 passengers waiting 1.5 hours for their connection because 814 didn't wait.

- Why does southbound SCC only wait 10 minutes for their timed transfer? Waiting limits make sense for northbound EMUs waiting for SCC because EMUs have other timed connections and schedules to keep, there's also more frequent trains available. Going to south county has a limited number of trains, with at least 30 to 60 minutes between.
- 816 came from the Caltrain maintenance yard direction - did Caltrain know it was having issues before it entered service? I noticed that there were no SCC trains at Diridon even though 3 trains were still scheduled to run tonight.
- Does Caltrain regret leasing the rest of their spare diesels to other agencies? Can Caltrain get any of the trains back to help with spares? At the most recent CAC meeting, Caltrain staff said they have 2 spares. One had one diesel with chronic issues and another being repaired after debris damaged air brake equipment resulting in no spares.

Sincerely,
Tyler McDowall

From: VTA BART Phase II <vtabart@vtabsv.com>
Sent: Friday, September 18, 2026 4:00 PM
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: VTA's BART Phase II: October 2026 Construction Update

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**BART SILICON VALLEY
PHASE II EXTENSION PROJECT**

October 2026 Construction Update

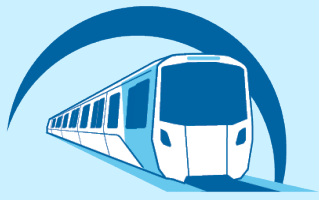


[VTA's BART Silicon Valley Phase II Extension Project's October 2026 Construction Update](#) has just been published!

Learn about recent and upcoming construction activities around the Project site, including construction progress made in September 2026, as well as anticipated work in October 2026.

Have a question for us about Phase II?

Visit www.vtabart.org or email us vtabart@vtabsv.com



BART SILICON VALLEY PHASE II EXTENSION PROJECT

vtabart@vtabsv.com

(408) 321-2345 BART Silicon Valley Hotline



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2830 De La Cruz Blvd
1st Floor
Santa Clara, CA 95050

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From: [Rebecca Regnart](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Tonight on Caltrain after giants game
Date: Monday, September 21, 2026 10:39:23 PM
Attachments: [IMG_3715.png](#)

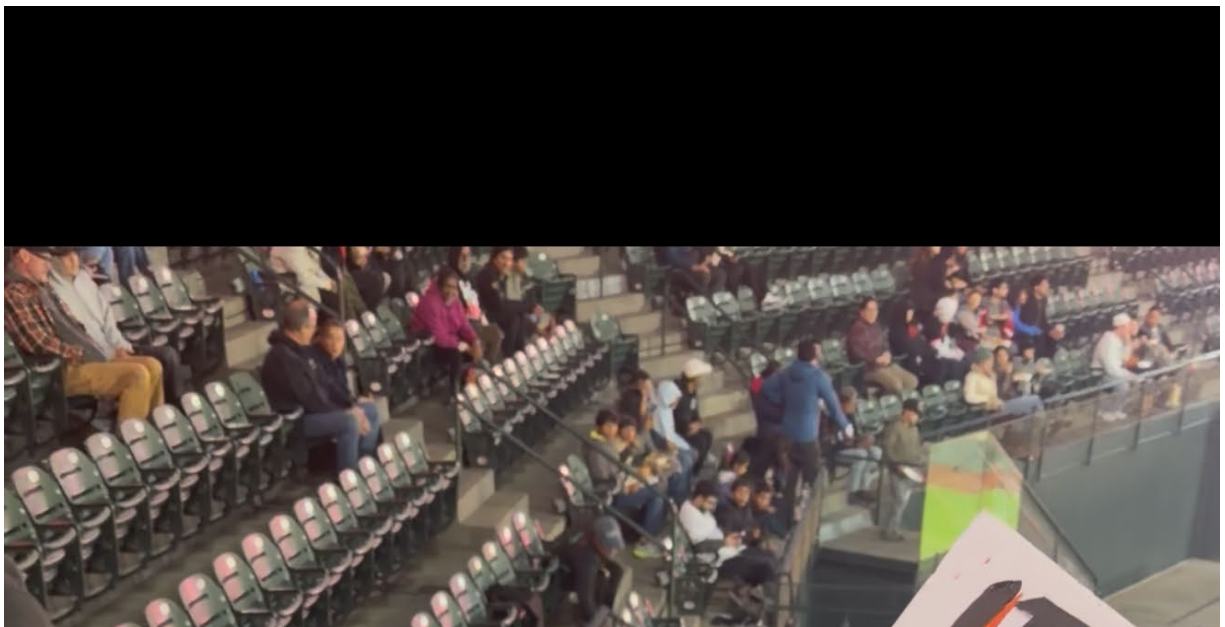
Some people who received this message don't often get email from rareg083@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Hello,

