

TRANSPAC Transportation Partnership and Cooperation

Clayton, Concord, Martinez, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek and Contra Costa County
2300 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 (925) 969-0841

September 22, 2009

The Honorable Maria Viramontes, Chair
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, California 94523

Dear Chair Viramontes:

At its meeting on September 9, 2009, TRANSPAC took the following actions that may be of interest to the Transportation Authority.

1. Received a presentation by Beth Lee, Assistant Director of Airports, Buchanan Field, with an update on airport developments since the adoption of the Master Plan in 2008.
2. Concurred in the use of TRANSPAC/TRANSPLAN TDM Measure C and/or Measure J funds for the proposed electric vehicle program.
3. Concurred with the request for the use of up to \$25,000 in TRANSPAC/TRANPLAN TDM Measure C and/or Measure J funds for a demonstration shuttle from Contra Costa Centre to downtown Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek.
4. Approved forwarding the County Connection Congestion Management Program comments to the Authority (attached).
5. Appointed Tim Tucker, City of Martinez, to the Technical Coordinating Committee.

TRANSPAC hopes that this information is useful to you.

Sincerely,



Mark Ross *MR*
TRANSPAC Chair

Attachment

To: Barbara Neustadter
From Anne Muzzini
Re: 2009 CMP Edits
Via email 8/27/09

Barbara,
The draft CMP should be modified to reflect CCCTA's current service level and capital replacement schedule as included in the CIP. I've pasted sections below with new information.
Thanks, Anne

Page 38 and 39: CCCTA 's performance element

Standards for Frequency The County Connection shall provide a maximum headway (minimum frequency) of fixed-route service of sixty minutes during peak commute periods during the weekday subject to the directives of the CCCTA Basic Level of Service Agreement. This service is dependent on the availability of operating assistance and sufficient ridership with respect to Authority-wide standards for economy (farebox to operating cost recovery ratio), effectiveness (passengers per revenue hour) and efficiency (cost per revenue hour and passenger). **Currently, frequencies are as follows: during peak commute periods, between 15 and 120 minutes; other weekday times, every 30 to 120 minutes; on weekends, every 40 to 120 minutes.**

Measures of Routing The County Connection's 36 routes provide fixed-route bus service directly, or in close proximity to, major retail, institutional and governmental activity centers located within its service area. These activity centers include, but are not limited to, Sun Valley Mall, the seven BART train stations(Orinda, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Concord, North Concord/Martinez,and Dublin/Pleasanton), the Martinez Intermodal Facility, City Central Business Districts,Kaiser Hospitals (Martinez, Walnut Creek), Veteran's Hospital in Martinez, the WillowsRetail center, the Golden Triangle in Walnut Creek, Bishop Ranch, John Muir MedicalCenter in Walnut Creek and Diablo Valley College.

Page 54 and 55" CCCTA's CIP

Fleet Replacements in CIP

Description	FY 09	FY 10	FY 11	FY 12
Heavy Duty bus - 40'			10	10
Cutaway vans		42		8



SWAT

Danville • Lafayette • Moraga • Orinda • San Ramon & the County of Contra Costa

September 21, 2009

Robert K. McCleary
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

RE: SWAT Meeting Summary Report for September 2009

Dear Mr. McCleary:

At the **September 14, 2009** Southwest Area Transportation Committee (SWAT) meeting, the following issues were discussed that may be of interest to the Authority:

Measure J Strategic Plan Update: The Committee received a presentation on the *Measure J Strategic Plan Update*. Committee members had a number of questions and concerns, and expressed a desire for frequent and timely updates on the status of sales tax revenues and upcoming bond issuances.

TRAFFIX Update: The Committee received a presentation on the launch of the TRAFFIX Program (formerly referred to as the San Ramon Valley School Bus Program). Despite a late start due to an unanticipated delay in bell schedule adjustments, the program is off to a strong start.

The next SWAT meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 5, 2009 at the Lafayette City Offices, Conference Room 240, 3675 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette. Please contact me at (925) 314-3384 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

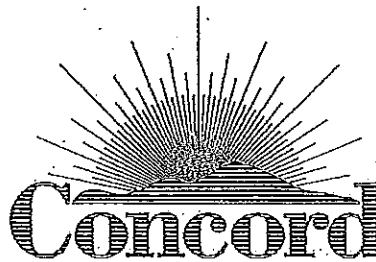
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Dillard", written over a horizontal line.

Andy Dillard
SWAT Administrative Staff

Cc: SWAT and SWAT TAC
TRANSPAC, c/o John Cunningham, 651 Pine St, 4th Floor - North Wing, Martinez, CA 94553
WCCTAC, Christina Atienza, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, CA 94806
TRANSPAC, Barbara Neustadter, 2300 Contra Costa Blvd. Suite 360, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
CCTA, Danice Rosenbohm, 3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
CCTA, Martin Engelmann, 3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

CITY OF CONCORD
1950 Parkside Drive
Concord, California 94519-2578
FAX: (925) 798-0636

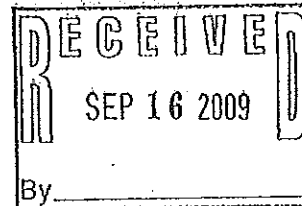
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
Telephone: (925) 671-3150



CITY COUNCIL
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Helen M. Allen
Mark A. Peterson
William D. Shinn

Mary Rae Lehman, City Clerk
Thomas J. Wentling, City Treasurer
Daniel E. Keen, City Manager

September 15, 2009



Robert McCleary
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

SUBJECT: Appreciation and Recognition of Amin AbuAmara

Dear Mr. McCleary:

I would like to express my gratitude to you and your staff, specifically Amin AbuAmara, Associate Transportation Engineer, for the extraordinary effort exhibited throughout the funding and approval process of Concord's two Federal Aid Projects funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA): Project No. 2130, Clayton Road Pavement Rehabilitation (Market Street to Oakland Avenue) and Project No. 2131, Clayton Road Pavement Rehabilitation at Various Intersections.

As you know, projects funded under the ARRA went through an accelerated approval and planning process. Mr. AbuAmara was instrumental in ensuring that Concord, as well as the other jurisdictions in Contra Costa County, met all of the stringent ARRA requirements in a timely manner. He facilitated the communication between the County jurisdictions, Caltrans Local Assistance and MTC. Every step of the way he was there to advise and assist us through the approval process. If an issue or pitfall would arise in one city, he shared that problem with other entities and helped us all to avoid a similar problem.

As part of a survey, Concord was recently contacted by the California Legislative Analyst's Office. We were informed that our City had some of the most successful ARRA projects. They asked us what went right in the process of getting these projects to construction. We told them that CCTA's facilitation throughout the approval process was invaluable, and that Mr. AbuAmara was instrumental in the success of Concord's projects.

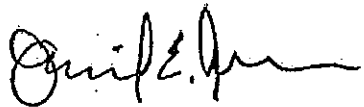
September 16, 2009
Authority Meeting
Handout Item 5.0

Robert McCleary
September 15, 2009
Page 2

Thanks to the hard work of Mr. AbuAmara and other members of your staff, Concord was able to move forward quickly with the construction of two important ARRA projects, thus fulfilling the original intent of the ARRA.

We are grateful to you and your staff for the continued support you provide to Concord, its staff and residents.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Keen
City Manager

cc: Mayor and City Council
Paul F. Maxwell, Chief Deputy Executive Director, Projects, CCTA
Dave Hudson, Chair, Contra Costa Transportation Authority

WCCTAC

West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee

El Cerrito

September 11, 2009

Hercules

Mr. Robert McCleary, Executive Director
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Pinole

RE: WCCTAC Meeting Summary

Dear Mr. McCleary: *B.S.B.*

Richmond

At its September 11, 2009 meeting, the WCCTAC Board took the following actions that may be of interest to the Authority:

San Pablo

- 1) Approved, as part of the consent calendar:
 - a. An update on the status of AB 744 (Torrice);
 - b. Comments on the preliminary draft Richmond General Plan Update;
 - c. AC Transit and WestCAT's FY 09 and FY 10 claims for Measure J Program 19b, Additional Bus Service Enhancements;
 - d. Programming of FY 09 Measure J Program 20b, Additional Transportation for Seniors and People with Disabilities; and
 - e. East Bay Paratransit, Richmond, San Pablo, and WestCAT's FY 09 and FY 10 claims for Measure J Program 20b.
- 2) Discussed and approved comments on AC Transit's Draft 2010 Service Adjustments Plan affecting West County.
- 3) Discussed and approved comments on the DEIS/DEIR for the proposed Point Molate Casino-Resort.

