



In This Issue:

Ways to Get Around on Weekends without Caltrain **page 2**

Q&A on High Speed Rail **page 3**

Candidate Statements **page 3**

Note: **On the Topic** will return in the next issue

VTA Attempts to Slow Caltrain Electrification

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) declared on short notice in late May that they would not support funding Caltrain electrification this fiscal year. This signals a reversal of their earlier support for Caltrain electrification.

At the June 6 Caltrain Joint Powers Board meeting, VTA sought approval for a competing 2003 capital budget proposal, citing financial troubles caused by the economic recession and a significant drop in sales tax revenue. The original proposal supported by San Francisco and San Mateo counties requested the electrification monies as part of an \$82.7 million capital budget, with each county underwriting \$6.9 million in "local match" funding. The proposal by VTA, on the other hand, was identical to the original proposal but omitted \$8.6 million in funds for preliminary engineering and environmental clearance work for electrification. Under VTA's plan, each agency would reduce its contribution to Caltrain by \$2.9 million for this fiscal year.

The economic recession of 2001 and 2002 has prompted VTA, as well as Caltrain and many other agencies, to reduce service and raise fares. However, VTA has placed other capital projects, such as the Fremont-San Jose BART extension, on the fast track. This emphasis would indicate that political considerations, rather than financial difficulties, prompted VTA to undercut electrification.

[See **VTA**, page 5]

Governor Helps Launch CTX



(Above) State Senator Jackie Speier speaking at the CTX groundbreaking ceremony with a new Caltrain low-floor railcar in the background. Other speakers include (left to right) Governor Gray Davis, Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet, MTC Commissioner Sue Lempert, and JPB chair Mike Nevin. (Photo: Margaret Okuzumi)

Red and white balloons festooned the 4th and King station in San Francisco as regional and state officials, Governor Gray Davis among them, gathered on June 28 to celebrate the kick-off for Caltrain's CTX construction project.

The "Baby Bullet" program, adding two extra tracks at three segments along the Caltrain line, is the centerpiece of the \$110 million CTX construction project. The project includes additional work to improve train speed, safety, and rail infrastructure. The construction will take place mostly on weekends for the next 22 months, shutting down the entire line during

construction times. During the shutdown, contractors will install centralized traffic control, rebuild three stations, replace old bridges, and add express tracks.

A highlight of the groundbreaking ceremony was the inaugural ride of Caltrain's first low-floor railcars. Caltrain purchased the cars its future Baby Bullet service. One of them was freshly painted in red and grey Caltrain colors. Projected to begin operation in late 2003, the new Caltrain super express train service will cut the travel time between San Francisco and San Jose nearly in half by

[See **Groundbreaking**, page 4]

BayRail Plans High Speed Rail Forum

BayRail Alliance, in partnership with Tau Delta Phi, an honor student organization at San Jose State University, will host a forum on high-speed rail on Wednesday, September 25. The forum will take place on the San Jose State University campus and will feature key high speed rail stakeholders, including Rod Diridon, the chairperson of California High Speed Rail Authority. Goals of the forum include informing members of the community about the current high speed rail proposal, facilitating a dialogue between the public and key stakeholders, and

building political momentum for the statewide system.

BayRail is pleased to join with Tau Delta Phi to host the forum. Tau Delta Phi has produced several well-attended on-campus forums in previous years.

Staging this large public forum will present challenges for BayRail and Tau Delta Phi. BayRail is seeking volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. If you are interested in being a part of the effort, please email Andy Chow, head coordinator of the forum, at ac-netj@altavista.net.

Ways to Get Around on Weekends without Caltrain

Does the thought of 22 months of weekends without Caltrain service strike terror in your heart? Never fear, our tips on how to get around the Peninsula without Caltrain service will see you through this temporary inconvenience. Clip and save this column, and ditch the car. Not only will you become an expert on the local bus system (hey, it's not all that bad!!!), your bad memories will be erased when speedy "Baby Bullet" service starts running late next year and when CTX ends a few months after that.

Hint 1: Obtain a free San Mateo County bus system map at the SamTrans Headquarters at 1250 San Carlos Ave. in San Carlos, or call 1-800-660-4287 to request one via mail.