We live one block up from the San Bruno Caltrain station and ride the train sparingly but have always had positive experiences. Today was my 5 year old son's birthday, and we took him to the giants game to celebrate and took the train in. We were some of the first people to board the train home (9:25pm train) and found seats close to the doors on bottom level. After one or two stops a couple came on the train who appeared possibly homeless, with large bags of belongings which were spilling out everywhere. They were told to move their baggage out of the doorway and they were mad that we had a stroller (I also have a 10 month old daughter). They were swearing a lot saying my f-ing stroller is in the way and there is no room for their stuff, etc. We asked them kindly several times to not swear in front of our children but they didn't listen. They were also warned repeatedly to stop. Shortly after they were speaking loudly to one another using the word "faggot" repeatedly, upsetting other people riding on the train. I feel like they should have not been allowed to stay on the train, they did not seem mentally stable and my 5 year old told me when we got home "now I know what bad words are, mama". We had an amazing day and time at the game, I'm trying not to let this experience ruin our night but I had to pass along what happened. Next time we will consider driving in, which is a shame since we live so close to the train and that's the most convenient method of transportation to the park.

Rebecca Ramos





From: [Roland Lebrun](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Cc: [MTC-ABAG Info](#); [Baltao, Elaine \[board.secretary@vta.org\]](#); [SFCTA Board Secretary](#); [SFCTA CAC](#); [cacsecretary \[caltrain.com\]](#)
Subject: What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer
Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 4:11:21 AM

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Gemini response

During the preliminary testing and commissioning phases of the **Caltrain Battery-Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU)** demonstration project, **battery thermal runaway propagation testing** was identified as one of the primary technical and safety risk factors. [1, 2]

The issues tracking around this specific testing phase revolve around the following core concerns:

1. The Core Concern: Thermal Runaway Cascade

A propagation test evaluates whether a catastrophic failure—specifically **thermal runaway**—in a single lithium-ion battery cell or module will cascade and spread to adjacent cells or modules within the large on-board traction battery packs. In large-scale passenger rail applications, containing an isolated cell failure to prevent a wider pack fire is crucial for rolling stock safety certification. [3, 4]

2. "First-of-its-Kind" Design Complications

Because this is a national demonstration project featuring the world's first **bi-level battery-equipped KISS trainset** from Stadler, there is no preexisting domestic blueprint for passing these specific structural and safety standards. The physical configuration—a **four-car trainset where passenger cars are paired alongside dense battery and power housing components**—means that energy containment and mitigation protocols must be designed and validated from scratch to satisfy stringent general railroad safety regulations. [3, 5, 6]

3. Impact on Project Timeline and Risks

As highlighted in Caltrain's recent **Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB)** project updates, battery technology and its associated propagation validation remain top-tier project risks alongside Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor alignment and supply chain/tariff impacts. Delays or structural adjustments required to pass the propagation metrics directly influence the timeline for moving the BEMU from standard overhead contact system (OCS) electrified testing into its intended non-electrified trial service down to Gilroy and Salinas. [1, 2, 3, 7]

Would you like to explore how **Caltrain and Stadler** plan to address these design risks, or do you want more details on the planned **Gilroy and Salinas demonstration routes**? [3]

[1] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[2] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[3] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[4] <https://belmontscientific.com>

[5] <https://www.railwayage.com>

[6] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[7] <https://www.caltrain.com>

Can you compare how Roland LeBrun's BEL proposal could potentially be safer than Caltrain's BEMU in a battery fire event?

Regional rail advocate **Roland LeBrun** has frequently lobbied the **Caltrain Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB)** to abandon the Stadler BEMU pilot. Instead, he advocates for utilizing heavy **Battery-Electric Locomotives (BELs)**—such as those manufactured by [Wabtec](#) or [Progress Rail](#)—to haul standard, unpowered passenger coaches. [1, 2]

From a fire-safety engineering standpoint, **LeBrun's BEL proposal features several structural safety advantages over Caltrain's BEMU configuration during a thermal runaway fire event:**

1. Complete Physical Separation from the Passenger Cabin

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** The Stadler BEMU integrates heavy traction batteries directly into a passenger-carrying trainset. In its current layout, batteries are positioned inside an attached "power car" or converted cab cars, putting massive energy packs immediately adjacent to or under passenger areas. **If a thermal runaway cascade occurs, poisonous gas, extreme heat, and fire are a direct threat to the passenger envelope.** [3, 4]
- **LeBrun's BEL Proposal:** A battery-electric locomotive is a detached, isolated power unit pulling unpowered passenger cars. If a battery pack catches fire, the entire hazard is structurally sealed inside an unoccupied locomotive shell, completely away from passengers. [3]

2. Simplified Emergency Uncoupling (Decoupling the Threat)

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** Because an electric multiple unit is a semi-permanently coupled, integrated trainset, **a fire in one section cannot be easily separated from the rest of the train while out on the corridor.** Passengers must rely on internal fire barriers and rapid evacuation at a standstill.
- **LeBrun's BEL Proposal:** Traditional locomotive-hauled configurations allow train crews

to quickly uncouple the locomotive from the rest of the passenger coaches. In a catastrophic battery fire, a crew could theoretically isolate and detach the burning BEL, leaving it safely away from the passenger cars to mitigate risk.

