



March 14, 2013

Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain)  
Attn: Stacy Cocke, Senior Planner  
1250 San Carlos Avenue  
P.O. Box 3006  
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306

**Re: Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project EIR**

The Leagues of Women Voters of San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties have commented extensively on proposals for Caltrain services and system improvements since the 1980's. We have supported Caltrain as part of a regional transportation network with intermodal connections. We have urged that electrification of the system be a priority in order to improve service, reduce energy consumption, operating cost, regional air pollution, and engine noise, and to be compatible with High Speed Rail.

The Notice of Preparation describes the Purpose and Need for the Project. Most of the goals of this EIR update study are very much the same as in the 2000-2004 EIR study. The notable addition, as the first listed purpose, is to Provide High-Speed Rail Compatible Electrical Infrastructure. However, in the event that High-Speed Rail does not come to the Peninsula Corridor, **the case for Electrification must be able to stand alone** and must examine every physical, social, and economic impact on the Right-of-Way and the communities, businesses, and properties touching and near the Right-of-Way during construction and as long-term impacts. The **financial feasibility** of Caltrain electrification is a primary concern.

We are concerned that mitigations for negative impacts should be analyzed for their costs and environmental effects. The cumulative impacts of every aspect of the project must be documented.

Caltrain, with its present service levels, has already nearly achieved ridership levels predicted for years beyond 2013 in the original EIR. More accurate assessments of ridership projections must be made, in order to evaluate the cost effectiveness and environmental benefits of the project. The planned small incremental addition of train capacity taking a calculated number of cars off the roads must be justified for congestion reduction benefits.

The economy of the Peninsula Corridor has experienced expansions and contractions since the EIR was begun in 2000. Transit oriented development (TOD) and the Grand Boulevard plan for El Camino Real have not progressed as rapidly as hoped for. The extent of both TOD and Transportation Demand Measures (TDM) affect Caltrain ridership, linked to expansion of Silicon Valley industries. Therefore, the need for the service improvements provided by the project must be documented.

The Project Description shows that considerable improvements have been made in the details of the electric systems needed for the project. There is still uncertainty about the locations of the three types of electric power stations and the amount of additional property that will be required for their construction. These uncertainties must be resolved at once, to allay fears about takings through Eminent Domain and fears about neighborhood impacts due to construction and placement of the facilities.



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA

An Inter-League Organization of the San Francisco Bay Area



The Leagues of Women Voters will scrutinize the details of the Potential Environmental Effects mentioned in the NOP, with particular attention to Air Quality; Energy Sources, Costs, and Consumption; Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change; EMI/EMF; Hazardous Waste and Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use and Planning; Noise and Vibration; Visual Impacts; Housing; Safety; Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice; and Traffic and Circulation, including parking. We are especially concerned about the cumulative regional effects of this project in combination with other transportation projects, both rail and road, in all the Alternatives that will be studied, and in conjunction with land use plans and projects along the Caltrain corridor.

The updated EIR must unequivocally demonstrate that the Caltrain Electrification Project is financially feasible and will serve the needs of the Peninsula Corridor as an environmentally superior alternative to any other use of the corridor.

Sincerely,

Marion Taylor  
President