Hint 2: To obtain a Santa Clara County bus map, call (408) 321-2300 or toll free (800) 894-9908 (from area code (650) toll areas) and ask VTA to mail you a copy.

Hint 3: Caltrain substitute bus service, route RRX, accepts only regular Caltrain tickets, which you can buy from a staffed Caltrain station when it is open, or through a Caltrain ticket vending machine. Unfortunately, drivers will NOT accept cash on the bus.

Hint 4: Unlike Caltrain, you will not be allowed to eat or drink on the RRX or the other buses, and they won't have restrooms. Plan well.

Hint 5: The closest KX bus stop to the Hillsdale RRX for southbound KX riders is El Camino Real just south of Hillsdale Blvd. Northbound KX riders should disembark on Hillsdale at Curtiss (a long block east of El Camino Real). The RRX stop is on El Camino just north of Hillsdale.

Hint 6: Similarly, in San Jose the VTA 22 bus stop on Santa Clara Street is a long block away from the Caltrain RRX stop at San Jose Diridon station. You'll have to hike through the station parking lot to make the connection.

Hint 7: For schedules, maps, fares and other information, visit <http://www.transitinfo.org>.

Hint 8: Don't forget to check the Caltrain website at www.caltrain.com for supplementary bus service that will be running during special events like Giants' games.

OK, here goes. We know it looks confusing but that's because there are many options! If your origin and destination points include:

San Jose - Palo Alto - Hillsdale - San Francisco (4th & King) - take the Caltrain substitute bus service **RRX** which stops at these stations.

To cities between Hillsdale and San Francisco - From San Francisco: take southbound SamTrans bus **292** toward Hillsdale on Mission Street. SamTrans 292 follows the Caltrain route closely except in San Bruno and Millbrae.

From south of Hillsdale: take bus **RRX**, or SamTrans **KX, 390**, or **391** to Hillsdale and transfer to northbound SamTrans buses **390, 391**, or **292**. Buses 390 and 391 travel north on El Camino to Daly City.

To SFO - From San Francisco: take SamTrans bus **292** or **KX** on Mission Street. Note however, that the KX does not allow luggage onboard between San Francisco and SFO.

From south of SFO: take bus **RRX** to Hillsdale and transfer to SamTrans bus **292** on Hillsdale Blvd. east or west of El Camino, or to **KX** on Hillsdale Blvd. between the Caltrain tracks and 101. KX provides express service to the SFO from Hillsdale but charges local bus fares.

To cities between Palo Alto and Hillsdale - From San Francisco: take bus **RRX** to Hillsdale and transfer to southbound SamTrans **390** or **KX** toward Palo Alto, or **391** toward Redwood City. Alternatively, take **KX** toward Palo Alto on Mission Street. SamTrans buses 390, 391 and KX all travel along El Camino Real south of Hillsdale.

From south of Palo Alto: take bus **RRX** or VTA **22** to the Palo Alto train station and transfer to northbound SamTrans **390** at the station, or to the **KX** on nearby El Camino Real.

Cities between San Jose and Palo Alto - VTA bus **22** travels between two of the RRX stops, along El Camino Real from behind the Palo Alto station (located behind the Palo Alto Bike Station) to Santa Clara Street, just north of the San Jose Caltrain station.

Taking Greyhound from Sunnyvale or San Jose: Greyhound travels to the Transbay Terminal in San Francisco from San Jose several times a day and non-stop from Sunnyvale in just 50 minutes. The Sunnyvale Greyhound Depot is on the south side of Evelyn at Mathilda under the overpass near the Caltrain station. Free parking is available in the lot just west of the depot. You must buy your \$5 ticket in advance from a station agent. See www.greyhound.com for details. Be forewarned: the service is not always reliable and frequently runs 10 or more minutes late.

To San Jose Airport - From Palo Alto or points north, take bus **RRX** to San Jose and transfer to westbound VTA bus **22** on Santa Clara Street to go to the Santa Clara Caltrain station. At Santa Clara station, transfer to the free **VTA Airport Flyer** (route **10**) which stops at the bus shelter near the Caltrain platforms.

