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Ex Officio
JIM WUNDERMAN
President & CEO, Bay Area Council
*Nominee



July 29, 2010

Mayor Cathy Baylock and Councilmembers, City of Burlingame
Mayor Patrick Burt and Councilmembers, City of Palo Alto
Mayor Richard Cline and Councilmembers, City of Menlo Park
Mayor Kathy McKeithen and Councilmembers, Town of Atherton
Mayor Christine Wozniak and Councilmembers, City of Belmont

Dear Mayors Baylock, Burt, Cline, McKeithen, and Wozniak, and Councilmembers:

I am writing to you regarding your cities' and the Peninsula Cities Consortium's obstructionist policies towards California high speed rail and the grave danger that they pose for our state. As a former public official who served two San Francisco mayors, I have the greatest respect for the dedication, responsibility, and authority of local government leaders such as yourself, and it is with some regret that I critique your leadership. I have concluded, however, that there are much larger issues at stake and that it is appropriate and necessary that I convey to you the strongly held concern and recommendation of the Bay Area Council.

In characterizing your cities' policies as obstructionist and dangerous, I do not mean to impugn your motives, which I am entirely confident are only to best serve the interests of your local residents. Yet the fact remains that the policies and actions that your cities are pursuing are serving to obstruct and undermine a project that is quite literally of historic importance to the residents of the Bay Area and California. To say, as does your Peninsula Cities Consortium, that "high speed rail should be built right or not at all," and that cost analysis should play no role in determining alignment, is to say that the project need not, should not, and will not be built.

You are, I trust, as aware as anyone of the importance of high speed rail to the State of California and of the environmental, mobility, and urban revitalization benefits that it will bring. You may not, however, be entirely aware of the extent to which your cities' demands endanger the project and bolster the advocacy of the very small and very vocal minority of Californians who cannot be satisfied unless high speed rail, and Caltrain with it, is killed.

Let me point out to you the support that the Proposition 1A high speed rail bond measure enjoyed among your neighbors and constituents in the November, 2008 election. Statewide, it passed with 53 percent support. In San Mateo County it earned 61 percent approval and in Santa Clara County 60 percent support. Within the cities of your Peninsula Cities Consortium—the voters that you represent—Proposition 1A was embraced by 61 percent (46,023 yes - 29,242 no). Such

overwhelming public support from your citizens for high speed rail makes it appear extremely unlikely that they would want their city to be the one standing in the way of the project coming to fruition.

Respectfully, you may also under-appreciate the staggering toll of unemployment and economic distress on millions of California families of modest means. Though your communities, like other high-wealth communities in the state, have escaped the brunt of the Great Recession, 2.3 million unemployed Californians are not as fortunate. For these struggling Californians, \$4 billion of near-term high speed rail construction expenditure would be lifesaving.

There was, no doubt, a period in American history in which government infrastructure planners ran roughshod over the interests and welfare of residents and communities. Thankfully, this era is behind us, but it has been replaced by an era in which too many public officials believe that no project can or should be built unless there is universal approval of the public. Overwhelming public support with large and widespread public benefits are somehow offset by the vocal opposition of a single individual. In the case of high speed rail, a small handful of individuals in a small handful of neighborhoods in a small handful of communities raise a seemingly endless series of complaints and objections and threaten to halt the construction of a project of generational significance, and immediate economic survival, for this state and its residents.

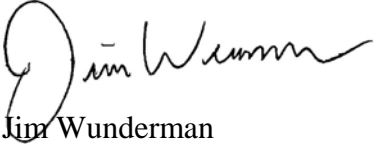
This is not why I went into public service, and I don't believe that it is why you went into public service. You likely were motivated, as was I, by the belief that public officials can be powerful and effective leaders to improve the public welfare. Public leadership, however, requires more than hearing and representing only the loudest voice in the room. It takes leaders who look to the future rather than the past, who throw their energy into making positive change happen rather than preserving the status quo, and who stand confidently in support of progress even when critics fling arrows. California once stood at the forefront of social progress—recognized as the nation's leader in higher education, research and development, environmental protection, and job creation—and deserved to be called the Golden State. Today, after decades of holding progress hostage to the unachievable ideal of “universal consensus,” the Golden State moniker is used only to show how far we have fallen.

This failure of leadership did not originate with the emergence of high speed rail, and it isn't limited to your cities. Far from it. But high speed rail is where the politics of paralysis must end. After decades of inaction, California is finally, with high speed rail, taking a step worthy of a Golden State. It is a first step and a crucial test of whether California can once again establish and execute a bold statewide vision for the general benefit of the state and its residents. If the answer is no—if Californians choose to remain bound by the politics of paralysis—then look for status quo trends to continue, with the tragic consequences that this entails for our schools, public facilities, economy, employment, livability, and, ultimately, the lives of the state's citizens. This is not the future that I want to see, and I doubt that it is the future that you want. And I deeply believe that in approving the Proposition 1A high speed rail bond, Californians were

sending a message that they too are ready for California to rebuild itself and restore the dream of the Golden State.

I urge you to step back and re-evaluate your cities' positions on high speed rail. Look again at the benefits—economic, environmental, urban revitalization, jobs, mobility—that high speed rail offers to the citizens of California. Watch *An Inconvenient Truth*. Visit with unemployed construction workers. Consider the need to restore the Golden State for our children. And ask yourself if you can in good conscience advocate that “not at all” is your position on high speed rail unless every demand of every member of your community is met in full.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Wunderman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" being more prominent than the last name "Wunderman".

Jim Wunderman
President and CEO

cc: Board of Supervisors, County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo
City Council, City of Belmont
City Council, City of Burlingame
City Council, City of Menlo Park
City Council, City of Palo Alto
City Council, Town of Atherton