Vision & Guiding Principles

The Caltrain Vision
The Caltrain Vision through 2023 is to become the preferred mode of travel along the Peninsula Corridor by:

- Providing passengers with a world-class travel experience
- Acting as a major catalyst for redevelopment and economic activity in communities along its route
- Playing a key role in mobility management along the Peninsula Corridor and in the Bay Area region as a whole

Caltrain is a vital component of the Bay Area transportation system that will have an ever increasing impact at the individual, local and regional levels. For it to be the preferred mode of travel along the Peninsula Corridor, it must succeed and excel at these three levels.

At the individual level, Caltrain must provide passengers with a world-class travel experience. It should keep and attract passengers by offering convenient, efficient, pleasant, and economical service that is safe and secure. Riding Caltrain should allow people to enjoy a quality of life they cannot experience while driving in traffic.

At the local level, Caltrain must act as a major catalyst for redevelopment and economic activity. It must support existing communities along its route by serving the people that live, work, and play there. By keeping and attracting passengers, Caltrain will bring potential customers to local businesses near its stations. Caltrain must be a partner with the communities through which it travels to realize development opportunities and meet other common goals. Caltrain stations must be inviting and contribute to a community’s sense of place.
At the regional level, Caltrain must play a key role in mobility management. It must offer people an attractive option to automobile travel while helping to achieve congestion relief and air quality goals. It must encourage the use of other alternative modes by facilitating seamless connections to local and regional transit systems, providing state-of-the-art facilities for bicycles and wheelchairs, and improving pedestrian access.

Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles are designed to bring policy-makers and decision-makers one step closer to turning the Caltrain vision into reality. The Guiding Principles do not prescribe specific actions but provide a policy framework for leading the Caltrain management team in a direction that will enable it to achieve its ultimate goals. They are:

1. **Satisfy passengers and build ridership**
2. **Invest wisely in system improvements**
3. **Promote regional connectivity and cooperation with other transportation providers**
4. **Partner with communities and broaden communications with the public**
5. **Develop a solid financial foundation that ensures long-term sustainability**

Each of the Guiding Principles is explained further on the following pages with associated objectives, challenges, and opportunities.
GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1
Satisfy Passengers and Build Ridership

Without satisfied passengers, no part of the Caltrain vision can become a reality. To keep and attract riders, Caltrain must be convenient to use, pleasant to ride, and take people to places they want to go. Caltrain must be a competitive alternative to traveling by automobile by providing its passengers with a world-class travel experience.

SERVICE & PASSENGER AMENITIES

Paramount to customer satisfaction is the quality of Caltrain service, which must be fast, frequent, reliable, and safe. Caltrain should accommodate a variety of travel needs, whether one is traveling a short distance to a neighboring town or traveling a great distance between counties. Trains should use modern, comfortable, and clean vehicles and technology to enhance operations, to provide passengers with information and amenities, and to enhance the public image of Caltrain.

STATION ACCESS & ENVIRONMENT

Convenient station access and inviting station facilities are also important to the passenger experience. Stations play an important function, not only as the interface between rail service and the communities they serve, but as gateways to the Caltrain system. They should function as community meeting places and as landmarks that enhance the neighborhoods in which they are located. Caltrain stations should contribute to each community’s sense of place. Station access for all passengers, including seniors and persons with disabilities, should be addressed by balancing the need for adequate parking facilities with the need for improved access for pedestrians, transit, and bicycle.

INFORMATION & FARE SYSTEM

Information on the Caltrain route, station access, schedules, and fares should be easily obtained at stations, over the phone, via the Internet, or through other media. Real-time information on arrival and departure times should be made available to passengers and potential riders with the use of advanced technology. The fare payment process should be simplified, and fare media should be universal to facilitate transfers between different transit operators.

MARKETING & SERVICE EVALUATION

Passenger and public comments and suggestions are absolutely essential to improving Caltrain in the future. Customer input should be collected on a regular basis to evaluate service performance and measure customer satisfaction. Understanding the needs of current and potential markets along the corridor through outreach and other communication tools will enable Caltrain staff to identify and prioritize system improvements, project future ridership, and attract more passengers.
To satisfy passengers and build ridership Caltrain must:

- Provide a **flexible mix of local and express service** that reflects the travel needs of Caltrain passengers. Reduce overall travel time with operational and platform improvements to facilitate faster boarding. Increase frequency of service.

