



By John Ciccarelli

# bikes on board

## CALTRAIN "BIKES ON BOARD" PROGRAM

**Caltrain is a 110-km (70-mile) passenger rail line** connecting San Francisco with Silicon Valley. Caltrain accommodates a total of 24 bicycles on all trains and 48 on some — the highest capacity in North America — offering the door-to-door convenience of a car throughout a 900 square km (350 square mile) area. Trains operate from 6am to midnight, with several per hour at commute times and hourly service at most other times.

### Cost, Funding, and Revenue Impact

San Francisco County contributed \$30,000 in State Transportation Development Act funds for the design, fabrication, and installation of the first onboard racks, which created a capacity of 12 bicycles per train. Caltrain's operating budget increased capacity to current levels. By attracting customers who would otherwise drive, the program repaid its startup costs within six months and is now a revenue source. Ridership increased over 7% recently and some attribute 4% to cyclists. There are now over 1,500 cyclist boardings each weekday, and advocates expect demand to continue rising.

Carrying bicycles also saves transit operators hundreds of thousands of dollars annually because cyclists bring their own "shuttle". (By contrast, about 20 "free" shuttle bus lines log about 2,500 daily boardings, requiring subsidies on the order of \$50,000 per line (\$1 or more per ride)).

### Parties involved / Public involvement

The Counties of San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara have owned the line since 1992 and oversee it through a Joint Powers Board composed of elected officials. Amtrak operates the system. An August 1992 meeting attended by over 200 people led to a pilot program with capacity of 4 bikes per train and the formation of Caltrain's Bicycle Advisory Committee. The BAC meets at least quarterly, includes cyclists from each county plus staff and conductors, and has helped to develop racks, printed materials, and policies. Caltrain's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) expressed crucial early support for bicycle accommodations.

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition ([www.sfbike.org](http://www.sfbike.org)) and Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition ([www.svbcbikes.org](http://www.svbcbikes.org)) were instrumental in gathering support from individuals and employers. The recently formed Mid-Peninsula Bicycle Coalition (<http://blue-room.com/MPBC/>) supports bike access in San Mateo County.

The "caltrain-bikes" Internet list is a forum for resolving problems and generating ideas. At least one conductor participates, and staff follows the discussion.

### Critical step

A Bicycle Advisory Committee is essential. Support from large employers helps considerably because each represents hundreds of customers.

#### contact

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#### other examples

##### THE WWW.BIKEMAP.COM WEBSITE

LISTS OVER 170 NORTH AMERICAN TRANSIT SYSTEMS THAT CARRY BICYCLES. EXAMPLES INCLUDE BART (BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT, [www.bart.org](http://www.bart.org)), WASHINGTON'S METRO SUBWAY ([www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com)), AND BOSTON'S MBTA SUBWAY ([www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com)). THE CYCLISTS TOURING CLUB SITE (<http://www.ctc.org.uk/trains.html>) LISTS BICYCLE ACCOMMODATIONS ABOARD ENGLISH RAIL SYSTEMS.

#### contact

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#### contact

##### THE GLOBAL CYCLING NETWORK

([www.cycling.org](http://www.cycling.org)) HOSTS THE CALTRAIN-BIKES, BART-BIKES, AND BIKES-N-TRANSIT LISTS.



Bicycle access to BART, CA