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DATE: July 28, 2014
TO: Palo Alto City Council and PTC Members
FROM: Stephen Levy
SUBJECT: Caltrain and PA Planning Issues

Some Caltrain Trends

Average Weekday Ridership

The Palo Alto (downtown) station remains the second busiest system wide and shows above average growth since 2010. Interestingly, while the Cal Ave ridership is much lower, the rate of growth exceeds that at the downtown station. Since these are total trips, the number of unique riders is roughly half of the ridership totals. So, for example, the growth of 2,574 boardings at PA represents nearly 1,300 additional riders.

Average Weekday Trips To and From Station

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Growth 2010-14	
						Number	Percent
PA	3582	4028	4664	5469	6156	2574	71.9%
Cal Ave	777	865	1069	1294	1408	631	81.2%
Mt View	3049	3368	3670	3876	4274	1225	40.2%
Total	34120	37779	42354	47060	52611	18491	54.2%

Source: Caltrain

Average Peak Morning Ridership

These trends are interesting and shed light on two discussions—1) the priority for downtown housing and jobs relative to transit and 2) parking and shuttle service relative to ridership trends.

Average MORNING PEAK Weekday Trips to and From Palo Alto Station

	Going North		Going South		Total	
	On	Off	On	Off	On	Off
2010	659	790	161	1399	820	2189
2011	382	826	150	1538	532	2364
2012	726	1037	186	1803	912	2840
2013	746	1333	214	2139	960	3471
2014	820	1493	246	2459	1066	3952
2010-14	161	703	85	1060	246	1763
	24.4%	89.0%	52.8%	75.8%	30.0%	80.5%

The first point to note is that the station is used by many more coming here than leaving from here. In 2014 in the morning peak hour 3,952 riders got off at PA station and 1,066 got on. The number of riders getting off at PA increased by 80.5% since 2010 while the departing riders increased by just 30.0%.

More riders (2,459 in 2014) got off coming from the north than from the south (1,493) but there are large numbers and % increases from both directions.

Potential Implications

Palo Alto is a major destination for jobs for Caltrain morning riders. The increase since 2010 has been 1,763. It would be interesting to know the split between those going downtown, to Stanford and perhaps to other locations. I know that many walk downtown after getting off as I see them but I do not have numbers. Perhaps Stanford has and would share shuttle ridership trend information.

Each of these arriving passengers eliminates a parking demand. It would be interesting to know how the increase in riders getting off at PA compares to job increases in downtown and Stanford.

I had thought the increase on people getting on at PA would have been larger and might have been a larger component of the increase in parking pressure. This looks less likely given the ridership numbers and 1) that PA has the second largest on board bikers (732), 2) some people walk to the station and 3) some are dropped off.

I think these data support the idea that locating jobs near transit is the more effective way to reduce auto commute use while locating housing near downtowns remains the most effective way to reduce non commute travel.