Contra Costa
County

AC Transit

BART

Sincerely,



Christina M. Atienza
Executive Director

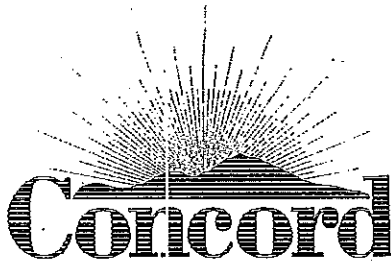
WestCAT

cc: WCCTAC Board; Danice Rosenbohm, CCTA; Barbara Neustadter, TRANSPAC; John Cunningham, TRANSPLAN; Andy Dillard, SWAT

CITY OF CONCORD
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Thomas J. Wentling, City Treasurer
Daniel E. Keen, City Manager



Telephone: (925) 671-3361

September 4, 2009

Mr. Paul Maxwell, Chief Deputy Executive Director-Projects
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Avenue, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

**SUBJECT: Commerce Avenue Roadway Extension (Project 1214)
Request for Appropriation of Measure C Funds for Additional Design Services**

Dear Mr. Maxwell,

As a follow up to our letter of July 6, 2009, the City of Concord requests the appropriation of \$210,000 in Measure C funds. The funds will be used for environmental clearance and final design for the Commerce Avenue Roadway Extension project. This is considered a very high priority project for the City of Concord and has the full support and approval of the City Council. Due to the urgency of this request, we desire the funds to be allocated at the September 16, 2009 authority Board Meeting.

The City is actively pursuing and is fully committed to the construction of the Commerce Avenue Roadway Extension. As shown on the attached funding Plan, the project is fully funded. The local funds mentioned on the funding Plans are available and committed to this project. Also, the City has additional resources to draw from should additional funds be required. The Concord City Council, private developers, and local residents have all voiced support for this project.

While the project went through a very lengthy and expensive Environmental Clearance process, we believe that the environmental clearance will be finalized shortly. Currently the project design is 85% complete and the City is working to resolve one outstanding issue pertaining to environmental clearance. Once the city receives environmental clearance, staff will begin the right-of-way process, for which CCTA Authorization has already been provided, and complete the design process. The current project schedule includes estimated dates as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| • Environmental Clearance | October 2009 |
| • Design Completion | April 2010 |
| • Required Permits | June 2010 |
| • Right-of-Way Completion | June 2010 |
| • Construction Contract Award | September 2010 |
| • Construction Completion | October 2011 |

Request for appropriation of Measure C Funds for Additional Design Services Commerce Avenue Extension
September 4, 2009
Page 2

The total programmed Measure C funds for the project are \$4,420,152. The following are the current appropriations for the project:

Environmental and Preliminary Engineering	\$ 658,975
Design Services	\$ 510,000
Right-of-Way	<u>\$ 295,000</u>
TOTAL Appropriated	\$1,463,975

The remaining Measure C funds that are not appropriated are \$2,956,177.

The appropriation request will be used to complete future work as follows:

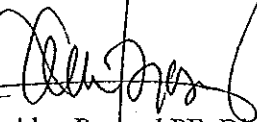
Final Design	\$140,000
Design Coordination	<u>\$ 70,000</u>
Total	\$210,000

Design activities include taking the Commerce Avenue Extension project from approximately 85% to final design. Project design coordination listed above includes potential environmental clearance wrap-up, additional utility coordination, design coordination, bid advertisement, and award of the construction contract.

If you need further information regarding this project, please call me at (925) 671-3231 or Mario Camorongán, Assistant City Engineer at (925) 671-3021 or send him an email at: mario.camorongán@ci.concord.ca.us.

Thank you for your consideration.

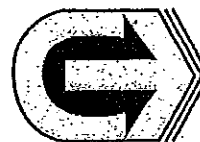
Sincerely,



Alex Pascual PE, Director/City Engineer
Department of Public Works and Engineering

attachment

cc: Vice Mayor Guy Bjerke, Concord TRANSPAC Member
Councilmember William Shinn, Concord TRANSPAC Alternate Member
Barbara Neustader, TRANSPAC Manager
Bob Hoag, Concord Planning Commissioner, Alternate Member
Daniel E. Keen, City Manager
Valerie Barone, Assistant City Manager
Peggy Lefebvre, Director of Finance
Ray Kuzbari, Transportation Manager
Mario Camorongán, Assistant City Engineer



**CALIFORNIA
TRANSIT
ASSOCIATION**

September 3, 2009

To: Local Government and Transportation Stakeholders

Fr: Jim Earp, Executive Director, California Alliance for Jobs
Chris McKenzie, Executive Director, League of California Cities
Josh Shaw, Executive Director, California Transit Association

Re: Potential November 2010 Ballot Measure Campaign to Protect Local Government,
Transit and Transportation Revenues

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The League of California Cities, California Transit Association, California Alliance for Jobs and other transportation and local government trade associations are leading an exploratory effort to assess the feasibility of qualifying and passing a constitutional amendment on the November 2010 ballot that would restrict the state from taking, borrowing or shifting away dedicated local government, transit and transportation funds. This memo summarizes the initial stages of this exploratory effort.

THE PROBLEM: California voters have repeatedly and overwhelmingly approved ballot measures to dedicate specific funding sources for local government, transportation and transit and to prevent state raids of these revenues. Despite these clear mandates by voters, in recent years the Legislature and Governor have proposed and/or implemented numerous attacks on these revenue sources.

This year alone, the Legislature and Governor:

- Borrowed approximately \$2 billion in property taxes from local governments, despite no clear path to repay these funds.
- Took \$2.05 billion in local redevelopment funds, despite a recent Superior Court ruling that says these types of raids are unconstitutional.
- Shifted \$910 million in transit funding away from local transit agencies.
- Voted to take more than \$1 billion of the local government share of the Highway User Tax (HUTA) in order to repay state bond debt (measure stalled in Assembly).
- Took action to eliminate the state sales tax on gasoline (Prop 42 funds) and replace it with a gasoline "fee" that would have no constitutional protection from future raids by the legislature (the Governor ultimately vetoed this measure).
- Threatened to borrow Prop 42 funds to address the State's deficit.

While the state is facing difficult financial times, local governments, transportation and transit agencies are also experiencing unprecedented fiscal hardship. Cities and counties are laying off peace officers, firefighters and other employees, and significantly cutting services. Transit agencies are cutting services and routes and increasing fares – hurting working and lower-class families who have no other mode of transportation. Further, construction industry unemployment exceeds 20%. If the Legislature is allowed to continue to raid or borrow these local and transportation funds unchecked, the result will be more cuts to these vital locally-delivered services, more uncertainty around local and state finances and more litigation.

September 16, 2009
Authority Meeting
Handout Item 7.3

THE SOLUTION: Our organizations have begun the process of evaluating the feasibility of passing a constitutional amendment in November 2010 that would further protect local government, transit and transportation funds. While we are in the initial stages of our voter and legal research, we envision one measure that would do most or all of the following:

- ✓ Close loopholes to prevent the taking of local taxpayer funds, including parcel taxes, sales taxes, and other locally imposed taxes that are currently dedicated to cities, counties and special districts.
- ✓ Revoke the state's authority to borrow local government property tax funds and to divert or borrow local redevelopment funds.
- ✓ Revoke the state's authority to borrow the *existing* state sales tax on gasoline (Prop 42 funds), which funds local government, transit and state transportation improvements.
- ✓ Prohibit the State from taking, borrowing, redirecting or eliminating the state and local government share of Highway User Tax on gasoline (HUTA) currently dedicated to cities and counties for local transportation maintenance and improvement.
- ✓ Prohibit the State from taking, borrowing or redirecting existing funding for public transit, including existing taxes on gas.

STATUS: Our three associations have each committed resources to conduct what we are calling "Phase I" of this process. We have enlisted the help of political attorneys, ballot measure consultants and pollsters to assist in the political evaluation and drafting of a measure. During Phase I we will be undertaking the following activities:

- Conduct a baseline survey of California voters to gauge voter support of the initiative concept and its components (initial survey complete, see summary below).
- Conduct potential follow up voter research as needed to make final determination before proceeding with signature gathering.
- Conduct thorough legal analysis and draft constitutional amendment measure(s).
- Conduct thorough evaluation of political landscape, winnability, and ability to raise the funding needed for a signature gathering drive and for a successful election campaign.
- Begin outreach to organizations and build a winning coalition to join in political and financial support of measure.
- File measure with the Attorney General.
- Work with Attorney General and Legislative Analyst on the development of Title and Summary.
- Solicit bids from signature gathering firms, and put plans in place for paid and volunteer signature gathering activities.
- Develop comprehensive campaign plan, with budget ranges, for a winning campaign in November.

At the conclusion of Phase I, the coalition will decide whether or not to proceed with Phase II. The signature gathering phase will cost approximately \$2 million. More than 1.1 million signatures are needed to assure qualification of a constitutional amendment.

