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**PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
JULY 16, 2003**

**Metropolitan  
Transportation  
Authority**

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA  
90012-2952

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON ALAMEDA CORRIDOR**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file the attached Report on Alameda Corridor (Attachment A).

**ISSUE**

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Board approved a motion regarding the I-710 Major Corridor Study that, among other things, called for MTA staff to report back on the use of rail, specifically the Alameda Corridor, as a method of moving cargo to and from the ports including possible policies and incentives to promote rail usage as the preferred method of transportation to and from the ports. This Board report responds to the Board motion by providing a report on the Alameda Corridor (see Attachment A). In short, the Alameda Corridor is operating at its projected level of utilization for this year. There is additional capacity for substantial future growth. To reach full utilization, however, will most likely require additional system improvements as discussed in the attached report.

**BACKGROUND**

The information in the attached report was compiled from several sources. The principal data source was the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA). ACTA provided responses to a series of questions that were raised by MTA staff. In addition, information was obtained from meetings with the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, Gateway City public works directors, technical reports, and several public meetings in the City of Long Beach where ACTA and the Port of Long Beach both made presentations on their respective agencies.

The attached report provides a brief history of the Alameda Corridor, its capacity and current utilization levels. The report notes the constraints that may limit the ability of the corridor to reach its full capacity. The report concludes with some incentives that might be further explored to increase train usage of the corridor.

**ATTACHMENT**

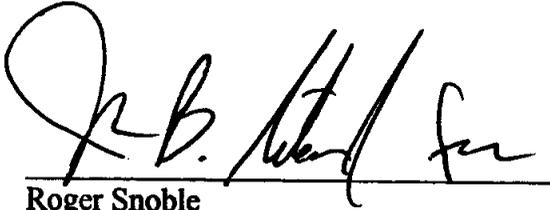
**Attachment A – Alameda Corridor - Response to Board Motion**

**Prepared by: Ernest Morales, Transportation Planning Manager  
Ray Maekawa, Director, Gateway Cities Area Team**



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James L. de la Loza  
Executive Officer, Countywide Planning and Development



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Roger Snoble  
Chief Executive Officer

**Alameda Corridor - Response to Board Motion**

The Alameda Corridor freight expressway became operational on April 15, 2002. It was developed to consolidate the operations of four freight railroad tracks into one high speed, high capacity corridor. The corridor has eliminated approximately 200 railroad at-grade crossings and consolidated 90 miles of branch line tracks into one 20-mile corridor. The Alameda Corridor is currently saving an estimated 15,000 hours of delay per day for vehicles, which would have been sitting and waiting to cross the railroad tracks as the trains pass.

History

The origins of the Alameda Corridor were the result of several studies conducted by SCAG in the early 1980's. The SCAG rail study recommended consolidating the four existing rail routes to the ports into one highly improved grade-separated route. The SCAG highway study recommended substantial improvements to Alameda Street including widening it to six lanes at least from the port complex to SR91.

In August 1989 the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA) was formed. In early 1990, a feasibility study concluded that the consolidation of the four existing rail routes to the ports into one grade-separated route was the most desirable alternative. An EIR and a project report were subsequently prepared.

These same studies, however, concluded that a widened Alameda Street north of SR91 would not be an attractive alternate for trucks using the I-710 and that insufficient right-of-way existed to widen Alameda Street to six lanes north of SR91. The traffic analysis in the EIR was thoroughly evaluated by SCAG and Caltrans who came to the same conclusion. Thus, the six-lane improved Alameda Street north of SR91 was not considered to be a viable alternate to improvements to the adjacent freeways. In addition, the cities north of SR91, through which Alameda Street passes, were strongly opposed to any widening because of the right-of-way required to provide the additional two lanes of traffic.

In March 1993, the ACTA Governing Board adopted the Alameda Corridor plan and certified the EIR, as did SCAG, LACTC, Caltrans and all the Cities along the 20-mile corridor. All agencies approved the reduced scope of the Alameda Corridor project. After the project was defined and the EIR certified, the Corridor's official response to accommodating the increase in truck traffic was that "the Alameda Corridor will decrease the growth rate of trucks on the I-710" but not completely offset them.

