

## DORAS BRIGGS & JANE TOLMACH: PIONEERS OF RAIL ADVOCACY

California recently lost major pioneers in rail passenger service advocacy, Doras Briggs and Jane Tolmach.

Long-time rail passenger advocate **Doras Moreton Briggs** died at age 96 at her home in Emeryville last May 4th. Doris was originally from Iowa, and graduated from UC Berkeley in 1942. For many years she played the campanile bells and local church organs. She reportedly fell in love with trains on her 5th birthday in 1923, with her first train trip from her home in Waterloo to Cedar Falls, Iowa. Doras and her husband were active model railroaders.

Once Doras retired from UC Berkeley, she became devoted to the cause of improving rail passenger service, actively lobbying locally, in Sacramento, and in Washington. She served on Amtrak's Customer Advisory Committee, was National Association of Railroad Passengers director, and served on the Board of Directors of TRAC. She received several awards in recognition of her rail advocacy, including Amtrak's "Champion of the Rails," the George Falcon Golden Spike Award, and the California Golden STAR Award.

From 2003 until her death, Doras lived in an apartment overlooking the Emeryville Amtrak station after moving from Kensington. Doras was a frequent sight at the station, appearing every morning there wearing her "train lady" conductor's hat until just a short time before her death.

Doras is survived by a step-son, a step-grandson and numerous nephews, cousins, step-nephews, and numerous grand nieces and grandnephews.

She is also survived by hundreds of Amtrak staff, volunteers, and passengers who appreciated her extraordinary efforts to improve rail passenger service.

**Jane McCormick Tolmach** passed away at her Oxnard home on August 23rd, surrounded by her family. Jane was the first female mayor of Oxnard, a community activist, and long-time rail advocate. Without Jane, would be no TRAC.

She became an environmentalist long before the word was invented, becoming strongly aware after the 1928 Saint Francis Dam collapse and Santa Clara River flood, which the family only narrowly avoided. Jane graduated from UCLA in 1943, and received a Masters degree in Social Work from Smith College in 1945.

While busy raising five children including TRAC co-founder Richard Tolmach, Jane became very active in Democratic Party causes. During election season, her home was a hotbed of political activity.

Jane was close friends with Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. and Senator Alan Cranston in the 1958 campaign. Trains were one of her issues, and she worked through Democratic politicians on the Senate Public Utilities Committee to advocate for better train service on the SP Coast Route, including stops in Oxnard for the Lark and Coast Daylight.

Although she was a strong Democrat, she also was against the Vietnam War. She also became active in Cesar Chavez's effort to organize farm labor and similar causes.

After the assassination of Robert Kennedy, she devoted her time to local causes. She was

elected to the Oxnard City Council in 1970, and was mayor in 1973-1974. In the early 70's, relations were bad between the Oxnard police and minority neighborhoods, and she worked as a liaison between the two sides.

Following the devastating 1972 Santa Barbara Channel oil spill, she fought dubious projects like a proposed Oxnard LNG port, which was blocked after a 10-year fight. As a member of the Southern California Association of Governments Transportation Committee, she advocated for commuter trains, and worked with SCAG consultant Carl Englund to try to ensure Oxnard was on the network, which was eventually implemented as Metrolink.

In 1976, Jane ran in Assembly District 36, but found herself facing a gas industry-backed candidate. She lost, but went on to serve on the state Water Reclamation Board, and later the state Community Colleges Board, as well as numerous local boards and commissions. After she finished her term on the Oxnard City Council in 1978, Jane completed a law degree from Southwestern University in 1981, and was active in politics through 2011.

Jane also worked with the first Jerry Brown administration to improve passenger service, and took the opportunity at an Oxnard fundraiser that she held to educate him about things he could do to expedite the startup of the overnight coast train between Los Angeles, the Bay Area and Sacramento. Jane was also a long-time member of TRAC, and often used her political influence to improve transit and passenger rail. She will be sorely missed.

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# California Rail News

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## Keys to HSR Success: Market-Based Route & Private Funds



## CURRENT HIGH-SPEED PLAN ATTRACTS "INTEREST" BUT NO MONEY

By Michael D. Setty  
TRAC Administrative Director

On June 22, 2015, the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) released its "Request for Expressions of Interest for the Delivery of an Initial Operating Segment," to firms interested in helping construct, finance or operate CHSRA's proposed high-speed rail (HSR) route between Burbank and Merced.

By its September 14 deadline, the CHSRA solicitation drew 36 responses from large international construction, management, engineering and financial firms possessing varying degrees of HSR experience and expertise. "They are not bringing their checkbook yet, but they are bringing their ideas, their interest, their commitment to work with us," said CEO Jeff Morales in an interview with the Los Angeles Times. CHSRA board member and

financial expert Michael Rossi said, "There is no proposal, there is no commitment to do anything; We need to be very, very careful."

Access to \$9 billion from Proposition 1A, approved in 2008 by voters, hangs on getting past the vociferous opposition of litigants claiming the project does not meet the requirements of the Bond Measure. Without those funds, CHSRA's plan to build the initial segment from a point near Madera to a point near Bakersfield are in doubt. Beginning in 2016-2017, approximately \$500 million per year will be available for HSR construction from Cap & Trade funds. Those funds are not sufficient to build an HSR system, however.

Given that the prospects for additional state funding beyond Proposition 1A, Cap & Trade and more federal funding are slim to none, CHSRA's only hope is private sector

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## HSR REFORM SERIOUS BUSINESS IN KINGS CO.

By Shelli Andranagian

Hanford, CA -- The future of California train travel is serious business for a group of dedicated and unselfish individuals who have met in a rural American town nearly every week since 2011.

