

8C-1

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council
From Council Member Ruskin

December 8, 2003

Subject
California High Speed Rail Route

Recommendation
Information only.

Background
High speed rail is an excellent concept and will offer great benefits to our region and state. This is an issue of importance to the people of Redwood City, from an environmental and transportation standpoint. Redwood City has had a continual interest and concern for the environment. In addition, we have taken a prominent role in regional transportation issues, with Council representatives on CCAG, the Transportation Authority, SamTrans and involved in Ferry service development.

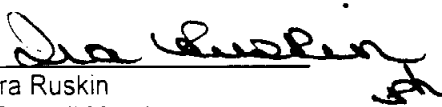
It is therefore important to us that High Speed Rail be implemented in a way that provides a good transportation solution and in as environmentally sensitive a manner as possible. This means following existing transportation or utility alignments as much as possible, minimizing sprawl-inducing design choices, and preserving existing wildlife corridors.

There are four routes being considered for connecting the Los Banos station with Gilroy through the Diablo Range. Two of these routes go directly through Henry Coe State Park, cutting the Orestimba Wilderness in half. These routes should be unacceptable.

Southern alignments may be acceptable. The draft environmental impact report (DEIR) will make a definitive evaluation.

Pacheco Pass and Altamont Pass are two possible routes for linking the Central Valley to the Bay Area. However, the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) identified only the Pacheco Pass alternative for review in its Final Business Plan in June of 2000 and the upcoming DEIR. Yet, even the HSRA acknowledged that the Pacheco Pass option would have more negative environmental impacts compared to the alternative, Altamont Pass. CEQA guidelines clearly call for a reasonable range of alternatives to be considered in the environmental review process. This can only be achieved with the inclusion of Altamont Pass in the review process. The Altamont Pass option also offers significant transportation system advantages.

I will make a presentation about these issues at the Council meeting.


Ira Ruskin
Council Member