

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
December 15, 2004
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The meeting of the California High-Speed Rail Authority was called to order on December 15 at 10:30 a.m. at Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Board Room, Los Angeles, CA.

Members Present: Joseph E. Petrillo, Chair
Fran Florez, Vice Chair
Marc Adelman, Vice Chair
Rod Diridon, Sr.

Members Absent: Donna Andrews, Vice Chair
Bob Giroux
Lynn Schenk
T.J. Stapleton

Opening Comments

Chair Petrillo apologized for the delay in starting the meeting. The Chair also explained that due to previous travel plans and an unexpected illness the Authority would not have a quorum at the meeting and therefore could not take action on any of the items on the agenda.

Members Reports

Rod Diridon reported on his efforts as a board member of HSGTA.

Chair Petrillo reported noted that throughout the public review process of the EIR/EIS there has been broad support for the project. Chair Petrillo added that the proposed high-speed rail would serve as the backbone transportation infrastructure for the next millennium, and would connect with many other transportation systems. With the development of high-speed train routes, improvements would be made to bridges, roads, and other rail facilities which would allow for increased and faster movement of goods.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Morshed reported that the Request for Proposal by the MTC to conduct a statewide ridership study for high-speed rail has been released and the proposals are due by December 17. MTC is also conducting a regional rail planning effort to determine how their local transit system will coordinate with the high-speed train system. The Authority staff will be working with MTC on their regional rail plan, and have been discussing the preparation of a MOU for board approval.

The Executive Director reported that the Authority had received a letter from the Attorney representing TRAC, PCL and a number of other environmental organizations. The letter indicates that they believe the EIR/EIS is not sufficient to select individual routes and station locations, and recommend the Authority should only certify the document that high-speed rail is preferred alternative and leave the routes and station location selection for future work.

Christine Sproul, representing the Authority from the Attorney General's office, stated that the letter from Mr. Flashman raised two issues. The first issue relates to the piecemealing or segmenting the project by virtue of staff's recommendation to focus the analysis of the Northern Mountain crossing on a broad corridor rather than a single alignment. The second issue relates to apparent confusion over the board's decision making process for complying with NEPA and CEQA. Ms. Sproul stated that based on case law as well as consultation with FRA and CEQ the process the Authority has structured complies with both NEPA and CEQA, and is appropriate under the tiering provisions of both statutes.

Ms. Sproul went on to state that the decision the Authority was scheduled to make today was a decision that was one that would provide direction to staff for the preparation of the final environmental document: and this is not a final selection or approval. NEPA calls for a preferred alternative or alternatives to be included in the final environmental document.

Selection of Monthly Meeting Dates

Executive Director Morshed presented a revised schedule of the 2005 Authority meeting schedule, noting the Authority meetings are scheduled on the fourth Wednesday of the month, with the exception of the January meeting. Chair Petrillo requested that the January meeting also be scheduled on the fourth Wednesday for consistency. Executive Director Morshed reminded the Authority the February 23rd meeting will be an all-day workshop to discuss the Implementation Plan with industry experts. Executive Director Morshed stated the March meeting should be stricken due to the potential trip to Japan.

Identification of Preferred Alignment and Station Locations

Deputy Director's Carrie Pourvahidi and Dan Leavitt presented revised staff recommendations identifying preferred alignments and station locations for the final EIR/EIS. A copy of this report is available on the Authority website www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov or upon request.

Public Comment

Bob Link, Mayor of City of Visalia

Mayor Link reported on the City's efforts to build consensus among the Central Valley communities in support of high-speed rail and best alignment through the Central Valley.

Colleen Carlson, Dooley & Herr, LLP (representing the City of Visalia)

Ms. Carlson expressed the City's concern over the exclusion of the UPRR alignment with a station in Visalia in the programmatic process.

Michael Keisling, TRAC

Mr. Keisling stated TRAC is in support of the staff recommendation between Fresno and Bakersfield.

Lynn Gorman, Fresno County Department of Public Works

Ms. Gorman stated the Fresno County Board of Supervisors strongly supports the BNSF alignment in south Fresno County.

Jim Bickhart, Councilmember Antonia Villaraigosa

Mr. Bickhart presented a letter from Councilmember Villaraigosa requesting the Authority engage the community in the process to ensure a sensitive project design and mitigation measures.

Implementation Plan Presentation

Nick Brand from Systra presented an overview of the Implementation Plan with discussion on selected areas of the Plan. A copy of this presentation is available on the Authority website www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov or upon request.

Public Comment

James Birkelund, Natural Resources Defense Council

Mr. Birkelund requested the Authority refrain from locking in preferred alignment alternatives and station locations until there is sufficient environmental analysis to support these decisions. Mr. Birkelund requested the withdrawal of the present draft EIR without certification and issuing a revised EIR that further analyzes the environmental impacts.

Tom Grave, Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE)

Mr. Grave asked about the time needed to complete the next-tier programmatic EIR/EIS for the Northern Mountain Crossing. Mr. Grave distributed a letter from the Mayor Trevino from Atwater.