



JPB Board of Directors
Meeting of November 7, 2024

Correspondence as of November 6, 2024

Subject

1. Re: Caltrain Horns – *Staff Response*
2. Re: Line around block 5min before departure – *Staff Response*
3. Re: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos – *Staff Response*
4. RE: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos
5. Re: Train horn volume – *Staff Response*
6. Re: Train horn noise – *Staff Response*

From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: [Martin J Sommer](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Caltrain Horns
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:38:30 AM

Dear Martin Sommer,

Thank you for your feedback regarding the use of the bell and horn at the Palo Alto University Ave. Station. We appreciate your concerns about noise pollution and the impact it has on the community.

To clarify, "Company policy" references the General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR), which aligns with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations and Title 49 (CFR 49). While we understand your suggestion to limit the use of the bell and horn to instances of imminent danger, it is important to emphasize that the bell is utilized for safety reasons prior to entering, departing, and while passing through passenger stations. This practice is required, and it is meant to alert pedestrians near the platform of an approaching or passing train, ensuring their safety.

Additionally, the whistle/horn will be sounded when approaching individuals, equipment, or any potential hazards on or near the track, regardless of any whistle prohibitions. This is a critical safety measure, especially considering the nearby crossing at the Palo Alto station.

We value your input and are committed to maintaining a balance between safety and community concerns.

Thank you for your understanding.

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 4:32 PM
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Subject: FW: Caltrain Horns

From: Martin J Sommer <martin@sommer.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 11:32:43 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>; Board (@samtrans.com) <board@samtrans.com>
Subject: Re: Caltrain Horns

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Dear Caltrain Support Team,

Thank you for acknowledging that sounding the bell/horn each time a train enters or exists the Palo Alto University Ave. Station, is NOT an FRA requirement, and is simply a Caltrain "policy".

Before taking this issue into legal action regarding a public agency generating unneeded noise pollution, would you be willing to only sound the bell/horn, whenever there is "imminent danger"? For example, if someone has jumped or fallen onto the tracks, or is too close to the platform edge?

If so, this would provide a workable solution, and reduce the bell/horn noise by at least 90%. I believe this would also educate people of real emergencies, vs routine noise.

Thanks, and please let me know.

Sincerely,
Martin

On 10/25/24 1:27 PM, Caltrain BOD Public Support wrote:

Dear Martin Sommer,

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 your feedback regarding the sounding of the bell at the Palo Alto Caltrain Station. We appreciate your concerns and understand the importance of minimizing noise pollution, especially in areas where efforts have been made to create a quieter environment.

We would like to clarify that, according to company policy, it is required to sound the bell when approaching and traveling through every station platform. This rule is in place to ensure the safety of all individuals in the vicinity, as it serves as a warning to make them aware of an incoming train. While we recognize that University Ave. Station is grade-separated, the safety of the general public remains our top priority.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused and appreciate your understanding of the safety measures we have implemented. Your feedback is invaluable, and we will continue to evaluate our practices to balance safety and community concerns.

Thank you for your understanding.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Martin J Sommer <martin@sommer.net>
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2024 3:34:18 AM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Todd Douglas <DouglasT@samtrans.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>; Board (@samtrans.com) <board@samtrans.com>
Subject: Re: Caltrain Horns

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Hi Todd,

Thanks for your response. According to FRA document 222.21 When must a locomotive horn be used?, " ... the locomotive horn on the lead locomotive of a train ... shall be sounded when such locomotive or lead cab car is approaching a public highway-rail grade crossing".

The significant part here, is "grade crossing". When it comes to sounding a horn or bell at stations, it boils down to two issues: a) is the station "at grade" with the tracks, and/or b) is there an imminent hazard of death or injury to a person or persons.

University Ave. Station in Palo Alto, is grade-separated, and thus the only validation for ringing a bell or blowing the horn, is if someone has jumped or fallen onto the tracks, and is in "imminent danger".

The idea of the new electric trains ringing their bell on every entry and exit of the University Ave. Station, is not required, and is creating public noise pollution ... something we worked so hard to eliminate, in electrifying Caltrain.

