

CC-HSR — dedicated to preventing the California High Speed Rail project from devastating our communities and State finances.

community report

OCTOBER 13, 2015

It's Back! High Speed Rail is rearing its ugly head again on the Peninsula

Burlingame public meeting underscores the problems and issues faced by Peninsula communities.

DEBUNKING THE STATEMENTS BY THE HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

Thanks are in order to many elected officials including Senator Jerry Hill and various council members from local communities who convinced the High Speed Rail Authority, particularly Chairman Dan Richard, to change their meeting format to allow for Q & A, which they have rarely permitted. That was the good news from the October 7 public meeting in Burlingame.

And now the bad news. The Authority's PR team left before everyone had a chance to speak which is really, very bad form and which illustrates their tendency to avoid public input and concerns. They clearly care more about their schedule or getting out of the firing line instead of listening to the communities. Their approach: Send a message, we really don't have time for you and as you will see, they have a very abbreviated environmental process. We are not sure at all that California's environmental process will be followed.

Some of the questions were not fully or accurately answered. From various reports the crowd was told that the four-track option is dead. Only the blended system was in play. But the truth is the communities have never received assurances that the blended system is legal, after the Authority sent two letters in 2011 to the Attorney General's office. The Authority has refused to release the AG's response claiming Attorney/Client privilege. If it was favorable, why won't the reveal the answer? They published the request letters. The problem is, *if it is revealed that the blended system is illegal, a four-track option may come roaring back*. Also the passing track option is on the table right through the peninsula because it's a faster option. In most cases rail authorities don't include passing tracks in the same category as regular tracks though they will do the same damage.

Context Sensitive Solutions will not be followed. The Authority representatives were questioned about involving the community with Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). It was revealed they will not be followed, they said they used that for the full build option not the blended system. In fact all reference to that process was wiped away from Caltrain's website. However it is not true, the CSS process was talked about but was never fully engaged. It should make no difference whether there are four tracks or two of three, the full process should be used. Not an abbreviated process because the Authority wants to hurry and get this segment, environmentally cleared.

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Will the Authority really engage a "Community Engagement Strategy?" Authority representatives say they are interested in engaging the community with a "Community Engagement Strategy" but it has to be on an accelerated basis since they have to finish the EIR by the end of 2017. Doesn't sound like they want to really engage the public if they have a rushed deadline. Why is the question since they are very behind in the Central Valley property acquisition and construction and they are supposed to be first. The Authority went silent on the Peninsula more than 3 years ago as far as environmental planning. Instead they promoted the Caltrain upgrades as I am afraid, a "Trojan horse," giving the public something they wanted first and then slip high-speed rail in later.

And then there is the issue of noise. In regard to questions about the noise the trains will make, the Authority's representatives assured the crowd that electric trains are quieter. Well that may be partially true, though braking systems are very noisy and there are many stops and starts along the crowded peninsula corridor. Once thing for sure the horn noise for 20 trains an hour are real. The peninsula has many crossings and the horn blows and of course blows at entering and leaving stations. If things go as planned, the public will experience one every three minutes during commuting hours. If you live within a mile of the train tracks you know that's a big deal as to your quality of life. Quad gates, a way to increase safety, are a cheaper way to get around grade separations or underground options but they alone do not stop the horns.

Will Quiet Zones create increase community liability? Although quad gates clearly make grade crossings safer, there appears to be a concern that installing a quiet zone might affect a community's liability if an accident results from the lack of horn blowing. Locally in Menlo Park, that has always given pause to past councils besides obviously the money to build the quad gates. Perhaps the Authority or Caltrain plan to pick up the liability and cost.

The big picture ... and the lack of funding. Regarding the bigger picture, the Authority admitted this week they have a large hole in their funding and their recent request for expressions of interest, if you read between the lines, was actually a dud. They said they have lots of great information but no one has offered to put money on the table. This is the third attempt by the Authority to engage private money. As the Central Valley organization, Citizens for California High-Speed Rail Accountability (CCHSRA.org), thought the results indicated "expressions of disinterest." See the Ralph Vartabedian's account in the LA Times about private investor interest in the project.

http://www.latimes.com/local/politics/me-bullet-train-gap-20151009-story.html

Michael Rossi, the board member who heads up the Finance/Audit committee says in a nutshell there is nothing new, no financing offers. He said in the corporate world the responses would not count as real expressions of interest. The Authority believes the time some of the firms invested in answering the questions and the advice they gave showed real interest in the project. Half way through is Rossi's comments:

https://youtu.be/1cHIEZ5ydtY

But for now the gap continues.

Your Support Is Vital! Help keep our efforts moving forward>

CC-HSR is deeply grateful for the support we have received from our contributors! We depend completely on voluntary contributions, and your support is what keeps us working on the issues. Next February, the Tos case goes to trial. That is obviously a top priority for CC-HSR, but in the meantime, as this Community Bulletin shows, we are working to make sure that the High-Speed Rail Authority doesn't victimize residents and businesses on the Peninsula, with their very problematic plans to send high-speed trains barreling through our communities, causing increased noise, major traffic disruption, reduced property values, and more noise and danger. If you are in a position to help us, please do! We are truly appreciative of your past and continuing support!

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

Visit our web site. You can contribute to CC-HSR online: www.cc-hsr.org

Help us continue our coverage.

Since 2008, CC-HSR has been working through litigation, lobbying, and public outreach to make sure that the state's proposed High-Speed Rail project does not bring devastating impacts to the San Francisco Peninsula, or to other parts of California. Return go to our web site **www.cc-hsr.org** to make a donation to support our work. CC-HSR is totally supported by the community, and this latest decision by the STB, and the anticipated approval in January of the proposed Caltrain "Pre-HSR" project, means that we will probably have to be back in court very soon. We truly need your help! (AS NOTED ABOVE.)

AND, please Know This: WE APPRECIATE Your Support!

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!

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