



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT



SFMTA

Municipal Transportation Agency

September 23, 2010

Robert Doty, Manager – Peninsula Rail Program
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Summary of Concerns Related to Proposed CAHSRA Concept Plans for 7th/16th Street
and 7th/Mission Bay Drive Grade Separations

Dear Mr. Doty,

We appreciate the time your staff took to meet with city staff on August 25, 2010 regarding California High Speed Rail (CAHSR) within San Francisco. As you know, while the City strongly supports CAHSR, we continue to have serious concerns about the negative impact of CAHSR on the central part of the city. In particular, we are concerned about CAHSRA's grade separation proposals for 7th/16th Streets and 7th/Mission Bay Drive (referred to as Commons in the CAHSRA documents).

As requested by CAHSRA staff at the August 25 meeting, this letter summarizes the concerns of the City and many community members regarding the proposed undergrounding of 16th Street, 7th Street, and Mission Bay Drive/Commons. We formally request a detailed analysis of alternative designs that address these concerns in a timeframe that will allow their incorporation in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), scheduled to be released in December 2010. In a separate letter, the City will provide specific alternatives to be included in the EIR at an equal level of analysis as the current proposals.

Community Context

Mission Bay is the City's newest community. Already substantially underway, at full build-out it will include thousands of new residents and jobs, a University of California (UCSF) campus and medical center, and will represent billions of dollars of public and private investment. The adopted Mission Bay Redevelopment Plan is a result of hundreds of public meetings, building on decades of planning for the redevelopment of the area. Similarly, after a decade of planning, the City adopted new plans for the Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and Central Waterfront areas as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods effort. These plans laid out a framework, based on careful community input, for substantial intensification in this section of the City. Over time, these industrial areas will become dense, mixed-use districts with new residents, workers, students and visitors, supported by robust pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular connections. The Mission Bay and Eastern Neighborhoods planning efforts included significant environmental analysis to

determine what transportation and utility infrastructure is necessary to adequately serve these growing areas. Maintaining and enhancing the 16th Street, 7th Street, and Mission Bay Drive connections are essential to supporting the growth of these neighborhoods.

Summary of Issues

16th Street and 7th Street are already major neighborhood arterials supporting the entire northeast quadrant of the City; Mission Bay Drive will be a critical connection once Mission Bay is fully built out. These roads provide key linkages for pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, freight, and autos. Because of the existing at-grade Caltrain tracks, they provide the only such connections between Mission Bay, Showplace Square, Potrero Hill, and the Central Waterfront. The City has made tremendous investments, including the creation of the new Mission Bay Drive (Commons) crossing of the existing tracks, to connect these neighborhoods.

The following points summarize some of the City of San Francisco's key concerns:

- **Neighborhood Character and Connectivity:** The existing at-grade rail tracks and Interstate-280 currently physically divide the Mission Bay, Showplace Square and Potrero Hill neighborhoods from other parts of the City. A primary tenet of all of the plans adopted for these areas is to improve their connections with the larger city to help improve quality of life, economic vitality and access to services and amenities. Significant public investment has already been made to overcome these barriers, such as improving both the 16th Street and Mission Bay Drive/Commons crossings (the improvements to the Mission Bay Drive at-grade crossing cost almost \$20 million alone). However, the CAHSRA proposals for 16th Street, 7th Street and Mission Bay Drive will instead reduce the quality of the connections between these neighborhoods by creating greater visual and physical barriers. In addition, the number of actual connections with the surrounding grid system will be reduced under CAHSRA's proposals. Given existing barriers, connectivity needs to be improved in these areas, not further compromised.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections and Safety:** The proposed designs for the 16th, 7th and Mission Bay Drive underpasses create relatively long tunnels and depressed areas that will create an unsafe and unpleasant environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. These tunnels and depressed areas will force pedestrians and bicyclists to traverse relatively long stretches of road with no, or very little, visual or physical connection to adjacent properties. Pedestrians are greatly sensitive to walking environments and to grade changes. A wealth of local and international experience has proven that pedestrians avoid the use of bridges or tunnels. Pedestrians rightly avoid such infrastructure not just because of the physical inconvenience of grade changes, but because of the unpleasant experience and the unavoidable fact that these facilities attract undesirable activity and create significant personal safety threats. While there might technically be a pedestrian connection via a bridge or tunnel, the neighborhoods would be effectively completely severed, which will substantially affect pedestrian mobility. Any adequate proposal needs to result in safe, direct, well ventilated, and pleasing pedestrian and bicycle access, with the minimal grade change, since the City places

