

CITY OF SAN MATEO



Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding High Speed Rail

At the 4/15/10 Community workshop, we again received a number of inquiries related to High Speed Rail. Below are answers to those questions

FAQ's Relating to Property Impacts and Eminent Domain

- Q: How will this project affect me, my house and my family?
- Q: How long will construction last?
- Q: Will you take my home?
- Q: Will I be compensated for the construction debris, problems?
- Q: Will residents be relocated during construction?
- Q: What is the timing for next steps relating to property?
- Q: How will the High Speed Rail Authority compensate us for such potential damages and losses which we would suffer due to the exercise of any of these options?

A: *A summary of information that relates to eminent domain will be provided at the May 13, 2010 workshop. This information will be added to the Web Site following the meeting.*

We will not know the extent to which eminent domain will be necessary, the timing of the process, nor the answers to specific questions about eminent domain until after the Project Level Environmental Impact Report has been certified, and the project enters the design phase. The CAHSRA does have some general information relating to right of way/ eminent domain on their website:

<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/news.asp?type=faqs&cat=9123>

FAQ's Relating to Design and EIR

- Q: How will creeks be affected?
- Q: If it is open trench, what will required fence/wall look like?
- Q: What will be the impacts on traffic flow – especially in conjunction w/ development near 92?
- Q: Will the land above/below tracks be used?
- Q: What are the plans to coordination w/ redevelopment & infrastructure?
- Q: Concerned about noise and impacts during construction
- Q: Concerned about vibrations and loss of sunlight
- Q: Concerned about health, asbestos in gravel around trains

Q: Concerned about impacts to local business
Q: Concerned about creating blight where property is not taken
Q: How loud will the train be compared Caltrain now?
Q: What will happen to our downtown?
Q: Concerned about aesthetics – will this create more areas for graffiti?
Q: What will be the impacts on TOD projects (especially in Hayward Park)
Q: For Hayward Park stretch at grade, is there a wall considered?
Q: How will Caltrain continue service during construction?
Q: What will be the impacts to the environment?
Q: Will the new tracks be east or west of the existing tracks?
Q: Can we put bike lanes on top of the tunnel through downtown?

A: *We will not know the answers to these questions until the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Study (EIS) has been released by the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). Release of the EIR/EIS is anticipated in December 2010. During the process of reviewing the EIR we will examine High Speed Rail Authority's identified impacts and advocate for any needed mitigations. We will also identify impacts that we do not believe are adequately evaluated in the draft EIR/EIS. We will not have answers regarding construction timelines or methods until the project has entered the detailed design phase.*

FAQ's Relating to Project Costs

Q: Revenue is projected at \$2.87 billion in 3035. Debt service on \$45 billion is \$2.72 billion for 30 years. How will the debt be serviced?
A: *The project will utilize a combination of bond funds authorized by Proposition 1A; Federal funds; and funding from private partners. For more information, the HSR Business Plan is available:*
<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library.asp?p=8200>

Q: What was the estimated cost of the project and who came up with it (based on what assumptions)?
A: *Construction of High Speed Rail is estimated to cost \$45 billion. The project is being funded by a combination of sources:*

- Bonds authorized by the passage of Proposition 1A the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act approved by voters on November 4, 2008 (\$9.95B)*
- Federal funding (\$17-\$19B from ARRA, other federal loan programs, transportation appropriations)*
- Local Funding (\$4-\$5B in right of way, parking fees, transit-oriented developments, contributions)*
- Funding from private investors (\$10-\$12B public-private partnerships, vendor financing, availability payments, etc.)*

Source: HSR December 2009 Business Report Fact Sheet
<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/news/FactSheetBusinessPlan.pdf>

In comparison, the estimated costs of expanding our highways and airports to meet a demand similar to that expected to be carried by the high-speed train system is \$82

billion (in 2003 dollars). For more information on cost estimates, the HSR Business Plan is available:

<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library.asp?p=8200>

Q: What is cost of the service going to be?

A: *It is estimated that a one-way ticket from SF to LA would cost approximately \$56. This estimate may be revised as the cost of the system construction and operation are refined during subsequent engineering.*

Source: http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/images/chsr/20081021150533_Ridership2.pdf

Q: Is HSR money being used for underground sections in wealthy communities like Atherton? If so, why not San Mateo?

A: *The Alternatives Analysis defines alignment options that are to be considered in the EIR/EIS. More than one option will be considered for most segments. An underground alignment is considered for most segments including the segment in San Mateo, from 12th Avenue to Peninsula Avenue.*

FAQs regarding the selection of the Caltrain Corridor

Q: Why MUST it be on this existing corridor? Why not build over 101, 280 or 82?