3. Industrial-Grade Containment Enclosures

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** Weight distribution is highly sensitive on passenger multiple-unit trainsets, meaning battery enclosures must balance structural fire containment walls against the strict axle-load limits of passenger railcars.
- **Lebrun's BEL Proposal:** Freight-derived battery locomotives (like the Wabtec FLXdrive) are built to heavy-duty locomotive standards where excess weight can actually aid in tractive effort. This allows for significantly thicker blast-resistant framing, heavy firewalls, and dedicated external venting systems designed to channel runaway thermal energy straight up into the air, rather than outward toward a passenger car body. [5]

Direct Comparison

Safety Aspect	Caltrain BEMU (Integrated Trainset)	Lebrun BEL Proposal (Isolated Locomotive)
Proximity to Passengers	Highly adjacent; batteries share the trainset frame.	Completely isolated; zero passengers inside the power unit.
Containment Strategy	Relies on passing cell-to-cell propagation testing inside a multi-use car.	Uses structural locomotive framing and venting away from coaches.
Emergency Mitigation	Passengers must evacuate the train onto the right-of-way.	The burning power source can be physically uncoupled from coaches.

Would you like to review **Roland Lebrun's specific cost and capacity arguments** against the BEMU, or should we look at how standard **FRA safety regulations** view battery locomotives versus multiple units? [1, 6]

[1] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[2] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[3] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[4] <https://www.railwayage.com>

[5] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[6] <https://www.caltrain.com>

Q: How standard FRA safety regulations view battery locomotives versus multiple units

The **Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)** evaluates battery locomotives and battery multiple units through two distinctly different regulatory lenses. While the United States lacks a unified, codified "battery-specific" safety statute, the FRA handles new alternative-propulsion systems by applying established, rigid structural paradigms based on vehicle classification. [1, 2]

The FRA framework distinguishes between standalone battery locomotives and integrated battery multiple units (BEMUs) through the following key principles:

The type of vehicle dictates the primary set of federal safety guidelines that must be met:

- **Battery-Electric Locomotives (BELs):** Regulated under [49 CFR Part 229 \(Railroad Locomotive Safety Standards\)](#). This section focuses heavily on heavy-duty vehicle chassis integrity, structural crashworthiness, control stand failsafes, and power-cutoff stability. [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Battery-Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs):** Regulated under [49 CFR Part 238 \(Passenger Equipment Safety Standards\)](#). Because a BEMU features integrated traction batteries embedded within passenger-carrying vehicles, it must meet incredibly granular, complex passenger-protection criteria, including strict fire safety, emergency evacuation, and specialized structural deformation limits. [2, 5]

The FRA subjects these two configurations to fundamentally different physical tests to verify crashworthiness: [2]

- **Locomotives (BELs):** Under Part 229 and industry guidelines like AAR S-580, locomotives utilize massive bulkheads and internal framing designed to withstand extreme impact forces. For a battery locomotive, the massive steel envelope acts as an armored box. The FRA treats the battery containment area similarly to heavy internal equipment or fuel storage, requiring it to resist crushing and prevent puncture from catastrophic collisions. [2, 4, 6]
- **Multiple Units (BEMUs):** BEMUs must adhere to Tier I or Tier II passenger crashworthiness requirements under Part 238. This includes strict **Crash Energy Management (CEM)** systems, which integrate crumple zones at the ends of the cars. The FRA's primary concern with a BEMU is ensuring that a structural impact does not deform the battery compartments, puncture a cell, or introduce toxic thermal runaway gasses into the passenger breathing zone. [2, 5]

Because neither Part 229 nor Part 238 natively anticipates high-voltage lithium-ion thermal runaway dynamics, the FRA relies heavily on **case-by-case engineering approvals** and alternative design waivers. [1, 4]

- For **BELs**, the FRA expects a comprehensive product safety analysis covering traction

electronics, vehicle/track interaction due to the extreme shifting center of gravity, and battery fluid isolation.

- For **BEMUs**, the FRA demands a far more exhaustive system hazard analysis. This requires builders like Stadler to rigorously prove to the FRA that an onboard failure cannot compromise passenger emergency preparedness, egress routes, or interior air quality. [1, 2, 7]

To bridge this regulatory gap, groups like the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) have established dedicated working groups to standardize **Battery-Electric Passenger Rail Equipment Safety Practices**, explicitly targeting risk mitigation for onboard energy storage systems. [7]

Regulatory Dimension	Battery Locomotive (BEL)	Battery Multiple Unit (BEMU)
Primary Regulation	49 CFR Part 229 (Locomotive Standards)	49 CFR Part 238 (Passenger Equipment)
Safety Philosophy	Protect the crew; isolate heavy infrastructure inside an unoccupied shell.	Protect the passengers; safely manage energy storage embedded in the cabin frame.
Impact Testing Focus	Rigid chassis protection, collision posts, and heavy-duty object deflection.	Structural deformation control, crumple zones, and battery enclosure non-intrusion.
Fire/Smoke Mandates	Standard industrial venting away from control cabs.	Demanding cell-level propagation mitigation and strict smoke/gas containment barriers.

Would you like to dive deeper into the specific **APTA safety practices** regarding battery fires, or look at how the FRA evaluates **Tier I versus Tier II crashworthiness** for passenger trainsets?

[1] <https://www.trains.com>

[2] <https://www.railwayage.com>

[3] <https://www.ecfr.gov>

[4] <https://www.ecfr.gov>

[5] <https://railroads.dot.gov>

[6] <https://downloads.regulations.gov>

[7] <https://www.railwayage.com>

From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: ccss@msn.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer
Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 10:04:14 AM

Dear Roland Lebrun,

Thank you for taking the time to contact Caltrain and share your input. We appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 4:11 AM
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Subject: FW: What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer

From: Roland Lebrun <ccss@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 4:10:39 AM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Cc: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>; Baltao, Elaine [board.secretary@vta.org] <board.secretary@vta.org>; SFCTA Board Secretary <clerk@sfcta.org>; SFCTA CAC <cac@sfcta.org>; cacsecretary [board@caltrain.com] <cacsecretary@caltrain.com>
Subject: What went wrong during Caltrain's BEMU battery testing and why Battery Electric Locomotives (BELs) are inherently safer

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Gemini response

During the preliminary testing and commissioning phases of the **Caltrain Battery-Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU)** demonstration project, **battery thermal runaway propagation testing** was identified as one of the primary technical and safety risk factors. [1, 2]

The issues tracking around this specific testing phase revolve around the following core concerns:

1. The Core Concern: Thermal Runaway Cascade

A propagation test evaluates whether a catastrophic failure—specifically **thermal runaway**—

in a single lithium-ion battery cell or module will cascade and spread to adjacent cells or modules within the large on-board traction battery packs. In large-scale passenger rail applications, containing an isolated cell failure to prevent a wider pack fire is crucial for rolling stock safety certification. [3, 4]

2. "First-of-its-Kind" Design Complications

Because this is a national demonstration project featuring the world's first **bi-level battery-equipped KISS trainset** from Stadler, there is no preexisting domestic blueprint for passing these specific structural and safety standards. The physical configuration—a **four-car trainset where passenger cars are paired alongside dense battery and power housing components**—means that energy containment and mitigation protocols must be designed and validated from scratch to satisfy stringent general railroad safety regulations. [3, 5, 6]

3. Impact on Project Timeline and Risks

As highlighted in Caltrain's recent **Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB)** project updates, battery technology and its associated propagation validation remain top-tier project risks alongside Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor alignment and supply chain/tariff impacts. Delays or structural adjustments required to pass the propagation metrics directly influence the timeline for moving the BEMU from standard overhead contact system (OCS) electrified testing into its intended non-electrified trial service down to Gilroy and Salinas. [1, 2, 3, 7]

Would you like to explore how **Caltrain and Stadler** plan to address these design risks, or do you want more details on the planned **Gilroy and Salinas demonstration routes**? [3]

[1] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[2] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[3] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[4] <https://belmontscientific.com>

[5] <https://www.railwayage.com>

[6] <https://www.caltrain.com>

[7] <https://www.caltrain.com>

Can you compare how Roland LeBrun's BEL proposal could potentially be safer than Caltrain's BEMU in a battery fire event?

Regional rail advocate **Roland Lebrun** has frequently lobbied the **Caltrain Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB)** to abandon the Stadler BEMU pilot. Instead, he advocates for utilizing heavy **Battery-Electric Locomotives (BELs)**—such as those manufactured by [Wabtec](#) or [Progress Rail](#)—to haul standard, unpowered passenger coaches. [1, 2]

From a fire-safety engineering standpoint, **Lebrun's BEL proposal features several structural safety advantages over Caltrain's BEMU configuration during a thermal runaway fire event:**

1. Complete Physical Separation from the Passenger Cabin

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** The Stadler BEMU integrates heavy traction batteries directly into a passenger-carrying trainset. In its current layout, batteries are positioned inside an attached "power car" or converted cab cars, putting massive energy packs immediately adjacent to or under passenger areas. **If a thermal runaway cascade occurs, poisonous gas, extreme heat, and fire are a direct threat to the passenger envelope.** [3, 4]
- **Lebrun's BEL Proposal:** A battery-electric locomotive is a detached, isolated power unit pulling unpowered passenger cars. If a battery pack catches fire, the entire hazard is structurally sealed inside an unoccupied locomotive shell, completely away from passengers. [3]

