

Staying on Track

December 2004 No. 2004-3



Caltrain CTX and Baby Bullets Boost Ridership 17%

Caltrain introduced a new timetable and five round-trip Baby Bullet express trains in June. The results of this overhaul are in: Caltrain has experienced six consecutive months of substantial ridership gains, up an average of 17 percent from February 2004, for an overall average of 28,268 riders on weekdays this year. Ridership on some Baby Bullet trains has exceeded total seat capacity by 4 or 5%.

The complete schedule overhaul was made possible by the capital improvements of the two-year CTX project, constructed during nights and weekends from July 2002 to June 2004.

The capital improvements made it possible for Caltrain to provide 13% more service on weekdays and 50%

more on Sundays with the same level of staffing and equipment as before.

CTX Infrastructure Upgrades

The \$163 million CTX project upgraded track to continuous welded rail, installed bi-directional centralized traffic control with new signaling, and new high-speed crossovers every few miles. These allow all trains to bypass a disabled train. It also installed four-track segments in Bayshore, Redwood City and Sunnyvale to enable Baby Bullets to pass local trains. Huge credit goes to State Senator Jackie Speier for her leadership in working with Caltrain to conceptualize the Baby Bullet service and obtain \$110 million in state funds for the CTX project.

CTX and the earlier Ponderosa project upgraded stations, bridges, tunnels and grade crossings. Many stations have been modified to allow opposing trains to safely stop or run through the station at the same time, reducing delays. Since the advent of the Baby Bullet service, on-time performance has consistently exceeded 96%.

Improving the Bottom Line

Caltrain has been pursuing other initiatives to improve ridership. The "Go Pass" program allows companies to purchase an annual pass for all of their full-time employees at a fixed rate, encouraging employees to try transit. Participating employers currently include Stanford University, Adobe, Genencor and IDEO.

A train ad-wrap campaign (see article on page 7) is also bringing in revenue that will help Caltrain to pay for the rising cost of diesel fuel.

Please see page 2...

Measure A in San Mateo County Passed by Wide Margin

The new San Mateo County Measure A half-cent sales tax was passed with over 75% of the vote. The measure is expected to raise \$1.5 billion over the next 25 years for roads, Caltrain and other transportation projects.

Of the \$1.5 billion in new funds, Measure A will raise \$450 million for

transit: Caltrain improvements, shuttles for the disabled, operating funds for BART-SFO and Dumbarton rail. \$225 million will go for additional Caltrain grade separations.

The overwhelming passage of the measure boosts the standing of Caltrain projects and increases pressure on Santa Clara County to provide their funding share for electrification.

Bay Area Voters Approve \$4.5 billion in Transportation Measures

On November 2, three other Counties passed transportation sales tax measures. In addition, Voters in the BART district passed a bond measure and AC

Transit district voters passed a property tax increment to fund those transit systems. Both of these received the required two-thirds yes votes.

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The 80 Natoma Street parcel viewed from the north last July, when a stop-work order was issued. (The existing Terminal, not in the picture, is on the far left. The construction crane is on the other side of Second Street, west of the proposed rail subway alignment.)

Transbay Terminal:

SF Supervisors vote to condemn 80 Natoma



BayRail Alliance and other supporters of a new TransBay Terminal and Caltrain downtown extension achieved a significant victory on September 28.

The San Francisco Board of Super-

visors voted unanimously to condemn and acquire, through eminent domain, developer Jack Myers' land slated for a high-rise condominium project at 80 Natoma Street. The condemnation will

Bay Area Voters Approve \$4.5 billion ...from page 1

The county measures that passed — Contra Costa, Marin, and San Mateo, and Sonoma — all brought together multiple stakeholders in processes that lasted over a year to gather wide public input and iron out differing views.

“When elected officials bring together people representing all interests in the county and work in good faith to reach a consensus, transportation measures have no problem getting the super-majority needed to pass,” said Jeff Hobson of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC), who was involved in lengthy negotiations over Contra Costa's Measure J. “When agencies take time for public participation, voters invest in transportation.”

