



July 20, 2011

Adrienne Tissier
Chair, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Chair Tissier:

I am writing to express my deep concern at the continued absence of a clear and positive vision to bring high speed rail up the Peninsula from San Jose to San Francisco and to urge that MTC step into the void and lead a collaborative process to shepherd the process forward. Absent strong regional leadership, I am concerned that the Bay Area is at risk of losing this historic opportunity.

You are, no doubt, all too familiar with the difficulties that the Peninsula project has faced over the past two years and that have now culminated in the California High Speed Rail Authority suspending its work on the Peninsula. In recent months, however, local leaders have begun to discuss variations on a promising new path forward, based on a smaller scale “starter project.” There is much common ground among the framework put forward by Senator Simitian, Assembly Member Gordon, and Congresswoman Eshoo; the Caltrain concept; ideas from San Francisco and San Jose; and even the “phased” approach that the Authority has aired.

The Bay Area Council has had discussion with these leaders, and I see substantial areas of agreement among them and with the Bay Area Council. I believe that there can be broad support for a project that:

- Brings both high speed rail and Caltrain electrification to the Peninsula as soon as possible, by utilizing a simple design that can be funded and built quickly.
- Provides sufficient speed, capacity, and flexibility to support an attractive high speed rail service, while also providing adequate capacity for robust Caltrain service.
- Minimizes community impacts by forgoing construction elements that are not needed in the near/mid-term.
- Connects to the Transbay Terminal.
- Meets legal requirements necessary to access Proposition 1A high speed rail bond funds.
- Is designed such that future upgrades, should they be necessary and desired at a future date, would not require unnecessary disruption or wasteful reconstruction.

Some will have concerns additional to those above, and some might quibble with the precise wording—there certainly will need to be a degree of compromise on all sides in order to reach agreement. But agreement, I am confident, is within our reach.

I am concerned, however, that the Bay Area does not appear to be on a path towards agreement, even with so many of the pieces in place. Our region has always been successful when we speak with one

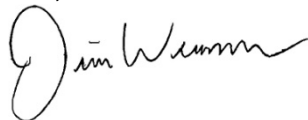
voice, and we have always struggled when we have squabbled amongst ourselves. Currently, our region is speaking with many voices about high speed rail and Caltrain, and the multitude of voices obscures that fact that much of what is being said is consonant. Our inability, as a region, to articulate a clear vision for high speed rail has real consequences: we weaken our support in the state and federal government, we put ourselves at the back of the funding line, and we strengthen those who argue that high speed rail is an impossible fantasy. To succeed at high speed rail and Caltrain electrification, the Bay Area needs to resolve the various project concepts into a single project vision. This is the role that I urge that MTC take on.

The Commission has played this role before: to cite just a few examples, MTC led collaborative partnerships that produced agreement on the high speed rail alignment into the Bay Area, the funding package to sustain Caltrain operations over the next two years, funding for the Transbay Terminal, and design and operational funding for the BART SFO extension. It is entirely appropriate that MTC again serve as the regional convener to guide the development of a consensus Peninsula rail project. In accepting this role, MTC would undoubtedly do a service to Bay Area transportation stakeholders, but I believe that it would also be a service to the High Speed Rail Authority and would help strengthen the statewide project.

For over 60 years, the Bay Area Council has put itself at the service of Bay Area infrastructure improvement, and I cannot think of a project that will have a more significant and longer-lasting effect on this region. Caltrain is a foundational transportation service for the Bay Area, and electrification is its key improvement to meet future transportation needs. High speed rail is *the* signature infrastructure project that will define the Bay Area, California, and even the United States in the 21st Century. I am prepared—more than prepared, eager—to devote the full resources of the Council and our members to make this project a reality and to be an active partner in establishing a vision that has the broad support of Bay Area public officials, business leaders, and residents. The Council is prepared to directly engage stakeholders to explain the process and the project and to build strong and organized support, and we will stay engaged for as long as is necessary to fund and deliver the project.

I hope that MTC will agree to take up this challenge on behalf of the Bay Area. Please feel free to contact me to discuss how the Bay Area Council can help.

Best,



Jim Wunderman
President and CEO