Based in Kings County, Citizens for California High Speed Rail Accountability (CCHSRA) has been on the frontlines in holding the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA or Authority) accountable.

CCHSRA's co-chairmen Aaron Fukuda, a civil engineer and Frank Oliveira, a farmer, private investigator and former parole agent, first met in May 2011. Both men, who were born and raised in Kings County, had discovered by accident that their properties were in the rail's pathway. They immediately bonded, after sharing their eerily similar stories of communication breakdowns with CHSRA.

Fukuda and Oliveira decided to form an accountability group shortly thereafter to assist others in getting answers and the necessary help. "We realized we were both being lied to and decided to do something about it," Oliveira said. "Over time, CCHSRA has become a family unit. We continue to have each other's back."

The group has been in the forefront and on the frontlines ever since, all while attempting to get CHSRA and its board to be in full compliance with Proposition 1A (aka the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Train Bond Act for the 21st Century) which California voters narrowly passed in November 2008.

CCHSRA's members include people in agriculture, business, education, engineering, health care, law and the media, along with retired professionals. Many share a fondness for trains, but not for how the Authority carries out its business or the proposed high-speed rail plans it is forcefully pursuing.

They also have a great support system, which continues to grow and extend throughout the state. "Everywhere I go throughout the State, I am humbled to be in

the company of other landowners, businesses and concerned citizens. They are acutely aware of the mismanaged high-speed rail project and have pledged their support to our cause," said Fukuda.

In addition to attending weekly meetings, CCHSRA members traverse the Central Valley and California each month. Activities include hosting informative workshops for those impacted and testifying about their concerns at CHSRA Board meetings, as well as meetings of the County Board of Supervisors, City Councils and the State Public Works Board. CCHSRA members write letters to legislators and testify at legislative hearings, supporting rail advocates like TRAC.

Members stay up-to-date on what is happening in each proposed segment (often finding out that history tends to repeat itself but not in a good way). This then leads to outreach, and often to holding fundraisers. Members have continually been on the frontlines when it comes to environmental issues caused by the California High-Speed Train project.

Fukuda stated, "When you see what they are doing in the public realm, it causes concern. When you learn what they are doing behind closed doors, it angers you and compels you to action."

On November 14, 2011, Kings County joined Fukuda and farmer John Tos in filing suit against the CHSRA, asserting its project failed to comply with Proposition 1A. Phase 1



CCHSRA's "brain trust" hard at work during a meeting.

of the case resulted in an initial Superior Court victory on November 25, 2013. The Third District Appellate Court ruled on July 30, 2014 that sadly, plaintiffs had no remedy for the non-compliance found by the lower court.

However, the Court acknowledged that CHSRA needed to submit a funding plan for the Merced-Burbank route if it wanted construction funding from the Bond measure. The plaintiffs appealed the overturned ruling to the State Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case in a statement issued on October 15, 2014. Phase 2 of the Proposition 1A case is set for trial on February 11, 2016 in Sacramento Superior Court.

In the meanwhile, CCHSRA will stay the course in holding the Authority accountable when it comes to the future of train travel in California.

Please visit [www.cchsra.org](http://www.cchsra.org) for additional information.

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# Keys to Success

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financing to cover most of the additional \$25-\$30 billion it claims is needed to complete HSR from Burbank to Merced. They are at least \$10 billion short. CHSRA Dan Richard said proposers either wanted a "revenue guarantee" or "...a record of financially successful operations."

The terms of Proposition 1A require HSR to cover its operating expenses out of fare revenues, without any form of state operating subsidies. A "revenue guarantee" is a polite word for subsidy. Proposition 1A was originally drafted with the expectation that the lion's share of HSR capital costs would also be covered by fare revenues, making private sector rail operations and major private capital investments feasible.

CHSRA released its solicitation with an expectation of private financing for a major portion of its current HSR plan. However, to paraphrase CHSRA Board Chairman Dan Richard, "there were lots of interesting ideas, but let's not delude ourselves that anyone wants to invest in our HSR plan."

Elizabeth Alexis of Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design (CAARD), a TRAC ally in the effort to reform the HSR plan, said, "Everybody who

is anybody responded to the authority, but the bad news is that everybody is telling them as kindly as possible they are nuts."

## CA High Speed Rail Can Work, but the Current CHSRA Plan Cannot

When the CHSRA solicitation for "Expressions of Interest" was released, TRAC did not expect any private investment offers. And as a number of experts predicted, only taxpayer guarantees of operating revenues, or a "record of financially successful operations" would generate such financing offers. TRAC is no longer alone in believing that the current CHSRA plan cannot be built. No financing is forthcoming from major international players in the high-speed rail field, supporting conclusions that TRAC arrived at several years ago.

Stated simply, for high-speed rail to succeed in California, high-speed rail planning must be taken back to the drawing board to develop a financially feasible plan. "This requires three things:

- (1) Selecting a route best serving the intercity travel market between Northern and Southern California;
- (2) Developing a plan that will actually provide travel times of under 3 hours, to be competitive with flying; and
- (3) Designing a project that can not only cover its ongoing operating expenses, but generate a surplus. That would enable it to attract significant amounts of private investment in addition to Proposition 1A bonds and Cap & Trade funding.

Based on this, TRAC proposes abolishing the California High Speed Rail Authority. CHSRA duties should be rolled into those of a new statewide California Rail Commission (CRC) that would have responsibilities for coordinating all regional and intercity rail passenger services statewide, including HSR. The Governor and Legislature would appoint Commission members, in addition to representatives from each of the regional rail providers (including the three corridor joint powers agencies that oversee the Capitol Corridor, the San Joaquins and the Pacific Surfliners) that serve at least two counties over passenger routes connecting to the national rail system.