- Provide or facilitate **passenger amenities** on board trains and at stations, such as Internet access, banking, dry cleaning, child care, and other “non-transit” services.

- Address **station access needs** with a balanced approach that includes coordinating service with connecting transit operators in San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties; promoting walking, bicycling, carpooling, and carsharing to and from stations; improving access for persons with disabilities; and finding innovative and effective solutions for meeting parking demand.

- Create **inviting stations** that serve as landmarks and activity centers for the communities in which they are located.

- Provide **complete, reliable, real-time information** that is easily obtainable at transit stations, over the phone, via the Internet, or through other media.

- Implement a fare structure that is easy to understand and a **universal fare** medium that is easy to collect and transfer across transit providers.

- Understand **current and potential markets** along the Caltrain route to establish ridership targets, set service levels, and market Caltrain service to potential riders.

- Regularly **conduct passenger market research** to evaluate service performance, measure customer satisfaction, and improve service.

- Continually strive to **improve the passenger experience** and the Caltrain organization as a whole.

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**CHALLENGES**

- A major challenge to satisfying passengers and increasing ridership will be to build a solid financial foundation that ensures long-term, dedicated funding for substantial system and service improvements.

- Another challenge will be to reshape the public perception and brand image of Caltrain as a viable and preferred alternative to the automobile.

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**OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** presents opportunities to build potential ridership by locating residences, businesses, and services near Caltrain stations.

- The proposed California High Speed Rail would present a number of opportunities for complementary capital improvements that will make Caltrain a more attractive transit system by improving service, improving Caltrain’s image, and increasing opportunities for regional connections.

- Planned capital programs and enhanced service improvements can enable Caltrain to serve the travel demands of current and potential riders and shape the public perception of Caltrain as a modern, fast, and reliable transportation mode.

- Amenities for Caltrain customers could be provided at low cost by providing an environment to attract private vendors that could provide services.
GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2
Invest Wisely in System Improvements

Investing wisely means that capital programs and service improvements must be balanced with market demand and financial feasibility. Capital projects must have longevity, and improvements overall must benefit a majority of users and prove effective in achieving Caltrain goals.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY
Implementation of system improvements must be prioritized and measured against the availability of financial resources. The development of multiple funding scenarios will enable Caltrain to strategize the financing and implementation of improvements over the next 20 years.

MARKET AWARENESS
To provide the level of service that passengers seek from a world-class rail transit system, ongoing efforts to plan and implement system improvements must be complemented by market awareness. It is essential that regular market research be conducted to evaluate whether Caltrain is meeting the needs of its passengers and to plan for system improvements that will attract potential passengers.

SERVICE & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
The ability of Caltrain to provide enhanced service is inextricably linked to capital improvements, therefore service and capital improvements must be carefully coordinated. They must respond to market demand and be balanced with financial feasibility. Management of system capacity will be required in conjunction with capacity expansion in order to maximize use of the right-of-way and to avoid costly overbuilding.

THIRD PARTY INVOLVEMENT
Involvement from partnering agencies or third parties, such as local government funding of route extensions or private investment in station improvements, allows Caltrain to stretch its dollars to fund more improvements. Working with other organizations requires more coordination to maximize the opportunities that result from pooling resources.
To invest wisely in system improvements Caltrain must:

- Balance service and capital improvements with market demand and availability of financial resources. Develop financial and capital improvement plans that consider various funding scenarios and subsequent plans of action.
- Use valuable market research to inform decisions about service improvements that will attract more riders, such as employing “universal design elements” that appeal to many travelers.
- Develop standards and targets that are useful in monitoring the efficient and effective use of resources.
- Balance system rehabilitation and modernization projects to increase reliability; deliver fast and frequent service; and provide quieter, cleaner, and more comfortable trains. Expand and manage system capacity effectively to maximize use of the tracks without overbuilding.
- Find balanced and cost-effective solutions for improving station access for all passengers. Ensure that Caltrain passengers can access rail stations via transit, bicycle, or walking. Facilitate transfers by coordinating schedules with other transit operators and promoting increased feeder service to Caltrain stations. Encourage bicycling and walking to stations by providing related facilities and amenities. Balance the need for adequate parking facilities at stations where it is appropriate.
- Enhance stations to create transportation facilities that are “places” and integral parts of the communities in which they are located. Factor in the unique characteristics of stations when planning station facilities and access.
- Capitalize on opportunities presented by partnerships and third party investments to improve the system. (These may include route extensions, station enhancements, or other system improvements that are funded by other organizations.)
GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3
Promote Regional Connectivity and Cooperation with Other Transportation Providers

Promoting regional connectivity is essential to meet regional mobility needs, achieve environmental goals, and provide Bay Area residents and visitors with viable transportation options. It is also a critical component of developing a more sustainable future for the Bay Area through a stronger integration of land use and the transportation system. By cooperating with other agencies and transportation providers, Caltrain can improve the movement of people and goods throughout the region.

MOBILITY & CONGESTION MANAGEMENT
To serve regional objectives, Caltrain must be effective in alleviating traffic congestion, particularly along the Peninsula Corridor. As population and job growth occur over the next 20 years, continued low-density development patterns and the scarcity of affordable housing in urban centers will result in more automobile travel, more traffic, and environmental degradation. The problems that stem from traffic congestion challenge all Bay Area transportation providers to be proactive in finding a solution.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION
To meet regional travel demands, the regional transportation system must function as one seamless system rather than as multiple disjointed parts. An optimal regional system facilitates timed transfers, employs an integrated fare system, and delivers real-time information. The contribution that Caltrain makes to improve regional connectivity will assist in meeting regional goals related to congestion management, air quality, and land use. Coordinating with other transit providers to connect service and build intermodal facilities will allow Caltrain to better serve its passengers and the communities along its route.

FREIGHT & GOODS MOVEMENT
The Caltrain right-of-way provides the only freight rail access to the Peninsula and San Francisco. It plays a key role in goods movement and alleviating truck traffic congestion on local roads and highways. Understanding freight needs is essential for Caltrain to continue improving regional mobility and supporting local businesses.
To promote regional connectivity and cooperation with other transportation providers Caltrain must:

- Understand the influence of the land use/transportation nexus so that Caltrain can become an active participant in addressing regional mobility needs.

- **Maximize connectivity** between Caltrain and regional transportation providers including ACE, Amtrak, Capitol Corridor, BART, VTA light rail, MUNI Metro, regional bus service, and airport connectors. Strategies include increasing feeder service to stations, coordinating schedules, developing fare agreements, and integrating public information. Minimize transfer time and total travel time of regional trips with timed transfers, an integrated fare system, and system improvements to facilitate quick boarding and alighting.

- Expand Caltrain service with **network extensions** to facilitate regional trips and to better serve Caltrain passengers. (Service expansion could be achieved through partnerships with other agencies or by third party implementation.)

- Provide transit **transfer information** at stations that is easy to follow and understand.

- Work with other transportation providers and local agencies to build adequate **facilities for joint use** between multiple transit operators. (Factor track capacity needs of other transit providers and freight operators that use the Caltrain right-of-way.)

- Capture an **increasing percentage of the mode split** of north-south trips made along the Peninsula corridor.

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**CHALLENGES**

- The primary challenge to promoting regional connectivity is developing the interagency partnerships that are required to coordinate multiple transit systems so that they function seamlessly.

- Another challenge to promoting regional connectivity will be financing the capital and service improvements that must be made in order to facilitate seamless connections between transit systems.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Expansion projects at the Diridon Station in San Jose and the Transbay Terminal in San Francisco would facilitate direct connections between multiple transit operators (rail and bus).

- Several of the planned system improvements present opportunities for serving regional trips on Caltrain. These include extensions to downtown San Francisco, across the Dumbarton Bridge to the East Bay, and to Salinas and Monterey.

- By connecting with High Speed Rail, Caltrain will have an opportunity to serve riders that are traveling to and from the region.
GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4
Partner with Communities and Broaden Communications with the Public

Caltrain's customer base includes a much larger group than the people who ride its trains each day. Forming strong partnerships with these extended customers—employers, local businesses, and communities—enables Caltrain to be more effective in addressing system safety, improving station environments, and achieving environmental quality.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
The healthy relationships that Caltrain fosters with passengers, communities, businesses, local governments, other transit operators, policy makers, and its staff will ultimately affect the ability of Caltrain to achieve its goals. This requires regular communication within and outside of the organization, followed by consensus building and action.

SAFETY & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS
Addressing system issues such as safety and management of track capacity benefit the public and other transportation providers as well as Caltrain and its passengers. Safety issues are critical as they affect passengers, operators, and people in the communities along the Caltrain route. Several system improvements, such as fencing and station/platform enhancements, can address immediate safety concerns. Some improvements, such as grade separations, can achieve multiple objectives in addition to increasing safety along the right-of-way, including reducing train noise. Programs in emergency preparedness, crime prevention, and system safety and security play important roles in making the Caltrain system safer.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS
Similarly, transit-oriented development (TOD) offers partnership opportunities, provides a mix of housing and services near the stations, and enhances the communities in which they are located. Development of strong working relationships with local government will enable Caltrain to be more effective in this arena. Partnering with local government and businesses to provide amenities and services for passengers would be another opportunity for Caltrain to work with other organizations to provide better service to its passengers.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
By investing in system improvements that reduce noise and air pollution, promote transit use and walkable communities, and facilitate regional mobility, Caltrain helps improve the environmental quality of local cities and the region.
To partner with communities and broaden communications with the public Caltrain must:

• Strive to improve relationships with cities and external agencies. Develop strong relationships with the public, policy makers, and Caltrain staff by conducting frequent outreach efforts and acting upon lessons learned from outreach. Develop an effective external affairs program.

• Find win-win solutions for community issues, such as safety, and train and construction noise.

• Manage corridor capacity to maximize and coordinate use of the tracks by multiple transportation operators.

• Continue to improve system safety and security as necessary and work with local jurisdictions and law enforcement to effectively implement safety measures. Support programs in emergency preparedness and crime prevention.

• Promote and create stations as public spaces. Present any station improvements, grade separations, and other route enhancements as part of a larger corridor plan.

• Maximize transit-oriented development opportunities along the Caltrain route. Work with member agencies in pursuing TOD in the individual counties. Work with local jurisdictions to support businesses by attracting people to the communities where stations are located.
GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5

Develop a Solid Financial Foundation that Ensures Long-term Sustainability

Because financial stability is an essential ingredient to the long-term success of Caltrain, it is critical that Caltrain secure adequate funding for a multi-year period to deliver a program consistent with its vision. The JPB must embrace a finance plan that is acceptable to the three member agencies, while employing innovative financial management to reach new levels of investments.

DEDICATED FUNDING

Traditional funding sources alone will be insufficient to meet the long-term needs of the future Caltrain system. Multi-year financial planning is essential to ensure that capital and service visions become budgeted realities.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Partnering with local business, developers, cities, private interests and the utilization of “cutting edge” and “yet-to-be-invented” financial techniques together with the funding initiatives of tomorrow, such as high-speed rail bonds, federal reauthorization, local sales tax reauthorization, etc., will provide the financial framework to increase revenues. These strategies accompanied with traditional financial programs will guide Caltrain to provide the financial means to meet the market demands of the future.
To develop a solid financial foundation that ensures long-term sustainability Caltrain must:

- Balance the implementation and timing of system improvements with committed funding.
- Develop a capital improvement program that outlines potential development scenarios based on prospective funding opportunities.
- Explore innovative ways to secure long-term funding to guide Caltrain into the future. Programs such as high-speed rail bonds, bridge tolls, local sales tax authorizations, future federal authorizations as well as non-traditional programs such as tax increment financing, lease backs, public private partnerships, and joint TOD opportunities should be pursued to ensure funding is available to meet future needs.
- Support each county’s effort toward developing a dedicated source of funding. Secure local matching funds to leverage committed state and federal capital grants.
- Develop financial plans and programs that reflect the financial capacity of the member agencies.