

Report of the TA Community Advisory Committee

Meeting of January 7, 2025

Committee Actions

- **4a) Amending the Rules of Procedure for the San Mateo County Transportation Authority Community Advisory Committee (approved unanimously, with the addition of the ability to delegate another CAC member to attend Board meetings when necessary)**
 - Giuliano Carlini asked about the Chair and Vice Chair coming to Board meetings. He said that their delegates should also be able to go when necessary. Staff said that this could be addressed through a motion (which was adopted and approved).
 - Mr. Carlini expressed his frustration that the CAC could not influence its own agenda given the goal of the CAC is to provide the Board with a broad base of expertise. Staff said that it spoke with General Counsel and the Board Chair. Staff said that the CAC could make a motion to influence its agenda and there could be a path forward in a limited sense where that would be allowed a few times a year, if limited to TA-specific items. The CAC can make a separate motion asking the Board for this ability. The CAC needs to be following the rules of the Board and the Agenda of the TA. Unlike other CACs, there isn't broad discretion to set its own agenda. This is a committee of volunteers, and these (longer) discussions may impair the ability to recruit and retain new members. The Board has discretion on what the can/not be presented by the CAC.
 - Sandra Lang expressed an interest in making CAC members aware of nominees prior to the election meeting. Staff said that there is flexibility here to provide such information in advance.
 - Mr. Swire applauded the additional structure around the elections. He asked for examples of items that the CAC can add to the agenda "as required by law." Staff said that emergency changes are sometimes allowable, per the Brown Act, if approved by two-thirds of CAC members. It is a narrow exception, however.
 - Ms. Lang asked whether "urgent" matters qualified for this exception. Staff said that is not the case; only emergencies qualify.
 - Rich Hedges asked whether CAC Members could answer questions from the public. Staff said that under 1 and 2, Members can answer questions on projects. Mr. Hedges said that City Councils often say that new items will be put on subsequent agendas.
 - Mr. Swire expressed concern that the CAC is not able to provide input to the Board on its agenda in a timely manner. Staff said that the CAC reports go to the Board several hours prior to the Board meeting. Mr. Swire said that he understands that the report only goes to the Board one hour in advance. Staff said that it is up to the Board to determine whether they are getting enough time with the reports. Mr. Swire said that the CAC shouldn't hold up its report based

on the timing of other reports. Staff said they will ask the Board whether this timing works.

- Mr. Carlini asked whether CAC Members could still present their personal views in the community. Staff said that on your own time and dime you can speak on your own behalf but need to make that clear.
- **4a+) Additional agenda motion**
 - The Committee voted unanimously to ask the Board to allow the flexibility for the Committee to add items to its agenda a few times per year.
- **4b) Election of 2025 Chair and Vice Chair**
 - The Committee voted unanimously to postpone elections until the subsequent meeting.

Consent Calendar - all approved unanimously

- **5a) Approval of Minutes of the CAC Meeting of December 3, 2024**
- **5b) TA Board Item 9.b Acceptance of Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the Period Ending November 30, 2024**
- **5c) TA Board Item 9.c Awarding Contracts to AppleOne, Inc., COGENT Infotech Corporation, Domain Experts Corporation, and InterSources, Inc. for On-call Full-cycle and Sourcing Recruitment Services for an Aggregate Total Not-to-exceed Amount of \$500,000 for a Five-year Base Term, with up to Two Additional One-year Option Terms**
 - Nheeda Enriquez asked for details on the services provided in these contracts. Staff said that the contracts concerned hiring of new or hard to fill positions (although there are none at this time).
 - Mr. Hedges that these contracts were common in public agencies given the difficulty in hiring locally due to the cost of living.

Other Items

- **3) Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**
 - No public comments
- **5d) TA Board Item 9.d - US 101 Express Lanes: Quarterly Update on Variable Rate Bonds and Express Lane Performance (no vote necessary)**
 - Mr. Carlini asked about year over year data on express lanes performance. Staff said that they are working on this with the JPA (San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority) and will come up with a more comprehensive analysis of the performance of the express lanes.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether they would begin charging for High Occupancy Vehicles of 3+ (HOV-3). Staff said that the toll bridges were doing this, not the local express lanes. He also asked why average tolls were increasing. Staff did not have the information and will ask for an answer.
 - Mr. Hedges said that the bridges have always charged for HOV-3.
 - Mr. Carlini asked whether a 7 percent year-over year increase in express lanes trips meant a 7 percent increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Staff said that

this isn't necessarily true. Staff said that the increase in trips was only on the express lanes, not on all 101 trips. VMT wouldn't increase if the increase in express lanes traffic was coming from general purpose lanes or other roads. Mr. Carlini said that given the general purpose lanes are congested and that the express lanes were slowing to their minimums, this would suggest that the network VMT was increasing, too.

