



**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

July 28, 2020  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr Carlton B Goodlett Pl  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**Re: Items 36 and 37 – Caltrain Sales Tax**

Dear President Yee and San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

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 crisis at hand demands decisive and collaborative leadership. To that end, we recommend:

- **Advance a ballot measure *without conditions* to reduce immediate financial volatility, sustain the system, and implement new policies that advance equity.** There is no certainty that we will see another national emergency package in the near future. We are concerned that a ballot measure with an uncertain expenditure plan will not pass, jeopardizing people's mobility and our economic recovery. A future without high-quality rail service connecting San Francisco, San Jose and communities along the Peninsula is not a future we wish to imagine.
- **Outside of the measure, pursue governance reforms that deliver mutual benefits for riders and solve shared regional challenges.** The MTC Blue Ribbon Task Force for Transit Recovery is an important venue to evaluate long-term options. Many of the problems we face in transit stem from the persistence of a system in which each agency works to solve shared challenges 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 the Bay Area's elected officials 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