Construction of rail lines on viaducts is something that European cities rarely allow anymore. Berlin’s last major elevated railways were built by the 1920’s. Decades of scholarship, much of it done in the U.S., has proven that elevated railways produce urban blight. The spectacle of a railway management ignoring public input and trying to blast its way through residential neighborhoods with an elevated rail line is unthinkable today in Europe.

HSRA actively fanned public outrage in a dozen neighborhoods on the Peninsula by proposing elevated trains most of the way from San Francisco to Gilroy. HSRA’s intransigence motivated dozens of local professionals to oppose the rail project and elicited three major lawsuits. Once Bay Area plans were blocked, the Authority did not change its approach and proposed even bigger elevated structures through five Central Valley cities, as well as poorly thought-out elevated lines through rural areas, spurring citizen activism against the project in a region that was previously solidly pro high-speed.

In addition to 60 miles of viaducts in the Bay Area, the Authority proposed another 15 miles on Gilroy-Chowchilla, over 42 miles on its two Central Valley starter segments, and at least 30 miles.

Opinion by Richard F. Tolmach

Latest plans published by the California High Speed Rail Authority show nearly 150 miles of its proposed San Francisco - Anaheim line using aerial structures, many as high as 60 feet in the air. Given the many drawbacks of viaducts, HSRA’s plan to put 30% of the high-speed route on them appears entirely unrealistic.

Viaducts were HSRA’s preferred answer to almost any alignment problem, despite known seismic and safety vulnerabilities, and their propensity to broadcast train noise. In pushing aerial lines, HSRA was ignoring modern European practice, which severely limits the extent of high-speed structures on safety grounds. For example, France’s TGV has less than 2% of track on viaduct, including all river crossings.

Rail engineers cite unacceptable risks as a reason to avoid extended 220 mph operations on viaducts. Each mile of speed increase diminishes the ability to keep trains from launching off the viaduct in an accident. Perching crash walls atop a 60 foot structure would add so much mass as to require more frequent piers and greatly increase the construction cost.

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In addition to 60 miles of viaducts in the Bay Area, the Authority proposed another 15 miles on Gilroy-Chowchilla, over 42 miles on its two Central Valley starter segments, and at least 30 miles.
As part of a pilot program, Metrolink introduced its first two “bicycle cars,” passenger railcars outfitted with space for at least 18 bicycles, instead of two slots like Metrolink’s other railcars. The agency hopes this will encourage more bicyclists to take the train to their destination.

To accommodate the additional bicyclists, Metrolink crews removed 23 passenger seats on the bottom level of one of its railcars that traditionally seats up to 149 people.

“We hope to attract bicyclists whose public transportation options may be limited by available storage space,” said Metrolink CEO John Fenton. “We are committed to growing our ridership; to do so, we have to modify the type of services we offer.”

Metrolink used in-house resources to design and retrofit existing cars with additional storage for bicycles. The agency coordinated with bicycle advocates on the design, which was ultimately approved by the Federal Railroad Administration.

Initially, Metrolink’s “bicycle cars” are used only on its Inland Empire and beach trains, where demand is highest for bicycle parking. The agency plans to modify up to 10 additional bicycle cars to its fleet, depending on the success of the pilot program.

Integration of LOSSAN: Great Goal, Hard to Achieve

Service integration on the LOSSAN corridor, long a goal of rail advocates like TRAC and Help Fight for Improved Trains, looks very bit as problematical as it did ten years ago, prior to several major efforts by Southern California counties to meld service by multiple carriers, the latest of which is in progress under the guidance of Gene Skoropowski, former Capitol Corridor manager, now working for HNTB, a consulting firm.

The blockage seems to be largely financial and institutional.

Caltrans and the CA Dept. of Finance are worried about the skyrocketing subsidy of their Pacific Surfliner service, which has been financially harmed by Metrolink competition, lax management, and a fare scheme that is now more difficult. Caltrans has been working with Amtrak to try to recoup the costs of increased loss traffic, particularly with San Joaquin trains. Revival of reliable daily train connections across California would apparently improve revenue by over $1 million annually, even with a slightly lower frequency of service. Fiscal conservatives wonder why state taxpayers should continue to underwrite the $800 million Amtrak Pacific Surfliner service between Los Angeles and San Diego when local agencies seem ready to provide competing services without subsidy. One reason the state subsidy should continue is that counties seem not to understand the needs of intercity travelers, and may impair long-distance connections, further restraining mobility.

