

Staying on Track

Summer 2005

No. 2005-1



From the Director

Good News! Caltrain Fare & Schedule Changes are More Positive than Not

Dear friends and supporters of Bay-Rail Alliance,

Good news! While the news headlines and articles about the new Caltrain schedule may sound grim, the truth is that the new schedule is a miraculous accomplishment that many will be pleased with. Thanks to a tremendous cooperative effort by Caltrain staff and Amtrak, a new 96-train schedule, unveiled just this past Friday, will be operated using the same number of crews and equipment as before.

The new 96-train schedule is an increase from the current 86-train schedule. It is the most daily trains that Caltrain has ever run, though those trains will be making fewer stops. The new schedule will be both more convenient and less convenient, depending on where and at what time of day you're traveling.

It may seem a strange thing to say about a schedule forged out of a budget crisis, but the majority of riders will consider the new schedule to be better and faster than the old, most of the time. For those using Broadway or Atherton stations, Caltrain is working to develop shuttle service to nearby stations to ease the impact of the closures on you (those stops will not lose weekend service).

Caltrain's new 96-train schedule* is posted on its website. Riders us-

ing Lawrence Station will be pleased to know that the new schedule adds limited express service for commuters traveling from Hillsdale. Trip times between Sunnyvale, Redwood City and San Francisco have decreased and will become much more convenient for the many commuters trying to reach the city by about 9 AM. Caltrain staff made quite a few changes to the schedule based on public input, so the new schedule is very different and much improved from the 88-train schedule released in April.



Evening service and service to a number of stations isn't as robust as we'd like. We're not thrilled about the fare increases either, which will go into effect on July 1. It's far from perfect, but given that Caltrain had to either innovate or shut down, they've done an outstanding job of developing a package that will help the railroad to survive. Meanwhile, we'll all have to do our part to absorb part of the pain. When the economic climate improves, Caltrain will be in a good position to build upon this solid schedule.

Caltrain's budget is still extremely tight. A continued rise in diesel fuel prices could knock another hole in

the budget. They're counting on an increase in ridership from the additional bullet and limited express trains, which bring in up to twice the revenue of local trains. Already, Caltrain has added two new Baby Bullet runs which began on May 2.

Now may be a good time to encourage your friends and co-workers to use Caltrain for their travel needs. The message is clear: use it or lose it.

We'll let you know of specific campaigns also that you can participate in to increase funding for Caltrain and other public transit. Meanwhile, please spread the good news that there is much to like about the *See Good News, page 2*

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HSR Bond Measure Delayed to November 2008 Ballot

Margaret Okuzumi

The \$9 billion bond measure for building California high-speed rail (HSR) between San Francisco and Los Angeles, has been delayed again from November 2006 to the November 2008 ballot due to a bill by Assembly member Albert Torrico, D-Newark. AB 713 passed out of the Assembly Transportation and Housing Committee on April 11, 2005. Senator Dean Florez, D-Shafter, has vowed to try to kill the bill in the California Senate.

Proponents of delaying the bond measure say that the state of California's dire financial situation and a weak economy makes it unlikely that the bond measure could pass in 2006. They also say that the actual delay would only be by about a year since last year's bill stipulates that bonds could be issued no earlier than January 2008. Opponents say the move to delay the vote is premature, given that the economy is likely to improve between now and Nov. 2006. If the bond is postponed, major portions of the environmental documents may need to be redone, incurring additional costs and delay. A delay could also make it more difficult to obtain needed federal matching funds for the project.

The response of the pro-HSR transit community to this delay has been mixed. Some point to the increased costs for the HSR project and additional barriers that this delay would create. Others feel that since the environmental impact report for HSR is not complete, voters would not quite know what they were voting on. This would be approving a blank check to what could potentially be turned into an environmental disaster.

What is certain is that the ill-fated decision of the High Speed Rail Authority to omit the Altamont alternative from the Environmental Impact Report has contributed to the delays that this project is experiencing. Until the Altamont issue is resolved in a

satisfactory manner by being fairly studied in the environmental report, community and environmental support for the HSR project will continue to be conditional and divided.

