



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of July 1, 2021

Correspondence as of June 25, 2021

Subject

- 1 Fire & Infrastructure Risk Along Rail Corridor Due to Dead Trees
- 2 Repayment to SamTrans for the Acquisition of the Caltrain Right of Way
- 3 Thank you Letter – House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

From: [Kim Martin](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Fire & Infrastructure Risk Along Rail Corridor Due to Dead Trees - Recommend Expanding Removal Agency Authorization
Date: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 12:02:00 PM

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Greetings. My name is Kim Martin. I am a resident of Palo Alto and am writing to express my opinion that CalTrain and the rail corridor are at serious risk of infrastructure damage and fires due to large dead and dying trees growing inside the track property. I have spoken with CalTrain tree trimming crews that I have seen working in my area. I have shared with them my experience in trying to bring specific large dead trees to the attention of the agencies authorized to act on it, and those crews have told me that the best way to elevate this issue is to contact the Joint Powers Board, so that is what I am doing. Note that they were working to trim lower trees, but were not authorized or equipped to remove the very large ones that pose the largest risk.

I would like to emphasize that the process of reporting dead trees to removal agencies is not easy. It should be. Dead trees are one of the largest and yet most manageable risks to fire spread in urban areas. Very tall dead trees are extremely dangerous, as when they burn, their embers are already high in the sky, so it takes less wind to carry them far. They also have the capacity to fall entirely or drop massively burning large branches across large areas. Specific trees (eucalyptus, pine) ignite and even explode very quickly. Removal of these trees, wherever they are in the urban landscape, should be of highest priority, especially now. Our tree trimming and fire fighting resources will be highly strained very soon. Now is the time for action.

In trying to report a 60-70 foot tall dead-as-a-doorknob eucalyptus tree growing on the train tracks on the border of Peers Park in Palo Alto, I have learned that this is a "pass the buck" game. Every agency reports that they either do not have authority to remove or do not have the resources. The Palo Alto city tree management department insists this is a CalTrans issue. CalTrans insists that they do not have authority to remove on the CalTrain tracks and that this is entirely a CalTrain issue. I have reported this to CalTrain which responded that they will investigate the situation. Since then, they have sent tree trimming crews out to this area, and those crews had instructions on what to remove and what not to touch, and they were not instructed to do anything about the large dead eucalyptus.

At this point, I can only conclude that the people who are in the chain of command in determining how to allocate tree removal resources do not know the potential of what we are dealing with. To that I would just recommend that you all get onto YouTube and watch some videos of large eucalyptus trees catching fire. I am completely serious about this recommendation. They ignite far faster than they could possibly be put out, in about 2-3 minutes. Now imagine that such a fiery inferno falls onto the newly installed overhead electrical wires of the CalTrain tracks and further across Alma Street to the houses along that busy corridor, probably falling onto some cars as well, and then all exploding.

I seriously recommend both 1) that you remove this particular tree as soon as possible, and more broadly 2) that you design a protocol whereby you work with local agencies - city and county tree management agencies, for example - to literally log all the dead matter that needs to be removed and prioritize it according to flammability, scale of safety risk, etc. Local agencies can certainly be involved to deal with the "processing" of the cut down trees - whether that be chipping or whatever.

Whatever you decide, I hope you can agree that something needs to change to streamline

the process of cleaning up the dead matter along the tracks, ideally before the 2021 fire season starts, which will very likely be quite early this year.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

From: [Scarpino, Robert](#)
To: kim_maas_martin@yahoo.com
Cc: [Public Comment](#); [Wong, Shirley](#); [Right of Way](#)
Subject: Tree near Peers Park
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 7:33:43 AM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Hi Kim,

I received your email yesterday and we understand your concerns. We have a 52 mile corridor with vast amounts of trees and vegetation to maintain and prioritize annually. We have a Professional Tree Management **Arborwell** who assist us with our annual tree maintenance and removal plan. We have worked together with Arborwell for the last 5 plus years. A tremendous amount of planning goes into each year, but this is not a “perfect” system as tree conditions change. We do not have the budget to address each and every concern form the public and the cities we run through. We are looking into the tree you mentioned in your email yesterday near Peers Park in Palo Alto. We will advise once we are able to evaluate the tree conditions and explore the history we have on it.

Thanks...

<https://www.arborwell.com/>

Robert Scarpino

Director Rail Maintenance

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O: 650.508.7780

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From: [Roland Lebrun](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#); [Baltao, Elaine \[board.secretary@vta.org\]](#); [SFCTA Board Secretary](#); [MTC Info](#); [SFCTA CAC; cacsecretary \[caltrain.com\]](#)
Subject: Repayment to SamTrans for the acquisition of the Caltrain right of way
Date: Friday, June 25, 2021 10:16:51 AM
Importance: High

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Dear Caltrain Board,

Please add an information item to the 6/28 Finance Committee agenda to inform the expediting of the repayments to SamTrans for the acquisition of the Caltrain right of way.

Thank You.

Roland Lebrun

CC

- MTC Commissioners
- SFCTA Commissioners
- VTA Board of Directors
- VTA PAC
- SFCTA CAC
- Caltrain CAC
- VTA CAC



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June 24, 2021

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
U.S. House of Representatives
272 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

On behalf of the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain), I am writing to thank you for working to secure \$306,000 for Additional Mini Highs at Caltrain Stations as part of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's version of the INVEST in America Act.

This project, if funded, will build upon the ongoing investment in Caltrain Electrification and will help our agency deliver on the bold 2040 Service Vision adopted by our Board in 2019. We are confident you will continue to advocate for this funding as the measure advances through the Senate and is ultimately signed into law.

Thank you again for all of your support of Caltrain and for transit over the years. Your support makes it possible for our agency to deliver quality service to the communities along the Peninsula.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devora Davis", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Dev Davis
Chair, Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board

cc: Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board of Directors

PENINSULA CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS BOARD
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