INITIAL POLLING SHOWS VERY STRONG VOTER SUPPORT FOR INITIATIVE CONCEPT:

We commissioned a survey of 800 California voters in August 2009, conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, one of the state's premier ballot measure polling firms. The results of that survey indicate that strong majorities of California voters are supportive of a measure that would restrict the legislature's ability to borrow or take local government, transportation and transit funds:

- When read a detailed description of the measure's provisions, three-in-five (62 percent) voters support a statewide ballot measure to prohibit the Governor and Legislature from borrowing or taking city, county, special district and local transportation tax revenue.
- After hearing the factual recitations of the ballot measure provisions, support increases further to 65% of voters.
- Even in the face of strong arguments against the measure, including statements arguing that passage of this measure would lead to higher taxes, additional cuts to public schools and a further reduction in health care services for children and seniors, three-in-five voters remain supportive.

It is clear that voters would support a measure to further protect local government, transit and transportation funding. However, preparing and qualifying a measure for the ballot takes significant resources and political will. Our three associations have committed to the initial phases of this campaign and are hoping others within the local government and transportation communities will join us in this necessary effort.

Please contact any one of us with questions or for further information.

OPINION

David Rounds Publisher
 Kevin G. Keane Vice President, News
 Dan Hatfield Editorial Page Director
 Pete Weyurski Managing Editor BANG-EB
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InsideBayArea.com ContraCostaTimes.com

End squabble at naval weapons station

ABUREAUCRATIC difference of opinion between the Navy and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on how to help the homeless should not be allowed to delay progress on developing the closed Concord Naval Weapons Station, one of the most important projects in the East Bay.

The dispute involves the method of raising funds to aid homeless people with employment services and housing.

The city of Concord's plan places conditions on the Navy's sale of the property to developers, who would be required to make a contribution to a homeless assistance fund. The Navy then would have to enforce the condi-

OUR OPINION

tions, which it does not want to do. Concord's homeless plan needs approval by HUD, which supports it. However, HUD is also required to ask the Navy if it supports the plan.

HUD could approve Concord's plan without the Navy's support. However, the Navy could continue to hold back its environmental study, thereby delaying redevelopment of the land.

The Navy's preference is to comply with the federal law's mandate for homeless accommodations with a special tax on the property after the Navy sells it. That would relieve the Navy of responsibility for enforcing conditions on the property sales.

The cost to developers most likely would be similar whether they paid a tax or made upfront donations to a homeless fund. Also, the amount of funds available for helping the homeless should be the same regardless of whether it is raised by a tax or contribution.

In the meantime, HUD and the Navy appear to be in no rush to resolve the dispute. The delay could be because the Navy is waiting for the Obama administration to make appointments. Also, with lower property values during the recession, the Navy, no doubt, is not in any rush to sell.

Fortunately, the Navy-HUD discussions do not affect Concord's envi-

ronmental review, which is now in its public comment stage.

Although it is far from urgent at this time, we hope that the dispute over the homeless portion of the weapons station redevelopment plan does not drag on indefinitely.

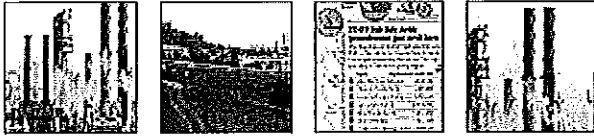
The ultimate impact on the homeless and developers is apt to be similar no matter how the funds are raised. So perhaps the city could consider financing homeless aid through a special tax rather than contributions to a fund. That is the method the Navy approved for the soon-to-close Naval Air Station in Brunswick, Maine.

Such a change should satisfy HUD and Concord as well as the Navy, and still provide the revenue needed to help the homeless.

California plans to levy greenhouse gas fees

Kelly Zito, Chronicle Staff Writer

Sunday, September 20, 2009



More than a year after Bay Area air pollution regulators became the first in the nation to charge businesses for pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the program has raked in close to \$1.7 million. And as early as this week, the state may follow suit by imposing similar fees on large California polluters as part of an ongoing effort to cut greenhouse gases 20 percent by 2020.

The proposed program from the California Air Resources Board and the fledgling regional effort are designed to use the fees to pay for measuring, monitoring and studying the emissions blamed for global climate change.

While health and environmental advocates say tracking greenhouse gases is an important step in the state's plan to battle climate change, big emitters say there is a risk of creating an unfair hodgepodge of regulations and fees.

"We continue to have a lot of problems with (the program)," said Dennis Bolt, manager of the regional office for the Western States Petroleum Association, which represents many of the Bay Area's largest oil refineries. "If every district, county, city in the nation does this ... when you roll that up, it's pretty punitive."

Last year the Bay Area Air Quality Management District voted to charge about 2,500 businesses for emitting greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. The fee, which currently amounts to 4.5 cents per metric ton of greenhouse gases, is widely seen as too small in most cases to deter the discharge of carbon dioxide and other gases. Instead, the fees were set to generate money for further study.

The largest emitters - refineries, power plants and cement factories, for example - must pay hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. Other businesses - including auto shops, coffee roasters and restaurants - pay \$1 or \$2 per year.

A bigger role

The district already regulates smog-forming volatile organic compounds and nitrous oxide, as well as particulates that come from wood-burning fireplaces, diesel generators and construction equipment. Though the majority of the Bay Area's air emissions come from cars and trucks, the local air district does not have the authority to regulate those sources.

Yet in expanding their purview to include greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources, such as smokestacks at major refineries, the 16-member district leap-frogged state and federal regulators.

"The air district sees itself as being in a leadership position on air pollution areas," said Brian Bateman, director of engineering at the Bay Area air district.

The state, however, is finally closing the gap.

This week, the California Air Resources Board is expected to approve a new rule that would levy a fee of 12 cents per metric ton of carbon dioxide on the state's largest polluters beginning in late 2010 or early 2011, according to agency spokesman Stanley Young. The fee would decrease to 9 cents per ton over three years.

Like the Bay Area measure, the state fee would cover the administrative costs of implementing the greenhouse gas-reduction goals detailed in AB32. The 2006 law requires California to cut its overall greenhouse gas emissions by about 174 million metric tons over the next decade, bringing the state's emissions to 1990 levels.

For a company such as Chevron, whose Richmond refinery is the largest in the Bay Area, the local district fees come to about \$200,000 per year - about 9 percent of the total fees paid to the air district each year.

If the California fee goes into effect as planned, the refinery would have to pay more than \$700,000 total to both state and local regulators.

Broader goal

While the companies say the two sets of fees create a duplicative, patchwork effect, environmental and health advocates say the programs are a necessary interim step toward creating a more comprehensive statewide system that puts a price on carbon. That could mean an outright carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system that would set an emissions limit and require companies to buy credits to pollute above that level.

Eventually, argues Shankar Prasad, a fellow with the Coalition for Clean Air and former deputy secretary of science at the California Environmental Protection Agency, the cost of carbon will be built into just about everything producers and consumers create and use.

"The end goal is that we have to reduce carbon and that means we have to put a price on it," he said. "It's not a question of one business or industry or person paying for it. There's a societal cost. All of these costs will eventually be passed on."

On sfgate.com: Search a database of the Bay Area's largest carbon dioxide emitters and recent fees paid to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

E-mail Kelly Zito at kzito@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/20/MNCK1906HC.DTL>

This article appeared on page **A - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle

\$529 million loan for plug-in hybrids

David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

Fisker Automotive, Tesla Motors' main rival, won a \$528.7 million conditional loan from the U.S. Department of Energy on Tuesday to develop two lines of luxury, plug-in hybrid cars.

Fisker, based in Irvine (Orange County), is just the fourth automaker to receive funding from a 2-year-old federal program to develop more fuel-efficient cars. Tesla, based in San Carlos, won \$465 million in June from the same program.

Fisker will use \$169.3 million to complete its first vehicle, an \$87,900 sports car named the Karma that should begin full production next year. The rest of the federal loan will fund Fisker's "Project NINA," an effort to design a plug-in hybrid that will cost \$47,400.

The Karma will be built overseas, although most of its parts will come from the United States. The NINA sedan, which could hit the market in late 2012, is expected to be built in the United States.

"This investment will create thousands of new American jobs and is another critical step in making sure we are positioned to compete for the clean energy jobs of the future," Energy Secretary Steven Chu said in a statement.

Unlike Tesla's cars, which run solely on electricity, Fisker's autos are hybrids. The Karma can travel about 50 miles on battery power before switching to its gasoline engine. Owners will plug in the car at home to recharge the battery.

E-mail David R. Baker at dbaker@sfchronicle.com.

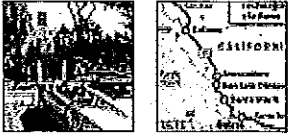
<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/23/MN9719R2Q8.DTL>

This article appeared on page **A - 16** of the San Francisco Chronicle

Charging-station network built along 101

David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer

Wednesday, September 23, 2009



Say you own a Tesla, and you're in the mood to take your sleek electric sports car for a spin down the coast to Los Angeles.

