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January 3, 2023

Nuria Fernandez, Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for Caltrain's application to the Rail Vehicle Replacement Program

Dear Administrator Fernandez:

On behalf of our broad coalition — represented by elected officials, environmental groups, transit advocates, labor, housing, educational and health care institutions and businesses large and small — we are writing to express our strong support for Caltrain's application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Rail Vehicle Replacement Program (Rail Program) to ensure reliable and sustainable electrified service in the Bay Area. Funding from the Rail Program is a critical resource to enable the replacement of Caltrain's existing, outdated diesel trains with new electric multiple unit (EMU) trainsets as part of the Caltrain Zero-Emission Corridor Project (Caltrain ZEC). The replacement of three diesel trains with three new EMU train sets would allow Caltrain to operate over 90% of its trips with electric trains, improving air quality, reducing noise, maintaining service, and increasing reliability for riders and communities along the corridor.

Caltrain ZEC builds upon the foundation of the Caltrain Electrification Project, which is modernizing a nearly 160-year-old rail line to a cutting edge, electrified system spanning 51 miles between San Francisco and San Jose. The Caltrain Electrification Project will replace 75% of Caltrain's diesel fleet with EMUs, directly benefiting many cities along the rail corridor. Beginning in Fall of 2024, Caltrain will become California's first electrified commuter rail system and North America's first commuter rail system in 30 years to transition its trains and infrastructure from diesel to an electrified system. Caltrain ZEC takes this work a step further and envisions all trains on the system's corridor from San Francisco to Gilroy to operate zero-emissions service, requiring the eventual transition of the remaining diesel trains. Caltrain ZEC's will help mitigate climate impacts while creating and maintaining thousands of jobs from the construction and delivery of EMUs. Replacement of diesel trains with EMUs will yield multiple local, regional, and state level benefits.

Environment: Additional EMUs will help Caltrain get to a fully zero emission corridor delivering significant environmental benefits to the region by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and diesel pollutants such as NOx and PM. Transitioning to an electric fleet will also reduce dependence on foreign energy sources and instead rely on cleaner, renewable domestic energy sources. EMUs also have regenerative braking capability, so they use less energy than our diesel trains.

Equity: The continued transition from diesel to an electric rail service will significantly decrease noise pollution in the equity priority communities along the corridor. It will also enhance access and service and help Caltrain serve a more diverse group of riders, including people with lower incomes and members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

Job Creation and Economic Growth: The Caltrain ZEC replacement EMUs requested will continue supporting the thousands of manufacturing jobs across the country not just in California but also in Utah where the trains are being manufactured and at supply chain locations ranging from Washington to Florida.

California High Speed Rail: In the future, California High-Speed Rail Authority will operate on Caltrain's tracks and use the new 25kV Overhead Contact System (OCS) being installed for the Caltrain Electrification Project. Caltrain must acquire and operate an all-electric fleet between San Francisco and San Jose to have a successful blended system because diesel locomotive performance is incompatible with high-speed rail service.

Ridership and Community: The new high-performance EMU trains will offer a better experience for riders and the community. They will generate less noise than their diesel equivalent, making the trip more enjoyable both for riders and residents that live near Caltrain tracks. The new vehicles also offer enhanced amenities, including new digital onboard displays, power outlets at each seat, energy-efficient lighting, coat hooks, security cameras, expanded storage and ADA restrooms with baby changing tables.

Caltrain's application is particularly timely and important as the agency has an open contract with its vehicle manufacturer, Stadler, allowing Caltrain to proceed quickly with the purchase of EMU trains. Given the uncertainty with inflation and the potential increased costs of needing a new procurement contract, this is a unique and important opportunity for Caltrain to leverage ongoing investments and cost savings. The requested funding from the Rail Program will allow Caltrain to take advantage of this near-term opportunity to purchase electric trains and replace more of its remaining diesel fleet that has exceeded its useful life.

We respectfully request your consideration of the Caltrain application to ensure that the older diesel fleet is replaced with zero-emission, state of the art electric trains to deliver transformative benefits for the region. Thank you in advance for your consideration of Caltrain's grant application.

Sincerely,



Bill Widmer
Mayor, Town of Atherton

cc: Michelle Bouchard, Executive Director, Caltrain
Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board of Directors