The latter measure tied nearly a quarter of its funding to a precedent-setting Growth Management Program. By contrast, in Solano and Santa Cruz counties, public processes could not achieve a consensus, environmental groups and others mounted strong opposition, and

their transportation sales tax measures failed.

Implications for Santa Clara County and BART to San Jose

The fact that so many transportation measures could achieve the two-thirds majority will take away much of the pressure to reduce the voter threshold for future transportation tax measures. The biggest impact may be on Santa Clara County, where some transportation officials and business leaders have been considering asking voters to approve an additional transportation sales tax measure to cover the considerable funding shortfall for extending BART to San Jose. The recent election outcome, coupled with growing concerns by many about the wisdom of the project and decision-making at the county's transportation agency VTA, are casting doubt on the future of the multi-billion dollar project.

This article was adapted from a press release from TALC, of which BayRail Alliance is an affiliate organization.

cost about \$32.5 million, half to be paid by the city, and half by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

The parcel sits at the south end of the planned underground rail platforms. The condo project would have obstructed the alignment of tracks, in violation of Proposition H approved overwhelmingly by city voters in 1999.

Myers admits that his project is all but dead, but he is filing suit with the city over the Transbay Terminal environmental impact report and the earlier “stop work” order on his project. He says that \$32.5 million is an insult and that his land is worth \$80 million, including \$20 million he has spent so far.

In a previous vote, the supervisors supported a compromise plan by the SF County Transportation Authority intended to accommodate both projects. Experts including the consultant for the nearby Muni Central Subway project argued that the compromise proposal would be totally unworkable due to geological, architectural, engineering and legal complications.

Caltrain CTX ...from page 1

Caltrain recently completed a comprehensive ridership survey that will help it to refine service. Changes are being contemplated to the length of trains and departure times. New Bullet service with different station stop patterns is also being studied.

Additional improvements, however, require money. Even maintaining the current service is expected to be a challenge because the three funding partners (SamTrans, VTA, and San Francisco Muni) are all experiencing budget problems from the economic downturn.

As fuel costs continue to rise, Caltrain may consider raising fares sometime next year. While funding is a challenge, it's clear that this relatively modest capital investment, equal to about the cost of one highway interchange project, has produced enormous improvements to mobility and quality of life on the Peninsula.

Action Alert!

Your Comments Needed on VTP 2030 and MTC 2030 Transportation Plans!

The draft version of the VTP 2030 document is now available for review and comment at www.vta.org/projects/vtp2030. It outlines the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's long-range transportation plans through 2036. (Unfortunately, the draft does not have an index or table of contents.)

The VTA Board deferred adoption of the draft VTP 2030 plan until February 2005, so there's still time to comment, but sooner is better.

Comments, suggestions or corrections should be emailed to the VTA board (board.secretary@vta.org) and vtp2030@vta.org. Or contact Chris Augenstein, VTP 2030 project manager at (408) 321-7093. (A previous December deadline has been extended.)

2030 Plan Talking Points:

- VTA should support strategic rail transit expansion as outlined by BayRail Alliance executive director Margaret Okuzumi in a November 19 op-ed piece in the *SJ Mercury News* at www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/opinion/10222043.htm

- Los Angeles County is building a 450 mile, county wide bus rapid transit (BRT) network, at a cost just 2% that of the BART extension. VTA must stop cutting service and raising fares. VTA should create a *regional* transit network, and not squander its funds on a massively expensive downtown subway line.

- VTA's vision for bus service (p. 104-105) is totally inadequate. Contrast VTA's "vision" with LA County MTA's *Short Range Transportation Plan* at www.metro.net/projects_plans/short-range/SRTP.htm or MTA's 25-year *Long Range Transportation Plan* at www.metro.net/projects_plans/longrange/LRTP.htm.

Please send similar comments to Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Deadline for comment on the MTC 2030 plan is January 7, 2005. Go to www.mtc.ca.gov/T2030 to fill out a survey.

