

BayRail Alliance Staying on Track

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Governor Schwarzenegger - Don't Kill HSR

By Margaret Okuzumi

I hope you'll take time to read the letter that we submitted to the state legislature in April on why the California High-Speed Rail project is required for California to maintain its future quality-of-life. It's a seminal piece that's helped galvanize support for the high-speed rail project. A link to it is on our website at www.bayrailalliance.org/california_high_speed_rail.

Several subsequent support letters than came in to the legislature after ours, lifted whole sentences and paragraphs from our letter! Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, it seems. I'm glad others liked our letter.

The editor of a widely-read and respected progressive political blog, the California Progress Report asked us to adapt it for posting on his blog. As a result, hundreds of influential people in Sacramento and around the state have read it. I'm told it was picked up by the Governor's office, and other people have re-posted it to their blogs including one in Germany. And one of the diarists on DailyKos linked to the HSR talking points we have up on our website. We're famous!

Following the Money

We attended hearings in Sacramento to support funding for HSR and for public transit. The Schwarzenegger administration has proposed that public transit lose \$1.3 billion next year compared to what it is supposed to get under state law. In the Governor's proposal, yellow school buses and shuttles for severely disabled people to go to regional treatment centers – both items that have always been funded out of the general fund – would be funded out of the public transportation account instead. They've also proposed to take \$340 million dollars to repay debt early on transportation bonds.

Then to add insult to injury, they proposed that some of the loss could be offset using proceeds from the transit portion of the infrastructure bonds. Surely voters did not intend that Prop 1B, passed last November, would be used to backfill normal transit operations instead of used to pay for new or expanded transit service.

The administration was playing a huge shell game with the budget, and it was very complicated to follow.

If the governor's proposal ultimately prevails, we'll suffer from a double whammy of public transit agencies losing funding – creating a crisis for dozens of transit agencies and their riders statewide – and also risk losing the

Mark Your Calendar for HSR Public Hearings in August

Most of the program-level Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for statewide high-speed rail was completed in 2005. Because of the controversy over the alignment into the Bay Area, and the clear inadequacy of the statewide EIR/EIS in addressing the issues, the HSRA directed staff to “prepare separate program-level EIR to identify a preferred alignment within the broad corridor between & including the Altamont Pass and Pacheco Pass for the HST segment connecting the San Francisco Bay Area to the Central Valley.”

The draft EIR/EIS has just been released. There will be 60-day public comment process, assuming that Schwarzenegger has not completely killed the HSR project by August.

Six public hearings on the Draft Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train (HST) Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) have been scheduled from 4 PM - 6:30 PM on the following days/locations.

August 23: San Francisco City Hall
August 24: San Jose City Hall
August 27: Livermore City Hall
August 28: Oakland City Hall
August 29: Gilroy City Hall
August 30: Merced (County Board of Supervisors)

Please check the CAHSRA website (www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov) to obtain room numbers and further location details.

In addition, the HSRA board is scheduled to meet August 23, 10 AM, at San Francisco City Hall.

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New Meeting Styles, Locations and Times

BayRail Alliance is changing our almost two-decade-long practice of holding monthly general meetings on the Peninsula where we invite a transit official or expert to present on a topic with a Q & A session afterward.

The old meeting style helped us to get insights from transit staff and officials and to hone our transportation expertise, but was not conducive to engaging people who were new to the issues or focusing on action.

We've seen a need to recruit more people to help us do outreach and education on issues such as high-speed rail and electrification of Caltrain. So recently we held two meetings in San Jose that were focused on figuring out what we can do to help educate more people about these projects. These meetings were very successful in generating some creative new ideas and energy, and analyses as to what might be a strategic approach to this outreach (see sidebar).