Please stop sounding the bell and/or horn, every time a train enters or exists University Ave. Station in Palo Alto!!

Ref: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/section-222.21>

Martin

On 10/14/24 3:24 PM, Todd Douglas wrote:

Hello Martin Sommer,

Thank you for taking the time in contacting Caltrain with your comments concerning horn noise in your area. Your comments were sent to Rail Operations for further handling.

The application of a train's horn/bells is governed by Federal and State law. One of the locations where they must sound their horn is when the tracks cross a street and also pull into the station.

I can tell you we frequently inspect the volume of these systems to ensure they fall within the mandated decibel range for this type of equipment.

We are sorry the sound has been disturbing you, and will maintain our programmed monitoring of these systems to ensure they are only as loud as necessary.

Again, thank you for your comments.

Regards,

Todd Douglas

San Mateo County Transit District
Customer Service Dept.
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 95070-1306
1-800-660-4287
www.smctd.com

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Martin Sommer
650-346-5307
martin@sommer.net
www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer

"Turn technical vision into reality."

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Martin Sommer
650-346-5307
martin@sommer.net
www.linkedin.com/in/martinsommer

"Turn technical vision into reality."

From: Caltrain BOD Public Support
Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:46 AM
To: tangneyjeff@gmail.com
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: Re: Line around block 5min before departure

Dear Jeff Tangney,

Thank you for your feedback regarding your recent experience with Train 130. We understand that waiting to board can be frustrating, and we appreciate your concerns about the timing of door openings.

Please note that Train 130 opened its doors 15 minutes prior to departure, which is in line with our standard operating procedures. We strive to ensure that all trains depart on schedule, and we are pleased to confirm that Train 130 departed as planned on October 18th.

Your feedback will be taken into consideration as we work to enhance the boarding experience for all our passengers.

Thank you for your understanding.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Jeff Tangney <tangneyjeff@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 18, 2024 12:14:40 AM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@caltrain.com>
Subject: Line around block 5min before departure

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Super annoying. The train is here & ready. But the train workers are too lazy to let us on board. Doors should open 20min prior to avoid run/stress/lines.





From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: bgarcia@prometheusreg.com
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:52:38 AM

Dear Nicole Garcia,

Thank you for reaching out regarding the security concerns at Trestle Apartments. I would like to inform you that on November 3, 2024, we successfully installed the lock to secure the gate behind Trestle Apartments. This should help mitigate the concerns you have raised.

If you have any further questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 2:24 PM
To: bgarcia@prometheusreg.com <bgarcia@prometheusreg.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Subject: Re: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos

Dear Nicole Garcia,

Thank you for your email. 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 appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention. I will forward your concerns regarding the gate security at Trestle Apartments to the necessary parties for their prompt attention.

If you have any further questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to reach out directly.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Nicole Garcia <bgarcia@prometheusreg.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 6:58:03 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Subject: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos

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

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Hello,

My name is Nicole, I work over at Trestle Apartments located in San Carlos. I had a gentleman by the name of Steve come by 2 weeks ago stating that he will be talking to his team about putting up a lock that secures the gate behind Trestle Apartments so we can stop having transits coming from the railroad tracks into our property. I have not heard anything back and we really need to get this done as soon as possible.

Please feel free to reach out to me at 650-453-0800.

Thank you,

Nicole Garcia | Trestle Apartments (San Carlos) & Brickline Flats (San Mateo)

p:650.453.0800 | **Certified B Corporation™**

Trestle Apartments | 333 El Camino Real | San Carlos, CA 94070

p: 650.453.0800 |

I AM HOME®. When I'm with my partner and fur child, watching a scary movie.

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From: [Nicole Garcia](#)
To: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: RE: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:57:12 AM

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Hello,

Thank you for your email and confirmation.

Have a wonderful rest of your week!

Nicole Garcia | Trestle Apartments (San Carlos) & Brickline Flats (San Mateo)

p:650.453.0800 | **Certified B Corporation™**

Trestle Apartments | 333 El Camino Real | San Carlos, CA 94070

p: 650.453.0800 |

I AM HOME®. When I'm with my partner and fur child, watching a scary movie.

From: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>

Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:53 AM

To: Nicole Garcia <bgarcia@prometheusreg.com>

Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>

Subject: Re: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos

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Dear Nicole Garcia,

Thank you for reaching out regarding the security concerns at Trestle Apartments. I would like to inform you that on November 3, 2024, we successfully installed the lock to secure the gate behind Trestle Apartments. This should help mitigate the concerns you have raised.

If you have any further questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Caltrain BOD Public Support <CaltrainBODPublicSupport@caltrain.com>

Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 2:24 PM
To: bgarcia@prometheusreg.com <bgarcia@prometheusreg.com>
Cc: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Subject: Re: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos

Dear Nicole Garcia,

Thank you for your email. 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 appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention. I will forward your concerns regarding the gate security at Trestle Apartments to the necessary parties for their prompt attention.

If you have any further questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to reach out directly.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Nicole Garcia <bgarcia@prometheusreg.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 6:58:03 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Board (@caltrain.com) <Board@Caltrain.com>
Subject: Cal-Train Gate at Trestle Apartments in San Carlos

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

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Hello,

My name is Nicole, I work over at Trestle Apartments located in San Carlos. I had a gentleman by the name of Steve come by 2 weeks ago stating that he will be talking to his team about putting up a lock that secures the gate behind Trestle Apartments so we can stop having transits coming from the railroad tracks into our property. I have not heard anything back and we really need to get this done as soon as possible.

Please feel free to reach out to me at 650-453-0800.

Thank you,

Nicole Garcia | Trestle Apartments (San Carlos) & Brickline Flats (San Mateo)

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From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
To: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Train horn volume
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 10:59:53 AM

Dear Phil King,

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 taking the time to share your feedback regarding the new electric trains. We are delighted to hear that you have enjoyed riding them.

We understand your concerns about the horn signals in San Mateo. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations require train horns to sound at a volume between 96 and 110 decibels (dB) at a distance of 100 feet in front of the train. We have recently conducted tests on our new electric trains and noted that some of them are operating at the upper limit of this decibel range.

Please rest assured that we are actively working to lower the horn decibel levels on all our trains to the minimum of 96 decibels. We appreciate your suggestion regarding the tone and volume adjustments, and we will take this into consideration as we strive to enhance the overall experience for our passengers and the communities we serve.

Thank you once again for your valuable input. We are committed to finding a solution that balances safety and community comfort.

Best regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Phil King <phil.king@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 1, 2024 5:29:57 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik
To: Board (@caltrain.com)
Subject: Train horn volume

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Hi

I'm delighted by the new electric trains and have enjoyed riding them several times this month.

That said, a number of neighbors have noticed that the horn signals in San Mateo seem louder. I think they're louder and a different tone than the old horn. This erases the benefit of years of "tuning them out" that we've all done. I wish Caltrain would have used exactly the same tone as the old trains, and the same volume, right from day 1. Perhaps the tone can be adjusted? Is the volume also being reduced to the old level?

Are the speakers / horns on the new trains also at the same height as the old trains? I believe some years ago the horns on the old trains were moved to reduce how far the noise travels. Either way, I'd really encourage trying to get to parity with the old trains to help neighbors habituate and get back to ignoring the noise ASAP.

Thank you!

- Phil King
San Mateo Caltrain fan

From: [Caltrain BOD Public Support](#)
To: debra@careermarketingcoach.com; newsom@cityofsanmateo.org
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#)
Subject: Re: Train horn noise
Date: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 3:26:08 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-nadddrac.png](#)
[Outlook-5v44syqz.png](#)
[Outlook-t00c1oaw.png](#)
[Outlook-pesop4ta.png](#)
[Outlook-iafc1nor.png](#)
[Outlook-vedpueq0.png](#)

Thank you for reaching out to the Caltrain Board of Directors with your concerns about train horn noise in your neighborhood. Your message was referred to me for response, and a copy of our correspondence will be provided to the Board members.

