



# Connection

The Newsletter for Caltrain Riders

Spring 2009

## Public Hearings in June

The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board will hold two public hearings June 4 to formally declare a fiscal emergency and consider possible fare and service changes. A fiscal emergency is called if a transit agency is projected to have negative working capital within one year.

Over the past seven years, Caltrain has dealt with significant financial problems. The rail agency has relied on one-time funds to close the annual budget gap, but this year those revenue sources are depleted. State Transit Assistance funds have been reduced 50 percent this year and eliminated for the next few years.

The hearing will take place at 10 a.m. at Caltrain headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Ave., San Carlos.

## Fun Train Destinations in Menlo Park

With spring in the air, many people are looking to get out of the house and enjoy some outdoor fun without worrying about the hassles of gas, driving and parking. Caltrain is an easy way for people to enjoy weekend excursions while reducing their carbon footprint.

Riders can take Caltrain from San Francisco to San Jose to a number of destinations that are within a short walk of a station, such as the Menlo Center in downtown Menlo Park. Nestled along El Camino Real, just one block from the Menlo Park Caltrain Station, the Menlo Center



Customers grab a bite to eat and enjoy the sun at Café Borrone in downtown Menlo Park.

features popular hangouts such as Kepler's Books, Café Borrone, Palermo Italian Restaurant and the British Bankers Club.

Kepler's and Café Borrone, two family-owned businesses, have been a vital part of the commu-

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## TransLink Cards Tested at Caltrain

Caltrain customers may have noticed riders tagging TransLink cards at readers in stations or on platforms. The Bay Area stored-value transit pass is undergoing its first phase of testing by Caltrain. Nearly 100 Caltrain employees have volunteered to put TransLink through a rigorous real-world test.

The test will be concluded in mid-June, after

which the results will be analyzed. A second phase of testing, which will include volunteers from the general public, will begin after the analysis is complete.

The TransLink card can be loaded with monthly or multi-ride passes as well as e-cash. Before boarding the train, TransLink users "tag on" at a Trans-



Caltrain employees are currently testing cards.

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# Fun Train Ride to Menlo Park Center

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nity for decades. On any given day, one can see throngs of book lovers headed to the bookstore to hear their favorite authors speak or people sitting around the outdoor plaza of the café enjoying a tasty meal or beverage.

## Kepler's Books

For the past 54 years, Kepler's has been an institution in Menlo Park. Founded by Roy Kepler, the independent bookstore at one time served as a "radical oasis" for Stanford University students who wanted to share their political beliefs during the tumultuous 1960s. Now owned by Roy Kepler's son, Clark, the bookstore is still a place where individuals and families can share ideas, opinions and a love of books.

About four years ago, this community gem was forced to shut its doors. With the rise of book sales at chain and big-box stores, plus the Internet, it was hard for Kepler's to compete. Not many people knew that the bookstore was in serious financial trouble, and many were left shocked and dismayed by the sudden closure in summer 2005, Kepler said. But then



*Customers have been buying books at Kepler's Books for more than five decades.*

the unthinkable happened.

Several of Kepler's loyal customers decided to save the business. Kepler called customer Daniel Mendoza the catalyst behind the "Save Kepler's" campaign. Mendoza contacted potential investors to help save Kepler's. Others used their business-savvy and marketing experience to assist in the effort. With over a half-million dollars invested in the business by its patrons, the store re-opened within six weeks.

In an interview for a PBS documentary called "Paper Dreams," which discusses the life and times of the independent bookstore, Mendoza said, "We put Kepler's on its feet, but only the long-term support of its community will keep it standing."

To keep the store afloat, Kepler learned ways to improve traditional book sales. New strategies include selling fair trade items and green products.

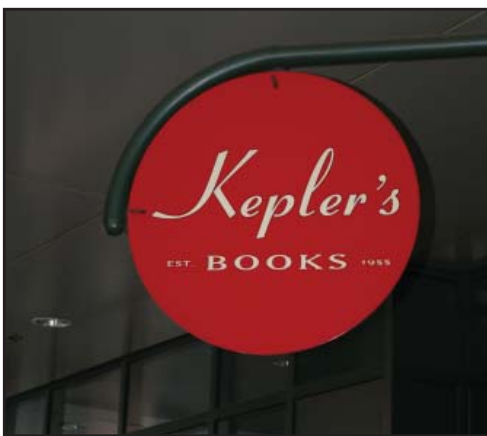
"One of the advantages we have over chain stores is a better relationship with our customers and the

community," Kepler said. "We have increased our author events (for adults and children) and reached out to young readers through their families and schools."

Twice a year, Kepler's holds a series of book fairs at schools in Redwood City, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Mountain View. Bookstore staff works closely with each school's librarian to provide books that are unique to the schools. And for the last few years, Kepler's has partnered with the Menlo Park Library to promote the "Magic of Reading" event each spring. As a way to give back to the community, Kepler's donates 10 percent of all store sales to the Belle Haven Library in Menlo Park.

"We want Kepler's to be a place where people want to come with their family and friends," Kepler said. "We want it to continue to be a place of discovery for people."

