

**CALTRAIN BICYCLE AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

TO: Caltrain Bicycle and Active Transportation Advisory Committee

FROM: Lori Low  
Acting Manager, Government & Community Affairs

SUBJECT: **MILLBRAE TRANSFER, WAYFINDING & SINGLE-TRACKING LETTER**

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The attached letter has been submitted by Caltrain BATAAC member Raayan Mohtashemi for the Committee's consideration and approval.

September 15th, 2022

Dear Caltrain Board Members,

At its July 21st meeting, the Caltrain Bicycle and Active Transportation Advisory Committee (BATAC) discussed improvements to the rider experience. The discussion revolved around how communication of planned or unplanned temporary service changes, such as single-tracking/train platform reassignment, can be improved. This conversation especially centered around the Millbrae Station, which presents unique challenges for transit riders transferring between various transit systems. Changing platforms quickly is a significant issue for riders, especially at stations with concourses, such as Millbrae station. When single-tracking occurs, either unexpectedly or when planned ahead, it is crucial for riders to be notified in a timely and effective manner so that they have enough time to change platforms.

At the meeting, agency staff updated the committee regarding specific actions they had taken to ideate improvements, and noted that they continue to work with BART staff to improve transfer times between Caltrain and BART at Millbrae station. We thank staff for the work they have already done to improve the transfer experience at Millbrae, while also working on wayfinding improvements to reduce the chance that riders miss a train because of platform reassignment due to single-tracking.

Staff noted that presently, they communicate platform changes due to single-tracking through social media, website alerts, and audio/video announcements at stations. Staff also discussed previous attempts they had made to improve communication, such as hiring ambassadors to communicate changes on the platform. Finally, staff noted that new stations, such as the recently opened Hillsdale station and the planned grade-separated Broadway station, are often being designed with center platforms to make it easier to switch platforms.

During the meeting, members of the public and members of the committee gave the following feedback regarding improvements to rider information at Millbrae station and throughout the entire Caltrain system:

1. Providing single tracking information on the areas that Caltrain has control over is not sufficient for the travel patterns that different people have - disruptions between BART and Caltrain should be communicated between the two systems (exception-handling wayfinding). Riders trying to transfer between BART and Caltrain on a tight schedule may not have time to pay attention to audio or even text announcements about a temporary change when they reach the station - more explicit wayfinding to denote what direction a Caltrain train is traveling in would be helpful. It would be ideal for BART and Caltrain train operators to provide the information about potential changes on their respective trains, so riders know where they need to go in advance of arriving at the station in the event that there is a change. These sorts of announcements about the other system aboard trains would require live inter-agency operations/dispatch communication: Caltrain operations staff should be in live communication with BART operations staff during the day to communicate last-minute platform reassignments and other essential information for system operation.
2. Place A-frame signs with updated track information at strategic decision-points, such as on the concourse level before people go to the platform level at some stations, where resources allow.
3. Identify specific “problem stations” where it’s especially hard to switch platforms on short notice, and target wayfinding improvements and/or staff resources there.

4. Consider relaxing train schedules to allow trains to dwell longer at stations where they are unexpectedly using another platform in order to allow riders enough time to switch platforms and make their train.
5. Conduct a walk-through of Millbrae station with BART staff to discuss how the two agencies can help each other improve the rider experience at the station
6. Think of longer term solutions as well, since single-tracking and platform reassignments will still occur after electrification. One potential longer term improvement could include making the electronic signs on the station platforms larger to allow them to display more information consistently
7. Upgrade volume and frequency of audio announcements related to single-tracking - especially starting several minutes before arrival of trains. In addition to noting the new arrival platform of the train, include in the announcement a direction - i.e. instead of “All trains board on the northbound platform,” a more informative announcement could be: “Southbound riders, please make your way to the opposite platform. The next train on the northbound platform will be a southbound train.”
8. Continue monitoring social media for rider feedback about how single-tracking announcements are going
9. Work with BART station agents at Millbrae station to improve Caltrain rider experience
10. When planning transfers between systems, continue considering how long it takes active transportation users to switch platforms

The BATAAC would like to thank staff for diligently listening to and following up on the feedback provided by members of the public and commissioners at the meeting. Staff continue to follow up with the BATAAC on many of the above items, including some feedback that was

already on their radar. Thank you as well to the board for recognizing the importance of improved wayfinding and communication of track changes at stations, especially the Millbrae station, and we ask that the board continue to enable staff to pursue improvements in these arenas, and prioritize identifying and implementing the solutions. Doing so will provide benefits to riders as platform reassignments continue both during and after the remaining two years of the Caltrain electrification project, and also provide outside benefits to active transportation users who often need additional time to change platforms and position themselves near the right train car to board appropriately.

Sincerely,

Caltrain Bicycle and Active Transportation Advisory Committee (BATAC)