



October 26, 2007

Mr. Quentin Kopp  
California High Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comments by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG)  
on the Draft Program EIR/EIS for the Bay Area to Central Valley High-  
Speed Train (HST) Program EIR/EIS.

Dear Chair Kopp:

Thank you for the opportunity to supplement our original comments provided on August 30, 2004, on the overall program level EIR/EIS for the overall HST system (attached for your convenience). Our comments today focus primarily on the Bay Area access issue (Pacheco vs. Altamont alignments), but also raise again an issue that we do not believe has received sufficient attention from the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA).

L035-1

First, with respect to the Bay Area access issue, we believe that draft document may be flawed in its projections of the Altamont ridership numbers. We would pose this question: How can ridership be greater via the Pacheco Pass alignment, which traverses areas of very low population densities, when compared to the Altamont alignment, which goes through Modesto, Stockton, Tracy, and Livermore? The Altamont alignment also lends itself much more readily to a future build out that would connect Sacramento and the Bay Area. It would seem that the CHSRA's consultant definitely needs to go back to the drawing boards in the ridership area before the document is finalized.

L035-2

In addition to ridership, we would make the following observations: the travel times to Southern California are virtually the same (with the Altamont alignment slightly faster); the wetland/grassland and other environmental issues associated with the Pacheco alignment are highly problematic and will ultimately be more difficult to resolve than the Altamont environmental issues; and the costs to build a future Sacramento leg via the Altamont alignment are significantly less (i.e., a Sacramento-Stockton segment will be considerably cheaper to construct than a Sacramento-Chowchilla segment).

L035-3

L035-4

L035-5

All of this, we believe, argues for the CHSRA to give very careful consideration to the Altamont alignment in its upcoming deliberations.

L035-6

Auburn  
Citrus Heights  
Colfax  
Davis  
El Dorado County  
Elk Grove  
Folsom  
Galt  
Isleton  
Lincoln  
Live Oak  
Loomis  
Marysville  
Placer County  
Placerville  
Rancho Cordova  
Rocklin  
Roseville  
Sacramento  
Sacramento County  
Sutter County  
West Sacramento  
Wheatland  
Winters  
Woodland  
Yolo County  
Yuba City  
Yuba County

There is another issue, however, which the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) feels most strongly about and which we would like to reemphasize to the CHRSA regardless of which Bay Area alignment is selected. In our August 30, 2004, letter, SACOG pointed out our concerns about the potential for the High Speed Train (HST) to create sprawl, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley. We believe that the measures the CHRSA has developed to date to deal with sprawl are inadequate. While the intentions of the CHRSA in this area are admirable, SACOG believes that the Authority has not examined sufficiently the unintended consequences of the project with respect to sprawl.

There is virtually no difference between the freeway system and an HST system with the sprawling effect that such a project can create. One need look no further than New York City and Chicago after World War II to see the massive low density development that occurred in Connecticut and Northern Illinois by commuter trains. When a wage earner can buy a much less expensive home in Fresno and commute to work in the Bay Area in less than one hour, why would that individual not do so? Look what is happening in Tracy and Modesto, and the commutes are much greater than one hour. The CHRSA needs to address this issue in a much more in depth manner than it has to date.

L035-7

The Europeans and the Japanese have dealt with this issue with very strict land use controls. We do not suggest that land use controls are the only to deal with this issue. While the Coastal Commission has been very effective, as an example, in preserving the California coastline, land use controls have not been generally very popular with the residents of this State. There may be incentives which the CHRSA could explore that would address the issue of sprawl in a more proactive way. The main point here is that the CHRSA has not really addressed in a thoroughgoing manner the issue of the potential of the project to create additional sprawl throughout the State. This unintended consequence of the project could very well defeat very problem the project was proposed to solve. We encourage the CHRSA to take up this issue immediately, and SACOG stands ready to offer its assistance in any way that would be helpful. We believe that our experience with the Blueprint project and the PLACE<sup>3</sup>S methodology could be very useful to the Authority.

Thank you and please feel free to call me if you have any comments or questions.

L035-8

Sincerely,



Mike McKeever  
Executive Director

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Attachment