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LOOKING AHEAD From the Executive Director

By Margaret Okuzumi

Recently, the BayRail Alliance board spent a Saturday reviewing the past year's successes and planning for the future. Here's a summary of items we considered.

Meetings

The format and logistics of our monthly meetings have been challenging. We will be experimenting with their format (to improve interaction and discussion among members) and plan to change the location. We welcome your feedback and ideas. Email them to info@bayrailalliance.org

Our upcoming meetings will feature a discussion of Caltrain's new fare policy; mobilizing to shape San Mateo County's Measure A; and a presentation by Caltrain staff on the progress of the CTX project.

BayRail Celebrates 20 Years of Advocacy

This year marks the twentieth year of our existence (we were formerly known as Peninsula Rail 2000). While we have not achieved all of our transportation goals, we've significantly influenced public policy for the better and we have much to celebrate. We're hoping to hold a dinner and retrospective to celebrate these accomplishments sometime in September, but we won't be able to do this without additional volunteer help.

Outreach

We're only as effective and strong as our membership. The watchword for us in 2003 is outreach. Outreach to potential new members, to elected officials and to other influential members of the public. This is where we need your help! We have over a

[See **Ahead**, page 3]

VTA faces transit crisis

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) fiscal crisis is hammering transit riders, and apparently the worst is yet to come. On February 6 the VTA board approved reducing service on 64 out of 71 bus routes, and eliminated three bus routes and late-night light rail service. This 9% reduction in service, effective in April, is the third in a series of cuts made since 2001.

VTA already plans another 6-9% reduction in service this September if sales revenues continue to remain steady or decrease.

Furthermore, VTA will increase its fares this July by a proposed 10% on top of last year's 10% increase. Yearly 10% fare hikes are being considered.

Last November, VTA released a report detailing its financial crisis. The report stated that VTA would go bankrupt this June unless sweeping changes were made.

VTA projects a \$6 billion deficit over 20



years if it implements transit improvements promised to County voters in 2000 Measure A. These improvements included expanded bus and Caltrain service, Caltrain electrification, light rail extensions, and construction of the BART extension from Fremont to Santa Clara via downtown San Jose.

To address financial concerns, San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales convened a Business Review Team consisting of representatives from members of the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group (SVMG). The review team's report suggested increasing

[See **Crisis**, page 5]

Davis proposes to merge High Speed Rail Authority with Caltrans

Due to a state budget shortfall projected at \$35 billion, Governor Gray Davis in January proposed to merge the staff of the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), arguing that this would save the state about \$1 million next fiscal year.

Under Davis' proposal, the CHSRA Board of Directors would be maintained while CHSRA staff would be eliminated. Caltrans staff would assume duties to plan and construct the proposed statewide high speed rail system.

State Senator Dean Florez (D-Shafter/Bakersfield), a member of the Senate Transportation Committee and a former

member of the CHSRA board, blasted the proposal, charging that it "would result in the death" of the HSR project. With support from several colleagues, he fired off a petition to the Governor calling for the formation of a state rail commission to oversee all rail projects in the state.

Florez introduced a bill, SB 91, that would transfer all intercity rail planning responsibilities held by Caltrans to the CHSRA. The bill also requires that the CHSRA review all intercity rail projects that have not yet received state funding and to proceed only with projects that are deemed complementary to the planned HSR service.

At their January meeting, members of

[See **Merge**, page 3]

Analysis: Would the Davis proposal spell death for High Speed Rail?

Some rail supporters view Davis' proposal as another flip-flop in his support for the proposed high-speed rail system.

Others counter that Davis is indeed a supporter of HSR, albeit misguided in his current proposal. They point out that he had several chances to kill HSR and could have cut funding to the CHSRA or vetoed SB1856 (the high speed rail bond) last year, but didn't. CHSRA Chair Rod Diridon reported that he had a long conversation with Caltrans Director Jeff Morales about the proposal after it was announced. Diridon publicly declared he was satisfied that "no malice" was involved.

