



City of Palo Alto

City Council Rail Committee Staff Report

(ID # 6454)

Report Type: Agenda Items

Meeting Date: 12/16/2015

Summary Title: Rail Committee Recommissioning & Discussion and Recommendations on Rail Issue Next Steps

Title: Rail Committee Recommissioning & Discussion on Rail Issues/Next Steps

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Rail Committee discuss its work plan for the coming year, including the rail issues outlined below.

Background

On October 13, 2015 the Palo Alto City Council received a presentation from City staff on the following three items:

1. The California High Speed Rail Authority's plans to proceed with environmental clearance for the San Francisco to San Jose Segment;
2. Next steps regarding rail grade separations in Palo Alto and authorization for staff to pursue outside funding for both grade separations and at-grade crossing improvements; and
3. **The City's interests and strategies** regarding the proposed Santa Clara County transportation sales tax measure, including a potential City of Palo Alto transportation funding measure or other funding strategy.

City

Council

Motions

Following Council's October 13, 2015 discussion they made two motions.

The first motion was:

- A. Have the Mayor reappoint the City Council Rail Committee;

- B. Direct Staff to return in the near future with a preliminary plan for a Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) approach to address rail impacts and the future of rail in Palo Alto and the Mid-Peninsula;
- C. Direct Staff to return with a first phase Circulation Study;
- D. Direct Staff and the Mayor representing the Council to convey, clearly to both the California High Speed Rail Authority and Caltrain:
 - i. The full Context Sensitive Solutions approach should be retained for the process of High Speed Rail along the Peninsula; and
 - ii. The timeline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) along the Peninsula should be adjusted to include adequate timing for the EIR and adjusted for time needed to fully integrate CSS in the process;
- E. Direct Staff to pursue interim grade-crossing safety measures through U.S. Code Title 23, Section 130 (Railway-Highways Crossing Program) funding and through other means.

The second motion was:

- A. Direct Staff to advocate for and support putting in the Countywide funding measure, funding for countywide Caltrain grade separation in the order of 15 percent of funds raised by the ballot measure and engage with Caltrain to determine what specific needs they have for the prospective County tax measure and return to Council with this information;
- B. To check in with Council when the Measure starts to take shape; and
- C. That the criteria for allocating funds to specific grade separations be driven by need factors.

Discussion

In the two motions that were made by the City Council on October 13, 2015 there were nine separate parts.

Parts of the motion that have been completed, or are in the process of being completed, are:

1. The Mayor has reappointed the City Council Rail Committee; and
2. Staff is pursuing interim grade-crossing safety measures through U.S. Code Title 23, Section 130 (Railway-Highways Crossing Program) funding and through other means.

Parts of the motion that City staff is currently addressing are:

1. Staff is advocating for including in the proposed Santa Clara County transportation funding measure, funding for Caltrain grade separations in the order of 15 percent of the funds raised by the measure and is engaging with Caltrain to determine what specific needs Caltrain has for the prospective County measure; and
2. That the criteria for allocating funds to specific grade separations be driven by need factors.

Parts of the motion that will require additional staff or consultant resources are:

1. Developing a preliminary plan for a Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) approach to addressing rail impacts and the future of rail in Palo Alto and the Mid-Peninsula; and
2. Developing a first phase Circulation Study.

Staff is developing a request for proposals (RFP) for project management expertise, and hopes to retail an individual or firm with rail expertise to take the lead on these items and other activities needed to advance grade separations in Palo Alto expeditiously, whether or not High Speed Rail (HSR) proceeds.

Parts of the motion that staff recommends should be addressed through the attached letter (Attachment A) are:

1. The full CSS approach process should be used by the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) for HSR along the Peninsula; and
2. The timeline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) along the Peninsula should be adjusted to include adequate time for the EIR and CSS processes.

Parts of the motions that staff recommends should be addressed in the future are:

1. To check in with Council when the Measure starts to take shape.

Conclusion

Staff would welcome a discussion by the Committee on how the Committee envisions approaching the issues in its purview. As noted above, additional staff and/or consultant resources will also be required.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Draft Process Letter to Caltrain and the CHSRA_12-16-2015 (DOCX)

Draft

December 16, 2015

Caltrain
Jim Hartnett
Chief Executive Officer
P.O. Box 3006
San Carlos, CA 94070

California High Speed Rail Authority
Jeff Morales
Chief Executive Officer
770 L Street, Suite 1160
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: City of Palo Alto Comment Letter on the California High Speed Rail Authority Environmental Clearance Process for the San Francisco to San Jose Segment

Dear Mr. Hartnett and Mr. Morales:

I am writing you today regarding the process that has been proposed by the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) for completing the environmental clearance work necessary for the CHSRA's San Francisco to San Jose project segment.

I am writing both of you, not just Mr. Morales, because with the "Blended System" concept no action taken on the corridor by either agency can be done in isolation. Action taken by Caltrain impacts the CHSRA and action taken by the CHSRA impacts Caltrain.

As it stands, the CHSRA is proposing to have the environmental clearance work for the CHSRA's San Francisco to San Jose project segment completed by the end of 2017. The City of Palo Alto feels strongly that trying to complete such a complex process on this timeline is not only rushed but is likely to result in less than desirable results.

Therefore, the City of Palo Alto formally requests the CHSRA, with Caltrain's support, take the following action:

1. That the CHSRA use the full Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process for developing High Speed Rail along the Peninsula; and
2. That the CHSRA adjust its timeline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Francisco to San Jose project segment so it can include adequate time for the EIR and CSS processes.

Thank you for your time and if you have any questions or comments, please contact Palo Alto City Manager James Keene at (650) 329-2563 or by email at james.keene@cityofpaloalto.org.

Sincerely,

Karen Holman
Mayor, City of Palo Alto

cc: Palo Alto City Council