

DAVE PINE FOR SUPERVISOR

High Speed Rail/Caltrain

California's population is expected to reach 60 million people by 2050. This population growth will require that we invest in cost effective, reliable and energy efficient, transportation systems. With already overcrowded roads and highways, we need to turn to other solutions. Caltrain, BART, the SamTrans bus system, connecting shuttles and paratransit services are all struggling to meet our local transportation needs with shrinking budgets. We must take a regional approach to transportation that ties these systems and others together, reduces administrative overhead, and provides for dedicated and stable funding sources.

Decisions that are now being made about High Speed Rail (HSR) and Caltrain will have a lasting impact on the nature of our communities. The voices of San Mateo County's residents must be heard during this critical time.

Caltrain

Our immediate focus should be on Caltrain. There is no excuse for one of the best public transportation systems in the Bay Area that keeps 40,000 people a day off our highways to be facing a \$30 million deficit. We must find secure sources of funding for Caltrain with possible solutions including: adopting congestion management fees and high occupancy vehicle lane tolls; collecting a dedicated public transit fee on car rentals; increasing short haul freight which will generate track usage fees; and selling carbon credits.

Longer term it is imperative that we electrify the Caltrain system. Today Caltrain utilizes diesel locomotives that are expensive to operate, highly polluting and cannot start and stop quickly. With an electrified Caltrain, significantly more passengers could use the system and more service could be provided to local stops which currently are bypassed by the baby bullet trains. Electrification would also significantly increase the systems revenue through higher fare box returns.

The challenge is finding the funding to make the substantial upgrades that are needed to electrify Caltrain, including road overcrossings or underpasses. To date, Caltrain has tied its electrification plans to the construction of a HSR system connecting San Francisco to California. As discussed further below, it is unlikely that California will be able to afford such a system, and even if it does go forward, I believe construction on the Peninsula could easily be a decade or more away. We should not condition the funding for Caltrain electrification on HSR.

High Speed Rail

Few would dispute that HSR has emerged as a critical 21st century transportation solution in countries around the world. With California's population projected to reach

50 million by 2050, HSR would be a wise an investment in the future. But we cannot forge ahead on a project of this magnitude without satisfactorily answering the following questions:

1. Can we afford a HSR system linking the Los Angeles and San Francisco?
To date, there is no evidence that we can afford HSR. The HSR Authority estimates that construction costs will total approximately \$43 billion (which equals half of the state's budget), while some transportation experts project construction costs as high as \$100 billion or more. \$9.95 billion in construction funds were secured by passing a state bond in 2008, and approximately another \$3.2 billion in federal funds have been set aside. But where will the rest of the money come from? Additional funding from the Federal government does not appear likely in the foreseeable future. California cannot afford to issue more bonds. Bonds are not free and interest payments on the state's existing bonds already equal the amount California spends on higher education. We also have not seen credible ridership numbers, an investment grade business plan, or an operator willing to run the system without a subsidy.
2. What is the best way to connect San Jose and San Francisco?
The HSR bond that the voters passed in 2008 requires the HSR system go all the way to San Francisco. But given the budget constraints faced by the state, and the significant incremental construction costs and disruption that would be caused by adding additional tracks in the Caltrain corridor to accommodate HSR, we must examine whether a modernized electrified Caltrain would do the job. Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, State Senator Joe Simitian and Assemblymember Rich Gordon recently recommended that Caltrain and the HSR Authority consider such a blended approach. It's an idea that I think makes sense.
3. Can we modernize rail service on the Caltrain Corridor without profoundly and adversely affecting our communities? Modernizing and electrifying the Caltrain corridor will require substantial construction. Completing the necessary grade separations where streets currently cross the tracks will alone require years of construction and cost hundreds of million dollars. But with a well thought out implementation plan and proper engineering, I believe we can upgrade the Caltrain corridor in a way that respects our communities and quality of life on the Peninsula. Such a plan would require trenching in some segments of the Caltrain corridor, particularly in our downtown areas. An elevated line running down the entire length of the Peninsula is unacceptable.

When the Caltrain right away was purchased from Southern Pacific, the San Mateo Transit District (SamTrans) paid \$42.9 million on behalf of San Francisco and Santa Clara County. We have never been repaid. As the "majority owner" of the Caltrain corridor, we must ensure that HSR be constructed in a way that we can afford and that reflects our communities' needs.