Davis' proposal apparently caught the CHSRA board and staff by surprise. Federal Railroad Administration Officials also expressed concern over the proposal. Some speculated that it was a power grab by Morales, a rail proponent with possible ambition to preside over California's largest-ever public works project.

A synopsis of the arguments:

On the pro side:

- The Davis administration has stated that the reorganization would save the state

money.

- Rail supporters who have been at odds with the CHSRA or who charge that the CHSRA is corrupt view such a shakeup as necessary for positive change. Moreover, some officials in southern California who support building a mag-lev system, support the proposal.

Opponents say:

- The change would not save the state money and in fact would cost it millions. The program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the HSR project is scheduled to be completed this August. Transferring the project to Caltrans before the EIR is complete jeopardizes the legality of the process and could delay the project by at least a year. This could cost the project several million dollars.
- Caltrans maintains 12,000 miles of freeways, has traditionally been concerned with highways rather than rail, and would not devote sufficient attention to HSR.
- Caltrans has a checkered history in running regional rail projects. In particular, Caltrans ran the Capitol Corridor service so poorly that the service was almost killed

until local entities formed a joint powers authority to oversee it.

- Caltrans has no experience with HSR, but the CHSRA has been able to recruit the best and most experienced consultants for the project.
- Caltrans, commonly known as a large and inefficient bureaucracy, has a poor public image. Putting Caltrans in charge of the project may reduce voter support for the \$9.9 billion HSR bond measure on the Nov. 2004 ballot.
- The CHSRA has Design/Build/Operate/Maintain authority over the project. Caltrans has a "cumbersome and opaque" contracting process that might discourage competitive bids on the project.

Details of the proposed transfer of the HSR program have yet to be determined, and opponents have been asked to reserve judgement. Nevertheless, sentiment against the proposal by the CHSRA board and members of the legislature already is quite strong. A potentially positive outcome is the formation of a state rail commission to oversee all rail projects in California. This may help systems such as Caltrain to obtain the state funding they deserve, and could enable the development of a unified regional rail network.

Authority showcases High Speed Rail systems

HSR Authority members received presentations on HSR in France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, South Korea and Taiwan at their January 28 meeting in San Francisco.

Interesting facts that you may not have known...

JAPAN: On October 1, 1964, Shinkansen service commenced between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka (320 miles apart). Top speed was 131 mph, and today it is 167 mph. The Tokaido line now carries more than 80 million passengers/year. The system has had zero fatalities or injuries in 38 years of operation. Today 287 trains/day operate (11 trains/hour in peak times). Average delay time in 2001: 0.3 minutes. The Tokaido line recouped its capital costs long ago and now generates a large profit used to subsidize feeder commuter lines.

FRANCE: Paris-Lyon service opened in 1981. Currently 2.5 million riders/year are "induced" demand, or people who would not have made the trip had driving or flying been

their only options. The convenience of rail travel has created its own sizeable passenger demand.

SPAIN: Spain's 2000-2007 Master Plan calls for a \$28 billion investment in rail. (Compare that to Amtrak, covering a much larger territory, but struggling to obtain \$1.2 billion next fiscal year.) AVE, the HSR division of the national rail system RENFE, began operation in 1992, and generated 12% of revenue and \$45 million in profit last year. (However, infrastructure is managed under separate administration under EU rules.)

KOREA: The Seoul-Pusan line is underway. 70% of the project is being constructed on bridges, viaducts or through tunnels.

TAIWAN: The Taiwanese line was conceived as a 100% government funded project. But interestingly, it is now 100% privately funded through a consortium of five companies, using a performance-based contract system of design/build, lump sum fixed contracts, and proven Japanese technology. Almost the entire line will be constructed on bridge, viaduct or tunnel/cut

and fill -- even though frequent and severe earthquakes are of concern.

Other facts to ponder: Automobile accidents cost the United States \$172 billion/year. The U.S. spends \$100,000/second on foreign oil. The Japanese cite the significant contribution of HSR to their country's energy efficiency and reduction of CO₂ emissions.



Tracking 2002: President's Annual Report

BayRail members and supporters should be proud of their accomplishments in 2002. During the year, we utilized more volunteers than before, and with your hard work and strong voices, we accomplished so much. Thank you, BayRail members and volunteers!

