

JPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building
1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070

MINUTES FEBRUARY 18, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: P. Bendix, G. Graham, F. Granade, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins,
M. Kiesling, B. Wilfley

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Richardson

STAFF PRESENT: T. Bartholomew, M. Bouchard, M. Collins (Amtrak), R. Lake

Chair Gerald Graham called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of January 21, 2009 were approved by the Committee.

Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said there is an overflow of parking at the Caltrain section of the Millbrae Intermodal lot because BART is now charging for parking. A lot south of Trousdale Drive is no longer available because it is being used by hospital contractors. He also sees cars with North Point Apartment stickers; these people could walk to the Broadway station if it were open. He said there is a lot of misinformation being spread by people in Menlo Park, Atherton and Palo Alto about how High Speed Rail (HSR) is going to destroy neighborhoods. Deputy Director of Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard said the Trousdale lot contractor was on a month-to-month lease and has been served notice. After improvements are made in that parking area the goal is to make parking available for Caltrain customers. Ms. Bouchard suggested providing informational materials on use of the Broadway shuttle to the Millbrae Intermodal station.

Doug Delong, Mountain View, asked about a JPB demolition contract of the existing maintenance facility at the San Jose station; it doesn't appear that any work is taking place. He asked if the two recently awarded signal contracts are being held up by the state budget debacle. He asked which construction projects were motivating the current Caltrain timetable change. Ms. Bouchard said the capital projects were awarded and funded and are going through post-award audits before work begins. Caltrain is bracing for a fairly rough budget year particularly regarding State Transit Assistance (STA) funding and is expecting a fairly deep cut to the existing funding for existing projects. Staff will update the CAC on future projects that may be impacted by cuts. Projects that are enabled by the timetable change include the San Mateo Bridges' project, the South San Francisco station and the vehicular grade crossing program.

Pat Giorni, Burlingame, said the single most important thing Caltrain will be looking at for the next year or two is electrification and HSR. She would like to see a bicycle advisory committee, which is in existence now but not as a public advisory committee.

Brian Wilfley arrived at 6:19 p.m.

Steve Van Pelt, Palo Alto, said a man in a Caltrain polo shirt boarded the Valco Shuttle at the Lawrence station and said shuttle service was threatened. He said the shuttle customers said there were no other alternatives to get to Cupertino. He commented on buses departing the Palo Alto station at 7:24 p.m. before southbound Caltrain #210 arrives at 7:23 p.m.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said he was pleased that the federal stimulus package contains billions for HSR and transit. The HSR media statement from Quentin Kopp said some of the money can be used for electrification and grade separations but he didn't see any funding for the train box at the Transbay Terminal, which is on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) list to obtain stimulus funding.

Presentation – Bikes on Caltrain-Onboard Capacity Update

Ms. Bouchard provided follow up since the October 2008 board approval of the Bicycle Access and Parking Plan (Plan).

1. History: Caltrain started in 1992 with 4 bikes allowed on a few trains and is the industry leader for bicycle access on trains. Actual daily on-board bike use is currently approximately 2,400, which is the highest in the nation. Record ridership is straining system capacity and reliability.
2. The Plan: Addresses wayside improvements, provides feedback on on-board space provision, identifies overall access policy and provides staff options to provide modest increases in on-board bike capacity.
3. On-board bike challenges: Includes limited bike capacity, bumping in peak periods, lack of real-time information and improving dialogue with Caltrain and the bicycle community on bike access issues.
4. Operator challenges: Includes space demands for all customers, dwell time, platform conflicts, conductor resources and consist capacity.
5. On-board access project: Focused on options to increase bike capacity and collected data on 21 of the most-used peak period trains for comparison to previous data.
6. On-board data collection results: Capacity constraints exist on 9 of 98 trains and only peak periods are affected. Bombardier trains sets have potential for bumping; train schedules make certain trains very popular; Caltrain guarantees 16/32 bike slots for all trains and train set rotation creates consistency issues.
7. On-board access – outreach: Bike coalitions and customers requested adjacent bike cars in train sets, improved information on bike capacity, more than four bikes on each bike rack, bikes on mezzanine levels of Bombardier cars, addressing bike bumping and increasing on-board bike capacity.
8. On-board Access Engineering Study: Provided two options to address bike capacity. Option 1 increased bike capacity 100 percent on Bombardier cars and 50 percent on gallery cars and requires structural alteration on seven cab cars for a cost of \$950,000.
9. Staff recommendation: Option 2, which expanded Bombardier capacity to 32 slots and gallery cars to 40 slots; retains bike capacity in north end cab car and requires removal of 328 passenger seats to install additional racks. The option can be completed in 8-12 weeks once labor is sourced and funding needs to be identified in the amount of \$200,000. Total available bike slots in the peak period would increase 33 percent.
10. Board action: At its February meeting the Joint Powers Board (JPB) recommended increasing Bombardier car capacity to 24 slots; increasing gallery car capacity to 40 slots per train; deploying two-car gallery sets, which would be a train with 80 bike slots operating between seven to eight train consists and assessing dwell time and accommodation impacts on the system due to increased bike capacity.

11. Next steps: Include developing and implementing the recommendations; monitoring and assessing capacity increases; collection of bike data during high season including on-board demand and bumping; investigating platform-based methods to reduce passenger flow issues; continued communication with the bike community and completing and adopting a Comprehensive Access Policy to frame future decisions regarding investment in system access for all modes.

Public Comment

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, asked if it would be possible to take enough regular coach trailer cars and put bike racks in those to provide a second bike car on all the consists so there would be a bike-equipped cab and either a bike-equipped cab or bike-equipped trailer car in a fourth position of every consist to reduce variability from one train to another. He said Twitter among the bike community could be used to communicate the status of car capacity.

Shirley Johnson, San Francisco, said Caltrain service is excellent. She helps Caltrain, herself and the environment by riding Caltrain. She said Caltrain's on-board capacity is excellent. She suggested converting two Bombardier cab cars to bike cars plus trailer cars so all trains could have two bike cars.

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, thanked staff and Caltrain for addressing bike capacity issues. He said bicyclist are to enter and exit different doors on a Bombardier car, which causes problems with narrow aisles. He hopes any increased capacity on Bombardier cars doesn't interfere with entrance and egress. He asked if seats could be removed in the forward section of gallery cars so people could watch their bikes.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said there are dwell time issues in Mountain View and Palo Alto and trains can sit for over a minute. He said the door closes in less than 20 seconds on Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail. Caltrain runs antiquated equipment and he encourages bicyclists to recognize that Caltrain needs to move to electrification. New equipment will help solve capacity issues.

Pat Giorni, Burlingame, said Caltrain never did a scientific study with real statistics on whether bicyclists cause an increase in dwell times. She said wheelchairs cause 3-5 minutes on and off boarding. She doesn't think dwell time is an issue until a study is actually done. Problems with loading are also caused by foot passengers lollygagging in moving on or off the train or platform.

Mike Kiesling said BART provides zero bike spaces in the peak direction. At any other time BART has 20 doors (10-car train) that open and bikes can load into 18 doors, which puts about four people in every space if the train is completely crowded and messes everything up. He said at the February JPB meeting, bicyclists argued against 32 slots on Bombardier cars and this was reduced to 24; that is what the bicycle community wanted and Caltrain reacted to that. He said Caltrain has to live with the choice of equipment and will hopefully get new equipment soon so customers in wheelchairs or with bicycles can enter any door. Hopefully there will be an equal number of spaces distributed across all the spaces on the train. He said there are no little steel bars under the floor in cab cars so you can't bolt down seats as you can in other cars. Staff is trying to deal with current equipment. He said Twitter is only as good as the information being consistent and useful for people who know people.

Brian Wilfley asked if there will be 24 slots on a Bombardier car. Ms. Bouchard said between 24 and 48 depending on whether there is a second cab car and between 40 and 80 on gallery car sets.

Mr. Wilfley asked if it would have been better to create a symmetrical situation where all trains had approximately the same number and therefore, customers wouldn't have to catch a specific train but any train. Ms. Bouchard said Option 1 sought to do as close to what Mr. Wilfley proposed; gallery cars are able to be fitted for more bike racks than Bombardier cars and every seat on the lower level of the Bombardier car would be removed to put in a rack and get up to 32 slots.

Mr. Wilfley asked what is the operational implication of having a few consists that have 80 spaces that are put on certain trains. Ms. Bouchard said staff proposed this to the board. Staff can schedule as well as possible to meet the demand of bikes with the high capacity trains. On any given day there can be mechanical delays or late trains and that will require substitution of one consist for another. Good information is available as to which trains are seeing the high capacity; each train probably makes five trips per day. This means roughly 40 of the trains that operate in a given day will have significant increase in bike space and on the Bombardier side it is another 10. This means about roughly half of the schedule has a significant increase in bike capacity.

John Hronowski asked what is considered high season for bikes. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain has a fairly standard curve for all riders and definitely knows what the low season is in terms of bike ridership. It could be May, July or August and staff needs to determine when that is but doesn't have unlimited dollars to pursue data collection.

Francois Granade said he has been taking a bicycle on Caltrain for 12 years. He said two points affect bike capacity: economics and consistency. He said the economics of the bicycle, and one of the reasons he applied to the CAC, is the question of being bumped; it is extremely frustrating and leads to exaggerated behavior. He said there is no other business that refuses customers. There is an enormous potential for bicycle growth. The economic downturn increases ridership and Caltrain must adapt. Bike users need consistency and clarity and the solution to that and dwell time issues is to have progressively, not only more bikes per car but more cars with bicycles. He said Twitter may not be realistic but could bring communication and cooperation to a much higher point by having people who build the cars in the morning update the websites with capacity of the train, which could cost in the thousands or tens of thousands and is not practical.

Ms. Bouchard said she can't emphasize enough the trepidation with which staff is approaching this bike increase in capacity. Staff will gladly do it because bicyclists are constituents but dwell time is very much at issue here. Caltrain did a dwell time study in 2001 before Baby Bullet service and until Caltrain has the money to do another study, it won't have those numbers. Staff knows boarding bikes is a contributor to dwell time and will monitor increasing bike capacity because there really is a holistic viewpoint that Caltrain has to stand to. The long-term goal involves developing a cohesive bike plan and a comprehensive access plan because incrementalism and reaction is very difficult on a system and it's much better to be out in front and then monitor the impacts.

Paul Bendix will forward "Not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY)," rail issues in Menlo Park and Atherton to Ms. Bouchard.

Mr. Graham asked if there was a bike station in Palo Alto. Ms. Bouchard said there is one but it is not operated by Caltrain. He suggested that to have two bike cars on a train, one could be the cab car as it exists on the north end of the train and the other could be a non-cab car on the southern end of the train, which would provide consistency. Instead of running two cab cars on each train, Caltrain could stay with one cab car and have the south bike car a regular car.

Chairperson's Report

No report.

Staff Report

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- Performance statistics for January 2009 compared to January 2008.
 - a) Total ridership increased 6.1 percent.
 - b) On time performance was in excess of 97 percent and somewhat expected with the seasonal dip in ridership.
 - c) Average weekday ridership increased 8.1 percent.
 - d) Ridership is holding due to the reliability of Caltrain service. Assistant Superintendent of Commuter Operations Mark Collins and Amtrak staff were thanked for working hard with Caltrain staff to bring about coordination of mechanical issues in the past and working hard to make sure Caltrain has protection consists on either end so when glitches happen during the day they are seamless to the riding public.
 - e) Revenue increased 11.3 percent.
- Weekday and southbound evening schedules will be adjusted beginning March 2 in order to accommodate construction along the right of way.
- A new 8-ride ticket will be introduced on March 2, replacing the current 10-ride ticket. The reliability of the validator's cutting mechanism has diminished over time, so the new ticket has been designed so that it only needs to be stamped, not cut. Caltrain's public information office has published information in order to reduce confusion with the changeover.
- Giant's service will be offered in late March for the Dodgers exhibition game.
- Everyone was invited to the construction completion celebration of the improvement projects at the California Avenue and Palo Alto stations on February 26 at California Avenue Caltrain Station.

Public Comment

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said he was disappointed that the notice for the 8-ride ticket came in less than a month and that the 10-ride ticket was no longer sold. He said the price point is cheaper for the 8-ride ticket. Ms. Bouchard said 10-ride tickets would be sold until March 2. Mr. Chow said the Bay Rail Alliance is meeting tomorrow evening in Mountain View at the Café Yulong restaurant; there will be a speaker from Caltrain giving an update on electrification. More information is available at bayrailalliance.org.

Committee Comments

Mr. Hronowski said there was a delay yesterday morning when a Baby Bullet broke down at Paul Avenue. The conductor made good announcements and kept all informed of progress.

Mr. Granade requested the CAC be updated on TransLink[®].

Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 6 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070, 2nd Floor, Boccaccio Auditorium

Adjournment at 7:23 p.m.