



**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

Hon. Mayor Liccardo and City Council  
City of San Jose  
200 E. Santa Clara Street  
San Jose, CA 95114

*Submitted Electronically*

March 30, 2017

**Re: Diridon Station Plan and Regional Rail Projects Study Session (March 20, 2017)**

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

As you know, SPUR has launched a multi-year project looking at the ways to maximize the transit and city-building opportunities around Diridon Station. We've hosted charrettes with city and its partners, written several case studies including one on Toronto<sup>1</sup> and one on Rotterdam.<sup>2</sup> We have been vocal in our support for high-speed rail<sup>3</sup> and Caltrain electrification, and have weighed in on major decisions such as where the downtown San Jose BART station should be located.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past few months, city staff has been working to build collaborative relationships carefully with VTA, the California High-Speed Rail Authority, Caltrain and BART. This collaboration is invaluable and essential for the success for Diridon Station. However, collaboration is not enough.

Today, we urge Council to direct staff to work with their partners towards a governance structure that will set up San Jose to reap the rewards of major investments in transportation infrastructure. **The governance structure should, at a minimum, address: 1) land use and large-scale station development, 2) transit service planning and integration, and 3) financing.**

1. **Land Use & Large Scale Development:** Station area land is valuable and finite. The development potential around the station area is limited due to its proximity to the Mineta International Airport and the one-engine-inoperative (OEI) restrictions. Each square foot needs to be maximized in order to achieve our goals for economic

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<sup>1</sup> Lessons for Diridon: Revitalizing Toronto's Union Station. <http://www.spur.org/news/2016-12-20/lessons->

<sup>2</sup> Lessons for Diridon: Rebuilding Rotterdam Centraal Station. <http://www.spur.org/news/2016-09-22/lessons-diridon-rebuilding-rotterdam-centraal-station>

<sup>3</sup> Getting High Speed Rail Back on Track. <http://www.spur.org/publications/urbanist-article/2012-07-10/getting-high-speed-rail-track>

<sup>4</sup> Where to Put the Downtown San Jose BART Station: Go West. <http://www.spur.org/news/2017-01-26/where-put-downtown-san-jose-bart-station-go-west>

development. Due to the diversity of public and private ownership interests, we do not have a way to comprehensively assemble, manage and dispose of land to maximize development around the station. Therefore, we need binding design standards to create dense, transit-supportive development. And we need to be intentional about balancing growth in a way that achieves significant employment, destination-oriented uses that bring people to the station area and are inclusive of a robust civic culture and diverse population.

2. **Transit Operations, Service Planning and Integration:** Diridon needs round-the-clock transit service in order to support the type of growth that is planned. Transit service and operations drive station design. We want to have enough tracks and platforms for the number of trains that are anticipated to come through Diridon. This may require passing tracks in some locations and widening the Santa Clara Bridge. These questions must be resolved before we can appropriately answer questions about the space requirements and design of the station.
3. **Financing:** Remaking Diridon is about more than high-speed rail, BART, and electrified Caltrain. To make Diridon successful, we will need to build well-designed public spaces, significantly improve the pedestrian and bike network, and create a central station hall. All of these are currently unfunded. Revenue is needed for these public investments that synergistically create added financial value for the private sector and create a more dynamic urban place that will reap rewards for San Jose.

Yesterday, SPUR opened an exhibition to inspire visionary thinking and build public support for this ambitious and transformative endeavor. The exhibition looks at best practices and cautionary tales from stations and cities around the world.

We looked at places like Lyon, where they built a new high-speed rail station and added major employment uses on a 230-acre unused military base around the station. Thirty years later, Lyon is the second largest employment center in France, second only to Paris. If we take make the right land use choices that take advantage of our unparalleled accessibility, San Jose can be a greater economic powerhouse too.

And we looked closer to home at places like Denver, where they faced the reality that they didn't have enough funding they needed, Denver and their partners created a solution that involved a unique federal funding package and a significant amount of private investment for the project as a whole. The station re-opened in 2014, has become a major destination and has spurred significant redevelopment in the area (over 20 projects completed or under construction today). If we work together to overcome obstacles, we can do that too.

The time is now to think about the right governance structure that will allow for the best decisions and transformative outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important study session. This is the most significant city-building project that San Jose has ever undertaken, and it will shape San Jose and the South Bay for the better part of a century.

Sincerely,



Teresa Alvarado  
San Jose Director