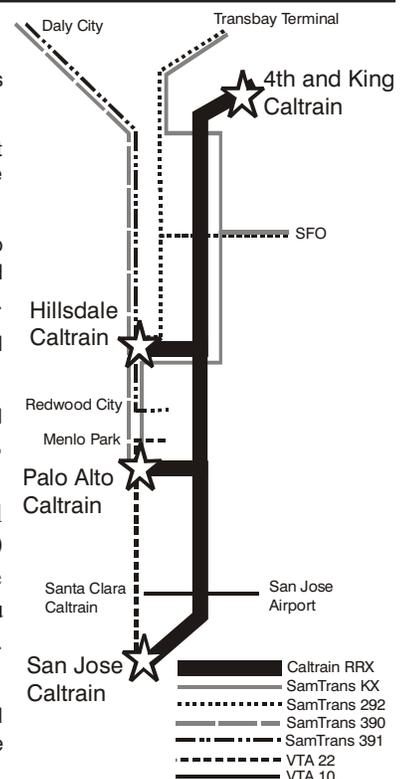
Bailout Plan Averts Amtrak Shutdown

Under the threat of system-wide shutdown by Amtrak management, the federal government and Amtrak recently agreed on a bailout plan. Under the plan, the federal government will lend Amtrak \$100 million followed by a commitment to provide \$170 million, either through a loan or a grant. The bailout package averts a national shutdown starting July 4th.

The Bay Area would feel the impact of an Amtrak shutdown. Caltrain, which contracts out operations to Amtrak, could experience temporary service disruptions. Riders of the state-sponsored Amtrak Capitol Corridor service could also face higher fares.

The debate on how to deal with the Amtrak's immediate situation is closely related to the debate over the long-term fate of Amtrak. Since its creation in 1971, Amtrak has received only a tiny fraction of the federal subsidies and investment given to highways and aviation, while being asked to fulfill an impossible mandate of becoming self-sufficient. Rail proponents argue that Amtrak, like other transportation modes, require ongoing investment by the federal government.

BayRail urges those concerned about Amtrak to act on the alerts put out by the National Association of Rail Passengers at www.narprail.org.



Q and A

High Speed Rail

The current High Speed Rail plan proposes a north/south route to Sacramento through the Valley. Why isn't HSR planned for the SF-Oakland-Sacramento route along the I-80?

Current High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) plans call for east-west Bay Area-Sacramento service in addition to the north-south Bay Area-Los Angeles and Sacramento-LA service. While it may seem inefficient to require Bay Area-Sacramento passengers to detour almost all the way via Merced, travel this way will be as fast as driving via I-80 (at uncongested speeds), and faster than today's Capitol trains. This HSR service will offer San Jose-Sacramento or San Francisco-Stockton/Modesto passengers even more attractive travel times. To keep travel times from Sacramento competitive, the HSRA currently favors a more northerly Diablo Range crossing between south San Jose and Merced, which would take 45 minutes to San Jose or 1 hour 15 minutes to San Francisco, rather than the Pacheco Pass (highway 152) alignment. Crossing via the Pacheco Pass would add approximately 1/2 hour to the travel times.

Under this service scenario, an upgrade of the Capitol Corridor route to HSR makes less economic sense. Nevertheless, the HSRA envisions possibly funding upgrades to the diesel-powered Capitol Corridor trains to serve as important feeder route for HSR.

Wasn't HSR planned to enter the Bay Area north of San Jose via Pleasanton and Fremont?

While that routing cut the distance between San Francisco, Stockton, and Sacramento, it relegated San Jose, the largest city in Northern California, to a branch off the mainline. Service to and from Modesto and all points south would have had to split into as many as four northern branches: one to Sacramento, one to Oakland, one to SFO airport and San Francisco (via a rebuilt Dumbarton rail bridge), and one to San Jose. The currently favored configuration lines up San Jose with both Oakland and San Francisco.

BayRail Alliance Board of Directors Election

Candidate Statements (in alphabetical order)

Currently paid members: Your ballot and instruction should be included in your newsletter.

