

**CalMod Local Policy Maker Group (LPMG)
Summary Meeting Notes for March 25, 2021**

Summary Notes

The purpose of these notes is to capture key discussion items and actions identified for subsequent meetings.

City / County	Representative or Alternate	Present
Atherton	M. Lempres	
Belmont	T. McCune	X
Brisbane	T. O'Connell	
Burlingame	E. Beach	X
Gilroy	R. Armendariz	X
Menlo Park	J. Wolosin	X
Millbrae	G. Papan	X
Mountain View	M. Abe-Koga	
Morgan Hill	R. Constantine	X
Palo Alto	P. Burt	X
Redwood City	M. Smith	X
San Bruno	M. Salazar	X
San Carlos	R. Collins	
San Francisco	A. Sweet	
San Jose	S. Jimenez	
San Mateo	A. Lee	X
Santa Clara	A. Becker	X
South San Francisco	E. Flores	X
Sunnyvale	R. Melton	X
San Francisco BOS	TBD	
San Mateo BOS	TBD	
Santa Clara BOS	TBD	
Chair	Jeff Gee	X
Vice Chair	Emily Beach	X

VACANT SEATS: Santa Clara BOS, San Francisco BOS, San Mateo BOS

CALTRAIN STAFF: Sebastian Petty, Brent Tietjen, Ryan McCauley

1. Call to Order

Chair Jeff Gee called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

2. Staff Report

Brent Tietjen, Government and Community Affairs Officer for Caltrain, provided a federal legislative update, including the passage of the American Rescue Plan as well as how representatives are receiving requests for earmarks. Sebastian Petty, Deputy Chief of Planning for Caltrain provided a verbal update on the status of the Corridor-Wide Grade Separation Study.

LPMG members' key comments regarding the federal legislative update:

- A member asked if there was any advocacy efforts on the part of Caltrain for grade separation projects. *(Caltrain staff answered that the staff has been told by members of the federal delegation that representatives are looking for projects between the \$500,000 to \$3 million range and grade separations are much more expensive than that.)*
- A member asked if there were updated cost estimates on all grade separations in San Mateo County. *(Caltrain staff answered that that question will be covered in the next staff update.)*
- A member commented that this is a new process for many locally elected officials and that the LPMG would be happy to help advocacy efforts in any way.
- A member asked for clarification on whether each jurisdiction should advocate for grade separation funding or whether it would be more effective to package them together. *(Chair Gee responded that he would like to hold that question for the next agenda item).*

Public Comments:

- A member of the public commented that through the MTC CHRSSA funding allocation, VTA has a surplus of \$96.8 million.

LPMG members' key comments regarding the Corridor-Wide Grade Separation Study update:

- A member commented that they are hoping to be able to get federal funding for grade separations sooner rather than later and asked for clarification on the amount of grade crossings in San Mateo County. *(Caltrain staff answered that there are 29 at-grade crossings. This does not include already separated crossings or crossings included in the 25th Avenue Grade Separation project in the city of San Mateo.)* The member followed up noting that they believe they should try to organize and advocate collectively for grade separation funding prior to the study and community outreach. *(Caltrain staff responded that the message has been heard and that it will be discussed. Staff also noted that going through the study and advocating for federal funding are not mutually exclusive. Staff also noted that there are not cost estimates for each at-individual at-grade crossing as many individual cities along the corridor have not yet elected to study specific crossings or even indicated that they desire to have their crossings separated. .)* The member reiterated that they would like to move quickly. They also asked if Caltrain or High-Speed Rail has looking at boring options for grade separations. *(Caltrain staff answered that to their knowledge they have not, but cannot speak for High-Speed Rail).* The member followed-up noting that State Senator Becker has been meeting with boring companies and may reduce costs.
- A member commented that they were excited to see the new engineering standards replace the current system of design exceptions noting many cities are conducting grade separation studies and asked if it would be useful to create an LPMG ad-hoc committee of cities actively looking at grade separation. *(Caltrain staff noted that it is an interesting idea and could be discussed as part of the Corridor-Wide Grade Separation study)* The member followed up asking if there is a

potential for new engineering standards. *(Caltrain staff responded that this would be need to be addressed by other members of staff, but does believe that the study is the right venue for cities to express their concerns with the current standards and for Caltrain to evaluate the process of updating and changing them.)* The member followed up noting that they understand the issue is not a binary one, whether or not freight uses the line. They also commented on an elevated system that could reduce costs for grade separations. *(Caltrain staff noted that there are regulatory as well as physical engineering issues that play into the equation.)*

