

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council From the City Manager

February 9, 2009

SUBJECT

Study Session: Proposed California High Speed Rail Project – San Francisco to San Jose Section, on the Caltrain Corridor

RECOMMENDATION

1. Provide input to staff for use in the City's official scoping comments letter to the California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority), in response to the Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS).
2. Discuss possible policies, principles, and guidelines that the City Council may wish to create outlining the community's best interests related to the proposed project, and its potential implementation alternatives.

BACKGROUND

In November, 2008, California voters approved a bond measure to finance the design and construction of the California High Speed Rail System. This is proposed to be an electrified high speed passenger rail system connecting Sacramento to Los Angeles, with extensions through San Francisco, the Peninsula, San Jose, and south Santa Clara County. With the decision made to proceed, the choices and decisions ahead are critically important to Redwood City and neighboring communities: How the system will be designed and built, and how its impacts and potential benefits can be balanced to meet the public interests.

The Authority and the SAMTRANS / Caltrain Joint Powers Board are currently negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding that will shape the evolution of a combined High Speed Rail system and electrified Caltrain service that will be fully compatible and fully grade separated from local streets and highways, and within a four-track right of way configuration.

On January 12, 2009, the Authority issued a Notice of Preparation of a project Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS) for the San Francisco-to-San Jose segment of the proposed system. The Authority is soliciting public and agency input into the development of the scope of the EIR. The deadline for comments is March 6, 2009. A public scoping session was held in San Carlos on January 22, 2009 (one of three offered countywide). A public information / scoping session is tentatively scheduled for the first week of March in Redwood City, and staff is working with the Authority's consultants to determine purpose and method of outreach.

Redwood City staff is studying the proposal in order to provide thoughtful input and ensure that the project EIR/EIS addresses the critical issues and impacts of the proposed project on Redwood City. Attached is a very preliminary list of some of the impacts that will be included (in more detail) in the scoping comment letter. A City Council discussion of these and other potential impacts will add to the depth and value of the City's scoping comments, and will help ensure that the community's best interests are represented.

Staff will benefit from gaining the City Council's thoughts on possible policies, principles, and guidelines that the City may want to impress upon the project. Again, this is in order to ensure the project proceeds in the most conscientious and community-sensitive way possible.

The city manager will provide a short presentation ahead of Council's discussion.

ALTERNATIVES

The Council could choose to direct staff to proceed with the scoping comment letter in a different manner, and could choose not to engage in the issue of possible policies, principles, and guidelines.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the City associated with this study session. However, the potential fiscal and economic impacts of the proposed High Speed Rail project may be significant and long-term.


Peter Ingram
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Preliminary listing, without detail, of potential impacts of construction and operation of the proposed High Speed Rail system through Redwood City

RELATED DOCUMENTS IN CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

None

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**Study Session: Proposed California High Speed Rail Project
San Francisco to San Jose Section, on the Caltrain Corridor**

Attachment to staff report: Preliminary listing, without detail – and in no particular rank order, of potential impacts of construction and operation of the proposed High Speed Rail system through Redwood City, which require study within the Environmental Impact Report process. Comments due March 6, 2009.

Design Implications

- a) Consistency with elements of the Downtown Precise Plan and New General Plan
- b) Impacts on property values
- c) Redwood City as a station location: overall impact to surrounding land uses, streets, utilities
- d) Parking if station is located here
- e) Linking with feeder transit systems
- f) Physical separation from downtown/division of the community depending on profile of grade separation
- g) Impacts of elevated tracks, at-grade improvements, and/or subways
- h) Right of way acquisition impacts on neighborhoods, adjacent properties and/or development proposals
- i) Impact on creek crossings
- j) Implications of potential contaminated sites in or near right of way
- k) Economic benefit of station in Redwood City
- l) Economic benefit of line through Redwood City
- m) Economic benefit of possible uses of 'new' available land ("value capture")
 - Above a subway alternative if selected
 - Below tracks if elevated non-berm alternative is selected
- n) Displacements and relocations if the right of way is expanded
- o) Neighborhood compatibility
- p) Environmental justice / equality of impacts

During Construction

- a) Noise, air quality, vibration, detours, traffic disruption
- b) Public safety personnel access across the right of way (during and post-construction)
- c) Safety of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists in and around the construction zones
- d) Loss of business and economic activity of adjacent businesses during construction

Post Construction – Operations

- a) Noise, air quality, vibration during operation
- b) Community safety during operation (fencing)
- c) Recorded / unknown archeological resources
- d) Recorded / sensitive historic resources
- e) Heritage trees / root zones in or near rights of way, and if additional right of way is to be acquired