

FIGHTING FOR WHAT COULD BE

WHY RAIL ADVOCATES ARE SUING TO STOP
THE CA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

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1

Many people may be thinking, High-Speed Rail (HSR) is the best thing to ever happen to rail. Why on Earth would rail advocates be suing to stop it? I'm going to spend the next few minutes explaining exactly that.

WHERE IS HSR NOW?

- **WITHOUT +\$26B FROM FEDS, HSR IS DEAD**
- **BECAUSE THE ROUTE IS SO BAD, NO PRIVATE CAPITAL WILL TAKE ON RIDERSHIP RISK**
- **WITHOUT PRIVATE CAPITAL, HSR IS DEAD**
- **DESPITE SPENDING \$8B, NO HSR OR STATEWIDE SERVICE IS FORTHCOMING**

If the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) actually wanted HSR, their Business Plan would be totally different, as this one doesn't lead to HSR. The Business Plan is based on the premise that no private money will be invested in HSR until the State generates profits running passengers between the Central Valley and LA. I'm confident that will never happen, because it depends on an unattainable \$26 billion in Federal funds.

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT

- THIS PROJECT BUILDS 60-130 MILES OF TRACK
- RAIL RIDE STILL ENDS IN BUS RIDE TO LA
- TRAVEL TIME SAVINGS IS DUBIOUS
- PRIMARY RESULT: \$6B FOR CONTRACTORS
- PROVIDES UNNECESSARY FREIGHT-LEVEL STRUCTURAL STRENGTH (4 X MORE EXPENSIVE?)

The Central Valley Project looks like bait and switch to me, which has nothing to do with HSR. Downtown Fresno landowners have wanted for decades to get rid of the freight tracks, preferably at public expense. The Central Valley Project is strikingly similar to their plan. Rail advocates need to know, supporting this project will not inevitably lead to HSR. It is just money thrown down a hole.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- **THE PRINCIPAL DESIGN CRITERION WAS POLITICS**
- **POLITICS INFECTS ALL ROUTE DECISIONS**
- **COMMON SENSE WAS IGNORED**
- **BIASED EIRs JUSTIFY POLITICAL CHOICES**
- **ENGINEERS GONE WILD: OVER \$450M SPENT DESIGNING A GOLD-PLATED SYSTEM THAT CAN NEVER BE BUILT, DUE TO BAD PROJECT ECONOMICS**

CHSRA has consistently chosen inferior routes, then lied about it in the EIRs. I will discuss each decision separately. Contrary to the Authority's claims of profitability, the rail industry's refusal to invest in the project is proof the CHSRA's plans will not result in a viable business. On a party-line vote, the legislature handed them \$8B, even after the most informed Senators advised withholding the funding.

WHAT WOULD A NON-POLITICIZED HSR PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

- **LED BY EXPERIENCED HSR OPERATOR**
- **PURSUED IN BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER**
- **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP, WITH STATE PAYING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**
- **COST-EFFECTIVE: AVOIDS VIADUCTS, COSTLY FREIGHT STRUCTURES & OTHER FRILLS**
- **SF TO LA HSR OPERATIONAL MUCH SOONER**

SNCF, the French National Railway, offered to build a funded SF-LA project, and asked the Authority to conduct a public bidding process where they could compete. SNCF knew it could make money on a route it chose, partnered with the State. CHSRA flatly rejected their offer. The fact that the CHSRA kept the SNCF proposal secret, and refused to put the project out to bid, says that building HSR is not the CHSRA's primary goal. I won't speculate what that goal is, but their secrecy indicates that whatever it is is not in the public interest. They were unhappy when I got this story in the press, because it totally undercut their avowed intent to build HSR. While their Business Plan hopes for HSR in 2029, it fails to identify any way to fund it.

I-5 CORRIDOR

COMPARED TO SR-99

- **ROW ACQUISITION FROM CALTRANS: PAINLESS**
- **ELIMINATES NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACTS**
- **MINIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL/AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS**
- **MUCH FASTER FOR SF-LA TRIPS: THE KEY TO HSR'S ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY**
- **AT-GRADE CONSTRUCTION MUCH CHEAPER**
- **DISCARDED BECAUSE OF POLITICS**

Jim Costa, now a congressman, insisted that HSR go through Valley cities for political reasons. At least one operator was willing to build HSR using I-5 but none were willing to build the Valley cities route. The LA Times carried a story that the Central Valley HSR project was a payoff to Costa, in exchange for his vote on the Affordable Care Act. California Rail News reported that the project's location changed when Costa's district was redistricted. The SNCF proposal that was rejected sought to use I-5 as a shorter distance path for SF-LA trips.

A STRAIGHTER ROUTE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL

Legend



Authority
Route
Proposal



Straighter
and Cheaper
Alternative



Upgraded
Existing
Tracks

New
Intermodal
Station

Upgraded
Existing
Station

WINDING
480 MILE
AUTHORITY
ROUTE VIA
PALMDALE,
MOJAVE &
FRESNO



Map: Richard F. Tolmach

**UPGRADED AMTRAK FOR CENTRAL VALLEY CITIES:
HSR-COMPATIBLE TRAINS TO SF, LA & SAC ON HSR TRACKS,
WITHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD DISRUPTION OF HSR**

Notice how incredibly straight the I-5 route, displayed in grey, is. That is hugely important in having a profitable system. The red line is the High-Speed Rail Authority's adopted route. It is much longer and disruptive. The faded grey line is the proposed upgraded Amtrak line for Central Valley cities, which would greatly improve their connection to the rest of the state, without the very high impacts and expense of running a 200 mph train through cities.

GRAPEVINE CORRIDOR

COMPARED TO PALMDALE

(1999 CHSRA CORRIDOR EVALUATION FINAL REPORT)

- **SHORTER LENGTH**
- **FASTER TRAVEL TIME**
- **LOWER CAPITAL COST**
- **HIGHER PROJECTED RIDERSHIP AND REVENUE**
- **DISCARDED BECAUSE OF POLITICS**

Interestingly, one of the few good things former CEO van Ark did was to get the CHSRA Board to study the Grapevine again. Apparently, costs had gotten so ridiculous on the Palmdale route that commonsense engineering asserted itself momentarily. CHSRA Board Chair Dan Richard killed the study, apparently because LA development interests were unhappy.

LOSSAN CORRIDOR

LOS ANGELES TO SAN DIEGO

(1999 CHSRA CORRIDOR EVALUATION FINAL REPORT)

- **DIRECT CONNECTION TO SAN DIEGO,
SHARED WITH COMMUTER & INTERCITY TRAINS**
- **AVOIDS COSTLY DETOUR TO THE INLAND EMPIRE**
- **MANY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS LESSENERD**
- **STAFF RECOMMENDED THIS CORRIDOR**
- **DISCARDED BECAUSE OF POLITICS**

In the 1999 analysis, staff proposed tunnels to bypass the beach communities that the train currently runs through. This avoided major environmental impacts.

ALTAMONT CORRIDOR

COMPARED TO PACHECO

(1999 CORRIDOR EVALUATION FINAL REPORT)

- **LOWER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**
- **HIGHER RIDERSHIP**
- **MUCH BETTER CONNECTION TO SACRAMENTO**
- **LESS TUNNELING. THEREFORE, LESS COSTLY**
- **58 MILES SHORTER TO JOIN CENTRAL VALLEY LINE**
- **DISCARDED BECAUSE OF POLITICS**

Why the CHSRA's 13 year insistence on Pacheco and all the biased EIRs? It appears the Authority has had goals other than HSR, ever since it was founded. This is why we sued. The only non-downtown station on the system was proposed for a dairy farm in Los Banos owned by former Assemblyman Rusty Areias. Very well-connected Democratic funders were buying up land in Los Banos, years before the 2008 EIR that selected the Pacheco route.

LAWSUIT COALITION

- TOWN OF ATHERTON
- CITY OF MENLO PARK
- CITY OF PALO ALTO
- TRANSDEF
- CA RAIL FOUNDATION
- PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LEAGUE

OUR LAWSUITS

BAY AREA-CENTRAL VALLEY EIRs

2005	STATEWIDE FINAL PROGRAM EIR	LAWSUITS THREATENED	HSRA TO DO BA-CV EIR
2008	FINAL PROGRAM EIR	ATHERTON I	DECERTIFIED
2010	REVISED FINAL PROGRAM EIR	ATHERTON II	DECERTIFIED
2010	REVISED FINAL PROGRAM EIR	ATHERTON II	ON APPEAL
2012	PARTIALLY REVISED FINAL PROGRAM EIR	ATHERTON III	HEARING NOV. 9

We've been fighting this thing since 2004, when the Draft EIR claimed Altamont allegedly didn't meet the project's Purpose and Need. We thought the 2008 EIR was heavily biased towards Pacheco. In 2010, Elizabeth Alexis of CARRD discovered the ridership model had been tampered with to reduce Altamont ridership projections. All the briefs are available on this website, at <http://transdef.org/HSR/HSR.html>

WHY WE FIGHT

- **IF CHSRA WASTES \$6B IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY, WE WILL NEVER HAVE HSR IN CA**
- **IF THE BAY AREA EIR IS STRUCK DOWN, IT COULD STOP THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT**
- **A TAXPAYERS' LAWSUIT IS CHALLENGING THE LEGALITY OF USING PROP. 1A BOND FUNDS FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT**
- **THE STATE CAN DO MUCH BETTER:
NO TO PORK, YES TO HIGH SPEED RAIL**

There's a good chance the CHSRA's wasteful ineffective approach to High-Speed Rail will fail. We think experienced rail operators need the opportunity to bid on HSR, choosing a route they are willing to invest in. For HSR to get built in our state, we need a State agency dedicated to affordable, effective HSR. We need a base of informed HSR advocates ready to take up the cause.

GET WITH “THE PROGRAM?”

NO, WE CAN DO MUCH BETTER!

WRITE: INFO@TRANSDEF.ORG

CALL TRANSDEF: 415-331-1982

I would like to invite you to join with us. Knowing you're out there, supporting us, would be very helpful.