Transit Agency Audit Highlights VTA's Problems

MTC recently had an independent consultant audit a number of transit agencies, including SF Muni and VTA. Under federal law, agencies are audited every three years.

The audit report on VTA highlights its many serious problems.

AC Transit and BART are in the next group of agencies to be audited and

those reports will be available by June 2005. SamTrans will be audited in 2006.

To obtain a copy of any transit agency's audit report, contact Alan Eliot at aeliot@mtc.ca.gov or call him at (510) 464-7758 and ask him to mail you a copy.

Palo Alto Bikestation closes, as Fruitvale Bikestation Opens

Caltrain Palo Alto Bikestation closed

Caltrain has temporarily closed its popular bikestation and repair shop in the Palo Alto University Avenue station while the building is upgraded, repaired and restored. Closure will last about seven months, until May or June 2005. The closure was necessary while structural seismic upgrades are done and the building is brought up to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

At the same time, the Palo Alto Caltrain Station will be restored historically to its original 1930's Southern Pacific Art Deco appearance. Caltrain is adding 50 more bike lockers to provide storage for bicyclists inconvenienced by the temporary closure.



BART Fruitvale Bikestation opens

Almost simultaneously, a new bike station has opened at the Fruitvale BART Station in Oakland. It's the second largest bike station in the US. It has free, secure bike storage and a full-service bike repair shop operated by Alameda Bicycle.

The bike station is near the north-east station exit by Caesar Chavez Plaza entrance to Fruitvale Village. Free attendant parking is available from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays.

The bike station has over 230 bike parking spaces and offers repair services and retail bicycle gear including helmets, lights, locks and other accessories.

Fruitvale brings BART bike stations to three, the other two are in Berkeley and SF Embarcadero.

Dumbarton Rail Project Progresses

The Dumbarton Rail Project (DRP) is continuing to making progress. It has money in all three county sales tax measures: Santa Clara, San Mateo and Alameda counties. Regional Measure 2 is supplying capital and operating funds (from the additional \$1 bridge toll).

The Dumbarton Policy Advisory Committee has 12 members — 3 from each county, plus 3 from the Capitol Corridor.

Daily Rider Projections

2010: 4,800

2025: 6,900

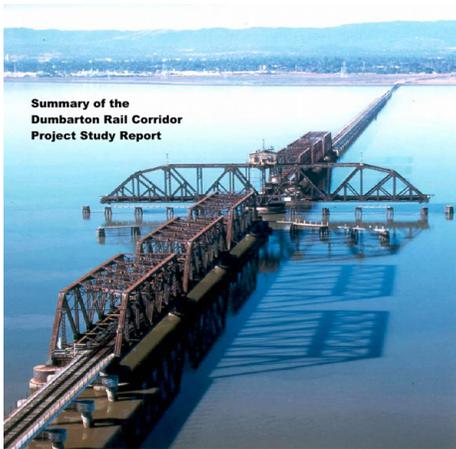
With Livermore Extension

2010: 6,200

2025: 9,600

DRP is expected to provide a 15 minute improvement in peak travel time in the corridor vs. the automobile.

- 32¢ / mile operation (similar to ACE, Caltrain, Metrolink, and Coaster)
- Average fare \$2.07 (on a Caltrain fare basis)
- 30% fare box recovery
- Average trip 17.6 miles
- Capital costs: \$300M (95% is funded)
- Service startup in 2010



A summary of the May 2004 project study report is at www.smcta.com/Dumbarton_Rail/DRC_PSR_Summary.pdf.

What's New with ACE?



ACE Offers Food Service

ACE has begun providing food service on board its Trains 3 and 4, in car number 3, the third car from the locomotive. The Seasons Cafe serves coffee, pastries, bagels, hot & cold drinks, and assorted other goodies. They also will take special meal requests.

MTC Honors Baby Bullet, Dumbarton Advocates

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) chose Caltrain's new Baby Bullet service as the recipient of its Grand Award in September. The new express Baby Bullet trains have been very successful, and some trains are standing room only.