Meanwhile, A Dilemma Governor Schwarzenegger's support for HSR has been lukewarm, and these days his office seems mainly focused on discussing toll roads and trucking and highway improvements. Nonetheless the governor proposed including \$1.7 million to continue work on the Bay Area program-level Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) in his FY 2006 budget. Because the HSR bond measure is likely to be delayed, the state legislature may be poised to delete this funding from the state budget. This would interrupt the EIR process. Again, there is some debate as to the impact of this.

On the one hand, some argue that the interruption of the EIR will provide another setback to the project and make it less likely that it could be completed in time for a 2008 bond measure, which in turn would make such a bond measure less likely to pass. The consultants currently working on the EIR/EIS would have to be let go, and work on the EIR/EIS would need to be re-bid when the process started up again, adding more delays and cost to the statewide project. The sooner that the necessary right-of-ways (land parcels required for the project) are identified and purchased before they are developed for other uses, the less the project will cost.

On the other hand, if the bond measure is delayed to November 2008, much of the work done in the coming year may well become obsolete by then, since the shelf life of environmental reports is 3 years at best. Thus money spent for a study in FY 2006 may go to waste anyway. Additionally some feel that the draft EIR/EIS was very poorly done and that it

might not be a bad idea to start with a fresh slate of consultants. A delay in the EIR/EIS would allow for the results of the MTC Regional Rail Study (see below) to have more influence on the EIR/EIS, which is probably a good thing.

Once again we find that a quandary is created by the delay caused by the omission of the Altamont alternative from the program-level HSR EIR/EIS. It puts HSR advocates who believe that the Altamont alignment is most likely the far superior alternative, in a difficult and uncomfortable position of trying to determine if a temporary interruption of the study will have a negative, positive, or negligible impact on the HSR project's future success and feasibility.

North Bay

North Coast Rail Line Moves Toward Reopening

Brian Stanke

This March the North Coast Rail Authority received approval from FEMA to rehabilitate southern half of the North Coast rail line. The Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment from FEMA on the South End Alternate Project allows the authority to begin design work for the repair of bridges and tracks along the line.

The South End project will reopen the line from Lombard at the Napa County line north to Willits, allowing connection the California Western Railroad. Eventually rail service will be restored to Eureka and Humboldt Bay Harbor.

New Blog About VTA

We're told there's a new blog about the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. Check it out at:
[<http://vtawatch.blogspot.com/>]
for a healthy dose of cheeky behind-the-scenes political analysis about VTA.

Regional Rail Network Study Begins

Will include HSR

Margaret Okuzumi

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is launching a new study to help coordinate future planning for the San Francisco Bay Area's regional rail network. The study will examine how to improve the connectivity, coordination, capacity and funding situation of our regional rail network, and the impact of various extensions such as e-BART, SMART, Caltrain and BART on the network as a whole.

The study will also examine the impact of three different scenarios on the future development and funding requirements of our region's rail network: 1) no HSR, 2) HSR is built over the Altamont Pass, and 3) HSR enters the Bay Area through a southern alignment. This is an extremely important study that we will be participating in and watching closely.

The study was initiated by Senator Don Perata (D-Oakland) and is funded with Regional Measure 2 (bridge toll) funds. The main rail agencies involved in the study are Caltrain and BART. These lead agencies will work cooperatively with other rail agencies within the Bay Area to develop a comprehensive and integrated assessment of our region's rail network, including access to the Port of

Oakland, freight movement, and especially, regional passenger rail service. Light rail is excluded from this study.

Currently the consultants who will carry out the study are being chosen. The study will begin in August and continue for about two years, with about twenty outreach meetings scheduled to collect input from transit and other agencies, and the public and advocacy groups such as ours. The draft of the report is due March 2007, and final adoption of the results by MTC is scheduled for September 2007. It is expected that the results of the study will influence the development of HSR.

Earlier studies have indicated the Altamont route will:

- Provide the fastest connection between San Francisco and Los Angeles;
- Serve the most riders early on, creating favorable economics that will allow future extensions to be built.
- Cost about \$1 billion less to construct than a southern alignment;
- Create the least environmental damage and destruction of wilderness.
- Allow HSR to happen sooner rather than perhaps not at all

Good News, continued from page 1

about the new schedule, an amazing thing given the dire circumstances under which it was forged.

