Caltrain Releases Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project

Draft Environmental Impact Report

Public Meetings to Be Held in March and April

Caltrain today released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the planned electrification of the Caltrain corridor between San Jose and San Francisco, a major milestone in the railroad’s efforts to improve its commuter rail service.

The Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP) is part of the Caltrain Modernization Program, which will upgrade the railroad’s signal system, implement the advanced safety technology known as Positive Train Control, electrify the corridor between San Francisco and San Jose and purchase new high-performance electric rail vehicles known as electric multiple units (EMUs).

Members of the public can submit written comments on the Draft EIR through April 29, 2014. To assure the full range of public comment, Caltrain has extended the required 45-day comment period to 60 days.

Caltrain will conduct four public meeting in March and April to obtain public comments on the Draft EIR.

An EIR is required to evaluate the potential impacts a project will have on the environment including the surrounding community. The project has significant local and regional environmental benefits but would also result in certain local environmental impacts. Key local issues examined in the Draft EIR include potential impacts related to noise, trees and other vegetation, traffic, aesthetics, disruption due to construction and other issues as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

An electrified Caltrain system, scheduled to begin operations in 2019, will improve regional air quality by up to 84 percent by 2020, increase Caltrain daily ridership to nearly 70,000 by 2020 and more than double current weekday ridership with the downtown extension in place by 2040. It also is projected to take more than 600,000 daily vehicle miles off the region’s roadways by 2040. As part of this project, weekday service at the Atherton and Broadway stations will be restored.
The increased ridership and improved performance from electrification are critical for Caltrain to sustain its services and meet future demand.

The project will install poles and wires, known as an “overhead contact system” (OCS), where electrified trains will operate. The OCS delivers the power source for the electrified vehicles. Electrification also requires the construction of two substations, one switching station and seven paralleling stations. Limited amount of property outside of the rail right-of-way will be needed to support the electrification infrastructure.

One of the key issues discussed in the Draft EIR is tree removal. This was analyzed based on a worst-case OCS alignment of poles. There are approximately 19,000 trees and other vegetation in the immediate Caltrain corridor area. The worst-case OCS configuration could result in the removal of more than 2,200 trees and vegetation. The Draft EIR identifies vegetation mitigations including potential OCS alignment options. Alternative pole configurations could help reduce the number of impacted trees and also reduce property needs outside of the rail right-of-way.

“Now that we know what the potential worst-case local impacts are and have identified feasible mitigation measures in the Draft EIR, Caltrain will continue to work with the community partners to figure out how best to apply the identified mitigation to help reduce impacts,” said Marian Lee, Executive Officer for Caltrain Modernization.

“This is the next step in a critical partnership between Caltrain and the communities we serve. We must work together to ensure the successful delivery of the Caltrain Modernization Program. We are committed to seeking public comment and to make sure that the concerns of our communities are addressed directly, collaboratively and transparently,” said Michael J. Scanlon, Executive Director of Caltrain.

The Draft EIR can be viewed HERE. It is also available in hard copy at libraries in each of the 17 cities along the Caltrain corridor between San Jose and San Francisco. The DEIR can be printed at certain Copymat locations in each of the counties. The library locations and Copymat locations are listed HERE.

To view a video detailing the Modernization project click HERE.

Comments:

Written comments will be accepted until April 29, 2014.

Send to:
Caltrain
Attn: Stacy Cocke, Senior Planner
P.O. Box 3006
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306
Comments will also be accepted at electrification@caltrain.com with the subject line “Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project.”

**Meetings**

**Tuesday, March 18, 6 – 8 p.m.**
Caltrain Offices, 2nd Floor Auditorium
1250 San Carlos Ave., San Carlos

**Monday, April 7, 6 – 8 p.m.**
San Jose Main Library
150 E. San Fernando St., San Jose

**Wednesday, April 2, 6 – 8 p.m.**
Redwood City Library
1044 Middlefield Rd., Redwood City

**Wednesday, April 9, 6 – 8 p.m.**
UCSF Mission Bay,
Genentech Hall Room N114
600 16th St., San Francisco

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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 more than three years of consecutive monthly ridership increases, surpassing more than 50,000 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 in 2014. Planning for the next 150 years of Peninsula rail service, Caltrain is on pace to electrify the corridor by 2019, reducing diesel emissions by 90 percent and adding more service to more stations.

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