



## Caltrain faces 'existential crisis'

*By Isabella Jibilian, San Francisco Examiner, May 8, 2020*

"Empty platforms. Empty trains. Empty coffers.

"Caltrain is facing a \$71 million deficit over the next financial year, as ridership has plummeted due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Although the railroad received nearly \$50 million in relief through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act — 'funding that so far has stopped the bleeding' — Caltrain should prepare for a looming 'existential financial crisis' staff said at a board meeting May 7.



A southbound Caltrain arriving at San Carlos station

"Transit systems across the nation are facing decreased demand amid COVID-19, but Caltrain's existence is more tenuous than most. Unlike BART and Muni, Caltrain is not funded by sales or property taxes. It depends on fares and parking fees to stay afloat.

"Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and 'shelter-in-place' orders, ticket sales have been down more than 95 percent, according to Derek Hansel, Caltrain's chief financial officer.

"Once shelter-in-place orders are lifted, revenues won't necessarily bounce back. Some riders will choose to commute to work via car as a means of maintaining social distance. Some workplaces will not open; [some will] encourage their employees to continue to



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telecommute. [And] maintaining social distance on public transit will be difficult and expensive.

“In the short term, Caltrain’s hopes are pinned on receiving more aid. The CARES Act will distribute a second round of funding, though Caltrain’s share has yet to be decided.

“In the longer term, board members and staff are considering turning to tax revenue to supplement the farebox, by placing a \$108 million measure on the November ballot.”

**[Read the full article here.](#)**