A: *The option of having HSR run along the I-280, US101 or El Camino corridor was considered, but not selected by the Rail Authority. The Caltrain corridor alignment would increase intercity connectivity and accessibility to San Francisco and the Peninsula, and minimize environmental impacts since this alignment utilizes the existing Caltrain right-of-way. In addition, the Caltrain Corridor alignment would provide safety and traffic benefits by grade-separating existing at-grade roadway crossings. For these reasons, the Caltrain corridor has been identified as the preferred alignment for HSR services between San Francisco and San Jose and is the only option being considered.*

Q: Why not stop the new HSR from Southern California at San Jose, and have passengers transfer to CalTrain Baby Bullet trains and/or BART to complete the trip to San Francisco?

A: *This option was considered, but does not meet the legislative requirements of HSR to connect San Francisco to Los Angeles and limit travel time to no more than two hours and 40 minutes. The alignment being discussed now reflects a HSR project that will utilize the Caltrain Corridor through the Peninsula.*

Q: What is the specific language in the bond that was passed that prevents HSR from ending in San Jose?

A: *Proposition 1A, which provides legislative direction for the project, specifies "Phase I of the train project is the corridor between San Francisco Transbay Terminal and Los Angeles Union Station and Anaheim." Therefore, an option that terminates the HSR system in San Jose, with San Francisco passengers continuing north by transferring to Caltrain does not meet the legislative mandate for the project. The option was*

previously considered and dismissed at the program level as it would not meet the purpose, need or objectives of the new HSR system.

Source: Official Voter's Guide to Proposition 1A:

<http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/past/2008/general/pdf-guide/suppl-complete-guide.pdf#prop1a>

Other Questions Raised at 4/15/10 Workshop

Q: Can residents be assessed to generate the funds needed to ensure construction of a below grade tunnel?

A: *The project will fund the options selected by the HSRA. If the HSRA prefers a tunnel option, no additional funding will be necessary. If the City wishes to implement a different option than what is recommended by the HSRA, the City will have the option to fund any added costs. However, the magnitude of these costs could be hundreds of millions of dollars, so the use of local assessments may prove infeasible. The ability of the City to fund this difference by utilizing assessments will be evaluated once the project costs are more well-defined and the preferred project is known. This will occur once the Draft EIR/EIS is released.*

Q: Will we have an opportunity to vote on this?

A: *Proposition 1A, The Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act has already been approved by voters at the November 4, 2008 election. The project level EIR for the San Francisco to San Jose segment is expected to be released later this year. During the environmental review process, the public will have the opportunity to submit comments and feedback. A direct vote on the project by the electorate is not anticipated unless alternate authorization for funding is requested.*

Q: Why not use the funds towards the current “going bankrupt” transit systems?

A: *The people of California voted to authorize funding and dedicate it for the High Speed Rail system. Absent of a ballot initiative, Proposition 1A funds cannot be diverted away to other transit systems.*

Q: Over the next ten years, what is the estimated loss of property tax and sales tax revenue for the city of San Mateo due to the lowered quality of life for residents? Is this number accounted for in the cost estimates for the various options? If not, why not?

A: *The City Council raised similar concerns at their Study Session on High Speed Rail on May 3, 2010, and requested that analysis and discussion of those impacts be included in the Environmental Impact Report (scheduled for release in December, 2010).*

Q: Why the elevation change occur/over to North/Hillsdale Station to get the tracks below grade prior to Hwy 92 to protect Hayward Park.

A: *The alternatives analysis provides one option (at grade) as it passes under Hwy 92 and in the vicinity of the Hayward Park Station. This is consistent with the City's recommendations and the recent Footprint Studies prepared by the Transportation Authority. The alignment must be at grade when it passes below SR 92 due to limited clearance under the SR 92 structure. Returning to an at grade alignment is also necessary to match existing elevations of the Hayward Park Station. North of the station the alignment will transition to either a raised or depressed alignment (the City is*

advocating for a depressed alignment). The current plans show the at grade section to extend from the Hayward Park Station for about 1,000 feet before the vertical curve that would begin the transition to the downtown alignment. Given that there is very limited engineering completed at this point, the location of the transition may change. The 15 percent plans will not be available for several months.

Q: When is construction scheduled to start?

A: *Construction of some segments (including San Francisco to San Jose) could begin as early as 2012.*

Q: Where else in the world do trains travel like this through cities?

A: *There are high speed rail systems throughout Europe and in Asia, and they all travel through cities. It is necessary to construct high speed rail in and surrounding metropolitan areas, as metro areas represent a significant market for high speed rail service and will generate a substantial share of the expected ridership.*

Q: Will Union Pacific continue to use the tracks?

A: *Yes. However, with the addition of grade separations at current at-grade rail crossing, the need to sound the train horn will be minimized.*

Q: Is it possible to get real estate evaluations with respect to the impacts of the different alignment options?

A: *The environmental impact report will identify potential property impacts for the various alignment options. Meaningful conversations regarding real estate and property impacts can only occur once a project is selected and that can only occur with certification of the environmental document. A summary of eminent domain will be provided at the City of San Mateo's May 13, 2010 community workshop.*

Q: What is each City Council member's view of HSR and its effect on San Mateo?

A: *The City Council took unanimous action in 2008 to support Proposition 1A, the High Speed Passenger Train Bond Act. In addition, the Council is supportive of the High Speed Rail alignment within the Caltrain corridor, but is specific on their alignment preferences. The preference is to have a depressed alignment through and north of the downtown, and for a raised alignment in areas South of Highway 92. Those interested in individual opinions from the Council may contact Council Member (contact information is available at: <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/index.aspx?nid=166>) or may attend the next City Council Meeting where High Speed Rail will be discussed (scheduled for June 21).*

Q: Should San Mateo be willing to put a train over ground and greatly impact the quality of life of its citizens?

A: *The preference for the alignment of High Speed Rail in the downtown area is in fact for a depressed alignment, in order to minimize the impacts. For the segment South of Highway 92, an elevated alignment was anticipated during the San Mateo Rail Corridor Plan development. The raised alignment will permit construction of grade separations at 28th and 31st Avenues in order to improve safety and traffic circulation. The elevated*

alignment was predicated on the elevation of the existing rail alignment in Belmont and the need to be back to grade at Hwy 92. The limit of 1 percent grade results in very lengthy transitions for elevated to at grade or depressed alignment. The Council's long term vision was crafted as the result of extensive outreach and public input, with the intent of improving the overall quality of life in the City.

Q: **It was said 600,000 jobs will be created. How did you get that number and how will you keep track of NEW jobs? Will the 600,000 jobs be California resident jobs?**

A: *The California High Speed Rail Authority has conducted analysis of the economic benefits and impacts of constructing HSR which indicates the project will draw upon and expand California's skilled workforce, creating nearly 160,000 construction related and jobs and an additional 450,000 permanent jobs by 2035. To read specific information regarding the economic benefits and anticipated jobs creation specific to the Bay Area, you can view the Regional Economic Study report at:*

http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/images/chsr/20081003150751_HSR%20Bay%20Area%20Report%20Final.pdf

Comments submitted

Comment: **HSR through San Mateo downtown should be underground, stacked option, to preserve character and authentic center of our community. CUT AND COVER.**

Response: *The City Council agrees and has gone on record in support of a depressed alignment in the Downtown.*

Comment: **I like the proposal to build only to San Jose for now.**

Response: *This is not a proposal which is currently "on the table" for discussion. As noted previously, Proposition 1A specifies "Phase I of the train project is the corridor between San Francisco Transbay Terminal and Los Angeles Union Station and Anaheim." Therefore, an option that terminates the HSR system in San Jose, with San Francisco passengers continuing north by transferring to Caltrain is not a viable alternative. The option of ending the line in San Jose was previously considered and dismissed at the program level as it would not meet the purpose, need or objectives of the new HSR system.*

Source: Official Voter's Guide to Proposition 1A:

<http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/past/2008/general/pdf-guide/suppl-complete-guide.pdf#prop1a>

Comment: **Hayward Park would like to have some sort of mitigation for at grade alignment. This could include trees or other measures to reduce visual impacts of trains and catenary poles.**

Response: *Noted. The City will have an opportunity to submit specific comments such as these during the comment period on the Environmental Impact Report (scheduled for release in December 2010).*

Comment: **This project impacts people least likely to benefit from HSR**

Response: *The entire City of San Mateo will benefit from the improved safety provided by grade-separated rail crossings, as well as train horn noise reductions. Clearly, the most significant impacts will be to those who live, operate a business, and/or own property adjacent to the rail right-of-way.*

Comment: A number of comments were expressed concern regarding project funding, particularly that HSR will cost more than initial estimates. What happens if funding runs out?

Response: Prop 1A includes a number of fiscal safeguards to ensure there will be adequate funds to construct the project such as significant analysis and review of funding plans, annual audits, establishment of an independent peer review committee to review financial viability of the plan. You can learn more on the CA HSRA website: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/news.asp?type=fags&cat=8159>

Comment: Concerned about reinforcing division between east and west side

Response: Project impacts (including any disproportionate impacts to our neighborhoods) will be identified and discussed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report. During the process of reviewing the EIR we will examine the impacts and advocate for any needed mitigations. The City's preferred alignment retains east and west access in north San Mateo and downtown. The preferred alignment south of SR 92 will permit improved access through construction of grade separation at 28th and 31st Avenues. In addition, the option for a raised alignment on structure would also enhance east west access.

Comment: We should spend money on making good transit improvements to what we already have

Response: Proposition 1A actually does provide funds to improve current commuter urban and intercity rail systems. An allocation of \$950M will be available to improve intercity and commuter rail systems. Funds will be available upon appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act.

Comment: We are already suffering from the loud and frequent Caltrain horn noises

Response: High Speed Rail will actually alleviate much of the impact of train horn noise. Currently train operators are required to sound the horn when they cross streets at grade. The high speed rail project will provide grade-separated crossings. This means that train operators will only need to sound the horn if they observe a hazard on the track, which should be rare.

Comment: Unhappy certain alternatives on the peninsula have been dismissed

Response: Noted.

Comment: Hayward Park section at grade should include tall trees, park strip to hide tall wires that would greatly impact small bungalow neighborhood.

Response: Noted. The City will have an opportunity to submit specific comments such as these during the comment period on the Environmental Impact Report (scheduled for release in December 2010).

Comment: Spend the money to protect quality of life in San Mateo and not trying to help Burlingame's tunnel.

Response: The City Council has identified preferences for the alignment options in San Mateo, and those preferences include a depressed alignment through the Downtown and in the Northern part of the City. This preference has been made in the interest of minimizing

impacts in our city; not to strengthen Burlingame's case for a tunnel. Any money expended by the City of San Mateo in relation to the HSR project will be focused on the segments that are within the City limits.

Comment: **Concerned that reduction in population density in north central will result in loss of tax revenue**

Response: *The City Council raised similar concerns at their Study Session on High Speed Rail on May 3, 2010, and requested that analysis and discussion of those impacts be included the Environmental Impact Report (scheduled for release in December, 2010).*

Comment: **The San Francisco Peninsula is so urbanized it makes no sense to disrupt everyone by trying to insert new, high speed rail within the existing context.**

Response: *That is why the Caltrain corridor was selected--because it is urbanized, and because rail service is already contained in the existing corridor. Most of the infrastructure needed to support HSR is already in place and utilizing this corridor actually has the fewest impacts. Use of another alignment (e.g., US101) would require significant modification to the existing highway. It would also place the new HSR Millbrae station away from the existing BART Caltrain station. Combining stations will provide easy transfers and would allow riders to take advantage of the existing BART parking.*

Comment: **Feeling defeated/without a REAL voice.**

Response: *You do have a voice! The purpose of these workshops is to allow community members to have a voice and provide input regarding the alignment options, so the City Council can subsequently make a recommendation to the HSRA regarding San Mateo's preferences.*

Comment: **At 15% design we'd like to see where the Right of Way (ROW) widths are and the impacts – still too sketchy**

Response: *Although there are many questions we will not be able to answer until the project reaches 15% design, we do have the ROW widths for the various alignment alternatives, and we know the existing ROW width of the different segments along the corridor. Assessing the potential impacts is actually the primary purpose of the May 13th workshop.*

Comment: **We request that a decision be made to remove the elevated and the below grade (a trench or a partially covered trench) options. We oppose the elevated and the trench options, because we believe that any of these would cause community disruption and substantially decrease the value of our property. Moreover, the elevated option would result in soaring overpass structures and high walls, completely blocking the natural sun light and views which we have been enjoying in our daily lives in our sunny and beautiful city.**

Response: *Noted.*

Comment: **Give us lots of trees and landscaping when it's at grade.**

Response: *Noted. The City will have an opportunity to submit specific comments such as these during the comment period on the Environmental Impact Report (scheduled for release in December 2010).*

Comment: **Give us remediation clout commensurate with our population (as opposed to Atherton's dollars).**

Response: *San Mateo has been working in cooperation with the Rail Authority throughout the review process, rather than spending money to work against them. We believe our comments are as valuable as those submitted by any other City.*