2. Simplified Emergency Uncoupling (Decoupling the Threat)

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** Because an electric multiple unit is a semi-permanently coupled, integrated trainset, **a fire in one section cannot be easily separated from the rest of the train while out on the corridor.** Passengers must rely on internal fire barriers and rapid evacuation at a standstill.
- **Lebrun's BEL Proposal:** Traditional locomotive-hauled configurations allow train crews to quickly uncouple the locomotive from the rest of the passenger coaches. **In a catastrophic battery fire, a crew could theoretically isolate and detach the burning BEL, leaving it safely away from the passenger cars to mitigate risk.**

3. Industrial-Grade Containment Enclosures

- **Caltrain's BEMU Design:** Weight distribution is highly sensitive on passenger multiple-unit trainsets, meaning battery enclosures must balance structural fire containment walls against the strict axle-load limits of passenger railcars.
- **Lebrun's BEL Proposal:** Freight-derived battery locomotives (like the Wabtec FLXdrive) are built to heavy-duty locomotive standards where excess weight can actually aid in tractive effort. This allows for significantly thicker blast-resistant framing, heavy firewalls, and dedicated external venting systems designed to channel runaway thermal energy straight up into the air, rather than outward toward a passenger car body. [5]

Direct Comparison

Safety Aspect	Caltrain BEMU (Integrated Trainset)	Lebrun BEL Proposal (Isolated Locomotive)
Proximity to Passengers	Highly adjacent; batteries	Completely isolated; zero

	share the trainset frame.	passengers inside the power unit.
Containment Strategy	Relies on passing cell-to-cell propagation testing inside a multi-use car.	Uses structural locomotive framing and venting away from coaches.
Emergency Mitigation	Passengers must evacuate the train onto the right-of-way.	The burning power source can be physically uncoupled from coaches.

Would you like to review **Roland Lebrun's specific cost and capacity arguments** against the BEMU, or should we look at how standard **FRA safety regulations** view battery locomotives versus multiple units? [1, 6]

- [1] <https://www.caltrain.com>
- [2] <https://www.caltrain.com>
- [3] <https://www.caltrain.com>
- [4] <https://www.railwayage.com>
- [5] <https://www.caltrain.com>
- [6] <https://www.caltrain.com>

Q: How standard FRA safety regulations view battery locomotives versus multiple units

The **Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)** evaluates battery locomotives and battery multiple units through two distinctly different regulatory lenses. While the United States lacks a unified, codified "battery-specific" safety statute, the FRA handles new alternative-propulsion systems by applying established, rigid structural paradigms based on vehicle classification. [1, 2]

The FRA framework distinguishes between standalone battery locomotives and integrated battery multiple units (BEMUs) through the following key principles:

The type of vehicle dictates the primary set of federal safety guidelines that must be met:

- **Battery-Electric Locomotives (BELs):** Regulated under [49 CFR Part 229 \(Railroad Locomotive Safety Standards\)](#). This section focuses heavily on heavy-duty vehicle chassis integrity, structural crashworthiness, control stand failsafes, and power-cutoff stability. [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Battery-Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs):** Regulated under [49 CFR Part 238 \(Passenger Equipment Safety Standards\)](#). Because a BEMU features integrated traction batteries embedded within passenger-carrying vehicles, it must meet incredibly granular,

complex passenger-protection criteria, including strict fire safety, emergency evacuation, and specialized structural deformation limits. [2, 5]

The FRA subjects these two configurations to fundamentally different physical tests to verify crashworthiness: [2]

- **Locomotives (BELs):** Under Part 229 and industry guidelines like AAR S-580, locomotives utilize massive bulkheads and internal framing designed to withstand extreme impact forces. For a battery locomotive, the massive steel envelope acts as an armored box. The FRA treats the battery containment area similarly to heavy internal equipment or fuel storage, requiring it to resist crushing and prevent puncture from catastrophic collisions. [2, 4, 6]
- **Multiple Units (BEMUs):** BEMUs must adhere to Tier I or Tier II passenger crashworthiness requirements under Part 238. This includes strict **Crash Energy Management (CEM)** systems, which integrate crumple zones at the ends of the cars. The FRA's primary concern with a BEMU is ensuring that a structural impact does not deform the battery compartments, puncture a cell, or introduce toxic thermal runaway gasses into the passenger breathing zone. [2, 5]

Because neither Part 229 nor Part 238 natively anticipates high-voltage lithium-ion thermal runaway dynamics, the FRA relies heavily on **case-by-case engineering approvals** and alternative design waivers. [1, 4]

- For **BELs**, the FRA expects a comprehensive product safety analysis covering traction electronics, vehicle/track interaction due to the extreme shifting center of gravity, and battery fluid isolation.
- For **BEMUs**, the FRA demands a far more exhaustive system hazard analysis. This requires builders like Stadler to rigorously prove to the FRA that an onboard failure cannot compromise passenger emergency preparedness, egress routes, or interior air quality. [1, 2, 7]

