



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 1
File #: 19-899

Board Meeting Date: 9/24/2019

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Dave Pine, District 1

Subject: Request for Support of the Caltrain Long Range Service Vision, Moderate Growth Scenario, and the pursuit of a dedicated revenue source to support the operations and future capital investments in Caltrain

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution supporting the proposed Long Range Service Vision, Moderate Growth Scenario, developed by the Caltrain Joint Powers Authority (JPA), and the pursuit of a dedicated revenue source to support the operations and future capital investment in the JPA.

BACKGROUND:

As the electrification of Caltrain is well underway, and with the anticipation of significant ridership increases over the next 20 years, a vision for the Caltrain service has been developed to allow the system to meet the needs of future riders and the region as a whole. The options for investment explored by JPA staff include baseline, moderate and high growth scenarios for the system, each of which represents incrementally more significant carrying capacity and investment demands.

Under the Long Range Service Vision, Moderate Growth Scenario (Service Vision) recommended by Caltrain's professional staff, fast and frequent service would be the standard on the line every day, all day. Over the last two decades, Caltrain ridership has more than doubled, and today Caltrain serves nearly 65,000 passengers per day, on average. Caltrain is now the seventh-largest commuter railroad in the country.

Over the 2020 - 2040 period of this Service Vision, peak hours would see eight trains per direction per hour operated by Caltrain, with all day Baby Bullet express service every 15 minutes and increased off-peak and weekend services. This vision also includes the opportunity to operate four additional High Speed Rail trains per hour in each direction. This increased frequency, paired with longer trains, has the potential to greatly expand the system's capacity to nearly 180,000 riders per day. The plan envisions end-to-end, electrified service from Gilroy to San Francisco all day in both directions, improving connections for communities all along the line.

The Service Vision would not preclude expanded service to accommodate the high-growth scenario should future conditions require it. The Service Vision would ensure that Caltrain is ready to expand and integrate into a regional rail network over the next 20 years including the expected extension to the Salesforce Transit Center in downtown San Francisco, potential renewed rail service across the Dumbarton Bridge, enhancements at Diridon Station in San Jose, as well as numerous grade separations along the entire corridor. The Service Vision prepares Caltrain for a future shared corridor with High Speed Rail, and considers opportunities presented by a second Transbay crossing in addition to the Dumbarton Bridge crossing, expanded service to the Monterey Peninsula, and investments along the Altamont Corridor Express and Capital Corridor services

DISCUSSION:

The Service Vision will grow ridership substantially and position Caltrain to meet a wide range of eventualities. It also presents a detailed assessment of Caltrain's organizational structure and lays out options for how it can evolve to meet the demands of the system. While Caltrain has over 70% farebox recovery and low administrative costs, and is among the nation's most efficient railroads, the Service Vision reiterates the ongoing need for a dedicated funding source to help provide the resources needed to sustain and grow operations. The discussion about organizational and management considerations is important and should be focused on options that will best prepare the corridor to implement the Service Vision and associated infrastructure improvements. The most significant organizational options are long-term, and many are not options that the Caltrain member agencies can implement without cooperation from other regional entities. Given the long-term nature of these discussions, Caltrain should establish a clear process that reflects the involvement of appropriate stakeholders, and this process should not preclude or interfere with immediate opportunities to secure dedicated funding that is essential to the implementation of the Service Vision.

In 2017, Caltrain secured full funding to complete the electrification of the Caltrain corridor. Electrification is anticipated to be complete by 2022 and will provide the foundation for implementation of the Service Vision. Electrification combined with this vision will help bring more environmentally sustainable commuting to the region, with four million vehicle trips averted each year and an overall reduction of nearly two million metric tons of CO₂. The Service Vision would result in the equivalent of 5.5 new freeway lanes of passengers during peak hours by 2040.

Caltrain staff has made numerous presentations to stakeholders, regional agency partners and to the public about the Service Vision to collect feedback and that has helped to inform this planning effort.

The Caltrain Joint Powers Board will consider the Service Vision at the board's October meeting. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, like the boards in Santa Clara County and the City and County of San Francisco, is being asked to provide direct feedback.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

Approval of these actions will contribute to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of Collaborative and Safe Community by advancing a project that will provide regional benefits to San Mateo County residents.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no net county cost