



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

July 8, 2020
Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board
1250 San Carlos Ave.
San Carlos, CA 94070

Re: JPB Board Meeting- Item 11

Dear Chair Pine and Members of the Caltrain Joint Powers Board:

Thank you for your ongoing work to evaluate governance options to evolve the organization to deliver on its ambitious long-range service vision and to a better service to riders. A major new capital undertaking is often the compelling force behind governance changes.

The Bay Area has unreliable service and poor connections between modes and services; divergent maps, schedules and fares; uncoordinated capital investments leading to both under-building and over-building; and fare policies that make taking transit out of reach for many. In recent months, the outlook for transit's future has become dire. COVID-19 has drastically decreased ridership and revenue. Coupled with a backlog of maintenance and repair needs and mounting pension obligations, our transit agencies are facing a fiscal cliff that will not only result in less service for riders, but--in the case of Caltrain--the very real possibility of ceasing to operate altogether.

The challenges at hand demand a regional response. A coordinated regional response can do more to reverse course, save Caltrain, and create a better future than each agency could by acting alone. To that end, we recommend:

- Advance a ballot measure to reduce immediate financial volatility and sustain the system. There is no certainty that we will see another national emergency package in the near future. A future without high-quality rail service connecting communities along the Peninsula is not a future we wish to imagine.
- Evaluate options for governance reform that deliver mutual benefits for riders and for solving shared regional challenges. The MTC Blue Ribbon Task Force for Transit Recovery is an important venue to evaluate long-term options. Many of the challenges described above stem from attempts to solve shared problems independently. The end result is detrimental for regional equity, access and the financial stability of each agency.

The spirit of collaboration and ingenuity that we have seen from Bay Area transit agencies and MTC during the COVID-19 crisis has been remarkable. We must continue to draw on that same spirit to advance a better future for Caltrain.

Sincerely,

Laura Tolkoff
Regional Planning Policy Director