SPUR
San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

January 5, 2016

Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. 1st Street
San Jose, CA 95134

Re: Agenda Item 7.2 | Authorization of Funding for the Diridon Station Intermodal Study
(January 7, 2016 Meeting of the VTA Board of Directors)

Dear VTA Board of Directors:

Today, Diridon Station is a regional rail center. With Caltrain electrification, high speed rail, and ACE and Capitol Corridor improvements, Diridon Station could become the busiest train station west of the Mississippi. This means we have to design a station that is as distinctive as those found in great international cities.

SPUR is writing to express our support for moving forward with a Diridon Intermodal Study; to articulate a set of principles that should guide the study; and to recommend steps for a strong public process for this study.

We strongly recommend that the Board of Directors authorize the Diridon Intermodal Study. When we think about great transit stations—New York's Grand Central Station, London's St. Pancras or King's Cross, or Germany's Leipzig main station—we can see grand visions come to life through the smallest details. The Diridon Intermodal Study is an opportunity to get the details right.

The Diridon Intermodal Study should be guided by a set of principles that are realized in the engineering and design processes. **The principles include:**

Riders will enjoy a great transit experience at Diridon Station. In our report *Seamless Transit*, we developed a vision for a seamless transit network, where transit infrastructure would be designed for easy connections between modes and operators. To achieve this vision, the region needs transit hubs that make riders feel comfortable and informed, make transfers easy, and are integrated into surrounding neighborhoods. VTA has the opportunity to build a world-class station at Diridon. This study is the first step in making that happen. From an engineering and design perspective, this means that:

- The terminal will be sized to accommodate growing passenger volumes and avoid crowding.

- Platforms, escalators and concourses will be wide enough to make it easy for travelers to get on and off trains.
- Riders will be able to make intuitive, efficient, and direct transfers between rail services, without having to make extraneous detours.
- Entrances, exits and pathways to transit and amenities will be well marked and easy to find.

Riders will prefer transit. A well-designed station experience will make transit legible and attractive. From an engineering and design perspective, this means that:

- Transit is a primary mode of access to and from the station.
- Parking is managed carefully and comprehensively to ensure that transit and other space-efficient modes of travel are the preferred choice. This means managing availability and price of parking, as well as promoting shared parking arrangements and unbundled parking.
- There will be frequent, high quality pedestrian connections through the station and to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Land uses within the station area put walking, biking and transit use first, and provide a continuous network for these modes.
- Signs and visual queues make it easy for riders to get to other modes.
- It will be easy for riders to find and pay for each leg of their journey.

People will want to spend time in the station, whether or not they are boarding a train. Diridon station will be a terminal, where people spend extended amounts of time. From an engineering and design perspective, this means that:

- The station will have room for a mix of retail, dining and other services.
- Safe and comfortable waiting and luggage storage areas will be available to travelers.
- The station will have well-designed spaces for special events, such as art installations, historical exhibits and private functions.

The Diridon Intermodal Study should address how Diridon station will relate to its surroundings. Diridon Station should be the focal point of a memorable place that is integrated with downtown and nearby neighborhoods. At the same time, the station area should reflect and contribute to the station's regional transit accessibility. From an engineering and design perspective, this means that:

- The expanded station offers iconic architecture and exemplary urban design while also meeting the region's growing mobility needs. High-quality urban design and architecture expertise should be brought in at the start.

- The station is the gateway to, and the face of, downtown San Jose. Its visual impact is important and should be bold.
- The station is sized appropriately and designed to serve the multiple functions of a great train station.
- The station and station area serve as a major hub for high quality mixed-use development befitting to the station's regional connectedness.
- There are frequent pedestrian entrances, paths, and crossings that are safe, wide, visually interesting and intuitive to provide connections to downtown San Jose and nearby neighborhoods.

Finally, we ask the VTA and its partners to develop a transparent and public process that allows people to meaningfully engage with the Diridon Intermodal Study. We encourage VTA to develop a clear process for station design; intermediate products that the public can comment on, including a public notice about the study and its scope; a set of alternatives and evaluation criteria. Ideally, this station design process would take place outside of the CEQA or NEPA environmental processes. Since the study is also a collaborative effort of the Diridon Intermodal Task Force, it would be helpful to delineate which bodies will approve the final work product.

We look forward to working with VTA leadership and staff to create a great anchor for one of the most dynamic rail corridors in the country. Thank you for your review and consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please reach out to 408-638-0167.

Sincerely,

Laura Tolkoff
San Jose Policy Director

cc: Mayor Liccardo, Kim Walesh, Nanci Klein, Jim Ortbal, Reena Brilliot, Nuria Fernandez, John Ristow, Leyla Hedayat, Carolyn Gonot, Ben Tripousis, Casey Fromson