

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: James R. Helmer

**SUBJECT: SILICON VALLEY HIGH SPEED
RAIL COALITION**

DATE: 06-16-05

Approved

Date

6/21/05

Council District: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt resolution in support of High Speed Rail (HSR) and the Pacheco Pass, or Southern Gateway, Alignment and communicate this support to the California High Speed Rail Authority, as well as to State and Federal Legislative delegations.

BACKGROUND

At the recommendation of the Rules Committee, City Council is being asked to reiterate its support for the California High Speed Rail project, and in particular, the Pacheco Pass or Southern Alignment into the Bay Area. In 1999, the High Speed Rail Authority considered two general alignments for service into the Bay Area: the Altamont Pass alignment and the Southern alignment (Pacheco Pass). The Pacheco Pass alignment was adopted by the Authority on July 21, 1999 as part of the Draft Business Plan for the High Speed Rail project.

Analysis by the Authority determined that the Pacheco Pass was the most effective alignment for providing high-speed service into the Bay Area region. This view is shared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which has adopted a resolution in support of the selection of the Pacheco Pass alignment.

The urgency behind the Council's support for the Pacheco Alignment is driven by renewed calls for consideration and further study of the Altamont Pass alignment, which continues to be raised as an option by some jurisdictions. The Altamont alignment has been previously considered and dismissed as a viable option for High Speed Rail service into the Bay Area. The Altamont Pass alignment would greatly reduce the level of service to either San José or San Francisco.

Southern access reduces travel time, increases ridership, accommodates double the number of trains, improves distribution and connection opportunities and serves a greater population any other potential option. The Southern alignment is expected to provide at least 1.1 million additional riders and \$56 million in additional revenue annually as compared to the Altamont

alignment. In addition, southern access does not require the construction of a new rail bridge across the Bay. While some environmental issues have been raised with the proposed southern access, Authority staff believes that potential environmental impacts in the southern corridor can be mitigated. The City Council adopted a formal position of support for the High Speed Rail project and the Southern alignment on May 11, 2004.

ANALYSIS

Silicon Valley High Speed Rail Coalition

The Silicon Valley High-Speed Rail Coalition, an organization of business and local government representatives, has come together to support the construction of a high-speed rail (HSR) line connecting northern and southern California as a means of relieving highway and air traffic congestion between the Bay Area and Los Angeles, one of the busiest air traffic corridors in the nation. The Coalition has recommended that the HSR Authority should utilize a Pacheco Pass alignment into the San Francisco Bay Area from the Central Valley and opposes any route between Pacheco Pass and Altamont Pass through the Hamilton Range. The Coalition supports a Pacheco Alignment, because such a route would:

- Maximize the number of trains serving the region's three largest cities-- San Jose, San Francisco and Oakland
- Maximize the speed, frequency and ridership of the high-speed rail service and, therefore its long-term economic sustainability.
- Minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- Follow an existing transportation corridor, rather than creating a new transportation corridor.

The Coalition does not support efforts to turn the HSR service into a commuter line connecting the Central Valley and the Bay Area. This would be inconsistent with the primary mission of the HSR service, which is providing a competitive long-distance transit alternative between northern and southern California. The Coalition supports expanding existing commuter lines, such as Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) and the Capitol Corridor Intercity Rail Service, to serve this need. In fact, the \$9.9 billion HSR bond includes \$900 million for improving local transit that will connect to the high-speed rail line.

The Coalition supports running the HSR service along as much of the Caltrain Commuter Rail Service Corridor as feasible. This will reduce the cost of constructing the HSR line as well as improve the speed, frequency, and safety of Caltrain commuter rail service between Silicon Valley and San Francisco. Attachment A is a draft resolution that outlines the Coalition's recommendations.

Funding and Ballot Measure

A \$9 billion Bond measure, which had been slated for the November 2004 ballot was later moved to the November 2006 ballot by legislative action. The State budget debate in Sacramento has led

to a call by the Governor to delay the High Speed Rail ballot measure until November 2008. Supporters of the project believe that such a long delay will eliminate the momentum created by the environmental analysis and result in an even longer delay of the project as well as a significant increase in the project's cost. The measure is now under consideration in the State Legislature and a final decision is expected in the next few months. It is possible that a compromise can be reached that will place the measure on the November 2006 ballot.

OUTCOME

The recommended action facilitates council outreach in support of the Pacheco Pass Alignment and High Speed Rail.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public outreach for the California High Speed Rail project is being conducted by the High Speed Rail Authority.

COORDINATION

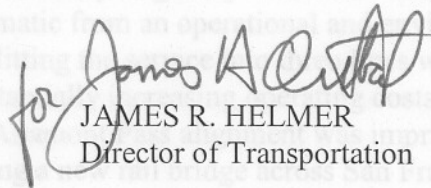
This item has been coordinated with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the Silicon Valley High-Speed Rail Coalition, the California High Speed Rail Authority, the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the City Attorney's Office.

CEQA

There is no anticipated cost to the City as a result of this recommendation.

CEQA

Not a project.


JAMES R. HELMER
Director of Transportation

Attachment

Be it further resolved, that San José will communicate this position to the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

Be it further resolved, that the City of San José is an active member of the Silicon Valley High-Speed Rail Coalition, which was formed to advocate not only for the construction of the proposed high-speed rail system, but also for a Pacheco Pass alignment into the San Francisco Bay Area from the Central Valley.