Local agencies are now actively encouraging Amtrak riders, which has reduced State and Amtrak willingness to cooperate. Metrolink and Coaster have begun new through service authorized under Section 209 of the PRIIA bill that undercuts a San Joaquin service.

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11 days in bed in hospital. Today [July 28] to visit the scene earlier. “I was ill and spent
attempts to move the car before a last search.
injuries by a police captain who had resisted
was found unconscious, but without serious
whose parents had apparently perished,
uncover the locomotive of the second train.
so vociferous that the railway was forced to
Chinese mini-blogs were filled with damning
admitted, because blame for major casualties
signal system should keep trains at a safe
never heard of lightning doing that, but if it
did, everything else would stop too. And the
system should keep trains at a safe
distance.” Human error was not immediately
stated that “maximum speed is 300 kilome-
contract for prototype vehicles which clearly
translated by Laura Lin, claimed the Minister
Liu Zhijun was jailed and removed from his
at the Shanghai bureau did not diminish
at the face of great trag-
that publishes leaked directives by censors.
not investigate the causes of the accident;
the public anger about the accident, which
of 1 million annual San Joaquin riders
in a story
trains most of the public can afford.
curtail availability of rail travel by cutting the
plans. Much of the problem is financial, as
the world’s fastest train, according to Zhou
Zhang Shuguang, deputy chief engineer of
the department was sacel.
Contractors are alleged to have skimmed on expensive hardening agents for concrete
crosses. The trestles, essential to high-speed,
in safety and suspect concrete in struc-
tural. Earlier this year, prior Rail Minister
the police did not question. Do not elaborate.”
“CARMAGEDDON” PREDICTED
from a 2 day closure of Interstate 405
MARKETERS AT JETBLUE jumped on
the service for an entire decade during
ers in May, a goal which had eluded
is expected to elevate a local candi-
dorothy duggar was recently forced
General Manager of MUNI, has left
San Francisco is avoiding the typi-
being promoted by the transit agency,
that Saturday from Long Beach to Burbank at just $4 each way, taxes
and fees included. The 600 seats avail-
able to view the Capitol
Dorothy Dugger was recently forced
after receiving a $384,000 golden para-
hed toward the capital of Fujian Province.
According to local media reports, one train
was derailed after a lightning strike and came
to a halt on the outskirts of Wenzhou. About
20 minutes later, the second train plowed into
the back of the stalled train, derailing two of
that train’s six cars and sending four of its
own over the edge of the 60-foot high via-
duct, killing 40 and injuring 210. The last car
of the second train was completely destroyed,
making it difficult to ascertain total fatalities.
Official response was secretive, made no
sense, and fueled public fears of a cover-up.
Early Railway Ministry statements blaming
a lightning strike for loss of signals were
sense, and fueled public fears of a cover-up.
On the evening of July 23, two of China’s
healed new high-speed trains were travel-
On the “Communist Party’s 90th anniversary.
Public anger about the accident was
the public anger about the accident, which
closely followed repeated power failures on
the new high-speed link between Beijing and
Shanghai. The 820-mile line opened June 30
on the Communist Party’s 90th anniversary.
High-speed rail already was under fire for
cost overruns, contract corruption, lapses in
safety and suspect concrete in struc-
tural. Earlier this year, prior Rail Minister
Liu Zhijun was jailed and removed from his
post for $122 million of kickbacks he alleges-
ly received, and handing construction con-
tracts to his brother-in-law. At the same time,
Znag Shuguang, deputy chief engineer of
the department was sacked.
Corruption, Crash, Cover-up

1025 Ninth Street #233
Sacramento, CA 95814-3516
Telephone: 916-557-1667
www.calrailnews.com

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Train Riders Association of California
Robert Reynolds, TRAC President

Signs are erected on the side of the road to mark it.

California Rail News encourages letters, comments,
and questions on local issues. Please submit your ma-
terial to California Rail News at the above address.
Sorry, we do not guarantee return of photos or arti-
cles submitted. Deadline for material to be included
in the next issue of CRN is September 15, 2011.
10 WAYS TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE CROOKED HSR PROPOSAL

1. PICK THE SHORTEST ROUTE
   Sylmar to Fremont via the Altamont route identified by Setec is about 340 miles and traversable in under 2 hours. The HSR’s Mojave, Fresno and Pacheco route takes at least 70 extra miles and 22 extra minutes. A shorter route makes rail substantially more competitive with highways and air carriers and saves at least $20 billion in life cycle costs. It also makes service to the East Bay, Modesto, Stockton and Sacramento possible as part of the initial network.

2. USE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY
   which already exist, like the underutilized Interstate 5 highway right-of-way, instead of spending over $2 billion and most of a decade to condemn an inferior winding route through a thousand privately held agricultural parcels. The State of California already owns the most efficient Central Valley route, so why go looking for a fight with wealthy farmers on the most valuable ag land in California? Existing state rights-of-way are also a perfect place to lease lands to energy producers to site solar and wind power, at a feasible price.

3. FILL THE GAP FIRST
   between Sylmar and Bakersfield to provide through rail travel from Southern California to the Central Valley for the first time since 1971. That 80 mile project is the top priority for improving the California rail network, and would save passengers up to 4 hours each direction. It also has far more traffic and revenue potential than the Bakersfield-Fresno “train to nowhere” that HSR prefers.

4. WORK WITH SCRRA
   and share track instead of advocating separate lines and stations. California can only have a success if its rail network is fully integrated and all lines feed each other.

5. ERADICATE FRAUD
   in HSR data, including the repeated erroneous claim that Los Angeles-San Francisco mileage via Mojave is 432, a falsehood still on HSR’s website. Runs via Palmdale and Mojave add at least 48 miles, not the claimed 25 miles. Likewise, omission of the White Wolf Fault from planning data is literally criminal. HSR wouldn’t have to wage a political battle with Palmdale if the agency leveled with the public about seismic facts and mileage.

6. BAN 220 MPH CITY SPEEDS and elevated tracks. Corcoran, Wasco, Shafter, Madera, and Chowchilla receive no service benefits under the Authority’s plans. These cities do not deserve to lose basic liveability just so urbanites can save time. 42 miles of viaduct on the proposed 160 mile starter line only increases the risk factors and wastes $3 billion.

7. HOURLY SERVICE
   for San Joaquin cities using existing stations and BNSF tracks accelerated by high-speed segments into the Bay Area and Southern California. Fresno would be accessible in under 2 hours 40 minutes from anywhere on the network.

8. FORGET THE WYE in Chowchilla, along with any talk of a Central Valley maintenance facility. Those two projects never made any sense, except as leverage for the Authority to manipulate land values and play Valley cities against one another. Train routes between Sacramento and the Bay Area should run via Tracy, not go 180 miles out of their way to Madera County and back.

9. USE SMARTER MONEY
   and save California as much as $10 billion in General Fund interest payments. $35 billion in Railroad Infrastructure Finance Funding is available. RIFF guaranteed loans (3% interest) are a smarter source than state bonds (7.5% interest).

10. BRING IN THE EXPERTS
    who have designed and operated high-speed rail, and the bankers who have financed the successful projects worldwide by putting the project out to competitive franchise bids. HSR operators know better than bureaucrats how to fashion attractive plans like the Setec Altamont route which would avoid destruction of Peninsula cities and produce a bankable project.

Sacramento
San Francisco
Sacramento
Stockton
Fremont
San Jose
Tracy West
Merced
Fresno
Hanford
Bakersfield
Santa Clarita
Corcoran
Wasco
Shafter
Madera
Chowchilla
Palmdale
Los Angeles
Santa Clarita
Legend
Authority Route Proposal
Straighten and Cheaper Alternative
Upgraded Existing Tracks
New Intermodal Station
Upgraded Existing Station

Map and opinion by Richard F. Tolmach
PARTICIPATE IN RAILROADING

Want to work on a railroad — as a hobby? Throughout California, railroad museums are kept alive through volunteer work by members; you could be the next Station Agent, Conductor, or Locomotive Mechanic at a (small) railroad near you.

Railroad museums are an excellent way for the public to have fun while learning both the rich history of our railroads and to the potential for using railroads to solve transportation problems. Simply by being active in keeping the doors open to visitors expresses the commitment of volunteers to the vision of railroads as the future as much as in the past. The big trains draw the visitors in, of course. However, many of California’s railroad historic sites also have a large display of current rail transportation timetables and maps, along with literature from both historical and advocacy groups like TRAC.

Sometimes a “museum” is a restored station; here a docent can welcome visitors or explain what happened. You can be a Station Agent for a day, telling people how they can (could) buy tickets to far away places, ship parcels or freight cars, and send telegrams.

Larger museums have crews who restore, operate, and maintain locomotives, cars, buildings, and track. After training you could become an engineer or conductor, a mechanic or track worker, or a carpenter or painter. It is all for fun, and it is always done with a group that stresses safety and friendship. About the crew? We’re talking “volunteer” here, so it is just for fun and personal satisfaction.

TRAC Board Member Mike McGinley has done modest amounts of volunteer work for two organizations: the Santa Susanna Station in Simi Valley and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railway in New Mexico. At Santa Susanna he is a docent a few Sundays a year, explaining some of the history of the Southern Pacific and the current Amtrak and Metrolink operations (always watching for the trains passing outside the front door). At the Cumbres & Toltec he has been a “Bridge & Building” carpenter, working on stations, freight cars, water towers, and bridge handrails. These work sessions are a week long, but lose its monopoly in the heaviest traffic corridor in the U.S. It also would lose the ability to conceal heavy NEC subsidies which inflate the costs of all other trains nationwide.

For New Jersey, the plan would be a disaster, because over a hundred million dollars of New Jersey Transit subsidies are hidden in the Amtrak NEC program, too big to hide any longer.

The biggest tragedy is that Amtrak has apparently lost the ability to conceive of a cost-effective set of Northeast Corridor improvements that could have bested weakly supported high-speed rail proposals elsewhere in the U.S.

The announced Amtrak “Vision Plan” for a 30-year project to build a $220 million per mile Boston-Washington high-speed line has spawned a riposte from the House Transportation Committee proposing an alternative plan that seeks to involve private capital in the project.

Chair John Mica (R-FL) and Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA) say their alternative would cost $17 billion, half the $34 billion NEC program. The Mica/Schuster legislation, introduced in July, would:

• Transfer ownership of the Northeast Corridor to a new public sector entity.
• Set objective performance criteria for NEC high-speed rail programs.
• Introduce competitive bidding for NEC high-speed rail operations.
• Involve private sector railroads currently operating high-speed trains.
• Cut in half the time and cost of bringing true high-speed rail to the NEC.
• Preserve rail labor union protection.

Amtrak and the state of New Jersey predictably attacked the proposal. The big danger for Amtrak is that it would work with others who share our interest in railroading and to bring our vision of railroading to young people who visit... and to live the continuing 150 year history of railroading.”

California has large operating railroad museums at Portola, Rio Vista, Ferris, Campo, Jamestown, and in Niles Canyon (near Fremont), and dozens of smaller exhibits throughout the state. They all welcome new members. If you look them up on line, drive by and pick up a flyer, or check the phone book, you may find one near where you live or work. It is a quiet, low-key way to express your vision of rail road travel, past and future.

The inside story.

The California Rail Foundation was founded in 1987 to promote modern rail and bus technologies and to develop high-speed rail. Since that time we have produced California Rail News and cosponsored an annual conference that educates on rail, Cal Rail 2020.

We never believed it would be easy to build California high-speed rail, but we understood just how much fraud megaprojects apparently attract. The project now has a broken budget because of tens of billions of pork including 200 miles of wasted route and dozens of miles of unnecessary viaducts planned in the Central Valley. It appears to be the same model used on Peninsula and Los Angeles County segments. Taxpayers are being offered only overly expensive choices by HSRA that wreck cities the same way that elevated highways would.

It does no good to just complain about fraud; we have to organize and fight it in court.

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The California Rail Foundation is a tax-deductible 501(c)[3] nonprofit, and operate without paid officers or permanent employees, so all financial resources are directed to our mission of cost-effective modern rail service. Take a tax deduction by using the form below to send a check to CRF or by using the PayPal link on our web page.

SUPPORTING RAIL REFORM IS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

In July 2008, CRF filed suit in Sacramento Superior Court, along with the Planning and Conservation League, TRANSER, the Town of Atherton and the City of Menlo Park to overturn adoption of the Pacheco Alternative which would have destroyed many Peninsula cities.

We won the case in October 2009. Last December, HSRA was forced to rescind its selection of Pacheco and redo its environmental work. A brief opportunity in 2010 allowed us to submit new comments into the record. We retained a leading model expert, Norm Marshall of Smart Mobility, who found major flaws in the HSRA ridership figures, confirmed by other experts.

We also retained the leading European HSR route design firm, Setec Ferroviaire, to help us define and present a faster and better way for trains to link S.F., Sacramento and Los Angeles, through the East Bay. Initial court findings have been favorable, and we are hoping for a clear victory. You can see Setec’s work at the CRF site: calrailfoundation.org

Seth’s route saves so much time that it would allow Caltrain segments to run at current speeds. Seth also examined Highway 101 between Redwood City and SFO, a route Setec believes is a feasible alternative.

CRF is actively providing leadership on reforming the project, and promoting cost savings available by involving private capital. Your generous contribution today to CRF will help us stop the bad plan and launch an environmentally superior alternative.

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HOUSE RIPS AMTRAK’S $117 BILLION NEC PLAN

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LET HSR OPERATOR DO DESIGN

PEER REVIEW PANEL SAYS HSRA IS UNQUALIFIED

The following comments regarding competence of the High Speed Rail Authority are from the July 2011 Peer Review Group review of the LAO’s May 10 report to legislators.

The [Peer Review] Group has consistently taken the position that the current organization of itself to meet the challenge posed by the HSR project. We agree with the LAO Report that a change is critical. Our conclusion has been based on the following observation: between the business of the project for a very large increase in the range and level of managerial skills in the near term, on the one hand, and on the other, the PA, the Authority does not have this expertise either, to assume functions similar to the California Transportation Commission, responsible for the decision making capability and a minimum of organizational interfaces. As we have argued in our earlier letters, the organization needed would be more consistent with some form of State-owned corporation in which public oversight would be exercised by public appointment and confirmation of the Board of Directors but with management free to act with the flexibility of a corporation. However, we recognize that the Legislature’s desire for direct public control could lead in the direction of continuance of the Authority to Caltrans would not be a simple task. Neither Caltrans nor the HSRA has the skills, resources and knowledge to emerge over the years. At least some consistent version of the entire picture is needed before the Group and the Legislature can assess whether the organizational structure, along with the related resources and skills, are appropriate.

The Group continues to believe that the HSR project management will need full flexibility in hiring and to hire the staff needed for the project over all its phases and will need to handle procurement rapidly and efficiently in a way that the standard public procurement rules do not facilitate. Real trouble lies immediately ahead if the current organization proceeds to awarding construction contracts without being restructured to ensure adequate accountability for taxpayer funds. The project is larger than the entire Caltrans construction program, and will need maximum flexibility in management to ensure quick decision making capability and a minimum of organizational interfaces.
Please join TRAC, the California Rail Foundation, and the Transit Coalition for our annual California Rail 2020 conference Nov. 4th to 6th, 2011, at the Metro Gateway Headquarters Board Room, adjacent to Union Station. This year’s agenda will include:

**FRIDAY, November 4:** 6:30 pm-onward: Meet and Greet at the upstairs room at Philippe the Original at 1001 North Alameda Street at Ord. Come and get to know your fellow TRAC members. From 8 pm onward, those still standing will do an all-transit pub crawl.

**SATURDAY, November 5:** 9:00 am (registration), Meeting 10:00 am to 5:30 pm with the following sessions:

- **Last Chance for High-Speed Rail** - Members of the HSRA Peer Review Group and MTA discuss how to save the project by giving it a workable management structure and making high-speed rail respond to regional needs.

- **SoCal Railroad Renaissance** - Representatives of OCTA, Metro, Metrolink and the LOSSAN Corridor talk about next steps in integrating regional commuter and intercity service.

- **Metro Rail Accelerates Coverage** - Representatives from the Expo Construction Authority, the West Side Subway Extension, the Downtown Regional Connector, and the Gold Line Construction Authority talk about successes so far and what will happen this year.

- **Tight Transit Budgets and What We Can Do** - Our panel will focus on operating budget problems faced by commuter and intercity rail, and possible efficiency improvements and opportunities for legislative action to address the shortfalls.

**Saturday Conference Rates (includes continental breakfast and luncheon):** Day-of-event rates for members will be $100, but you can save significantly by being an early bird! Mail us your check before September 18 and pay only $79. Before October 25 the rate will be $89. (Non-members pay a $25 surcharge and get TRAC membership at a promotional rate). Make your checks out to *Train Riders Association of California.*

**Saturday 7 pm No-host dinner at TRAXX,** a superb restaurant right in Union Station. Talk to conference staff on Saturday to sign up.

**SUNDAY, November 6:** 9:00 am–4:00 pm We are planning an excursion on the new Expo Light Rail Line.

**Register early:** First 80 registrants get Expo excursion free with conference. Non-conference attendees pay $25.

**Lodging:** We have worked out a special $85 room rate (plus tax) at the Metro Plaza Hotel at 711 North Main Street (at Alameda and E. Cesar Chavez Avenue). This rate is good for Friday or Saturday night. To reserve, call (800) 223-2223 and mention the TRAC conference rate.

**Sunday excursion is planned on Metro’s new Expo Line**