How did France avoid destroying prized Burgundian and Champagne vineyards and market towns, in the face of new high-speed rail construction in the past several decades? High value wine exports were potentially at risk, and also the well being of residents of cities not used to the disruption and stress of 95-decibel high-speed trains.

No residents organized to fight the train in Burgundy or Champagne nor did farmers. No local politicians pulled rank and advocated routings which could have destroyed agriculture or neighborhood quiet. And, in the end, no new rail lines went through any high-value local orchards or vineyards, nor through any cities at 200 mph speeds.

France had no interest in destroying the economy of the regions or its heritage, so, unlike in California, France never seriously considered harming its cities, waterworks, vineyards and orchards. All were spared by simply sensitively avoiding them, and by patient negotiations with farmers in rare cases where land takings were necessary.

The central stations of Dijon, Beaune, Nancy, Reims, Epernay and Metz all were left off the mainlines of the TGV-Southeast and the TGV-East, despite the fact that their populations mostly range from 200,000 to 500,000, a bit above the median of Central Valley counties. France considered that the cities were too important to damage them. Instead common sense prevailed and rail lines went via the most inexpensive routes, far more direct than the former freight alignments that wound through the old centers.

The new tracks cost a fraction of the price considered in California ($10M to $25M there, $60M to over $100M here), because they followed existing highways, utilities and waterways along open routes, or shared development costs with new highways, instead of barging through cities and farms maximizing the destruction.

Intermediate cities avoided all the noise, but still get good service via these means: 1) high-speed trains branch off the mainline using conventional speeds to serve them, 2) high-speed trains connect at exurban stops with branch line trains, or 3) new diesel-electric hybrid trains (see photo above) provide a single-seat ride to/from Paris or other regional center.

The new technology hybrids can go anywhere tracks run, offering seamless travel. They can use old tracks’ 1.5kV direct current, new high-speed rail routes’ 25kV (continued on Page 2)

France’s hybrid AGC trains built by Bombardier extend benefits of high-speed rail to nearby cities not on HSR routes. Photo: © Bombardier, Inc.
SINGLE-SEAT TRIPS USING HYBRID SETS

(continued from Page 1)

CalRail 2020 on October 27 hosted two presentations featuring innovative ideas for enhancement of track capacity on urban passenger rail networks.

The search for capacity on rail freight lines has been intensive and well rewarded by North American railroads and the capital markets. However, only rarely has the same zeal for efficiency appeared on US passenger services. Many urban networks in particular struggle with operational issues that have well-known solutions.

The Bay Area Rapid Transit District is the positive exception. For example, the BART innovation that created timed cross-platform transfers at MacArthur Station deserves emulation by US rail carriers nationwide.

Val Menotti of BART’s Planning Dept. announced a new innovation at CalRail 2020. BART will conserve scarce paths between Oakland and the West Bay by implementing train splitting at Bayfair Station. The Dublin/Pleasanton and Fremont/Berkeley trains will join together there westbound and split apart the eastbound, making frequent service affordable.

Train splitting is usually a predictable and easily managed practice, but its most stunning asset is the ability to free up a tremendous amount of capacity. BART will reportedly use the saved frequencies, 4 per hour, partly to augment service on the Richmond transit node, already the most efficient operation in the network.

BART is also the biggest regional rail operator in the U.S. to have avoided the class-act-in-the-end downtown terminal problem. Most U.S. commuter railways are saddled with massive terminal costs and operational inefficiency from pre-1950’s terminal design. This is ironic because it is a capacity issue like the ones American engineers have tackled so effectively on freight operations. Penn Station New York exemplifies the solution to the problem in its purest form, a through station that allows trains to link the entire region efficiently, with storage at less expensive stations on the periphery.

Dr. Reinhard Clever, a recent UC Berkeley alum, provided a PowerPoint showing how many European cities applied the same cross-city method, reaping travel speed and coverage benefits. This plan is why loads are so relevant in Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Munich, Hamburg, and Cologne.

