



Item No. 1 Town of Atherton

RAIL COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

TO: RAIL COMMITTEE

FROM: ROBERT OVADIA, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2019

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION REGARDING FUTURE TRAIN SERVICE IN ATHERTON, TOWN RAIL POLICY MODIFICATIONS, AND STATE LEGISLATION REGARDING HOUSING ALONG TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss and provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding rail service options at the Atherton Caltrain Station, and potential modifications to the Rail Policy in Atherton.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, Caltrain launched the development of its 2040 Business Plan with a goal of addressing the future potential of their rail service over the next 20-30 years. The Business Plan is intended to assess the benefits, costs, and impacts of different service visions and ultimately build the case for investments and a plan for implementation. Caltrain discontinued weekday train service at the Atherton Caltrain Station in August 2005. Weekend service at the Station continues.

The Caltrain Modernization Program (CalMod) includes electrification and other projects that are intended to upgrade the performance, efficiency and capacity of Caltrain service along the service corridor. Construction of the electrification project has begun along the corridor, including the installation of pole foundations in Atherton. Caltrain intends to begin passenger service with electric trains in early 2022. Previously, Caltrain had committed to resume weekday service in some form with the implementation of their electric passenger train service. This service commitment is echoed in its environmental documents for the electrification project.

The Caltrain Business Plan projects a demand of up to 240,000 riders per day in 2040, including approximately peak passenger ridership of 8,000 – 10,000 for the northbound AM/southbound PM commute. To meet this demand, Caltrain forecasts that they would need to operate eight 10-car trains or twelve 8-car trains per hour, per direction. This projection does not include High-Speed Rail capacity to serve the demand. Caltrain developed seven service concepts ranging from twelve (12) to sixteen (16) trains per hour per direction, inclusive of four (4) HSR trains per hour per

direction. Caltrain presentations have indicated headways of a little as two minutes in each direction during peak periods.

In May 2018, the Council adopted Resolution 18-11 rescinding and replacing Resolution 15-10 titled “A Resolution of the City Council of the Town of Atherton Establishing and Governing Town Committees” including an attachment of the City Council’s adopted Rail Related Policy Issues. The Rail Committee, at its December 4, 2018, meeting recommended the following changes to the Rail Related Policy Issues for consideration by the Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting on January 16, 2019:

Town Priorities Regarding Caltrain Line

The Town recognizes that successful implementation of the Town’s rail corridor priorities with Caltrain require a partnership with Caltrain. To that end, the Town will endeavor to work with Caltrain to address the following priorities for the Atherton Station and Rail Corridor:

- Caltrain must restore *full* weekday service.
- Caltrain must complete a capital project to remove the “hold out station” in Town.
- *Ensure any long term corridor rail plan limits two tracks through Atherton.*
- Modernization of the rail system must minimize and fully mitigate any environmental impact to the Town.
- The Town seeks to ~~perfect~~ *add on the Watkins Avenue Crossing to* the Quiet Zone within the Town through the addition of Quad Gates at the Watkins Avenue crossing ~~and upgrading the Atherton Station~~. These measures require the support and partnership of Caltrain.

The Rail Committee met in Joint Session with the City Council on January 9, 2019, to discuss the Caltrain Business Plan, potential service levels at the Atherton Caltrain Station, as well as the Rail Policy. At the meeting, the Council requested that the Rail Committee consider the joint discussion held, the feedback of the Council and provide the City Council with a recommendation on amendments to the Rail Policy that reflects desired service levels at the station (which could range from weekend only, restoration of weekday service, or elimination of service). It is anticipated that any recommendation from the Rail Committee for revision of the above Rail Policy section will be presented to the Council for consideration at the February 20 Council Meeting.

Further discussion was held at the Joint Meeting in relation to State Legislation that addresses housing development along the transportation corridor. California and the San Francisco Bay area are experiencing a shortage in housing and affordable housing. According to the League of California Cities, State housing officials estimate that 180,000 homes need to be built each year to keep pace with population growth. Over the past decade, on average, less than half that number have been constructed annually. Legislation has passed and continues to be discussed at the State level and more recently at the regional level to encourage housing, particularly high-density housing, along transit corridors and near transit stations. The Council asked that staff return with a recommendation to form an Ad Hoc Council Committee to meet and work with State and Regional Elected Officials and address the Town’s concerns and opportunities for housing along the transportation corridor. Formation of this Ad Hoc Committee will be presented to the Council for consideration at the February 20 Council Meeting.

