



NAPA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY Board Agenda Letter

TO: NVTA Board of Directors
FROM: Kate Miller, Executive Director
REPORT BY: Danielle Schmitz, Director – Programs, Projects, and Planning
(707) 253-5968 / Email: dschmitz@nvta.ca.gov
SUBJECT: Approval of Letter of Support for the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) East-West Passenger Rail

RECOMMENDATION

That the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) Board approve sending a letter of support (Attachment 1) to the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) for the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) East-West Passenger Rail.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option #1: Send the letter in support of extending the rail system from Novato to Suisun via Napa County.

Option #2: Do not send a letter.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SMART staff provided a presentation at the May 15th NVTA Board meeting on the feasibility of passenger rail along the State Route (SR) 37 corridor which would traverse through south Napa County on its route from Novato to Suisun City. The east-west connection would service thousands of daily commuters from Sonoma and Napa counties to Marin and Solano for work. Currently, there is no transit along the SR 37 corridor and SMART would offer connections to the SMART north-south main-line, as well as Capitol Corridor/Amtrak and NVTA's Express Bus and Regional Routes 11, 11X, 21, and 29. SMART has requested a letter of support from the North Bay County Transportation

Agencies (CTAs) to advocate to the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) for continued support and resources needed to develop the east-west rail connection.

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Staff Report
2. Public Comments
3. Motion, Second, Discussion and Vote

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

STRATEGIC GOALS MET BY THIS PROPOSAL

Goal 1 – Serve the transportation needs of the entire community regardless of age, income, or ability

Goal 2 – Improve system safety in order to support all modes and serve all users

Goal 4 – Support Napa County's economic vitality

Goal 5 – Minimize the energy and other resources required to move people and goods

CEQA REQUIREMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

SR 37 is a 21-mile long corridor from Highway 101 in Marin County to Interstate 80 (I-80) in Solano County. It is recognized as the North Bay's most heavily used east/west highway serving commuters and visitors. The corridor is highly congested and travelers experience significant travel delay. The corridor is also impacted by uneven subsidence and intermittent storm-related flooding in several areas. Road closures on SR 37 result in traffic overflow on existing parallel corridors that are not equipped to handle it, causing economic loss and reduced opportunity for residents of the North Bay including disadvantaged residents who commute from Solano to Marin and Sonoma counties.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the four North Bay County Transportation Agencies (CTAs) funded a SR 37 Transportation and Sea Level Rise Corridor Improvement Plan in an effort to address congestion and sea level rise impacts on the corridor. The Corridor Plan set the groundwork for the Project Initiation Document (PID) which was completed in December 2018 and identified needed highway improvements. The North Bay transportation agencies are not only exploring highway infrastructure projects but investigating alternative modes of transportation such as transit. NVRTA led the Transit Feasibility Study which concluded bus transit is feasible,

but only after capital improvements are made such as the interim project that would add additional capacity on the highway between Mare Island and Sonoma Raceway. Any additional capacity would be a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) and/or toll lane which would provide incentives for commuters to carpool or take transit.

NVTA is supportive of the possibility of passenger rail and acknowledges it has the ability to address many of the congestion concerns currently plaguing the corridor.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Attachment: (1) SMART Letter of Support

July 17, 2019

David S. Kim
Secretary of California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) Passenger Rail – Novato to Suisun City

Dear Secretary Kim,

The Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) serves as the congestion management agency and public transportation provider for all jurisdictions in Napa County. In that capacity, NVTA shares the responsibility for overseeing the improvements along State Route 37 (SR 37) which connects the four North Bay Area counties of Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma. NVTA is writing this letter to seek CalSTA's continued support to extend Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) passenger rail service from Novato to Suisun Capitol Corridor, via Napa County. The SMART system parallels SR 37 and would fill the sorely needed transit alternative for this heavily traveled corridor.

SR 37 is a 21-mile long corridor from Highway 101 in Marin County to Interstate 80 (I-80) in Solano County. It is recognized as the North Bay's most heavily used east/west highway serving commuters and visitors. The corridor is highly congested and travelers suffer significant travel delay. The corridor is also impacted by uneven subsidence and intermittent storm-related flooding in several areas, which causes traffic overflow on existing parallel corridors that are not equipped to handle it, causing economic loss and reduced opportunity for residents of the North Bay including disadvantaged community residents who commute from Solano to Marin and Sonoma counties.

In addition to evaluating highway infrastructure improvements on SR 37, the transportation agencies are evaluating other modes of travel along the corridor to both relieve congestion and to address equity concerns. There is currently no transit that serves the corridor. NVTA was encouraged by the recent east-west passenger rail feasibility study that was completed by SMART and strongly supports further development to identify ridership feasibility and complete environmental and engineering work on the corridor. The SMART extension would connect to a number of express and regional bus services including NVTA's routes 11, 21, and 29 which serve the San Francisco Ferry, BART, and Capital Corridor. NVTA is hopeful the investment in alternative modes, such as passenger rail and micro transit, is one of the solutions to the congestion plaguing the SR 37 corridor.

NVTA strongly supports passenger rail along the SR 37 corridor and will continue to partner with SMART to bring passenger service east-west along the corridor, serving the residents and workers of Napa, Solano, Sonoma and Marin counties.

Please contact Kate Miller, NVTA Executive Director, at [\(707\)-259-8634](tel:(707)259-8634) or kmillier@nvta.ca.gov should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Chris Canning
NVTA Board Chair

cc: Farhad Mansourian, SMART
Suzanne Smith, Sonoma County Transportation Authority
Daryl Halls, Solano Transportation Authority
Dianne Steinhauser, Transportation Authority of Marin