Clever notes the huge disparity between BART’s successful results at four Market Street stations versus Caltrain’s lack of penetration of the San Francisco market at its distant 4th and Townsend station. He credits this to the “last mile” effect, that on the destination end of work trips, demand is extremely constrained by distance.

Clever, who has watched the growth of successful tram-train services in Europe, thinks they are relevant to the Caltrain problem. Tram-trains are long sets of light-rail type equipment that can go everywhere: on subways, railroads, and street trackage. The FRA decision to provide a waiver on light-rail weights and track sharing rules for European US equipment in Ft. Worth makes the mode possible in the US. Tram-trains are perfect for locations where terminals are too far from downtowns, like 4th & Townsend.

Given that it will be hard for Caltrain to claim adequate space for all its service in the new Transbay Terminal, crowded by high-speed expresses, Clever came up with an alternate idea. Use Embarcadero tracks soon to be vacated by MUNI’s 3rd Street light rail trains, plus excess MUNI Metro westbound capacity to give Caltrain passengers a one-seat ride to multiple downtown destinations. (see map below)

The idea could use planned Caltrain electrification and existing MUNI infrastructure. The only new construction needed would be a link from Caltrain to MUNI at 4th Street and a southbound connection from MUNI Metro which currently surface and occupy a 7th Street curb lane. Tram-trains could enliven economic activity on a whole section of Market Street that has been out of reach of Peninsula passengers and suffering from decay. The prospects are very exciting!

February Issue: More on Tram-trains

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California Rail News October-December 2012
The high-speed rail line formerly known as Desert Xpress is still years away, but a second private company says that gamblers may be able to strike out for Las Vegas on its luxury X-Train as early as next year.

Las Vegas Railway Express Inc. obtained a conditional agreement in November with Union Pacific Railroad to use a current freight line to operate passenger train service. Not willing to wait for the train, some anxious patrons are already gambling on its stock. After the UP announcement, the penny issue (XTRN:OTC) dropped from 17 cents to 6 cents, before rebounding to 10 cents.

The deal gives LVRE exclusive access to a route between Las Vegas and Daggett, at the California state line. But the company comprised of retired railroad executives, including some apparent passenger traffic experts from Illinois Central and CSX, plans to have the X-Train, set to begin service in May, anticipate spending $10 million building the arrival depot in Las Vegas. More than 2 million guests will travel via the X-Train each year, according to LVRE.

The company touts Metrolink connections in Fullerton, but Amtrak trains also connect there. Fullerton has appeal for private firms catering to Las Vegas travel because there is a large gambling community in Orange County inner cities, which currently use nonstop chartered coaches.

The plans have been in the works since 2009, but apparently started moving in earnest once congressional funding for high-speed rail was crippled by House Republican action earlier this year. It is unclear whether private managers of the service are expecting subsidies from casino interests or local government financial participation.

The popular Desert Wind Amtrak service between Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Salt Lake City was killed by UP lobbying efforts in 1990, and since that date only bus or air service has been offered. There remains a great need for public transportation in the corridor. Interstate 15 is one of California’s most congested highways on weekends, with traffic at the state line in Daggett expected to reach 128,000 vehicles a day on peak days, up from 60,000 now, according to LVRE.

The company said its trains will make the same trip in less than five hours. Earlier this month, Greyhound launched a five-hour service from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. On its trains, LVRE is setting about retrofitting of used commuter equipment with first-class accommodations and a lavish amount of space per passenger. It envisions chef-prepared meals, tables with flat screen televisions, live performances, table service from “conductresses” and sports lounges. Private cars can host business meetings, bachelor and bachelorette parties and more.

Some 4 million people a year could use a conventional rail passenger train, the company said, citing a study by the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada. With additional revenues from serving as a concierge to travelers — helping to book hotel rooms, spa appointments, dining reservations and show tickets — LVRE believes its business could be worth $500 million a year.

