

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

**MINUTES NOVEMBER 18, 2009**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** P. Bendix, G. Graham (Chair), F. Granade, J. Hronowski, B. Jenkins, S. Richardson, M. Tekchandani, C. Tucker, B. Wilfley

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** T. Bartholomew, P. Boland, M. Bouchard, M. Espinosa, R. Lake

Chair Gerald Graham called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. Mona Tekchandani led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee (Hronowski/Bendix) approved the minutes of October 21, 2009.

**Public Comment**

Jeff Carter, Burlingame, complimented Caltrain's efforts in dealing with the bomb threat at the Millbrae Caltrain Station last month. He said train service the day after Thanksgiving should include an earlier and later train as a commute option for workers.

**Presentation: Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP)**

Manager, Planning and Development Marisa Espinosa provided details on the draft plan for FY2009-FY2018:

- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) requires an annual plan that includes the 10-year operating and capital plan and financial projections used to qualify for State and Federal funds.
- The needs-based plan highlights Caltrain's ongoing safety program, the State-of-Good-Repair program and efforts to maximize ridership. Long-term needs focus on the Peninsula Rail Program (the agency's partnership with the California High Speed Rail Authority/CHSRA) and the modernization and electrification of Caltrain.
- The operating plan outlines rail assumptions for service levels, ridership, revenue and operating costs.
- Shuttle assumptions include a 5 percent increase per year except in FY2010, contracted service and costs shared by shuttle sponsors, the Joint Powers Board and other grant sources.
- Financial projections are challenged by a structural deficit until electrification, partner agencies contributions, continuing cost containment/reduction measures and the need for funding strategy to address shortfalls.
- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) needs a 10-year total of \$2.57 billion with 19 percent for state of good repair and 80 percent for the Peninsula Rail Program.
- The plan will be submitted for Board approval at the December 3 meeting.
- Comments will be accepted through November 20.

Mr. Graham asked why the Stanford Marguerite shuttle is undercounting. Director Rail Transportation Michelle Bouchard said ridership numbers have not been trued up in the past. The

numbers are now trued up and, going forward, Stanford has adjusted their method of counting ridership.

Ms. Tekchandani said passenger notification of train delays and onboard Wi-Fi would increase ridership and she doesn't see this in the SRTP. Ms. Bouchard said there is a plan in the CIP for information technology infrastructure.

Brian Wilfley said it was mentioned the SRTP is intentionally unconstrained financially and asked if this is done in response to MTC's request. Ms. Espinosa said it has been financially unconstrained, which is acceptable according to the regulatory requirements under MTC and the JPB would financially constrain it if possible. She said a big portion of the CIP is the Peninsula Rail Program, which is affected by High Speed Rail (HSR). When more information is available for funding HSR and how specific projects will be affected by HSR, the JPB will be able to continue to refine the Peninsula Rail Program as additional HSR milestones are completed.

Sepi Richardson arrived at 6:29 p.m.

Francois Granade said he found it strange to plan on flat ridership and shouldn't the JPB be more optimistic because the perception of the train is changing in the nation and the Bay Area where people may think more about taking the train. He said there are definitely possibilities for improvement in technology and a need for reliable service. He said bike service is improving, which will have a positive effect on ridership growth. Ms. Espinosa clarified that growth over 10 years doesn't seem flat and there will be some years that assume no growth in ridership. For example, growth in 2011 will assume no growth in ridership due to recent service cuts.

Ms. Bouchard said assuming a flat growth curve is actually being very optimistic in that respect because Caltrain is currently experiencing a 10 percent decline.

Ms. Espinosa said it is helpful to recognize a flat rate of growth is expected in FY2013 and FY 2014 due to construction during electrification and some impact to the right of way. Following electrification a significant increase of at least 10 percent is expected. She said the SRTP includes a balance of optimism and conservative projections for long range planning purposes.

Mr. Granade said there are untapped ways of promoting ridership including bicycles, which count for one-third to one-half of midday ridership. Ms. Espinosa said the SRTP is updated annually and takes into account significant trends to ensure planning for 10 years out and focuses on the long term.