Our plan is to continue with these new style of meetings in San Jose, Mountain View, San Francisco and possibly Hillsdale stations, and to schedule quarterly meetings in the old format in Mountain View. We welcome your input as to what topics you're most interested in hearing about or which transit officials you're most interested in hearing from. Please call us toll free at 866-267-8024 or else use the contact form on our newly-redesigned website at www.bayrailalliance.org

New Features on our Website

In each issue of *Staying on Track*, we'll highlight some of the types of information and features you'll find on our newly-redesigned website

- Everything you need to know about planning a trip on transit in the Bay Area on our **Plan Your Transit Trip** page
- Caltrain bike tags: a template for quickly making your own Caltrain bike destination tags using our template and a name badge holder
- A video showing our depiction of Caltrain Metro East at San Jose Airport
- Tips on how to be effective when contacting elected officials

Check it out by exploring bayrailalliance.org

Thanks to all our donors who helped make the website overhaul possible!

Make it Happen!

We've more ideas than people who can execute them to support the development of quality rail transit in the Bay Area.

Some recent ideas that are seeking collaborators - maybe you!

HSR:

- Develop a wiki on California HSR that would tie together the various disparate blogs and websites scattered on the topic.
- Develop a forum by which HSR supporters can find out the latest news from the Capitol on HSR, and figure out ways to improve our access and presence in Sacramento.
- Develop a professionally-designed brochure that explains HSR to people who know nothing about it.
- Develop a TV or radio news item to tell people what's at stake with the Governor's support of HSR
- Promote HSR as an agenda item for civic groups
- maintain contact with sympathetic groups (e.g. environmental) but don't overlook targets like Bay Area Council and Calif. State Auto Association (has been somewhat sympathetic to some transit projects in the past
- Look for sympathetic bureaucrats and lobby them to promote HSR budgets and priorities

Caltrain electrification:

- Develop a large billboard/sign to mount on a truck parked at Caltrain stations with slogans such as "Dirty Diesel Exhaust Filling Your Lungs? Electrify Caltrain Now www.bayrailalliance.org" "You'd be shocked at how fast an electrified Caltrain could get you to work. Electrify Caltrain Now" "Want more trains to stop here? Electrify Caltrain Now" etc.
- Print napkins or coffee sleeves to give to station coffee vendors to use
- Do outreach to people who are into tech/solar/clean energy
- Talk to neighbors about reduction in diesel pollution
- Pitch newspaper stories in cities that have suffered cutbacks in local service

Please contact us if you'd like to be a part of any of the above projects. We're looking for someone with a large truck for the billboard idea.

We welcome new ideas also. Check our website for our upcoming meeting dates and join us!

Oppose expansion of VTA's taxing authority

A bill by Senator Elaine Alquist, SB 264, would allow the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to put a sales tax on the ballot in a 1/8-cent increment. Currently VTA may place taxes on the ballot in increments of 1/4-cent or a multiple thereof up to a current maximum total county sales tax rate of 9.25%.

VTA has stated it is considering putting a 1/8-cent tax measure on the ballot in 2008. Many of you know, the back-handed push by VTA to get some \$80 million/year by joining with the county on a 1/2-cent tax measure, failed last June, garnering less than 43% of the vote.

VTA is trying everything possible to keep momentum for the BART project alive. An eighth cent sales tax campaign would potentially mislead voters into believing this agency can deliver on the BART project, when an 1/8-cent tax increase would not suffice. But the passage of a 1/8-cent tax may keep momentum for the project going until they can pass yet another tax increase measure. As long as VTA remains focused on the BART extension we can expect other transit projects to be starved for funds.

In March, the Hay Group, outside consultants hired by VTA to conduct an organizational and financial assessment, blasted the agency for its poor financial practices and oversight.

The Mercury News, in their Sunday editorial of March 25, 2007, wrote:

"Rarely is an organizational audit as devastating as the Valley Transportation Authority vivisection that was revealed last week. Yet not a word we've seen so far comes as a surprise...Oversight: It's been all but absent, with no internal controls on spending and no serious board involvement...Mission: VTA has become caught up in "projects" and lost sight of its core mission to provide transportation...Basic cash-flow information is unavailable."

This isn't the first blistering critique of VTA. In 2004, Santa Clara County's civil grand jury recommended suspending the BART-to-San Jose project and disbanding VTA's board of directors.

As a pro-transit group, we are generally supportive of funding for transit. But should VTA be allowed to ask voters for more money, when they've not yet fixed the underlying governance problems identified in the Hay Group and Grand Jury reports?

VTA's been careless with the billions in Measure A sales tax funds that it already has. The financial mismanagement is but one symptom of a fundamentally broken governing board structure that allows the city of San Jose, and particularly, the mayor of San Jose, to dictate the regional transpor-

tation agenda with minimal buy-in from the other 14 cities in the county.

SB 264 has passed the Senate and is making its way through the Assembly. Opposing SB 264 are BayRail Alliance, the VTA Riders Union and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers' Association. In favor are VTA and SVLG.

For more information on the need for VTA reform, see www.bayrailalliance.org/vta_reform

Shaping the Bay Area's Transportation 2035 Plan

Work has already begun on shaping the grand plan for transportation in the Bay Area for the years 2010 - 2035. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has held a number of workshops describing their proposed approach to the topic.

Some of the planning framework has been set by existing federal legislation as spelled out in SAFETEA-LU, which expires in 2009. MTC is proposing a somewhat different approach than what it has used in the past. They have suggested that certain "performance measures" be used to model what it will take in terms of projects and money to achieve certain goals such as reduction in congestion, pollution, and number of miles that trucks and automobiles are driven in the Bay Area each day. They will separately model the outcome of expanding freeways, introducing HOT/Bus lanes, and expanding rail and ferry service. Then they are proposing to somehow develop a hybrid scenario out of this that the Bay Area can afford.

We have serious concerns with this approach and how the merits and prioritization of projects will be determined in the end. Nonetheless, there is some opportunity to introduce some different measurements and ways of thinking that MTC has never considered before.

Toward this end, planning is underway for a joint MTC/ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) Summit to be held at the Oakland Marriott on Friday, Oct. 26.

Some topics that they are proposing to discuss in more detail at the summit include:

- How to make housing and economic development happen in areas determined to be a priority in the regional FOCUS process
- Identifying strategies to address climate change
- Introducing pricing strategies and user fees
- Determining what constitutes a socially- equitable transit system

For more information, check the MTC website at www.mtc.ca.gov

BART to change San Mateo County service

More Cost , Inconvenience for Caltrain Riders to SFO
Will mass confusion ensue?

After the bitter divorce between BART and SamTrans over the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) extension, BART plans to change how it operates trains to the south of Daly City. While the changes will increase frequency of service to every 15 minutes from every 20 minutes, there will no longer be any direct service between SFO and Millbrae. Passengers traveling between Millbrae and SFO will have to travel one stop to San Bruno BART station and then transfer to the correct line and go another stop. (Note: the BART San Bruno station is one mile north of the San Bruno Caltrain station.) The changes will likely make the BART system confusing to many riders.

The new plan by BART is modeled on the original operating pattern in 2003 when the extension first opened for service. BART discontinued that pattern when low ridership created an operating deficit of \$20 million per year that SamTrans balked at paying.

BART hopes the new plan will boost ridership between the east bay and the airport and between Millbrae and downtown San Francisco. During the day weekdays and Saturdays, the Richmond line will serve Millbrae, taking a direct leg of a wye that bypasses the SFO station. At other times, the Dublin line would serve Millbrae. The SFO station will be served by the Pittsburg line at all times.

More Cost, Less Convenience

Before 2003, the connection between Caltrain and SFO was provided by a free shuttle that was timed to meet the trains and which stopped at all the passenger air terminals. The shuttle, partly funded by the airport, was discontinued upon the opening of the SFO BART extension. Passengers were now required to pay a \$1.50 fare to ride BART between Millbrae and SFO's International Terminal and had to transfer at San Bruno BART. Most travelers flying domestically would then have to transfer yet again to the airport people mover at the international terminal to reach the domestic terminals.