To bridge this regulatory gap, groups like the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) have established dedicated working groups to standardize **Battery-Electric Passenger Rail Equipment Safety Practices**, explicitly targeting risk mitigation for onboard energy storage systems. [7]

Regulatory Dimension	Battery Locomotive (BEL)	Battery Multiple Unit (BEMU)
Primary Regulation	49 CFR Part 229 (Locomotive Standards)	49 CFR Part 238 (Passenger Equipment)
Safety Philosophy	Protect the crew; isolate heavy infrastructure inside	Protect the passengers; safely manage energy

	an unoccupied shell.	storage embedded in the cabin frame.
Impact Testing Focus	Rigid chassis protection, collision posts, and heavy-duty object deflection.	Structural deformation control, crumple zones, and battery enclosure non-intrusion.
Fire/Smoke Mandates	Standard industrial venting away from control cabs.	Demanding cell-level propagation mitigation and strict smoke/gas containment barriers.

Would you like to dive deeper into the specific **APTA safety practices** regarding battery fires, or look at how the FRA evaluates **Tier I versus Tier II crashworthiness** for passenger trainsets?

- [1] <https://www.trains.com>
- [2] <https://www.railwayage.com>
- [3] <https://www.ecfr.gov>
- [4] <https://www.ecfr.gov>
- [5] <https://railroads.dot.gov>
- [6] <https://downloads.regulations.gov>
- [7] <https://www.railwayage.com>

From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: tyler.mcdowall@live.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: September 17th - South County Connector Issues
Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 12:57:26 PM

Dear Tyler McDowall,

Thank you for contacting Caltrain. We sincerely apologize for the significant delay and inconvenience caused by the late arrival of Train 514, the departure of Train 814, and the subsequent annulment of Train 816 due to a safety-system failure.

We understand how frustrating it was for passengers to wait approximately 90 minutes for a South County connection, particularly given the limited frequency of service to South County. We also recognize your concerns regarding timed-transfer procedures, the condition and availability of diesel equipment, and whether the issue with Train 816 was identified before it entered service.

Your detailed feedback and questions have been documented and forwarded to the appropriate departments for review. We regret the disruption to your trip and appreciate you taking the time to bring these concerns to our attention.

Kind regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2026 7:38 PM
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Subject: FW: September 17th - South County Connector Issues

From: Tyler McDowall <tyler.mcdowall@live.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2026 7:38:45 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Subject: September 17th - South County Connector Issues

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tyler.mcdowall@live.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from email you do not know or do not expect. Train 514 was ~10 minutes late to San Jose, 814 left expecting 816 to accommodate so passengers waited 30 minutes for 816. When it arrived, it encountered a safety system failure and was

annulled. Passengers were then forced to wait for 820. There's an hour between 816 and 820.

The end result is 514 passengers waiting 1.5 hours for their connection because 814 didn't wait.

- Why does southbound SCC only wait 10 minutes for their timed transfer? Waiting limits make sense for northbound EMUs waiting for SCC because EMUs have other timed connections and schedules to keep, there's also more frequent trains available. Going to south county has a limited number of trains, with at least 30 to 60 minutes between.
- 816 came from the Caltrain maintenance yard direction - did Caltrain know it was having issues before it entered service? I noticed that there were no SCC trains at Diridon even though 3 trains were still scheduled to run tonight.
- Does Caltrain regret leasing the rest of their spare diesels to other agencies? Can Caltrain get any of the trains back to help with spares? At the most recent CAC meeting, Caltrain staff said they have 2 spares. One had one diesel with chronic issues and another being repaired after debris damaged air brake equipment resulting in no spares.

Sincerely,
Tyler McDowall

From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: rareg083@gmail.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Tonight on Caltrain after giants game
Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2026 8:32:43 AM
Attachments: [IMG_3715.png](#)

Dear Rebecca Regnart,

Thank you for contacting Caltrain. We are truly sorry that your family experienced this while returning home from what should have remained a joyful celebration of your son's fifth birthday.

Your concerns have been documented and will be shared with the appropriate department for review with the train crew.

If you ever feel unsafe or the behavior continues after notifying the train crew, please contact Transit Police at 1-877-SAF-RAIL (1-877-723-7245).

Once again, we sincerely apologize for the distress this caused you and your children.