- A member added their support for advocating for federal funding for grade separations. They then asked what cities should do locally to be ready for any sort of federal funding program. The member also asked staff to elaborate on the type of community benefits seen from grade separation projects. *(Caltrain staff responded that if funding becomes available, projects still need to go through a design process with community input to select an alternative. That being said, talking about a program of projects may be a more effective strategy. Staff also noted that grade separation projects in addition to safety improvements and create new land, connectivity and potentially community facilities.*
- A member commented that they grew up when the San Carlos grade separation project was being constructed and noted what they believed the slow nature of these projects. The member noted that easing congestion is a quality of life issue and encouraged pushing for federal funding for grade separations.
- A member commented that typically grade separations are not federally funded, but fall on the shoulders of county agencies and the state. The member noted that we could not advocate for funding without a project defined and costs estimated, but rather efforts would be better used to advocate for more funding for Section 130 in the Reauthorization of the FAST Act.
- A member asked how much funding is going to the San Francisco Downtown Extension and the Diridon Station. *(Chair Gee asked if the member couple clarify which funding source they meant).* The member noted they heard they were funded through the MTC. *(Caltrain staff responded they did not have the numbers available, but could look them up and provide to the member.)* The member followed up noting that San Mateo County needs to think bigger and understand its regional significance.
- A member asked if this group advocates or discusses projects like the Dumbarton rail project. *(Caltrain staff answered that this group is specific to Caltrain issues and the bridge is owned by the San Mateo County Transit District, so it is not typically discussed in this venue. Staff noted if there was a desire to hear an update, one could likely be arranged.)*
- Another member followed up asking if the Dumbarton rail project moves forward, would electrified Caltrain be the preferred option. *(Chair Gee responded noting that Caltrain is one of the options, along with light rail and AVTs.)* The member noted that the project was included in the second group of the Plan Bay Area document.

Public Comments:

- A member of the public commented that there is not information on tunneling in the engineering standards and stated that they came up with a proposal for Palo Alto Grade separations. The member also voiced concerns on letting other agencies design grade separations.
- A member of the public voiced their concern with the engineering standards and how they have led to unnecessary costs for capital projects.

3. Caltrain Electrification Project: Construction and Vehicle Manufacturing Update

Brent Tietjen, Caltrain's Government and Community Affairs Officer, provided an update to member on Caltrain Electrification construction and manufacturing and testing of the electric trains.

LPMG members' key comments and questions:

- A member asked if staff could provide an update on the schedule and when passenger service is expected. *(Caltrain staff answered that the agency is working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to determine all COVID and non-COVID related sources of delays. The FTA believes a new schedule should be presented in May, but the most up to date project schedule has revenue service slated for 2022.)* The member followed up asking if 2022 was a realistic target. *(Chair Gee added that it is unlikely to meet the 2022 date due to COVID-related delays. He added that when the date is officially changed, they want to change it once.)* The member followed asking if the new fabrication was the gating issue as opposed to the line. *(Chair Gee responded saying that it is not the line preparation.)*

Public Comments:

- A member of the public commented that they believe the electrification project would be delivered in 2024 at the earliest and that they are the reason the trains are being tested in Pueblo. They also commented that due to the choice in train, stations between San Jose and Gilroy cannot be redesigned to accommodate non-electric service.

4. Caltrain Business Plan: Scenario Planning

Sebastian Petty, Deputy Chief of Planning for Caltrain, gave a presentation on the scenario-planning being done as a part of the Caltrain Business Plan.

LPMG members' key comments regarding the Caltrain Business Plan presentation:

- A member asked if they could get a copy of the presentation. *(Chair Gee informed members that the presentation was included in an updated agenda packet sent out by staff prior to the meeting.)*
- A member commented that they believe the governance discussion is distracting and does not want the Measure RR funds to be used to pay San Francisco and Santa Clara counties. The member also commented that they believe a merger with BART would be highly inadvisable. The member also noted that BART is undertaking an effort called Link21 and spending a lot of money on community outreach. They ended by noting they believe Caltrain could be more profitable if co-locating amenities like coffee shops at stations.
- A member asked how Caltrain envisions the recovery and bounces back to normalcy. *(Caltrain staff answered in terms of service, the agency is operating 70 trains per weekday and made a recent service adjustment to better connect with BART at Millbrae. The next likely service adjustment would be in the fall timeframe when BART adjusts their service and during that time, staff will be monitoring ridership and traffic trends.)* The member followed up asking if Caltrain service increases are contingent on BART service adjustments, noting BART service does not affect South County. *(Caltrain staff answered that the benchmark is not BART, but a number of factors including ridership, office re-occupancy, traffic along the corridor and the pandemic itself.)* The member followed up asking about a fourth train for South County and when the bi-

directional traffic would happen. *(Caltrain staff answered that staff is looking at four trains a day in South County sooner than later.)*

- A member noted that strategic planning is difficult, but Caltrain has done a great effort and advised staff to look at other connections to transit including micro-mobility and other next generation technologies. *(Caltrain staff thanked the member for their words and noted they are watching self-driving vehicles in addition to the other emerging technologies and their potential impact on transit.)*
- A member commented that they were pleased by the effort and vision of the Caltrain Board. They also noted that they believe micro mobility to be hugely relevant to the future of Caltrain.
- A member noted that there was legislation moving through the State Legislature aiming to standardize some elements of transportation management.

Public Comments:

- A member of the public commented on the Link21 effort noting that it could lead to Caltrain going across the bay, which would lead to an explosion of ridership. They also noted that Caltrain is in two different businesses: corridor management and passenger service.
- A member of the public voiced their displeasure with the zone-based fare system and that it could be a reason that ridership is low.

5. Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

- A member of the public commented that they believe two recently Caltrain station will need to be demolished because high-speed trains cannot pass center-boarding platforms safely.

6. LPMG Member Comments/Requests

- A member requested more information on quiet zones, tree trimming along the corridor, and the Seamless Bay Area concept.

8. Next Meeting

Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.