Caltrain Gets Clearance to Proceed with Design/Build Plans for Electrification

October 6, 2014

This week, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., signed legislation that allows the Caltrain electrification project to proceed as a design/build project.

The design/build procurement method allows agencies to combine design and construction activities into one contract, which helps manage risk, speed up project delivery, foster innovation and potentially reduce cost.

Transit agencies’ authority to issue design/build contracts expires at the end of this year, but Senate Bill (SB) 785, extends the authorization until 2024.

Extension of design build/authority was necessary for Caltrain’s electrification project to proceed as planned.

Part of the Caltrain Modernization Program, the electrification project will transform the system from a diesel-based service to an electrified overhead system, featuring high-performance electric trains that operate off an overhead power system. The electric trains will enhance capacity and allow the system to deliver cleaner, quieter, shorter trip times and, potentially, more frequent service for the corridor.

After years of substantial ridership growth, Caltrain’s diesel system can no longer meet existing ridership demand. Electrification will support service levels that help accommodate regional job and population growth and will help prepare the corridor to eventually accommodate California’s planned high-speed rail system.

In September 2013, Caltrain approved the use of the design/build contracting approach for designing and installing the electrification infrastructure. A Request for Qualifications has been issued to potential contractors. A Request for Proposal will be issued January 2015 and contract award expected in fall 2015.

Electrification will allow Caltrain to almost double the system’s forecasted daily ridership by 2040. Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 177,000 metric tons, automobile vehicle miles traveled will shrink by 619,000 miles daily and billions of dollars in economic value will be created including nearly 100,000 new jobs.

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About Caltrain: Owned and operated by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, Caltrain provides commuter rail service from San Francisco to San Jose, with limited commute service to Gilroy. Caltrain has enjoyed four years of consecutive monthly ridership increases, surpassing more than 60,000 average weekday riders earlier this year. While the Joint Powers Board assumed operating responsibilities for the service in 1992, the railroad will celebrate 150 years of continuous passenger service this year. Planning
for the next 150 years of Peninsula rail service, Caltrain is on pace to electrify the corridor by 2019, reducing diesel emissions by 84 percent and adding more service to more stations.

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