The company said some 1,000 workers will be needed to fill roles in management, service, technical support and more. It anticipates spending $10 million building the arrival depot in Las Vegas. More than 2 million guests will travel via the X-Train each year, according to LVRE.

The travel price is currently stated at $99 but is not categorized as one-way or return.
by Richard F. Tolmach, additional reporting by Kathy Hamilton

CalRail 2020 attendees in Berkeley October 27 received an intensive training in how high-speed rail bond funds will be used.

Ms. Elizabeth Alexis, the Co-Founder of Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design (CARRD) and David Schonbrunn of the Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund (TRANSDEF) got into what Prop. 1A funds appropriated by SB 1029 will buy. After a short diversion into Federal and State finance issues, Ms. Alexis got to the heart of the issue, “what do we get?”

California gets about $2 billion of assorted transit and intercity capital projects, including:
- New cars for BART ($256 million)
- Various Positive Train Control projects
- CBOSS for Caltrain ($41 million)
- Part funding of LA Regional Connector
- Sum for SF Central Subway ($61 million)
- $600 million for Caltrain electrification
- $500 million for Metrolink projects
- New cars for BART ($256 million)

The primary funded project is $6 billion (60 percent Federal funds) for a 60 to 130 mile alignment falls squarely within that alternative routes, and the Authority must consider alternatives as part of the environmental impact statement (EIS/EIR). Studying the Grapevine alignment calls for evaluating a more practical idea than importing Big Dig methods and excavating to 60 feet.

The only early implementation date claimed by the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) is on what Ms. Alexis termed “the mysterious Northern California Unified Service,” an ill-defined ACE + Amtrak service which has no solid funding source, no state staff, and no defined public planning process.

What’s in the $6 billion package?

Ms. Alexis then gave a tour through the four Central Valley construction packages, pointing out that only Package 1 (Madera–Fresno) was even close to be put to bid. Until recently, submission of proposals was slated for November, but that date has now slipped to January, following last-minute revisions to a number of elements of the RFP.

Award does not seem likely before July, according to project staff. To actually go to construction, over 400 parcels would have to be acquired. This means that even under the most optimistic scenario there would be only very limited construction in 2013, and there are substantial legal hurdles even for that.

Package 1 is a very complex piece of work, with three bridges including one over the San Joaquin River, many grade separations, a trench/tunnel in north Fresno, a aerial structure south of the Fresno station site, a second subterranean open section in south Fresno, and years of utility relocation. Even when completed towards the end of the decade, the segment would still lack tracks, signalling, electrification, trains, and stations.

One of the more amusing parts of the CARRD presentation was about “Jacked Box Construction.” Instead of letting contractors propose the most effective way to avoid Highway 180 structures, the Authority dictates this method of construction, for which there are few firms expert nationwide, seemingly giving about two of the five “qualified” firms an advantage.

The winning contractor would be required to use a concrete box as a cookie-cutter to go very slowly underneath a freeway support without collapsing it. On the Boston tunneling projects under South Station tracks, there may have been reason (and available budget) for such arcane methods.

This project is, after all, in Fresno, where a slight readjustment of the alignment seems a more practical idea than importing Big Dig methods and excavating to 60 feet.

Waiting for Caltrans to clear a path?

To make progress on Package 1, the winning contractor would also have to trust Caltrans to be able to do its part of the job expeditiously. Caltrans is tasked with rebuilding Highway 99 on a parallel alignment to its current lanes, complete with demolition of structures and removal of its facilities from several miles of right-of-way.

Even many construction industry sources have concerns about the RFP. The Authority’s time frames are clearly unrealistic, there is lack of transparency on overall budget, and too much risk is shifted to contractors, which is bound to result in high bids, cost overruns and subsequent change orders.