Andy Chow (incumbent), Redwood City

Dear members:

I am proud to serve as your board director for the last two years. During that period, I've contributed a lot to advocate for Caltrain improvements. In the fall of 2000, I involved in the No on Measure A campaign in Santa Clara County. In 2001, I worked with other members to create a long-term vision for Caltrain and conventional rail. Earlier this year, I took the role as the editor of our newsletter. Also, I am currently planning a forum on High Speed Rail in September.

I am asking for your vote as I am interested to continue serving on the board. I am a Caltrain rider and I am knowledgeable about many transportation issues in the Bay Area. In addition, I also understand the political dynamics in the Silicon Valley. I will try my best to advocate for electrification, extension to downtown San Francisco, as well as High Speed Rail.

Thank you for your support.

Andy Chow

Sylvia Gregory (incumbent), San Bruno

This is statement for reelection to the Board for Sylvia Gregory, Office Manager.

The needs of the BayRail Alliance to work to extend the train to the Transbay Terminal, upgrade to electrical propulsion, and protect the train right of way for expansion of the High Speed connection with Los Angeles are all projects that I wish to continue to be involved with as a Board member.

I now help monitor all of the mail that we get and help with doing the monthly meetings as a Board member.

Caltrain needs to be improved and enlarged to keep Caltrans from building more roads in the bay and wetlands. It is also my core interest to protect the Bay from further paving for highways and to get transportation for people so they won't need their cars.

I urge a vote for Sylvia Gregory and much work by all members of BayRail Alliance to monitor and develop a better Caltrain.

Paul Wendt (incumbent), Belmont

I am running for re-election as a director for BayRail Alliance, and I am asking you for your support. For the past several years I have been maintaining the PR2000/BayRail membership database, printing mailing labels, and participating in most of the mailings.

I regularly attend Joint Powers Board meetings, and speak on issues such as the importance of keeping electrification on track, as well as sending letters and email to elected officials and newspapers.

As a Caltrain commuter, I understand the issues and frustrations affecting Caltrain riders, and will continue to work to correct the problems.

I thank you for your support,

Paul Wendt

Caltrain Unveils Low Floor Rail Cars



Passengers board the new low-floor car at South San Francisco station (left). Governor Gray Davis is interviewed by reporters while riding the new "Baby Bullet" car. Caltrans director Jeff Morales sits behind him (right). (Photos: Margaret Okuzumi)

[Groundbreaking, from page 1]

stopping only at a few selected stations and bypassing local trains.

The June 28 festivities began with a rousing welcome at the South San Francisco station by San Mateo County Supervisor Mike Nevin, chair of the Caltrain board. Representatives from Herzog Contracting Corp. and Stacy and Witbeck Inc. showed off specialized construction equipment for the northern portion of the construction project dubbed "North CTX." Two workers in hard hats gave a smoky demonstration of how to build continuously welded rail using red-hot coals.

The new low-floor Caltrain cars soon arrived at the station and carried state Senator Jackie Speier, who sponsored the 2000 legislation to fund the Baby Bullet program, members of the media, and other participants to the ceremony at the 4th and King station.

In San Francisco, Supervisor Nevin skillfully opened the formal ceremonies with a warm and congratulatory tone. The ceremony included speeches by Governor Davis, California Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Maria Contreras-Sweet, Senator Speier, and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Commissioner Sue Lempert.

Senator Speier recalled back when Matier and Ross of San Francisco Chronicle reported her proposal to fund Caltrain two years ago, the governor quickly contacted her and adopted her plan into his Transportation Congestion Relief Plan (TCRP) funding package. The Caltrain Baby Bullet is the only major rail program to be fully funded using monies from the state

surplus in 2000. Governor Davis touted this investment in Caltrain, as well as \$20 million that he has appropriated for the Caltrain extension to Salinas.

Many other dignitaries also attended, including Jeff Morales, Director of Caltrans (the state Department of Transportation), and John McLemore, Caltrain board member and MTC Commissioner from Santa Clara County who is running for mayor of the city of Santa Clara this November. After the ceremony, Governor Davis rode the new train to South San Francisco.

