

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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March 15, 2013

MS STACY COCKE – SENIOR PLANNER
PENINSULA CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS BOARD (CALTRAIN)
PO BOX 3006 – 1250 SAN CARLOS AVENUE
SAN CARLOS CA 94070-1306

CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW SCOPING COMMENTS ON THE NOTICE OF
PREPARATION (NOP) FOR THE CALTRAIN PENINSULA CORRIDOR
ELECTRIFICATION/BLENDED SERVICE PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
REPORT (EIR)

Dear Ms. Cocke:

City of Mountain View (City) staff has reviewed the Peninsula Corridor Joint Power Board's (Caltrain's) Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Caltrain Peninsula Corridor Electrification/Blended Service Project (Project) dated January 31, 2013. The Project proposes to electrify the Peninsula Corridor from the San Francisco Caltrain Station at Fourth Street and King Street to approximately two miles south of the Tamien Caltrain Station in San Jose (51 miles), convert from diesel-hauled to electric multiple-unit trains, increase service up to six Caltrain trains per peak hour per direction by 2019, and provide electrical infrastructure that will be compatible for a future blended Caltrain/High-Speed Rail service.

The City requests the following concerns and topics be fully analyzed and addressed during the environmental review of the proposed Project.

GENERAL

Executive Summaries. The EIR should include an Executive Summary for each City along the Peninsula Corridor, which includes localized Project information, summarizes project impacts, and lists proposed mitigation measures to each affected City in an easily accessible and readable format.

Mitigation Measures. The EIR should identify mitigation measures where Project implementation is expected to have a significant impact. Mitigation measures should

be fully discussed, including financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities, and lead agency monitoring.

Infrastructure Impacts. The EIR should analyze how the Project may impact existing City infrastructure systems (roads, sidewalks, trails, sewer, water, stormwater, etc.), existing utilities (cable, fiber, electric, gas, etc.), and proposed and planned City capital projects for these systems, and should identify appropriate mitigation measures.

Project Ridership. The EIR should provide information on how projected Caltrain ridership numbers for the Castro and San Antonio Stations compare to existing travel along the Corridor in Mountain View, including any new information regarding ridership and demand model.

Caltrain Stations. The Project proposes to increase service from five to six trains during peak hour in each direction. The EIR should analyze how the existing Castro Street and San Antonio Road Stations will be impacted by the additional trains, including the need for longer/additional platforms, ensure transit services and street grid serving the stations are maintained, and how increased number of passengers will be accommodated at the stations and then dispersed to their desired locations throughout the City.

LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION INTEGRATION

Avoid Dividing the Community. The Caltrain Corridor already creates a physical and visual barrier to the movement of pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles in the community. Residential and commercial areas exist on both sides of the Corridor and the free flow of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles is essential to maintain a connected community. Over the years, the City has mitigated some of the impacts of this barrier through investments in improved bicycle and pedestrian connections across the rail corridor, but much more can and should be done. Improving connectivity across the rail tracks must be considered as part of Project's analysis and EIR process.

The City is concerned that the Project will include additional visual and physical barriers that will further divide the community. The EIR should identify and analyze the impacts of visual and physical barriers that may be proposed as mitigation measures and avoid such structures that appear to or actually divide the community.

Land Use Growth Assumptions. The EIR should provide the methodology and data sources for land use growth assumptions, including the City's 2030 General Plan growth assumptions, recently constructed projects, and projects in the planning stages

growth assumptions, recently constructed projects, and projects in the planning stages along the Mountain View Corridor. The EIR should also analyze how the anticipated growth in the North Bayshore (NBS) Area will be serviced by the Project. Both existing and projected NBS Area ridership and service levels for trains, buses, shuttles, etc., should be provided.

CASTRO STREET/MOFFETT BOULEVARD AREA

The heart of Mountain View is a vibrant, historic downtown with a successful multi-modal Transit Center adjacent to the Castro Street/Moffett Boulevard at-grade crossing of the Corridor. The potential impacts of the Project on the City's downtown may be significant. Castro Street/Moffett Boulevard is a major north/south arterial for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. Public, commercial, and residential uses are along Castro Street and Moffett Boulevard near the Corridor.

Economic/Gateway Impacts. The City's 2030 General Plan has identified Moffett Boulevard as an important gateway into the downtown area. The EIR should consider the impact of the Project on the gateway status of the Moffett Boulevard/Castro Street/Central Expressway intersections, and the Project should not detract from potential gateway improvements and opportunities in this area.

Downtown Historic Resource. The 100 Castro Street block includes a number of historically significant buildings. These buildings are valued by the community and contribute to the charm of downtown Mountain View. On the Moffett Boulevard side of the Corridor, the Adobe Building (157 Moffett Boulevard) is also an historic resource that the City renovated for community use. The EIR should consider the impact of the Project on historic resources and the Project should not adversely impact the historic setting of the 100 block of Castro Street or the Adobe Building.

Downtown Circulation. The City's downtown street network provides convenient and accessible vehicle and bicycle access in an interconnected grid system of streets. This grid system disperses traffic throughout the grid with multiple access points, ensuring relatively free-flowing traffic. Beyond Castro Street, many downtown streets are narrow residential streets and residents are sensitive to increased traffic volume and speed. Downtown residents and businesses depend on easy pedestrian access to businesses throughout the downtown and across the Corridor and Central Expressway. The EIR should consider the impact of the Project on the downtown Mountain View network and the Project should not disrupt the flow and access of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles in the area or create other adverse impacts to residents and downtown businesses.

Caltrain Station and Service Integration. The existing Downtown Transit Center and service are a vital component to the City's existing transportation system. The station includes stops for Caltrain, Caltrain Baby Bullet, VTA Light Rail, VTA buses, and private shuttles. Maintaining the level of service at the Mountain View Transit Center, both during and after construction of the Project, is essential to the City. The EIR should consider the impacts of the Project on the various transit services, including existing shuttles and expected growth in shuttles provided at the Downtown Transit Center, the current and planned 2014 and 2017 VTA Light Rail Train Efficiency Improvements, and the Project should not adversely impact the convenience or level of service of the station.

Downtown Caltrain Station Parking Lot. The 330-space Caltrain parking lot is full by 8:00 a.m. every weekday morning. Spillover parking can have significant negative impacts in the surrounding neighborhood. Additional parking is urgently needed for transit service to flourish. The EIR should consider the impact to the existing Downtown Caltrain Station parking lot and develop measures to mitigate negative impacts to the station as well as the surrounding neighborhood. The Project should preserve the parking lot for a future parking structure. The City has funded and entered into a contract with VTA for their consultants to perform environmental clearance and preliminary engineering for a parking garage at the station. The track alignment should not prohibit construction of the parking garage and should integrate it into the design of any station reconfiguration.

Traffic Analysis. The Project proposes up to six trains during the peak hour in each direction. The additional trains will cause more gate downtime along the roadways intersecting the tracks. The impacts of the Project need to be fully analyzed and mitigated. All roadways that would be impacted by the additional traffic delay need to be fully analyzed, including Central Expressway, Castro Street, Moffett Boulevard, Evelyn Avenue, Villa Street, and other nearby residential streets.

RENGSTORFF AVENUE AREA

The City performed a grade separation feasibility study at Rengstorff Avenue, with the City Council endorsing the option to maintain the tracks at their current elevation while depressing Rengstorff Avenue. On May 8, 2012, the Mountain View City Council adopted a policy statement supporting grade separation of the rail crossing at Rengstorff Avenue. The Policy statement directs grade separation of the rail crossing be designed to support improved connectivity across the rail tracks for all modes of transportation – pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists alike – and the design of the grade separation focus on the goals of minimizing disruption to the neighborhood

grade separation focus on the goals of minimizing disruption to the neighborhood context, improving the sense of place, encouraging multimodal use, and improving the safety of all users. Also, at its May 25, 2010 meeting, the City Council expressed preference for a trenched Caltrain/High-Speed Rail service. The EIR must take into account Mountain View's preference and stated grade-separation goals.

Rengstorff Park Area/Maintain Access. Rengstorff Avenue is a major north/south arterial for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles providing access to Rengstorff Park, the Aquatic Center, the Community Center, and retail/service businesses. Beyond Rengstorff Avenue, many neighborhood streets are narrow residential streets and residents are sensitive to increased traffic volume and speed.

Also, many residents in the area do not own vehicles and depend on easy pedestrian/bicycle access to businesses throughout the area and across the rail track Corridor and Central Expressway. The EIR should consider the impacts of the Project and should not disrupt the flow and access of pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles in the area or create other adverse impacts to residents, businesses, and services.

Traffic Analysis. The Project proposes up to six trains during the peak hour in each direction. The additional trains will cause more gate downtime along the roadways intersecting the tracks. The impacts of the Project need to be fully analyzed and mitigated. All roadways that would be impacted by the additional traffic delay need to be fully analyzed, including Central Expressway, Rengstorff Avenue, Crisanto Avenue, Leland Avenue, and other nearby residential streets.

OVERHEAD CONTACT SYSTEM

The Project requires overhead contact system (OCS) for distribution of electrical power, including poles and wires. The EIR should analyze the visual impacts, including any fencing/barriers required as mitigation for safety/security to existing trees/vegetation, Corridor views and right-of-way, and include appropriate mitigation measures.

CONSTRUCTION

The EIR should analyze how the Project construction impacts existing pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle travel (including emergency vehicles), existing business operations along the Corridor, existing transit service, and location/impact of storage/staging areas during construction. The EIR should also identify plans to restrict, detour, or close existing routes during and after construction, and include appropriate mitigation measures.

AIR QUALITY/HERITAGE TREES

Air Quality. The EIR should analyze how air quality conditions are affected along the corridor and to adjacent neighborhoods, and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

Heritage Trees. The EIR should identify impacts to Heritage trees (Mountain View City Code, Chapter 32, Article II) and other City trees, and should identify appropriate mitigation measures to the removal of existing trees which currently screen the tracks from adjacent neighborhoods along the Corridor.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

The City is concerned about the noise and vibration impacts of the Project. This concern has been raised repeatedly for the community. The EIR should analyze the expected noise and vibration impacts of the Project and all alternatives, and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

BLENDED SYSTEM

With two existing at-grade Caltrain crossings at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue, and the possibility that blended Caltrain and High-Speed Rail operations will result in as many as 10 trains using the Peninsula Corridor tracks per peak hour per direction, the impacts of the extended gate down time on the community will be significant. The EIR must fully analyze and identify potential mitigation measures, including grade separated solutions.

Bypass Tracks/Overtake Options. Caltrain's November 2011 blended operations analysis identified four potential overtake or passing track locations for the Peninsula Corridor. One of the options, the South Overtake Option, includes the possible addition of overtake tracks between the San Antonio and Lawrence Stations. Mountain View requests Caltrain remove the proposed South Overtake Option from the EIR. The width of the existing right-of-way in Mountain View is already very constrained, particularly where there are also VTA light rail tracks, and may not be able to accommodate the addition of overtake tracks. The City is also concerned that the additional tracks will make the Caltrain Corridor an even more significant visual and physical barrier in the community.

Grade Separation. With the possibility of trains traveling at higher speeds along the Peninsula Corridor and through stations under a blended system operation scenario,

the EIR must fully analyze the need for grade separation, platform, or other station-related improvements to ensure the safety of rail passengers as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists interacting with the rail system.

Traffic Impacts at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue. The EIR should evaluate all potential grade-separation solutions, including train service below grade or City streets below grade, at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue and should analyze the following impacts: impacts to the Mountain View Downtown Transit Center and transit service trips; impacts to surrounding streets and intersections and connectivity of streets which are impacted due to the changes in street elevations; impacts to businesses and access to properties due to street elevation changes; impacts to pedestrian and bicycle circulation across the tracks and Central Expressway; impacts on the 2014 and 2017 VTA Light Rail Train Efficiency Improvements; impacts on the future Downtown Caltrain Station Parking Garage; and how Castro Street/Moffett Boulevard and Rengstorff Avenue areas remain connected and connections are improved/enhanced across the Corridor tracks.

CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Under the cumulative analysis, Caltrain will review a six Caltrain/two High-Speed Rail trains, six Caltrain/four High-Speed Rail trains, up to 110 mph operational speed, and freight service. Increased service will increase gate downtime and cause further congestion at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue. The EIR should evaluate the blended system based on the cumulative effects of both Caltrain and High-Speed Rail systems, as both are being planned to use/share the same tracks. The EIR should analyze and mitigate the cumulative crossing/traffic impacts at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue, including any additional physical impacts at the crossings. If passing track is proposed in Mountain View, the EIR should analyze and identify appropriate mitigation measures for grade-separation solutions, including depressing Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue crossings as well as below-grade Caltrain/High-Speed Rail service options.

2009 CALTRAIN ELECTRIFICATION EA/EIR – IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Caltrain previously evaluated corridor electrification in a Draft EIR completed in 2004 and a Final EIR completed in 2009. However, Caltrain did not certify the Final EIR because of the need to resolve the issues of shared use of the Caltrain corridor for Caltrain service and high-speed rail service. The City requests Caltrain expand the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the 2009 EIR by fully analyzing and

addressing the following additional concerns and topics during the environmental review of the proposed Caltrain/Blended Service Project EIR for Mountain View and public to review:

Section 3.1 – Aesthetics:

- Map all areas where major landscape removal is anticipated.
- Because fencing along the entire track line will impact appearance greatly, describe the design, material, and height of the security fencing, including analysis under cumulative impact of blended Caltrain/high-speed rail service.
- Identify all major electrical equipment which will require structures or screening.
- Identify all additional visual impacts if the traffic evaluation or safety concerns require grade separation at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue.

Section 3.4 – Biological Resources:

- If passing track is proposed in Mountain View, fully analyze impact to Stevens Creek.
- Analyze electrification impact to all species, particularly birds and fish.
- If a subgrade solution is required and/or proposed, fully analyze the impact to Stevens Creek and wildlife.

Section 3.6 – Geology, Soils, and Seismicity:

- If a subgrade solution is required and/or proposed for other reasons, fully analyze the impacts.

Section 3.8 – Hydrology, Floodplain, and Water Quality:

- Analyze if the ground water impacts/mitigation evaluation will be changed due to expanded service and traffic impacts requiring a subgrade solution.

Section 3.11 – Noise and Vibration

- With more frequent service if the at-grade crossings are not separated, analyze the impact of additional train horn noise and warnings required at the Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue at-grade crossings. The analysis should also include the impact of future anticipated high-speed rail service.
- Substation noise may require being placed in a structure to mitigate noise. This mitigation should be considered as an option.

Section 3.13 – Public Services and Facilities

- With more trains for both Caltrain and high-speed rail services, a major accident plan may require expanded service from local public safety organizations (police and fire). Analyze the impact for additional City services.
- Analyze how the expanded rail service will impact existing public transit services, including traffic impacts at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue at-grade crossings.

Section 3.14 – Recreation

- With increased rail service and more frequent at-grade crossings by pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, analyze the impacts to Rengstorff Park and neighborhood area without grade separations.

Section 3.18 – Cumulative Impacts

- High-speed rail service and the added trains, crossings, etc., must be fully evaluated in the cumulative impact analysis. The high-speed rail services with expanded Caltrain service may have major physical design and construction implications which should be evaluated and mitigated prior to the proposed electrification Project.

Section 4.2.3 – Construction Impacts – Biological Resources

- Analyze the impacts of construction or the potential expansion of facilities for the passing track, if proposed in Mountain View, to Stevens Creek.

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Section 4.2.7 – Construction Impacts – Neighborhoods and Businesses

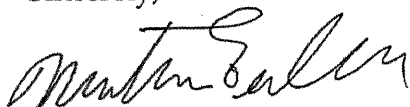
- Analyze the Project impacts during and after construction to local neighborhoods and businesses at Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue at-grade crossings, including potential grade separation solutions.

The City is submitting these comments to ensure the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process for the proposed Caltrain Electrification/ Blended Service Project is conducted thoroughly with all potential environmental impacts and benefits of the Project within Mountain View fully and accurately analyzed and disclosed.

The City requests notification of additional opportunities to provide input into and review the Draft EIR documents as they are being prepared.

Please contact the Project Manager, Helen Kim (helen.kim@mountainview.gov) or Transportation and Business Manager, Linda Forsberg (linda.forsberg@mountainview.gov) to coordinate future City participation and input into the environmental process for the proposed Caltrain Electrification/ Blended Service Project.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Fuller
Public Works Director

MAF/HK/7/PWK
905-03-14-13L-E

cc: City Council

CM, CDD, APWD – Solomon, TBM, PM – Kim, PP, TE, Chron/File