

Eco-Rapid Transit, formerly known as the Orangeline Development Authority, is a joint powers authority (JPA) created to pursue development of a transit system that moves as rapidly as possible, uses grade separation as appropriate, and is environmentally friendly and energy efficient. The system is designed to enhance and increase transportation options for riders of this region utilizing safe, advanced transit technology to expand economic growth that maximizes ridership in Southern California. The Authority is composed of the following public agencies:

City of Artesia

City of Bell

City of Bell Gardens

City of Cudahy

City of Downey

City of Glendale

City of Huntington Park

City of Maywood

City of Paramount

City of South Gate

Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena
Airport Authority

Chair

Karina Macias
Mayor
City of Huntington Park

Vice-Chair

Ali Sajjad Taj
Mayor
City of Artesia

Secretary

Sean Ashton
Councilmember
City of Downey

Treasurer

Vrej Agajanian
Council Member
City of Glendale

Internal Auditor

Jose R. Gonzalez
Mayor
City of Cudahy

Executive Director

Michael R. Kodama

General Counsel

Teresa L. Highsmith

Ex-Officio

William Rawlings
City Manager Representative

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Members of Eco-Rapid Transit Board of Directors

FROM: Michael Kodama, Executive Director

DATE: May 13, 2020

SUBJECT: SUPPORT AB 3213 (RIVAS) HIGH SPEED RAIL

Public comments on items on the agenda will be taken at the time the item is called and are limited to 3 minutes per speaker

ISSUE

Efforts by Assembly Speaker Rendon and Assembly member Friedman to expand the expenditure of CHSRA funds for transportation improvements throughout the State have gained support. A recently drafted bill AB3213 (Rivas D-Arleta) has passed the Assembly Transportation Committee and is working its way through the legislature (see attached). The Bill proposes to require CHSRA change their operational plan for the Caltrain system between Modesto and Bakersfield. The change would eliminate electrification of the right-of-way and utilize clean diesel/electric high speed locomotives for passenger service. The Bill requires that the cost savings be budgeted to fund transportation improvements in areas where people currently live and work.

The intent of AB 3213 is consistent with the prior position taken by the Eco-Rapid Transit Board and therefore staff believes deserves the Eco-Rapid Transit Board's support. Staff seeks your approval to support AB 3213 (Rivas) High Speed Rail.

BACKGROUND

In March 2020, Executive Director Michael Kodama discussed the California High Speed Rail Authority's (CHSRA) proposed 2020 Business Plan that directs future priorities and expenditures for CHSRA. Eco-Rapid Transit and others expressed their support of this effort (see attached article).

In an effort to prepare the Central Valley Region and improve the rail systems in the Southern California Metrolink and the Bay Area's commuter systems; as well as prepare for high speed rail; Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon's proposal of using \$5 billion dollars for those projects was discussed and endorsed during the public comments period of the latest CHSRA Board Meeting. This proposal began to gain support and the CHSRA Business Plan has been modified to support and finance transportation improvements in other parts of the State. The Eco-Rapid Transit Board directed the Executive Director to submit a letter to the CHSRA Board Chair supporting this initiative.

AB 3213 is consistent with the Eco-Rapid Transit Board's directive and requires CHSRA to make changes in the operational plan and direct the cost savings to fund transportation improvements statewide.



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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Discuss information presented and offer action items; and/or
2. Receive and file the item

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 3213

Introduced by Assembly Members Luz Rivas and Friedman

February 21, 2020

An act to amend Section 185030 of the Public Utilities Code, relating to high-speed rail.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 3213, as introduced, Luz Rivas. High-Speed Rail Authority: high-speed rail service: priorities.

Existing law establishes the High-Speed Rail Authority within the state government with various powers and duties related to developing and implementing high-speed passenger rail service. Existing law requires the authority to direct the development and implementation of intercity high-speed rail service that is fully integrated with specified forms of transit.

