



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of April 2, 2020

Correspondence as of March 13, 2020

Subject

1 BATWG Newsletter

2 Caltrain Horn Noise

3 Consumer Report

From: Bay Area Transportation Working Group <cautn1=aol.com@vrmailer3.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 8, 2020 12:51 PM
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: BATWG Newsletter - March 2020



Bay Area Transportation Working Group (BATWG)

BATWG is a 501 c3 Non-Profit Corporation organized by a group of experienced transportation professionals and activists in 2012. Mostly volunteers, we are dedicated to working with like-minded groups to improve the reliability and appeal of the Bay Area's passenger rail and bus systems and to significantly ease regional traffic congestion. To learn more about BATWG, please go to www.batwgblog.com.

BATWG meetings occur on the third Thursday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon. To receive an Agenda please send a note to BATWGNewsletter@gmail.com. To participate by telephone call 712-775-7031 and, when prompted, enter 791318 and announce yourself. Dues are \$40 a year, with discounts for seniors and students. To pay dues or otherwise contribute, go to www.batwgblog.com and click on the donate button, or mail a check to BATWG, 3001 Ashbrook Court, Oakland, CA 94601.

BATWG Newsletter

Issue No. 23, March 7, 2020

Resuscitating the Transbay Bus Service

March 7, 2020

According to the [San Francisco Examiner](#), a bus-only lane on the Bay Bridge would save bus users up to 6 minutes a ride. As transit advocates, BATWG would certainly support efforts to convert a peak-direction traffic lane in each direction to a bus-only lane. But anticipating objections to such a change, some uninformed officials are promoting off-peak contra-flow bus lanes on the Bridge. Under this arrangement

buses would travel westbound on the eastbound lower level during morning peak hours and eastbound on the westbound upper level during afternoon peak hours.

The proposal is frankly hokey, and here are three reasons why:

First, since the hours of peak traffic tend to vary there are certain to be times when contra-flow lanes would further compound already bad traffic backups.

Second, adding and subtracting contra-flow bus lanes two or more times a day would be a source of confusion to all concerned, which could easily lead to safety problems.

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Marin-Sonoma Voters Weigh in on SMART's Future

March 7, 2020



The Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit District's (SMART) 45 mile commuter rail service in the North Bay from Santa Rosa to the Larkspur Ferry is funded by a ¼ cent sales tax through 2029. **This week North Bay voters decisively rejected the proposal to extend the sales tax for an additional 30 years through 2059**, thereby forcing the District to address its budgetary and operational problems in a realistic manner. Past mistakes and unwise decisions regarding cost, scheduling, projected ridership and rail operations have lead to a system that is both excessively costly and underused. Things have gotten to the point where the District's total operating expense now exceeds its revenue. Fortunately there are 9 years of guaranteed sales tax funding remaining, giving the District sufficient time to reform its management and operations so as to provide a better and more effective service, and thereby improve its standing with the voters.

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Synopsis from 2/21/2020 BATWG Meeting

March 7, 2020

Faster Bay Area (FBA) the so-called Megatax. In late January SB278 (Senator Jim Beall, D-15th, Silicon Valley) was advanced out of the Senate in its original format (a three-page directive to perform coordinated regional transportation planning) as a placeholder bill. It was received by the Assembly, went through first read, and is being held at the desk. Assembly committee hearings not yet scheduled.



After missing their promised targets for “populating” (adding content to) of SB278 in mid-December, Mid-January, and Mid-February, the FBA sponsors continue to work with their pre-selected stakeholders to produce a “consensus bill”.

As of 2/21/20 SB278 remained in a “gut-and-amend” status, meaning that it still had no new content.

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San Francisco Takes a Stand!

March 7, 2020

For decades San Francisco and the rest of the Region have been suffering from an increasing imbalance between incoming new jobs and housing. Municipal, regional and State governments have been either unable or unwilling to do anything about the problem.

Fed up, the people of San Francisco have now taken a stand. On March 3, 2020 they passed San Francisco Prop E. According to Ida Mojada's in depth article (SF Examiner 2/29/20), Prop E will require large developers to curtail office development unless an appropriate amount of affordable housing development is built in San Francisco in accordance with state-mandated affordable housing objectives. Thanks to a ballot measure passed in the 1980's San Francisco already limits the amount of office space that can be approved every year. Prop. E will reduce the amount of currently acceptable new office space by a percentage equal to the percentage by which the city fails to fulfill its affordable housing obligations. In addition Prop E will cap large new office projects in the South of Market neighborhood until at least 15,000 new affordable housing units are produced in that area.

Why one might ask, should a transit-
advocacy group like BATWG care about
Prop E?



Because as well as addressing San Francisco jobs/housing imbalance, Prop E directly confronts the Region's most intractable transportation problem, which is how to keep up with the development community's long established practice of piling jobs into high cost housing areas, thereby forcing their employees, or those displaced by their employees, to relocate to distant, long-commute locations. A better balance between housing and jobs would benefit everyone, except those who put get-rich-quick real estate profits ahead of all other considerations.