### Current Train Volumes

The current train volume on the Alameda Corridor is approximately 35 trains per day, which has held steady for the past twelve months. This train count is consistent with the original projections for the early years of operation. Prior to the opening of the Corridor in April 2002, the train counts to the ports were about 25 per day on the four rail branch lines that were in operation. Within a couple of months after commencement of Corridor operations, volumes increased to 35 trains per day (a one-third increase) due to an increase in container volumes through the ports.

### Future Projections and Capacity

In 1991, the ports were forecasting growth of approximately 24 million containers by 2020. The split of containers between trucks and trains is roughly 50/50. Thus, about 12 million containers were projected for rail, which is equivalent to approximately 100 trains per day. The ports have since updated their projections to 40 million containers in 2025, which would equate to approximately 140 trains.

The Alameda Corridor was originally designed to accommodate 100 trains per day in the year 2020 to meet the then projected growth of the ports train container throughput. The railroads, after the Corridor became operational in April 2002, installed a third track in the trench so there are now three complete mainline tracks for the entire length of the project. The Corridor, with minor enhancements, has the capacity to handle 140 trains through 2025.

According to ACTA, the ports and others, the Alameda Corridor may not utilize its full capacity of 140 trains unless other system improvements are made as discussed below. The lack of capacity of on-dock (loading of containers at the port onto rail) and near-dock intermodal facilities and the lack of line haul capacity of the main line rail routes east of downtown Los Angeles to and beyond San Bernardino are major capacity constraints. Unless these capacity issues are addressed, the true capacity of the Corridor may not be fully realized.

### Utilization Constraints

According to ACTA, the factors that could limit the train volumes on the Alameda Corridor are: (1) the short fall in container lift capacity within the on-dock marine terminals and near-dock intermodal rail yards. Some expansion of these facilities is currently planned. (2) the ultimate line haul capacity of the railroads' main line tracks east of downtown Los Angeles and to a lesser extent the need for additional track improvements within the harbor area.

On-Dock and Near Dock Facilities; the first factor has to do with the amount of rail loading facilities and loading/storage space at or near the ports. Additional loading facilities could enable containers destined to or from the downtown rail yard by truck to be loaded instead onto rail cars right at the ports. Also, there is an operational need to sort containers to minimize future redistribution of the containers for their ultimate destinations. As one example, all containers destined for the same ultimate geographic part of the country could get loaded onto

one train right at the ports. This ability to sort containers onto the "correct" trains or trucks at or near the ports requires additional loading and train storage and would likely increase the amount of train usage.

Both Ports agree that building additional intermodal lift capacity near the ports is a must. The Southern Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific) has had the only near-dock intermodal facility since it opened in 1986. This year the Union Pacific's Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) will probably handle about 750,000 lifts, which directly equates to 750,000 truck trips that did not use the I-710. Today the Union Pacific's ICTF is the single largest generator of trains on the Alameda Corridor and it has been estimated that it has capacity to handle about 1 million lifts per year.

According to the Ports of Long Beach, a near-dock facility for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway would have the immediate effect of shifting containers using the railroad from downtown Los Angeles to the port complex. This would immediately decrease truck traffic on the I-710 north of Sepulveda (Willow) and increase train volumes on the Alameda Corridor. Every container loaded on a railcar near-dock is one less container that moves by truck.

Line Haul Capacity: ACTA staff responded that another factor that would ultimately limit train volumes on the Alameda Corridor was the ultimate line haul capacity of the railroad's main line tracks east of downtown Los Angeles. They note a need to define, in concert with the Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, the phased main line track capacity improvements needed to ensure that track capacity exists when required to serve both the long haul trains, shuttle trains and the increasing demands for passenger trains.

Rail Shuttle: another system improvement that would improve utilization of the Alameda Corridor is the rail shuttle concept. According to ACTA, this basically, is a logistics network of on-dock and near-dock dock rail facilities in the ports, additional line haul capacity on the main line rail routes, and one or more inland rail transfer facilities. The concept would be to quickly load containers onto trains that would shuttle back and forth between the ports and inland redistribution centers. The containers would then be sorted out at these redistribution centers and loaded onto correct trains or trucks for final destinations.

The shuttle train operations are probably the easiest element of the overall system. The main infrastructure improvement, the Alameda Corridor, is already in place. Some form of public financial support might be required to assist the early years of shuttle train operations and certainly significant public and private financial commitments would be required to build the required rail and terminal infrastructure. The shuttle train could capture 10% or more of the containers projected to use the port complex in the future.

#### Possible Policies and Incentives

The following are measures which can serve as the basis for possible policy and incentives to promote increased rail usage. Each of these would need to be extensively studied and developed to ensure technical and financial viability.

To promote rail usages as the preferred method of transportation to and from the ports, the following TSM, capital improvements, and studies should be considered:

### **Transportation Systems Management (TSM)**

- Imposition of a container user fee equal to or greater than the \$30 container charged by the Alameda Corridor on all trucks leaving the ports. In addition, the revenues from this fee could be used to improve the operation and geometrics of highway facilities.
- Extend gate operations to 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. The immediate effect could be a leveling out of the flow of containers into and out of the ports which could increase the train loading capabilities and subsequent train usage on the Alameda Corridor.

### **Capital Improvements**

- Construct projects that increase the efficiency of port operations such as the Pier B Street Intermodal Rail Yard expansion. This project would increase the port's capacity to load and unload trains and maximize the percentage of goods shipped directly by rail without having to be transported by truck on the I-710 and local roadways.
- Construction of on-dock (loading of containers at the port onto rail) and near-dock rail container transfer facilities to provide additional capacity to load containers onto rail cars. Containers destined to or from the downtown rail yards by truck would instead be loaded onto railcars at these new facilities, reducing truck trips that would otherwise occur on the I-710.

### **Studies**

- Assess main line track availability to determine if improvements need to be made in order to ensure that track capacity will exist to serve both the long haul trains, shuttle trains and the increasing demands for passenger trains.
- Study the initiation of a system of regular scheduled shuttle freight trains from the ports to the Inland Empire. This would require both siting and development of the inland rail terminals and assessment of certain main line track capacity improvements to enable a significant increase of freight trains.

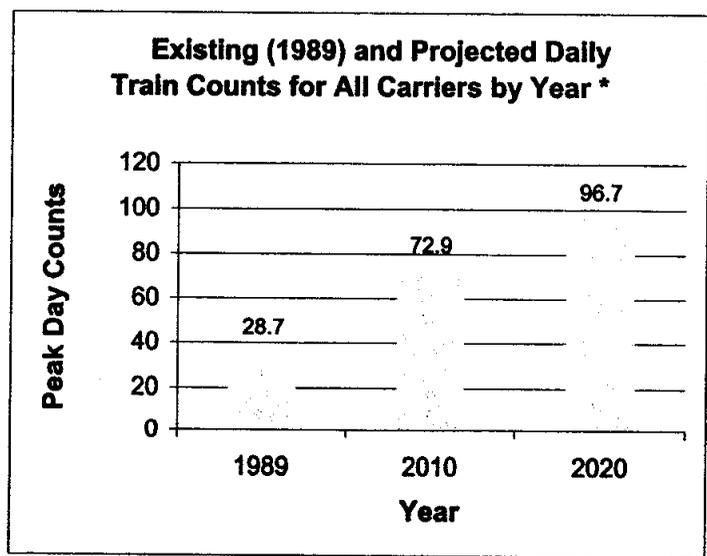
**Alameda Corridor Supplemental Information**

**BACKGROUND**

The principal objective of building the Alameda Corridor was to consolidate the existing rail lines into one rail corridor that would be used by the three rail carries for transporting port related cargo. The corridor handles all types of commodities and train configurations as "through freight trains." No trains serving local industries, yard switching or passenger trains are handled on the corridor.

In 1989, a total of 28 through train movements occurred per day on tracks linked to the ports. Nearly two thirds (61%) of these movements occurred on Southern Pacific lines (17 trains per day); 27 percent of the through movements occurred on Union Pacific (8 trains per day), and 10 percent occurred on Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe lines (3 trains per day).

**Alameda Corridor Train Counts**



\* Source: January 1993 Alameda Corridor Environmental Impact Report

**Current ACTA Projections**

In 1991, the ports were forecasting growth of approximately 24 million containers by 2020. The split of containers between trucks and trains is roughly 50/50. Thus, about 12 million containers were projected for rail, which is equivalent to approximately 100 trains per day. The ports have since updated their projections to 40 million containers in 2025, which would equate to approximately 140 trains.

The railroads, after the Corridor became operational in April 2002, installed a third track in the trench along the entire length of the project. The Corridor, with this third track, now has the capacity to handle 140 trains through 2025.

