

California Legislature

February 10, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

RE: Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project Full Funding Grant Agreement Support

Congratulations on your recent appointment and successful confirmation. As members of the California State Legislature representing the communities served by the Caltrain commuter rail system, we have spent the last several years introducing, supporting and passing legislation that requires voter-approved high-speed rail funds to be utilized immediately to offer near-term improvements to existing systems like Caltrain.

Specifically, these efforts have resulted in the requirement that \$600 million in high speed rail funds be refocused to help modernize and electrify Caltrain, a \$2 billion investment that will replace existing diesel equipment with high-performance electric trains that allow the operation of more service to more riders on one of the nation's fastest growing transportation corridors.

We understand that our efforts to direct high-speed rail funding to this critical commuter rail project have resulted in some interpretation that Caltrain electrification is a high-speed rail project. It is not.

California's high-speed rail project is still in the early planning stages and will require multiple project approvals and significant additional investment before it can be implemented. Caltrain is an existing rail service, and electrification of that service is ready to be implemented now and can begin construction upon approval of the Core Capacity grant currently pending at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

We have worked cooperatively with our colleagues in the Legislature to provide Caltrain electrification with state matching funds to allow the project to proceed as soon as possible.

In 2012, we collaborated to pass SB 1029, which appropriated \$1.1 billion in high-speed rail bond funds to be directed toward improving existing commuter rail corridors. In 2013, SB 557 directed that \$600 million of these funds would be invested specifically in Caltrain electrification and eliminated the ability to shift the funds elsewhere. In 2016, AB 1889 clarified that investment of high-speed rail funds in projects like Caltrain electrification are an allowable use as long as they result in near-term improvements to existing rail systems.

These efforts, along with generous investments from local and regional funding sources, have all aligned to provide Caltrain with the resources it needs to transform and improve rail service that is vital to the California and national economies.

Implementing Caltrain electrification will not allow the operation of high-speed trains. It is discouraging to think that our efforts to direct funding to this critical improvement for an extremely popular existing rail service are being used as a reason to withhold Federal funding for the project.

We encourage you to proceed with approval of this federal investment at the earliest possible time. Please feel free to contact us anytime if we can be helpful in providing additional information.

Sincerely,



Jerry Hill
California State Senate,
13th District



Kevin Mullin
California State Assembly
22nd District



Rich Gordon
California State Assembly (former)
24th District