A major role of the proposed CRC would be to protect existing funding for rail passenger services, including sufficient funds to maintain the existing level of service and a robust conventional rail

capital program. The new commission would recommend the allocation of Cap & Trade funds for rail projects, working from the perspective of improving the statewide network. It would coordinate intercity feeder bus networks and connections between regional and local transit operators.

The new CRC would also develop a franchising process for high-speed rail, designed to solicit proposals from experienced HSR operators to plan, build and operate a San Francisco to Los Angeles system. A vital feature would be to give potential bidders the option to propose new HSR alignments based on market requirements. At their discretion, bidders should be able to discard any, if not all, of CHSRA's current HSR plans and programs.

Unlike the products of the inexperienced CHSRA bureaucracy, private sector planning will be based on market feasibility and potential profitability, offering the flexibility to consider lower cost alternatives that meet real world market needs. This also can gain wide support from the California public rather than from just a few narrow, if powerful, political interests.

## XpressWest HSR to Las Vegas Moves Ahead with Chinese Seed Funding

China Railway International USA Co., Ltd, an arm of mainland China's railway construction and rolling stock manufacturing industries, and XpressWest, announced on September 17th that they have formed a joint venture to develop, finance, build and operate the electrified, 150 mph XpressWest high-speed rail line between Las Vegas and Southern California. Stations are proposed in Las Vegas and Victorville, with eventual through service via the California HSR link from Palmdale to Los Angeles.

The Chinese have agreed to provide \$100 million in startup capital for this new 180-mile high-speed rail line. The XpressWest project will introduce Chinese HSR technology to the United States. Proponents say that California and Southern Nevada will gain new economic development and tourism from the project, generating thousands of new jobs. XpressWest may also be the first effort establishing a high-speed rail manufacturing capability in the North American market.

XpressWest says it expects to begin construction in late 2016 or early 2017.

# New L.A. Co. Sales Tax Could Raise \$120 Billion

## 5 NEW RAIL LINES, NO METROLINK FIX?

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) may ask county voters to increase sales taxes by another 0.5%, which is now allowed since Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 767. If approved by at least two-thirds of voters, a measure on the 2016 ballot could raise up to \$120 billion over its life, which would allow MTA to add five new rail lines to its already long list of new rail projects currently under construction or in the planning stage.

Voters previously approved Measure R in 2008 for a half-cent tax and two previous half-cent transit sales taxes in 1980 and 1990. Los Angeles County residents are paying 1.5% in transportation sales taxes right now.

### Sepulveda Pass Tunnel

Some Los Angeles-area rail supporters have been advocating a new rail tunnel through the Sepulveda Pass in the Santa Monica Mountains, paralleling the I-405 between the San Fernando Valley and West Los Angeles. Metro has studied this project, among others on a potential list to be placed before voters that could be finalized by Spring 2016.

A Sepulveda Pass tunnel has been estimated to cost between \$10 and \$33 billion, with the latter figure including a new toll road tunnel as well as a rail line. If a toll road was added to the project, it would require private sector funding, though where and how such a new roadway would tie into existing freeways is not clear, nor are its environmental impacts.

### Finish "Subway to the Sea"

Another project would extend the Wilshire Boulevard "Purple Line" project (also called the "Subway to the Sea") to downtown Santa Monica from its currently planned terminus near the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital. It is possible this line would connect with Phase Two of the Expo Light Rail Line near the Santa Monica beach. This six-mile project is likely to cost more than \$4 billion, assuming construction costs are similar to the current segment of the Wilshire Subway under construction, the \$2.3 billion, four-mile extension from Vermont to La Cienega Avenue.

It is not clear when a Santa Monica extension might be finished. Measure R originally projected completion of the Purple Line/Wilshire Subway to UCLA and the VA Hospital by 2035, though some have proposed moving up completion to 2024 in time for another Los Angeles Olympics (assuming the Olympics bid is won for that year). This suggests the entire line to Santa Monica could be completed by the same time, if voters approved a 2016 sales tax measure and other funding was forthcoming.

### LAX LRT & People Mover

Plans already exist to plug the 2-mile "gap" between Los Angeles International Airport and the Crenshaw Line now under construction. The proposed project would include a new \$200 million station at 96th Street and Sepulveda Boulevard and a \$1.5 billion people mover to the LAX terminals. The station would be located between a new airport ground transportation center on the west and a new LAX rental car facility to the east.



Has L.A. learned freeway expansion is futile?

A new station would provide better access than the current Aviation/LAX Station on the Metro Green Line, located nearly four miles from the center of the LAX terminals area.

The new LAX station is proposed to include airline check-in counters, flight schedule information boards and food, drink and other services. Some officials also want to include baggage check-in at the new rail station.

Currently the Crenshaw Line is planned for completion in 2019, though the \$1.5 billion people mover may not be completed until 2022.

### Hollywood to "Mid City" Line

Metro is also considering a new six-mile line to connect Hollywood and the "Mid-City" area, e.g. starting at an existing Metro Red Line subway station, running north-south with connections to the Wilshire Purple Line subway, the Crenshaw light rail line currently under construction, and the Expo Line near Baldwin Hills.

This line has the support of four out of five Central Los Angeles residents. If 100% subway, such a route is likely to cost more than \$4 billion, based on current construction costs.

### Orange Line Busway to Rail

Metro is also considering converting the successful Orange Line Busway in the San Fernando Valley to rail, at an estimated cost of \$1.2 to \$1.7 billion. Currently, the San Fernando Valley has nearly 20% of Los Angeles County residents, but is underserved by the rail network.

