

Question 7

Questionnaire for City Council Candidates 2009 Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN)

Terminology: "the City" refers to the government of the City of Palo Alto.

High Speed Rail (HSR): What is your position on HSR, including undergrounding? If HSR is built, should the City request a station? What should be the City's role?

[D] Tim Gray : www.vote4Gray.com/

I attended the "teach-in", walked the neighborhood advocating a "quiet" design, and have a lot at stake since I border the Cal Train corridor. It would be unconscionable to have an elevated track divide our town. We have held very strict zoning standards for ourselves since the beginning of time, and then have that all tossed away with one project would be beyond injurious. The principle of "Shared Community Benefit and Share Community Cost" must be applied. Sure, there are great benefits to the HSR, but to have the costs land so abruptly and disasterously on the neighborhoods, is just not acceptable.

[E] John Hackmann

There should be NO HUGE WALL for an elevated train in Palo Alto taking up vast amounts of our land and dividing our community.

High Speed Rail can be valuable to California. However, the most important route should first be built from Sacramento through San Jose to Los Angeles. Then we will learn how much it is used.

The proper role of the Peninsula route is to use the existing bullet CalTrain as the feeder to the High Speed Rail, so it can collect riders for the high-speed journey. Otherwise, the train has several stops on the Peninsula – in which case it would not be a high-speed train in that segment.

[F] [Karen Holman](http://karenholman.org) : karenholman.org

The project proposal by the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) to have the train elevated on a wall that would divide Palo Alto, require eminent domain, and create a number of environmental impacts is not tenable.

The concept of high speed rail is appealing and may come to pass in some fashion. But at this time, there are significant issues that have not been resolved. Some questions have not even been addressed. Among these issues are funding (only \$10billion was authorized by the voters toward a minimum \$40billion project), compatibility of passenger cars with freight, best design (cut and cover, trench, etc), best route, a real business plan, environmental analysis that includes impacts vs benefits , on and on.

I do not support a station in Palo Alto because of the scale of development that would have to be created to support the function.

The City's role should continue to be participation in the dialog with the Authority and other communities ensuring that proper analysis is done, and that the process is open and

transparent. The City should continue to hold public meetings to keep the community informed and to get public feedback.

[G] Larry Klein www.ReelectLarryKlein.com

I oppose the construction in Palo Alto of HSR above grade which would mean a “wall” somewhere between twenty and forty feet high running the length of our town from the Mountain View border to Menlo Park. A HSR in a tunnel through Palo Alto might be a great benefit to us but there is much research and study to be done before we fully understand the ramifications of this idea. A station in Palo Alto would have to be so large that its impacts would be unacceptable. I oppose this idea. Much is at stake for Palo Alto in the HSR decision making process and we will have to be vigilant in monitoring and lobbying not only the HSR Authority but also actions by the Legislature and even the Congress.

[H] Leon Leong : www.leonleong.com

I am opposed to the High Speed Rail and had voted against the bond issue on the 2008 ballot for the following reasons:

- 1) The required grade separation meant that there would be a 15 foot high platform running the length of the city would only divide the community
- 2) An above grade solution would create more noise pollution to the surrounding neighborhoods
- 3) The cost of a tunnel as a grade separation solution is prohibitively expensive
- 4) Any station would be similar to putting in an airport with all the related traffic congestion issues
- 5) The estimated cost \$40 billion should have been spent on local mass transit solutions – local commutes comprise the vast majority of the transit issues.

The city should actively oppose the HSR route through the peninsula.

[I] Corey Levens : www.electcoreylevens.com

The High Speed Rail project is potentially the most divisive and most important issue to face the Palo Alto community in a generation. No other issue or project will have as great an impact on the community in terms of land use and economic issues. It is essential, therefore, that the Palo Alto City Council speak with a united voice on this issue in order to have the greatest impact and influence with the HSR Authority. I believe that Palo Alto will also have to work closely with other communities, as it has done in some instances already, to have its concerns be heard and considered. Funding our own redundant, independent studies and filing meaningless friend of court briefs are a waste of valuable resources.

At present, it is impossible to make a judgment on HSR. There are simply too many variables and too many unknown issues. It seems to me, however, that the HSR route (Pacheco Pass vs. Altamont Pass), the impact of that route on Palo Alto, and the design of HSR in Palo Alto are at the heart of the issue for Palo Alto. Additionally, if the HSR route goes through Palo Alto, we must determine whether we want a station in Palo Alto or whether we prefer to watch as the trains zip through our City for stops in Redwood City or other locales. The City Council must be vigilant and forceful in making its position known and heard, otherwise, we run the risk of being steamrolled by Sacramento and others with vested interests.