MTC chose State Senator Jackie Speier for its John F. Foran Legislative Award. Speier sponsored the enabling legislation that created the Baby Bullet.

The original version of the 2000 bill called for a Dumbarton branch extending east via the ACE line, in addition to the Peninsula line. (The award itself is named for Speier's predecessor who sponsored legislation in the mid-1980s to study upgrading Caltrain.)

Belmont resident Jim Bigelow received an Award of Merit for his advocacy efforts on behalf of the Dumbarton Rail project.

Hillsdale, South San Francisco Caltrain Stations to be Upgraded, Starting Spring

The San Mateo County Transportation Authority will provide \$2.1 million to upgrade Caltrain's Hillsdale Station and \$500,000 to conduct environmental studies on upgrading the South San Francisco (SSF) station and a grade separation at Linden Avenue near the San Bruno border. Funds are leveraged by Measure A. Total cost estimates of the Hillsdale improvements are \$6.5 million — \$4.3 million in federal funds are committed. The total cost of \$980,000 for SSF

studies will be supplemented by \$480,000 in federal funds.

At Hillsdale the northbound platform will be moved 300 feet north and the existing Bay Meadows stop will be permanently closed. The new station will have outside boarding platforms, improved passenger access and a new parking lot to the east. Planned are PA and visual message systems, platforms those with disabilities, and gated pedestrian crossings. Tracks will be rehabilitated. This project will speed operations at this busy station. SSF project plans call for outside boarding platforms, two more main tracks, and grade-separated pedestrian crossings.

Check the Dumbarton rail page on the BayRail website for more information and new developments, www.bayrailalliance.org/dumbarton.

Special ACE Trains Planned for 2005

ACE plans to run special trains to the following events in the coming year:

- April: Stockton Asparagus Festival
- May: Sacramento Jazz Jubilee
- August: San Jose Jazz Festival, Fremont Festival of Arts

VTA Exaggerating Light Rail Claims?

VTA has repeatedly claimed that light rail ridership has surged 30% system-wide since the opening of the Capitol extension to east San Jose in June. But the total size of the light rail system has also increased by 6.4 miles, or 17%. The remaining 13% increase in ridership correlates with recent ridership increases on BART, Caltrain, and other public transit services in the Bay Area as the economy recovers.

VTA altered the routing of a number of bus lines to force many passengers to transfer to light rail, where previously they could complete Milpitas-San Jose journeys with a single bus ride.

VTA has not yet released detailed ridership figures to substantiate their claim. The numbers are likely to show that the huge investment in light rail has produced little or modest benefit, and that the increased ridership came essentially from rerouted bus riders rather than new transit riders.

New train maintenance facilities in Oakland, San Jose

A new \$71-million state-of-the-art maintenance facility was dedicated on October 12 in Oakland. The 22-acre facility, jointly funded by Amtrak and the State of California, serves Amtrak regional and long-distance trains and opened on November 1.

Groundbreaking for the Caltrain maintenance facility occurred on November 8 in San Jose. Also 22 acres, the \$76 million facility is being built on the former Southern Pacific yard property just north of Diridon Station. It will include a repair shop, new wheel and traction motor maintenance capability, indoor train washer, and a safe controlled working environment for maintenance operations. It's planned to open by late 2006.

VTA highlights the new Capitol light rail extension on its website.



[1996 Measure B: A Silicon Valley Success Story](#)

