



The City of Burlingame

501 PRIMROSE ROAD, BURLINGAME, CA 94010-3997
www.burlingame.org



Centennial Celebration

CATHY BAYLOCK, MAYOR
TERRY NAGEL, VICE MAYOR
ANN KEIGHRAN, COUNCILMEMBER
JERRY DEAL, COUNCILMEMBER
MICHAEL BROWNRIGG, COUNCILMEMBER

TEL: (650) 558-7200
FAX: (650) 342-8386
EMAIL: council@burlingame.org

August 17, 2010

Mr. Joseph C. Szabo, Administrator

Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Mr. Shaun Donovan, Secretary

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Mr. Ray LaHood, Secretary

U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Messrs. Szabo, Donovan and LaHood:

We understand that the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) has just submitted an application for additional federal funds for the San Jose-San Francisco segment based on a proposed "aerial orientation" on the San Francisco Peninsula. "Aerial orientation" and "viaduct" are CHSRA euphemisms for constructing the equivalent of a six- to eight-lane elevated freeway through the middle of our cities. We urge you to decline funding for the aerial option because we do not believe the Obama Administration would want its signature technology initiative to be associated with the creation of urban blight and 1950s design solutions.

The route that CHSRA prefers would travel very close to schools, homes, small businesses, parks and hospitals. An elevated HSR "trainway" would significantly inhibit our ability to create mixed-use housing in our downtown cores, create an eyesore that depresses property values in bustling neighborhoods, impact our ability to attract additional enterprises to our downtowns, and for several Peninsula cities, cause existing businesses to fail, with a substantial negative impact on our sales tax and employment bases.

While CHSRA does not seem to worry about this conflict, we know the Obama Administration does understand it. We note in your joint TIGER funding program announcement (Federal Register Volume 75, No. 121), for example, the following aspiration:

DOT and HUD [wish] ... to better align transportation, housing, economic development, and land use planning and to improve linkages between DOT and HUD's programs. HUD's

funding is designed to target housing, economic development, and land use planning strategies that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a related transportation project being planned. Therefore, DOT and HUD [wish to] ... encourage and reward more holistic planning efforts that result in better projects being built with Federal dollars.

Or, as Secretary LaHood put it even more eloquently in your confirmation hearings in January 2009, "**The era of one-size-fits-all transportation projects must give way to one where preserving and enhancing unique community characteristics, be they rural or urban, is a primary mission of our work rather than an afterthought.**" CHSRA's proposal to you for the San Francisco-San Jose segment does not meet this standard.

To be clear, we are in favor of a high speed rail line running beneath our cities, which would facilitate transit-oriented development. We also favor HSR running on routes such as Highway 101 or 280, which would not disrupt living communities to such a degree. Please note that our call for an underground covered rail line is strongly supported by an overwhelming majority of our residents and local community groups, including the San Mateo Union High School District, Burlingame High School, Burlingame Chamber of Commerce, Broadway Improvement District and the Putnam Motor Group, among many others on the Peninsula.

We are also fully in favor of the 100 percent electrification of our intercity at-grade railway, Caltrain. Electrification of Caltrain is a shovel-ready project that would move more commuters more quickly, get people out of their cars and enhance local economies. It would not disrupt communities, and it would put construction workers to work almost immediately. The only people CHSRA has put to work, on the other hand, are consultants and a PR firm, Ogilvy & Mather, which is being paid \$9 million to sell high speed rail at any cost.

Please fund Caltrain, a real railroad project, and let CHSRA take the time needed to get the alignment, business plan and other critical factors right before coming to you for more money. From Seoul to Seattle, the world is tearing down 1950s-era elevated freeways; do not allow CHSRA to take us in the other direction, making HSR a wrecking ball of sustainable cities. If you do not hold them to this standard, how can we?

Sincerely,



Cathy Baylock
Mayor

Copy: Michael DeEmilio – Special Assistant to the FRA Administrator, Chief of Staff
Copy: Douglas R.B. Reynolds - White House Office of Urban Affairs
Copy: Jackie Speier - Congresswoman representing California's 12th District
Copy: Anna G. Eshoo - Congresswoman representing California's 14th District
Copy: Leland Yee - State Senator Assistant President pro Tempore representing the 8th Senate District
Copy: Joe Simitan - State Senator representing California's 11th Senate District
Copy: Fiona Ma - State Assemblywoman Speaker pro Tempore representing the 12th District
Copy: Jerry Hill - State Assemblymember representing the 19th Assembly District
Copy: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors