

July 1, 2020

Scott Haggerty

Chair, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and

Therese McMillan

Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments

Bay Area Metro Center

375 Beale Street, Suite 800

San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

Subject: Support for the Regional Caltrain Downtown Rail Extension in the first plan period of Plan Bay Area 2050

Dear Chair Haggerty and Executive Director McMillan:

On behalf of Friends of the Downtown Rail Extension, a group with a laser focus on “getting the train tracks to the (Salesforce Transbay) train station”, we are writing to express our overwhelming support for including the Caltrain Downtown Rail Extension (DTX) in the **first plan period of Plan Bay Area 2050 covering 2021-2035**, consistent with the Transbay Joint Powers Authority’s project schedule, Caltrain’s Business Plan Service Vision, and California High Speed Rail Authority’s (CHSRA) 2020 Draft Business Plan. As described in the 2018 California State Rail Plan, the DTX project is a critical lynchpin for the entire Bay Area’s regional rail network - extending Caltrain commuter rail from its current terminus at Fourth and King Streets to the Salesforce Transit Center and BART/Muni corridor in downtown San Francisco. The project will deliver future high-speed rail service from Los Angeles to San Francisco as well as serve as the potential first leg of a new Transbay Rail Crossing to the East Bay.

Project Benefits the Region

Once DTX is completed, the Transit Center will bring an impressive number of regional and state transit systems under one roof, linking Caltrain and high-speed rail with nine other transit operators: AC Transit, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SFMTA Muni, SamTrans, WestCAT Lynx, Amtrak, Greyhound, as well as local paratransit service. The project will **close a major gap in the Bay Area’s transportation system** with accessibility benefits for up to 90,000 new and existing Caltrain and high-speed rail passengers in addition to new and existing bus riders by 2040. It **will relieve gridlock on US101/I-80**, one of the most congested corridors in the Bay Area, and anchor growth in one of the region’s most robust and diverse Priority Development Areas, the Downtown SF/South of Market/Mission Bay area. Bringing rail to the Transit Center also leverages the region’s prior investment in the Transit Center and is key to its long-term financial stability, providing much needed relief to MTC and local transit operators who heavily subsidize transit center operations presently. Finally, taking 4th and King off as the terminus will help a terribly undersized station fit into the total picture instead of being stretched way beyond capacity.

Partners Signed MOU—Ready to Go

The DTX is a complex project which requires partnerships among multiple agencies to realize. In May 2020, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Caltrain, CHSRA, the San Francisco’s Mayor’s Office, and SFCTA entered into the San Francisco Peninsula Rail

Program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) creating an integrated program management team to boost project delivery. This team of agencies has committed to examining the project's cost-effectiveness including considering cost reduction, phasing and project delivery strategies and strengthening funding plans to identify an initial operating segment that can be constructed in the next 10-12 years.

With this MOU in place and work commencing, **it is critical that DTX be included in the first period of Plan Bay Area 2050**, from 2021-2035. The DTX received its Federal Record of Decision in July 2019, a major milestone that environmentally clears the project and facilitates its entry into the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts funding program. In addition to providing significant transportation benefits (particularly travel time savings for commuters), the project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 8.5 million metric tons of CO² per year, helping to meet the region's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2035. Significant local, regional, and state dollars have been committed to the project already, including San Francisco tax increment funding, regional bridge toll revenues, and San Francisco sales tax dollars. As one of the region's two New Starts priorities in the regional transit expansion plan, the project is well positioned to make significant progress in the next few years.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to collaborating to improve connectivity for current and future transit riders across the Bay Area region, Northern California mega-region, and throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Friends of the Downtown Rail Extension

Michael Gimbel, Co-Founder of Friends of the Downtown Rail Extension
Thea Selby, former CA High Speed Rail Authority Board Member
Ron Miguel, former President of the SF Planning Commission
Jim Haas, Creator of the SFCTA and a member of the TransBay Area CAC
Bruce Agid, former Chair of the TJPA CAC
Peter Straus, SF Transit Riders Board member and former SFMTA Service Planning Manager
Eric Schattmeier, retired Caltrain employee
Adina Levin, President, Friends of Caltrain
Brian Stokle, Cartographer and Planner

CC:

N. Josefowitz, H. Ronen, E. Ahn - MTC Commission
A. Bockelman, M. Maloney, D. Vautin - MTC
Chair N. Sesay, M. Zabaneh - TJPA
P. Supawanich - SF Mayor's office
T. Chang, M. Lombardo, M. Beaulieu - SFCTA