



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of March 2, 2023

Correspondence as of February 3, 2023

Subject

- 1 Paying for Caltrain
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- 5 Invest in Communications
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From: [Felix Davis](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Paying for Caltrain
Date: Monday, January 30, 2023 7:59:10 PM

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Hi Caltrain,

My name is Felix, and I am a boy scout where I am working on a merit badge in which I have to contact a city official on an issue in my community. I take Caltrain to school almost every day, and I notice a lot of time people do not pay even though they have a clipper card, which I can assume loses a lot of money. My solution to this is to have someone walk around and check for tickets/ if people scanned their clipper card on every train. I hope you consider this idea!

Thank you,
Felix

From: [Matthew Rossillon](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: High school engineering interview project
Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2023 11:38:36 PM

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Dear Community members,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Matthew Rossillon and I am a high school engineering and computer science teacher at Palo Alto High School. As part of my "Principals of Engineering" class curriculum, I have an exciting project for my students this year. They will be interviewing local engineers from different disciplines, which provides a unique opportunity for them to gain firsthand experience speaking with professionals in the field and understand the key skills and responsibilities of engineers.

I am reaching out to create a list of engineers who might be interested in participating in this project. The interview will take about half an hour and can be over Zoom, at a time that is most convenient for the engineer and student.

To help build this contact list, I have created a Google survey that I would kindly request you to fill out. If you have any friends, family members, or colleagues who may be interested in being interviewed, I would greatly appreciate it if you could forward this email to them. Your support in spreading the word about this opportunity is truly invaluable. Thank you for taking the time to read this email and for your consideration. I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Best regards,

<https://forms.gle/NUzR6rP2mjziYviN6>

Matthew Rossillon
High School Engineering and Computer Science Teacher
Palo Alto High School
Mrossillon@pausd.org
(510) 590-8350

From: [Rachel Croft](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Cc: [Rachel Croft](#)
Subject: public input for ridership discussion today
Date: Thursday, February 2, 2023 8:56:37 AM

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To the esteemed Caltrain Board,
I'd like to share some input and suggestions for your ridership discussion today.

I work from home but have opportunities to ride Caltrain periodically throughout the year. My experience is that the last mile is the biggest drawback, with difficulty of taking a bike being the second factor. There are improvements that Caltrain can make to encourage ridership by addressing these issues.

Here is a recent experience as an example: In October 2022, I went to a 2-day conference at San Jose Convention Center from Palo Alto station, taking my bike to get from the Diridon Station to the convention center, and home from PA station. These are the issues I faced:

- Bringing a bike can solve the last mile problem. But getting my bike onto and off the train was difficult, carrying it up 3-4 steps into and out of the bike car. This would have been impossible for a less strong person, or someone wearing more professional clothes. Also near impossible for a heavier bike like an ebike. The bikes are then stacked, unstacked and restacked within the train car as people get on and off, a hassle and you can potentially damage others' bikes as you move them.
- Once I arrived at Diridon station, it was reasonably clean but seemed deserted. This doesn't give a great feeling of safety during the day, and I would not want to arrive there at night. Safety improvements would help. Lighting, visible security cameras and an actual person being present with eyes on the passenger areas.
- Getting from Diridon to San Jose Convention center on my bike was not at all straightforward or safe. I followed Google Maps' directions, but encountered blocking construction, forcing me to find an alternate route with no bike path and multiple crossings of large intersections and even some riding on the sidewalk because of streets that didn't have bike lanes. The second day I took a path that went along Guadalupe River and I ended up in a dead end underpass which was a homeless encampment absolutely filled with trash, needing to carry my bike up 20-30 steps to get out, or backtrack a long way to get on a different path. This was a bit scary and distressing to see so much trash, and caused a delay in me getting to my destination, for a second day in a row.
- The convention center had a laughably small number of bike racks. I locked to a stairway bannister and by the end of the day about 10 bikes had done the same.

There are many issues here that Caltrain could address:

- Create infrastructure at stations to enable people to easily get their bikes on/off train
- Evaluate alternatives for bike storage and access on trains
- Work with local cities and major venues (conference centers, stadiums) to ensure clear

transportation routes for people on bikes, scooters or foot who are trying to solve the last mile problem themselves. Ensure adequate parking for such personal vehicles.

