

(continued from Page Two)

depot could be stabilized, lifted, and moved about a block north for a mere \$20 million. Three other proposals to move Sacramento brick buildings have failed to proceed after plans and funding for moving them fell through. Activists are skeptical that the station-moving plan will be any different, one activist calling the idea "a grand plan for a million dollar brick sale."

Depot activists have thus become increasingly concerned that the rails will be moved but the station may never follow. The result would be exactly what UP and its development partners have wanted all along. A timeline of project construction shows several years between track removal and the proposed station move. When the actual station moving costs are realized, a future Council could simply reverse the earlier idea and leave the station where it is. At a March 29, 2006 meeting, consultants admitted moving the depot was only a 'preferred alternative' and that there is no guaranteed mechanism or funding source to assure the historic depot and passenger platforms would be brought together after being split apart.

Keep the Depot with the Rails

Save Our Rail Depot (SORD), a Sacramento coalition of groups concerned with public transportation and historic preservation, is wary of the City's approach in advancing the 240 acre Railyard development, without first studying the Sacramento Intermodal Transportation Facility (SITF) and the relationship of the rest of the development to the SITF. "Our basic concern is for the tracks and the Historic Depot to stay together with the Historic Depot maintaining its historic purpose as a rail depot," said SORD in a recent set of comments on the Notice of Preparation for the EIR. From the beginning of this planning process for the Railyards, SORD has emphasized the importance of the SITF driving the surrounding development, not the other way around. Yet this NOP for the DEIR has PROJECT level analysis for the 'Project Level Area' which does not include the SITF. "For the 'Project Level Area' to have project level analysis without that thorough analysis for the SITF as well appears to be piecemeal planning," said SORD.

One fear is that all public resources for the project will be handed to the developer, leaving no funds to do the required station work. "If the Project Area review does not include the SITF, how will the City proceed with securing funding for it without the appropriate CEQA review? The City has not identified

the source or amount of funding for the track move, the construction of new platforms, provision of grade-separated passenger access to those platforms, provision of temporary or permanent station replacement, provision of light rail access to the new platforms, or the lifting, moving and restoration of the Historic Depot," said SORD.

SORD is also concerned about impacts upon passenger access to the station during and after the project. "There are potential negative impacts on commuters and travelers during and after the construction begins including, but not limited to ADA access to trains, disruption of bus access and bus/train connections, impaired pedestrian access to platforms, remediation of toxic soil under the current track location and disruption of Amtrak sales and service operations," said SORD. 5th and 6th Street overhead grade separations and doubling the width of the 7th Street underpass may bracket the site, preventing full use of the existing depot and as well as thwarting a future, properly sized and modern terminal for high-speed rail.

The latest estimate for the track move, station move, and new platforms required in the Sacramento plan is \$300 million. This is about double what Sacramento spent on its entire 18-mile light rail line, yet will result in no increase in service frequency nor capacity while increasing walking distance to downtown and ending the cross-platform transfer.

End of an Era for Development Profits

The rail-transit-friendly era created by the visionary 1920's City Council will end, replaced by today's promises of development dollars and the glitz of a downtown arena. The promise of better train service is the stated goal, but the public will be cheated if the end result is dismantling an existing, viable passenger rail facility for the purpose of clearing the way real estate development profits.

NOVEMBER MEGA-BOND TALKS RESUME

Talks have resumed at the State Capitol to place a "Mega-Bond" on the November Ballot. The current total bond is now proposed at about \$30-\$34 billion, about half the amount previously proposed for a bond for the June election. The emphasis this time around is on education, levees and transportation. Talks resumed when Republicans gave up on money for surface water storage (dams) and Democrats gave up the majority of resources dollars (parks, etc.).

As we go to press, reports from the Capitol are that approximately \$15 billion is being proposed for transportation, with \$400 million of that proposed for intercity rail capital (down from \$500 million in the previous bond proposal); there is a separate, \$300 million pot for grade separation. One major sticking point is that Democrats are proposing \$4.1 billion for mass transit while Republicans are holding out for zero. Money for high-speed rail isn't even on the table.

TRAC urges our members and concerned rail passengers to contact your State Senator and State Assemblymember to let them know of your support for the intercity rail investment dollars. Furthermore, let them know the importance of a multi-billion-dollar investment in mass transit for California. The message that mass transit is essential for California's future can really be driven home with gas prices on a spectacular rise. Our politicians must be reminded of the importance of a balanced transportation investment.

Coast Observations

THE SWEETEST RAIL FARE DEALS rarely get publicized adequately. On April 2, the Los Angeles Times noted Amtrak's offer on the Coast Route, touting a free companion trip from Los Angeles to Ventura that costs only \$15 for two. Actually, the twofer is available from any Pacific Surfliner stop including San Francisco (\$44 for 2) San Jose (\$41 for 2) and other cities served by Thruway from San Luis Obispo. The fare is available until May 25. Discount code is H553 and no coupon is required. You can even buy on-line at amtrak.com... PIE IN THE SKY infrastructure bonds went from \$222 billion to \$40 billion and then to zero on the June California ballot, after polling showed lack of public support for deficit spending and negative views emerged on the porkbarrel selection process employed by the Governor and legislature. Chances of a November bond measure are not great because a number of California counties plan sales tax measures for that ballot... THE CAPITOL CORRIDOR has announced it will run four additional San Jose-Sacramento round trips starting August 28. It is a great expansion of service, adding frequencies even in peaks, but trackside observers wonder where the equipment will come from. The Capitols already use up to 39 cars of the shared operational 70 car northern California fleet, about a half-dozen more than their share. Are there some Amtrak long-hauls that Bush appointees plan to axe after the summer peak?... SACRAMENTO LIGHT RAIL TRAINS have a very unpleasant new bell that seems designed to negatively affect property values near tracks. In areas which are already noisy, such as the K Street Mall, train location is difficult to ascertain. The monotone electronic sound resembles a burglar alarm and sounds every time a train crosses a street. Local humorists have made a connection to the supposed larcenous character of passengers, not a good sign for the system's public relations, either... SPEAKING OF LOUD TRAINS, beware of California cab cars with horns mounted at passenger-head level rather than on the roof. The intent may have been to reduce sound propagation into trackside neighborhoods, but a serious passenger safety issue was ignored. A blast at a platform potentially surpasses the human-ear damage threshold, because passengers' heads can be as close as eight feet from the five deafening air horns... ACE PLANS A JULY start to a new Stockton-San Jose round trip. It would use a fourth set of equipment, and run entirely in the off-peak, with morning service leaving Stockton about 9:30 am and a midday return from San Jose. Each train would replace a Caltrans bus, a very good trend, but unfortunately, there still will be a bus trip between the Amtrak station and the ACE station in Stockton... NEW CALTRANS FEEDER BUSES started in November have averaged 16 passengers per run on S.F./Santa Barbara, 11 per run Bakersfield/Hemet and Indio, and 2 per run Merced/Monterey. Another S.F./Santa Barbara run will start in April along with a speculative extension of a Sacramento/Redding bus to Medford, Oregon. Get those rare bus miles while you can. On any given day, there is a 30 percent chance you will be the sole passenger on an endangered Merced-Monterey bus...

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