

MAYOR/COUNCIL MATTERS ITEM B



August 28, 2009

Dear Mayor Richardson:

As you are aware, the California High-Speed Rail Authority, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration, has initiated the preparation of a project environmental impact report /environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) and engineering studies to determine the best route alignment and design of the proposed San Francisco to San Jose section of the statewide high-speed train system.

To support this effort, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has recently undertaken a comprehensive public outreach and communication assessment. Over the past several months our local team has met with representatives from each of the 22 cities within San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties along the proposed high-speed train corridor to help guide us in our public outreach processes and approaches.

Our objective in working with you and your city is to ensure the highest level of awareness about the project and the many opportunities for public engagement and input.

Our effort reflects the Authority's commitment to fostering public engagement along the Peninsula rail corridor. We want to ensure that cities, counties, transportation and other agencies, and the public actively participate in the development of a statewide high-speed train system that best meets the needs of the region and statewide objectives.

Our assessment has resulted in six key commitments by the Authority to encourage public engagement in this section. These commitments include:

1. Create and facilitate an advisory Policymaker Working Group composed of elected officials from each of the cities to provide policy-level input;
2. Provide regular public updates regarding project details through use of Cable TV, e-newsletters, websites and other communication vehicles;
3. Coordinate and participate as a sponsor in high-speed train system, public Design Workshops, including Alternatives Development Workshops this fall;
4. Incorporate Context Sensitive Design Principles into project planning and outreach;
5. Provide outreach to community groups such as home owner associations, business, labor, environmental and civic organizations, etc; and

6. Include opportunities for the community to provide input and get their questions answered through staffing community events such as farmer's markets and other venues.

Our public outreach assessment indicated that each city along the alignment supported the creation of a Policymaker Working Group as an important forum for elected officials to provide input to the environmental and engineering studies currently underway.

Please accept our invitation to join this valuable new group. The Authority requests that you designate an elected official (e.g., yourself, or a member of your City Council or Board of Supervisors) to the Policymaker Working Group no later than September 18, 2009, by contacting Ms. Sharon Kyle at 510-587-8671 or at skyle@hntb.com with the name and contact information of your designated representative.

The first meeting of the Policymaker Working Group is scheduled for October 15, 2009 and will be held at SamTrans offices (1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos – 2nd Floor auditorium) from 6-8 pm.

It is envisioned that the group will meet several times over the next six to eight months to gather information and provide feedback to the technical teams that are preparing the Draft EIR/EIS document. The Draft EIR/EIS is scheduled to be released by early 2011 and will initiate another phase of public engagement and input that ultimately leads to a final document.

To date, your city's staff has been invited to, or has already participated on, a Technical Working Group relating to the preparation of the environmental and engineering studies. The first Technical Working Group meeting was conducted on June 23, 2009, for city/county/transportation agencies. The second Technical Working Group meeting is scheduled for September 30, 2009, at SamTrans, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, in San Carlos, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium.

Thank you in advance for your participation in the Policymaker Working Group, and we look forward to your continued involvement in the Technical Working Group.

The Authority will continue to work collaboratively with you and City staff to make sure you and your constituents receive timely information about project updates, understand the engineering, environmental and economic challenges of all potential alternatives, and have ample opportunities to provide input on key decisions.

Sincerely,



Mehdi Morshed
Executive Director
California High Speed Rail Authority