The Orange Line carries nearly 30,000 daily passengers, requiring nearly 45 minutes (on average) to travel between Warner Center and the North Hollywood Red Line subway station. Conversion to light rail is expected to shave these travel times by 15 minutes, with commensurate increases in patronage.

### The Missing Metrolink Fix?

However, some San Fernando Valley transit advocates question converting the Orange Line to light rail, suggesting that funds would be better spent on busway grade separations and upgrading the two Metrolink regional rail routes in the Valley instead (some also suggest a Red Line subway extension to the Burbank Airport).

These advocates argue that Metrolink upgrades could serve much more of the San Fernando Valley more quickly and cost-effectively than an Orange Line conversion, without a multi-year disruption of service to existing busway passengers.

# Coast Observations

**MORE ACADEMIC RESEARCH** indicates that driving causes many more problems than just congestion, global warming and urban sprawl. By far, driving is the most stressful way to commute. On average, drivers suffer from higher blood pressure and heart rates, and are, in general, fatter than those who take transit, walk or bicycle. One study estimates that for every hour spent commuting by car, your chances of being obese increase 6%. Every kilometer (0.6 mile) walked daily reduced one's chances by 5%. Also, transit riders and walkers tended to be less antisocial, according to a Swedish study... **THE CONTRA COSTA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY** will be testing self-driving buses at the Bishop Ranch office park in San Ramon. This testing may prove the viability of automating transit vehicles, (potentially including streetcars). If self-driving cars become widely used, highly detailed daily updates of road and street conditions and obstacles on every roadway everywhere would be needed, yet are probably impossible. However, the well-defined transit route environment can be surveyed on each trip by a transit vehicle... **MEANWHILE, THE CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION** goes "old school," criticizing the Caltrans' proposed policies in the draft California Transportation Plan to cut motor vehicle use. The CTC believes the Plan puts too much emphasis on reducing auto travel, and too little on electric cars and other technological advances... **AND THEN, WHERE "THE CAR IS KING"** (Los Angeles), per capita driving has dropped 9.7% from 11.91 miles per day in 2002 to 10.96 in 2013... **MINNESOTA ACADEMICS** David Levinson and Kevin J. Krizek, in their new book "The End of Traffic and the Future of Transport," detail the rise and decline of autos and traffic. They make the standard predictions about the rise of self-driving cars, but unlike other roborac enthusiasts, they also point out the bright future for transit, walking and bicycling... **ANOTHER MINNESOTA NATIVE**, Charles Marohn, P.E. of strongtowns.org outlines five ways that traffic engineers traditionally neutralize criticism: (1) Your opinion isn't valid since you're not an engineer; (2) There isn't enough money for what needs to be done; (3) We can't eliminate all risks; (4) The Nuremberg defense: blame the politicians. Engineers are just following orders; and (5) It's the cops' problem, not the engineers'. The last dodge is disingenuous, since road design determines speeds and other driving habits; narrower streets improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety... and to wrap up our academic round-up, **AUSTRALIAN TRANSIT GURUS** Peter Newman and Jeffrey Kenworthy have released the final volume in their trilogy on auto dependence. Let's all celebrate "The End of Automobile Dependence, How Cities are Moving Beyond Car-Based Planning" by reading their book and enjoying having been right all along... **AUTO EVANGELIST RANDAL O'TOOLE** believes driverless cars will save us. While we wait for the roborac salvation, he thinks the Washington Metro should be converted to underground busways, among other things...

# California Rail News

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# HIGH SPEED RAIL: A WALK UNDER & THROUGH THE ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST?

CURRENT RAIL LINE UPGRADES MUST BE TORN OUT IF HSR ROUTED THAT WAY; NEW TUNNELS UNDER NATIONAL FOREST TO PLACATE SANTA CLARITA?

by Susan MacAdams  
TRAC Board Member

With the passage of Proposition 1A, California voters agreed that the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) would use existing rail corridors for the construction of a high-speed rail route. In Los Angeles, the Metrolink Antelope Valley Line is the designated rail corridor through the San Fernando Valley for high-speed rail (HSR). It starts in Palmdale, goes through the desert alongside SR-14, and ends at Los Angeles Union Station.

Currently, Caltrans, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and Metrolink are spending tens of millions of construction projects along this corridor through the San Fernando Valley and Burbank. Metro has built twelve miles of bikeways along the Metrolink corridor in San Fernando. Caltrans is currently constructing a mile-long Metrolink rail bridge in Burbank along this corridor. CHSRA has given Metrolink \$55 million dollars of Proposition 1A funding to rebuild fifteen new at-grade crossings, three platforms, three bridges and ten miles of track between Burbank and Sylmar along the Antelope Valley Line.

Why is this news? Because these improvements will have to be torn out and replaced if HSR is built within the railroad corridor. They would all need to be completely rebuilt to allow HSR.

Metro has identified dozens of potential bike routes throughout LA County that would benefit from the construction of

new bikeways—projects that enhance the safety of riders, linking shopping with neighborhoods. Other bike paths are planned for existing Metro and Metrolink stops that would connect stations with local neighborhoods and businesses.

Yet the new San Fernando bike paths link one Metrolink stop to another down a rail corridor that lacks shade, local businesses, or direct access to housing, at a cost of two to three million dollars a mile. The paths would need to be removed to make space for HSR.

