



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 6557)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 1/25/2016

Summary Title: Draft Process Letter from Palo Alto to the CHSRA and Caltrain

Title: Review and Approval of a Draft Process Letter from the City of Palo Alto to the California High Speed Rail Authority and Caltrain

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Recommendation

Staff and the City Council Rail Committee recommend that Council review and approve the attached draft process letter to be sent from the City of Palo Alto to the California High Speed Rail Authority and Caltrain.

Background

At the October 13, 2015 City Council meeting, staff was directed by Council to clearly convey to both the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and Caltrain the following:

1. That the full Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach should be retained for the process of High Speed Rail (HSR) along the Peninsula; and
2. That the timeline for the CHSRA's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Francisco to San Jose project segment be adjusted to include adequate time to fully integrate the CSS process.

At the December 15, 2015 City Council Rail Committee meeting, staff presented a draft letter on these issues to the Committee for their discussion and review.

Following their discussion and review the Committee made recommendations to staff on the letter and voted 4-0 to forward it to Council for approval.

The draft letter is attached (Attachment A).

Attachments:

- ATTACHMENT A: Draft Process Letter to the CHSRA and Caltrain_1-25-2016 (DOCX)

Draft

January 25, 2016

California High Speed Rail Authority
Dan Richard
Chair
770 L Street, Suite 1160
Sacramento, CA 95814

Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board
Adrienne Tissier
Chair
P.O. Box 3006
San Carlos, CA 94070

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 Chair Richard & Chair Tissier:

I am writing you 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 (SF) to San Jose (SJ) project segment.

This letter is addressed to you jointly 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.

The CHSRA is proposing to have the environmental clearance work for the CHSRA's SF to SJ project segment completed by the end of 2017. The City of Palo Alto believes 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 requests the CHSRA along with the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB) take the following actions:

1. That the CHSRA adjust its timeline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the SF to SJ project segment so there is adequate time for the EIR and CSS processes;
2. That the CHSRA use the full Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process for developing High Speed Rail (HSR) along the Peninsula as the CHSRA agreed to do under the Peninsula Rail Program (PRP) in 2009. CSS is a clearly defined process used by the United States Department of Transportation and other agencies for project design and implementation. CSS is "a collaborative, interdisciplinary, holistic approach to the development of transportation projects. It is both process and product, characterized by a number of attributes. It involves all stakeholders, including community members, elected officials, interest groups, and affected local, state, and federal agencies. It puts project needs along with agency and community values on a level playing field and considers all trade-offs in decision making. Often associated with design in transportation projects, CSS should be a part of all phases of program delivery including long range planning, programming, environmental studies, design, construction, operations, and maintenance." Source: (www.contextsensitivesolutions.org);
3. That the CHSRA and Caltrain enhance their communication protocols with both policymakers and staff of the cities along the SF to SJ portion of the rail corridor to ensure no action is taken without community awareness and input; and
4. That the CHSRA include grade separations as an essential part of the project description to be evaluated pursuant to CEQA. Failure to include grade separations as an element of the project would

not only result in more significant impacts to be mitigated by CHRSA and other agencies, but would also effectively segment the cumulative effects of high speed rail operation and subsequent localized construction projects necessary for the CHSRA project to safely and effectively operate.

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,

Patrick Burt
Mayor, City of Palo Alto

cc: Palo Alto City Council
Palo Alto City Manager
Congresswoman Anna Eshoo
Senator Jerry Hill
Assemblymember Rich Gordon
Executive Director of Caltrain Jim Hartnett
Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board