



February 6, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I am writing to you with an urgent request to approve a critical transportation project as one of your first acts as Secretary. On January 18, 2017, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) completed its evaluation of the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP), and favorably forwarded the proposed grant agreement to Congress for a mandatory 30-day review. I urge you to approve this grant as soon as the review period ends.

This is a desperately needed project, and one that will undoubtedly serve a large number of people as Caltrain ridership continues to skyrocket. It will also lead to cleaner air as we shift away from diesel to clean electricity. These benefits, plus robust public matching funds, are part of the reason it has received a Medium-High rating after its two-year review by the FTA.

I understand that in a January 24 letter, some members of Congress claim that these funds are being sought by California's High Speed Rail Authority. That is not true. This is a local project and it is being sought by the Caltrain Joint Powers Board. For decades Caltrain has sought to electrify this line to replace dirty, slow, aging diesel engines. Electrification will also allow this line to connect more easily to the new Transbay terminal in downtown San Francisco. This project is part of the Caltrain Modernization Program and is desperately needed whether or not High Speed Rail ever shares the tracks.

If you hold off on approving these funds this month, it could kill this urgently needed upgrade. Caltrain currently carries more than 62,000 riders per day between San Jose and San Francisco. This investment is urgently needed in this fast-growing corridor, which serves Silicon Valley.

This project went through years of rigorous evaluation by federal agencies and has received a strong rating. Don't let politics get in the way of building smart infrastructure projects with both broad environmental and economic benefits. I strongly urge you to approve this grant as soon as the Congressional review period ends on Feb 18, 2017.

TransForm promotes walkable communities with excellent transportation choices to connect people of all incomes to opportunity. We have supported this project since 2000 to help achieve that crucial mission. Please feel free to contact me at stuart@transformca.org or 510-740-3150 x311.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stuart Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Stuart Cohen, Executive Director

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