The low floor railcars, made by Bombardier, are nearly identical to the cars used by Altamont Commuter Express between Stockton and San Jose, Metrolink in Los Angeles, and Coaster in San Diego. Caltrain purchased the railcars from Sound Transit of the Seattle area. Sound Transit initially had purchased and painted the cars but was unable to use them due to lack of funding.

For many years, BayRail Alliance has advocated the purchase of low floor railcars. These cars provide greatly improved accessibility and ride quality over the gallery cars currently used by Caltrain.

While the low floor cars were purchased for the "Baby Bullet" service, they will be used on regular local service before the super express service begins in late 2003.

The CTX project marks a major milestone for Caltrain. Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet emphasized the advantages of upgrading Caltrain in her speech at the groundbreaking. She stated that the Governor and other public officials, through their decision to fund the largest capital improvement project in Caltrain's history, recognize the potential for significant

transportation improvements by upgrading existing rail infrastructure.

Sen. Jackie Speier described the CTX project as an important step toward the creation of a statewide high-speed rail system. With the outpouring of support for Caltrain express service by public officials, BayRail aims to further its advocacy efforts to make electrification, the downtown San Francisco extension, Dumbarton Rail, and statewide high-speed rail a reality.

Transit Service Reduction Expected

A decline in sales taxes and fare revenue during this economic recession is resulting in service cuts for riders of Caltrain and connecting transit services.

Train cuts - According to the recently approved operating budget, Caltrain will adjust its schedules to eliminate two round-trip trains. The service reduction is planned to start in September.

Caltrain shuttles 80X, 81X, and 82X - Originally proposed to be eliminated, under a new agreement with Muni, the number of trips on these bus routes will be reduced instead, especially in the afternoon. Also, Muni will assume the operating subsidy for 82X between downtown and the Presidio. The changes in the express shuttle service will take effect in September as well.

Cuts in VTA services - Recently VTA reduced the frequency of the light rail and route 10 Airport Flyer from every 10 minutes to every 15 minutes. In addition, bus routes 41 and 43 have been eliminated, which serve Caltrain riders from Lawrence station.

VTA Attempts to Put Brakes on Electrification

[VTA, from page 1]

Electrification, estimated to cost as much as \$600 million, would increase train speed, improve air quality, and allow trains to operate underground to the proposed new Transbay Terminal in downtown San Francisco. Electrification and the downtown San Francisco extension have been two of the main goals for BayRail Alliance since the group's inception as Peninsula Rail 2000 in 1982.

VTA stated that the agency would not make funding available for Caltrain electrification until at least the year 2012, while giving other projects higher priority for funding from Measure A. Santa Clara County voters in November 2000 approved Measure A, a half cent sales tax to be collected for 30 years starting in 2006. Caltrain advocates chastised VTA for forgetting that Caltrain serves more communities in Santa Clara County than VTA Light Rail or the proposed BART extension, and argued that VTA's arbitrarily-determined priorities made it a poor regional partner. "Measure A never listed any priorities,"

pointed out BayRail vice president Andy Chow at the June 6 meeting.

"An attack on electrification is a direct attack on the Caltrain system," said Vaughn Wolffe, a BayRail Alliance member and a director of Rail Passengers Association of California.

JPB members from other counties also found VTA's proposition to cut electrification unacceptable. At the JPB meeting, Caltrain staff offered the JPB two alternatives on the capital budget - one with funding for electrification, and one without. During the board discussion, Steve Schmidt, a JPB member from San Mateo County who strongly supports Caltrain, vowed that he would not support any plan that did not include electrification. San Francisco JPB member Sophie Maxwell expressed San Francisco's willingness to consider lending money to VTA so that electrification can go forward.

Ken Yeager, a Santa Clara County JPB member, in response to criticism from the public and JPB members from San Francisco and San Mateo counties, proposed to delay

the vote on the capital budget for one month to work towards resolving the issue. After adding a language to remove the non-electrification alternative from further consideration, members of the JPB then unanimously voted to delay the vote on the capital budget.

