Memorandum
From: Staff
To: XCAP
Date: January 23, 2020
Subject: Agenda Item #3: Presentation and Discussion with Sebastian Petty of Caltrain

The list of questions generated by the XCAP Caltrain Working Group are attached to this memo (Attachment 3a) and were previously distributed at the January 15, 2020 XCAP meeting.

In addition to the list of questions, Mr. Petty will also cover the Council-adopted Criteria of “D: Support continued rail operations and Caltrain service improvements” with the XCAP.

Lastly, the XCAP Chairperson asked that the following reference links also be shared with the XCAP in preparation of this discussion in addition to Attachments 3b and 3c to this memo.

- The latest business plan update that mentions total 8 trains in each direction per hour is in this document (pages 34-78): http://www.caltrain.com/Assets/__Agendas+and+Minutes/JPB/WPLP+Committee+Agenda+Packet.pdf
Note: I am going to try to chair this meeting so that Sebastian isn’t answering every question everyone has ever had related to Caltrain - and instead is focused on answering questions we have as XCAP members that we feel we’d really need to understand in order to make formal recommendations. I will reiterate that, similar to the consultants, Sebastian Petty and Caltrain are going through their own planning exercises and many answers might end up being - we don’t know yet but we’re working on it. I also understand, however, that some folks need to understand Caltrain a bit better - so we need to leave some space for folks getting up to speed.

With that in mind, are these questions what we need to know to make a decision?

Caltrain operations now
1. Is there any reason that Caltrain can’t increase schedules to 6 trains/hour in each direction before electrification is complete, to alleviate overcrowding and standees on many trains?
2. Why doesn’t Caltrain run more midday service now?

Electrification Construction Schedule
1. Is the overall electrification project on schedule? If not, what is the new estimated completion date?
2. What are the risks to the schedule?

Caltrain Operations After Electrification
1. According to best information, current Caltrain funding is sufficient for new EMU trainsets to replace only 75% of the current fleet. Is this true? How much of the current fleet of diesel engines and diesel-hauled coaches will remain in operation to support current schedules? Are there any plans to get funding to replace the remaining 25% of the diesel engine and coach fleet with EMU trainsets?
2. How is mixing diesel and electric expected to impact the schedules in the short term and does this delay more frequent midday service until Caltrain is fully electrified?
3. How much of the current fleet of engines and coaches will be needed to cover a service increase to 6 trains/hour/direction? Are there any plans to get funding for the additional EMU trainsets needed?
4. How will diesel-engine powered trains affect overall schedules as headways are reduced, since diesel engine powered trains cannot accelerate or decelerate as fast EMU trainsets?
5. How many years until the current EMD F40-PH2 or the MPI MP36PH-3C engines reach end of life? Will they be replaced with new diesel engines or with EMU trainsets?
6. We know Caltrain plans to run more trains once electrified and the Business Plan shows Caltrain will run much more frequent all day service in the future. When will Caltrain release information of
what happens in the in between (2023 - ?) When might midday service significantly increase? We are trying to understand when we will “feel the pain” of gridlock - so any understanding of even the process to determine the service post 2023 is helpful.

Passing Tracks in South Palo Alto
1. What is our contingency plan if we need passing lane(s) in Palo Alto? How do we get some more definitive information about four-tracking requirements from Caltrain?

2. Caltrain has said they would like cities to select an alternative that doesn’t “preclude” four tracks - which of these options doesn’t preclude 4 tracks: viaduct, hybrid, trench, tunnel?

3. Can we overlay any possible future four-track passing sections against the current maps of alternatives?

4. If passing tracks are required as part of a grade crossing separation design, will Caltrain pay for the incremental cost of design and construction? Ongoing maintenance?

5. Will Caltrain share costs for a four-track alternative, in advance of when Caltrain would actually need to use the passing tracks?

6. How could a trench or a viaduct be widened to accommodate 4 tracks?

Business Plan and Overall Planning
1. Does Caltrain intend to develop a comprehensive plan for replacement of all the grade crossings between San Francisco and San Jose?

2. Does Caltrain intend to develop a funding mechanism to support such a comprehensive plan?

3. Are there state and local agencies that we can work with better so that we are all planning a regional solution rather than a town-by-town solution?