Early last year, we staged a campaign to make safety and access improvements at California Avenue station a top priority in the Santa Clara County 1996 Measure B Caltrain plan. The California Avenue station, like Santa Clara and other stations, requires that northbound passengers wait on the southbound platform and then walk across the southbound tracks when the train arrives. This prevents both north- and southbound trains from pulling into the station at the same time for safety reasons (known as the "hold-out" rule), causing delays.

The deteriorated condition and design of the California Avenue station is unsafe for riders, and the problem will worsen with the introduction of the Baby Bullet express service less than a year from now. A redesigned station would provide significant improvement for many riders, as it would reduce "hold-out" delays on the Caltrain line, and be friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists. In the original Measure B Caltrain plan, the only improvement proposed was a reconfiguration of the shuttle/parking area. Many riders like you responded to our call to action and showed up at meetings, wrote letters, and called their local VTA representatives. Thanks to you, we succeeded in persuading VTA and County staff to make this project a priority.

We succeeded in elevating the profile of the California Ave. platform project, even as the recession diminished the Caltrain Measure B plan budget. For now, VTA and the county have decided only to complete projects already well under way, such as parking

lot expansion at Santa Clara station. But when more funding becomes available, California Avenue station will be next in line.

Throughout the year, the momentum for High-Speed Rail has picked up speed. When SB1856 was introduced in the State Senate in the spring, no one knew its chances of passing. But with your help, not only was it passed, but an extra \$3 billion was added to bring the Caltrain Corridor up to High-Speed Rail capacity. Viewed as unlikely only a year ago, California will vote on High-Speed Rail in 2004.

Thank you again for your help in our letter writing campaign. Thanks to those of you who took a day off to help us in Sacramento where, along with other rail groups, we convinced the State Transportation Committee to pass SB1856. Thanks to everyone who made a phone call to get the governor to sign it.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made our own High-Speed Rail Forum a great success. Our first major event in many years gave us valuable media exposure and allowed to utilize the many talents of our volunteers. Not only did we make the public aware of High-Speed Rail -- it also shows California the growing support from business, labor, and government for High-Speed Rail.

There are so many more accomplishments to list, from rallying for weekend replacement bus service, to talking to the PUC about low floor boarding. From speaking out and moving the Downtown San Francisco extension along, to providing a 3D Vision for Caltrain. All of these accomplishments were possible only with your support.

Finally, I'd like to thank all the board members for their dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm. We made commitments to our newsletter, our new brochure, and our outreach program - but most importantly to our members. Thanks to each and every one of you.

--John Tseng

Florez criticizes Davis's proposal

[Merge, from page 1]

the CHSRA board expressed strong concerns about the Davis plan but will not be taking an official position until more details about the plan are available in a publicly-noticed meeting next month.

Among the foes of the Davis plan is state senator Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles), who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. Murray was greatly impressed by the Spanish high-speed trains on a recent trip between Madrid and Sevilla with CHSRA Executive Director Mehdi Morshed.

As of press time, Murray has scheduled an oversight hearing to discuss the proposals in the Senate. The competing proposals by Gov. Davis and Senator Florez must be debated and voted on by both houses in the legislature before either is enacted.

LOOKING AHEAD From the Executive Director

[Ahead, from page 1]

hundred officials we'd like to meet with and a large territory to cover.

We'd like to develop and improve our marketing materials to convey to the public our vision of a viable world-class regional rail network, particularly our "3-D Vision for Caltrain" available on our website at www.bayrailalliance.org. We'd like your assistance with this, especially if you have expertise in marketing and graphical design.

Particular campaigns that we'd like to focus on include encouraging voters to approve the HSR bond initiative on the ballot in 2004 and of course, encouraging local commitments to Caltrain electrification. While today's economic climate is challenging, our transportation needs and goals haven't changed. We'd like to start tabling at farmer's markets and community events where we can take our message to the public.

There are many ways that you can get involved. In addition to our other outreach efforts, we also need help maintaining our website and producing our bi-monthly newsletter.