#### Public Comment

Pat Giorni, Burlingame, said she hopes public comments on the SRTP will be available to read at the next JPB meeting. She said 114 trains are to run in 2015 assuming completion of all grade separations and asked if that number is a combination of Caltrain and HSR trains. She said the SRTP does not address bicycle ridership or adaption of electric multiple units (EMUs) for bicycle use. Ms. Espinosa said bike program updates are included in the executive summary in the first chapter of the SRTP. Ms. Espinosa reiterated the purpose of the SRTP is to enable the agency to be eligible for State and Federal funding and the primary focus is on funding and assumptions regarding financial prospects for the agency and the capital side.

### **Presentation: 2009 Amtrak Customer Satisfaction Survey**

Marketing Manager Pat Boland provided details on the background, methodology, key findings, factors in scores and next steps.

- The survey was conducted in June 2009 with 2,140 eligible Caltrain passengers with a completion rate of 77 percent.
- The survey was self-administered in English and Spanish on 34 trains of all types with a mail-in option.
- Key Caltrain customer satisfaction 2009 findings compared to 2008 based on a top score of 5 points:
  - a. Ease of ticket vending machine use increased from 3.8 to 3.93 due to the change from a 10 to 8-ride ticket and fewer validator problems.
  - b. Overall station experience increased from 3.95 to 3.98.
  - c. Availability of printed materials increased from 3.89 to 4.05.
  - d. Onboard experience overall decreased slightly from 4.04 to 4.03, while overall satisfaction increased from 3.98 to 4.0.
- Forty-eight percent of weekday peak riders use a Caltrain monthly pass and 98 percent of those riders are adults. The mean income of Caltrain riders is about \$103,000.
- Ridership decreases of 10 percent are due to the economy, job losses and service disruptions.
- Future Caltrain projects include a Predictive Arrival System (PAS), TransLink, a MTC Hub Signage project and Content Management System (CMS).

Mr. Granade said the computer side of TransLink is problematic but the service is great after the learning curve. He said there is competition with Twitter but Caltrain is in the commuter business. Mr. Boland said staff monitors Twitter and puts a notice out in the event erroneous information is posted.

Mr. Granade said Caltrain's revenue and ridership differentiates it from any other transit system in the Bay Area. He said there is a great revenue source in advertisements that touch a rider population with an income average of about \$115,000. Mr. Granade asked if the CMS system is internal or to manage information outbound or inside. Mr. Boland said it will be internal with departmental control.

Mr. Granade said there is a challenge with information flow maintaining thousands of issues with Caltrain, the JPB and Amtrak and things need to be tracked. Ms. Bouchard said being not only in the communication age but in the center of where communication is evolving means that using different means of communication is key. One of Caltrain's major pushes is to think more strategically how the agency deploys information. She said the PAS will be online fairly soon and will involve equipping trains with Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Caltrain also realizes the need to take a more strategic approach to deployment of communication and is kicking off a Strategic Communication Study, which will help figure out the communication needs of customers and how to build a base of strategic infrastructure to continue to build on and evolve.

Ms. Tekchandani said there are challenges with the last mile of a commute. She asked if Caltrain has considered flex car service at certain stations especially on weekends. Ms. Bouchard said Caltrain had a proposal several years ago but deployment on the Peninsula at that time was not a viable business model for the nonprofit company involved with the issue.

Bruce Jenkins and Paul Bendix left at 7:05 p.m.

Ms. Bouchard said Ms. Espinosa managed the bike access plan project and one of the findings from that is Caltrain needs an access policy. This will lead to other types of recommended access improvements and car sharing will be high on the list.

Ms. Tekchandani said she didn't know how studies are run but asked if they are mentioned in Caltrain promotional materials. She said there would be many riders who would like to comment. Mr. Boland said the CAC is a good vehicle to get points across and comments from surveys are always interesting. He urged CAC members to submit topics of interest to staff for the *Caltrain Connection* publication.

### **Presentation: Caltrain Web Site Update**

Mr. Boland provided details on the CMS, Web design, project calendar and next steps.

- The CMS is a relatively modest program with a total budget of \$90,000. It involves information posting by department, subscription service, and a calendar function including trip planning, online sales and real-time updates.
- Sample design pages included tabs showing schedules, stations, fares, rider information, accessibility and Caltrain information.
- A fare tab will expand to include zones, types of fares, how to buy tickets, and parking fees.
- A sample window explains the Caltrain bicycle program including how to ride, destinations and connections, parking, accessibility and FAQs.
- Schedule:
  1. November – design and data migration.
  2. December – testing and training.
  3. January – launch.
  4. Ongoing – site expansion.

