

# BayRail Alliance Formerly Peninsula Rail 2000 Staying on Track

<http://www.bayrailalliance.org>  
No. 2003-3 October 2003



## Toll increase headed for March Ballot

Days after Governor Gray Davis lost the recall election, he signed SB916, a bill to increase bridge tolls from \$2 to \$3 and fund a host of transportation projects. The law requires voter approval by a simple majority in seven Bay Area counties in the March 2004 presidential primary election. Tolls would increase on seven Bay Area toll bridges, not including the Golden Gate Bridge.

SB916 would help fund the Caltrain extension to downtown San Francisco and Dumbarton rail, among many other projects. It also includes funding for transit operations, a need often neglected by legislators.

Pressure from East Bay legislators resulted in amendments to add funding for the Caldecott Tunnel fourth bore and more funding for the Fremont/Warm Springs BART extension in the final version of the bill. South Bay politicians successfully removed a provision to fund a study of the Altamont Pass alternative alignment for high speed rail. Advocates of this alternative have argued that an Altamont HSR line would serve more markets and have less serious environmental impacts than the favored alignments south and east of San Jose.

## Financial crisis threatens VTA expansion plans

During the summer months, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) took controversial actions to borrow funds to avoid cuts and continue work on its BART and light rail capital projects.

At its August meeting, the VTA board approved a plan to bond against Measure A (the transportation sales tax approved by voters in 2000) by a 7-5 vote. The plan would prevent a proposed 21% cut in bus and light rail service scheduled for January 2004, while increasing VTA's expenditures for capital projects.

Transit advocates and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, who asked that transit cuts be averted, raised concerns about the plan. Only \$80 million out of the approximately \$550 million plan would go towards preventing transit cuts. \$170 million would fund preliminary engineering for the BART extension from Fremont to San Jose.

Questions were raised about VTA's ability to construct the extension given the agency's dire financial situation. Some warned that funds bonded for the extension would lead VTA into worse financial hardship in the future. VTA still plans to cut 3% of its service this January. Recent economic projections predict that year 2000-level numbers of jobs will not return to the Valley until 2009 or 2010.



Supervisor Blanca Alvarado asked VTA General Manager Pete Cipolla why the bonding package included funding for BART. Cipolla answered that VTA must continue preliminary engineering to maintain the staff to work on the project.

On October 6, VTA approved two Minimum Operating Scenarios (MOS) to include in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the BART extension. VTA developed these phased plans to satisfy a request by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to reduce the cost of the project.

One MOS plan, as recently approved by VTA's Policy Advisory Board, includes building the full length project in the first phase, minus two stations (Berryessa, Civic Plaza/SJSU; Alum Rock also would have been eliminated but was added back following political outcry).

[See VTA, page 2]

## Vote Yes on K in San Francisco to fund Caltrain

BayRail Alliance urges San Franciscans to vote Yes on Proposition K on the November 4 ballot. Prop. K would extend the city's transportation sales tax. Based partly on community input, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) developed Prop. K's expenditure plan which provides for significant investment in Muni and Caltrain.

Prop. K would extend the existing 1/2

cent transportation sales tax for another 30 years to generate an estimated \$2.4 to \$2.8 billion. About 24% of the revenue would be dedicated to transit capital projects. 37% of the revenue would go to transit infrastructure maintenance. The rest would fund paratransit operations, street maintenance, and traffic safety programs. Major capital programs in the plan include Muni bus rapid transit, Third Street light

Rail and Central Subway, a new Transbay Terminal with a Caltrain downtown extension and Caltrain electrification. With the revenue programmed for Transbay Terminal/Caltrain extension (\$270 million) and for other capital programs, SFCTA would leverage additional state and federal funds.

Prop. K requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

# VTA considers phased plans for BART

[VTA, from page 1]

The other MOS scenario includes all seven stations as originally proposed (Montague/Capitol, Berryessa, Alum Rock, Civic Plaza/SJSU, Market Street, Diridon/Arena, and Santa Clara). But it defers some parking at stations, vehicles, and maintenance facility capacity, based on 2015 demand projections. The EIR for the project is planned for public release in March 2004.

Even the initial MOS contrasts with common practice on similar projects locally and nationally. More typically a project would be truncated and project costs scaled back more drastically. The initial MOS reduced costs by only 10% but also reduced ridership by about 10%. The new MOS proposals scale back the project even less.