The Caltrans rail bridge construction uses a combination of local, state and federal funding. Yet the bridge cannot accommodate high-speed trains, because it was not designed to fit catenary poles to power the trains. To accommodate HSR, this mile-long bridge would need new foundations, new bridge support columns and a wider bridge deck to support four tracks (two for Metrolink and two for HSR). The only way HSR can go over the new bridge is if it is torn down and rebuilt.

It is curious that the fifteen rebuilt at-grade crossings are being paid for with Prop 1A funding. CHSRA's Design Standards require HSR tracks to have vertically separated crossings, so that trains never intersect with vehicles or people. But with the new construction, cars and pedestrians will continue to cross the railroad tracks at-grade.

These new at-grade crossings cannot be changed into the grade separations needed for high-speed trains without tearing them out and completely reconstructing the

intersections. These examples show a disturbing incompatibility between the planning of CHSRA, Metro, Metrolink and Caltrans. There appears to be no construction coordination whatsoever, as all this new work will have to be removed for HSR to be built in this corridor. These agencies have long been on notice of the problem, however.

Over two years ago, an August 10, 2013 progress report from the CA High-Speed Rail Joint Venture, made up of Hatch Mott MacDonald, URS and Arup, states under "Key Issues and areas of concern":

"Metro continues to promote improvements in their ROW in the San Fernando Valley at the expense of high-speed rail alternatives. The shared corridor in the San Fernando Valley should

be programmed to a sufficient level to better layout how the corridor should be developed and whether Metro's projects should be pushed as a separate agenda or in conjunction with bringing high-speed rail into the Los Angeles...Metro is taking an aggressive position regarding some of the projects which could lead to modification of the alignment alternatives or create unnecessary constraints."

The Transcontinental Railroad was built in six years, between 1863 and 1869, during the chaos of the Civil War and its aftermath. Six years after Proposition 1A became law, there still is no coordination between Metro, Metrolink, Caltrans and CHSRA for construction along the Prop. 1A San Fernando Valley corridor.

By funding obvious bottlenecks, maintaining silence on sister agency projects, and investigating extraordinarily expensive tunnel alternatives, CHSRA sends a strong message that it has decided not to use the corridor.

At which meeting did the Authority decide to not use the San Fernando corridor and instead build HSR tunnels under the mountains from Burbank to Palmdale? Currently CHSRA has applied to take tunnel boring samples in the Angeles National Forest. If the tunnel borings in the mountains show that tunneling through the mountains is not feasible, then what corridor will CHSRA choose for HSR? Oops!

CHSRA has not conducted an environmental review process in this corridor. Because of that, it is still legally

Boulevard along Glencrest, Rutledge, Sangamon, Milano and Hollywood Way would be condemned for the tunnel boring pit. Other streets would be closed, leaving remaining residents to face long detours, dust, debris and noise for up to ten years.

The proposed Burbank HSR station adjacent to the Bob Hope-Burbank Airport is the entrance to the tunnels. If the station can't be built, then the tunnels can't be built. The station would be the size of the World Trade Center, built on its side. Building such a massive structure underground, in soil with known toxic contamination, would be enormously challenging. There is no building of that size in the Western United States. The infrastructure around Burbank Airport cannot support construction this massive without a complete degradation of existing services for a period of ten years. This will severely impact local businesses.

The station structure, plus the special trackwork on either end, is about a mile long. For tunnel option E1, an underground HSR station cannot be built along San Fernando Road. The distance is too short between the height of the new Caltrans bridge over Buena Vista and the depth of the underground station at Hollywood Way to construct platforms and special trackwork.

The tunnel portal for the HSR Burbank station would be located in a designated flood zone. Overflowing water will seek out its lowest level, in this case the portal opening flooding down into the station.

The Burbank Airport is also not an optimal location for an HSR station. It

committed to the Antelope Valley Metrolink route selected in the 2005 Statewide Program EIR. Has the Authority made a decision to abandon that route?

If so, that decision would be in violation of law. CEQA requires a public decision-making process, which includes public comment and environmental analysis. Or is CHSRA oblivious of the work of its sister agencies? Neither explanation places CHSRA in a favorable light.

Have the local and statewide agencies-Caltrans, Metro, and Metrolink—come to the conclusion that CHSRA is never going to build high-speed rail, and decided to take advantage of CHSRA's free money?

How did we get to this state of affairs? The instructions to commence these actions did not descend from Heaven. Someone within each agency gave the permission to proceed with construction. These contracts would not have been awarded without the support of local partners.

Which board members, which local and regional politicians prompted Metro, Metrolink and Caltrans to forego building HSR in the Proposition 1A corridor and instead presume that tunneling under the Angeles National Forest from Burbank to Palmdale will work and be cost-effective?

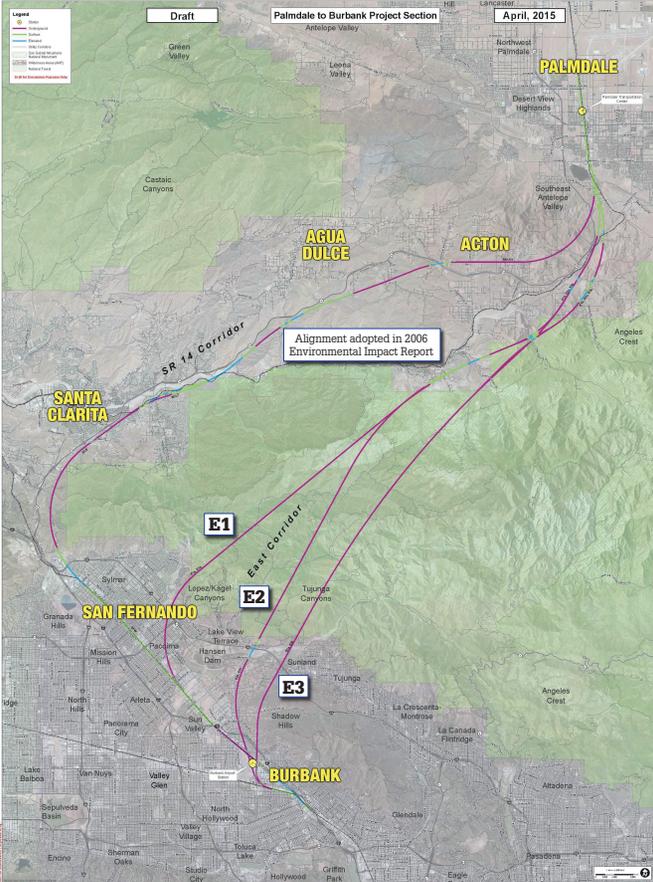
Is it possible that the main point of accelerating development of the Palmdale-Burbank HSR segment is to build the vital connection to Los Angeles for the proposed XpressWest high-speed train paralleling I-15 from Victorville to Las Vegas?