Ms. Alexis in comments in a later forum in San Jose pointed out that HSRA’s chosen route in the Central Valley has potential to do vast damage to the fertile farmland that produces 70 percent of California fruits and vegetables. The line will disrupt complex irrigation systems that keep crop watered during the summer, because the Authority has not made provisions for them.

In many cases, instead of just taking margins of properties next to a road, the Authority is dividing properties up the middle with no access for miles, making entire parcels uneconomic. This has serious repercussions for the right-of-way cost, because the Authority could be liable under inverse condemnation for entire businesses.

How did we end up here in Fresno?

Ms. Alexis said farmers are concerned that the route will make Fresno a new suburb of San Jose. She pointed out that the Authority’s practice of promising stations to cities early, before exacting commitments to smart growth, was a serious strategic error that may spur leapfrog growth, endangering more farmland.

Ms. Alexis also predicts that operation of 220 mph train service will have a catastrophic

HSRA Chair Dan Richard looks on as Elizabeth Alexis of CARRD details broken promises in Central Valley. Photo: K. Hamilton
Citizens Pinpoint HSR Flaws, provided by the project is money to keep construction going. According to his brief the only benefit is no prospect of high-speed or statewide service. He said, “High-speed rail is simply dead. There will never be complete enough to be operable. The high-speed project has any future. He pointed out that HSRA’s technical work was manipulated.”

At some point, all HSRA’s technical work became suspect. He alleged claimed time savings for the San Joaquin’s “abusive proposition,” because track connections to BNSF are not being made available and the new line would lack needed stations in Madera, Fresno, and Hanford. “What is the utility to Amtrak passengers of a new, allegedly faster line through Fresno if it has no stations.”

The bottom line, says Schonbrunn is an expensive mess made by engineers gone wild. Over $450 million has been spent by California for design of an impractical gold-plated system. All other ways can be built and benefits nobody but the herd of consultants.

Skepticism about reality of project.

David Schonbrunn of TRANSDEF, in his talk posed the basic question of whether the high-speed project has any future. He pointed out the capital deficit in the project, observing that without approximately $26 billion from the Federal government, the HSRA project will never be complete enough to be operable.

Because the geographic layout of the line is so wasteful, with 100 extra miles of route and unnecessary grade and seismic hazards, no private capital is willing to undertake the risk.

“Without the private capital,” Schonbrunn said, “high-speed rail is simply dead. There is no prospect of high-speed or statewide service starting in the foreseeable future, despite California having burned through $8 billion.”

Is the goal rail service or billings?

Schonbrunn asked attendees to think about what a non-politicized high-speed rail project would look like. He offered:

- It would deliver practical service benefits right now.
- It would be built more efficiently by avoiding gratuitous viaducts, tunnels, or diversions to insiders’ investment properties.
- It would be built in partnership with an experienced high-speed operator which had a stake in its success.
- On both Bay Area and Los Angeles ends, direct routes would connect onto commuter systems, sharing tracks.

Both Schonbrunn and Ms. Alexis alluded to the fact that there had been an honest plan offered by the French National Railway (SNCF), prior to the tragic death of Denis Docte, President of its American subsidiary early in January 2010.

SNCF knew that experienced passenger rail operators could make money on a Bay Area-Los Angeles line if it had an efficient routing with minimal Valley delays. It had studied the California corridor since 1990 and favored Altamont and Grapevine routings to the politicized longer ones chosen. Docte was in particular an outspoken critic of spending an extra $6 billion to get through Fresno on structures.

HSRA blocked consideration of having an expert operator as a partner, and has tried to displace the firm each time its proposal has been raised. The most recent time, HSRA Chairman Dan Richard even repeated the discredited attack that SNCF collaborated with Nazis to send Jews to death camps in World War II. If that were true, why would Israel Railways have SNCF as a partner today?

I-5: easier building, faster travel.

Schonbrunn asked attendees to consider the efficiencies of constructing a line along the Interstate 5 corridor compared to along Highway 99.

