Testimony to Senate Budget Subcommittee, Senators Simitian and
Lowenthal
Palo Alto, CA - January 21, 2010
By Robert Doty, Director, Peninsula Rail Program

I'd like to share you with you a little bit of my background before
addressing the subject of public participation for the High-Speed Train
Project . My personal experience includes the design, construction, and
operations of a variety of rapid transit, commuter, and high-speed train
systems around the world. I started my career with BART and then worked
internationally on rail projects including five years in Asia where worked on
Korean High Speed Rail and Europe for three years working on the Channel
Tunnel Rail Link. I joined Caltrain seven years ago, where by discarding
conventional ways of providing service, we have attracted unprecedented
numbers of passengers to the system. Last year I became the Director of
the Peninsula Rail Program, the joint organization between CHSRA and
Caltrain.

The U.S. rail transportation system lags far behind the rest of the world.
For instance, we have no domestic railcar business in the United States
today. All U.S. rail operators procure vehicles from non-U.S. sources. When
I worked on Korean High-Speed Rail, we were able to negotiate with the
successful bidder to help establish a railcar manufacturing industry in
Korea, which is in business today selling cars to the United States. I also
travelled with a Korean delegation to visit several high-speed rail
organizations to learn how they successfully implemented and operate
their systems. I witnessed the evolution of high-speed rail in Spain, where
15 years ago, engineers from France were working with a start-up rail
organization that has now become a vibrant industry that operates
profitably and continues to expand. Considering the unprecedented
political and financial support we currently have at the state and federal
levels, we are at an opportune moment - not only introduce a new industry
to the U.S. – but to incorporate the best practices of the industry from
around the world and make it our own.

Several years before Proposition 1A passed in 2008, Caltrain had embarked
on a modernization program to provide an electrified, fully-signaled system

to support high-performance vehicles. This program is fully compatible with high-speed train systems. To maximize the benefit of both high-speed rail and Caltrain systems for the Peninsula, the Peninsula Rail Program is employing Context Sensitive Solutions, or CSS, for the San Francisco to San Jose section of the project with the support of CHSRA and the JPB. Context Sensitive Solutions is a collaborative approach to public engagement that involves a wide range of project stakeholders, who are an active part of creating design solutions that meet as many of the project and community goals as possible while staying within the boundaries of what is technically achievable, fundable, and allowable by regulatory agencies. This is an iterative process that requires commitment on the part of all parties involved, which will take more time at the start of the project, but will eventually save time over the life of the project. It challenges each individual involved to come up with solutions that meet not only his or her own goals, but the goals of the broader stakeholder group. One of the most important features of CSS is that it provides transparency to the public in the decision-making process, by involving such a broad stakeholder group and memorializing the process by which the group refines the alternatives over time.

We are currently in the Alternatives Analysis phase of the project, which will eliminate absolutely impractical project alternatives, but keep feasible alternatives open for further study. The alternatives that remain go through an iterative process of technical analyses and evaluation involving our stakeholder group. As new information becomes available, one or more alternatives will rise to the top and others will fall out for having fatal flaws. Caltrain will endorse the final alternative that has been through the intensive CSS process, which must be been fair and inclusive. Then it will go to the CHSRA Board for final approval in late 2011.

The challenges and questions that we're facing for high-speed rail in California are similar to the challenges and questions that I've faced on every system I've been a part of. I can say from experience that there are solutions – in fact, there are many solutions for the issues we are trying to address. We just need to spend the time and the energy to find the right set of solutions that make sense for the Peninsula. The CHSRA organization is evolving from one of planning and advocacy to one that must be able to

responsibly and effectively implement a major public works project. It will eventually evolve into an organization that must operate the system, which will require yet a whole different set of skills. With the completion of a comprehensive alternative analysis process supported by our program of context sensitive solutions, I believe that the opportunity and reduced risk to development will attract the very best firms to actually design, build and operate our new system.

The intense interest and passion that the people in this room, including the public, local elected officials, legislators, and the project team, is what gives me confidence that we will be able to get this project built. That intensity is truly the project's biggest asset. Our challenge moving forward is to harness that passion and energy and use it to create the best-high speed rail system in the world.

We have the rarest of opportunities to leave a legacy for future generations to enjoy – the combination of growing demand for reliable, safe, and "green" transportation, an undeveloped railcar industry, an eager labor pool, and willing partners at the state and federal levels – are the critical ingredients we need for creating what has already proven to be a success in many parts of the world. I am truly honored and excited to be a part of this historic effort, and look forward to seeing the results of our hard work.