Assuming you started in San Francisco with a fully charged battery, you'd get as far as San Luis Obispo, or maybe Pismo Beach. Then the battery would die. Like all electric cars, Tesla's \$109,000 roadster is limited by its range - about 250 miles.

So a solar power company and a Dutch bank have teamed up to build five recharging stations for Teslas along Highway 101 between the Bay Area and Los Angeles. One of the stations gets some of its power from a solar array.

Pit stops will take 30 to 45 minutes, far longer than the usual visit to a gas station. But the recharging stations, most of them located in the parking lots of Rabobank branches, are situated near stores, cafes and restaurants, where drivers can pass the time.

"You can stop, get some lunch while you're charging," said Lyndon Rive, chief executive officer of SolarCity, which created the stations. "It would be great to have a society where, if you have an electric car, you know you can go someplace and get a charge, whether it's the bank, the coffee shop, the grocery store."

Drivers won't have to pay for the juice.

Rabobank, based in the Netherlands, will cover the cost of the electricity, which isn't expected to be very high. Fully charging a Tesla costs about \$4. Most drivers using the stations are expected to top off their batteries rather than recharge from scratch, which takes more than three hours. And Tesla Motors, based in San Carlos, has sold just 700 roadsters so far.

"I do not believe we're going to have a hundred cars lined up tomorrow - there's not that many of these cars on the road yet," said Marco Krapels, an executive vice president with Rabobank. "We're trying to provide some momentum to the renewable energy movement."

The recharging "corridor" cost about \$80,000 to create, with the money coming from a grant Tesla received from the California Air Resources Board.

The electric vehicle recharging stations - in Salinas, Atascadero, San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria and Goleta - draw their power from the state's electrical grid. But one of them, at Rabobank's Santa Maria branch, connects to a photovoltaic solar power array, and the others may eventually get the same treatment. Rive

calls it "PV meets EV."

"We're combining clean, renewable solar power with all-electric transportation, allowing drivers to travel through California with zero emissions," he said. All the stations are up and running except the one in Goleta, which will open in October.

Recharging electric vehicles might seem a stretch for SolarCity, which installs and leases solar power systems to homes, businesses and government agencies. But the company, based in Foster City, recently bought an electric-vehicle-recharging business and has already installed more than 100 solar home recharging stations for Tesla owners.

There's a family tie between the companies as well. Rive and his brother Peter, SolarCity's chief operating officer, are cousins of Tesla CEO Elon Musk. Musk serves as SolarCity's chairman.

For the moment at least, only Teslas can use the stations. But that could change. SolarCity plans to add another, more standardized plug to each of the stations in the future. The budding electric-car industry has discussed adopting a standardized plug to make sure that recharging stations can serve multiple brands.

"There's a little bit of a tower-of-Babel thing going on," said Tom Dowling, who runs a Web site called EV Charger News that lists recharging stations. "I'm hopeful that in the next year or so this will all get straightened out."

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/23/MN9719QVGD.DTL>

This article appeared on page **A - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle

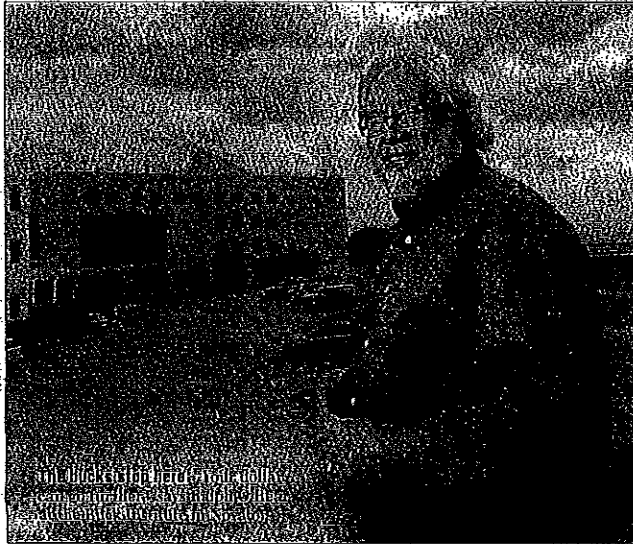
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Construction costs hammer in savings

Bay Area projects shave off millions

BY ERIC YOUNG AND RON LEUTY
San Francisco Business Times

Crippled by the global financial melt-down and crimped by California's budget crisis, the Buck Institute for Age Research's \$40.5 million stem cell research facility has been on hold for more than a year.

That bad luck, however, is now turning into good fortune: As Buck has struggled to finance its project, construction costs have plummeted. Now the Novato Institute expects to

shave \$6 million off that pricetag if it's able to begin work later this year.

Buck's just one of many developers seeing major savings on big-ticket construction and infrastructure projects. From the \$4.5 billion Hetch Hetchy water system improvement to new structures in San Francisco's Mission Bay and the Doyle Drive rebuild, private developers and public agencies are busy rewriting cost estimates and pushing contracts forward — and budgeting for millions in unexpected

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THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION

Materials costs have dropped 11% in the last year.



STEEL
-11%



LUMBER
-7.3%



CEMENT
+1%



JOBS
-29.7%



JOBS
-29.7%

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

CONSTRUCTION:

Material costs slip, labor holds steady

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ed savings.

Prices of materials like steel and lumber have tumbled to lows unseen for decades, and margins are being squeezed as contractors and subcontractors bid on anything that can keep their crews busy. As a result, bids on large-scale projects are falling as much as 70 percent below earlier estimates, and industry observers say they could continue to tumble for another year or more.

"Now is a great time to put your work out in the street," said Julie Labonte, who is overseeing every contract on the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Hetch Hetchy project. "And we're working hard to get as many jobs as we can on the street."

More Buck for the bang

It's a far cry from two years ago. When Buck assembled its project plan in 2007, it built in a 10 percent cushion in construction costs, which had been rising steadily.

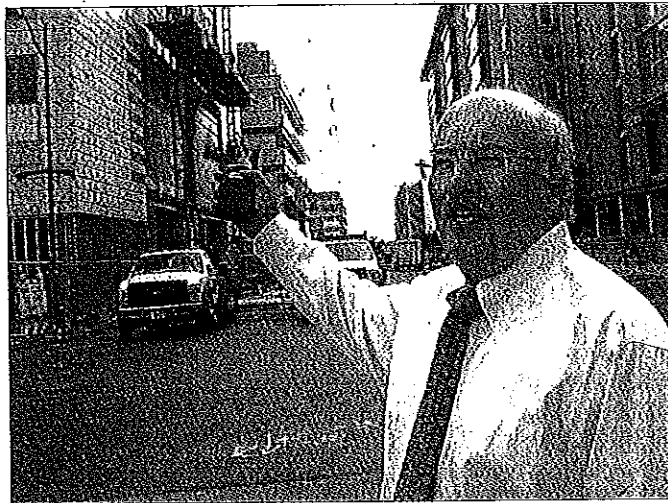
By last year, the financial markets' meltdown had halted private financing. What's more, the state's budget problems stalled bond sales that provide money to the stem cell funding agency that promised a \$20.5 million grant for the 65,708-square-foot building.

In the interim, the price of steel, concrete and other commodity construction materials fell hard and fast, wiping out the Buck's 10 percent escalation cost estimate — and then some.

"There is a lot of aggressive bidding going on," said Ralph O'Rear, vice president of facilities and planning at the Buck Institute. "We think there are opportunities to take advantage of those market reductions. Your dollar can go further."

Other projects look to pocket even bigger savings: BART's Warm Springs extension will cost \$136 million, or 45 percent below its previous estimate. Bids for San Francisco International Airport's \$383 million Terminal 2 renovation work are 8 percent below projections. And a total of nine Hetch Hetchy projects originally expected to cost \$289.7 million will instead cost \$220.8 million, said Todd Rydstrom, CFO for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

Bids next month on the first two phases of the \$1 billion rebuild of Doyle Drive, the roadway that connects to the Golden Gate



"The prices ... are definitely coming down," says Joe Francini of Rudolph and S

Bridge, are expected to come in about 20 percent below original estimates.

Behind these drops is the collapse in both residential and commercial construction, which has trimmed demand for building work and turned a worldwide shortage of construction materials into a global glut.

Construction has been the hardest hit of all industries in the Bay Area, said Jon Haveman, a principal with Beacon Economics. It's shedding more jobs locally than either retail or financial services, two other hard hit sectors. Construction employment peaked in the nine-county Bay Area in early 2007 with 195,000 jobs. The low point will probably be around 137,000 jobs in the third quarter of 2010, he said, a 30 percent drop over three years.