4. In the absence of a comprehensive plan, does Caltrain intend to provide assistance to crossing elimination projects, city by city?

5. On average, what percentage of funding have cities contributed to grade separations in the past? What was the main source of funding for these grade separations historically? Has any tax measure ever been raised just to pay for grade separations (and not other general transit capital projects)?

6. Are there any legal requirements for Embarcadero grade separation to continue to include a Stanford stop (if changed in the future for any reason)? Who is responsible for Stanford Station? Does the City or Caltrain have an arrangement with Stanford that must be considered? Are there any scenarios contemplated in Caltrain’s business plan service vision that continue to provide service to the Stanford station?

7. If a viaduct or a tunnel is built, can the City have amenities, such as bike paths, as part of an easement, or would all of the land be controlled by Caltrain. If there are no amenities, is Caltrain accountable to control weeds, graffiti, etc.?

8. If existing tracks are removed for viaducts or tunnels, will Caltrain create bike paths? If not, what is the intended use of this space?
9. Is there anything that regulates how long of a stretch between crossover switches? Is there a requirement for the maximum spacing in miles between crossover switches?

10. Are there any large projects that are in the works but have not been completed that might change the technical requirements (like 1% grade) on the Caltrain corridor in the future in a way that could impact our decision? For example, is there a plan to remove freight that is in the works but has stagnated? What is the likelihood of any surprises through the design review process (re Caltrain, etc.)?

11. Has Caltrain developed standards for tunnels that have only electric trains (same standards that will be used for going into TransBay terminal)? If not, when are they expected?

12. How will Union Pacific (or a future short line operator) operate trains on a 2% grade? More power on each train, or shorter trains? What would be the noise impact of more power or engines operating at full throttle on a 2% grade?

13. Will Caltrain be ready to speak about Union Pacific Railroad exceptions related to freight?

14. For design exceptions such as 2% vertical grades, is the City required to negotiate with Caltrain, or can the City negotiate directly with Union Pacific RR?

Documents for Chantal to give to XCAP prior to meeting:

1) Letter from Caltrain to HSR re: who pays for passing tracks if/when HSR comes to the Peninsula
2) Letter from Mayor Sam Liccardo and former Mayor Ed Lee asking UP to consider requiring a short-line operator to allow 2% grade
3) Excerpt of Caltrain Organizational Assessment (starting page 89) describing the two entities Caltrain is considering for dealing with Grade Separations
4) Do we have some document that is an “guide to Caltrain” for newbies that might be useful for XCAPers to read before the meeting? Something that explains the board make up and how they don’t have dedicated funding in a succinct and readable way??
August 22, 2019

Brian Kelly, Chief Executive Officer
California High Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: High-Speed Rail Preferred Alternatives in Northern California

Dear Mr. Kelly,

The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB) appreciates the ongoing, collaborative effort our agencies are engaged in to plan for the successful development and operation of a Blended System in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Authority’s completion of project-level environmental clearance describing the infrastructure needed to introduce High Speed Rail operations into the Bay Area is an important step in this ongoing process and we congratulate the Authority on reaching the important milestone of identifying Preferred Alternatives for high-speed rail in the areas it has defined as the “San Francisco to San Jose” and “San Jose to Merced” project sections.

This letter serves both to indicate Caltrain’s concurrence with the staff recommendation at this stage in the Authority’s environmental process as well as to affirm our perspective that significant further planning and agreement between our agencies will be required to successfully advance the implementation of the Blended System in the Bay Area. This letter briefly describes Caltrain’s rationale for our concurrence with the staff selection of a Preferred Alternative in each project section and highlights areas where we anticipate that additional coordination and discussions will be required. Please note that this letter is narrowly focused on the Authority’s selection of Preferred Alternatives from among the options studied in each project segment and is not intended to provide a detailed assessment or comment on the Authority’s overall plans. We anticipate writing a more comprehensive comment letter at such time as the full draft environmental documents for the “San Francisco to San Jose” and “San Jose to Merced” segments are released.