For more information, visit [www.keplers.com](http://www.keplers.com).



*Kepler's Books is located in downtown Menlo Park, a block from the Menlo Park Caltrain Station.*

# Transit District Hosts Earth Day Event

To encourage more people to jump on the green bandwagon, the San Mateo County Transit District, the managing agency for Caltrain, hosted an Earth Day Fair at the Redwood City Caltrain Station/SamTrans Transit Center.

In addition to Caltrain information, the free, lunch-time event featured a variety of booths to

educate people about how they can “green” their life and their community.

Allied Waste, the American Heart Association, Chain Reaction Bicycles, the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance, PG&E and the San Mateo County Food Sys-



tem Alliance also participated.

The District sponsored the event to encourage people to take a positive step to reduce their carbon footprint. According to the American Public Transportation Association, switching to public transportation reduces individual carbon emissions by 20 pounds per day or 4,800 pounds per year.

# Bicycle E-lockers at Redwood City Station

Caltrain’s recently adopted Bicycle Access and Parking Plan calls for more flexible options for bicyclists at its busiest stations. These options included adding new electronic lockers to stations and upgrading existing keyed-lockers to electronic day-use lockers.

In partnership with Redwood City, Caltrain has applied for a \$76,000 grant to install 24 new electronic lockers at the Redwood City station. This station would be the first of 10 sta-

tions highlighted in the plan to have the modern lockers. The proposed location of the lockers is just a short walk from the north- and southbound platforms. If the grant is approved, installation of the e-lockers could begin as early as July.

E-lockers offer very secure bicycle parking for regular, as well as occasional, users. In the last few years, more agencies started moving in the direction of installing the lockers because they are more flexible

and secure than conventional keyed ones.

Participants must register with E-lockers Technology to gain access to the lockers. Members can access any e-locker within the network including those at BART stations and Valley Transportation Authority transit centers.

## Bikes Onboard

For individuals who need to take their bikes onboard trains, Caltrain schedules two bike cars – total capacity of 80 bikes – on 36 of its most popular weekday trains (gallery car sets). The bike cars are the northernmost car and the fourth car from the north on the stainless steel gallery car trains. Yellow bike signs are posted on these trains.

Caltrain crews will strive to maintain this customer enhancement; however, the second bike car is not guaranteed because of equipment maintenance and other operational needs.

The Bombardier bike car capacity is increasing to 24, with retrofit expected to be completed by the end of July. For a list of trains that have the two bike cars, visit the Caltrain Web site at [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).



*A grant would allow Caltrain to install e-lockers at the Redwood City station.*

# Baseball Fans Enjoy Spring “Train”ing

Seasoned San Francisco Giants fans are hopping onboard Caltrain once again this baseball season. AT&T Park is just one block from Caltrain’s San Francisco terminal at Fourth and King streets.

For post-game weekend and weekday evening service, an express train to San Carlos leaves approximately 15 minutes after the last out, or when full, and then makes all locals stops after San Carlos to San Jose Diridon station.

The second special train departs San Francisco 25 minutes after the game, or when full, and serves all local stops to San Jose Diridon. On nights with post-game fireworks, the express and local trains depart approximately 15 and 25 minutes, respectively, after the fireworks or when full.

Caltrain reminds fans to drink responsibly and to remember that alcohol is not allowed on game-day

trains beginning at 9 p.m.

Caltrain baseball service brochures are available on trains or can be viewed at [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).

## Kids Are Giants Too

At the end of May, more than 800 students, from 13 schools in Redwood City chartered a Caltrain train to AT&T Park to spend the day with the San Francisco Giants’ staff and mascot Lou Seal.

For the past several years, Sequoia Hospital has sponsored a trip for Redwood City School District fourth-graders to hangout with members of the Giants organization as part of its *Make Time for Fitness* community program.

# TransLink Tested

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Link reader, located in the station or on the platform. This deducts the Caltrain fare from the card.

When riders reach their destination, they must “tag off” by tagging the card again at a reader before leaving the station. If not, the maximum Caltrain fare will be deducted from the card.

Monthly Pass customers will only need to tag on and off their first day of travel each month.

Proof of payment will still be required. Conductors will use a hand-held card reader to verify that TransLink cards have been tagged or that the rider has a valid monthly pass.

More than 25,000 TransLink transactions are being processed by AC Transit, Dumbarton Express and Golden Gate Transit every day. TransLink has been implemented and tested on BART and is expected to launch by early summer.



*Giants fans head to AT&T Park from the San Francisco Caltrain Station at Fourth and King streets.*

## Safety Tip

Never drive onto a railroad crossing until you are sure the traffic ahead has left enough space to drive across without boxing you in. Do not shift gears while driving across the tracks.

If your vehicle stalls on the crossing, get everyone out and get off the tracks. Call 1.877.SAF.RAIL (1.877.723.7245) to report the situation.

## Expressions - Riders Write

**Q:** I know funds are tight these days, but why do the Caltrain windows look so dirty?

**A:** Since the San Jose maintenance facility opened in 2007, the trains are washed up to four times a week. An environmental bonus is that Caltrain has been able to recover and recycle between 80 to 90 percent of the water it uses to wash the trains.