Caltrain has innovated and, we hope, will survive by averting the overall decline in ridership that typically accompanies service cuts in times of financial crisis.

We hope to see you on the train!

— *Margaret Okuzumi*

*See the new 96-train schedule at http://www.caltrain.com/pdf/timetable_effective_8_1_05.pdf

ACE Back on Track

Brian Stanke

With on time service back up over 80% and increasing ridership ACE is recovering from a disastrous February and March caused by Union Pacific. ACE runs on the Union Pacific's rail line from Stockton to San Jose and is at the mercy of their scheduling.

Freight train interference and dispatching problems that plagued ACE's trains have decreased now that Union Pacific is recovering from winter storm damage and poor maintenance.

ACE will implement \$11.5 million in track and signal improvements over the next year. This project will cut 17 minutes off of the Stockton to San Jose trip the trains take each weekday.

Candidates Sought for BayRail Alliance Board

BayRail Alliance will be holding its annual election for Board of Directors at the August 18 general meeting. Once again we are seeking a few good people to serve two-year terms on our board from August 2005 through July 2007. Board members govern the group by setting policy and procedure and are responsible for our organization's vision and health. Because we are a volunteer group, board members are expected to help run the organization as well as govern it.

We especially are seeking board members with business, financial or accounting expertise. However, potential board members need only have an interest in furthering our rail transit advocacy and the ability to devote time and effort to their duties.

If you are interested in being a candidate for the BayRail Alliance Board of Directors, you must be a currently paid BayRail Alliance member. Candidates who are not nominated by the board must submit signatures of five other currently paid members who support your candidacy. Submit a statement of 200 words or less on your qualifications and desire to serve by July 23, 2005. Please include your city of residence, your occupation, and the name of your employer.

Contact Executive Director Margaret Okuzumi by email at okuzumi@silcon.com for more information.

TRANSBAY

Dumbarton Rail Moves Ahead

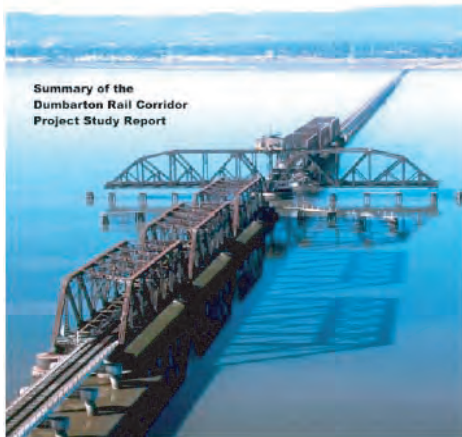
BayRail Asks that Hayward Be Included in Environmental and Ridership Studies

Brian Stanke

Environmental and ridership studies are about to get underway for Dumbarton Rail and BayRail Alliance is working to ensure that the study of the travel corridor is complete. At its April meeting the San Mateo County Transportation Authority board approved funding for the environmental impact report (EIR) and market demand (ridership) studies. Construction of the \$300 million project is now over 95% funded by San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties, Toll bridge funds, and matching state funds.

BayRail Alliance has sent a letter asking the Dumbarton Policy Committee to include Hayward in the EIR and ridership studies. Extending service to Hayward made the entire system more cost-effective in the 1999 service evaluation. Consistent with BayRail's support of cost-effective commuter service we want to insure that the most effective system is built. By including Hayward in the

market demand study and EIR the region will be able to make an informed decision about how far to extend the system in the East Bay.



BayRail believes the extending rail service to Hayward makes sense because:

- The capital and operating costs for extending service from Union City to Downtown Hayward are very low;

Twists, cont'd from page 5

all projects meeting minimum thresholds will be fully funded.

Third, VTA would still have to substantially increase its revenues by obtaining voter approval of an additional 3/8 cent sales tax for transit, or obtain other revenues in order to have sufficient financial capacity to operate and maintain both new and existing transit services. As of this writing, this also is looking unlikely, meaning the BART project still faces very formidable challenges. **s**

- The rail line next to Hayward BART is already in place and has no current or future freight traffic projected on it for years to come.

- The Hayward station would be made an intermodal station by simply removing one fence and building a platform, with no big construction impacts or costs.