BART cancels direct San Bruno–Millbrae trains

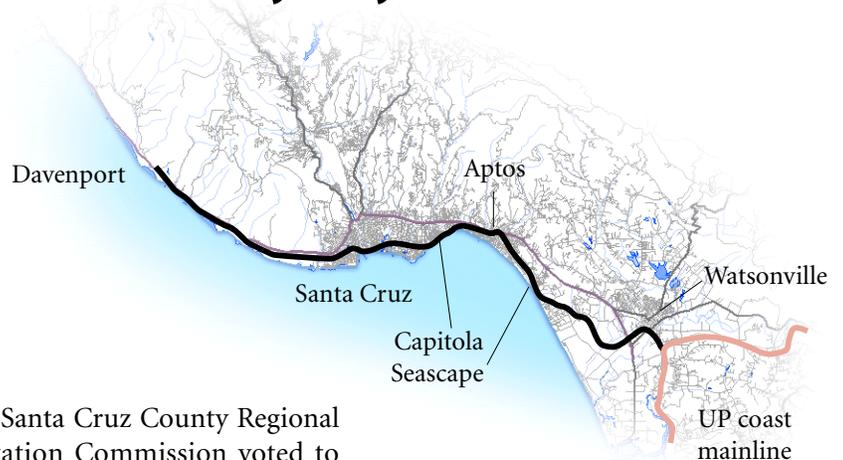
All trains on the Millbrae-SFO extension now stop at San Francisco International Airport between Millbrae and San Bruno. This entails reversing trains at the stub-end SFO stop. Ridership to Millbrae has not met official expectations, necessitating service cutbacks. Operating losses on the extension overall led to litigation between BART and SamTrans, the agency responsible for covering operations costs. A deal worked out between the two agencies resulted in

cessation of direct service between Millbrae and San Bruno effective September 6th.

This is especially embarrassing to these agencies because the federal government is still paying for track built on the unused segment.

The circuitous route through SFO means longer trip times to San Francisco and most likely increased ridership on faster and cheaper Caltrain. (See table on page 6.)

Santa Cruz County May Purchase Rail Line



The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission voted to approve a preliminary agreement on a purchase from Union Pacific of the right-of-way from Watsonville to Davenport. The \$19 million purchase for the 32-mile rail line will facilitate the implementation of projects that the

agency is exploring. Projects might include a tourist trolley between Seaside and Capitola, a hiking and biking trail along the tracks, and eventual commuter rail.

Editorial Opinion

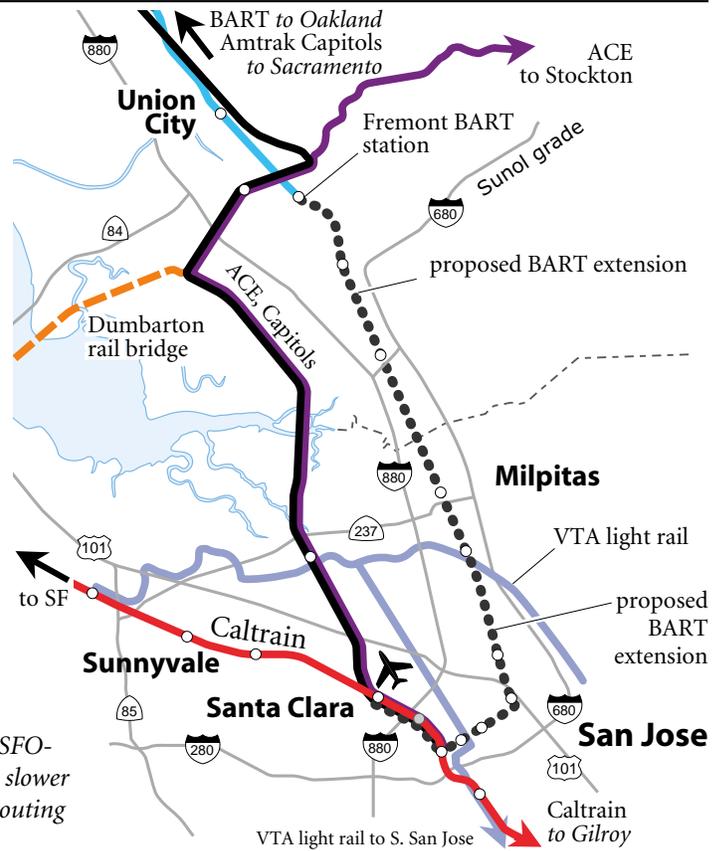
SJ BART Alternatives Are Real And Already Here

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has announced that a second half-cent sales tax will be necessary to extend BART from Alameda County to San Jose. BayRail Alliance has a better plan for fast, frequent rail which will not require any tax increase. Upgrading the existing Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) and Capitol Corridor to all day service would cost only a fraction of what the BART extension would cost.