significant priority on pedestrian and bicycle movements. Please note that 16th Street is a designated bicycle route that will have bike lanes installed.


- **Property Access and Acquisition:** The proposed underpasses would significantly limit or remove access to certain properties around the intersection of 7th and 16th Streets, requiring the potential acquisition of those properties and almost certainly rendering significant swaths of them degraded in use and value, if not simply undevelopable. On both sides of 16th Street just west of 7th sit two major under-developed pieces of property that are key to the revitalization of the Showplace Square and Potrero Hill areas, representing the potential for several hundred housing units on each parcel, in addition to ground floor retail and community uses to activate and support the neighborhood. On the Mission Bay side, 1700 Owens, at the corner of 16th Street, 7th Street and Owens Street was just completed in 2007. It was recently assessed at more than \$65 million in value. However, that building stands to lose much of its retail frontage and access along 16th Street under the proposed alternative, including 16th Street access to the emergency road and loading area located behind this building. In addition, the proposed Mission Bay Drive/Commons realignment would require the acquisition of large pieces of public and private property on both sides of the rail line.
- **Quality of Transit Service:** 16th Street is the designated corridor for the extension of the 22-Fillmore trolley coach line, which will be the transit connection between Mission Bay and the developing lower 16th Street area, BART, and the Mission District. Depressing 16th Street will negatively impact transit service in two ways. First, it will eliminate the possibility of stops along the depressed roadway, which will distort ideal stop spacing, as well as preclude one or more important stops at key intersections. Secondly, creating a major vertical grade change in a tunnel structure will increase dewirements (where the trolley poles lose contact with the overhead wires). These in turn can create delays of anywhere from two minutes to several hours, compromising the reliability of the service on the entire line. Also at the Mission Bay Drive/ Commons Street crossing, MUNI will run the 12-line motor coach route between the western edge of Mission Bay and the Showplace Square and Potrero Hill neighborhoods. While the concern with dewirements are not an issue with motor coach service, the problems of stop locations and stop spacing with a depressed roadway would also be present here.
- **Compatibility with Adopted Local and Regional Plans:** Finally, the CAHSRA EIR analysis must also address the significant amendments that will be required to numerous adopted planning documents to address the inconsistencies that would result with the implementation of the proposed CAHSRA roadway changes. For instance, the adopted environmental documents, circulation, and transportation plans recently adopted for these districts depends on and assumes not just maintenance of these roads at grade but their enhancement. We have included as an attachment to this letter an initial list of plans and environmental documentation that should be addressed. Also, please note that 7th Street is under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco and subject to the State of California Burton Act. We understand that a passenger rail road may not be a compatible use with the Burton Act.

Attached to this letter please also find additional technical information on existing and planned infrastructure that would be affected by the proposed undergrounding of 16th and 7th Street and

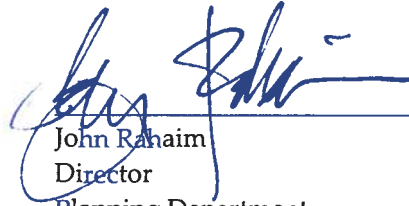
Mission Bay Drive. Please consider this information in your technical and environmental analyses.

Thank you for considering our request to analyze alternative designs that address the concerns of the City and County of San Francisco. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important project.

