

(text OCR'ed from original letter)

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Anna G. Eshoo
Fourteenth District
California

October 26, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

Thank you for your letter of October 25th addressing many of the concerns raised at the September 30th meeting between Department of Transportation officials and the Bay Area Congressional Delegation.

Thank you for your extraordinary level of participation and that of your office at the meeting and the opportunity to discuss openly our concerns about the future of the California High Speed Rail (HSR) project and its impact on the residents of the San Francisco Peninsula, as well as the Caltrain system, which is the vital transportation spine for our region.

It was particularly reassuring to read in your letter that "no final decision has been made regarding the design" of the Peninsula corridor and that your department "must approve any final alternative in order for it to receive Federal funds."

Given the issues, doubts, concerns and even suspicions raised by and about HSR, there could be no more critical statement from you to the communities that no alternatives have been chosen for this project on the Peninsula.

Frankly, until now, it has been difficult, if not impossible, for many of my constituents to believe that decisions have not been made that circumvent their concerns and the process by which those concerns must be addressed.

Your affirmative statement reinforces the absolute urgency that the Environmental Impact Report is done right: Completely, without bias and such that it examines all options - tunnel, trench, covered trench, at-grade and aerial - and provides a straightforward accounting of the pros and cons of each of these alternatives.

The federal government, as the funding agency, needs to ensure that the EIR can be trusted and that it moves forward in a manner that examines all alternatives.

Thank you for the announcement of the allocation of \$16 million in ARRA funds to the San Jose-to-San Francisco corridor, which also resolves our concerns about the corridor's eligibility for these funds.

This is an important signal that the Peninsula corridor is viable and has Federal support.

We look forward to further discussion about directing the \$16 million to a Positive Train Control project being advanced by Caltrain.

As you know, PTC, which, incidentally, is a federal mandate for all commuter rail systems, was among the projects our Bay Area delegation urged your Department to fund in our letter of May 26th.

As we noted at the time, PTC "will provide significant improvement to existing Caltrain commuter rail service and pave the way for HSR."

We recognize your concerns about ensuring that funds spent on the PTC project would advance the interests of HSR and we appreciate your desire to safeguard the public's dollars.

We can assure you that the PTC project is not a "throwaway" that would benefit only Caltrain and require replacement or costly upgrade when HSR is built. This is a solid project and it would provide a meaningful foundation for the essential signaling system that would serve HSR.

We are at a critical crossroads for the future of Caltrain and the California High Speed Rail project and the opportunity presented to all of us cannot be squandered,

That's why I'm so appreciative of your attention and the assignment of DOT resources to this issue.

We can rebuild public trust in this project and undertake the essential work of saving Caltrain. With your leadership, it is possible to see this project taking a turn for the better for the first time in months, if not years.

Most Gratefully,

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Enclosure

cc:

Members, Bay Area Delegation

California State Senator Joe Simitian

California State Assemblymember Paul Fong

California State Assemblymember Ira Ruskin

California State Assemblymember Jerry Hill

Mayors and Council Members of Cities located in the 14th CD

Members, San Mateo and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

San Mateo County Transit District

Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design

Silicon Valley Leadership Group

Bay Area Council

Community Coalition on High Speed Rail

Silicon Valley High-Speed Rail Coalition

Silicon Valley Bike Coalition

California Rail Foundation

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

Bay Rail Alliance