Whether or not you can give of your time, we need your financial contributions to carry our vision to the larger public and to more widely distribute our new membership brochure. If you have not been a member of BayRail Alliance or have let your membership lapse, please send in a check today using the form in this newsletter, or make a credit card contribution through our website. With your support, we hope to make great strides in 2003!

Can you help? Please call Margaret at 408-732-8712 or email okuzumi@silcon.com with your daytime or evening phone number and a short description of your area of interest.

From the Editor's Desk

San Mateo County sales tax renewal

By Andy Chow

Recently, we have received comments about our role regarding the upcoming renewal of the half-cent transportation sales tax in San Mateo County. The current tax will expire in 2008. Many of our members are concerned about reports that the new sales tax would showcase a BART extension south from Millbrae. Such a plan could be financially disastrous for the Peninsula while diverting resources needed to upgrade Caltrain, and hindering the implementation of high-speed rail service to Los Angeles.

Some Caltrain advocates fear that San Mateo County could follow in the footsteps of Santa Clara County, where three years ago the Valley Transportation Authority rushed a sales tax measure onto the ballot with little public input, to fund a BART extension from Fremont to San Jose.

We have to be vigilant, and at the same time, what has been reported so far doesn't hold water.

The first question is BART to where? So far, the reports have only mentioned "down the Peninsula." Is it to Burlingame or to Redwood City or to Menlo Park? Where are the rough estimates of how much it would cost? Where is the feasibility study?

The second question is what about Caltrain? Would BART completely replace Caltrain, or run side by side along Caltrain? What about the Baby Bullet and Dumbarton Rail? What about service to the Giants' stadium? Would BART use other corridors besides Caltrain? How would it impact the implementation of high speed rail service?

The third question is what about road projects? Almost half of the current sales tax is dedicated to street and highway maintenance and construction. Most reports on the proposed sales tax renewal neglect to mention this element. Although we support transit over road building, we should reasonably expect that a new sales tax plan would address at least some road maintenance needs. Recent developments make the idea of

extending BART, instead of upgrading Caltrain, a nonsensical proposition for these reasons:

1) Caltrain is about to release its long term capital plan. Among other projects, Caltrain plans to lengthen four-track sections and to grade separate the rail line. Planned grade separations in San Bruno would accommodate four tracks, despite an adjacent BART subway. This is consistent with the plans of the California High Speed Rail Authority.

2) The high speed rail bond, which includes \$3 billion for rail improvements on the Peninsula and in San Francisco, will be on the ballot in 2004. The bond only pays up to 50% of the total project cost. Local matching funds will be needed to build high speed rail on the Peninsula.

3) Caltrain plans to run faster trains with more seating and amenities suitable for longer-distance travel than BART can (See "Reimagining transit for the future").

4) Despite the popularity of its transit-only sales tax plan three years ago, the Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority is in a big financial mess. San Mateo County is still in the hole paying for the soon-to-open BART-SFO extension. Most local officials are well aware of this.

While there are political forces to expand BART, I think that the Peninsula BART scenarios put forth are out of step with reality.

In response, we are working to organize teams to present to various community groups a vision of future Caltrain and high speed rail, and show reasons why a new tax plan must include funding for Caltrain. We definitely need your support and participation.

We also demand that San Mateo County convene an expenditure plan committee just as Alameda County did. This approach led to passage of their sales tax measure by more than an 80% margin in 2000. Only with true buy-in from the community will a sales tax transportation measure be successful in San Mateo County.

Reimagining transit for the future

Why we don't support BART extensions? Simply put, a modernized Caltrain could provide service superior to that of BART for a fraction of the cost. Based on the cost of the eight-mile SFO/Millbrae extension, a BART extension to Menlo Park would cost over \$5 billion. Also, Caltrain can provide what BART can't: express trains, sufficient seating, tables, and on-board restrooms. Caltrain already runs nearly as frequently as BART during peak times and could run more frequently if sufficient funding were provided.