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From: Rios, Rona
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 12:33 PM
To: 'Jax Ter'
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: RE: Caltrain Horn Noise

Hi Jax,

Thanks again for your patience as I gathered information regarding the horn noise you reported hearing usually around 5pm-11pm as trains approach Auzerais Street. Our Operations team looked into your concern to determine what may be happening and they identified that you are likely hearing the whistle sequencing for both crossings. There are two crossings, one at Auzerais Street and at Virginia Street (just south of the Diridon Station). I am also being told that neither of these crossings are covered by the Whistle Quiet Zone code which means the locomotive Engineers are sounding the whistle in a specific sequence depending upon the situation, and in accordance with the General Code of Operating Rules. I understand the whistle sequence for public crossings is two long whistles, one short whistle and finally one long whistle as the train crosses. Also, regarding your question about the recent horn calibration to check decibels, I have been informed that these levels are checked on a regular basis. Operations has been notified that you are concerned with the noise level and want to ensure the train horns are operating at the FRA regulated decibel level and that engineers are obeying the mandated sounding patterns.

Please know that we sincerely apologize for the disturbance. We realize that we cannot entirely eliminate the problem however we will work to address any areas we can.

Thank you for taking the time to reach out to us and please feel free to reach out directly to me if I can be of assistance with any additional questions or concerns. Our correspondence will be shared with Director Davis' office along with the Caltrain Board of Directors.

Best Regards,

Rona Rios
Director, Customer Experience
SamTrans | Caltrain | SMCTA
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA. 94070
riosr@samtrans.com

On Mar 3, 2020, at 9:33 PM, Jax Ter <jaxter408@gmail.com> wrote:

Greetings,

I am writing to bring to your attention the egregious horn blowing from the train conductors, Caltrain/amtrack/freight trains when approaching the Diridon station. As a community we understand the need to alert intersections and the train station of the approach however, I implore you to investigate why they feel the need to blow the horn more than 8 times (which happened tonight). I have clear view of the tracks for nearly 500 yards as they approach and there are no obstructions or pedestrians on the tracks that would prompt them to blow the horn more than 3 times. Can you please help address this and advise of the policy/noise ordinance of these issues? I will be prompting an investigation with several media outlets and other entities to look into this matter and would appreciate the City and Federal agencies helping to address this issue.

Sincerely,

Concerned citizen

-----Original Message-----

From: Jax Ter [mailto:jaxter408@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 8:37 AM

To: Rios, Rona

Subject: Re: Caltrain Horn Noise

Hi Rona,

Thanks for reaching out. I've noticed this occurring mostly from 5pm-11pm daily while approaching Auzerais St. Some conductors follow the 4 blast rule in the regs while others exceed it without any emergencies or obstruction in the tracks. I would also like to inquire about the most recent horn calibration which is not to exceed 110 decibels also stated in the regs. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Mar 5, 2020, at 6:17 AM, Rios, Rona <riosr@samtrans.com> wrote:

>

> Good Morning Jax,

>

> My name is Rona Rios from Caltrain and I received your horn noise complaint from Councilmember Director Davis' office. May I gather some additional details from you so I can further review this issue? There are specific recommendations as it relates to sounding locomotive horns so gathering these details in order to determine excessive use will be extremely helpful for us to investigate.

>

> Please provide me with the specific date/time and location (name of the street in San Jose near Diridon or cross streets) of the occurrence you're referring to.

>

> Thank you, and we sincerely apologize for the frustration.

>

> Rona Rios

> Director, Customer Experience

> Caltrain

> 650-508-6239

From: Rios, Rona
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2020 7:50 AM
To: russellpatrickbrown
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: RE: Consumer Report #745329

Russell,

I will get a status on the appeal.

I will be in touch as soon as I have additional information.

Best,
Rona

From: russellpatrickbrown <russellpbrown@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 10:22 PM
To: Rios, Rona <riosr@samtrans.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>
Subject: Re: Consumer Report #745329

Dear Director Rios,

I appreciate your thoughtful email. I feel better knowing that Caltrain is looking into what happened. It's a horrible stain on what should have been an exciting trip to a wonderful place.

Can I help with you any additional information? I have filed an appeal, so we'll see how that goes. I'm not so bothered by paying the money as I imagine that helps your system, it's more just having a record of a citation and the memory of the abuse that gets me.

Kindly,
Russell

On Mar 6, 2020, at 3:52 PM, Rios, Rona <riosr@samtrans.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Brown,

Your correspondence to Director Brinkman was forwarded to Caltrain for investigation and review. First, we regret that your correspondence was due to issues with our service. Please accept our sincere apology for the poor experience you had travelling with us during your visit to the San Francisco Bay Area and we especially want to assure you the treatment described in your correspondence is appalling to us and absolutely not acceptable behavior.

We at Caltrain are well aware of our responsibility as a public transit agency, and we understand the manner in which we conduct our service is just as important as the service itself. Our crew members are expected to remain professional and courteous at all times, including during the course of fare checking. Your comments concerning this incident with Conductor Mowery were immediately forwarded to the

proper parties within our organization for further handling. Our Rail Operations management team take personnel issues very seriously, and they always take appropriate action after a full investigation of the issue. Nonetheless, we realize this is only a reactionary measure; it does not change what happened. Again, we apologize for the negative experience.

