



JPB Board of Directors  
Meeting of August 3, 2023

Correspondence as of July 14, 2023

<u>#</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1	RE_ Business case for 4-car Caltrain EMU trainsets
2	Re_ Caltrain Customer Service Recording Form_ 892810



August full Board meeting.

Respectfully presented for your consideration

Roland Lebrun

CC:

SFCTA Commissioners

TJPA Board of Directors

CHSRA Board of Directors

Caltrain CAC

TJPA CAC

SFCTA CAC

Caltrain BAC

**From:** [Steven Scholom](#)  
**To:** [Sarah Nabong](#)  
**Cc:** [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](mailto:Board (@caltrain.com))  
**Subject:** Re: Caltrain Customer Service Recording Form: 892810  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 11:56:23 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

You don't often get email from [stevenbiologist@hotmail.com](mailto:stevenbiologist@hotmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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

Dear Sarah Nabong,

Thank you immensely for your promptly reply. I apologize for the directness of my tone in the previous message.

My nephew and I purchased tickets for the 8:15pm San Mateo Northbound Caltrain on July 4th, 2023. We parked at 8:09, ran to the station and made it by 8:11, and waited until 8:25. At that point someone walked by and said the train already came before we arrived, that they had also missed it because it was 5 minutes early. When we arrived, the electronic sign above the track said the train would be arriving in 4 minutes (Train arriving at 8:15 is "on time"). At approximately 8:22, the sign switched to 9:15, without any train ever coming. Right after I was told to leave by people who missed, I wrote the email. We didn't even realize what had occurred because there was no way to know.

At that point we took my car to San Francisco, didn't find parking, drove far from the fireworks and took an Uber the rest of the way, and missed half of the fireworks. That was not worth \$24 worth of unusable Caltrain tickets. The Uber was expensive for me, and so was the gas, but missing part of the fireworks with someone who had never seen them was the worst part.

On Sunday, April 23rd, 2023 my wife bought 2 one-way tickets for my son and her to a Giants game. He sings in Ragazzi Choir, which was due to perform the national anthem for the game that night. With all his changes of clothing, they lined up to catch train #677 Northbound from San Mateo at 5:17pm. I wanted to surprise my wife by riding the same train, and had brought my nephew too, by getting in at Hillsdale Station. I arrived at my station at 5pm. "Train 677 is 5 minutes delayed" said the sign. At 5:10pm it said "Train 677 is 20 minutes delayed." At 5:16, though signs said the train was still coming, it showed as canceled online. Then an announcement came that 677 would terminate in Mountain View, and all game attending riders were encouraged to get out there, to take the next train (which was also delayed). At 5:26, my wife (who had no car) took an Uber to the game, (\$78), and made it 3 minutes before rehearsal due to horrible traffic. That means my 13-year-old son got heavily reprimanded by his choir director for being tardy. He later cried about it. (My wife's paid tickets, like mine, became useless)

My nephew and I waited at Hillsdale until the "replacement train" was supposed to arrive, yet it never did, so we walked back to my car, parked it in San Bruno, and then took an Uber to the game. I missed my son singing the national anthem for a Giants game by 15 minutes, due to Caltrain, and that is irreplaceable.

Previously, we had taken the Caltrain sporadically to visit San Francisco on several different occasions, and I remember telling my wife "look, we ride the train 3-4 times per year, and every single time it's 7-20 minutes delayed, or even canceled." I even posted on my Facebook account that if someone were to be a working individual who cannot afford a car, or relies heavily on the train, that they would need to take a train at least 1 hr early every time for their job, since the train is literally 90-100% unreliable.

I'm being both critical and realistic. I hate to be critical about a broken system that I don't rely on, but I'm doing it on behalf of all those people that do rely on its promptness. I'm sad to report on the state of affairs of United States trains in general, but that such a rich area that is as highly populated as the Northern California Peninsula cannot produce a more functional system is dismally distressing and infuriating.

This year we have tried to ride the train twice, and were forced to not use it due to its lateness, which wasted \$56, but led to one close call and great grief with my son, and several irreplaceable missed opportunities. I can't imagine what it's like to repeatedly lose your job or have a dysfunctional work commute in general due to Caltrain. I won't be using the service in the future, and will need to look for alternative modes of transportation.

Last note: we were told that the squeaky brakes on trains would be replaced many years ago. Trains all over Europe, including in poorer countries than the United States, have nearly silent trains that are much faster, much safer, and definitely more reliable. The functionality of those trains means that people trust the system, and therefore use it. That is where their ridership revenue comes from. Areas near train stations become popular destinations, and even short shopping trips are cheaper and more effective by train than by car. The goals that are set by public transit authorities in our area probably relate to expansion, but that's not even a realistic aim if the system in place is wholly unreliable.

The Caltrain websites, signs at the train stations, loud verbal announcements at stations, comfort within the trains, temperature in trains, and safety of railway stations and street crossings are all excellent. It's sad to think that certain elements have been worked on very well by dedicated staff, yet the whole system falls short on some of the most integral parts. I truly hope things get better. Again, I won't be riding the train anymore, and will encourage people not to use Caltrain unless it's for a completely careless trip with no particular destination or schedule.

Kind regards,  
Steven Scholom  
541-840-8828

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**From:** Sarah Nabong <nabongs@samtrans.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 8:18:04 AM  
**To:** stevenbiologist@hotmail.com <stevenbiologist@hotmail.com>  
**Cc:** Board (@caltrain.com) <BoardCaltrain@samtrans.com>  
**Subject:** Caltrain Customer Service Recording Form: 892810

Dear Steven Scholom,

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

Thank you for contacting Caltrain, though we regret it was due to issues with our service. We are in receipt of your correspondence, please note this has been filed as Report #892810.

In order to aid us in our investigation, would you mind giving us a little more detail? If possible would you be able to provide the station at which you attempted to board, occurrence time, and train number?

We know it is extra hassle on top of everything else you have had to deal with, but providing us with such information will help the process immensely.

We sincerely apologize for the trouble.

Best regards,

**Sarah Nabong, Customer Service Representative 2**

1250 San Carlos Ave San Carlos, CA 94070

Phone: 650.508.7925

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



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I ride Caltrain two times per year. They have never been even close to on time, of those two times they are generally 7 to 20 minutes delayed, last time they were 35 minutes delayed and then suddenly canceled, on a regular weekday. Nobody can use the service if they have a job that relies on it. That means people who have jobs that require them to travel by train, have no other options other than to be fired over horrible Caltrain services. Missing fireworks because Caltrain came 5 minutes early. Surprise! Last time missed my son singing the national anthem at a ball game. I will be submitting information to a newspapers as well as I can. Someone has got to fix the broken system.