



August 4, 2010

Mr. Roelof van Ark
Executive Director
California High-speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Dear Mr. van Ark,

We are writing to you in our capacity as partners in the ownership, operation and funding of Caltrain to urge with all deliberate speed the phased implementation of the Peninsula Rail Program, including those projects recommended in prior proposals to the Authority.

We believe a phased implementation of the Peninsula Rail Program is the best approach to achieving the goals of the Caltrain program and building the first operable segment of California's High-speed Rail system.

Phased implementation will mean immediate and long-term improvements to an existing commuter rail system, providing enhancements that will have specific, independent utility for high-speed passenger rail service and will accommodate Caltrain infrastructure elements including electrification of the right of way, advanced signal systems, terminal configuration and grade separations.

Phased implementation will provide a manageable high-speed rail system between San Francisco and San Jose that can meet current and future demand long into the foreseeable future, and provide an infrastructure that will allow growth for generations to come.

Phased implementation will serve as a national model for a network of connected local, regional and statewide systems that truly is a game-changer in the national transportation infrastructure.

Perhaps most importantly, phased implementation of the Peninsula Rail Program will create thousands of jobs – now, not later -- significantly reduce emissions, demonstrate the efficacy of high-speed rail and provide improvements to Caltrain that are essential to the future of the rail system.

Phased implementation is elegant in its simplicity:

- Build an infrastructure that can accommodate the current and foreseeable needs of high-speed rail in a manner that is interoperable with Caltrain.
- Build a modern, electrified Caltrain that represents a quantum leap forward in that historic rail service.

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- Build an infrastructure that can grow as demand grows on both systems.
- Defer until such time as demand warrants the most controversial and disruptive elements of any future design and construction.
- Move forward with additional elements only after subsequent and additional environmental review and extensive public engagement.

The Peninsula rail corridor is uniquely positioned to proceed:

- An existing railway already is in public ownership and is available for shared operation.
- There are key elements of the Peninsula Rail Program that are ready to go, including new positive train control technology that has been acknowledged by the Federal Railroad Administration as a major advancement in safety, as well as significant infrastructure improvements;
- A partnership is in place between the California High-speed Rail Authority and Caltrain and those partners can act in concert to achieve significant economies and squeeze the greatest value out of the public's money.
- The partnership Memorandum of Understanding, entered into in April 2009, specifically anticipates phased implementation of the Peninsula Rail Program, stating, "It is the objective of the parties to incorporate high-speed rail in the Caltrain Rail Corridor on a phased basis."
- Federal, state and regional funding is immediately available to commence final study and design and to begin construction.

In a recent opinion piece in the San Francisco Chronicle, Representative Anna Eshoo suggested that your arrival at the helm of the California High-speed Rail Authority is an opportunity to "hit the reset button" and get a new, fresh start with a community that has been polarized over the prospect of high-speed rail.

We agree that such an opportunity is at hand. Working cooperatively with you, we can advance the long-awaited Peninsula Rail Program.

There is significant support for California high-speed rail service in many of the communities along the Peninsula corridor and the project team has been working productively to address community concerns where they exist.

Over the many months, the communities we serve also have expressed their concerns over the future of rail service on the Peninsula and those concerns can be summed up in a single phrase: Do it right.

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We have heard that message and we believe the vast majority of those who have concerns can be reassured by a thoughtful plan to proceed, a plan that effectively demonstrates the true nature and ability of a fully realized network of high-speed rail and local, commuter rail as envisioned by the Peninsula Rail Program.

Phased implementation is the best opportunity to prove our responsiveness to the legitimate concerns and understandable fears of the communities we serve and to meet the needs of both partners to the Peninsula Rail Program.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you directly to discuss this in sufficient detail that the value of this proposal would be unmistakably evident, and then to proceed at a staff level to put this plan into action.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to years of cooperation, collaboration and partnership in implementing the Peninsula Rail Program improvements for the benefit of residents in the Bay Area and throughout the State of California.

Sincerely,



Michael T. Burns
General Manager
Santa Clara Valley
Transportation Authority



Steve Heminger
Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission



Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr.
Executive Director/CEO
San Francisco Municipal
Transportation Agency



Michael J. Scanlon
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