would not be centrally located for San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita Valley residents. This will increase congestion on the I-5 Freeway. There are two million people in the Valley with very poor access to Burbank Airport. Burbank only has 105,000 residents.

Adding a fourth rail station to the Burbank Airport area is not needed and is an additional taxpayer expense with few rewards. Currently, only one percent of passengers and workers use existing shuttles from nearby transit stations to arrive and depart from the airport. Free shuttle service is available to the existing Metrolink station, and the North Hollywood Red Line subway station that has a direct link to downtown Los Angeles.

The existing Burbank Airport is wedged between two rail transportation corridors. Amtrak service to Santa Barbara and San Francisco runs on the south side of the airport. The Metrolink Antelope Valley line connecting Los Angeles Union Station to Palmdale runs along the north side. Road access into the airport terminal area is already constrained by existing grade crossings. A HSR station at this site will increase congestion, decrease revenue and create multiple safety issues.

Burbank Airport has recently completed a \$112 million dollar renovation in the southeast quadrant of the site. If the Airport Terminal is moved to the north side of the runways, a new terminal complex will need to be built, with all-new parking structures. Duplicating the previous efforts would add little public benefit.



"Base" tunnels are alternatives to CHSRA's previously preferred routing via Santa Clarita. Earthquake faults and variable geology greatly complicate tunnel options.

To construct tunnel E1, the Pacoima neighborhood bordered on the south by San Fernando Road and Glenoaks on the north, and between Paxton and Pierce will have many homes condemned. This includes the closing or shortening of the Whitman Airport runway for the tunnel portal location. This neighborhood appears to be the hardest hit as the entire distance between the tunnel portal and the tunneling pit would be excavated and

remain an open trench. To construct tunnel E2, the Sun Valley/Burbank neighborhood bordered on the south by San Fernando Boulevard and on the north by the 5 Freeway, between Ledge and Ferncola, including Glenwood Elementary School, would be condemned to make room for the pit needed for the tunnel boring machines. To construct tunnel E3, the Sun Valley neighborhood above North Glenoaks

## FATAL FLAWS OF TUNNELS UNDER NATIONAL FOREST

The Los Angeles Times reported on October 25 that CHSRA's project has far larger difficulties than it has publicly disclosed: the earthquake faults and difficult geology northeast of Los Angeles will make tunnels extremely challenging to build. They will significantly increase costs and delay completion of the project—if they can ever be completed. A tunneling expert that consulted on the 35-mile long Gotthard Base Tunnel under the Swiss Alps called the CHSRA's tunnels "very, very ambitious—to put it mildly."

TRAC's Susan MacAdams has uncovered a dramatic twist to this story: tunnels under the Angeles National Forest can't be built at all! In the adjacent story, she reports on how CHSRA has approved projects by other agencies that will prevent HSR from fitting on the Antelope Valley Metrolink surface route. Here's her report:

The tunnels would need emergency escape routes, but they can't be built where the tunnel is 3000 feet below the surface. Even where the depth is not as great, emergency evacuation routes can't exit into the National Forest. I was curious about the emergency escape routes and took a hike into the National Forest to investigate. There's no place to build a road to the emergency escape locations without

changing the nature of the National Forest. So even if they can tunnel, they can't get environmental clearance for the emergency escape routes. So this is one of the fatal flaws in the tunneling concept.

The FBI will not allow construction of the long tunnels because of the potential for terrorist bombings. The ends of the tunnels become like cannons, shooting the explosive blast waves into an underground Burbank HSR station. That means the E1, E2, and E3 Burbank Airport tunnel designs are not feasible.

Contrary to the direction given by Proposition 1A, Tunnels E1, E2 and E3 do not follow an existing transportation corridor. Following a high-voltage transmission corridor does not create an acceptable alternative, because high-voltage towers scale mountainous terrain in zig-zag patterns rather than maintain a steady grade.

The tunnels would cost much more than the State Highway 14 corridor.

Even if the tunneling itself were feasible, the damage and destruction caused by the mining operations at the tunnel staging areas would be beyond what any local neighborhood would tolerate. Tunneling excavation pits are the size of a high school football stadium, but much deeper.

# Capitol Corridor's 3rd Track to Roseville a Waste Without New Sacramento Co. Stops

by Benjamin Etgen

In a Draft EIR recently closed to public comment, the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) proposes spending \$250+ million for a 3rd track between downtown Sacramento and Roseville. This proposal envisions extending up to 10 round-trip trains east to Roseville, in addition to the 3 existing Amtrak round trips on the route.