Regarding your concern with the lack of ability to purchase tickets on board the train, I understand the frustration however, Caltrain initiated a proof of payment fare enforcement system which requires passengers to have a ticket before boarding, therefore the sale of onboard ticket purchases ended. Tickets can be purchased prior to boarding using a Caltrain mobile app, at the Ticket Vending Machines on the platforms, or by using a Clipper Card that allows travel by other means throughout the region. I understand you received a citation of violation and have filed an appeal, unfortunately I have not been able to obtain a status and this is handled through a 3rd party vendor.

We agree that public transit can always be better, which is why it is always our aim to improve. Whether it is modernizing our service through our Electrification Project or ensuring our employees adhere to the professional standard expected of them, we make every effort to meet our goal: providing the community with a high-quality transit service. Feedback from our riders helps direct our efforts and we appreciate you taking the time to send us your comments about your experience.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should you want to discuss this further and I'm happy to work directly with you through your concerns.

Rona Rios
Director, Customer Experience
SamTrans | Caltrain | SMCTA
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA. 94070
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From: russellpatrickbrown <russellpbrown@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 29, 2020 9:42 AM
To: Chavez, Cindy <Cindy.Chavez@bos.sccgov.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Harassment from ticket agent onboard Caltrain

Dear Supervisor Chavez,

On my visit to San Francisco Bay Area this week I was harassed, verbally assaulted and slandered by one of your ticket attendants onboard a train. Like you I value public transport immensely and have not owned a car in 15 years, so this really breaks my heart that this kind of experience would happen to passengers like me trying to do the right thing by not driving or taking car services.

I flew in for the day to interview for position in the area and decided to take the train from Palo Alto to San Francisco to help the environment instead of taking the free Uber ride which would have been paid for by the company. A train arrived just as I got on the platform in Palo Alto and I did not have time to buy a ticket and I saw no messaging saying that I could not buy a ticket onboard the train on the platform. I wrongly assumed like in my hometown of New York that I can buy a ticket onboard for an increased price (NJ, MetroNorth and LIRR all do this).

When the ticket agents came around I asked them to buy a ticket and they said to wait. Then an agent came over and I asked again for a ticket and she immediately got very rude with me. She seemed to take it personally and said they do not sell tickets onboard and she asked for my ID without telling me what was going on. She did not inform me of my rights or what was going on.

After asking multiple times she finally said I was going to get a citation ticket. I said I didn't know I could not buy a ticket on board as I am from out of town. It was an honest mistake. Then the agent started getting nasty with me. She then looked at my ID and then personally attacked me by saying that I was from New York and that I should know that I cannot pay for tickets onboard. I told her that is not true and that you can buy tickets onboard all commuter rails for an increased price. She then got very outlandish and said "well I've been to New York I know you can't." This is completely false

(<https://new.mta.info/fares-and-tolls/long-island-rail-road/buying-tickets><https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_new.mta.info_fares-2Dand-2Dtolls_long-2Disland-2Drail-2Droad_buying-2Dtickets&d=DwMFaQ&c=jluf2QGe13CVwCCNhnHSyGX0TfHadH8sr2VwRkl7n8&r=QEO9xqc_nHekK_tbc5BOA28dODtT-kq9-Y040n0QRo&m=yvFVs6U6ai84w9XRrJqzbe5Re6DZ4z-eQjvHeUHM-9g&s=umo_s-oUXMGEa2cY2PZ0o3d9kA6cQjv6gwwUrXbdLBk&e=>>).

Our system in the Tri-state area helps people who do not know or do not have time to buy a ticket before boarding, it does not punish them. She continued to assault me by saying that I was trying to get a free ride. When I tried to show her the website that says that you can buy tickets onboard the Long Island Railroad she said "get that phone out of my face." I told her she had no right to speak to me with that attitude. I asked if her name was on the ticket and she shouted at me "IT SURE IS."

I complied with all her demands, accepted my violation and thought it would then be over. She then she starts talking badly about me to other customers onboard the train. She was talking about how I live in a world where I want a free ride and talking about arresting me. Then she started talking about performing a citizen's arrest on me to others. This did not stop until we all left the train at Millbrae.

I can say in 15 years of riding New York Public transit I have never been treated this way. That your city finds it acceptable to treat visitors this way means to me that I will never take your trains again, and I prefer public transit over cycling or cars. I would not recommend the Bay Area to anyone who values the same.

Why do you not allow people to buy onboard? Why do you not allow people to buy on their phones and present to the agent? Why do you attack visitors to your town and on your public transport? How is it acceptable for your agents to personally attack, try to provoke and slander riders who do not have a ticket?

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter. It was a humiliating, awful experience. My violation number is 24000901 and the citation was issued by Mowery, T. Badge: 694. I filed an appeal, but that hardly does justice to what this agent did to me.

I hope we can work together to improve public transit experience onboard Caltrain, whether I move to the area or not. We can always make public transit better.

Kind regards,
Russell Brown

18 Gay St 27B
New York, NY 10014
917.340.0378