- Karen Kulkin said that GP lane users might be moving to the express lanes, thus VMT wouldn't increase, even if express lane trips increase. Mr. Carlini said that this shouldn't be the case if express lane pricing increases. Ms. Kulkin said that the express lanes work very well when used as design. Mr. Carlini said that based on his experience, one user's experience wasn't indicative of overall usage.
- Mr. Swire asked whether the project was "working well", i.e., that the Express lanes were reducing congestion for the average user. Staff said that the heat maps demonstrate that there is less congestion on 101 today. Mr. Swire said that the heat maps are static and thus don't show changes over time. Staff said that the heat maps were improving vs. prior to the project. Mr. Swire said that the CAC has asked for that data several times. Staff said that they will provide this data in the future.
- Mr. Hedges said that the intent of the express lanes was to keep speeds at 40 miles per hour. Staff indicated the threshold was 45 miles per hour.

- **6) TA Board Item 7.a - Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of December 5, 2024**

- Mr. Swire said that he and several members of the community presented a ghost bike in memory of the death of Andrea Vallebuena on Holly Street in San Carlos. He said that the reason that they presented to the Board was to promote safety. According to a member of the City of San Carlos City Council, the Holly Street Pedestrian/Bike Bridge project ceased with the widening of US 101. He thanked the Board for their positive response. The ghost bike is located on the south side of the 101 overpass on Holly Street.
- Karen Kulkin said that, not to diminish the meaning of the presentation, but on numerous occasions the TA reached out to the City to try to work through the project but that repeatedly the City has been hooked into the idea of that bridge instead of less costly alternatives they could have entertained. She encouraged CAC members to reach out to staff for that history. Mr. Swire agreed that TA staff had made this claim; he said that the City of San Carlos, including the Mayor, had said something to the contrary. Ms. Kulkin said that of course the (San Carlos) Mayor was going to say that because she didn't want to get sued. Mr. Swire said that it was the prior Mayor, Councilmember Dugan (not the current Mayor). Ms. Kulkin said that she was sure they were going to say that in a very defensive way. Mr. Swire said it wasn't a defensive comment. Mr. Swire advised against getting into a he-said/she-said, he was simply repeating the claim. Staff said that we need to be careful of the Brown Act.

- Mr. Carlini asked whether the review of the Board minutes could be part of the CAC's consent agenda. Staff said that this could happen. Chair Arietta said she understood the suggestion but didn't think this would save much time.
 - Ms. Lang said she hopes the Board reads Member comments. Staff said that several Board members mention that they do read them ahead of the meeting.
- **7) TA Board Item 5 - Adoption of 2025 Legislative Program**
 - Mr. Hedges asked whether the TA has unspent federal funds. Staff said that there are small earmarks that are not in any danger. Mr. Hedges said that in 2016 the Trump Administration withdrew \$3.9 million from high-speed rail. He said that money needs to be allocated and ready to spend or it will be lost.
 - Mr. Ohtaki said that the state budget is showing a surplus for this year and asked whether this will change the TA's strategy; can we use this for grade separation? Staff said that they will be aggressive no matter what. Last year the focus was getting back what they were promised. This year's budget is still somewhat in the air. The TA will still ask for more money, although the surplus won't necessarily be used on transportation.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether the legislative program addressed potential legal challenges to converting general purpose lanes to express lanes. Staff said that they decided not to include that language to avoid pre-supposing an option for the express lanes project. Staff said that there may be evolution in the flexibility of interpretation of the laws here. Mr. Carlini suggested that we advocate for these changes.
 - Mr. Carlini said he was disappointed that the Legislative Program is very specific, but it doesn't specifically address mode shift, given climate and safety issues. He would hope that we advocate for moving away from private vehicles. We should consider this next year.
- **8) TA Board Item 6 - Legislative Update**
 - Ms. Lang asked about tax extenders; staff will look into this. Ms. Lang asked about the continuing resolution uncertainty and whether Rep. Mullin's earmark will survive. Staff said that it is uncertain but is currently in the bill. She also pointed out that Senator Becker is now the Chair of Energy, Utilities, and Communications.
 - Mr. Hedges commented that Assemblymember Berman's committee position is powerful.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether Congressman Mullin had sponsored an earmark for Holly Street; staff was unaware of an earmark request for the project. Mr. Swire asked whether the TA's strategy changes given the change of administration and Project 2025's focus on highway expansions and potential opposition to transit and active transportation. Staff said that they are being strategic in information provided in grants - e.g., whether to focus on equity vs. jobs. State and other funding opportunities exist for transit.