In contrast to BART's \$250 million per mile cost, for only \$4.5 million per mile in just two years Caltrain built two completely new stations, ADA-mandated station upgrades at some stations, track and signal overhauls, a new central traffic control system, and new Baby Bullet trains which cut the 43-mile San Jose to San Francisco trip from 90 down to 57 minutes. Caltrain did it while maintaining normal weekday service.

Commuters boarding at Millbrae now get to the city faster and pay less money by riding Caltrain instead of

ACE and Capitol Corridor follow a direct route between the East Bay and Silicon Valley job sites. High tech industry is concentrated in north San Jose, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale north of the Caltrain line and west of highway 880. The proposed San Jose BART extension, like BART's SFO-Millbrae line, would be slower due to its roundabout routing and several extra stops.



BART. A comparison of schedules and fares of both systems between Millbrae and San Francisco shows that Caltrain is faster by 9 to 15 minutes (see the table below), and 35¢ cheaper. BART's only advantage is frequency – twice as many trains make that trip as Caltrain between 5 AM and 9 AM on weekdays, but none is faster than 36 minutes. Conventional rail technology (Caltrain, ACE, Capitol Corridor) allows trains to operate just as frequently as BART.

Amtrak's Capitol Corridor already offers service of comparable speed to Caltrain's Baby Bullet. Trains between Oakland and Santa Clara/Great America make the 41-mile trip on schedules ranging from 54 to 61 minutes. The Capitol trains follow a direct route to the heart of Silicon Valley. To make the same trip via BART, commuters would have to endure several additional stops and transfer to light rail in Milpitas. The BART line would pass east of where most job sites are located, and then loop around through downtown San Jose on its way to Santa Clara.

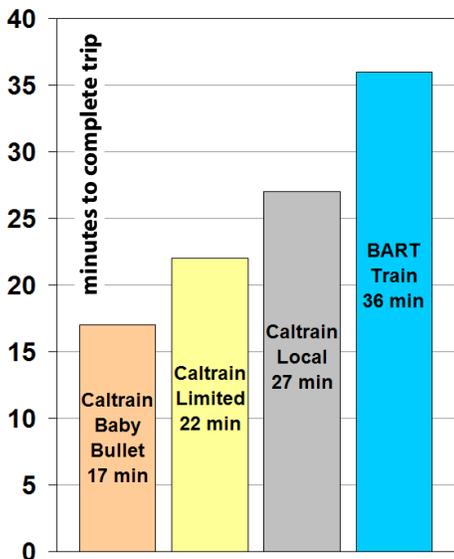
BART extension proponents, includ-

ing Laura Stuchinsky (see op-ed in *SJ Mercury-News* Nov. 29) of the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group (SVMG) repeatedly overlook this and other shortcomings of BART. Meanwhile, BART project sponsor VTA has cut service and admitted that it can't afford to maintain current minimal service levels. SVMG has displayed a BART myopia, and refuses to reconsider its position in light of financial concerns and possible rail alternatives.

Unlike BART, conventional rail such as ACE and Caltrain have the potential, with necessary upgrades, to accommodate proven high-speed train equipment from Europe or Japan, as well as trains of the proposed California high speed system to Los Angeles.

Voters should refuse any further tax increase to fund a single multi-billion-dollar subway under San Jose. The aim of any transit system must be maximum flexibility at minimum cost. Despite its shiny appearance, BART extended to cities with San Jose's low density falls short of these goals. ACE and the Capitols already provide service in this corridor. Let's build on that.

Rail trip times, Millbrae – San Francisco*



*Caltrain to 4th & King, BART to Montgomery

Is USA Transportation Collapse Looming?

Transportation columnist Don Philips wrote in an op-ed, "Transportation Needs a Real Total Breakdown" in the January 2005 issue of *Trains* magazine. He observes that the USA lacks any centralized nationwide transportation plan. No one in government has a clue as to what a dangerous position that puts our country in.