"We're not at the bottom yet," said Matthew Anderson, a partner with Foresight Analytics LLC in Oakland. "There are the beginnings of recovery, but from such a weakened position on the jobs front."

Commodities down, labor up

Most savings are coming on materials and margins, contractors say — not on labor. Many building trade union workers are covered by contracts signed before the big fall that lock in wage increases, said Joe Francini, senior vice president of estimating and preconstruction services at Redwood City-based general contractor Rudolph and Sletten. Carpenters, for instance, recently saw their wages go up \$2.80 an hour, effective July 1.

But material prices have slumped across the board. Reinforcing steel, for example, has dropped from the neighborhood of \$1 a pound a year ago to 55 to 65 cents today. Structural steel prices, at one point as high

as \$3,700 per ton, have dipped to \$3 less.

"Any jobs that are bidding over the next six months, the prices, even labor increases, are definitely down," Francini said, in the range 15 percent.

Feeding the fall is stiffened competition among contractors and subcontractors, scrambling for any work as observers say firms are bidding on fewer projects than they would have expected before, and local firms are likely to be competing locally with contractors from as far out as Stockton.

Two years ago, 10 to 12 bids were submitted for a major contract, Francini said. Today, 18 or more would be expected.

The price of more specialized work like the University of California Francisco's \$254 million, 236,000-foot Cardiovascular Research Institute that Rudolph and Sletten is building has fallen less precipitously because firms are qualified for it, he said.

The cardiovascular project bid in 2007, when prices like steel were peaking, said Michael Bade, interim vice chancellor for capital projects and campus architecture at UCSF. "I suspect that if we had bid the year later, we would have gotten (a 15 to 20 percent) less," Bade said.

Other institutions are happily playing the waiting game. Buck wants to work this year — but a further delay means even more cost savings.

"The new normal really hasn't established," O'Rear said.

Reporter Sarah Duxbury contributed to this story. Email: sd@bizjournals.com / (415) 288-4900. Fax: sd@bizjournals.com / (415) 288-4

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

Major Bay Area building projects have seen original cost estimates dip as much as 72 percent.

Agency	Project	Cost change from original estimate
S.F. International Airport	Terminal 2 rebuild	-8%
S.F. Department of Public Works	3rd/7th/Howard/Leavenworth Streets Sewer Replacement	-11%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Water treatment plant improvements in San Mateo	-13.8%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	New Crystal Springs bypass tunnel	-14.3%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	design and construction of a water treatment facility near Tracy	-15.2%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Upgrades to pump station in Sunol Valley	-17.6%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Noe Valley water main improvement	-20.8%
S.F. Department of Public Works	Balboa Street Phase I Pavement Renovation and Sewer Replacement	-21.0%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Seismic upgrades to water valves in South San Francisco and Daly City	-28.1%
S.F. Department of Public Works	Various Locations Pavement Renovation	-32.0%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Seismic upgrades to pipeline crossing at Hayward Fault	-40.9%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Lake Merced Pump Station upgrades	-42.1%
BART	Tunnel section of Warm Springs extension	-45.4%
Hetch Hetchy (S.F. PUC)	Increasing discharge channel capacity in San Mateo County	-72.0%

Construction firms spar in battle of bids

BY BLANCA TORRES
San Francisco Business Times

With fewer projects to go around, the construction industry food chain is getting squeezed. The biggest firms that once only did projects worth upwards of \$10 million now go after any work that comes along, leaving less for firms that specialized in smaller contracts.

"It's like we're living from project to project," said James Jenkins, principal with GCI General Contractors in San Francisco, a firm that specializes in office interiors and building renovations. "A major project or two could turn us around, but maybe for just a few months."

During the building boom that peaked a few years ago, GCI's average contract brought in \$350,000 or \$400,000. Now the average is closer to \$100,000.

"The flavor of the day is (to) do as much as possible at the lowest price," Jenkins said. "We're forecasting next year is going to be the same as this year or maybe 10 to 20 percent better than this year."

Besides bringing in less revenue, construction firms also face daunting levels of competition. Many projects are now drawing twice as many bids as before and bids are coming in much lower.

Construction costs have come down an average of 15 to 20 percent according to the Associated General Contractors of America, a national trade group, thanks to a combination of falling material prices and contractor's fees.

The question is how long can companies continue to reduce their profit margins and make little or no money on projects.

Ken Simonson, chief economist with the contractor's association, said stimulus contracts have given the industry a boost, but some of the money has yet to be allocated and is just a temporary fix. Another issue is that major segments of the market such as retail, residential, hotel and office construction have not recovered.

"The pace of decline is accelerating," Simonson said, which could push many firms to close their doors.

So far, contractors have done what they can to stay in business. Jenkins' company has cut staff from about 60 people to 40 and expects to see a revenue decline of 50 percent during the current fiscal year compared with the year prior.

"I see a lot of contractors at different levels more and more competing for the same work," said Bill Groth, principal and senior vice president with BCCL. "We're competing with contractors we haven't seen in our marketplace since 2001."

Some firms, small and large, are finding that having a specialty is an advantage. Oakland-based McDonald Construction and Development Inc., which focuses on sustainable residential construction, has not seen a drop in its business.

"Actually," said Mike McDonald, president of the firm, "we're scrambling to assemble crews capable of high-end, green-oriented work."

BUILDING'S FREE-FALL



Jenkins

Transportation

The Costliest Ride

Transportation service for the disabled can be a budget-buster. Cities are looking at a variety of new approaches.

By Josh Goodman | July 2009

More Like This

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In Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a city of just over 150,000 people, almost half of the annual public transit budget doesn't go for buses, or trolleys, or any newfangled light-rail system. It goes for vans—to provide mobility to disabled people who can't use the regular vehicles. These riders receive curbside service outside their homes, and are dropped off at their destination of choice, at a cost to Sioux Falls of \$25.81 per trip. Every sizable city has some version of this program. It's called paratransit.

And it's a piece of the public transportation puzzle that's often forgotten—by everyone except transit agencies and those who depend on the service. The agencies can't ignore paratransit because they're legally obliged to provide it under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. But it's hugely expensive. Sioux Falls' cost per trip is actually lower than

most—a one-way ride for a single disabled person costs more than \$30 in many places. While most big cities don't spend as much proportionately as Sioux Falls, it's common for a transit agency to devote 10 percent or more of its operating budget to paratransit. And the fares normally cover less than 10 percent of the costs.

The agencies don't like having to spend this money, and the disabled don't especially like the quality of the service they're getting. Rides have to be arranged at least a day in advance and generally are available only in limited geographic areas to those who have very serious disabilities. Some requests are rejected. Even when they're accepted, booking a ride can involve long waits on the phone. The vans are often late arriving and occasionally don't show up at all.

This is a case where both sides are right. The service costs a lot of money to provide and isn't very efficient. And the problems are likely to get worse. Transit agencies are suffering through serious budget problems and looking for ways to cut back on the programs, even as the aging of the Baby Boomers is bound to increase the share of the population with disabilities—and increase demand for paratransit.

There's no easy solution. But some cities, including Pittsburgh and Seattle, have come up with promising responses. If paratransit service is expensive and inconvenient, perhaps there's some way to help people with disabilities ride the same buses and trains as everyone else.

The origins of paratransit date to the 1960s, when transit planners had big ideas about creating a parallel system that offered door-to-door service for all riders—not just the disabled. There was one major problem: They never realized just how much this would cost. When it became obvious, local governments backed down. Many began offering some paratransit to the disabled, but this service was very limited. In the 1980s, New York City Mayor Ed Koch complained that it would be cheaper to pay for taxi rides for the disabled than to use vans to take them where they wanted to go.

But that changed in 1990 with federal passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA law said that people with disabilities must have equal access to public transportation. This meant, for starters, that traditional fixed-route modes of transit had to meet new accessibility standards. Buses, for example, had to have wheelchair lifts. But a wheelchair lift doesn't do much good for a blind person who can't find his way to the transit stop, or someone in a wheelchair who lives in a neighborhood without sidewalks or curb cuts.

So ADA mandated that people who couldn't ride fixed-route transit still had to be offered public transportation. Under the terms of the law, this meant paratransit service must be available anywhere within three-fourths of a mile of a fixed-route transit line. The law also stipulated that paratransit had to be available during the same hours of the day as fixed-route transit, and that fares for ADA paratransit riders couldn't be more than twice the fare on the fixed routes. The costs quickly mounted up, as did the complaints about service. The agencies didn't hire enough operators to book trips, it was charged, or didn't buy enough vehicles to meet the demand for service.

These allegations were the continuation of a troubled history. In the 1980s, when the American Public Transportation Association gathered for meetings, activists demanding accessibility would greet them with street-clogging protests. "Anytime all the transit officials went out and tried to go from building to building or get out of their hotels," says Marilyn Golden, of the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, "there were throngs of wheelchair users blocking them and getting arrested and chanting and singing." Today, the adversarial relationship continues in many cities. Transit agencies often are sued for failing to meet ADA strictures for paratransit. Some advocates suspect transit agencies don't mind these

suits: It's cheaper to hire lawyers than it is to provide good paratransit service.

