



community report

March 9, 2016

They're BaaaACK!!!

New Threats to the Peninsula.

High speed rail is making EVERYONE mad!

The latest plans of the state's High-Speed Rail Authority are putting the San Francisco Peninsula back in the middle of a boondoggle bullseye.

You have probably heard that the Authority has now decided to begin construction of its proposed project by laying tracks from San Jose to somewhere near Bakersfield. This is what might well be called the **"big switcheroo!"** Until about a week or so ago, the Authority was telling everyone that the first segment would be built from Merced to the San Fernando Valley in Southern California. That was, in fact, the central feature of what the Authority optimistically called its "Business Plan," released in 2014.

First, a little history.

Let's review a little history. The first plan outlined by the Authority was to drive elevated tracks right through the middle of the best residential and business areas on the San Francisco Peninsula. Starting in 2008, CC-HSR has fought that plan, and we have, since the beginning, been critical of the High-Speed Rail Authority for taking what many thought was a good idea (high-speed rail) and turning that idea into **a costly and mismanaged boondoggle.**

Thanks to the hard work of CC-HSR, and lots of other people, the High-Speed Rail Authority was forced to abandon its plans to victimize the Peninsula, and in 2014, the Authority decided to "go South," not "North."

What changed?

What changed things so precipitously a week or so ago? Well, as we have let subscribers to this newsletter know, the Authority never got the finances right, and their physical planning was so bad that what the Authority was proposing, with the route from Merced to the San Fernando Valley over the Tehachapis, has now clearly been demonstrated to be not only financially impossible, but physically impossible, too, at least impossible without causing extended travel times that would not conform to the requirements of Proposition 1A.

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continued

So much for the vaunted 2014 “Business Plan!” As though this were a late breaking news flash, the Authority has now decided it will be quicker and cheaper to go from Bakersfield to San Jose, so that’s the new “Business Plan,” as released for public comment on February 18th. You can click right here to review the new plan, and to see a copy of the 2014 Business Plan, and even to review a Business Plan from 2012. The comment period on this latest version is still open, with the comment deadline being April 18th.

Reaction to the big switcheroo.

The San Jose Mercury News immediately reacted to the “big switcheroo” in an editorial printed on February 19th, the day after the new plan was released. As the Mercury said, it’s “still a boondoggle.” Not only is this plan as ill-considered as the “go South” plan, it’s going to “piss everyone off,” too, as one person so pungently put it! With the Authority now apparently planning for construction simultaneously in the Central Valley, in Southern California, and in Northern California, this “pissing off everyone” characterization seems about right.

Peninsula residents might also note that the Friends of Caltrain appear to be concerned, too. Read a recent posting in the Friends’ blog, which points out that high-speed train use of the Caltrain corridor could really degrade current commuter service.

Some quick reactions.

Once CC-HSR has developed detailed comments on the new, 2016 plan, we will definitely share those comments with newsletter subscribers. In the meantime, here are some quick reactions:

- Southern California legislators, who believed what the Authority said about the Authority’s commitment to “go South,” have learned that the Authority, as ever, speaks with a “forked tongue,” and they are mightily miffed.
- San Jose residents, in some of the nicest neighborhoods in that city, will now have to face the same kind of disruptive, neighborhood-destroying project that they were told was not going to happen to them. They won’t be happy!
- There isn’t any reliable funding for this new route, so those legislators trying to balance the state’s precarious budget aren’t going to like this proposal very much.
- The new plan requires that environmental review for the Merced to San Jose segment will have to be rushed, distressing all those environmentalists, farmers, and city-dwellers whose concerns are going to be given short shrift.
- Not too many people actually want to go from San Jose to Bakersfield, so the “ridership” figures for this new plan will be even worse than for the “go South” plan. Possible private sector investors (the Authority keeps saying there are some, though they have never materialized) won’t take kindly to that change.
- Finally, one likely impact of the new proposal is increased urban sprawl in the Central Valley, destroying more of our precious agricultural land. Environmental reviews, required before construction can begin, are not yet completed for the “go North” alternative, and environmental opposition is almost a certainty.

In short, the Mercury News did get it right: North or South, it’s “still a boondoggle.”

Thank You For Your Support Of CC-HSR

cc-hsr community report

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If you can help CC-HSR with a contribution, please do! We are truly grateful for your past and continuing support. We have been at it since 2008, and we're not able to go out of business until the High-Speed Rail Authority drops its badly managed plans or is otherwise put out of business itself!

To Contribute, Please Mail Your Check To:
Community Coalition on High Speed Rail
2995 Woodside Road, #400-362
Woodside, CA 94062

We Appreciate Your Support

CC-HSR has been working since 2008 to make sure that the High-Speed Rail Authority doesn't victimize residents and businesses on the Peninsula, and that the High-Speed Rail Authority won't be able to waste almost \$10 billion of the taxpayers' money with a project that just won't work. *CC-HSR is totally supported by the community, and we truly appreciate your help! Thank you again for your support and assistance for our work!*

You can make a contribution by mail or on our web site: www.cc-hsr.org.