Most of Europe, Japan and China are way ahead of us, especially in rail passenger transport. China is pumping many tens of billions in transportation for its booming economy.

Our sleeping Dept. of Transportation is no more than a balkanized group of fiefdoms for petroleum dependent trains, planes, and trucks, which never talk to each other. Sound familiar? Shades of CIA, FBI, and Defense pre-9/11.

Philips believes it will take another event like a "9/11" or an OPEC oil embargo aimed at bringing our transportation to a standstill to jolt us into reality. And the longer we meddle in the Middle East, the more likely it is to happen.

Train Museum Open in Millbrae

The Millbrae Train Museum opened on October 23. It's located in the historic 1907 Millbrae station on California Drive, at the east end of Murchison Drive. Operated by the Millbrae Historical Society, the museum houses artifacts, photographs, and other memorabilia. It's open every Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or by appointment by calling 650-333-1136.

Revenue from ad-wrapped Caltrains exceeds expectations

Two five-car train sets have been "wrapped" with Target ads as part of a one-year pilot project since May. A third train will be wrapped with ads from the Spanish Broadcasting System.

Caltrain officials expect revenues to reach \$480,000 for 2004, or \$40,000 per month — far exceeding original expectations of up to \$30,000 per month. In response to feedback from customers and train crews, more windows will be left uncovered.

Congratulations, new BayRail Alliance board members

Results of our recent board election are in. We have two newcomers and one returning member joining our board:

Ryan Hoover
Victor Lee
Brian Stanke

Brian Stanke returns to the board after serving two years in the Peace Corps. Incumbents Sylvia Gregory, Andy Chow, and Paul Wendt all won re-election. Patrick Moore resigned, creating a vacancy. Pending a vote by the board to appoint them, we welcome Victor and Brian who tied for third place.



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.

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

Please check one:

- New member
- Renewal of membership

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

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 on the back.
Or contact us toll free at
(866) 267-8024

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BayRail Alliance General Meetings **Third Thursdays 6:45 p.m.**
Caltrain Joint Power Board (JPB) Meetings First Thursdays 10:00 a.m.
Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meetings Third Wednesdays 6:00 p.m.

Location of all meetings listed above:
SamTrans administrative offices, 2nd floor auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Ave., San Carlos, one block west from San Carlos Caltrain station.
Meeting dates, topics, and locations are subject to change without notice.
For the latest information, go to www.bayrailalliance.org



Submissions:

We welcome submissions via email. Please include your name and phone number, and send your submissions to RyanHoov@aol.com. We especially encourage submissions that include information on what interested readers can do and any photographs or other graphics.

Baby Bullet faster than BART, see page 6.

Your Comments Needed on VTP 2030 and MTC 2030 Transportation Plans. See page 3.

BayRail Alliance Board of Directors

- Andy Chow (Vice President)
- Michael Graff
- Sylvia Gregory
- Ryan Hoover
- Victor Lee
- Michael Kincaid
- Brian Stanke
- Paul Wendt (Membership director)
- Margaret Okuzumi (Executive Director)

Does Santa Clara County need an additional transit sales tax? We think there's a better way. See page 6.

BayRail Alliance is a 22-year old, all-volunteer, entirely member-supported transit group working to promote the creation of a modern rail network to serve the greater San Francisco Bay Area. BayRail is not affiliated with any rail or transit agency, contractor or vendor.

Our goals include: 1) converting Caltrain to electric propulsion; 2) increasing Caltrain frequency to at least once every 10 minutes at peak times and every 30 minutes off-peak; 3) extending Caltrain to downtown San Francisco at a new TransBay Terminal and to the East Bay via the Dumbarton Rail Bridge; 4) expanding ACE and Amtrak Capitol Corridor service; and 5) building the proposed high speed rail line connecting the Bay Area and Southern California through Altamont Pass .

Staying on Track newsletter is published quarterly by BayRail Alliance

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