That said, this tense relationship obscures the fact that, on balance, paratransit service has slowly been getting better. By fits and starts, transit agencies have improved their record on some of the basics. It's less likely today than a decade ago that when someone calls for an ADA paratransit ride, they'll be told that no vans are available.

Even as the quality of service has improved, however, the scope of service has diminished. In the past decade, cities gradually have limited the geographic areas in which paratransit is available and created new restrictions on who is eligible. Now, with transit-agency budgets hurting, those trends have accelerated.

The question is what should be done about it. How can transit agencies provide decent service to the disabled without spending a fortune?

There's no shortage of ideas. Some local governments take Ed Koch's advice—they partner with taxi companies to expand the system's paratransit capacity without having to hire more salaried drivers. Others allow bus drivers to spend some of their workday on paratransit, creating a better-paid, better-trained, more reliable pool of drivers than if the system had to hire from scratch. And others are working to expand the number of trips that serve more than one passenger at a time. Sioux Falls has sought to increase revenue by allowing commuters who aren't disabled to book rides home on the paratransit vans.

There are limits, though, to how much difference any of these strategies can make. Even with the smartest, best-managed service, it's still going to be very costly to pick people up at their homes and drop them off at their destinations. That's a fundamental problem—unless you can come up with a system that finds practical alternatives to using paratransit in the first place.

There may be some. Pittsburgh, for example, has developed a sophisticated way of determining eligibility for the service on a trip-by-trip basis. In that city and in surrounding Allegheny County, all those who apply for paratransit service are evaluated in person to determine just what their physical capabilities are. Each customer is judged to be either ineligible, unconditionally eligible or conditionally eligible. It's "conditional eligibility" that represents the innovation. Some applicants are classified as eligible for the service only when traveling to a place without accessible bus stops. Or only in adverse weather conditions. A blind person or someone with a cognitive impairment might be eligible for trips to unfamiliar places, but not for trips they make routinely and are capable of navigating.

In Pittsburgh, some of this is done on a day-by-day basis. Other systems have instituted conditional eligibility in bad weather by allowing paratransit pickups between, say, October and March. Allegheny County checks the forecast every day. "We're not providing a \$20 trip if they can manage a \$2 bus ride," says Jeff Joll, the associate director of ACCESS Transportation Systems, the contractor that manages Allegheny County's paratransit service. There's a loophole that customers can invoke if they want to: When they're ruled ineligible for a trip, they're still allowed to request a paratransit ride—they simply have to pay double the normal fare.

What do the disabled think about that? "People complain about it all the time," says John Tague, who chairs the Governor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania. "You want to be an unconditional rider." Tague knows. He's eligible for ADA paratransit rides in Pittsburgh only when the temperature is below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Still, Tague says that, overall, he supports trip-by-trip eligibility. The savings from it are a key reason Allegheny County is able to provide paratransit service throughout the entire county, not just to the limited areas ADA requires.

Other transit systems have embraced the idea of mainstreaming paratransit riders into fixed-route transit. King County, Washington, which includes Seattle, is experimenting with personalized transit training. The idea is that someone who is blind, for example, might be capable of riding a bus, but could still have plenty of understandable fears. How will I know that the right bus has arrived? How will I know when it's my stop? By sending a trainer to ride along with the person for a few days, these sorts of concerns can be allayed—and a paratransit rider can become a regular bus rider.

While advocates for the disabled are cautious about efforts to push people into fixed-route transit—fearing that transit agencies will try to overdo it to save money—almost everyone agrees that it can be liberating for a disabled person to learn to navigate the regular transportation system. Door-to-door paratransit is an undoubted convenience, but it's also a hindrance if the trip has to be planned and ordered days in advance. "The very existence of paratransit," says Lawrence Carter-Long, an advocate for the disabled in New York City, "says to me we've failed in terms of providing adequate transit options."

Related Terms: Ed Koch Entertainment Finance John Tague Major Mayor New York City Person Career Pittsburgh Seattle Sioux Falls South Dakota Technology Transportation and Infrastructure

COMMENTS

by Anonymous (not verified) | September 10, 2009

I think it is interesting

I think it is interesting that the writer of this article did not even bother to use or learn the current correct terminology for people with disabilities. The frequent references to "the disabled" as opposed to "People first" vernacular such as: "people with disabilities" would indicate that not enough research went into this article. Had the writer looked up statistics on people with disabilities working and being able to leave public support behind, they would know that turning tax users into tax payers benefits EVERYONE in all aspects of society. If the transit system adequately enabled people with disabilities to work, the taxes they would be paying would also help cover the cost of these priceless services. When true accessibility is the standard, rather than the exception, the cost in dollars will be insignificant as offset by the influx of creativity and productivity that workers with disabilities bring to a business and community.

by EM Prentiss (not verified) | August 6, 2009

The Costliest Ride

Its interesting that Mayor Koch a past Mayor of NYC is quoted as saying its would be cheaper to put paratransit rider in taxis when today's Mayor has blocked mandating the gradual transformation of NYC's taxis to become a WC accessible fleet. I am AAR (Access-A-Ride) certified but only use AAR in NYC when my power WC is dead or I'm out of NYC.

AAR contractors have inaccessible sedans in their fleets and it is looking to utilize inaccessible community car services to provide trips as well. WC users are concerned with AAR's trend to offering inaccessible paratransit services. As a result NYC is offering accessible & inaccessible subway service (88 out of about 450 subway stations are accessible) accessible buses and accessible & inaccessible paratransit.

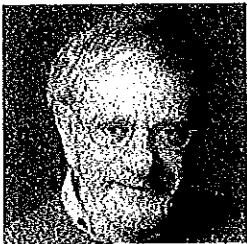
AAR offers a stranded passenger the option of calling a inaccessible taxi or car service but WC users are stranded until another accessible vehicle is dispatched.

NYC has approx 281 accessible and an unknown number of accessible car service vehicles so that WC users are up often stuck waiting for long periods of time for a replacement vehicle. I've never ridden a . Sioux Falls paratransit vehicle but boy can I tell you, no non disabled New Yorker would use AAR if they didn't have to!

Assessments

Paul Weyrich's Soft Spot for Public Transit*The late conservative leader debunks the free-market case against transit.*

By Alan Ehrenhalt | September 2009



Alan Ehrenhalt
is Governing's editor. E-mail him at
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Free-market economists are a bit like ornery bulls. Whisper the right phrase in their ear, and they come at you with nostrils flaring, just as if you had waved a red flag in front of a Toro Bravo. Try it with "rent control." Or "minimum wage." Or better yet, try it with "mass transit."

When it comes to transit, national free-market ideologists have been goading the idea so long it is hard for them to notice what is actually going on around them. Whether it is the continuing growth of light-rail ridership throughout the country, the economic regeneration of transit corridors such as those in Washington, D.C., Denver and Portland, Oregon, or the continuing voter support for new systems in seemingly unlikely places such as Phoenix and Albuquerque, organizations such as the Cato Institute and the Reason Foundation produce the same answer. Those numbers are misleading. This can't be

happening because theory tells us it is impossible. Only the free market—and especially automobiles—can do a good job moving people from place to place.

The libertarian noise machine against public transportation has been so loud in recent years that it would be easy to conclude all conservatives must agree with it. That is why it is so interesting to come across the new book *Moving Minds*, the contrarian work that Paul M. Weyrich wrote before his untimely death last year. By any standard, Weyrich was one of the most important conservative figures of the past generation. In the book, released jointly by the conservative Free Congress Foundation and the smart-growth group Reconnecting America, Weyrich and co-author William Lind, a national security specialist by training and a prominent cultural conservative in his own right, argue in blunt terms that the free-market case against public transportation essentially is a fraud.

I knew Paul Weyrich pretty well when I covered Congress back in the 1980s. I can't say he was always the easiest person to deal with. He could be arrogant, self-righteous and priggish. But no one ever doubted his commitment to conservative doctrine, or the role that he played as an organizer and theorist in bringing Republicans to power in Washington in the 1990s. And no one doubted his willingness to entertain unorthodox ideas if they seemed to fit his overall world view.

Some of Weyrich's ideas about transportation are so sensible that one wonders whether they might have become commonly accepted among conservatives long ago if the libertarians hadn't been so ubiquitous and so well-funded as to make serious discussion on the right impossible.

