



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

April 15, 2016

Attn: Draft 2016 Business Plan
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California High-Speed Rail Draft 2016 Business Plan

Dear California High-Speed Rail Authority,

This letter is intended to express SPUR's strong support for the 2016 CAHSRA Draft Business Plan. In particular, we support plans to make the initial operating segment between Bakersfield and San Jose, and we support the California High-Speed Rail Authority's commitment to work with its partners to make the most out of this incredible investment in the Bay Area's future.

SPUR is a non-profit urban policy think tank with offices in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland. SPUR is an early supporter of High-Speed Rail and the emphasis to put stations in city centers. We have authored numerous policy reports and articles about how the Bay Area can make the most of this critical investment in California's future, including [Beyond the Tracks](#), which focused on land use planning and [Getting High Speed Rail on Track](#), which argued that California can and should fund high speed rail even without significant additional federal investment.

SPUR strongly supports bringing an initial operating segment to San Jose, with service continuing on to San Francisco. Developing service to San Francisco should also happen as soon as possible, due to the importance of this market and this link to the entire statewide high-speed rail system. SPUR believes that high-speed rail is not just a worthwhile investment but a necessary one. Successfully building and initiating service on the first segment to San Jose will be the best option to grow public confidence in High-Speed Rail. Additionally, having one operating segment provides much needed learning opportunities for every aspect of high-speed rail operations.

High-speed rail will have a profound and transformational impact on the Bay Area. Some of the many benefits include:

- Strengthening regional intercity rail, such as Caltrain and BART.

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- Saving travel time and reducing congestion as travelers shift from auto and air to rail.
- Making the Bay Area, the Central Valley and Southern California seem closer together by making travel between the regions faster and easier, which shifts the competitive structure within which people and firms make decisions.
- Providing economic opportunity to cities in the Central Valley by enabling their cities and economies to be better linked with each other and with metropolitan economies on the coast.
- Relieving airports of some of the expected growth in their local services, enabling the use of limited slots by longer-distance services.
- Providing an armature for the state's population and job growth.
- Reducing pollution and helping to meet statewide climate change goals.

But to realize the full benefits of high-speed rail in the Bay Area requires a real commitment to intermodality and an appropriate land use response around each station. The Bay Area transit experience is that too many compromises were made with station design, station access and integration with surrounding neighborhoods. High-speed rail is an opportunity to do better. To be successful will require new and better partnerships between cities, transit operators, high speed rail and local businesses, civic groups and other actors.

Below, we articulate some of the key opportunities and challenges SPUR suggests focusing on as you implement this business plan in the Bay Area. We have are emphasizing the Diridon Station and Station area, given that it high-speed rail's gateway to the Bay Area and it is a city major decisions lie ahead in the next 18 months.

Diridon Station

Today, Diridon station is a regional rail hub. But in 2025, Diridon Station will have the largest concentration of public transit west of the Mississippi, bringing together the first operating segment of high-speed rail, BART, Caltrain, Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail and buses, the Altamont Commuter Express and Amtrak Capitol Corridor. Altogether, there will be at least 1,500 trains and buses running through Diridon station on an average weekday.

To develop the station and station area successfully, we encourage High Speed Rail to continue to work with its partners to achieve the following:

- *A clearer source of funding for long-range planning.* The city's long-term fiscal strain has shrunk its capacity do the sustained and intensive planning and

implementation work that are required for an opportunity of this magnitude. New resources to continue this work are necessary.

- *An effective governance structure to complete the station and oversee high-quality land use development.* There are multiple transit operators at Diridon station, each with different real property and service interests. There are also many property owners and a large amount of parcelization within the Diridon station area. Special attention to governance will be needed in order to deliver a world-class intermodal station at Diridon and a transit-oriented station area.
- *Careful management of new development to ensure the limited development capacity is not underutilized.* A high water table and the proximity to the Mineta International Airport and related aviation policies constrain building heights to 130-feet. It will be critical to make the most of every site. Too much parking could harm the walkability of the area and limit ability to achieve an appropriate land use response.
- *Creation of a multimodal station access plan that supports connections to downtown San Jose and nearby neighborhoods.* Diridon station is a 15-minute walk to downtown and ringed with the most historic and walkable neighborhoods in the city, but there are poor connections between these places. Public transit at Diridon station is more likely to be successful if there are multimodal connections to downtown and nearby neighborhoods.
- *A high quality of urban design commensurate with ambitions of the transit program.* The Diridon Station Area Plan (completed in 2014) includes design guidelines. However, these are largely aspirational and do not have the same standing as code. A walkable urban place will not emerge without significant attention to urban design.

Millbrae Station

While not in the core of a major downtown, the Millbrae high-speed rail station is of major importance to the entire network and an opportunity for a significant land use response. But this will only happen with forward-looking policies around land use, station design and station access. Millbrae will be the only station in the entire network with the ability to connect between High Speed Rail, Caltrain, BART and the San Francisco International Airport, the second busiest airport in California and the seventh busiest in the United States. The station area could accommodate office, hotel, convention, retail, and other airport-oriented uses as well as residential.

SPUR recommends that CAHSR work with the City of Millbrae, BART, SFO and Caltrain to establish the policies and station design guidelines that will appropriately shape the development and planning around Millbrae station. Given that high-speed rail is not yet in Millbrae, it will be important to plan for the area's long-term growth opportunity and not to consider today's market conditions a key indicator of what is possible. In some cases, it might be necessary to say no today to land uses or development that undervalue the opportunity (such as lower-density residential). As we look at the future of transportation, particularly on-demand services, using valuable sites for structured parking should be discouraged.

Transbay Transit Center and Extension of Caltrain to Downtown San Francisco

The completion of the Downtown Extension of rail to the Transbay Transit Center (TTC) will be a critical step in the success of CAHSR. SPUR supports CAHSR's investment in this project and recommends continued cooperation with all partners to ensure that this project is funded and completed as soon as possible. We support continued discussions on how to achieve level boarding heights throughout the corridor and maximizing the interoperability and throughput at the TTC.

In addition, we recommend that the Authority continue to support a more integrated and seamless transportation network in the Bay Area by working closely with partners on the following:

Caltrain Electrification and the Blended System

In the blended system between San Jose and San Francisco, Caltrain and high-speed rail share tracks and stations. This an opportunity to provide convenient rail services to riders while also reducing costs and community impacts. SPUR supports continued planning and funding cooperation needed to make the blended system a reality.

SPUR recommends that the blended system consider a schedule and service quality for Caltrain that attracts new transit riders in the corridor and also provides good connections with high-speed rail trains. We support investment in incremental infrastructure such as passing tracks and station improvements (beyond what is contemplated in the Blended System Operations analysis). These may be necessary to achieve a high level of service to Peninsula rail customers. A fully blended system will also need a thoughtful multi-agency strategy to prioritize grade separations in this corridor.

Network Integration

In order for High-Speed Rail to be connected to other transit and sustainable modes, integration across modes is essential. Implementation of the business plan should include:

- The implementation of shared ticketing/payment systems between high speed rail and local transit, bikeshare, etc;
- The integration of non-auto access such as easy bike access and bike storage;
- The integration of transit service planning between high-speed rail and local transit. A pulse system should be designed for reliable connections between the statewide rail network and local transit.

In conclusion, SPUR supports the 2016 Draft High-Speed Rail Business Plan and looks forward to working with the Authority to ensure that high-speed rail supports great urbanism and strong connections between California's cities.

Sincerely,



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