Despite public perception that BART is faster, average speeds and maximum speeds of BART and local Caltrains are both about the same. BART works fine as an all-stops subway for shorter commutes. However, for trips of 20 miles or more, the average length of a Caltrain commute, Caltrain has a clear advantage with express trains and superior amenities.

The region's fixation on BART extensions has hindered progress towards convenient transit for all. Since the early 1990s, we have seen billions of dollars diverted to BART's hyper-elongated subway lines, leaving crumbs for regional rail and bus feeder systems. This use of funds is a primary reason why we don't already have a world-class regional rail network with frequent Caltrain directly serving downtown San Francisco, connecting transit lines from all parts of the region. The proposed Dumbarton rail service, as well as improved Altamont Commuter Express (San Jose - Stockton) and Amtrak Capitol Corridor (San Jose - Oakland - Sacramento) would cost a small fraction of what has been spent on BART. Imagine having a 400-mile regional rail network as advanced as that of Paris or Munich for the price of a 20-mile BART extension.

In an ideal world, we'd have an endless supply of money that we wouldn't have to pick and choose projects. But we live in the real world, where BART's unique track gauge and non-standard specifications result in tremendous costs but merely adequate or substandard performance. Our goal is to bring superior public transit service to the Bay Area, fast. A modernized Caltrain line will entice many more folks out their automobiles, sooner, than BART ever could. With the CTX project to build express tracks, and electrification being planned, Caltrain's transformation already is underway. Caltrain will realize its potential if we convince the politicians to stay focused on it.

Take action:

- To see BayRail's vision for Caltrain, see our "3D Vision" at <http://www.bayrailalliance.org>
- To request a presentation for your community group, please contact BayRail executive director Margaret Okuzumi.

VTA plans further cuts, higher fares

[Crisis, from page 1]

fares and reducing discounts for youth, seniors and disabled riders, and cutting benefits to VTA employees.

The report places burden and blame for VTA's financial crisis on its transit-dependent riders. Missing were ideas about how the private sector could financially support VTA or to help increase ridership. Also missing from the report was any suggestion of delaying or phasing rail projects supported by SVMG, especially the BART extension from Fremont.

A day before VTA released these reports, voters in Santa Clara County approved Measure B, an anti-transit referendum by the VTA board and supported by SVMG. Measure B dedicates all state and federal discretionary transportation funds to streets and highways only, instead of transit, from 2006 until 2036. VTA apparently timed the release of the reports to withhold its financial status from voters until after the election.

When the VTA board asked the staff to produce a balanced budget scenario, the

staff, showing utter disregard for basic transit needs, projected a deficit even if VTA cut transit service by 70% or 95% or laid off all administrative staff. The staff asked the board to consider raising more revenue, perhaps through an additional 1/4-cent county sales tax. The scenarios apparently assumed building BART to San Jose, Downtown-East

With a projected \$6 billion deficit, VTA can't count on raising taxes and fees high enough to cover all their costs. VTA must face reality, reassess their plans, and develop a real balanced budget scenario. Among other things, BayRail Alliance asks that VTA to...

- protect county-wide bus service
- prioritize more cost-effective projects such as Dumbarton Rail, as well as Caltrain improvements
- consider truncating the BART extension in Milpitas, where it would connect to VTA light rail and realize most of the ridership benefit. The subway portion to San Jose is the most expensive part of the project.

Valley, and other light rail projects on an accelerated schedule with massive debt service, instead of on a pay-as-you-go basis.

This proposal drew criticism from some VTA board members as well as transit advocates.

VTA recently formed a committee that meets weekly to seek solutions to its financial crisis. If you wish to take action to prevent VTA cuts, please contact Margaret Okuzumi.

- instead of BART, consider resurrecting the idea of running conventional trains along the proposed BART route. VTA has already purchased the tracks. Trains would have been operating this year if VTA didn't scrap the project due to BART.
- become more effective in attracting riders
- reassess its operations and consider building Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) instead of light rail. BRT provides service, speed and amenities similar to light rail at a fraction of the cost. In Los Angeles, which has implemented a partial version of BRT on some routes, the travel times were reduced by 25% and ridership increased by 40%.



Staying on Track

SOT2003-1



YES! I support improving Caltrain and Regional Transit!

I support BayRail Alliance's efforts to promote a regional transit system by upgrading Caltrain and extending it to downtown San Francisco, improving connections between buses, trains, and other transit modes, and establishing a High Speed Rail system connecting the Bay Area and Southern California.

I am enclosing a contribution to help fund BayRail Alliance's programs.

- \$35 Regular
 \$50 Sponsor
 \$100 Patron
 \$250 President's Club
 \$ _____ Other
 \$15 Student/low income

- New member
 Renewal of membership

We are supported entirely by member contributions. Voting memberships start at \$15 or \$35, as applicable. As we engage in lobbying, dues are not tax-deductible at this time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (Day): _____ Phone (Evening): _____

Email: _____

I can help by:

- Calling or writing local public officials when you tell me about important transportation issues.
 Volunteering two hours a month (or more)

Mail to the address listed on the back, or contact us at: (650) 417-2571

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BayRail Alliance General Meeting

March 10 - 6:40pm: Caltrain's new fare system
 April 14 - 6:40pm: Caltrain CTX project update

Check www.bayrailalliance.org for meeting time change, as Caltrain will change its schedule when the BART connection opens.

Caltrain Joint Powers Board Meeting
Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

March 6 - 10:00am
 March 19 - 6:00pm

Location for BayRail Alliance General Meetings:

Round Table Pizza,
 1225 El Camino Real, Menlo Park,
 near the Menlo Park Caltrain station

Location for Caltrain JPB and CAC meetings:

SamTrans administrative office,
 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos,
 one block west from San Carlos Caltrain station

Other events:

- Feb. 18: 6:00 pm **Caltrain fare change meeting:** Santa Clara Police Department
 601 El Camino Real, Santa Clara
- Feb. 20: 6:00 pm **Caltrain fare change meeting:** Caltrain Administrative Office
 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos
- Feb. 24, 6:00 pm **Caltrain fare change meeting:** San Francisco City Hall, room 408
 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco
- March 22, 10:00am-2:00pm **Transportation and Land Use Coalition's Sixth Annual Summit: Funding a Sustainable Future**
 Keynote Speaker: Senator Barbara Boxer Closing Speaker: State Senator Don Perata
 Location: Laney College, Oakland
 Sign up at www.transcoalition.org or call 510-740-3150

Meeting dates, topics, and locations are subject to change without notice.
 For latest information: www.bayrailalliance.org.

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BayRail Alliance
March General Meeting
3/10, 6:40pm
Topic: Caltrain's new fare structure

Caltrain is planning to completely overhaul its fare collection system. At the February Caltrain Joint Powers Board meeting, it was revealed that among the many changes being proposed, the zone structure would be overhauled resulting in six fare zones of equal route length. This is to make the fare structure simpler and also more equitable.

Also in the new fare plan is the elimination of onboard ticket sales and the implementation of the proof of payment system, similar to the fare policies of Muni Metro and VTA light rail.

BayRail Alliance's March 10 meeting will be devoted to discussing the new fare policies. Mark your calendars now! The Caltrain Joint Powers Board, will be holding a public hearing on the matter at the April 3 board meeting before voting on the changes. Implementation of the new fare collection system is scheduled for Sept. 1, 2003.

BayRail Alliance Board of Directors:

- John Tseng (President)
- Andy Chow (Vice president)
- Sylvia Gregory
- Daniel Krause (Treasurer)
- Russell Reagan (Secretary)
- Paul Wendt

Executive Director:

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forwarding and address correction requested



BayRail Alliance, formerly Peninsula Rail 2000, is a 20-year old, all-volunteer, entirely member-supported transit group working to promote the creation of a modern rail network to serve the greater Bay Area region.

Our goals include: converting Caltrain from diesel to electric propulsion; increasing Caltrain frequency to at least once every ten minutes at peak times and every half-hour at off-peak times; extending Caltrain to downtown San Francisco and to the East Bay via the Dumbarton Rail Bridge; expanding ACE and Amtrak Capitol Corridor; and building the proposed high speed rail line connecting the Bay Area and Southern California.