This bill would require the authority, in directing the development and implementation of intercity high-speed rail service, to prioritize projects based on specified criteria.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 185030 of the Public Utilities Code is
- 2 amended to read:
- 3 185030. (a) The authority shall direct the development and
- 4 implementation of intercity high-speed rail service that is fully
- 5 integrated with the state's existing intercity rail and bus network,

1 consisting of interlinked conventional and high-speed rail lines
2 and associated feeder buses. The intercity network in turn shall be
3 fully coordinated and connected with commuter rail lines and urban
4 rail transit lines developed by local agencies, as well as other transit
5 services, through the use of common station facilities whenever
6 possible.

7 *(b) In directing the development and implementation of intercity*
8 *high-speed rail service pursuant to subdivision (a), the authority*
9 *shall prioritize projects based on the following criteria:*

- 10 *(1) Providing the most overall benefit to the state.*
- 11 *(2) Increasing passenger rail ridership.*
- 12 *(3) Replacing automobile trips with passenger rail trips.*

Bullet train officials reveal ethics inquiry

Consultant is accused of retaliating against workers for raising negative information.

By Ralph Vartabedian

A California bullet train consultant facing allegations that its executives retaliated against employees for bringing forth negative information about the project has hired a law firm to independently investigate the matter.

The investigation was disclosed by the California High-Speed Rail Authority at a meeting of its board of directors Tuesday where it separately approved a plan to help fund the modernization of Los Angeles' Union Station.

The Times first reported the allegations about the Montreal firm, WSP, last month.

Brian Kelly, chief executive of the rail authority, said that WSP, which it calls its "rail delivery partner," hired the law firm to investigate allegations by former WSP employees quoted in The Times.

The Times story reported that Mark Styles, WSP's former senior supervisory scheduler for construction in the Central Valley, was ordered to withhold information that could be politically damaging to the project.

"I was told to shut up and not say anything," Styles said. "I was told I didn't understand the political arena the project was in. I told them I am not going to shut up. This is my job."

Styles left his job at WSP in November.

The project is also being investigated by the criminal division of the U.S. Department of Transportation's inspector general, The Times has learned. Former project officials told The Times that they were contacted by investigators from the agency's San Francisco office.

Styles said he was among those contacted. A former state engineer was contacted by the FBI as well. The FBI and a spokesperson for the inspector general declined to comment in recent months.

Styles' account of the project's dysfunctional corporate culture was corroborated by a dozen current and former officials who work on the bullet train. Two other former WSP executives, Todd Bilstein and Vera Lovejoy, told The Times that they too were discouraged from sharing bad news.

WSP officials rejected the allegations, saying that the firm prepares realistic and transparent reports on the projects it works on.

The investigation disclosure was made at Tuesday's board meeting in response to a question raised by board member Martha Escutia, a former state senator and now USC vice president for government relations.

Escutia said she raised the matter because it was important to protect the integrity of the project.

Kelly did not identify the law firm conducting the investigation, but Denise Turner Roth, a spokeswoman for WSP, said it had hired the San Francisco office of Fox Rothschild, a major U.S. law firm. She said WSP launched the investigation and informed the rail authority. A call to the firm's office was not returned.

Separately, the rail authority board voted Tuesday to approve a long-delayed plan to provide its \$423-million share of the cost of modernizing Union Station. The \$950-million project would replace "stub-in" tracks, which force trains to back up out of the station, with run-through tracks.

The plan would cut many minutes off current schedules with seven elevated platforms with the run-through tracks that would pass over a bridge across the 101 Freeway and then turn toward the Los Angeles River. The improvements would also increase passenger capacity at the station.

The investment is part of the rail project's so-called bookend investments into Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Bay Area is getting an even bigger investment with a plan to electrify the 50-mile Caltrain commuter system between San Jose and San Francisco.

In the public comment period of the meeting, several speakers came forward to endorse a proposal by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood), in which \$5 billion of funding allocated to the Central Valley construction would be spent instead to improve the Southern California Metrolink system and the Bay Area's commuter system.

Rendon said the investments would prepare the region for high-speed rail and in the meantime provide greater public value.