Due to low ridership, to save money BART stopped running trains directly between San Bruno and Millbrae. BART reduced operations so that only the Dublin/Pleasanton line went to the airport and also to Millbrae. This is why travelers between Millbrae and downtown SF currently ride on trains that "back out" of the SFO in San

Bruno if they are traveling between SFO and Caltrain at Millbrae.

The new schedule is being determined entirely by BART. SamTrans remains too financially strapped to consider providing alternative service (like restoring the shuttle bus) for the Caltrain riders heading to SFO.

The Tradeoff

Direct service between Millbrae and the airport is more convenient for travelers to the airport who are coming from Caltrain, but makes trips between Millbrae and downtown San Francisco about ten minutes longer - for a total of 40 minutes to Embarcadero station.

This streamlined configuration also reduced confusion for travelers from the East Bay and San Francisco who were going to the airport, since all Millbrae-bound trains now stop at the airport. Before, some travelers would end up at Millbrae confused about how to get to the airport, not realizing that they needed to transfer to the SFO-bound train at some other station like Balboa Park or San Bruno. And some travelers to Millbrae Caltrain would unwittingly end up at the airport, and have much difficulty figuring out how to make the correct transfer at San Bruno to go one stop to Millbrae.

The BART extension was partly sold as an improvement for the Caltrain riders heading to the airport, but this promise was not fulfilled in the design. This is why we were part of the Coalition for a One Stop Terminal (COST) that opposed the extension to Millbrae. COST championed a plan that would have connected Caltrain, BART, and the airport people mover at a single station serving the airport. Unfortunately, the COST proposal did not prevail, and so we have the current dysfunctional configuration that will make transit to San Francisco International Airport more costly and less convenient for Caltrain riders for the foreseeable future.

About the SamTrans/BART “Divorce”

The BART extension to SFO and Millbrae in San Mateo County has always been costly and contentious. Between June 2003 and February 2007, SamTrans paid more than \$32 million in subsidies to operate the line 8.2-mile extension.

The partnership between SamTrans and BART to operate the line dissolved with a formal agreement brokered by MTC in February 2007. BART now has complete control of operations on the lines and will be responsible for its costs. SamTrans will pay BART predetermined amounts and will no longer owe BART an unknown millions of dollars each year depending on ridership.

San Mateo County is the only county with BART service that doesn't pay dedicated sales taxes for the BART system. San Francisco, Contra Costa, and Alameda counties do pay taxes going directly to BART and also have representation on the directly-elected BART governing board.

Instead, San Mateo County agreed to pay a “buy-in” fee of \$170 million and make other “loans” to BART to get the extension built. The parties mutually agreed in the 1990 to make SamTrans, the county's bus provider, responsible for paying for the extension's operating costs, and to let SamTrans have a say on how many trains would run. In exchange SamTrans would get to keep any future operating profits generated by the line after the first \$145 M in profit went to fund the BART - Warm Springs extension in Alameda County.

Within a few months of the line opening, SamTrans became alarmed at the high costs. Originally they expected to pay about \$6 million/year in operating subsidy; instead they were hemorrhaging about \$5 million every 3 months. The extension attracted about 12,000 new weekday riders, compared to the 50,000 weekday riders that were

forecast to materialize on the original opening date that had been planned for 1998.

Within six months of the SFO extension opening SamTrans had fallen behind in its payments to BART. BART voted to file a lawsuit against SamTrans. Some history:

February 1999 SamTrans “loans” BART \$72 million interest-free to fund a shortfall in constructing the extension.

June 2003 BART-SFO and Millbrae extensions (which added 8.2 miles and 4 stations to the system) open after years of delay

January 2004 SamTrans falls behind in its payments to BART. The subsidy that SamTrans must pay to fund the operating shortfalls is projected at \$22 million/year.

March 2004 BART board votes unanimously to file a lawsuit against SamTrans for the money that is owed.

March 2004 SamTrans' board votes to pay BART \$8.9 million but only if the agency agrees to cut service to levels that would be covered by the subsidy.

May 2004 SamTrans and BART reach an agreement to cut service on the extension, producing the direct Millbrae-SFO operating plan. SamTrans agrees to pay BART \$11 million.

July 2004 SamTrans plans 3rd major service cut in 3 years.

July 2005 SamTrans proposes closing some BART stations in San Mateo County on weekends

August 2005 BART board reluctantly approves SamTrans proposal that reduces service on BART -SFO extension to every 15 minutes from 7 or 8 minutes, and that increases fares between Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, San Bruno and the airport

station by \$1.14.

May 2006 SamTrans tells BART it wants to pay no more than \$5 million next year and nothing thereafter.

February 2007 SamTrans/BART “divorce” agreement announced.

The terms of the agreement:

- SamTrans agreed to pay \$16 million to BART in the current fiscal year and \$16 million for FY 2007-08. The \$32 M in funds will come out of SamTrans' anticipated \$42 million in state Prop. 1B transportation bond funds approved by voters in November.
- The San Mateo County Transportation Authority would continue to pay BART 2 percent, about \$1.2 million a year, of the county's half-cent sales tax toward the Warm Springs extension, or about \$30 million over the lifetime of the 25-year measure.
- SamTrans would also be on the hook to BART for \$800,000 a year in State Transit Assistance (STA) funds until the BART's Fremont-to-Warm Springs extension is completed.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission would also contribute \$24 million to BART service from its portion of state Prop. 1B transportation bond money.

In summary, BART will get some \$90 M. While San Mateo transportation will lose tens of millions to BART, none of the money will come directly from SamTrans' operating budget. This is a help to SamTrans which has been struggling to close large deficits each year and whose problems affect Caltrain also, as SamTrans funds about 42% of Caltrain's operating budget.

HSR

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high-speed rail project. This is because HSR was most likely to get money from the public transportation account. If transit is bled dry, then HSR couldn't take from the crumbs.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) had requested \$103 M from this coming year's budget, of which \$66 million was to complete design and environmental studies and \$37 million to start purchasing land. The Schwarzenegger administration proposed just \$1.2 million in new money for the project or 1% of the HSRA's request, hardly enough to keep the lights on. In addition the authority has about half a million carried over from last year's budget and \$3.5 million of Orange County Transportation Authority funds that OCTA has allocated to fund planning for HSR in their area of southern California.

The mood at the June 27 HSRA meeting in San Carlos was somber. The director of the HSRA, Mehdi Morshed, warned that the HSRA runs out of money on June 30, that the lateness of the state budget posed a problem, and that should the governor's funding proposal prevail, he would recommend that HSRA consider dismantling itself.

Some 400 consultant and engineers statewide working on all the details of the project would be reassigned to other projects or laid off, and it would not be easy to rehire them at a later date. They would not be able to use the money from OCTA and may not be able to finish Bay Area Program-level environmental impact study either.

Earlier in the month, the senate budget subcommittee recommended \$50 million, and the assembly budget subcommittee recommended \$40 million for HSR. Then, state revenues started coming in lower than expected due to a decline in personal income tax revenues.

The budget conference committee was unable to reconcile on levels of HSR and public transit funding, until late negotiations on tribal gaming compacts increased revenues to the state budget. On Friday June 29, the budget conference committee met and put \$40 M in the budget for HSR!

While it's less money than we wanted, it's is a victory for now – but not yet assured. The big question mark is Governor Schwarzenegger, and whether he will “blue pencil” the HSR funding or keep it in.

The Governor Refuses to Lead on HSR

Distressingly, Schwarzenegger sent a terse letter back to his HSRA appointee Quentin Kopp, declining Mr. Kopp's request

to convene private and federal interests to obtain funding commitments for HSR. Links to this correspondence are on our website. So much for leadership from this Governor.

BayRail Alliance produced a second widely-read media piece, published in the California Progress Report on June 15, that may have encouraged the budget conference committee to fund HSR despite negative feedback from the Schwarzenegger administration. We were prompted to write the piece, “Tragic Misunderstanding By Governor May Kill High Speed Rail in California”, in response to a letter the Governor's office sent in response Congressman Jim Costa's letter asking him to support HSR.

