Check Out Caltrain's New Trains Virtually

By Roger Rudick | Oct 9, 2020 | 6 COMMENTS

New rolling stock undergoing water testing last month (that’s one of the real trains above). Photo: CalMod

The first new electric trainsets are set to be delivered to Caltrain next year, but the Peninsula’s railroad is offering riders a virtual experience of what the interiors of the cars will look like.

From the CalMod website:

Experience the future of Caltrain by diving into an immersive virtual reality (VR) experience of the new electric train. Explore three different cars and get a first-hand look of the train’s new features and amenities. See what your future riding experience will be like on the high-performance trains.

Caltrain is offering a limited number of free virtual reality viewers as well.
Caltrain’s first order of new trains consists of sixteen six-car double-decker trains. The contract, which includes an option for an additional 96 cars, is worth $551 million. The new trains should come into service starting in 2022. Between the new cars and the modern electrification currently being installed, Caltrain is poised to become the most modern and advanced commuter rail service in North America.

It’s interesting to see the interiors virtually, but, of course, the real test will be how quietly they run and how smooth they ride in reality. Streetsblog has ridden the Stadler KISS (Caltrain’s new equipment is a variation of this well-tested, off-the-shelf design from Europe) many times and can say there’s no comparison to the janky, diesel-hauled museum pieces Caltrain currently runs. This also represents one of the first uses in the U.S. of lighter-weight European equipment that allows for much better acceleration and lower power consumption. All in all, Caltrain riders should be in for a much better experience in a couple of years.
The virtual tour also includes a good look at the new bike cars, as seen below. These have been a point of contention for bike advocates who want to see more bike space, and with more of that space visible from the seating areas.

Meanwhile, the first ballots are arriving this week for California voters. Streetsblog urges readers in San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties to vote “yes” on Measure RR, a one-
eight cent sales tax that will help fund Caltrain and enable it to run these new trains every few minutes, all day long, like a proper regional rail system.