- There are few impacts on existing communities. The route has no at-grade street crossings in Hayward.

- Additional ridership would make the Dumbarton Rail project more cost-effective.

EAST BAY

Altamont Pass Freight Shuttle and Central Valley Commuter Rail Part of Sales Tax Measure

Brian Stanke

Growing traffic and congestion at the port of Oakland has prompted planners to look at instituting a freight shuttle train to take containers from the Port over the Altamont pass to the Port of Stockton for distribution.

This could remove hundreds of trucks a day from the Altamont Pass. San Joaquin County is looking to include funds for the freight shuttle in its upcoming sales tax renewal. The sales tax will also provide funds to start up commuter service between Modesto and Sacramento.

However, the current sales tax proposal is controversial and may not pass. Less than 28 percent of the money would go to transit and bicycle projects. In the Bay Area over 75 percent of transportation sales tax revenues was earmarked for public transit. The Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club is asking for a larger percent to go to public transportation and non-automobile travel or they will work to defeat the proposed tax.

Report

BART Proponents Seek to Shut Down the Opposition

Recently the Mineta Transportation Institute organized a panel discussion on "BART to Silicon Valley -What's Next?" with the Commonwealth Club. Publicity for the event claimed that the panelists would "discuss the various options that are still on the table - including.... no BART at all." In other words, the full spectrum of views on this project.

The panel originally was going to include Councilmember Greg Perry, who is an informed and articulate opponent of the BART extension, and some publicity materials were sent out listing his name.

However, ten days before the event, Rod Diridon Sr., who heads the Mineta Institute, *uninvited* Mr. Perry from the panel. Mr. Diridon claimed that it had been decided that one of the other panelists, mayor Dennis Kennedy of Morgan Hill, who supports phasing in the project, was "more against" the project than he had realized, and that therefore he was inviting councilmember Ron Swegles of Sunnyvale to speak in Greg Perry's place. Swegles had not been known for speaking out in opposition to BART to SJ.

The event itself proved to be unin-

formative and boring as far as the project was concerned. Even the reporters seemed to think such.

BayRail Alliance, working with the Sierra Club and TALC, organized a press conference just prior to the event to publicize the exclusion of Mr. Perry from the panel and the lack of balance by the Commonwealth Club. (Incidentally, the head of the Commonwealth Club, Gloria Duffy, is married to Mr. Diridon Sr.) We were particularly concerned because some Commonwealth Club events are rebroadcast on public radio.

So, imagine our dismay when Carl Guardino of the so-called "Silicon Valley Leadership Group" led a group of protestors consisting of his staff members and union members from the Building Trades to shut down our press conference. They carried bright yellow pre-printed signs with the same simplistic message, "We want BART" and surrounding us, shouted down our press conference so that we could not be heard. Guardino stepped in front of me as I was speaking to the reporters and started talking to them. It was the height of rudeness.

Why did Mr. Guardino interfere with the right of the Sierra Club, BayRail Alliance, and other public interest groups to talk with the media?

SVLG's physical and vocal disruption of our press conference was a second, shameful attempt to stifle opposition to the BART extension. Fortunately, Mr. Perry calmly and repeatedly challenged Mr. Guardino with "Will you debate me, Carl?" and finally cried out an exasperated "Are you afraid to debate me?" prompting Mr. Guardino to engage in a sidewalk dialogue. Only then was person who agreed with "there's a better way than BART" point of view of our organizations heard at all.

SVLG's crude and desperate move to interfere with our right to free speech doesn't belong in a democracy. Companies that provide support to SVLG should question why the so-called "Leadership Group" must resort to these types of heavy-handed tactics to silence opponents. If the proponents are so confident that they are right, they should not be afraid of a full and open public debate on the best way to create world-class public transit for Santa Clara County. **I**

Staying on Track

SOT2005-1



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: 1(866)267-8024

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BayRail Alliance General Meetings 3rd Thursdays 6:45 pm
 Caltrain Joint Powers Board (JPB) Meetings 1st Thursdays 10:00 am
 Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meetings 3rd Wednesdays 6:00 pm

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



22 Baby Bullets daily starting on August 1

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.

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BayRail Alliance Board of Directors

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



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.

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Forwarding and address correction requested

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