Mr. Boland said there will be a usability study and the CAC will have the opportunity to test the Web site and offer input. Staff will provide dates for the study.

Cat Tucker asked if the Web site will offer a place for user comments. Mr. Boland said there will be a place for this and comments will be routed to appropriate staff.

Ms. Richardson asked about the process to contact CAC members. Assistant District Secretary Rosemary Lake said all correspondence can be emailed to [cacsecretary@caltrain.com](mailto:cacsecretary@caltrain.com).

Ms. Tucker said it would be nice if there was a way to notify the public who the CAC represents and how they could contact a CAC member.

Mr. Granade asked how information can be sent to board members. Ms. Lake said all correspondence/replies to the CAC or JPB are distributed at CAC and Board meetings in the correspondence file.

Ms. Bouchard said she will prepare a memo for the CAC explaining how to communicate with the CAC and Board.

Mr. Boland said he would like to do an article on the CAC for *Caltrain Connection*.

### **Chairperson's Report**

Chair Graham appointed Bruce Jenkins, John Hronowski and Paul Bendix to the nominating committee for 2010 officers.

### **Staff Report**

Ms. Bouchard reported:

- Acknowledged Amtrak staff for their excellent response in dealing with the bomb threat at the Millbrae Caltrain Station in October.
- Average weekday ridership is steady at about 10 percent below 2008. Total ridership is 10 percent down over the last four months. There were about 38,000 riders in October compared to 41,900 in October 2008. This compares to a low of 25,500 per day during the dot.com bust. October revenue decreased 5 percent compared to 2008 but is on budget due to last year's fare increase. Performance statistics seem to have stabilized and Caltrain is committed to providing on time and reliable service.
- Performance has been affected by 14 trespasser fatalities this year. Public affairs' staff is actively interfacing with mental health professionals and police on recent deaths by suicide along the rail corridor.
- Special service is scheduled for Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and the Big Game at Stanford.
- A solution has been found with the train washers to avoid acidic etching on train windows.
- All train horns in the lead position have been modified and are in compliance. A few remaining trailer cars in the middle of consists will be retrofitted.
- The double bike car project is near completion. One Bombardier trailer car will be completed next week so every consist will have a minimum of 40 bike slots.
- Staff is involved in the TransLink soft launch and working through software patches on the handheld card reader.
- The Holiday Train will run on December 5 and 6.

Mr. Jenkins said he lives about one mile from Caltrain tracks and it is difficult to detect horn noise.

Mr. Hronowski said he and Mr. Graham took SamTrans home after the Millbrae Caltrain Station bomb threat incident in October and acknowledged bus staff for handling announcements regarding the situation.

### Public Comment

Pat Giorni, Burlingame, said there are continuing complaints about horn noise and it is apparently from Union Pacific and freight lines that run during hours when Caltrain is not operating trains.

### **Committee Comments**

Mr. Wilfley said there was a KQED forum on the cluster of suicides of Gunn High School students. He said Public Information Officer Christine Dunn did an extremely good job as part of the forum.

Ms. Tucker asked what would be the trigger for ridership and how to increase service in the Gilroy area, especially on weekends. Ms. Bouchard said Gilroy service is more complex because

it involves traveling over the Union Pacific right of way. She said one year there was a pilot weekend service to the Gilroy outlets before the holiday season and it failed miserably. Ms. Bouchard said service levels are examined at budget time, which begins an inquiry. Surveys are conducted every three years to collect origin and destination information and ridership counts are completed each February. She said job losses and housing movement have had negative effects on Gilroy service. Ms. Bouchard said she would contact Ms. Tucker offline for a more extensive discussion.

Ms. Richardson said because of economic conditions outlets may offer a greater market share than specialty stores and asked how ridership could be tested on this concept. Ms. Bouchard said market research could be done but Caltrain doesn't have funding for this.

Ms. Richardson said Caltrain needs to start marketing for a stable source of funding for transportation.

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

Wednesday, December 16, 2009, 6 p.m., San Mateo County Transit District Administrative Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Bacciocco Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, CA

**Adjournment at 7:34 p.m.**