



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
Inter-Departmental Correspondence  
Planning and Building Department



**DATE:** May 24, 2010  
**BOARD MEETING DATE:** June 8, 2010  
**SPECIAL NOTICE/HEARING:** 10-Day Notice  
**VOTE REQUIRED:** None

**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Jim Eggemeyer, Interim Director of Community Development 

**SUBJECT:** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Background report for the public workshop on the California High-Speed Rail Project, Environmental Review, and Alternatives Analysis Report for the unincorporated North Fair Oaks segment in San Mateo County

**RECOMMENDATION**

Conduct a public workshop and provide direction to County staff on how to proceed with comments on the EIR.

**BACKGROUND**

The High-Speed Rail (HSR) Authority has selected the existing Caltrain corridor as the preferred alignment between San Jose and San Francisco, as part of the High-Speed Train (HST) network that would extend to Sacramento, the Central Valley, Los Angeles, and San Diego. The HSR Authority is now circulating the "Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report for the San Francisco to San Jose Section," which describes various vertical alignment options for the HST along the Peninsula, and establishes parameters for the next level of design and environmental review as part of the forthcoming project level EIR. The feedback received on the alternatives analysis report will aid in the development of the project level Draft EIR, scheduled for release in December 2010.

**DISCUSSION**

The proposed HST line will follow the existing Caltrain alignment through unincorporated North Fair Oaks. The County has begun an area planning effort in North Fair Oaks, and HST is a significant topic of interest and concern.

In North Fair Oaks, the primary proposal and apparent preference of the HSR Authority is that the HST will be at grade. While the alternatives analysis for the adjacent communities of Redwood City and Atherton include elevated, at-grade, below-grade, and deep tunnel, for the North Fair Oaks segment only at-grade and deep tunnel alternatives are considered. The at-grade alternative would result in a potential 20 to 24 combined trips by Caltrain and HST through North Fair Oaks per hour, or approximately one train

every 3 minutes. The increase in noise and vibration (and to a lesser extent emissions) from these additional trips, and from the HST in particular, could be significant. The deep tunnel alternative would require significant temporary impacts during the construction, but would minimize long-term noise, vibration, and other impacts of the project. The deep tunnel alternative is intended to be only for the HST and the current Caltrain line would remain above ground.

Community members have expressed a desire that analysis should consider all the alternatives examined for immediately adjacent communities. The community has particularly expressed a preference for consideration of additional underground alternatives. The community would also like to see mitigation for noise, vibration, and visual impacts along the alignment, especially if an at-grade alternative is selected.

A further concern is the potential impacts of both the final HST configuration, and temporary impacts of construction, on adjacent properties. Because project-level details on the alignment are not yet available, the nature and extent of these impacts remains uncertain. Another concern in need of further explanation is the cumulative impact of HST and the Dumbarton commuter rail extension. North Fair Oaks residents would also like any project to enhance the area's access to rail service. The County is interested in the further evaluation of the proposed HST station in Redwood City and its potential impacts and benefits on North Fair Oaks.

The current rail line can only be crossed at one location at Fifth Avenue. The community would benefit from at least one additional multi-modal crossing, potentially in the general vicinity of Pacific/Dumbarton/Berkshire Avenues, accommodating cars, pedestrians, and bicycles, and would also benefit from additional bicycle and pedestrian crossing(s). Members of the community have expressed a desire that, as part of any future project, the HST should commit to these improvements.

Staff is soliciting direction from the Board on the County's commenting and approach to the HST proposal and has included a draft comment letter with this report. There will be additional opportunity to comment on construction-related impacts when the project-level EIR is released later this year.

The public involvement process and providing comments on the EIR for the HST proposal contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of Livable Communities by ensuring growth occurs near transit and promoting affordable livable connected communities.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no direct fiscal impact in commenting on the EIR.

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