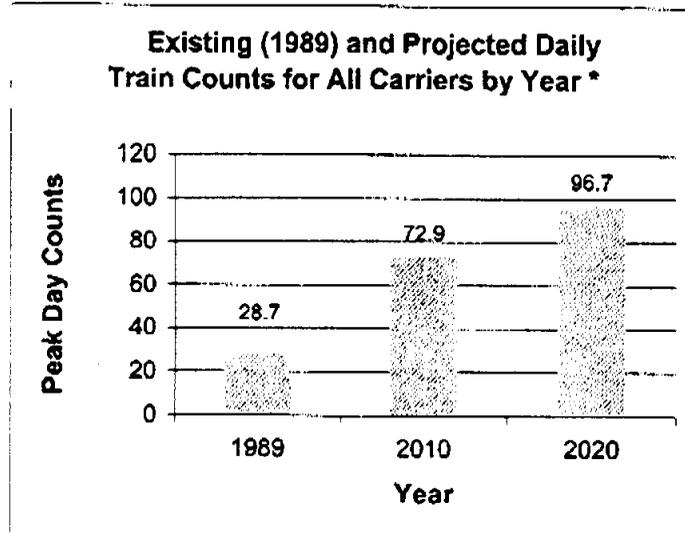
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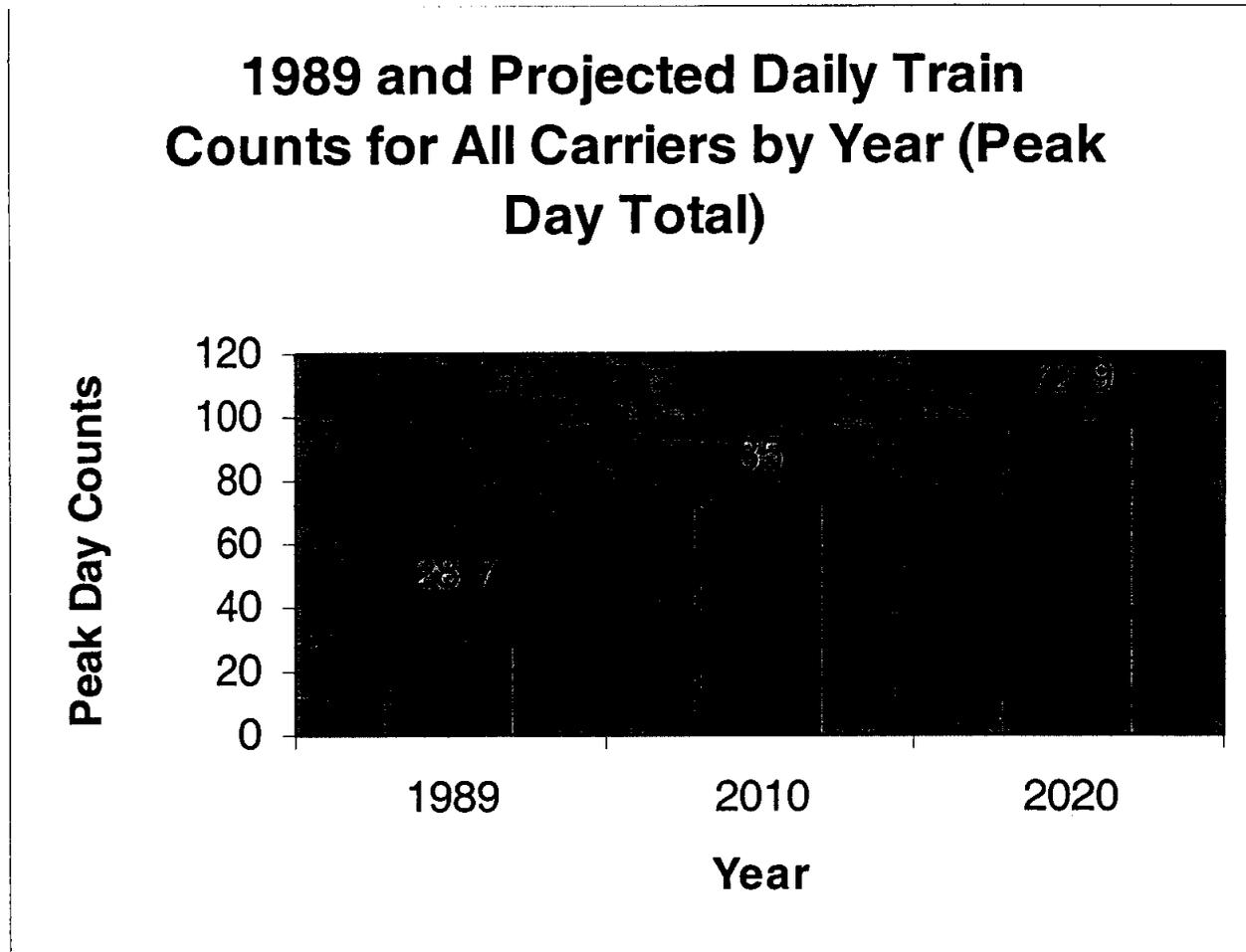
# **Status Report on Alameda Corridor**