Sincerely,
Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2026 10:39 PM
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Subject: FW: Tonight on Caltrain after giants game

From: Rebecca Regnart <rareg083@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2026 10:38:54 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Subject: Tonight on Caltrain after giants game

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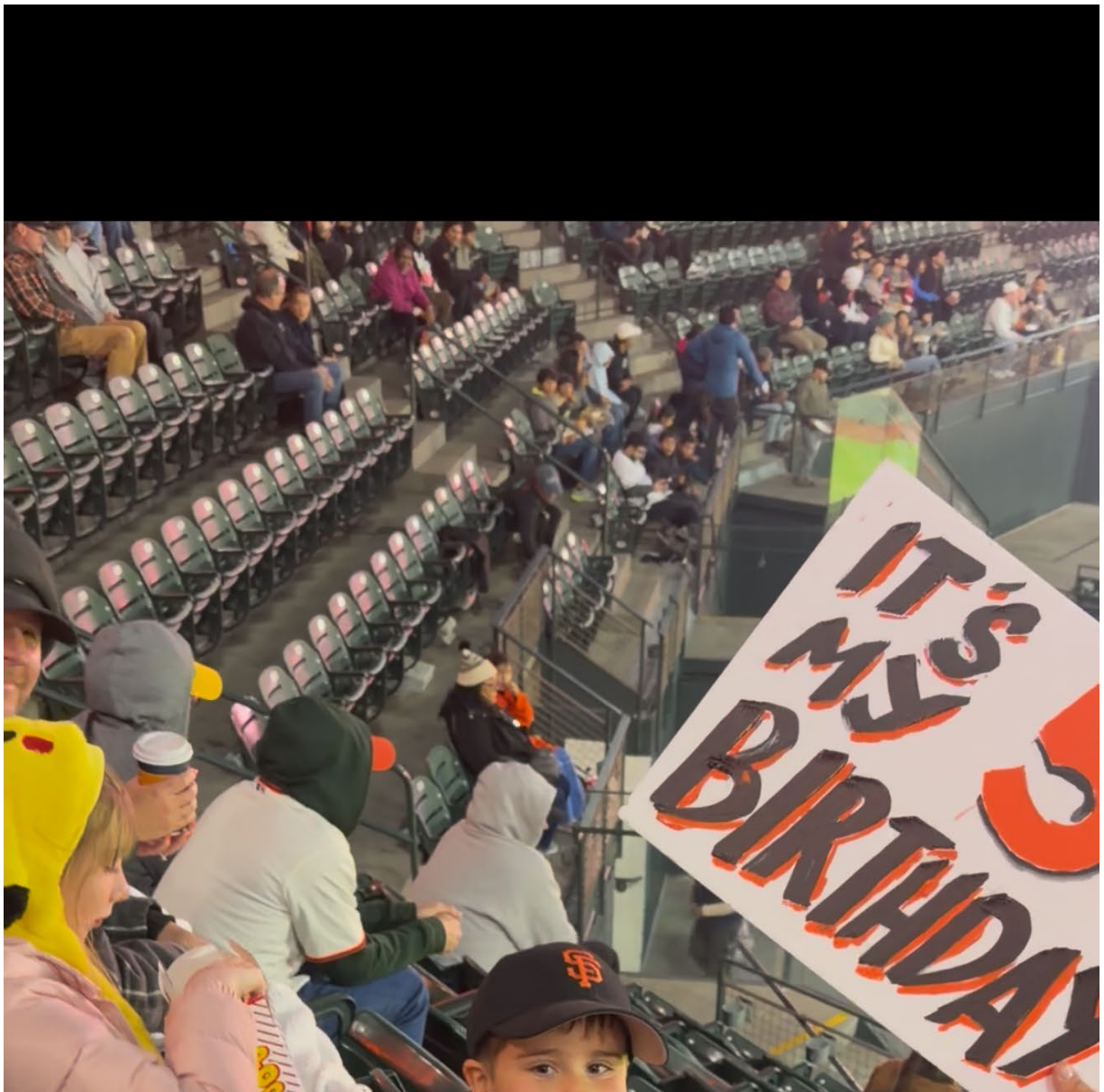
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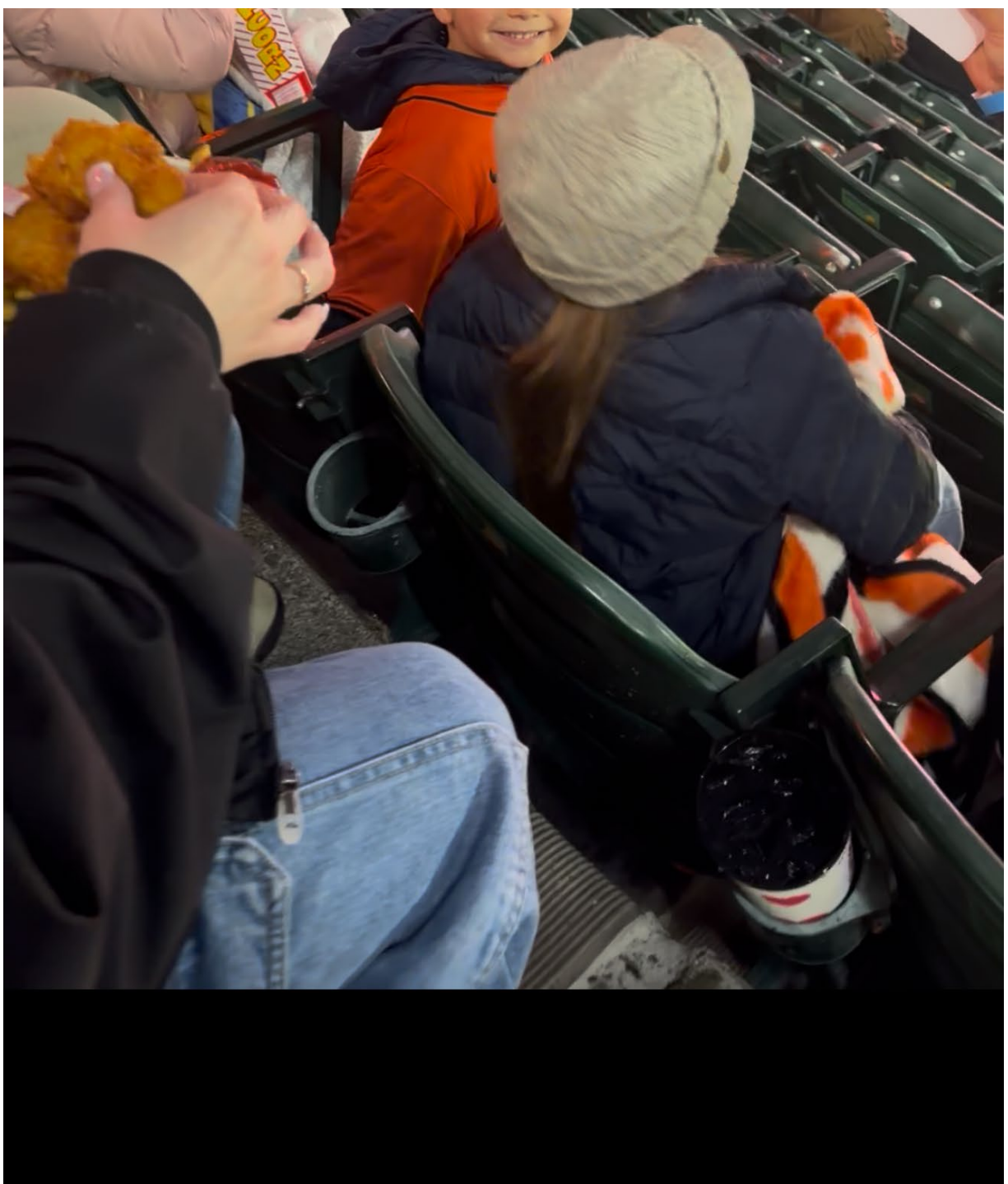
Hello,

