



SAN FRANCISCO
**PLANNING
DEPARTMENT**



SFMTA | Municipal Transportation Agency

September 28, 2010

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

Re: California High-Speed Train San Francisco to San Jose Section Environmental
Impact Report/Statement - Additional San Francisco High-Speed Rail
Alternatives

Dear Mr. Doty,

Thank you for having your staff meet with the San Francisco Stakeholders Technical Working Group on September 16, 2010 to continue a review of alternatives for advancing high-speed rail service into San Francisco. The City and County of San Francisco strongly support high speed rail and welcome it to San Francisco. To that end we are proceeding with the design and construction of the \$4 billion Transbay Transit Center (TTC) and Downtown Rail Extension (DTX) to serve as the San Francisco terminus for the California High-Speed Rail.

We are concerned, however, that your environmental document will need strengthening to avoid running afoul of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement to develop and assess reasonable alternatives that meet the purpose and need for agency action. The Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report includes only one alternative in San Francisco when we believe that other viable alternatives exist. As expressed in previous communications, San Francisco is extremely concerned that the only option proposed within the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis requires depressing 16th Street, 7th Street and Mission Bay Drive. Depressing these roadways is inconsistent with local land use and circulation plans and will serve to isolate an important redevelopment area in San Francisco. Those concerns have been conveyed to you and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) in a separate letter (copy attached).

To strengthen the high-speed rail environmental document and adequately address San Francisco concerns, we request that additional alternatives be assessed at the same level of detail as the single alternative now included in the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report and that they be included in the draft environmental impact report and statement (EIR/S) scheduled to be released in December 2010.

The alternatives described below and depicted in the attached drawings have the potential of maintaining 16th Street, 7th Street, and Mission Bay Drive at-grade, better promote sustainability, are consistent with local land use and circulation plans, and avoid the adverse impacts associated with the single current alternative. These alternatives all call for providing two tracks to the Transbay Transit Center via tunnel and two tracks to the Caltrain station at 4th and King Streets in San Francisco and are labeled as options and described below:

Option 1: A set of tracks enters a tunnel just north of the San Mateo-San Francisco county line and continues to the TTC, while the other stays at-grade on the current Caltrain alignment as currently proposed. Once the tracks on the Caltrain alignment reach the north portal of Tunnel 1, the tracks would be depressed and go into an underground alignment directly under the existing alignment, and cross below 16th Street, Mission Bay Drive and the Division Street sewer outfall and ultimately come back up to grade prior to entering the rail yard at 4th and King Streets.

Should there be insufficient space to accommodate the train box between columns supporting the I-280 freeway, a variation on Option 1 would be to replace the freeway north of Tunnel 1 with a four-lane at-grade boulevard thereby accommodating underground tracks. The boulevard would continue to either 4th and King Streets. The removal would commence far enough south of Tunnel 1 to effect a smooth transition to the new boulevard.

Option 2: A set of tracks enters a tunnel just north of the San Mateo-San Francisco county line and continues to the TTC, while the other stays at-grade on the current Caltrain alignment as currently proposed. Once the tracks on the Caltrain alignment reach the south portal of Tunnel 2, just north of the 22nd Street Caltrain station, the tracks would be depressed and go into an underground alignment directly under the existing alignment, and cross below 16th Street, Mission Bay Drive and the Division Street sewer outfall and ultimately come back up to grade to the 4th and King rail yard.

Option 3: A set of tracks enters a tunnel just north of the San Mateo-San Francisco county line and continues to the Transbay Transit Center, while the other stays at-grade on the current Caltrain alignment as currently proposed. Once the tracks on the Caltrain alignment reach the south portal of Tunnel 2, just north of the 22nd Street Caltrain station, the tracks would be depressed and go into an underground alignment, veering in a north-westerly direction to an alignment parallel to the current alignment but outside of the footprint of the I-280 Freeway, and cross below 16th Street, Mission Bay Drive and the Division Street sewer outfall and return to grade to the 4th and King Streets rail yard. This option avoids any potential insurmountable conflicts with the I-280 foundation system that may arise during detailed analysis. This option would require that the tracks destined for the TTC, currently planned to follow an underground alignment under Pennsylvania Avenue, be relocated westward to Mississippi Avenue so that the tracks going to 4th and King can be located below Pennsylvania Avenue.

Option 4: Under this option, both sets of track would remain in a parallel at-grade alignment to a point north of Cesar Chavez Street. I-280 would be removed from Cesar Chavez north. The short section of I-280 between Cesar Chavez Street and the crossing over the Caltrain tracks near Evans Street would be reconstructed so that I-280 would touch down at Cesar Chavez Street without constructing pilings in the Caltrain right of way. A four-track tunnel box would be constructed under the vacated I-280 right-of-way with a four-lane boulevard above utilizing existing grade separations. Signalized intersections along the boulevard would be provided at 22nd Street and 16th Street. North of 16th Street, the boulevard would have regularly-spaced signalized intersections to align with the Showplace Street grid. The boulevard would connect to 4th and King Streets.

The four-track tunnel would cross below 16th Street, Mission Bay Drive and the Division Street sewer outfall and proceed to a below-grade station and rail yard at 4th and King Streets. Alternatively, one set of tracks could return to grade after crossing the outfall to an at-grade station and yard at 4th and King Streets.

Option 5: Under this option, the entire four-track alignment within San Francisco County would be underground beginning just north of the county line. A set of tracks would remain underground to the TTC and one set could either remain below grade to an underground station and yard at 4th and King Streets or return to grade to an at-grade station at 4th and King Streets. Conceivably, this option could be built using a single mega-bore tunnel boring machine thereby reducing right-of-way requirements and potentially reducing cost and construction duration.

To reiterate, all of these alternatives provide the benefits of maintaining 16th Street, 7th Street, and Mission Bay Drive at-grade, better promote sustainability, are consistent with local land use and circulation plans, and avoid the adverse impacts associated with the single current alternative. We recognize that a detailed evaluation of all five options and additional sub-options may be neither desirable nor necessary. A well-crafted screening analysis can probably produce a smaller number of alternatives to be evaluated within the draft EIR/S. We do ask, however, that the additional alternatives described above and depicted in attached drawings be assessed and that those judged reasonable and feasible be evaluated at the same level of detail as the single alternative now included in the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report and be included in the draft EIR/S scheduled to be released in December 2010. To ensure continuing consensus, please include the San Francisco Stakeholders Technical Working Group in the evaluation of these alternatives and selection of alternatives prior to inclusion or deletion from the DEIR/S

We look forward to continuation of a cooperative and successful planning effort to bring the benefits of high-speed rail to California and the San Francisco peninsula.

Respectfully,

SAN FRANCISCO STAKEHOLDERS TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Saage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Leroy L. Saage, PE
Deputy Director for Capital Projects
San Francisco County Transportation Authority

cc: Fred Blackwell
John Rahaim
Jose Luis Moscovich
Nathaniel Ford
Dominic Spaethling
John Litzinger
Claude Gratianne
Tim Cobb
Bethany Williams
Denise LaPointe