It remains to be seen whether FTA will

accept these proposals for consideration. FTA has stated that it will provide no more than \$500 million toward any one project; VTA has been seeking \$973 million. The new scenarios would cut less than \$400 million from the cost of the project.

Moreover, recent spreadsheets from VTA staff, as presented to VTA's ad-hoc financial stability committee and board, show that the BART project cannot be built without additional local funding. They show that even an additional 1/4 cent sales tax would not be enough. However, it's highly unlikely that Santa Clara County voters would approve an additional sales tax just to build the BART project. Many are angry and disillusioned with VTA's current inability to deliver on its 2000 Measure A promises.

# BayRail Alliance welcomes new board members

Congratulations to Michael Graff and Patrick Moore, who were recently elected to the Bay Rail Alliance Board of Directors. Michael, a Fremont resident, supports ACE and Capitol Corridor improvements, as well as rail across the Dumbarton corridor. Patrick Moore, from Mountain View, brings enthusiasm and experience in support of high speed rail in the Bay Area. He helped organize the High Speed Rail forum in September 2002.

## SAVE DATE!

January 17 or 18, 2004  
Peninsula Rail 2000/BayRail Alliance  
20th Anniversary

## VTA financial reality

The chart on the upper right is based on a spreadsheet distributed by VTA staff to VTA's ad-hoc committee in September. For the first 22 of the 30 years of Measure A, the only color needed to portray the situation is red.

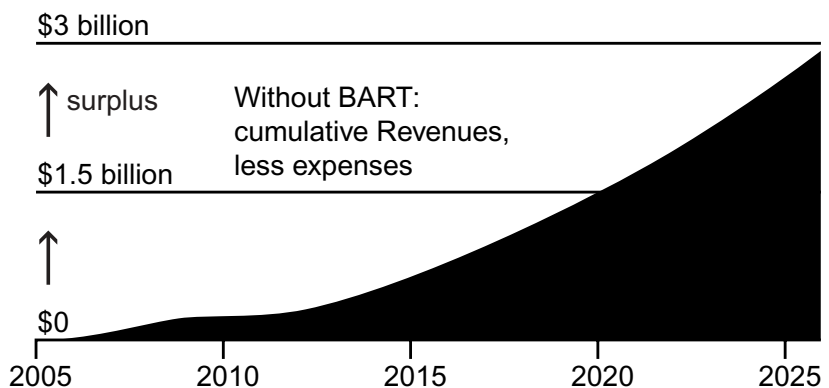
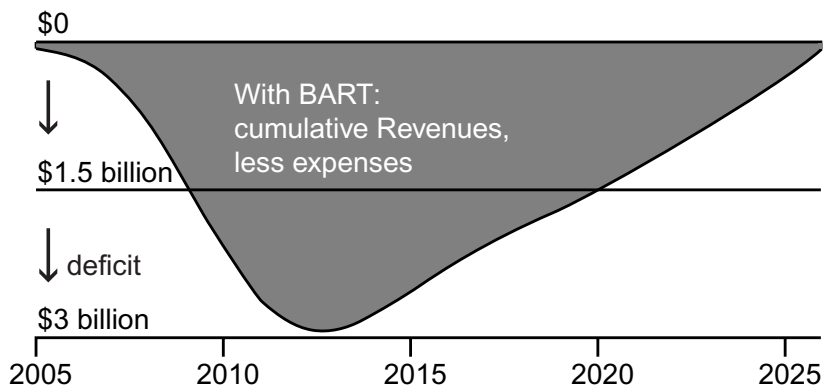
Under this scenario, Measure A would not have a positive ending balance until just before it sunsets in 2036. Instead of building many projects, Measure A funds would be used to pay about \$3.4 billion in interest and to retire the debt.

The lower chart is also based on the same VTA spreadsheet, but with the following assumptions:

- 1) the San Jose BART extension project (both costs and anticipated revenues from grants) is stricken from the project list;
- 2) Downtown-East Valley light rail extension is delayed five years, with the costs inflated by 4.75% a year;
- 3) no new taxes, such as another sales tax, are collected; and
- 4) bonds are issued as assumed by the VTA in 2003, even without going forward with the BART project.

BayRail Alliance believes that fast and convenient transit service at much lower cost is readily achievable in the BART corridor using more suitable technology.

Source: www.mtcwatch.com



# From the Editor's Desk

## Caltrain-SFO connection: examining the options

By Andy Chow

Since its June 22 opening, the BART extension to Millbrae/SFO has attracted far fewer riders than anticipated. As a result, SamTrans is trying to renegotiate with BART its financial responsibility for the operation of the extension.

