

March 26, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Hill
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5035
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Marc Berman
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6011
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for the City of Palo Alto's 2019 State Budget Request for grade separation funding

Dear Senator Hill and Assembly Member Berman:

On behalf of the City of Palo Alto, I want to thank you for your leadership and ongoing support of our city and the region. Today, I write to respectfully request your support and partnership in helping secure funding from the State budget to start the environmental studies for a grade separation project located in the City of Palo Alto.

Background

As you know, since 2009 the Palo Alto rail corridor has been the subject of community focus in response to planned rail investments along the Caltrain rail corridor; specifically the California High Speed Rail project and the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project, as well as general safety improvements. For our city and region, this is the biggest infrastructure project in our history.

The City is in the midst of a robust community-based process to address long-standing challenges associated with at-grade crossings on the Caltrain corridor that run through the community. This process will inform decisions affecting both community aesthetics and mobility choices for many future generations. Community feedback and collaboration is a vital part of the decision-making process. After spending much of 2017 soliciting input and developing a master list of 34 ideas, the City Council and its Rail Committee winnowed down the list to 6 alternatives.

Project Rationale

Caltrain electrification will be completed by 2022, which means that by 2025 there could be 20 trains per hour during peak times. The heavy train activity will cause the gates at our rail intersections to be lowered 25% of the time during daily peak periods, doubling traffic congestion by 2030. We seek to eliminate the conflict between trains, vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians while reducing congestion and supporting alternate transportation modes to job centers such as San Francisco. Importantly, a Federal Railroad Administration accident prediction report notes Palo Alto rail intersections as the top three accident-prone crossings in the county.¹ We seek to address these safety and congestion concerns through a grade separation project.

Status

In April 2018, the City Council approved a contract with AECOM to serve as the lead consultant. The City has been working with a group of very engaged citizens to help provide information to Council and assist in the decision making process. The City Council plans to make a decision on a preferred solution by October 2019.

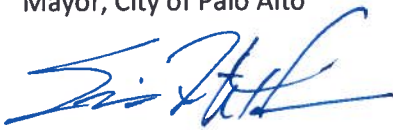
¹ See "[Accident Prediction Report for Public at-Grade Highway-Rail Crossings](#)." Run on March 25, 2019

After the Council decision in October, the City would begin the environmental review. We do not have funding to begin the environmental studies, which as you know is the first step in making this legacy project a reality. Therefore, the City respectfully requests your support to help secure a state budget appropriation in the amount of one million dollars.

I look forward to partnering with the State of California on this endeavor, and hope you each will support our progress towards making our rail crossings safe for years to come.

Yours,

Eric Filseth
Mayor, City of Palo Alto



CC:
Palo Alto City Council
Ed Shikada, Palo Alto City Manager
Townsend Public Affairs