There is great interest in sustainability these days, and likely increased interest in public transportation. But Caltrain needs to make it easier for people to choose to go green. I also think marketing a greener commute makes sense, but this message will land better once the trains are electric rather than emitting black clouds of diesel fumes.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.
Rachel Croft in Palo Alto

From: Nicholas Tan <nicholastjs@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, January 13, 2023 11:02 AM

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

Subject: Complaint - Bad Draining in Caltrain Land Causing Flooding in My Backyard

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Hi,

I'm the homeowner of 3395 Park Blvd, Palo Alto. I learned from city of Palo Alto that you are the owner of the land behind our house (between my property line and your train track). Every raining season, that area will be flooded. This posed three huge risks to us here:

- The flood will cause water that's pumped from my crawl space to reverse back to my crawl space, causing prolonged flooding in my crawl space.
- The prolonged flooding in our backyard cause softening of the soil, which cause our pavers and retaining wall in our backyard to severely sink, to a point that the retaining wall is almost collapsing over.
- The stagnant water becomes breeding ground to insects/bugs.

Can you take action to improve irrigation of your land there to prevent flooding again each raining season?

Thanks,
Nicholas

On Feb 2, 2023, at 11:00 AM, Nabong, Sarah <nabongs@samtrans.com> wrote:

Dear Nicholas Tan,

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

We appreciate you taking the time to provide us with your observations. We will inspect the area and address according to our findings.

Again, thank you for notifying us!

Best regards,
Sarah Nabong

Sarah Nabong, Customer Service Representative 2

1250 San Carlos Ave San Carlos, CA 94070

Phone: 650.508.7925

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

<image001.png>

From: Nicholas Tan <nicholastjs@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 2, 2023 11:02 AM

To: Nabong, Sarah <nabongs@samtrans.com>

Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>

Subject: Re: Complaint - Bad Draining in Caltrain Land Causing Flooding in My Backyard

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Hi Sarah,

Thank you so much for looking into this. Just an update, even after a couple of weeks of dry weather, there's still significant standing water right behind my yard fence.

Thanks,
Nicholas

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

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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.

From: Nabong, Sarah <nabongs@samtrans.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 2, 2023 11:32 AM
To: mpfshopper@gmail.com
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>
Subject: RE: Invest in Communications

Dear Michelle Flaherty,

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

We are replacing some of the VMS signs at our stations at the end of this year or early next year. Due to budget constraints, we may be able to replace VMS signs at 5 stations only and then the other stations will follow as funding becomes available. Replacing the VMS signs will not change the information displayed on the signs, that is another project we're working on to make the information more accurate. You can find the latest delays online at https://www.caltrain.com/?active_tab=service_alerts_tab or Twitter Caltrain Service Alerts.

Currently passengers may identify series of train by Service Type (2 digit: 1 letter, 1 number) is posted on the train exterior next to or on locomotive or front cab car.

We are working closely with our communications department to ensure our signage is reliable for our customers.

We apologize for the inconvenience this has caused, and we appreciate your feedback.

Kind regards,
Sarah Nabong

Sarah Nabong, Customer Service Representative 2

1250 San Carlos Ave San Carlos, CA 94070

Phone: 650.508.7925

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



From: [Wei Li, PhD](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Can we count on your help? 2023 Survey for Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board
Date: Friday, February 3, 2023 11:33:26 AM

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Dear colleague at Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board,

Hope this email finds you well! I am Wei Li, an Associate Professor of Urban Planning from Texas A&M University.

Several weeks ago, our team sent you an invitation to complete a brief **15-minute survey**. It aims to identify strategies to increase ridership for transit agencies like yours. This is part of a larger study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Please click here for the survey:

https://tamu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4TPbkv9LDFJWRoy?Q_CHL=email&Q_DL=EMD_NfqmqjrLGyvjNHI_4TPbkv9LDFJWRoy_MLRP_5tfMbLn3D8ObfbE&_g_=g

We believe this study is a unique opportunity for your agency to share your innovative strategies on network design, equity, and use of technology, among other things, with other agencies nationwide. We have successfully received responses from 36 states so far and hope to have your agency's data reflected in this national study.

Please note you may choose to skip any questions as you see fit. Your responses will be anonymous, and you do not need to be aware of every single day-to-day operation of your transit agency, nor is that expected.

We will be happy to share the summary results once completed. This is a link to our 2022 report: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mIgQuu2T-HC6WO7I5SE_3uam-XcgJkeu/view?usp=sharing

Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Wei Li

PIs: Chanam Lee, Wei Li, and Marcia Ory, Texas A&M University
IRB NUMBER: IRB2017-0848D

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Hopefully see you all there!

Bus wrap designed by our SamTrans Employee Cheri West, the bus commemorates this year's Lunar New Year celebration for the Year of the Rabbit.

Please come join us this weekend for the bus's debut at the [12th Annual Redwood City Lunar New Year Celebration](#) at Courthouse Square tomorrow!



SamTrans will be conducting a recruitment event, so definitely bring friends, family, and anyone that might be interested in a career with SamTrans.