

TRAC BACKS TRANSBAY IN BATTLE OVER 80 NATOMA

The following is a draft of the TRAC letter sent to the San Francisco Transportation Authority supporting immediate condemnation of the right of way for an extension to Transbay.

Subject: Proposition K: Caltrain Extension Funding

Dear Mr. Moscovich:

Your past support of the Transbay Terminal/Caltrain Extension Project is known to us and we appreciate your efforts, particularly with respect to educating other CMAs about the regional value of the Project and in helping to bring MTC into the picture.

As you know, Proposition K, with its \$270 million allocation directed toward extending Caltrain, was approved overwhelmingly by the San Francisco voters last November. This places the San Francisco Transportation Authority in a unique position currently because of the need to begin Project design without further delay.

Although the 80 Natoma developer clearly does not wish to modify his high-rise development plans or lose his development rights, the fact remains that with the recent EIR/EIS certification and TJPA selection of key consultants, it is now time for design of the Caltrain extension to proceed.

It has come to our attention that MTC is apparently asking for evidence of San Francisco's local financial commitment before allocating any of "its" Bridge Toll funds to the project. In view of what R.M. 2 actually says, this attitude on the part of MTC seems rather inappropriate. On the other hand it is not surprising to find a regional agency reluctant to commit regional funds before seeing evidence of a corresponding local commitment. (Moreover, because of the current Bay Bridge situation R.M. funds are in limbo, at least for the moment.)

In any event it has taken a very long time and a lot of hard work to get the Transbay Terminal Program to its current stage.

The purpose of this letter is to urge you to facilitate continuation of this work by asking your Board to allocate a significant amount of Proposition K funds as required to get the Caltrain Extension engineering

design under way. It is our understanding that the absence of necessary funds is now holding up the design contracts and that under an assumed inflation rate of 3% a year these delays are costing the Project roughly \$5 a month.

None of this is to suggest that oversight should be neglected. On the contrary TRAC fully supports the legitimate oversight role that has been assigned to the SFCTA and other agencies with fiduciary responsibilities. On a project this large effective oversight and fiscal control are essential no matter who manages it. As the design proceeds there will be ample time for the affected agencies to come to agreement on Scope and other matters of mutual concern.

The important thing right now is to get the design underway with sufficient funding so as to avoid the uncertainty, hiatuses, delays and constant hassles over money that invariably occur when those in charge of funding impose too many up-front hurdles or show too little regard for the significant capital cost increases that inevitably accompany project delays.

As a statewide passenger rail advocacy group we want to see this vital project proceed efficiently and expeditiously and with proper oversight.

You have important responsibilities in these regards and we're counting on you.

Richard Tolmach
President, TRAC

cc Honorable John Burton
Honorable Don Perata
Honorable Jackie Speier
Honorable Gavin Newsom
Honorable Matt Gonzalez
Honorable Tom Ammiano
Honorable Chris Daly
Maria Ayerdi
Fred Keeling
Jane Morrison
John Holtzclaw
Gabriel Metcalf (SPUR)
Andrew Sullivan (Rescue Muni)
Norm Rolfe

Coast Observations

THE NATIONWIDE MELTDOWN IN ON-TIME performance by Amtrak trains is just another symptom of a freight rail network collapsing under years of failure to invest in track renewals. Dow Chemical, which makes 150,000 rail shipments annually, has seen rail transit time rise 12.5 percent this year. The most severe delays occur in Chicago, New Orleans, Houston and Los Angeles... A HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL MEMBER authored a searing indictment of Union Pacific's behavior, pointing out the threat to recovering Texas economies if the gridlock recurs... EVER WONDER WHY THAT biscuit on your San Joaquin dinner plate is the size of an Oreo?: From a vendor's e-mail to Caltrans: "Due to inventory shortage, yesterday & today's delivery of Eat Easy Meals had 2.25 oz. buttermilk biscuits. Effective tomorrow, the standard 1 oz. buttermilk biscuits will resume. Sorry for the inconvenience." ... START OF OCEANSIDE-ESCONDIDO diesel light rail construction is expected around the beginning of October. The project continues to be dogged by litigation by NIMBY residents... SACRAMENTO EAST LINE extension to Sunrise has opened, but Regional Transit's bus connections have completely fallen apart, due to an agency agreement with drivers that gives them time at the end of each run, instead of a longer break one or two times a day. Many buses now operate on 35 minute headways, making connections unpredictable"... HOUSE REJECTION OF THE AMTRAK BUDGET makes the situation dire for future funding. Please write or send an e-mail to your Senators and Member of Congress NOW to assure you can ride next year to: Hon. _____, House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515 or Sen. _____, Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510. At www.calrailnew.com you can click a button that allows you to enter your zip code and get the name of your member of congress, then click to send an e-mail...

Invitation to Oct. 12 Event at Oakland Maintenance Base

The California Rail News received the following invitation from Tyrone D. Bland, Amtrak Director of Government Affairs-West with the instruction that we should pass on the invitation to our readership:

Amtrak and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) have completed the final construction phase of the state of the art Oakland Maintenance Facility.

The project budget is nearly \$65 million with 60% funded by Caltrans and 40% funded by Amtrak. The 50,000 square foot facility will be completed on time and within budget and will allow Amtrak to increase efficiency, maintain existing as well as additional trains, and provide weather protection to employees. In addition, the newest environmental and safety elements have been incorporated in the design. Increased efficiency and additional maintenance capacity is an important step in that exciting process.

The facility will support both Amtrak's short distance intercity corridor trains (the San Joaquins, and the Capitol Corridor), and

long distance trains (the California Zephyr and Coast Starlight) and is a prime example of the infrastructure investments being made at Amtrak.

As a demonstration of our commitment to the Oakland Community, Amtrak respectfully request your attendance at the Oakland Maintenance Facility Dedication celebration on October 12th at 2:00 pm. The event will be held at 1303 3rd Street in the City of Oakland. We are also extending invitations to: Secretary of Business Transportation & Housing, Senator Barbara Boxer, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, State Senator Don Perata, local elected officials, and a host of friends, community leaders, and transportation stakeholders.

We hope you mark your calendar to attend this event and join members of the Amtrak Board of Directors and President and Chief Executive Officer David Gunn as we dedicate our state of the art facility. Please RSVP to Sybil Evans at (510) 238-4351 or via e-mail at evanss@amtrak.com.

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Signed opinion articles represent the views of their authors, not necessarily those of the above organizations.

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The California Rail News encourages letters, comments, and reports on local issues. Please submit your material to California Rail News, 926 J Street, Suite 612, Sacramento, CA 95814. Sorry, we do not guarantee return of photos or articles submitted. Deadline for material to be included in the next issue of the California Rail News is October 15, 2004.