- Mr. Hedges asked whether Lifeline money for the County is based on equity criteria and whether it is thus in danger. Staff said that City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) and SamTrans get these funds primarily from the state, not the feds.
- **9) TA Board Item 14.a - Strategic Plan 2025-2029 Final Plan and Promotional Video**
 - Mr. Swire said that he was disappointed with the Strategic Plan video as it didn't provide an accurate representation of how the TA spends its money. There are lots of pictures of bikes and trains (while the funding is not primarily spent on these programs).
- **10) Report of the Chair**
 - Chair Barbara Arietta said that the Caltrain Board of Directors voted to adopt a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) at its November Board meeting. The CIP represents a significant agency-wide initiative, developed with input from member agencies, cities and the general public in San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties. The plan outlines capital investment through Fiscal Year 2035. It includes over 110 capital projects led by Caltrain, alongside more than 30 projects developed in partnership with regional agencies and Caltrain local communities. The range of projects will include:
 - Improving safety at "at grade" crossings.
 - Installing an improved security camera throughout the corridor.
 - Completing the replacement of the Guadalupe Bridge.
 - Replacing the 123-year-old San Francisquito Creek Bridge.
 - Upgrading Caltrain's Fiber Optics System, the Predictive Arrival Departure Systems and the Rail Operations Control System.
 - Initiating the Level Boarding Program.
 - To accomplish all this, Caltrain will use a prioritized framework to rank projects outlined in Caltrain's Mission Statement: Safety, Reliability, Accessibility, and Sustainability. This will help Caltrain to efficiently prioritize the projects most vital to its service and the communities it serves.
- **11) Member Comments/Requests**
 - Mr. Fox expressed concern with e-bike safety and licensing and mentioned that several municipalities in Marin and elsewhere are taking action.
 - Gus Mattammal said he was happy with passage of the new CAC rules of procedure, and we should have a clean election next month.
 - Chair Arietta looked forward to a fair election next month.
 - Mr. Ohtaki said that Brightline train service in Florida and Southern California might provide lessons for our rail agencies. Construction was fast and ticket prices are affordable. Our experience with high-speed rail has been different and ticket price estimates are increasing.

- Ms. Enriquez said that there will be a listening session on the Holly Street overpass in San Carlos on January 8. She hopes that CAC Members can attend.
- Mr. Swire said that the focus of the San Carlos meeting will be on quick build solutions. He thanked TA staff for their assistance. He recently walked the overpass and noticed several shortcomings that offer quick fixes. He also said that on January 21 the San Mateo City Council will consider removing two-year-old bike lanes in favor of more parking. He said that 2,000 kids go to school there. Also, this raises the issue of whether cities can reverse projects that received grant money. Staff said that thankfully the TA did not fund that project (which received Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant funding).
- Mr. Hedges mentioned that the Brightline project was built on existing right of way and is older technology. He recently went to Los Angeles (LA) to visit light rail and other projects; he said that LA is well-positioned given stable, dedicated transportation funding sources and federal grants. Trains were packed, but several people didn't pay for tickets. He also paid tribute to John Rubin who served on the Caltrain Board for San Francisco and made a difference on the Peninsula.
- Mr. Carlini thanked TA CAC Secretary, Jean Brook, for her service to the CAC. He said that many e-motorcycles are already illegal but that we need more people not driving to school. He mentioned the Executive Director's letter to the Honorable Toks Omishakin. He was concerned with the proposal of more express lanes involving widenings and potentially increasing VMT. He said we should be trying to limit VMT and should be prioritizing projects that lower VMT, per Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure.
- Ms. Lang thanked Ms. Brook. She said that the death of Andrea Vallebuena on Holly Street was upsetting. We audit our finances and budgets, but there is little oversight on safety on our overpasses. She said this will happen again up and down the Peninsula. We need a review of our on-ramps. Staff said that cities are responsible for the safety projects. Staff said that the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 will enable more TA technical support for the cities, but cities need to make these projects a priority. In addition, the TA is requiring third-party design reviews to ensure that projects meet safety standards.

- **15) Date/Time of Next Regular Meeting: February 4, 2025, 4:30pm**