Various letters and articles in local newspapers soon after the extension's opening documented the problems with the connection provided by BART's SFO-Millbrae service, compared to the free shuttle bus which operated prior to the opening.

Years before the extension opened, those of us familiar with the \$1.6 billion project anticipated many of these problems. They are the consequences of politically motivated design decisions. Facing this reality, BayRail asked specifically for integrated ticketing and timed connections. However, Caltrain and BART failed to provide either. The SFO-Millbrae service operates every 20 minutes. This is incompatible with Caltrain's 30-minute headways during midday, or with the rest of the BART system, with 15-minutes headways.

On the fare side, Caltrain passengers heading to or from the airport are required to purchase a BART ticket through its machines, in addition to their Caltrain ticket. Although Translink could provide integrated ticketing for some passengers, the new BART ticket machines and fare gates are currently incompatible with Translink.

BART could provide more convenient connections by

adjusting its SFO-Millbrae train frequency to operate every 30 minutes, timed to coordinate with Caltrain.

One proposal to remedy the lack of integrated ticketing would be for Caltrain ticket agents to sell \$1.50 BART tickets to Caltrain passengers heading to the airport. However, this is only a partial remedy, as it doesn't address the needs of passengers with multi-ride tickets, or those traveling from the airport. The design of Caltrain ticket machines may not permit them to dispense BART tickets.

### Better way to SFO

The best-kept secret for transit to SFO from the south is SamTrans' express route KX. KX runs between San Francisco, SFO and Palo Alto. The fare between SFO and points south is \$1.25, or free for riders with a Caltrain monthly pass with two zones or more.

At SFO, KX serves directly to the terminals. KX stops on the lower level of Terminals 2, 3, and the International Terminal. The Terminal 2 stop is a short walk from Terminal 1.

KX connects with Caltrain at the Belmont and San Carlos stations and takes the 101 freeway between Hillsdale and SFO. Passengers headed to SFO via Caltrain may transfer to KX in Belmont as an alternative to BART. On weekdays during midday, the northbound KX is scheduled to depart the Belmont Caltrain station about five minutes after the northbound Caltrain. Although the transfer time is longer for southbound connections, the timing is nonetheless consistent as KX also operates every 30 minutes. Overall, travel time via KX is competitive, if not faster, than via the BART connection at Millbrae.



## Staying on Track

SOT2003-3



**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.

### ***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)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Day): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Evening): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BayRail Alliance General Meeting  
Visit [www.bayrailalliance.org](http://www.bayrailalliance.org) for updates

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Caltrain Joint Powers Board Meeting	November 6 - 10:00am
Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting	November 19 - 6:00pm

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<b>Location for BayRail Alliance General Meetings:</b> BayRail is considering changes in meeting location and dates. Visit <a href="http://www.bayrailalliance.org">www.bayrailalliance.org</a> for updates.	<b>Location for Caltrain JPB and CAC meetings:</b> SamTrans administrative office, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, one block west from San Carlos Caltrain station
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**Other events:**

October 28: 6:30 pm	<b>Caltrain Baby Bullet schedule meeting</b> Municipal Service Building, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto
October 29: 6:30 pm	SamTrans admin. office, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos and San Francisco 4th & King Caltrain station
October 30: 6:30 pm	Council Chamber,s, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View and San Jose Diridon Caltrain station
November 4: 6:30 pm	Council Chambers, 7351 Rosanna Street, Gilroy

**Submissions:**

We welcome submissions via email. Please include your name and phone number, and send your submissions to [andychow@attbi.com](mailto:andychow@attbi.com). We especially encourage submissions that include information on what interested readers can do and any photographs or other graphics.

## Caltrain requests input on proposed Baby Bullet timetable

Caltrain plans to hold six public meetings to receive input on the proposed timetable changes, which includes the extensive overhaul of the Caltrain weekday timetable. The new timetable includes Baby Bullet express, limited-stop and local service changes. It also includes a new schedule for weekend service.

The new timetable is expected to take effect in spring 2004, following the completion of the CTX construction project.

Visit [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com) for the proposed timetable.

Meeting dates, topics, and locations are subject to change without notice. For latest information: [www.bayrailalliance.org](http://www.bayrailalliance.org).

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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 San Francisco Bay Area. BayRail is not affiliated with any rail or transit agency, contractor or vendor.

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.

forwarding and address correction requested