ANALYSIS

Caltrain Service Considerations

Changes in the current service could have both positive and negative impacts in the community. The following summarizes some of the issues and concerns that should be considered in recommending service changes:

- Increased service will likely need to be supported by ridership –
 - Restoration of weekday service without adequate ridership support may be discontinued at a future date by Caltrain.
- Parking –
 - The station currently shares parking with the Town's Civic Center. With weekend only service, the parking needs are not coincident.
 - The Town Center project will reconfigure Dinkelspiel Station Lane and will significantly reduce the amount of available parking in the Town Center/Station area.
 - Station parking demands will be moderately linked on the type and level of service provided.
 - Parking will need to be actively managed such that it does not overflow into the surrounding residential streets.
- Traffic –
 - Resumption of weekday service will likely add to peak-hour demand at certain critical locations, particularly:
 - Middlefield Road
 - El Camino Real
 - Marsh Road
 - Fair Oaks Avenue – Middlefield Road to El Camino Real
 - Watkins Avenue
 - Fair Oaks Avenue and Watkins Avenue will also be impacted by additional gate down times as train service along the corridor is ramped up over time.
- Shuttle Service / Bicycle Parking –
 - Traffic and parking demands can potentially be offset with shuttle service and bicycle parking
 - Appropriate pick-up and drop-off locations will need to be provided
 - Adequate bicycle parking for increased demand should be planned
 - Funding for any shuttle service will need to be identified
- Equity Concerns –
 - Atherton residents pay various taxes towards regional transportation, including Caltrain Service. Though service is available nearby, weekday service is not currently available to Atherton residents. Providing service would provide a more direct link between taxes paid and services received.
 - Atherton residents living along and near the corridor live with the various impacts of being near a rail line (train noise, horns, vibrations, etc.) and do not have direct access

- to commuter service in Town. Some residents may have purchased their properties while weekday service was operating or with the anticipation of service resumption.
- Resumption of weekday service may increase the burden and impact on Atherton residents resulting from increased development in the surrounding communities related to traffic.

Housing Along Transportation Corridors

Though not under the purview of the committee, legislative proposals to address housing needs in the State and in the region are encouraging development around transit stations and along high-quality transit corridors. Though information regarding State housing efforts are provided due to their tangential linkage to transit, **discussion should be centered on service at the station**, which may be tangentially linked to housing policies. The Council will be considering establishment of a Subcommittee to discuss various legislative housing proposals and how they may be implemented in the Town.

One legislative proposal, SB 50, defines a “high-quality bus corridor” as a corridor with fixed route bus service meeting **all** of the following criteria:

- 1) Average service intervals of no more than 15 minutes during the three peak hours between 6am to 10am, inclusive, and the three peak hours between 3pm and 7pm, on Monday through Friday.
- 2) Average service intervals of no more than 20 minutes during the hours of 6am to 10am, inclusive, on Monday through Friday.
- 3) Average intervals of no more than 30 minutes during the hours of 8am to 10pm, inclusive on Saturday and Sunday.

Review of current bus service by Committee Member Keh, indicates that service along both El Camino Real and Middlefield Road do not currently meet the criteria set in SB 50 for a high-quality bus corridor.

Suggested Service Options for Consideration:

- 1) Retention of weekend only service (+/- every 1.5 hours each way)
- 2) Add weekday service hourly all day
- 3) Add weekday peak hour service only either 30 minutes or hourly
- 4) Add weekday service every 30 minutes during peak plus hourly during non-peak
- 5) Closure

Rail Policy

As noted above, the Rail Committee provided the Council with suggested revisions to the Town’s Rail Policy (noted above in Background). The Committee has the opportunity to revise its suggested revisions subsequent to the Joint Meeting discussion.

FISCAL IMPACT

None at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

None.