However, with a bewildering lack of vision, the 3rd track proposal omits new stations in northeast Sacramento County, bypassing nearly 500,000 people. Adding a new station at Watt Avenue adjacent to the former McClellan Air Force Base would connect to frequent, fast bus service on Watt Avenue long-planned by Regional Transit. RT's installation of bus lanes at the southern end of Route 80/84 at the Watt/Manlove light rail station illustrates the commitment of RT and the region to high quality bus service.

Worse yet, in an apparent oversight, RT has put up for sale a large parcel on Watt Avenue that would be ideal for a new Capitol Corridor station.

This is an extraordinarily expensive proposal with very modest ridership gains. Without a new Capitol Corridor station at Watt Avenue (and ideally a second stop near Arden Way adjacent to the Swanston LRT station), there is no case for spending \$250 million, or more, for 150,000 annual new riders from Roseville, e.g., a little more than 400 new riders per day. Based on the relative populations served, new stops in northeast Sacramento County would add at least 400,000-500,000 annual new

riders in addition to Roseville. These riders would help the 3rd track project cover its incremental operating expenses, assuming typical Capitol Corridor trip lengths. Adding northeastern Sacramento County stops offers many advantages:

- Reduces long auto trips to the downtown station, thereby cutting congestion, freeing parking capacity, and increasing convenience for many Sacramento County residents;
- Eliminates the need for many seniors and persons with disabilities to



**Former Sacramento Amtrak Station platforms. Will we suffer yet another "Great Rail Planning Disaster" like the new platforms 0.25 mile away?**

navigate the 15-minute walk from the downtown station to the relocated platforms;

- Makes much better use of a large taxpayer-funded investment;
- Makes the mostly unfunded 3rd track project more competitive for cap & trade dollars and other sources;

to lift the rail bed above the water when opening for river traffic. SMART expects the new bridge to last at least 80 years.

On October 7th, the Novato City Council approved a \$100,000 study of constructing a third SMART station at the site of the old downtown Novato Northwestern Pacific station. Other station locations include a site in north Novato near the old Fireman's Fund complex, and near Hamilton Field.

Council members approving the study felt that a Downtown Novato station would support the city's revitalization goals, strengthening downtown as a destination and an attraction for visitors. One critic at the hearing feared that a "heavy flow of rail riders" would cause noise and other problems, while others thought a new downtown station would disrupt the area's "small town charm" (never mind that the railroad station was downtown in the 19th century).

SMART's original plans for a North Novato station were based on the large employment base at Fireman's Fund, skipping downtown due to relatively low projected ridership there. Now that Fireman's Fund is downsizing and moving to Petaluma, potential North Novato station ridership is more speculative. Google may have rented the complex as part of a partnership with the Buck Institute for Research on Aging, according to unconfirmed rumors.

- Supports the redevelopment of the former McClellan Air Force Base and other areas in northeast Sacramento County;
- Provides alternatives to driving, to help reduce oil imports, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Expands access to regional rail in the Sacramento region, which also would offer shorter travel times for Placer County residents than a Roseville light rail extension; and
- Compliments local plans for high quality, frequent bus service on Watt Avenue.

In the absence of Northeast Sacramento County stops, mostly empty trains to Roseville will be little more than a burden on taxpayers.

Capitol Corridor staff has indicated that new stations will require additional funding, on top of that being sought for the 3rd track project.

New Capitol Corridor stations should be high on the priority list if a transportation sales tax measure appears on Sacramento County's 2016 ballot.

Benjamin Etgen lives in Arden/Arcade, teaches mathematics at American River College and McClellan, and is a long-time TRAC member.

## President's Corner

### WELCOME TO TRAC!

By Ronald Jones,  
TRAC'S Interim President

TRAC welcomes readers new to the world of rail. The Rail News is a great place to be introduced by insiders to passenger rail service in California. You'll be surprised to learn that rail is not only important in California's fight against climate change, but also in improving the lives of Californians.

The Legislature's Joint Committee on Passenger Rail recently visited Modesto. They heard from an ACE Citizens' Advisory Committee member on how relaxing her rail commute to the Bay Area was. She arrives ready to work, not nearly as faded as those who drive. Time on the train also allows her to visit with the friends she had made during her commute. On the way home, many times there is almost a party, and she has a good feeling arriving home.

A local Modesto minister related how long, stressful auto commutes harm many in his congregation and their families. In his experience, this problem was not isolated to his church. He felt that better train service was an important solution for these social problems.

This issue's centerfold focuses on high-speed rail issues in the San Fernando Valley. TRAC is all about getting the word out, when things are going wrong. Other articles cover the CHSRA's problems getting private investment, and proposed rail expansions in Los Angeles.

Citizen advocates like TRAC need to be heard when political forces push short-term gains for the few over long-term benefits for the public. One way TRAC is doing this is by recruiting distinguished and knowledgeable board members, such as retired transportation professor Greg Thompson, rail activist John Deester of Sacramento, and track alignment specialist Susan MacAdams of Los Angeles.

Please join TRAC today. 2016 will be a pivotal year in the future of rail and California.

# Sacramento RT Struggles to Improve LRT & Buses Prior to 2016 Kings Arena Opening

By Michael D. Setty

In recent months, Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) has come under scrutiny regarding service quality, the cleanliness of its light rail transit (LRT) trains and buses, and growing concerns about security on-board buses, trains and at its stations.

Furthermore, RT has been under pressure from the downtown Sacramento business community to make its system, particularly the light rail network, cleaner, safer and more convenient prior to the opening of the Kings arena.

RT has signed agreements with local business groups in an effort to improve the quality and cleanliness of light rail stations, and committed \$5.7 million to refurbish selected light rail stations deemed important to handling the crowds from the new Golden 1 Center (e.g., the Kings arena) prior to its opening in October 2016.

## SACRAMENTO CO. LRT & BUS EXPANSION DEPENDS ON 2016 SALES TAX

### EDITORIAL

By Michael D. Setty

RT is to be commended for taking action to clean up and improve stations, and for partnering with downtown Sacramento and other area business groups to improve the cleanliness and appearance of its stations.

Hopefully, RT will also commit sufficient operating funds to ensure a wider presence of law enforcement and security personnel at its stations, including stepped up enforcement against fare evaders and other rule-breakers, particularly at night.

In a recent letter to the Sacramento Bee, in response to plans by Regional Transit to relocate the 7th & K light rail station to handle Golden 1 Center (Kings arena) crowds, I suggested keeping the station at 7th & K but with some major modifications:

- First, redesign the station and install safe 8-inch platforms to load two trains on both sides simultaneously, with one on 7th and one on K. Also line up trains to Watt Ave. at 8th & K.
- Second, utilize the St. Rose of Lima Plaza as a staging area. The Plaza can readily handle 2,000-3,000 people at one time, clearing within 30 minutes if enough trains are lined up. The arena should also pay for crowd control from its own revenues.

Now that RT General Manager Mike Wiley has announced his retirement, the future direction of transit expansion and improvements is not clear.

Plans for a Downtown-West Sacramento streetcar received a setback when area residents voted down the proposed parcel tax in June 2015. However, another financing proposal to be voted on by property owners is under discussion.

The streetcar is also the stalking horse for a plan to relocate current LRT service away from K-St. between 7th & 12th to a new H St. line four blocks north costing \$20 million or more. Transit advocates believe this would kill LRT ridership in the downtown core, gravely harming the effectiveness of the system. Downtown businesses would receive most benefits while other taxpayers are stuck with \$150 million in construction costs. Streetcars would also suffer delays by not being separated from automobile traffic.

A new 0.5% sales tax for transportation on the 2016 Sacramento County ballot may provide the prospect of substantial new funding for RT. However, new transit

The agreement includes expanding the use of work crews to clean downtown's 10 LRT platforms and 26 bus stops.

RT has also made similar arrangements North Sacramento and Rancho Cordova business groups.

Regional Transit is also looking at ways of increasing downtown LRT station capacity prior to the arena opening:

- One trial balloon was the entire removal of the 7th & K stop and constructing a replacement stop a block to the north at 7th & J St. RT suggests new platforms with boarding on both sides of trains after arena events let out. The current 7th & K St. station is located on a slight hill, which leads to accessibility and safety issues, and occasional overcrowding.
- Additional upgrades are suggested for the 7th & Capitol Mall station, as well as

stations expected to receive heavy usage by Kings fans and other arena attendees.

RT is also planning service increases during major arena events, including staging additional trains to handle expected crowds after events.

The \$5.7 million RT committed is also expected to cover improvements at other downtown LRT stations, as well as Folsom, Sunrise, Mather/Mills, Power Inn, Watt/I-80, Cosumnes River College, Franklin and Florin.

Improvements will include upgraded lighting, new ticket machines, repainting, upgraded waiting areas, with changes made at each station as needed.

In the wake of service cuts due to the 2008 recession, many stations became dingy and dirty, and passenger safety and security suffered.



**A two-car train of Sacramento's original 1987 26-car fleet of Siemens LRVs. Planning for replacing these nearly 30-year old vehicles needs to begin soon.**

projects should be based on what provides the greatest benefit to transit users. A transit funding program must be balanced between service improvements and new capital projects. My suggestions include the following:

- To immediately save money and to finance productive service improvements elsewhere, construct a fenced storage facility for LRVs near Folsom, allowing LRT runs to start and end there, without hour+ deadhead runs from the current facility. This would save several hundred thousand dollars per year that can be used for ridership-producing services.
- Restore the \$1.00 downtown zone fare on light rail. When RT eliminated this fare and transfers, and raised all-day passes to \$6.00, downtown lunch traffic and other "shuttle" usage evaporated.
- Fix the mistake made by moving the Sacramento Amtrak station platforms 0.25 mile north by constructing a new light rail and bus transit center adjacent to the relocated platform, with a direct pedestrian connection.
- Instead of useless H St. LRT trackage, serve Midtown directly by extending the K St. tracks east to the UP corridor, then south on the west side of the UP to the R St. corridor. Construct a new two-level transfer station between the Blue Line and Gold Line at 19th & R Streets.
- Construct at least two new Capitol Corridor stations at Watt Avenue/I-80 and at Swanston near Arden Way. This will provide direct Capitol Corridor access to 500,000 northeast Sacramento residents. The Capitol Corridor's 3rd track to Roseville project could also provide regional rail capacity, a potentially much quicker and cheaper transit option for Placer County than an LRT extension.
- Extend LRT to American River College. This will greatly improve transit access to ARC and the surrounding area.
- Extend a Natomas LRT line to Sleep Train Arena once the former arena property has been rezoned for a large transit-oriented development. Airport LRT would not have enough ridership to justify its cost.
- Complete double-tracking to Folsom, and run trains every 15 minutes, with trains every 30 minutes after 7:00 p.m.
- Examine a 5-mile LRT extension in Arden-Arcade to serve the Arden Fair Mall and the Country Club Plaza area directly.
- Replace the 1987 LRV fleet with modern low floor cars, including station upgrades.
- Establish a "frequent bus network" where density and potential demand is sufficient, and provide timed, coordinated connections with light rail, greatly increasing both bus and train ridership.