

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

**MINUTES APRIL 15, 2009**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** P. Bendix, F. Granade, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins, B. Wilfley

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** G. Graham (Chair), M. Kiesling, S. Richardson

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

Vice Chair John Hronowski called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of February 18, 2009 were approved by the Committee.

**Public Comment**

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said some train windows seemed to be dirty and spotty. He asked if the windows are being washed at the Centralized Equipment Maintenance and Operations Facility (CEMOF). Brian Wilfley said the windows seem etched. Deputy Director Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard said staff has worked on this problem in the past and will check with mechanical staff on the current problem.

**Presentation – TransLink**

Ms. Bouchard introduced David Chow, Manager of TransLink and the Ticket Vending Machine Programs.

Mr. Chow reported:

1. The TransLink card allows customers to use a single card to pay the fare on Caltrain or any other operator in the TransLink network, such as Golden Gate Transit/ Ferry, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (Muni) and AC Transit.
2. The card is used as a proof of payment to prevent fare evasion.
3. The card works by being read (tagged) by a card reader located at Caltrain station entrances or on platforms. The customer must tag off at the card reader when exiting the station and the reader deducts the maximum possible one-way fare from e-cash on the card.
4. The card has a four-hour trip limit to tag off.
5. E-cash is value stored on a card in the form of dollars/cents. Cards can have e-cash added and can be purchased at Caltrain headquarters in San Carlos or San Francisco and Diridon Caltrain stations, online, by mail and phone.
6. The card is available in several fare categories including adult, seniors, and youth.
7. Conductors and fare inspectors can use a handheld card reader to validate fare payments, determine the nature of any fare issues and look up a passenger's recent ride history.
8. Customers can call the Traffic Service Bureau (TSB) who will help open an account, issue a card, add value to a card, change customer information, register a card so it can be replaced if lost or stolen, provide card balances and resolve problems.
9. The TransLink Web site (TransLink.org) can perform many tasks the TSB performs.
10. TransLink roll out in 2009 will include Muni, BART and Caltrain; SamTrans and the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) will be onboard in 2010.

11. Employee testing with Caltrain, Muni and BART is ongoing for the next 60 days to insure quality assurance of the system.

Mr. Wilfley asked what happens after the 60-day testing period. Mr. Chow said the 60-day test will give enough information to gauge the accuracy of the system. If accuracy is at issue after the 60-day test, there may be another 30-day test cycle.

Mr. Wilfley asked if card readers have been installed at all Caltrain stations. Mr. Chow said Card Interface Device (CID) readers have been installed at all stations.

Paul Bendix said he has physical challenges handling money and looks forward to being able to board Muni with a TransLink card. He asked who is handling overall media relations for the transit agencies. Mr. Chow said there is a consortium of six major transit operators that meet each month. Muni and BART have the highest ridership and biggest media blitz.

Mr. Bendix asked if there was a team to handle any initial problems. Mr. Chow said the TransLink project is being led by a consortium, which has gained benefits from current operators. Testing of various failure scenarios is ongoing. Card readers are battery powered and will continue to function with any loss of communication or power. A policy is being studied to handle refunds to customers who can't tag off due to train delays beyond the four-hour trip limit.

Francois Granade asked what would be the impact of use in terms of numbers in proportion to riders. Mr. Chow anticipates a target group to autoloading cards, which automatically supplies cards with either e-cash or passes at preset amounts or intervals. The plan is to get rid of as much paper ticketing as possible with the move to an electronic ticketing system by ramping up slowly, based on how customers react to the electronic system.

Mr. Granade asked about the placement of CIDs at entrances and exits to facilitate ease of tagging on and off. Mr. Chow said a monthly pass requires tagging on and off on only one date. He said tagging on and off can be a challenge at stations with many entry and exit points. There is an average of three card readers per platform spread out in areas away from choke points. Adjustments in card reader locations will be made based on customer use.

Mr. Granade said he heard about an institution beginning to talk about collaboration between other transit agencies for one regional transit pass. Mr. Chow said there is discussion but a challenge remains with BART that doesn't have a monthly pass or 10-ride ticket.

Mr. Bendix said it is a challenge for wheelchair riders who arrive at Muni to get to BART because they need to take an elevator up to the BART concourse level so the agent can run the ticket through the machine and then do the same in the reverse. He said it would be great to have a TransLink card reader on the BART platforms. Mr. Chow said one of the BART projects will have a TransLink device on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gate. He said it is a challenge with BART because fares are collected before arrival at the platform and Caltrain is the opposite. He said staff is looking at having Caltrain ticketing at street level in the future.

Mr. Wilfley said there will be confusion when people tag on with a monthly card and the reader deducts the maximum possible fare and then when tagging off the reader calculates the fare for the number of zones traveled and refunds the difference.

### Public Comment

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, said TransLink is a lot of money for a fragmented fare system in the Bay Area and transit districts are not interested in regional fare cooperation. He said there will be log jams at the 4<sup>th</sup> and King Caltrain station with a thousand people trying to tag on and off. Ms. Bouchard said you only need to tag on and off on one date with a monthly pass.

Andy Chow, Redwood City, said the TransLink project is long overdue. He heard there is a limited supply of the TransLink cards and the card's chip is no longer manufactured. He commented on the inequity of fare zones and said Caltrain should consider station-to-station fares. Caltrain should consider a 31-day pass instead of a calendar pass, which can be purchased in the middle of a month. Mr. D. Chow said fare studies with zone combinations is a decision for upper management, who always work to improve Caltrain; TransLink would provide the ability to deal with zone charge changes.

Ms. Bouchard said TransLink is a vehicle through which Caltrain's fare policy is administered and may make it easier in some cases, but still mimics the existing fare policy so the decisions that have been made have been made for reasons that are still quite valid; that seems the direction Caltrain will continue to go for the near term.

Doug DeLong, Mountain View, said there could be problems with tagging on and off if a train delay causes customers to go beyond the four-hour validity period. He said there would be problems during a power outage if the CIDs are not all battery-powered. Mr. Chow said the CIDs are non-volatile and if power is lost there won't be a loss of transactions. In addition to communications going forward, the CIDs will hold information when they lose power. The hope is that someday there will be a design that has uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for backup. The CIDs are also low voltage safe units. Caltrain has a disaster recovery plan implemented for the TransLink system, which is a requirement for the accounting system.

Vice Chair Hronowski thanked Mr. Chow for the excellent presentation.

### **Chairperson's Report**

No report.

### **Staff Report**

Assistant District Secretary Rosemary Lake reported public notice of the recruitment for four CAC vacancies began on Monday, April 13. Applications are available at [caltrain.com](http://caltrain.com) and are due May 11 at 5 p.m.

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- Caltrain has been working on three capital projects in the past months: San Mateo grade crossing improvement, which involves looking at every single grade crossing in San Mateo County and making improvements to preclude vehicle/train crashes.
- Work has begun on the South Terminal Project to demobilize the old maintenance yard that has been moved to CEMOF. This will clear the way for installation of new platforms and tracks.
- Caltrain is seeing immediate results from installation of mini-high platforms at second tier stations in Sunnyvale and Redwood City. Installation will continue at Menlo Park, San Carlos, and Belmont stations.

- On-time performance was 98 percent for March 2009. Amtrak teams have worked extremely hard to improve mechanical procedures and coordination between transportation and mechanical staffs.
- There was a seamless transition to the new 8-ride ticket that was introduced on March 2, replacing the current 10-ride ticket.
- Annual passenger counts are being prepared for presentation in June.
- Giants service began on April 7 with no problems.
- The first shipment of racks for the Bikes on Board Project will be installed in gallery and Bombardier cars, which will expand capacity per bike car by eight bikes and maintain as much seating as possible.
- At its April 2 meeting the Joint Powers Board authorized an agreement between the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board and the California High Speed Rail Authority to establish a cooperative partnership for rail projects on the Caltrain right of way. This is just the beginning of outreach and an education process for the public. The Caltrain corridor is the most challenging portion of the high speed rail (HSR) network because this is the only place where HSR will interface with an operating railroad.
- Performance statistics for February 2009 compared to February 2008
  - a. Average weekday ridership was 883,043, an increase of 4 percent.
  - b. Total revenue was \$3,161,847, an increase of 5.2 percent.
- Statistics for ridership and revenue indicate the local economy is starting to have an impact on Caltrain service.
- State Transit Assistance funds have been taken back by the state. Caltrain is looking at a potential budget deficit nearing double digits. Staff is working diligently to develop options to help close the budget gap.

Mr. Wilfley asked if there is any visibility on the composition of ridership as it hasn't grown in March. Ms. Bouchard said data from January/February will show the highest ever ridership in all sorts of rider categories. Transit tends to take a double hit when the economy falters. Caltrain loses diehard riders if they lose jobs and people who are taking transit because it affords better travel times are seeing less crowded highways and going back to their cars. The advantage in these difficult economic times is that Caltrain has a very competitive transit service with the Baby Bullet, limited and local service.

### **Committee Comments**

Vice Chair Hronowski said he recently took a train trip across Canada. He rode the Gold transit commuter system out of Toronto and there seemed to be a ~~ear~~ train every minute or so during rush hour.

### **Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, May 20, 6 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos CA 94070, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Boccaccio Auditorium

### **Adjournment at 7:12 p.m.**