We live one block up from the San Bruno Caltrain station and ride the train sparingly but have always had positive experiences. Today was my 5 year old son's birthday, and we took him to the giants game to celebrate and took the train in. We were some of the first people to board

the train home (9:25pm train) and found seats close to the doors on bottom level. After one or two stops a couple came on the train who appeared possibly homeless, with large bags of belongings which were spilling out everywhere. They were told to move their baggage out of the doorway and they were mad that we had a stroller (I also have a 10 month old daughter). They were swearing a lot saying my f-ing stroller is in the way and there is no room for their stuff, etc. We asked them kindly several times to not swear in front of our children but they didn't listen. They were also warned repeatedly to stop. Shortly after they were speaking loudly to one another using the word "faggot" repeatedly, upsetting other people riding on the train. I feel like they should have not been allowed to stay on the train, they did not seem mentally stable and my 5 year old told me when we got home "now I know what bad words are, mama". We had an amazing day and time at the game, I'm trying not to let this experience ruin our night but I had to pass along what happened. Next time we will consider driving in, which is a shame since we live so close to the train and that's the most convenient method of transportation to the park.

Rebecca Ramos





From: San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority <donotreply@sjjpa.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2026 11:01 AM
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: Draft Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study Report

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San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority



Hello Gold Runner Stakeholders,

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) is nearing completion of its Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study, which focuses on developing specific, feasible, and short-term recommendations to improve Gold Runner Thruway Bus routes. Please visit the Authority's [Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study webpage](#) for more information about the study, to review the [Draft Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study Report](#), and to learn how to submit comments on the draft report.

Staff anticipates requesting approval of the Gold Runner Thruway Bus Study Report at the Authority's November 20, 2026, Board Meeting. Public input will be accepted until the study is approved in November; however, comments received by October 21, 2026, will be included in the staff report presented to the Authority Board at its November 20 meeting. Staff encourages submitting comments by October 21 to allow sufficient time for any necessary revisions to the draft report before its submittal to the SJJPA Board.

DRAFT REPORT



San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority

949 East Channel Street, Stockton Ca, 95202

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