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April 8, 2024

Brian Kelly, Executive Director
California High Speed Rail Authority

Re: Draft 2024 California High-Speed Rail Business Plan

Dear Executive Director Kelly,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Draft 2024 Business Plan. It is amazing to see continued progress on a statewide effort that will truly transform our future. Congratulations on the significant accomplishments made.

As you know Caltrain is reaching a significant milestone itself. This year, Caltrain will introduce Electrified Service, transforming the 160-year-old railroad into a faster, more efficient and sustainable service. Thank you for your investment and partnership in making this happen.

Looking forward, we are progressing our planning efforts related to the 4th and King station (e.g., the Portal Project, 4th and Townsend station) in the City of San Francisco and Diridon station in the City of San Jose as well as grade-separation projects along the corridor. Your partnership in these project efforts as well as planning for blended system corridor-wide improvements (e.g., level boarding, passing tracks) will be critical to meeting our collective future service goals.

With that context, the following are our comments:

1. While we understand your focus on funding and completing construction and operating the central valley segment, it is important that planning for the bookends is not sidelined. Caltrain corridor projects need to be planned now and advanced at a pace that is timed with high-speed rail arrival. Planning ahead is critical to ensure existing rail services are not negatively impacted when high-speed rail is ready to service the peninsula. We request CHSRA commitment to help Caltrain leverage resources and funding for the bookend projects while the central valley segment is being constructed. Particular funding sources that would benefit from CHSRA support include FRA (and the Corridor ID program) and state grant programs.
2. The 4th and King Station and Diridon Station projects as well as grade separation projects along the corridor are currently being designed. We request CHSRA commitment to work with Caltrain on a blended system context sensitive design criteria to inform project design. This approach will be critical to minimizing impacts along the Caltrain corridor. We are a

built urban environment that cannot broadly support “greenfield” design criteria. It is important to recognize the distinction between the 51-mile Caltrain corridor, which will host the Blended System, and any other part of the future CHSRA system. The Peninsula will require design elements and investments that are completely different than the greenfield segments that make up the vast majority of CHSRA’s Phase I program.

3. CHSRA and Caltrain need to partner and agree on a blended system capital improvement plan. Additional improvements beyond the large projects referenced above will be needed. Partnering with you to develop a CIP, phasing approach and funding plan is necessary to inform future corridor use agreements as well as ready the corridor for future high-speed rail service.
4. We understand that CHSRA is making necessary system decisions to advance and operate the central valley segment. We request CHSRA commitment to coordinate with Caltrain on system decisions, including vehicle procurement, which impacts the Caltrain corridor. Having clarity on what CHSRA system decisions impact the peninsula and addressing those matters with context-sensitive solutions will ensure that we do not compromise future blended system investments and operations.

I look forward to your response and our continued partnership in transforming the California rail network. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



Michelle Bouchard
Executive Director
Caltrain

Copy: Caltrain Board Members
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