On some of the older trains what you may be seeing are scratches, not dirt, since the windows are made of plastic, not glass.

## More Stations Convert to TVM Parking

By the end of summer, Caltrain riders will be able to buy daily parking permits at all Ticket Vending Machines, saving customers a trip back to their cars to display a daily permit. Patrons who purchase monthly permits will still have to display them on their dashboards.

TVMs at six Caltrain stations will be converted:

- San Mateo, Hillsdale and Sunnyvale (completed by June 15)
- Redwood City, Mountain View and San Jose Diridon (completed by Aug. 1)

The current stand-alone parking machines in the parking lots will be removed.

## Grade Crossing Improvement Project

Caltrain has begun a two-year project to improve 25 grade crossings (places where streets cross the tracks) in San Mateo County. These improvements are designed to en-

hance the safety for the many drivers and pedestrians who use these crossings.

Improvements included in the \$10.8 million project are more clearly-marked pedestrian crossings with fencing and gates, improved sidewalks and pavement markings. Vehicle safety will be addressed through signage and signal improvements, as well as the construction of new medians to discourage motorists from driving around the activated vehicle gates.

Work at 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Mateo will be completed by late August. Work will proceed to Redwood City, Atherton and Menlo Park. The remaining crossings in San Mateo and Burlingame will be completed later in 2009 and 2010. A similar project for crossings in Santa Clara County also is in the works.



*Grade crossing work at 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Mateo will be completed in late summer.*

## CALTRAIN SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

Take Caltrain to these special events. The station name and any additional transit service are listed below each event.

### June 13 & 14

39<sup>th</sup> Annual Burlingame Art in the Park  
Washington Park, Carolan and Burlingame avenues  
[www.burlingame.org](http://www.burlingame.org)  
Burlingame station

### June 26

14<sup>th</sup> Annual Downtown San Mateo Winewalk  
Along Third Avenue  
[www.winewalk.org](http://www.winewalk.org)  
San Mateo station

### July 11 & 12

Palo Alto Clay & Glass Festival  
Palo Alto Art Center,  
1313 Newell Road  
[www.acga.net](http://www.acga.net)  
Palo Alto station,  
VTA buses 35 or 86

### July 18 & 19

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Connoisseurs' Marketplace  
Santa Cruz Avenue at  
El Camino Real, Menlo Park  
[www.pacificfinearts.com](http://www.pacificfinearts.com)  
Menlo Park station

### July 26

Festa Italiana Community Street Fair  
South B Street between  
Tilton & Second avenues,  
San Mateo  
[www.festafoundation.org](http://www.festafoundation.org)  
San Mateo station

# Fast Facts

The Caltrain Board unanimously approved an agreement with the California High Speed Rail Authority to establish an initial organization framework where both agencies will work as partners in the planning, design and construction of improvements along the Caltrain corridor that will accommodate and serve both the near- and long-term needs of high speed rail and Caltrain. An outreach plan is being developed to make certain that input is solicited as the project moves forward.

Caltrain customers with disabilities may bring an Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Device, such as a Segway, on Caltrain if the device is used for mobility purposes. Caltrain has developed a policy that allows EPAMDs to be boarded on the train as long as the customer obtains a permit and follows instructions for boarding and stowing the device. To obtain a permit, customers may request an application by calling Caltrain at 650.508.6202.



*Warm Planet Bikes, located at the San Francisco Caltrain Station, offers valet bike parking.*

Warm Planet Bikes, located at the San Francisco station, is a recipient of the 2009 Earth Month Community Stewardship Award presented by Seattle's Best Coffee.

Caltrain will operate Saturday service on Independence Day, July 4. Please visit [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com) for schedule information.

# It Pays to Use Transit

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act recently signed by President Barack Obama nearly doubles the transit benefit allowance used to pay for transit passes from \$120 to \$230.

The benefit works in three ways: employers give their workers up to \$230 for transit as a tax-free benefit; employers give employees the option to use payroll deductions to avoid paying taxes on up to \$230 a month in commuting costs; or employers and employees can split the cost of the benefits. Visit [www.caltrain.com/transitbenefits](http://www.caltrain.com/transitbenefits).



*Caltrain Connection* is produced by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board. Comments, questions, contributions and suggestions should be directed to:

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1.800.660.4287  [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com)

# Accessible Boarding Platforms Here

Caltrain has built additional mini-high boarding platforms at five stations to improve accessibility to the train for people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The concrete ramps provide level-access to the Bombardier cars, eliminating the need to use a manual lift.

Sunnyvale, Redwood City, Menlo Park, San Mateo and San Carlos are now equipped with the mini-high boarding platforms. Millbrae, Hillsdale, Palo Alto, Mountain View and

San Jose Diridon train stops were the first to have them.



Every train has one wheelchair accessible car that can accommodate two wheelchairs. Many trains have an onboard wheelchair lift, but the newer cars must use the mobile wheelchair lift or the accessible ramp. Customers using a wheelchair or other mobility device wait at the blue international wheelchair symbol painted on the platform for conductor assistance.