

SAMTRANS
CORRESPONDENCE
as of 7-17-2020



July 13, 2020

San Mateo County Supervisor Dave Pine, Chair
Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board of Directors
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070

Dear Chair Pine:

Thank you for your efforts to help the Caltrain commuter rail system navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of the pandemic on public transportation are likely to continue for a prolonged period of time. We recognize that Caltrain is particularly vulnerable because, unlike other Bay Area transit agencies, it does not have a dedicated source of revenue. The survival of Caltrain is critical to the region's recovery from the pandemic and to our long-term need for safe, reliable, equitable, congestion-reducing transit alternatives. We urge Caltrain and its member agencies to take the actions needed to place a measure on the November 2020 ballot that will finally provide Caltrain with a dedicated funding source to help it endure this crisis, and eventually expand service to accommodate regional growth.

We were troubled to learn that the allocation of Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds will not be sufficient to cover Caltrain's operating needs, even in the near-term, and that the slow return of ridership could force the system to shut down entirely unless a dedicated source of funding is secured.

In 2017, we worked to pass SB 797 (Hill), which allows Caltrain to place a 1/8-cent sales tax on the ballot as long as it is authorized by the transportation agencies and boards of supervisors in the three counties that Caltrain serves. We have reviewed recent polling showing that this measure is politically viable in 2020. Last year, the Caltrain Board directed staff to evaluate moving forward with this measure. It is clearly needed now more than ever before.

Last year, the Caltrain Board also approved a 2040 Service Vision that would transform Caltrain into a modernized, frequent mass-transit system that carries nearly 180,000 riders, almost three times the current ridership. The implementation of this vision starts with the operation of 8-train-per hour expanded electrified service that will put the equivalent of two additional freeway lanes of traffic on Caltrain instead of our local streets and roads. This cannot be accomplished unless significant new local investment in the system is secured.

A 1/8-cent sales tax would generate enough revenue to make this service a reality. It would also relieve Caltrain's member agencies from their obligation to cover the system's annual operating shortfalls, providing millions of dollars in new revenues to support Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), and San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) transit services at a time when these systems will need it most.

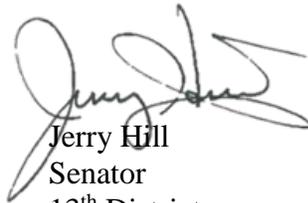
We understand that the Caltrain Board has also made significant progress to evaluate the current management and governance structure. Ultimately, given the size, complexity, and unique structure of the Caltrain system, it is critical for the long-term resiliency of the system that Caltrain eventually become an agency with its own staff — potentially independent of the San Mateo County Transit District — that can focus and specialize solely on the needs of our regional rail commuters. The continued evaluation of reforms that would achieve this should be prioritized. However, given the urgency of this catastrophic funding shortfall, this necessary reform need not be an explicit condition for the desperate need to put a Caltrain dedicated funding measure on the ballot this year. We look forward to continuing to work with Caltrain and the San Mateo County Transit District on this governance reform.

Again, we thank you for all you are doing to position the system to make it through this current crisis and to continue Caltrain's long track record of successfully serving our communities. If we can offer any help to advance this incredibly important effort, please let us know.

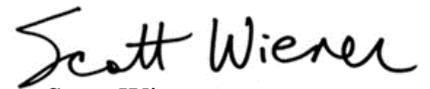
Sincerely,



Kevin Mullin
Speaker Pro Tempore
22nd District



Jerry Hill
Senator
13th District



Scott Wiener
Senator
8th District



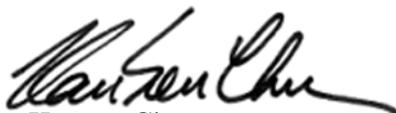
Jim Beall
Senator
15th District



Marc Berman
Assemblymember
24th District



David Chiu
Assemblymember
17th District



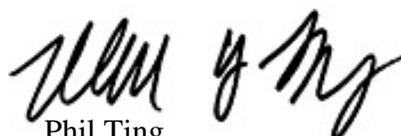
Kansen Chu
Assemblymember
25th District



Ash Kalra
Assemblymember
27th District



Evan Low
Assemblymember
28th District



Phil Ting
Assemblymember
19th District

cc: San Francisco Mayor London Breed
San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo
San Francisco City and County Board of Supervisors
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors
San Mateo County Transit District Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Agency Board of Directors