



San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
833 Market Street, 10th Floor
San Francisco CA 94103

T 415.431.BIKE
F 415.431.2468

sfbike.org

PROMOTING THE BICYCLE FOR EVERYDAY TRANSPORTATION

August 19, 2014

Sebastian Petty
Caltrain Senior Planner
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070

Re: Caltrain Strategic Plan

To Sebastian Petty:

Much has happened since 2004, when the last Caltrain Strategic Plan was passed. We applaud Caltrain's historic leadership with regards to bike access on transit, which was demonstrated in 2009 when bike capacity was increased so that all train cars now have two dedicated bike cars. This decision has made a tremendous difference in the daily commute for thousands of people who rely on the ability to bring their bike on Caltrain.

Having bike access on transit is important because it gives people the freedom to get from the transit hubs to their home, their job, their grocery store or their children's daycare. Bikes allow people to complete the "first and last mile" to their destination, which is often what makes using Caltrain possible and convenient, instead of being forced to drive.

More and more people are choosing sustainable transportation options particularly as the population, employment opportunities and congestion increase in the region. This has led to an overwhelming increase in Caltrain ridership, with bike ridership outpacing overall ridership growth (11.8% versus 19.6% in the last year). While this is exciting news for all of us, limited bicycle capacity has also had negative consequences. More than ever, the number of people who are denied boarding is rapidly increasing, which continues to affect people's daily lives and their ability to choose Caltrain as a reliable option.

One SF Bicycle Coalition member stated:

I am regularly bumped off Caltrain. In the morning I add an extra 12 minutes on my commute to ride to 4th and King to avoid getting bumped. I live closer to 22nd. I work in Redwood City (3.5 miles from the station) and I have to leave work early to catch the 4:52 train because I have been regularly bumped from the 5:25 and 5:52 trains. I have only been bumped from the 4:52 train a couple of times. I ride Caltrain less because of the concern that I will get bumped. (It is not practical for me to walk from Caltrain to my office.) I cannot be late to work and I have a small child at home so getting bumped really limits the amount of time I get to spend with my son.

From our perspective, and the perspectives of our members, this is unacceptable. There needs to be a solution to make sure that people who take Caltrain can count on being able to board, and the Caltrain Strategic Plan is the best opportunity to address this issue.

While we do not know what Caltrain's ridership will be in the ten years, we do know that right now there is not adequate capacity for passengers with bikes, and they are getting bumped off Caltrain on a regular basis. The mission of the SF Bicycle Coalition is to "promote the bicycle for everyday transportation." People should be able to choose sustainable ways to get around, and transportation agencies such as Caltrain need to support and accommodate these needs.

While there are long-term opportunities to maximize space and ridership by encouraging bike share usage and increasing bike parking, there is still the current, existing short-term issue. Therefore, we recommend a thoughtful exploration and coordination of short-term and long-term solutions so that Caltrain can continue to be the leader of bikes and transit it has historically been.

We recommend the following:

1. Increase bicycle capacity on Caltrain in the near-term and long-term
 - Retrofit at least half of the Bombardier cars into bike cars as part of the near-term purchase
 - Conduct analysis on other near-term improvements to increase bike capacity with results published publicly
 - Increase bike capacity on the new car purchase as part of Caltrain electrification and modernization
2. Increase wayside facilities to increase secure bicycle parking at Caltrain stations
3. Allow for priority boarding for passengers with bicycles on bike cars in order to speed the boarding process for all passengers
4. Develop a system for communicating real-time bike capacity
5. Develop a plan for integrating Bay Area Bike Share expansion into the future of Caltrain

While we know that there are no quick fixes, we appreciate transparency in the process and streamlined communication so our members and your everyday passengers have all available information. We welcome continued dialogue and look for to a healthy and sustainable future for Caltrain and thank you for the attention you have put on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JL' with a flourish.

Janice Li
Community Organizer
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition