May 15, 2009

Leslie T. Rogers, Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX
U.S. Department of Transportation
201 Mission Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, CA 94105-1839

RE: Approval of Categorical Exclusion for the San Mateo Bridges Rehabilitation Project in San Mateo, California
Grant # CA-90-Y696 and CA-05-0237

Dear Mr. Rogers,

The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB) requests your concurrence in an environmental determination that the proposed San Mateo Bridges Rehabilitation Project qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion (CE) under 23 CFR part 771.117(d)(3), Bridge rehabilitation, reconstruction or replacement or the construction of grade separation to replace existing at-grade railroad crossings, for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as amended.

The project proposes to correct the structural deficiencies and improve the safety conditions of the four Caltrain railroad bridges located at East Poplar Avenue, Santa Inez Avenue, Monte Diablo Avenue and Tilton Avenue in the City of San Mateo, California. The project is needed to bring the bridges to the standard of safety and reliability required for public transit and to ensure that they will continue to carry commuter service well into the future. At each bridge, the abutments will be rehabilitated to meet current Caltrain standards. The pedestrian sidewalks and streets will be adjusted as needed.

This project meets the requirements for a categorical exclusion under 23 CFR Part 771.117 in the following manner:

- Documentation in the Categorical Exclusion shows that there are no significant environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.
- No relocation of people or businesses would be required.
- No growth inducement was found to occur with the project.
- The project would not result in significant air, water, traffic, or noise impacts.
- The project would not impact any wetlands, endangered species or other biological resources.
- There would be no significant impact to cultural, recreational or historic resources.
A Finding of Effect (FOE) report was prepared applying the Criteria of Adverse Effect provided in 36 CFR 800.5 and the guidelines for documentation in 36 CFR 800.11. The FOE concluded that the proposed project would have an adverse effect on historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect. The adverse effect has been fully mitigated by the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement between the FTA, the PCJPB, and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The Section 106 process was formally concluded when the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation was notified of the execution of the MOA.

A Section 4(f) evaluation was prepared according to Part 774.7 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The evaluation concluded that the alternative selected included all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) property. The evaluation was found to have legal sufficiency and was circulated to the Department on Interior (DOI) on March 25, 2009. After sixty days had passed, it was determined that the DOI did not object to the findings.

- The project would be consistent with the existing zoning.
- The project would not have individual or cumulative significant impacts.

Enclosed is the supporting documentation, an expanded Categorical Exclusion, for your use to determine whether the project qualifies for a categorical exclusion under 23 CFR Part 771.117(d)(3).

Please contact Sylvia Cox of my staff at (650) 508-7704 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Scanlon
Executive Director

cc: Ray Sukys, FTA
    Hilda Lafebre, PCJPB
    Ildefonso Burgos-Gil, PCJPB
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

FTA Project No.: CA-90-Y696 and CA-05-0237
Grant Applicant: Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB)
Proposed Project: San Mateo Bridges Rehabilitation Project
Project Location: San Mateo, San Mateo County, California

A. REQUEST

This is a request by the JPB for approval of Categorical Exclusion (CE) under 23 CFR 771.117(d)(3).

Bridge rehabilitation, reconstruction or replacement or the construction of grade separation to replace existing at-grade railroad crossings.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT (Exhibit 1)

The similarities between the bridges and their close proximity to each other lend to a project wide program using similar techniques at all four locations. Facilities improvements would include:

- Rehabilitate existing abutments at all four locations to support the bridge superstructures and seismic loads.
- When needed, temporarily support utilities during construction (water, gas and power lines).
- Reconstruct the streets and pedestrian sidewalks as needed.

C. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to address the structural deficiencies and safety problems of the four Caltrain railroad bridges, to be consistent with the standards of safety and reliability required for public transit and to ensure that they will continue to carry commuter service well into the future.

There is a need to correct the structural deficiencies and improve the safety conditions of the four Caltrain railroad bridges at East Poplar Avenue, Santa Inez Avenue, Monte Diablo Avenue and Tilton Avenue. The bridge concrete abutments have cracked in several locations, are tilting due to ground subsidence, have insufficient load carrying capacity and have exceeded their structural life span. These effects cannot be reversed or arrested by maintenance of the existing structures. The bridge concrete abutments have reached and exceeded the 75-100 year useful life they were designed for. Their remaining fatigue life is unknown and there is a risk that they are being stressed beyond their capacity.
D. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND IMPACTS

Land acquisition and displacements – The project occurs mostly within railroad and highways rights of way. No property will be acquired and no businesses or individuals will require relocation. Temporary construction easements with the residences adjacent to the railroad corridor and within the project limits may be negotiated on a voluntary basis.

Land use and Zoning – The project area consists of railroad and mixed residential and commercial land uses. The project is consistent with the existing land uses and zoning.

Air quality – This project proposes to rehabilitate existing railroad bridges which are part of a mass transit system. The project would not result in an adverse impact to air quality.

Noise – A noise and vibration impact analysis, following the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment* (FTA, 2006), was performed to determine potential project impacts. Operation vibration impacts are not anticipated along the project corridor due to the distance between the proposed tracks and building structures in the area. It is anticipated that vibration generated from train operation would dissipate by the time it reaches any structures. Therefore, human annoyance or building damage would not be expected from train operations along the project corridor.

Construction noise impacts are anticipated due to the night and weekend work windows. These work windows are necessary to operate the commuter rail service during the day. Temporary noise barriers would not effectively mitigate construction noise because the tracks are elevated above street level. A combination of the mitigation techniques for equipment noise and vibration control as well as administrative measures, when properly implemented, would be selected to provide the most effective means to minimize the effects of construction activity impacts. Application of the mitigation measures will reduce the construction impacts.

Water quality – No adverse impact on water quality will occur as a result of the project. The project does not propose to increase impervious surfaces. Standard Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used during construction.

Wetlands – No wetlands occur in the project area. This project will not result in an adverse impact to wetlands.

Flooding – The project consists of the rehabilitation of existing railroad bridges and does not increase the risk of flooding.

Navigable waterways and coastal zone – There are no navigable waterways or areas of the coastal zone in the project area.

Ecological Sensitive areas – There are no ecological sensitive areas in the project area.

Endangered species – The project area is highly disturbed and consists of the railroad right of way and paved streets. A record search was performed using the CNNDB for
San Mateo County. No endangered species are known to occur in the project area. The project will not cause an adverse impact to endangered species.

Traffic – The project does not propose to modify existing roadway configurations. The project would not have an adverse impact on traffic and parking.

A traffic study was prepared by Parsons Transportation Group to analyze the temporary traffic impacts due to construction detours and temporary street closures. The Technical Memorandum, dated August 2006, concluded that the temporary closure of Tilton Avenue, Monte Diablo Avenue, or Santa Inez Avenue would not have an adverse impact on the adjacent streets. The Memorandum also concluded that the temporary closure of Poplar Avenue would result in an impact to adjacent streets. The street closure will be no more than four weeks and is a temporary construction impact. The final construction detour will be coordinated with the City to an acceptable level of impact to the community.

Energy requirements and potential for conservation – The project is a rehabilitation project and does not construct new facilities. Energy loss will be from short term construction uses.

Historic properties and parklands – A Finding of Effects report (FOE) was prepared applying the Criteria of Adverse Effect provided in 36 CFR 800.5 and the guidelines for documentation in 36 CFR 800.11. The FOE concluded that the proposed project would have an adverse effect on any historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect (APE). A Memorandum of Agreement was executed between the FTA, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the JPB on April 10, 2009. The Section 106 consultation was formally concluded when the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation was notified that a MOA was executed.

A Section 4(f) evaluation was prepared to document the considerations, consultations, and alternative studies that support the determination that no feasible and prudent alternatives exist to using the Section 4(f) properties, the four railroad bridges. This evaluation also supports the determination that the proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) properties resulting from such use. The Section 4(f) evaluation was found to have legal sufficiency and was circulated to the Department of Interior (DOI) on March 25, 2009. After sixty days had passed, it was determined that the DOI did not object to the finding.

Aesthetics – The project will not have an adverse impact to aesthetics.

Community disruption – This project will not disrupt a community. The bridges are located within an existing railroad corridor. In addition, public outreach efforts during construction will inform the community of detours and temporary road closures.

Safety and security – Amtrak provides security for the railroad corridor during normal operation. During construction, the site will be secured by the contractor. Workers will be required to complete Railroad Worker Protection training.

Secondary development – The project will not cause secondary development.
Consistency with local plans – Not applicable. The project is a railroad project and is exempt from local plans.

Environmental Justice – The project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. The project is a rehabilitation project and does not construct new facilities.

Public Outreach- As part of the Section 106 process, letters of interest were sent to the South Bay Railroad Historical Society, the City of San Mateo Public Works Department and the San Mateo County Historical Association. To date, the only letter received by the JPB was a letter of support for the project from the City of San Mateo. During construction, the JPB and the Contractor will coordinate with the public and the City.

E. Conclusion

Based on the above, no significant impacts are anticipated from this project, including the possible impacts listed in 23 CFR 771.117(a) for categorical exclusions. The JPB requests FTA to concur in an environmental determination that implementation of the San Mateo Bridges Rehabilitation Project qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under 23 CFR 771.117(d)(3) for compliance with the NEPA as amended.
Exhibit 1:
Project Location and Vicinity Maps
San Mateo Bridges Rehabilitation Project
City and County of San Mateo, California