**Planning & Programming Committee  
July 16,2003**

# **Project Objectives**

- ❖ Consolidate 90 miles of existing rail lines into one 20 mile high-speed, high capacity rail corridor**
- ❖ Eliminate approximately 200 at-grade crossings**
- ❖ Mitigate air quality impacts**

# Alameda Corridor Train Counts and Projections



SOURCE: January 1993 Alameda Corridor Environmental Report

# Possible Policies & Incentives

To promote rail usages the following TSM, capital improvements, and studies could be considered:

## ❖ **Transportation Systems Management (TSM)**

- Impose a \$30 container fee on all trucks.
- Extend gate operations to 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

# Possible Policies & Incentives

## ❖ Capital Improvements

- Construct projects that increase the efficiency of port operations.
- Construct on-dock and near-dock rail container transfer facilities.

## ❖ Studies

- Assess main line track capacity outside the Alameda Corridor.
- Study the use of shuttle freight trains between the ports to the Inland Empire.



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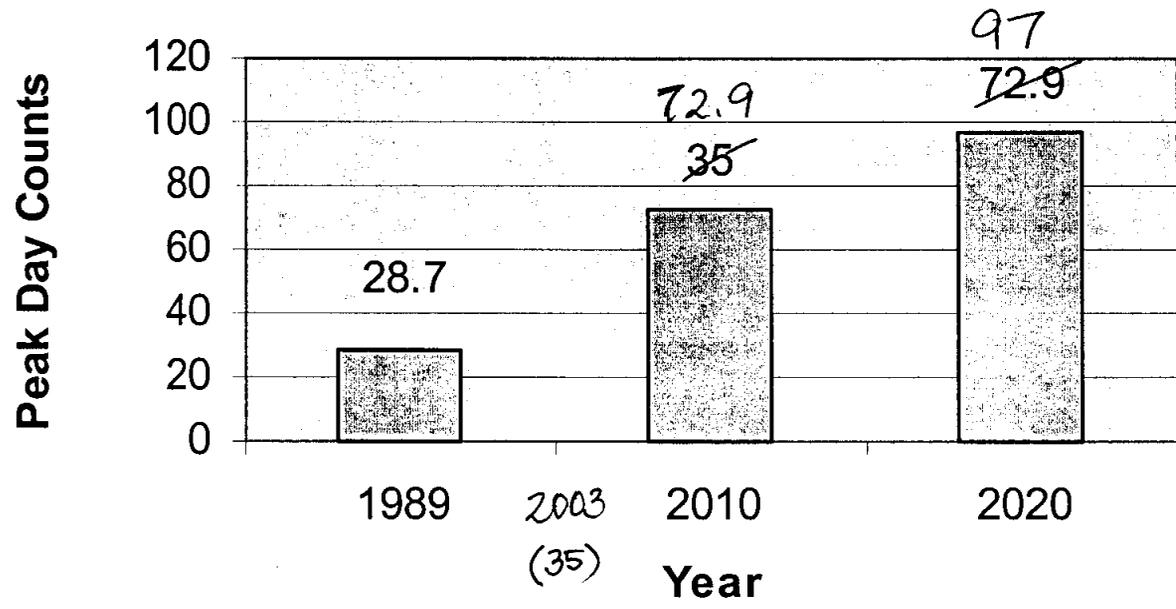
**Eliminate approximately 200 at-grade crossings**

**Mitigate air quality impacts**



# Alameda Corridor Train Counts and Projections

1989 and Projected Daily Train Counts for All Carriers by Year (Peak Day Total)



SOURCE: January 1993 Alameda Corridor Environmental Report



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