Former SFMTA and VTA CEO To Lead The Caltrain Modernization Program

At this morning’s Caltrain Board meeting, Executive Director Jim Hartnett announced that Michael Burns, who retired as the Chief Executive Officer for the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in 2014, will take the reins of the Caltrain Modernization Program. The Caltrain Modernization Program is the most transformative project in the rail system’s 150-year history. The program will electrify the system and provide electric vehicles to operate with the electrified infrastructure.

Burns was appointed Interim-Chief, Caltrain Modernization Officer. His will begin his new role Monday, Feb. 8.

He began working with the Modernization team in 2015 to support planning for Caltrain initiatives in San Francisco and ongoing coordination with High Speed Rail for early investment program and the blended system.

“The Caltrain Modernization Program is the largest, most important, improvement project in the system’s 150-year history,” said Jim Hartnett, Caltrain’s Executive Director. “Michael has more than 40 years of experience, the majority of which was spent overseeing rail programs across the country. Under Michael’s leadership, VTA received the federal funding needed to finally bring BART to San Jose. I’m thrilled that he will be leading our team towards Modernization.”

Burns replaces outgoing Chief Caltrain Modernization Officer, Marian Lee. Lee joined the San Mateo County Transit District in 2007 as Director of Planning, she took over the CalMod program in 2010. Lee’s contributions were pivotal in helping to create a community dialogue around the system’s needs and address community concerns.

Lee will begin her new role as the Assistant City Manager with South San Francisco later this month.

The Caltrain Modernization Program includes the electrification of the existing Caltrain corridor between San Francisco and San Jose; the installation of a Communications Based Overlay Signal System Positive Train Control (CBOSS PTC),
which is an advanced signal system that includes federally-mandated safety improvements; and the replacement of Caltrain’s diesel trains with high-performance electric trains called Electric Multiple Units.

The $1.7 billion program is funded through a nine-party agreement that leverages local, regional and federal funding to match $705 million in voter-approved high-speed rail bond revenues.

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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 five 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 celebrated 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, reduce diesel emissions by 97 percent by 2040 and add more service to more stations.

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