In order for me to support HSR, several conditions will need to be satisfied. Most importantly, the dislocation of people and homes along the chosen route must be minimized at all costs. In

addition, it is absolutely unacceptable for HSR design to, in effect, divide the community by virtue of a huge, obtrusive, "wall" that bisects Palo Alto from one end to the other. This most likely means either tunneling through the City or elevating the tracks (as was shown in a creative design proposed by architects located in Palo Alto). Regardless, it is imperative that the design have the approval of the people of Palo Alto.

If an acceptable route and design for HSR is finally approved, I believe that the economic well-being of Palo Alto requires that there be a station in Palo Alto. HSR will be a symbol of the type of progress and innovation that Palo Alto, as the heart and soul of Silicon Valley, is known for throughout the world. To have HSR simply run through our community without stopping, and permit other communities to reap the rewards and benefits that a HSR station will bring, is unacceptable. Such a prospect will inevitably lead to a shift of economic power and influence to the communities where stations are located. Palo Alto is already losing businesses at an alarming rate. A HSR station will help reverse that flow and bring business, and sales tax revenues, back to Palo Alto.

[J] Gail Price

I am a proponent of High Speed Rail because I believe it will provide opportunities to coordinate and improve transit services by linking to other local and regional destinations. If eventually operating within a similar corridor, it will enable long needed electrification of Caltrain while reducing hazards by creating more grade separations along the alignment. These would be critical improvements for our community. .

A major issue for the community is the ultimate alignment design, system operations, and configuration of HSR through our community. I support the underground option (either tunnel or cut and cover or a combination) to reduce the impacts on the community (although there is some discussion that the undergrounding option may also have staging and eminent domain issues). My biggest concern is the costs and identifying the funding for it (all options) Comprehensive costs for HSR have not been fully developed.

From an economic development perspective, I think the city should request a strong multi-modal station in Palo Alto. Property designed it could be part of a new municipal center complex and would have a strong economic and business impacts for Palo Alto.

A successful high-speed rail would likely promote additional housing and commercial opportunities near transit centers, which would help, address our jobs: housing imbalance. The construction and implementation of the high-speed rail could also provide jobs to Palo Alto and its environs that would be a positive benefit. . If the major design and operations issues are done thoughtfully, it could be a tremendous opportunity for the City

We need to continue to be leaders and active partners in the Peninsula Cities Consortium (PCC) in order effectively protect and advocate for the outcomes that best suit our local needs but contribute to transit improvements for the region. We will have direct and constant contact with the High Speed Rail Authority, and our County and State elected officials. It is critical that we continue to be heavily involved throughout the CEQA process to have some influence on the process.

As an elected official, I will examine and study all related environmental reviews and operational and conceptual designs related to the project. The HSR needs to be consistent with the transportation and land use goals of our Comprehensive Plan, the VTA Regional Transportation Plan and the goals of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. This will be an opportunity to intensity creative and compact land uses and projects directly adjacent to the transit stops

along the route. The City of Palo Alto should examine alternative design options and land uses that will maximize the advantages of accessibility to transit, improved pedestrian options, and promote increased ridership of the HSR.

[K] [Greg Scharff](#) : ElectGregScharff.com

The City needs to use all available means to vigorously oppose any high-speed rail plan that will call for a 20-40 foot wall to be built through our neighborhoods, taking our resident's homes through eminent domain and dividing our city. I support undergrounding the train in Palo Alto through either a tunneling approach or a "cut and cover" approach so that it does not adversely affect our neighborhoods or our quality of life. It is critically important that this issue be handled in a manner that protects the character of our city. Once the high speed rail is built, it will be impossible to fix the impacts on our neighborhoods, our community and our quality of life. If high speed rail is built, it will be beneficial to California, but I will be a strong advocate for our community against this High Speed Rail Proposal. I have very strong concerns about traffic, parking and Palo Alto's ability to handle the significant impacts of having a High Speed Rail station. As an attorney, I am uniquely suited to advocate for Palo Alto's concerns.

[L] Nancy Shepherd: www.electNancyShepherd.com

The possibility of having modern transit is exciting and I support the California HSR plan. I do not support any transit design that would put HSR or CalTrain above ground on walls with towers—this would permanently change the character of Palo Alto. I am eager to hear and consider alternative ideas, any decision I make will be through the lens of what is best for Palo Alto as a city of neighborhoods.

