



December 28, 2010

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Roelof van Ark
Chief Executive
Officer

Mayor Terry Nagel
City of Burlingame
501 Primrose Road
Burlingame, CA 94010-3997

Dear Mayor Nagel:

Thank you for your letter of December 17. I appreciate the ability to clarify for you my comments made recently to the cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill on the topic of placing the high-speed train in a trench, which the high-speed rail team has previously discussed with Burlingame and other Peninsula cities.

My comments were not reported in full detail in the news article you cite, and thus could lead to misinterpretation.

As you are aware, the Authority has nine project-level EIR/EIS processes underway for discrete sections of the high-speed train system. As required by state and federal environmental review laws, these EIR/EIS documents will evaluate in detail a reasonable range of alternatives, including, in a number of places, below-grade options such as trenches. Following the completion of the final project-level EIR/EIS for a section, including the receipt of public input, the Authority will select an alternative that best meets the needs of the high-speed train system, while minimizing and mitigating environmental impacts and being economically feasible. As with any project, the final decisions will be based on a careful balancing of multiple, complex factors.

Placing high-speed train tracks below grade is substantially more costly than at-grade or elevated options. While technical factors may dictate below-grade solutions in some locations (such as in mountainous terrain, close proximity to a major airport flight path, or where there is no other feasible alternative), extensive trenching of the high-speed train system statewide is neither feasible nor practicable. The Authority must be cognizant of its obligation to deliver to California citizens a complete high-speed train system that connects northern and

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southern California, an obligation that can only be fulfilled by careful considerations of the cost of each section in light of the entire system.

Where municipalities strongly desire to have a below-grade option implemented, and yet there is an above-ground alternative that meets the needs of the high-speed train system and the environmental process, the Authority encourages these municipalities to explore alternate means of funding the cost difference of placing the alignment below-grade.

I hope that clears up my comments and reflects our previous discussions on this topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roelof van Ark', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roelof van Ark
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Mayor Al Pinheiro, Gilroy
Mayor Steve Tate, Morgan Hill