

December 7, 2023

Hon. Chair Alfredo Pedroza
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

Hon. Chair David Canepa
Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

Dear Chair Pedroza and Chair Canepa:

We are writing today to express our concern regarding proposals to consolidate Caltrain with other transit agencies. MTC's recent and sudden efforts related to this concept, including conducting polling related to this issue without even consulting Caltrain leadership, lacks transparency and broad stakeholder engagement. This entire subject is disruptive, distracting, and divisive.

Efforts are underway to define and build support for a 2026 regional transportation funding measure which would provide agencies with sustained financial support. The regional measure will require near unanimous consensus among stakeholders to fund campaign activities, recruit volunteers to conduct voter outreach, and attract high profile endorsements as part of a comprehensive campaign to gain approval from voters. It will take a strong and unified coalition, committed to benefitting all transit agencies in the Bay Area and devising pragmatic, sustainable solutions to address rider concerns.

Caltrain is also nearing an exciting transformation. Next year, the agency will launch a fully electrified zero-emission commuter rail service between San Francisco and San Jose. Public, private, business, transit, and non-profit sector leaders have worked together to advance Caltrain Electrification, which will increase frequency, improve speed and reliability, and reduce noise and air pollution impacts on local communities.

Our priority lies in uniting our efforts towards ongoing recovery initiatives and effectively implementing the recommendations detailed in the Transit Recovery Task Force. We are confident that this is the best approach to fostering a cohesive and impactful passenger experience throughout the region's transit systems.

Thus, we ask MTC leaders and staff to prioritize the establishment of a Regional Network Manager and focus on their commitment to supporting state efforts related to SB 125 and the Transit Recovery Task Force. These, and other existing policies, programs, and solutions have the potential for meaningful improvements to transit agency operations and the passenger experience.

We are not supportive of Caltrain consolidation with another agency, as it would impose significant upfront costs and provide no clear benefits for Caltrain riders. This distraction could impede progress at a time when our focus should be on advancing recovery efforts and fulfilling the promise of electrification.

Thank you,

Nadia Naik, Co-Founder, Californians Advocating for Responsible Rail Design (CARRD)
Amy Buckmaster, President & CEO, Chamber San Mateo County
Rosanne Foust, President & CEO, San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA)

CC: MTC Commission and Andy Fremier, Executive Director, MTC
Caltrain Joint Powers Board and Michelle Bouchard, Executive Director, Caltrain
SamTrans Board and April Chan, General Manager & CEO, SamTrans
VTA Board and Carolyn Gonot, General Manager & CEO, VTA
Sean Elsbernd, Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor London Breed, Jeffrey Tumlin, Director of Transportation,
SFMTA, and Tilly Chang, Executive Director, SFCTA