Regarding the Palo Alto station request, I believe that this will be such a large project that it will generate too much traffic for our city streets. Since it would be connecting people from all across California, the station would need to be designed to handle large populations similar to an airport or mass transit hub—something that Palo Alto is not capable of accommodating. I believe that Redwood City would make a more convenient location for a HSR station.

The City's role in this state-wide initiative is to participate in the process, keep our residents informed, advocate for Palo Alto's interests and vigorously fight for the will of our citizens. This will mean that an engineer should be employed on the city's behalf to make an independent evaluation of EIR findings and interpret this for our residents. This will help separate the political rhetoric from good policy for Palo Alto.

[M] Brian Steen

Over the past year, I've worked daily with community leaders, agencies and elected representatives to assess High Speed Rail (HSR) feasibility. I believe that HSR, if done correctly, has the potential to create new transportation and housing connectivity.

Palo Alto can lead the way in exploring creative urban design and sustainable transportation solutions that support community and regional values.

[N] Mark Weiss

My statement in the voters pamphlet self-describes me as "for libraries, bikes, rail and community". (I take Caltrain when I can, for instance). Regarding High Speed Rail, I am not convinced we as a state community can do this right. Generally, however, I am for the progress

of our society from fossil fuel cars towards something more public. (It seems to work in France, or at least it works for Tom Cruise in “Mission Impossible”).

[A] [Dan Dykwel](http://www.dandykwel.com) : <http://www.dandykwel.com>

I do not support an elevated high speed rail system going through the middle of Palo Alto. An underground route would be most favorable in terms of safety, noise and preservation of properties along the route. There is an assumption that a station in Palo Alto would be a boon to business and make the city a transportation hub. I have not seen an economic analysis, if there is one, that makes a case for this assumption. It was just such assumptions about the value of high speed rail that has placed us in this difficult situation of trying to stop an elevated project. I think the City has the responsibility to get all the information available that would support or reject the value of an HSR station in Palo Alto and present it to the residents.

The official website of the California High Speed Rail Authority can be found at <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov>.

[B] Victor Frost: No response from candidate.

[C] Chris Gaither

For anyone who has travelled to or lived in Asia and Europe, the benefits of High Speed Rail are self evident. And for those who have travelled to or lived in the eastern states of the United States know the benefits of a public transportation system where the many different parts are connected to serve the greater good i.e. – subway systems that easily coordinate and connect to bus lines, or rail or ferry systems to get passengers and patrons from one city to the next, and often times to another nearby state.

Unfortunately, the HSR proposal before us was not presented in a truthful manner from the start. In many respects, we were bamboozled creating the current brouhaha! The potential situation that some home or property owners face with eminent domain if their land is needed for the tracks is not a matter to be taken lightly. People work hard and save a long time in order to purchase a house. For many people, the home they live in today is the home they plan to live in for the rest of their lives. A HSR system that threatens to impact even one home either through loss or devaluation due to proximity to the track is an emotionally devastating thought, and this could become reality if the HSR project is approved in its **current** format. Of course there are those who own homes who might want to relinquish ownership and be paid through an eminent domain process, but this is most likely a small number of folks.

I support efficient public transportation that not only gets us where we want to go quickly, but an overall public transportation system that is connected and coordinated with all the various modes of transportation. In the case of HSR, we have no evidence that a market study has been done to support that “if you build it, they will come” theory. We don’t have market study evidence reflecting that enough passengers will use the service to financially sustain this business model. Going back and forth from San Francisco to Los Angeles on HSR is not as attractive as being able to go from Los Angeles or San Francisco to a bordering state by HSR. Although, Disneyland is one of my favorite touristic sites, and I love to see the Giants beat the Dodgers in any stadium, I don’t see evidence where the market will support the HSR system.

I don’t support the current HSR plan, or an undergrounding plan as I don’t think a HSR system focusing in on these two end points as the main destinations will be financially successful. As a region, we cannot even make Caltrain financially successful. As a nation, we have failed Amtrak. To lose even one person’s house to such a plan is inhumane, and does not factor in the

human emotional suffrage. It is easy for people who don't own homes to say that those who do own these potentially affected homes are being too sensitive, and not thinking of the greater good.

If the HSR is approved, there should be a station in Palo Alto, as Palo Alto is an attractive touristic destination given Stanford University, the Stanford Shopping Center, and our very own new and improved Town and Country center. Furthermore, the city should remain involved, and very vocal if even one house is affected by the HSR as the city should be a center point to help the home or land owner negotiate the best deal. After all, the city council heavily promoted this HSR before the election last year, so they should be the first to advocate for any impacted landowning resident. And most importantly, why isn't the train red and white? Blue and gold, who thought of that ☺ !!