Respectfully,



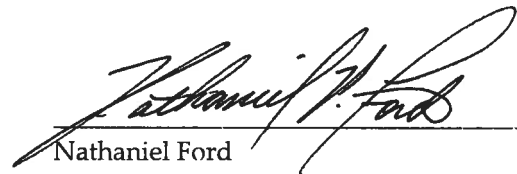
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Attachment 1: Applicable Local Planning Documents

Attachment 2: Technical Infrastructure Issue

Attachment 1: Applicable Local Planning Documents

The following lists some of the local planning documents and supporting environmental documentation that must be addressed the CAHSRA EIR. City staff is available to assist in answering any questions related to these documents and their implementation.

- Eastern Neighborhoods Area Plans, including East Soma, Showplace Square/Potrero, and Central Waterfront Area Plans (all part of the City's General Plan) and Rezoning. Effective January 19, 2009.
- Eastern Neighborhoods Rezoning and Area Plans Final EIR. Case No. 2004.0160E, State Clearinghouse No. 2005032048, certified August 7, 2008.
- Mission Bay North and South Redevelopment Plans and associated implementation documents, including the Mission Bay North and South Infrastructure Plans and Designs for Development. Adopted October 26, 1998 (Mission Bay North) and November 2, 1998 (Mission Bay South).
- Mission Bay South Plan Area Streetscape Master Plan, revisions adopted October 3, 2006.
- Mission Bay Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report. Case No. 96.771E, State Clearinghouse No. 97092068, certified September 17, 1998.
- UCSF Long Range Development Plan – 2008 Update. Adopted July 15, 2008 and September 17, 2008.
- UCSF Medical Center at Mission Bay, Final EIR. State Clearinghouse No. 2008012075, certified September 17, 2008.
- Bicycle Plan and Final EIR. Case No. 2007.0347E, certified June 25, 2009.
- West Soma Community Plan and EIR (environmental review ongoing). Case No. 2008.0877.
- Transit Effectiveness Project and EIR (environmental review ongoing). Case No. 2009.0192.
- Better Street Streets Plan (environmental review ongoing). Case 2007.1238.

Attachment 2: Technical Infrastructure Issue

The City is available and willing to provide any technical information and design criteria that CAHSRA requires to understand the existing and planned infrastructure system in the area. The following summarizes some of the major infrastructure facilities existing and planned for the area that need to be taken into consideration:

- **Bus Access** – Both 16th Street and Mission Bay Drive are planned for bus routes, so adequate clearance needs to be provided. The 16th Street route (the 22-line trolley line) is the City’s highest priority for an overhead line extension. As a result, any design needs to ensure that bus stops can be appropriately located, adequate clearance and maintenance access provided, and design features incorporated to avoid dewirements due to the grade change.
- **Utilities at 16th/7th Streets** - Major utilities are located in the vicinity of this intersection and relocation will be very costly and disruptive during construction. The following summarizes some of the existing utilities that need to be considered:
 - a. At least three underground power lines equal to or in excess of 110 KV with Franchise Rights are located in 7th and 16th Streets and provide power to Downtown San Francisco. Previous attempts with PG&E to relocate portions of these lines have not been successful.
 - b. A major existing gravity sewer under 7th Street.
 - c. A major 12-inch low pressure water supply under 16th Street.
 - d. A major 40-inch diameter communication duct bank under 16th Street.
 - e. A major “MCI” Communications line under 7th Street.
- **Utilities at 7th/Mission Bay Drive** – Similarly, major utilities requiring costly relocation would be affected by the proposed Mission Bay Drive underpass, including:
 - a. Underground power lines equal to or in excess of 110 KV with Franchise Rights in 7th Street.
 - b. A major gravity sewer proposed under 7th Street.
 - c. A low pressure water supply under Mission Bay Drive.
 - d. An AWSS water line under Mission Bay Drive.
 - e. A major “MCI” Communications line under 7th Street.