



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of February 2, 2023

Correspondence as of January 13, 2023

Subject

- 1 420 Berry Street San Francisco Flooded
- 2 Invest in Communications

From: [Nabong, Sarah](#)
To: kgurova@avanath.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: RE: 420 Berry Street San Francisco Flooded
Date: Tuesday, January 10, 2023 1:52:28 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Krystyna Gurova,

Your message to the Caltrain Board of Directors was referred to me for response. The Board members will receive a copy of our correspondence.

I apologize for what you described and we appreciate you taking the time in providing us with your observations. I spoke with Jada (1/9/23 @2:23pm) who informed me that a crew visited the site to rectify the flooding by adding more dirt to combat water from flooding the building. Your second email to the Board of Directors was received and filed as Customer Service Recording Form: 874848. I understand there has been flooding in a new area. This has been referred to the appropriate parties to further address.

Again, thank you for sending in your observations. We aim to keep our right of way safe, clean, and compliant, so we appreciate your awareness.

Kind regards,

Sarah Nabong, Customer Service Representative 2

1250 San Carlos Ave San Carlos, CA 94070

Phone: 650.508.7925

Websites: [Caltrain](#) | [SamTrans](#) | [TA](#)



Good Afternoon,

Hope this email finds you well.

I am reaching out to you because we currently have 2 units flooded at Crescent Cove community due to the rain. The area where the flood is located behind our community where the Caltrain territory is. There is gap in the ground filled with water that goes into the units. We are not able to access the location and the access is gated. Our maintenance team needs to place sandbags to prevent the flood in the future. I have been contacting Caltrain yesterday and today and submitted tickets. Unfortunately, no one responded so far and we will be facing the same flood issue again since there is rain coming tomorrow. Our address is 420 Berry Street San Francisco, CA 94158. Please contact us at 415.434.5495 or kgurova@avanath.com.

Thank you,

Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 12:46 PM

To: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>

Subject: RE: 420 Berry Street San Francisco Flooded

I wanted to reach out to you and let you know that this morning at 4am we had another leak coming from the same area but to different units. Please contact us at your earliest convenience – 415.434.5495.

Thank you,

From: Michelle Flaherty <mpfshopper@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 12, 2023 7:11 AM
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: Invest in Communications

You don't often get email from mpfshopper@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Dear CalTrain Board Members,

I recognize revenues are way down from the pandemic and the capital improvements are a big expense. But as a regular rider, I'm begging you to commit more funding to communications. You simply can't afford not to.

As you know, unlike bus transit, your farebox recovery rates depend on choice riders, many of whom are office workers with professional job responsibilities to the companies that subsidize or fully pay for their CalTrain passes. These riders need dependability or they will drive instead.

Effective communications must be a core part of your business model to attract and retain such riders, but you don't appear to be prioritizing it. It is really disorienting to ride a train, because (unlike buses or subways) when it pulls into the station there's no sign on the front or the side of the train to tell people on the platform which number it is or where it's going. This is intimidating to first-time or occasional riders who aren't sure they're getting on the right train -- which makes for an anxious ride that does not reinforce future ridership. It's also frustrating to routine commuters who don't have time to step onto a local milkrun when their schedule is counting on a baby bullet, or whose destination is south of Diridon and they have a limited choice of trains to get home on any given night. I am in the latter group, with only three trains that can get me to Gilroy, and if I work until 5pm I'm counting on that last Gilroy train to be running. It can be a precarious amount of dependency on a good day.

But when things go wrong, CalTrain is not designed to adapt well at all. And since things go wrong pretty regularly, this is significant. The organization is failing at real-time communication, and the impact to the rider is unacceptable. Please consider these two problems:

1. The information on the platform signs is usually inaccurate. For example, it might say a particular train is running 11 minutes behind schedule as a train is pulling into the station only 3 minutes behind schedule. (Great that it's getting back on schedule, but if a rider steps into a restroom nearby they'll miss their train.) Frequently, it says a train is arriving when it's not, which is confusing as to which train is pulling in. Most often, there's no information posted at all even though the train is not on schedule. Misinformation is worse than no information, but no information is particularly frustrating when, as mentioned above, you can't tell which train is pulling in without identifying marks on them. Ineffective platform signs are a great way to make sure your first-time or occasional riders never return to CalTrain.

2. There is a significant lag time between information on the ground and information provided through service alerts. Given the lack of useful info on platform signs, one might assume that the more savvy, regular commuters would be habituated to relying on online info from CalTrain. Nope, it's not helpful either. I've tried everything, and I just can't figure out where to look to get the right/best information. Is it on Twitter? On your website? Do I need a special app? Certainly your website should be the primary source of true information -- but no, it is not. When the fallen tree blocked service the other morning, there were no service alerts posted until after I was already onboard the last train out of Gilroy for the day.

Later that day, my colleague and I left our office in Redwood City at 3:30pm and we got home to Gilroy at 7:30pm -- a four hour commute -- because all the information you made available about our train was wrong.

This is the final straw that has prompted me to stop just complaining to everyone I know and sit down and write this email to the board. The platform sign made no reference to our train number at all -- it never said when it was coming or whether it was coming. There was no service alert declaring our train cancelled, but also no reference of any kind to our train on the website live map showing which train is supposedly where in real time. My colleague searched various sources of info on her phone while I searched others on mine and between the two of us we could find zero information about our train. When a train pulled into the station, we looked for a conductor to ask which train it was but no conductors could be found anywhere within shouting distance. We remained on the platform hoping the next train to pull in might be identified as our train. Only AFTER the mystery train pulled out of the station did a new message appear on the platform sign that indicated a different train would be accommodating passengers for our train. What does that even mean? We can deduce it means the train that just left is being rerouted all the way to Gilroy, but we're not on it.

CalTrain needs to figure this out. What processes do you need to improve to speed up getting the info from the field to the communications team? How can conductors be better trained and positioned to be helpful to riders on the platform in those few seconds the train is loading? Is it the operational service change decisions that are taking too long to be made, or the communication of them to the customers? Identify the lags and breakdowns in the system and fix them. Do you need more communications staff? Better technology? Please make this a high priority. The current level of service is unacceptable.