In the “San Francisco to San Jose” project section, which includes the majority of the JPB-owned corridor, our teams have worked for the last several years to jointly evaluate various service plan and passing track options. Based on that analysis, we are in agreement with the Authority that prototypical blended service plans similar to those previously studied as part of the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project EIR/EIS, and included in the “baseline” scenario of our Business Plan, can be operated on the mainline infrastructure included in “Alternative A” of the Authority’s environmental analysis (infrastructure that assumes no new mainline passing tracks).
We note, however, that the Caltrain Business Plan has demonstrated that additional infrastructure, including passing tracks, may be needed both in order to expand rail service over time as well as to allow for the operation of a wider range of alternative blended service patterns on the corridor. As the corridor owner and manager, Caltrain anticipates the Authority’s full support and participation in the process of planning for and implementing future passing tracks and overtakes that may be used in Blended operations. These ongoing collaborative efforts will lead to the processes and agreements by which the implementation and operation of both systems’ improvements can proceed apace.

In the “San Jose to Merced” project section, we are supportive of the Authority’s selection of Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative as that is the only alternative that helps expand the electrification of the Caltrain service south of Tamien Station to Gilroy. The Business Plan considers the electrification of this corridor and the provision of improved service to South San Jose and the rest of Southern Santa Clara County as a significant priority for the railroad and we appreciate that the design of Alternative 4 has been developed in a way that would make that service possible.

While we are supportive of the selection of Alternative 4 for the reason indicated above, we do note that this alternative has significant and complicated implications for the blended operations of both High Speed Rail and Caltrain systems from CP Coast in Santa Clara, through the Diridon Station and south to Gilroy. This southward extension of the blended system is a significant departure from many aspects of the planning and agreement work undertaken previously by our agencies. We look forward to continuing discussions and analysis related to this alternative, both within the context of the Authority’s environmental process as well as in relation to ongoing negotiations between the State and the Union Pacific Railroad, the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan, and our own process of interagency planning and agreements.

Since the landmark agreement in 2012 that set us on the path to develop a blended system, significant investment from the High Speed Rail Authority as well as from our other regional, state and federal partners is already helping transform our corridor and service through the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project. We again congratulate the Authority on its designation of preferred alternatives for the San Francisco to San Jose and San Jose to Merced Segments, and we look forward to continued partnership between our organizations as we move forward in planning shared investments and delivering enhanced rail service to our customers, our communities, our region and our state.

Regards,

Jim Hartnett

cc: Boris Lipkin
    Michelle Bouchard
    Sebastian Petty
October 9, 2019

Ms. Adina Levin
Friends of Caltrain
3921 E Bayshore Rd
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Re: Preferred Alternative for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section

Dear Adina:

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback on the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Preferred Alternative for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section. Friends of Caltrain has been a valuable member of our Community Working Groups and we look forward to continuing to work with members of your organization.

In your letter, you raised concerns about the relationship between the Authority’s proposed project that is undergoing environmental review and other planning efforts including the Caltrain Business Plan and the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan.

The Authority has been working collaboratively with Caltrain to plan, evaluate, and develop the blended system since 2012. Caltrain in 2015 completed environmental clearance for the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP). After completion of the PCEP environmental clearance, the agencies worked together to develop and assess the infrastructure needed to add high-speed rail service to the corridor in addition to those previously-evaluated and adopted plans by Caltrain. That work (along with substantial input from other stakeholders) resulted in the two alternatives under study in the San Francisco to San Jose project section.

Our efforts have taken place concurrently with Caltrain’s development of a business plan to lay out a long-range vision for the corridor and the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (both of which are ongoing). These efforts are important planning work for the future and are still evolving meaningfully. The Authority’s environmental documents will take both of these efforts into account but they will both require separate environmental clearance at the time that they are further developed, finite and stable.

The Authority’s efforts will not preclude either the Caltrain Business Plan or the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan from moving forward. Additionally, we
plan to stay actively engaged and to work collaboratively with Caltrain and our other partners on the development and long-term plans for the rail corridor between San Francisco, San Jose, and Gilroy. I am attaching Caltrain’s letter to the Authority that lays out some of those future collaborative steps while also concurring with the Authority’s identification of the Preferred Alternatives in Northern California.

As all of these efforts continue to advance, we look forward to an open and frequent dialogue with Friends of Caltrain.

Sincerely,

Boris Lipkin
Northern California Regional Director