Schwarzenegger's letter stated that he wished to see private industry and the federal government give some funding guarantees before the state spent any more money on HSR. He's also indicated opposition to the Nov. 2008 bond measure until federal support is demonstrated. It is really looking like his administration is trying to kill HSR.

Our piece describes how Schwarzenegger's chief economic advisor and appointee to the HSRA, is approaching the HSR project like an investment banker rather than a developer, and why that poses a problem for the project.

This second blog piece analyzing the administration's approach to HSR also received lots of attention, including a call and letter from former Judge Quentin Kopp thanking us for the insightful piece. It also led to me being interviewed by John Scott, a reporter for radio station the Quake (960 AM) for the Progressive News Hour. See our website for these.

Schwarzenegger's administration has been schizophrenic on the environment and in his stated commitment to HSR. He's missing a huge opportunity to make HSR his legacy. He's also been sending mixed signals in the state's work to meet AB 32 goals (to reduce greenhouse gas emissions).

The budget is expected to be finalized before the end of July. Please check our website for updates on how you can express your support for the HSR project.



High-Speed Rail Talking Points

Travel from Bay Area to Los Angeles in about 2.5 hours

- **High Speed Rail is a proven technology** that has been in use in Europe and Asia for over 40 years with an excellent safety record.
- Construction of the High Speed Rail system in California will be **transformative for the state**, stimulating the economy, driving development, creating an estimated 450,000 jobs *and* protecting the environment.
- High Speed Rail will **benefit all Californians**, whether they live in urban, suburban, or rural areas.
 - High Speed Rail will **ease congestion in urban areas**,
 - bring **suburban and ex-urban areas closer to major business centers**, and
 - **revitalize the downtowns** of many of our smaller Central Valley cities.
- If we don't build High-Speed Rail, California will need to spend twice as much money to expand freeways and airports to provide the same level of mobility. Expanding freeways and airports is in many places not an option and will harm surrounding communities and the environment.
 - to upgrade US-99 between Sacramento and Bakersfield to become I-9 will cost about as much the entire California HSR project -- and such a highway expansion would become clogged with single-occupancy vehicles very quickly.
- High Speed Rail will be **much more convenient**:
 - High Speed Rail is not affected by weather or traffic delays.
 - Downtown to downtown San Francisco to Los Angeles in about two and a half hours, saving travelers time and the hassle of airport parking and check-in.
 - SFO, Burbank and Ontario airports will be more easily accessible, for more Californians, especially those in the Central Valley.
- High Speed Rail will provide significant **environmental benefits**: the trains run on electricity, which will
 - **keep many millions of metric tons of greenhouse emissions** out of our atmosphere and
 - **decrease our reliance on fossil fuels**.
- California **has always led the rest of the country** in creating technology and protecting the environment: it's time for California to lead the way again - towards safe, convenient, comfortable and clean travel.

For more information, see www.bayrailalliance.org/california_high_speed_rail

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forwarding and address correction requested

BayRail Alliance is a 25-year old non-profit, membership-based organization that promotes the creation of a modern rail network to serve the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Yes! I support improving Caltrain and Regional Transit!

SOT2007-1

I support BayRail Alliance's efforts to promote a regional transit system by upgrading Caltrain, extending it to downtown San Francisco and the east bay, improving connections and establishing a High-Speed Rail system connecting the Bay Area and Southern California.

I'm enclosing a contribution to help fund BayRail Alliance's programs.

___ \$35 regular ___ \$50 sponsor ___ \$100 Patron ___ \$250 President's Club ___ \$ _____ Other
___ \$15 student/low income

- New member
- Renewal of membership

We are supported by member contributions. Voting memberships start at \$15 or \$35, as applicable. As we engage in some lobbying activities, dues are not tax-deductible at this time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

check here if you don't want your name and address shared with other organizations. **Make all checks payable to BayRail Alliance.**