



# SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

June 6, 2018

Board of Directors  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)  
3331 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
San Jose, CA 95134

**Re: Item 7.1 and 7.2 – San José Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) Plan Cooperative and Funding Agreements and Master Services Agreement.**

Dear VTA Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan and corresponding joint partnership agreement. **SPUR strongly supports VTA, the City of Jose, Caltrain and the California High Speed Rail (CAHSR) Authority entering into a cooperative agreement as a first step toward joint planning and governance of San Jose’s central station, Diridon.**

SPUR is a non-profit, member-supported organization that promotes good planning and good government. We have been a leading voice helping to shape the transformation of Diridon Station, the station area, and downtown San Jose. One year ago, we organized a study trip to rail stations in France and the Netherlands for a dozen elected officials and decision-makers to draw lessons on what it takes to build a seamless, high-quality state and regional rail network that supports and enables great urban places.

This is an unprecedented opportunity in the United States. It is critical for project partners to start with a clear and comprehensive vision that captures the needed types of mobility and service quality, the type of place the station and the station area must become, and how the station will support civic activity and promote public life.

In our vision, Diridon becomes a great urban train station and gateway to the Bay Area, providing people with fast, frequent, all-day and seamless access to transportation systems that lure them out of their cars (or other car-centric transportation systems) and get them where they need to go. The station is an active public space, seamlessly connecting people to the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown San Jose that thrive from round-the-clock activity where residents and visitors enjoy walking to meet their daily needs and experience a dynamic urban center.

This outcome will be the direct result of partners who’ve developed a clear and comprehensive vision, leaders who’ve taken risks in aiming high and a governance structure that was set up with the driving mission of creating the best transit system possible.

We believe the DISC plan is an excellent first step to achieve the following.

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### **1. Think beyond today's constraints to co-create a world-class station.**

We commend the ways in which agency leaders and staff are already working together. To make the most of this effort during the planning process requires the partners to look at the station-related work that has been done so far with fresh eyes and with a long-term view. Current plans and assumptions for future transportation systems at the station should prioritize the user's experience. The partners and their teams, including VTA and BART's staff working on the extension of BART to downtown San Jose, have the chance to sit at the same table and reconsider all designs that are enclosed in the station area.

Phase 1 of the integrated station concept plan gives the partners their best chance to design the infrastructure that supports world-class transit service and the highest quality user experience, both designed to convince people to use transit.

### **2. Build a structure that sustains the vision of the project through political and economic cycles.**

We support the concept plan's guiding principles. We agree that the planning approach must treat the station as one urban and transportation project and one place; design transit and station infrastructure for future capacity needs; enhance connectivity between the services; and maximize the traveler experience. We believe that the cooperation agreement shows the willingness of today's leaders to build a shared, bold and long-term vision for the project.

However, planning by multiple agencies is complex and sustaining a unified vision over time will be the challenge.

A long-term commitment to joint planning and implementation is needed. We foresee two critical steps in that commitment: an immediate coordinating team of experienced partners who will create the vision, design fast and efficient decision-making protocols and develop financing plans to secure the delivery of the vision; and, a long-term governance model that will fully authorize and execute the partners' and community's ambitions. These two steps will be critical to ensure that the commitment of today's leaders will be sustained to full realization.

### **3. Ensure that the visioning process fosters broad community engagement.**

There have been cases in which the station and station area plans did not enjoy broad support and were initially rejected (such as in Rotterdam). We don't have the luxury of time or money to start over. This plan needs to enjoy broad support in order to be adopted, implemented and embraced. The partners should be ready to talk about their vision for the project as one cohesive project team and act with one voice.

Creating a specific venue to talk about **all** aspects of the vision (transportation, land-use, urban design and economic development) will be critical. SPUR recommends an extension of the existing multi-stakeholder Station Area Advisory Group process initiated by the City of San Jose as a logical engagement strategy to support the DISC effort.

SPUR is pleased to support the cooperative agreement and looks forward to being closely involved as a thought-leader, engagement partner and champion for realizing a bold vision for Diridon, San Jose's central station.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Teresa Alvarado". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Teresa Alvarado  
San Jose Director

cc:

Nuria Fernandez, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
Brian Kelly, California High-Speed Rail Authority  
Jim Harnett, Caltrain  
Jim Ortbal, City of San Jose Department of Transportation