A few weeks after the decision by JPB, Caltrain staff identified possible funding from MTC for VTA to keep electrification on track. BayRail Alliance urges Caltrain supporters to write to the VTA board and to the JPB to approve the capital budget with electrification, as well as to speak out at the JPB meeting on July 11. "It is important to show our support for Caltrain and send a message to VTA that Caltrain electrification must be a priority in Santa Clara County," said Chow.

What can you do?

1. Attend and speak out at the JPB meeting on July 11, see back page for details.
2. Write or call the VTA board. Visit www.vtaridersunion.org for board member contact information.



Staying on Track

SOT2002-3



YES! I support improving Caltrain and Regional Transit!

I support BayRail Alliance's efforts to promote a regional transit system by upgrading Caltrain and extending it to downtown San Francisco, improving connections between buses, trains, and other transit modes, and establishing a High Speed Rail system connecting the Bay Area and Southern California.

I am enclosing a contribution to help fund BayRail Alliance's programs.

\$35 Regular
 \$50 Sponsor
 \$100 Patron
 \$250 President's Club
 \$ _____ Other
 \$15 Student/low income

New member
 Renewal of membership

We are supported entirely by member contributions. Voting memberships start at \$15 or \$35, as applicable. As we engage in lobbying, dues are not tax-deductible at this time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (Day): _____ Phone (Evening): _____

Email: _____

I can help by:

Calling or writing local public officials when you tell me about important transportation issues.
 Volunteering two hours a month (or more)

Mail to the address listed on the back, or contact us toll free at: 1(866)267-8024

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BayRail Alliance General Meeting

July 8 - 6:30pm: Topic: High speed rail forum, Sue Lempert
 August 12 - 6:30pm: Topic: to be announced

Caltrain Joint Powers Board Meeting

July 11, August 1 - 10:00am

Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

July 17, August 21 - 6:00pm

Location for BayRail Alliance General Meetings:

Round Table Pizza,
 1225 El Camino Real, Menlo Park,
 near the Menlo Park Caltrain station

Location for Caltrain JPB and CAC meetings:

SamTrans administrative office,
 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos,
 one block west from San Carlos Caltrain station

Other events:

July 10: 6:00pm-8:00pm Bay Crossings Study: public outreach meeting - final phase
 Location: California Public Utilities Commission Auditorium
 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

July 17: Time TBA California High Speed Rail Authority meeting
 Location: To be announced (San Jose)

July 17: 1:00pm-4:00pm Bay Crossings Study: Policy Advisory Committee meeting
 Location: City Council's Chambers, 3rd floor, Oakland City Hall
 Intersection of Broadway and 14th Street in Oakland

July 17: 5:30pm-7:30pm Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition (BATLUC)
 Regional meeting
 Location: Sierra Club, 3rd floor, 85 2nd Street, San Francisco

July 25: 6:00pm-8:30pm Meeting of GoHSR, a high speed rail advocacy group
 Location: Sierra Club, 3rd floor, 85 2nd Street, San Francisco

Meeting dates, topics, and locations are subject to change without notice.
 For latest information, visit <http://www.bayrailalliance.org>.

BayRail Alliance

July General Meeting Topic: High Speed Rail Forum, Sue Lempert

BayRail's high-speed rail forum is finally happening, scheduled for September 25 at SJSU. Help us to figure out how to educate the public on HSR. Also, San Mateo Mayor Sue Lempert will be appearing later in the evening to discuss Caltrain-related matters, including San Mateo County Measure A, the Bay Crossings Study and Caltrain electrification. In addition to being mayor of San Mateo, Ms. Lempert is a commissioner to MTC and an advisory member of the Caltrain Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board.

—Margaret Okuzumi

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BayRail Alliance, formerly Peninsula Rail 2000, is a 20-year old, all-volunteer, entirely member-supported transit group working to promote the creation of a modern rail network to serve the greater Bay Area region.

Our goals include: converting Caltrain from diesel to electric propulsion; increasing Caltrain frequency to at least once every ten minutes at peak times and every half-hour at off-peak times; extending Caltrain to downtown San Francisco and to the East Bay via the Dumbarton Rail Bridge; expanding ACE and Amtrak Capitol Corridor; and building the proposed high speed rail line connecting the Bay Area and Southern California.