



Mayor and City Council
City of San Mateo
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo CA 94403

April 13, 2005

Re: RAIL CORRIDOR TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN (Rail Corridor Plan)

Greetings Mayor Jan Epstein and City of San Mateo Council Members:

The Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club represents 20,000 members in its three county jurisdiction. Almost 900 of these members reside the City of San Mateo. We are delighted to write to you on the San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit Oriented Development Plan. It is our understanding that the San Mateo Rail Corridor Plan is a city plan for comprehensive land use planning in areas along the Caltrain line south of downtown San Mateo, which includes areas near the Hayward Park and Hillside train stations as well as the Bay Meadows race track. We understand that, while the Rail Corridor Plan includes the Bay Meadows area/site, it is not specific to it and is a general land-use plan for multiple areas/sites along the Caltrain line.

While the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter has not taken a position on the Rail Corridor Plan, the Plan is of interest to us because it represents an important opportunity to plan for sustainable mixed-use development on the Peninsula.

As you are aware, land-use decisions have a tremendous impact on community and environmental quality. Transit-oriented infill development, preferably mixed-use with residential serving commercial, provides an essential strategy for reducing sprawl and creating rich pedestrian-friendly communities. The jobs/housing imbalance throughout the Peninsula generates tremendous pressure for poor development in distant, often ecologically significant, areas. This, in turn, generates automobile traffic with its concurrent air and water quality degradation.

The proposed Rail Corridor plan appears to be a transit oriented, "smart-growth" development plan that makes efficient use of scarce developable land and to promote a higher density, in-fill development on land that is currently within an urbanized area. Indeed, a vast amount of the area is currently occupied with vast, asphalt, surface parking lots.

Last year the Chapter worked with Sierra Club California to endorse legislation designed to expedite transit oriented development along the Caltrain corridor throughout San Mateo County. We see the Rail Corridor plan as being consistent with this legislation.

Most importantly, a large portion of the Plan area is located adjacent to the Hillside Caltrain Station, the second most popular rail station in San Mateo County and one of only four so called Baby Bullet stops on the San Jose-San Francisco commuter train line, as well as the main line Sam Trans busses that run along El Camino Real. Equally important, much of the development planned in the Rail Corridor Plan area will be within easy walking

distance from the Hillsdale Shopping Center, meaning both trips to train, bus, and shopping can be more easily made on foot rather than by car.

We wish to encourage the City Council to support several specific elements of the Rail Corridor Plan motion that is now in front of you, as these are consistent with long-held Sierra Club policies to improve the urban quality of life.

1. Support the proposed Sustainable Development Policy.

The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the following policy: ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THAT INCLUDES USE OF GREEN BUILDING DESIGN PRACTICES THAT MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES AND PREVENT POLLUTION AND WASTE

2. Support the proposed Water Quality Protection Policy.

The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the following policy: INTEGRATE WATER QUALITY PROTECTION INTO STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS, STREET CROSS SECTIONS, PARKING FACILITIES, PLAZAS, AND OPEN SPACE

3. Support the recommended action on drinking water use reduction.

The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the following action: DIRECT CITY STAFF TO ACTIVELY EXPLORE MEASURES AVAILABLE TO THE CITY TO REDUCE WATER USE AND TO REPORT BACK TO THE CITY COUNCIL WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY ACTIONS.

4. Support for maximizing park space opportunities.

These steps will provide more efficient use of our valuable resources and provide for a more healthful and livable community.

We ask that we be kept informed of all public meetings on this project and we look forward to monitoring your planning process on the Bay Meadows Specific Plan. The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter expects to formally review the Bay Meadows Specific Plan in the next two months using our principles outlined in Sierra Club California's Urban Growth Management Policy Guidelines and our Chapter's Sustainable Land Use Standards for Residential Project Endorsement.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Melissa Hippard
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

cc: Karen Maki, chapter chair
Bill Allyaud, Sierra Club California, legislative director
The Honorable Gene Mullin, California State Assembly