Along I-5, right-of-way acquisition would be relatively painless due to the wide existing road, low intensity of most adjacent land uses, and few parcels to deal with. Along 99, up to 400 parcels would have to be acquired for the first 40-mile section instead of 100 parcels for the whole 4-package 130-mile segment. That difference is counted in years and billions of dollars.

Use of I-5 would virtually eliminate all construction controversy because there are adjacent sensitive uses. The existing 99 plan running 220 mph trains through five cities is a death sentence for neighborhoods and business districts close to the tracks.

Interstate 5 would minimize both environmental and agricultural impacts, because it would not split parcels and would not affect irrigation systems. It would also not cut through farming properties. Few farmers would be negatively affected at all, and the adjacent land is some of the lowest value, as compared with Highway 99 fields with more substantial crops growing.

Interstate 5 could also deliver much faster travel times for Bay Area-Los Angeles trips, the key to high-speed’s economic feasibility. The 50 miles savings in running time would eliminate the need for 220 mph speeds to achieve a 2 hour 40 minute travel time, broadening the range of available equipment and lowering construction, operation, and track maintenance costs.

At-grade construction available along I-5 is also much more expedient than the frequent viaducts, bridges, and underground sections required next to Highway 99. Instead of a 40-mile segment per year as envisaged by HSRA’s current Fresno-area plan, over 100 miles of line could be constructed annually, making a finished route a possibility inside Gov. Brown’s next term.

Interstate 5 construction is also the kind of clear project where Caltrans engineers could participate and take ownership. For example, the fastest start on construction would be to design and construct a replacement highway path in the I-5 right-of-way, and the best choice existing highway path for a high-speed rail path to be built once there is redundant highway space.

Exurban French high-speed rail projects built using Autocut alignments have come in recently at less than $20 million per mile, a far cry from the $50 to $100 million estimated for building through Fresno.

Is lack of I-5 study a fatal flaw?

High Speed Rail Authority officials have repeatedly claimed that Interstate 5 was studied and discarded, but the administrative record seems to indicate that it was discarded for political reasons long before the current environmental process and not studied since, although it is feasible.

Several of the current lawsuits initiated by the farming community may turn on the legality of the current environmental plans in the Central Valley. In California law, the feasibility of the Interstate 5 route may be a legitimate legal cause, but not so in the National Environmental Policy Act. Now that we can see all the flaws and negative effects of digging through Fresno and irreparable agricultural lands, I-5 deserves another look.
by Wilhelm R. Reich

In October, U.S. press outlets accused Italian judges of attacking science by holding six experts responsible for not predicting the earthquake that killed 309 people in April 2009.

The AP reported, “Defying assertions that earthquakes cannot be predicted, an Italian court convicted seven scientists and experts of manslaughter Monday for failing to adequately warn residents before a temblor struck central Italy in 2009 and killed more than 300 people.”

The Christian Science Monitor stated: “An Italian court sentenced six scientists to jail time for not having a functioning crys-
tal ball ahead of the 2009 earthquake in L’Aquila. The arguments of science and reason fell on deaf ears.”

Provoked by this coverage, an array of scientific voices in the English-speaking world criticized the reported action of the Italian judiciary, although many lacked direct knowledge of the case, reported only later in scientific journals.

An article published October 12 in the journal Science explained the real point of the case against the scientists: “Some independent seismic experts view the L’Aquila verdict differently, Lacliana Mualchin, the former chief scientist for Caltrans, was called to testify as an expert witness for the prosecution. In 2010, when the indictment was made, Mualchin and other experts criticized and refused to sign a letter supporting the indicted seismologists. Mualchin's view, systematically underestimates seismic hazard because it fails to consider extreme and rare events. Mualchin says quake “frequency is not important, what really matters is the largest earthquake we can expect, the stron-
gest one that has happened in the past. Risk prevention should be based on that.”