Weyrich, along with Lind, believed the U.S. economy worked best with as few federal subsidies as possible and as much private investment as could be encouraged. The two of them looked around and saw that tax-supported aid to highways was astronomically higher than any comparable aid to subways, light-rail systems and buses. In 1980, for example, the comparative figures were \$39.7 billion to \$5.8 billion. Over the next two decades, federal transit funding never amounted to more than a fraction of highway funding. "The current division of market share between the automobile and mass transit," Weyrich wrote, "is in no way the product of a free market. It reflects massive and sustained government intervention in favor of automobiles." Weyrich never saw anything conservative about a traffic jam.

Late in his life, and in his posthumously published book, Weyrich emphasized another point. He often said that he cared about freedom from another overseas attack more than perhaps any other federal issue. And he realized that dependence on foreign oil could be the greatest single threat to security. "As conservatives," he and Lind wrote in *Moving Minds*, "we are not environmentalists. More important to us is the fact that people who switch from their car to an electrified railway help reduce our dependence on oil imports, which in turn improves our national security."

Compelling as their theoretical case is, Weyrich and Lind are most persuasive—and most amusing—when they begin taking on the shibboleths of the free-market anti-transit movement one-by-one.

The single most striking piece of evidence usually offered against public transportation is the number of personal trips in the country made by public conveyance as compared to those made by private automobiles. This number always has been very small, rarely above 5 percent and in some studies less than 2 percent. It suggests, at least at first, that investing in transit is a bad use of resources.

Weyrich and Lind make a simple but rarely considered observation: These studies count all trips—even those where the

traveler would have no plausible opportunity to use public transportation if he wanted to. There are countless situations like this, even within individual metropolitan areas.

To try one close to my home, I asked the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority how long it would take me on public transportation to get from Centreville, in the Virginia suburbs, to Gaithersburg, in the Maryland suburbs. This is a 26-mile trip. I was informed that by making four different transfers via bus and subway, I might be able to reach Gaithersburg in a little less than three hours. If I get in my car, the estimate is 57 minutes. In what meaningful sense can it be said that I am making a choice against public transportation? As Weyrich liked to say, "If you don't build it, they can't come."

Rather than taking an indiscriminate count of travel in the United States, Weyrich and Lind suggest a measurement that has been proposed by others, one based on "transit-competitive" trips. In other words, how often do consumers use public transportation when it is genuinely available to them? This is not an easy measurement to agree upon. A 90-minute transit ride from Centreville to Gaithersburg still probably wouldn't tempt me out of my car. Others might feel differently. In the end, transit-competitiveness may simply be impossible to define.

However, there are other numbers that are at least as important. The indisputable fact is that transit ridership has been increasing in America for the past 15 years. Between 1995 and 2007, public-transit use in the United States increased by almost 30 percent—considerably more than the increase in the number of vehicle-miles traveled altogether. That increase corresponded rather closely with the construction of light-rail systems in cities such as St. Louis, Denver and San Diego, ones that replaced obsolete and lightly used bus lines. In 2008, Americans made 10.7 billion transit trips, the highest number in 52 years and a 4 percent increase over 2007. In the first quarter of this year, transit use remained essentially level—and if buses are excluded from the count, actually rose modestly, despite declining gas prices and a severe recession.

Of course, more buses are what much of the anti-transit lobby actually wants. They believe a major commitment to buses would be cheaper, more efficient and more attractive than new rail transportation. Key members of this lobby, such as Wendell Cox of the Reason Foundation, have admitted, while dismissing as insignificant, the fact that they receive some of their research money from the bus industry.

I'm not accusing anyone of being on the take here. I have nothing against buses—neither did Paul Weyrich—but as he recognized, they do relatively little for economic development. Creating new bus lines involves no new infrastructure that even an adventurous private developer would be willing to take a gamble on. The agency that runs the system can change the route on a moment's notice. But when tracks and stations start sprouting up for rail systems, developers see a virtually irrevocable long-term commitment that makes new investment a reasonable bet.

Paul Weyrich spent two decades of his life trying to persuade fellow conservatives that ideas such as those made sense. At the time he died, last December, I don't know if he felt he had been successful. But to a great extent, I think he had. Former Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, no liberal by anybody's standard, read Weyrich's work and was convinced. "Why do academic conservatives seem to believe that all transit is bad," Thompson once asked, "when as a real-world conservative, I know it isn't?"

Weyrich himself put it a little more colorfully. The anti-transit zealots, he said, "can't even see what everyone else sees, probably their own grandmothers, namely, that driving a car in rush hour in the city is a pain-in-the-you-know what." That would seem to be a truth that transcends ideology.

Related Terms: Albuquerque America Assessments author
Congress Denver Entertainment Oregon Paul M. Weyrich Person
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COMMENTS

by Anonymous (not verified) | September 4, 2009

In contrast with many

In contrast with many conservatives, Weyrich had a long history of ardent support for rail mass transit. He however opposed bus transit and instead supported rail transit as a more effective alternative. FCF publishes a newsletter on trolley and rail systems, The New Electric Railway Journal; Weyrich wrote numerous op-ed columns in favor of proposed light rail and metro systems. He also served on the national board of Amtrak and the Amtrak Reform Council, as well as on local and regional rail transit advocacy organizations without using any cash advance.

Tech Talk

Catching a Bus with a BlackBerry*Mobile apps and social media are being tweaked to serve transportation needs.*

By Ellen Perlman | September 2009

**Ellen Perlman**

is a Governing staff writer and technology columnist. E-mail her at eperlman@governing.com.

Here's a question that goes through many a weary commuter's mind: "Where's my bus?" But "Where's My Bus" is also the name of a mobile application for the Circulator bus system that runs five routes through downtown Washington, D.C. The system lets riders know where the bus they are waiting for happens to be at the moment.

I went to check it out. While I stood at the bus stop, "Where's My Bus" let me know on my BlackBerry that the bus that would take me across town was 0.8 miles away. What it didn't tell me was the arrival time. I had to check on congestion along the roadway to figure that out.

The idea for "Where's My Bus" started in the District's planning department. Only 63 percent of District households own a car, so Harriet Tregoning, D.C.'s planning director, figured enhanced bus service would be a valuable addition.

Implementation of the mobile app fell to the transportation and information technology departments. Much of the technology was ready to go: Buses, for instance, already had GPS transponders, making it possible to track their whereabouts.

"Where other systems have fallen down is in trying to predict the time of arrival," Tregoning says. "Think how complicated traffic is." Fortunately, "Where's My Bus" doesn't predict. It just tells it like it is.

The social media site K-TOC might not have the cachet of Facebook or the name recognition of MySpace. But unlike those sites, it doesn't run into office policies that prohibit workers from using it for security reasons. K-TOC presents little threat: It's an operation that lets employees of the Kansas Transportation Department and other people in the transportation field communicate with each other. But it's like Facebook in one way: It allows members to participate in online discussions and join a community of like-minded people.

The Transportation Department developed the program last year while reevaluating its public-outreach efforts. The benefit for transportation specialists is in their ability to connect with their peers around the state. "That's where the magic comes in," says project manager Patrick Quinn. The network of users can share their professional knowledge as a group, but individuals also can use it to connect with others who have similar interests and concerns.

The site, which cost around \$75,000, launched in January with the expectation that perhaps 300 public works directors, airport managers, transit operators, city and county engineers and transportation-minded residents would join in the first six months. Instead, membership climbed quickly to 700.

Quinn's job is to moderate and steer questions to the agency personnel best equipped to answer them. He sees the site as important not only for communication but as a way for the state to figure out the techniques and technologies of social media. Soon, he says, "the whole country is going to be one huge social network."

Related Terms: Business director Facebook Harriet Tregoning Labor Law Patrick Quinn Person Career Tech and Telecom Tech Talk Transportation and Infrastructure Washington, D.C.

State to apply for \$1.28 billion for high-speed rail, Caltrain construction from SF to San Jose

By Mike Rosenberg
San Mateo County Times

Posted: 09/21/2009 06:00:24 PM PDT
Updated: 09/21/2009 11:19:25 PM PDT

SACRAMENTO — State officials said Monday that they will apply for \$1.28 billion in prized federal stimulus funding for projects that would expand Caltrain commuter service and allow statewide high-speed trains to zip between San Francisco and San Jose.

The state would match the federal grants with its own money, likely from voter-approved Proposition 1A, which can only be tapped to match other funds, bringing the total cash at stake to a whopping \$2.56 billion.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority Board is expected to approve the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act application Wednesday. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger would then submit the request to the Federal Railroad Administration before the federal government's Oct. 2 deadline.

The stimulus plan includes \$8 billion for high-speed intercity passenger rail service, and the authority is requesting more than half, \$4.6 billion, for design and construction costs for four of its 10 corridors between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The application includes joint projects for the Caltrain line, which high-speed rail will share from San Francisco to San Jose.

"When we first started planning this project, nobody had ever dreamed there would be an \$8 billion pot of money in a stimulus act," said Jeff Barker, the authority's deputy director. "So to some degree, this opportunity is a gift."

But as funding sources dry up, the state and Caltrain are pinning a great deal of

Advertisement

their funding hopes on the federal program. Without stimulus and Prop. 1A money, Caltrain, for one, has no way to fund its electrification plans for at least a year.

In composing its application, the authority split the cost of each project in half, saying the state would come up with the other 50 percent.

At the top of the list is funding

Interactive map

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for grade separations, the rail bridges that allow cars to pass underneath the Caltrain tracks and for safety reasons are required for bullet trains. The authority is seeking \$494.5 million for grade separations along the Caltrain line, including \$150 million for rail bridges in San Bruno.

The state is also asking for \$442.5 million to electrify the Caltrain corridor. Electrification is necessary for the diesel locomotive rail line to be

compatible with high-speed trains, and it will allow Caltrain to expand its commuter service and save operating costs.

The application also includes a \$115.5 million request to install a positive train control safety system along the Caltrain corridor. The federal government in October mandated that the technology, which helps prevent train-to-train collisions and over-speed derailments, be used nationwide by 2015.

Finally, the authority will solicit \$227.5 million for improvements at three stations: Diridon in San Jose (\$75 million), Transbay Terminal in San Francisco (\$102.5 million), and Fourth and King in San Francisco (\$50 million).

In addition to the construction projects, the stimulus application consists of an additional \$276.5 million for preliminary engineering, including \$30.5 million for the San Francisco-to-San Jose segment.

Executive Director Mehdi Morshed said federal officials should award the funds in three to four months. Authority leaders like their chances, as California was one of the few, if any, states actively planning for high-speed rail before the stimulus funds became available.

"California is leaps and bounds ahead of anybody else in planning this," Barker said.

Even if the state is awarded the funds, it would lose the money if it is unable to begin construction by the federal deadline of September 2012. The authority would also have to approve the environmental planning for any stimulus-funded projects by September 2011 and complete construction by September 2017.

Barker said officials only chose projects they were confident would meet those deadlines.

A Sacramento judge is expected to issue a disposition Oct. 9 that may require the authority to redo some of its completed environmental work, which officials said would surely prevent the state from meeting the stimulus deadlines. The disposition stems from a lawsuit that Menlo Park, Atherton and environmental groups filed against the state last year.

Mike Rosenberg covers San Mateo, Burlingame, Belmont and transportation issues. Reach him at 650-348-4324.

High-speed rail stimulus application for San Francisco-to-San Jose segment

Project	Stimulus request	Total project cost
San Bruno grade separations	\$150 million	\$300 million
Other grade separations	\$344.5 million	\$689 million
Corridor electrification	\$442.5 million	\$885 million
Positive train control	\$115.5 million	\$231 million
Transbay Terminal platform extensions	\$102.5 million	\$205 million
Diridon station Improvements	\$75 million	\$150 million
Fourth and King station improvements	\$50 million	\$100 million
Total	\$1.28 billion	\$2.56 billion

***Source: California High-Speed Rail Authority**

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Comments



CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL BLOG

CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL SUPPORT BLOG, SPREADING NEWS AND INFO ABOUT THE HIGH SPEED TRAINS PROJECT APPROVED BY CALIFORNIA VOTERS IN NOVEMBER 2008.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2009

CHSRA Staff Recommendation for Phase 2 Stimulus Funding

California High Speed Rail Authority staff have released their recommendations for funding applications for the Phase 2 of the federal stimulus this fall. They focus on "design/build" in four corridors:

1. San Francisco to San José (\$1.28 billion)
2. Merced to Fresno (\$466 million)
3. Fresno to Bakersfield (\$819 million)
4. Los Angeles to Anaheim (\$2 billion)

The application also includes funding for preliminary work in all the corridors of the planned HSR route, including the Sacramento and San Diego extensions.

The four "design/build" corridors would enable actual construction of trackage to commence, though to varying levels of completion. Only the Caltrain corridor would include full electrification, and there it would also include Positive Train Control (PTC), along with the San Bruno curve and other "high-priority" grade separations. Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield would see tracks built, but no electrification or PTC. (Merced to Fresno is to be along the UPRR/CA-99 corridor, which is obviously going to be an issue; Fresno to Bakersfield is via BNSF corridor.) LA to Anaheim would be everything except electrification (including PTC).

Given the limited possibilities of the way the stimulus is written, this is a pretty sensible approach. Getting PTC and electrification on the Caltrain corridor is an extremely high priority both for Caltrain's survival and for getting HSR seeded on the Peninsula. The trackwork in the Valley will help enable the test track, and getting LA to Anaheim mostly built means it won't take much to get genuine HSR up and running in an extremely high-profile corridor.

Notice that the Merced-Bakersfield piece has been defined as two segments. CHSRA staff are recommending that both segments be pursued in the stimulus funding application. But the possibility that only one of the two could get funded is generating some unease in the San Joaquin Valley:

On Tuesday the Tulare County Board of Supervisors will vote to intervene in contention centered on a potential high speed rail line in the San Joaquin Valley.

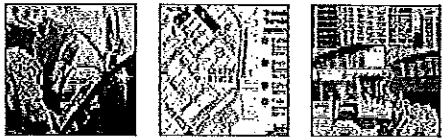
The supervisors will take a stand on whether or not a segment of rail should stretch from Bakersfield to Merced, or only to the halfway point in Fresno.

Federal money to design and build the rail is now available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, however some have suggested that only one of the segments should be submitted to the Federal Rail Administration for funding.

Spot for S.F. high-speed rail station up in air

John Coté, Rachel Gordon, Chronicle Staff Writers

Wednesday, September 23, 2009



(09-22) 19:10 PDT -- The plan is still for high-speed trains to whisk passengers into a sleek, modern rail station in San Francisco by 2020.

The question is where that station will be.

Ballot measures, years of planning and millions of dollars in prep work have all put the station at the Transbay Terminal at First and Mission streets.

Now that location is in question as the California High-Speed Rail Authority explores three alternatives amid questions about capacity of the Transbay Terminal during peak hours.

Local officials worry that uncertainty could cost them federal stimulus funds that will be awarded in a few weeks.

While the California High-Speed Rail Authority maintains the Transbay Terminal is its preferred site, high-speed rail officials say state and federal environmental laws require that they consider alternatives.

"We're following the law," said Quentin Kopp, a retired judge and former state senator who sits on the rail board.

The state attorney general's Office agrees, but some San Francisco officials dispute that position. The Transbay Joint Powers Authority says exploring alternative station sites is "legally improper" and unnecessary.

The alternate sites are: ending the high-speed line at a revamped rail terminal at the Caltrain station at Fourth and King streets, splitting high-speed rail traffic during peak times between the Transbay Terminal and the Fourth and King station, and locating the station on Beale Street.

The Beale Street option resurrects an idea that was rejected in 2002 to locate the terminal on almost three city blocks bounded roughly by Beale, Main, Mission and Harrison streets, perpendicular to the proposed transit center. The site had been the city's preferred option for a new terminal in the late 1990s until AC Transit sued to have it changed.

Arguments for beale street

Art Gensler, founder of the Gensler global architecture and planning firm, is a major proponent of the Beale Street plan. Supporters argue it can handle more trains, with 12 tracks and six platforms, and cost less.

But a Transbay Joint Powers Authority analysis said that location would cost about \$4 billion more and calls for tunneling that could undermine the Bay Bridge.

The option would also require acquiring federal land and demolishing a 287-unit condominium complex valued at more than \$140 million, according to a San Francisco Redevelopment Agency analysis.

"Every study has indicated that it's not a feasible or desirable site," said Adam Alberti, a spokesman for the Transbay Joint Powers Authority. The proposal "is not based on anything other than somebody's desire to move the station."

Alberti said recent design changes for the First and Mission site address capacity concerns.

The debate over where to locate the station comes as the Federal Railroad Administration is expected to announce soon which states will receive the highly competitive stimulus-fund grants for high-speed rail.

California requested \$1.1 billion in initial funding, \$400 million of which would help fund the Transbay Terminal project in San Francisco.

Cost for high-speed trains

California's plan for trains running from Southern California to San Francisco and Sacramento at speeds up to 220 mph would cost an estimated \$40 billion.

In addition to the \$1.1 billion in funding already requested, Mehdi Morshed, executive director of the High-Speed Rail Authority, said Monday he plans to seek another \$4.6 billion in federal funds.

San Francisco officials don't want to see their plan snubbed because the High-Speed Rail Authority has not settled on the station location. They say it is important to pursue federal grants with a unified voice.

"This is not the time to revisit the issue," said Michael Cohen, head of the city's Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

Steve Heminger, executive director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, said the High-Speed Rail Authority didn't have much choice.

"If there's a better way to skin the cat, you sure want to find it," he said.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/23/BAMJ19QIMR.DTL>

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