We understand that the frequency and volume of the horns have affected your quality of life, and we sincerely apologize for the disruption this has caused for you and your neighbors.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) mandates the use of train horns under Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, specifically §229.129, which requires horn decibels to range between 96 dB(A) and 110 dB(A). When our new electric trains were introduced, the horn noise initially registered at the upper end of this range. In response, we've worked with the train manufacturer and our maintenance teams to adjust the horns to the lower end of the dB range. Most of our new trains now operate with horns at or near the lower limit, and we continue to monitor sound levels regularly to ensure they meet compliance. We're committed to maintaining all train horns at the lower limit and are expediting adjustments to the remaining trains as quickly as possible.

In reviewing your information, it appears that the train in the videos you provided is traveling northbound toward Hayward Park Station, which has a pedestrian crossing that requires sounding of the horn. This may account for the horn use in that area in accordance with Rule 5.8.2 for whistle requirements. For additional details, you may review the FRA's guidelines here: https://www.ecfr.gov/search?search%5Bagency_slugs%5D%5B%5D=federal-railroad-administration&search%5Bdate%5D=current&search%5Bquery%5D=horn&view=hierarchical

We appreciate your feedback and remain dedicated to providing a safe and pleasant experience for our riders.

Kind regards,

Your Caltrain BOD Public Support Team

From: Rob Newsom <rnewsom@cityofsanmateo.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 3, 2024 9:50 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@Caltrain.com>

Cc: debra@careermarketingcoach.com

Subject: Fw: Train horn noise

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Hello Members of the the JPB.

You may be hearing about this today in Public Comment. Also attached are a few videos.

Of concern is why the horns are being blown with such frequency, when they were not with the Diesel trains, and also if there are grade separations, then this shouldn't be necessary at all.

Thank you for looking into this.



Rob Newsom Jr.

小羅伯特·紐森 روبرت نیوسوم

Deputy Mayor

& City Council Member- District 3

330 W. 20th Ave. San Mateo, CA 94403

650-522-7000 | rnewsom@cityofsanmateo.org



From: debra careermarketingcoach.com <debra@careermarketingcoach.com>

Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 11:55 AM

To: Rob Newsom <rnewsom@cityofsanmateo.org>; City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>

Cc: Richard Hedges <rhedges@cityofsanmateo.org>;

mfabry@cistyofsanmateo.org <mfabry@cistyofsanmateo.org>;
news@smdailyjournal.com <news@smdailyjournal.com>

Subject: Train horn noise

Dear Rob and City Council,

For over a month now, my quality of life has been destroyed by the train horn blasts in my neighborhood that are occurring almost all the time (with the exception of a few hours in the middle of the night).

Last night, I counted 60 train horn blasts in one hour (between 5:50pm and 6:50pm). I can hear the blasts with the windows closed, with my heater or HEPA filter running, and while wearing earplugs. With the windows open, which I normally have open in order to cool my house, the blasts are intolerable.

I videotaped the trains and the horn blasts, but the files are too big for me to attach, so I have texted them to Rob Newsom, who hopefully can forward them to you. The horns are even louder and more jarring than what you hear in the videos.

I have lived here for 24 years and did not hear train horns until September 2024, when everyone in my neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods started being tortured by **incredibly loud horns at an outrageous frequency (60 blasts in 60 minutes)**. Despite what Caltrain says, *the decibel level of the horn blasts is significantly higher than on the previous trains*.

The loudest horn is being sounded behind the Public Storage at 2222 South Delaware Street for no reason whatsoever—I live between the Hillsdale and Hayward Park stations, and there are no 4-way crossings anywhere between them, so there should be no horns sounded in this area.

I have filed three oral complaints and one written complaint with Caltrain and have received no response, despite being told by the Caltrain rep that I should receive a response within 72 hours.

I have talked to other people along Delaware St and near downtown San Mateo who are also suffering from train horn blasts...many of them sent written complaints to Caltrain but received no response.

There is no reason why I and everyone else in San Mateo who lives near the train should hear one bit more noise now than we used to with the old trains.

Please do something about this serious problem as soon as possible to **reduce both the decibel-level and the frequency of the train horns**. Importantly, train horns should not be sounded unnecessarily in places like behind the Public Storage at 2222 South Delaware St.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Debra Rosenfeld, MA, LMFT
2040 South Delaware St.
San Mateo, CA 94403
650-464-2130

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