Deterministic seismic-hazard analysis (DSHA) used that philosophy. DSHA is now out of style on many campuses and younger seismologists do not even learn about it, according to Mualchin. “PSHA (Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis) is a bad model California has exported elsewhere, and we see the results here in L’Aquila,” Mualchin told Nature in October.

Just under the surface, unmentioned by the press, is the motivation for PSHA. It was actually an industry reaction to the higher costs of fully recognizing the dangers exposed by the earthquakes of the 1980’s. Research on the Northridge, Loma Prieta, and Santa Clarita quakes didn’t expose the full extent of risks until nearly a decade later. Sticker shock at the needed fixes to structures resulted in pushback by construction firms, with the result that there was a lot of controversy. That made everyone in the field anxious.

Over the 1990’s, cozy arrangements intensified between the major design- and build firms, state departments of transport-
ation, and academia who more often than not work for both, leading to actions and decisions to downplay risk by adopt-
ing an actuarial approach instead of a safety approach. Less stringent seismic standards can save billions in civil costs while enriching engineering firms. Until that time, most risk assessments used “deterministic” models in which structures were designed to withstand the worst-case scenario, Maximum Credible Earthquake, (MCE) for a given location. Since such large earthquakes are infrequent, clever engineers developed methods “borrowed” from the insurance industry in which risk is assessed by the probability of quakes of various intensi-
ties occurring within the service life of the structure.

This methodology yields less damage than those predicted by MCE, thereby reducing construction costs. It appears that Californians should be even more concerned than Italians about the even-
tual occurrence of The Big One. The Bay Bridge East Span, expected to open by 2014, is exposed to severe San Andreas and Hayward fault hazards, which were downplayed by the PSHA model.

The asymmetrical self-anchored suspension (SAS) bridge currently under construction as part of the East Span has never been tested at scale on a seismic simulator. No empirical data exists for the bridge, because one of its type and size has never been built. However, the EDAP panel, in charge of seismic review, picked a new probabilistic model, the “Seismic Evaluation and Deficient Requirements” (SEER) model. It assumed that the structure would only have to weather a temblor with lesser force than the MCE. Chair of the current Caltrans panel Dr. David Culver, a publishing partner with Prof. G.M. Calvi, one of the sentenced Italian experts.

In its 2000 Report on the bridge, the Army Corps of Engineers posed concerns about vulnerability of the SAS. “The bridge should be evaluated for a design that addresses the San Andreas MCE ground motions. These ground motions appear to be more forceful than the MCE ground motions in the period range sig-
ificant to the bridge.” For example, the Loma Prieta quake had very low frequen-
cy, a rolling motion felt up to 100 miles away, but SEE uses a higher frequency temblor less likely to do damage.

In its assessment, the Corps clearly states the bridge is not seismically safe. The Corps says that the “performance of a replacement bridge” meets requirements from Maximum Credible Earthquake (MCE) cannot be determined. The bridge has not been evaluated or designed for a MCE event, which is illegal.

Caltrans seismic experts never agreed with use of the SEE, but the Metropolitan Transportation Commission sidetracked them by demanding that the transportation agency heed design control to the “independent peer review” panel.

The Bay Bridge East Span is far from being the only vulnerable structure. High-speed rail seismic analysis also relies entirely upon probabilistic modeling. High Speed Rail Authority officials have downplayed dangers of their proposed elevated viaducts in the Central Valley and on the Tehachapi grade, where the height of the structures would reach 330 feet between the White Wolf and Edison Faults.

Probabilistic models are a convenient way for HSRA to hide serious problems. Earthquakes in the Tehachapi are very rare, but also very dangerous. The last major White Wolf earthquake was in 1952, but it was the most significant Southern California earthquake of the 20th century. It displaced many structures in Tehachapi, many in Bakersfield, and eradicated about 8 miles of rail line.

The PSHA model says we don’t need to worry because the big one probably won’t happen in our lifetime, even if it did recently in Italy.
Istanbul Terminal Threatened

by Richard F. Tolmach

Launch of high-speed rail construction doesn’t necessarily mean most passengers will see service improvements, as China and now Turkey have learned.

Less than three years after launching its new 5-hour Istanbul to Ankara high-speed trains, Turkey’s TCDD railway abruptly ended intercity train service at its Haydarpaşa terminal in Istanbul in February 2012. Authorities cited the need to speed work on the second leg of the Ankara high-speed line from Inonu to Kosekoy, about 50 miles east of Istanbul.

However, the surprise closure spawned public demonstrations and anger among Istanbul citizens, because Haydarpaşa, Turkey’s highest ridership station with a beautiful setting on the Bosphorus will be endangered. The station, no longer have intercity train service, and its Haydarpaşa terminal in Istanbul in 1987 to promote modern rail and bus technology, including high-speed rail. Many fear that TCDD, restructured as a quasi-private firm, may spin off the site to property speculators or a hotel chain, crippling mobility for the city and taking the waterfront away from ordinary citizens. Haydarpaşa has been placed on the 2012 World Monuments Watch by the World Monuments Fund. As of today, only suburban trains serve the terminal.

Istanbul and its suburbs have always relied heavily on a huge network of ferry-boats, but contrarily, construction of two highway bridges have worsened traffic congestion rather than moderating it.

Also threatened with complete closure is Çirkesi, Istanbul’s European terminal, which lost train service to Greece following the Greek financial crisis. The last remaining international train, the Balkan Express to Sofia, Bulgaria has been disrupted by a bus bridge much of 2012.

A future project will extend high-speed rail to the Bulgarian border at Edirne, but that is not expected to be completed for many years. Turkey plans to construct some 3,700 miles of high-speed railway by 2023, the country’s 100th anniversary.

Authorities say the two terminals have been made obsolete by the Marmaray tube, the world’s deepest of its type, completed under the Bosporus in 2008 but still not ready for service. The tube, originally to cost $2.5 billion, is thought to have tripled in cost, as delays have stretched to four years. Due to major archeological finds during excavation and operational complexity of the deep line, which will host both a regional metro and high-speed trains on the same tracks, full operation is not expected before 2015.

Local traffic is expected to flood the Marmaray regional metro trains, but it is not clear how metro will mesh with high-speed rail. Issues yet to be determined include making ERTMS signalling for high-speed rail work together with a separate control system for the Marmaray trains, a worldwide first. The high-speed rail project, a $1.27 billion segment between Inonu and Kosekoy, has its own technical problems. Work began in October 2008. Plans originally called for the line to open by December 2013, but much work remains.

SUPPORTING RAIL REFORM IS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

The California Rail Foundation was founded in 1987 to promote modern rail and bus technology, including 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 underestimated 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 unneeded 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.

In July 2008, CRF filed suit in Sacramento Superior Court, along with the Planning and Conservation League, TRANSEDF, 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 HSRA’s 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

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

CRF is actively providing leadership on re-forming 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.

We are a tax-deductible 501c(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.
In August 2012, Sacramento removed tracks from its Amtrak station, ending easy pedestrian access from trains to Capital Mall job sites. Capitol Corridor trains have suffered a continuing loss of commuters since, due to harsh weather conditions on the distant new platforms. City officials admit two or three have died accessing the new platforms, but blame pre-existing health conditions.

Even sadder than the loss of life is the fact the $100 million track-move project was never meant to help train riders. It was an attempt to convince a billionaire to build an arena by moving trains away.

City DOT antagonism to rail helps make Sacramento look like Detroit. Photos: M. Drayton

Looking out from the station to the now-distant platform beside the old SP shops, the sight staring you in the eyes is the open drainage sump to isolate runoff expelled by the 150-year-old industrial site. Don’t you worry! Sacramento leaders have made provisions: They invented a slogan for the walk to the train: The Path to Progress! Ridiculous, but it ain’t no joke.

Sacramento’s newest mineral springs, rich in arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury!