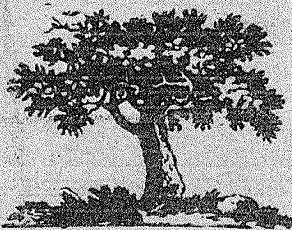


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Endangered species?



THIS BRAND NEW TRAIN may be an endangered species if the familiar rail line cannot be extended into San Francisco and is—instead—pushed farther from the center city where commuters want to go. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission is holding hearings this week and next which

could spell life or death for CalTrain; it is balancing the transportation desires of every transit agency in the nine Bay Area counties before recommending which projects will get federal money. See story on page 3.

Tenuous tower

The carillon at Christ Episcopal Church has been ravaged by termites and woodpeckers

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Housing for the rest of us

Menlo Park's city council puts the finishing touches on a new ordinance to provide "affordable" housing

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Break for burnt-out priests

Each fall and spring, Catholic priests from around the world come to the Vatican II Institute for spiritual rejuvenation

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Countdown for commuter railroad

Is CalTrain on track for success — or oblivion?

BY MARION SOFTKY

"Bayshore's completely tied up. There's a big rig crosswise at Silver Avenue. It's blocked in both directions," Arthur Lloyd of Portola Valley says complacently.

We are speeding along comfortably at 70 miles per hour on our way to the city aboard the 7:23 train from Redwood City.

At 8:04 a.m. we pull into the CalTrain terminal at 4th and Townsend—on time again. "CalTrain runs 98 percent on time," Mr. Lloyd says. "I've only been seriously late eight times since 1951—that's more than 15 minutes late."

Mr. Lloyd, who has been commuting to work on the train almost continuously for more than 35 years, is an enthusiastic booster of the Peninsula's endangered rail passenger service.

He's knowledgeable too. A lifelong train buff and railroad professional, Mr. Lloyd is director of public affairs for Amtrak, the national rail passenger service, for the 11 Western states "and El Paso." He also chairs the SamTrans Citizens' Advisory Committee and serves on the CalTrain Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Mr. Lloyd is worried that the Peninsula's only rail transit system is threatened. Hearings this week and next may determine whether CalTrain will improve and expand or wither and die. "If you lose the service, it's a traffic diasaster. You'll dump 16,000 people on the freeway," he says.

The key is whether the line can be extended farther into San Francisco

where most people want to go. A recent report by Hill International concludes that CalTrain could increase its ridership from 16,000 trips per day to more than 70,000 by the year 2000 if the station is moved from 4th and Townsend to the Transbay Terminal at First and Mission streets.

The threat is that San Francisco may succeed in getting it moved still farther out to make way for the giant Mission Bay development. "I'll violently oppose moving it to 7th and Channel because that is a death knell," said Mr. Lloyd.

Originally the train was supposed to go downtown, Mr. Lloyd noted. The Southern Pacific office building was built in a U-shape to accommodate the trains. But a "temporary" station was built at 3rd and Townsend in 1915 for the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Then, what with World War I and the Depression, "SP never spent the money."

The temporary station remained where it was for 60 years until 1975, when it moved a block farther away—and lost 10 percent of its ridership. "I know from experience that any time you set up a transfer, you lose 50 percent of your business," he said. "I feel the ridership could more than double by going downtown."

The basic problem is money. The cost of extending and upgrading the service would be \$502 million—or \$657 million if the public pays for undergrounding it through the Mission Bay development. ("If they want it undergrounded, they should pay the \$150 million," Mr. Lloyd argued.)

This money cannot be raised locally;

MTC hearings on new rail starts

San Mateo County officials and CalTrain supporters will be testifying at three public hearings on new rail projects for the Bay Area.

The hearings before the executive committee of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), will be held: Thursday, Dec. 10 at 11 a.m. at San Francisco City Hall; Friday, Dec. 11, at 1:30 p.m. at the Santa Clara County supervisors chambers, 70 W. Hedding St., San Jose; and Wednesday, Dec. 16, at 11 a.m. at the Metrocenter, 101 8th St., Oakland.

The full MTC will take action on the committee's recommendations on Jan. 28.

Letters and resolutions may be sent to Chairperson Doris Kahn, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 101 8th St., Oakland, CA 94607.

it requires matching federal and state funds. To get in line for these funds, the railroad project must get approval from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)—in competition with every other transit project in the Bay Area.

On Dec. 10, 11, and 16 the MTC's executive committee will hold three hearings around the Bay Area to hear the

desires for new transit projects.

"There is a tremendous competition among the 17 transit agencies in the nine-county Bay Area," said Mr. Lloyd. "It boils down to the five-letter word: money. And the administration is anti-public transportation."

Meanwhile, commuters talk quietly, read newspapers, look out the window or snooze in the comfortable new cars as the train whisks them into the city. Mr. Lloyd still has an old friend who comes aboard at San Mateo. Three others who used to share the trip have retired.

The worst delay—and the only serious accident he experienced in his years of commuting—was in the '60s. A contractor laying some pipe was too close to the passing commute train, he recalled. The pipe hit the locomotive, swung around, and then skewered a passenger car lengthwise. Four people were killed.

Even so, trains are slightly ahead of airlines for safety and way ahead of the automobile. "The big killer in this country is the automobile," Mr. Lloyd comments.

He keeps coming back to what a good service CalTrain is. "This car carries 150 people. This six car train that we're on will carry 900 people," he says. Glancing at empty seats, he adds, "It could carry a lot more people. This is the most under-utilized transportation corridor in the Bay Area"—primarily because it "stops a mile short of where people really want to go."

It's also the only mass transit in the Bay Area that keeps showing increases—mostly on off hours, weekends, and

Continued on page 4



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