

Claire W. Bogaard



28 August 2014

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RIGHT OF WAY

Brent L. Green
Chief, Division of Right of Way and Land Surveys
California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street – MS 37
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Sale of Caltrans SR-710 Properties
Draft Rules and Regulations

Dear Mr. Green:

As a member of the Steering Committee of the NO 710 Action Committee, I am writing to comment on the DRAFT Rules & Regulations regarding the sale of the Caltrans properties along the 710 right-of-way. These regulations, once adopted, will govern the release of almost 500 properties in the communities of Pasadena, South Pasadena and El Sereno (Los Angeles).

The NO 710 Action Committee has members from many communities, including Pasadena, South Pasadena, La Canada, Eagle Rock, Glendale, El Sereno and other neighboring cities. All of our members follow carefully the now 60 year-old proposed 710 Freeway. We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on these DRAFT Rules and Regulations, and we are united in our hope that the Caltrans properties will be sold in a fair, reasonable, and timely manner.

We understand that Caltrans will be reviewing the DRAFT Rules and Regulations soon in preparation for final adoption, and we respectfully offer the following comments and suggestions:

Greater Protection of Existing Caltrans Tenants

Greater emphasis should be given to the sale of the Caltrans properties to **existing Caltrans tenants** who have been renters in good standing for at least two years. Many tenants have lived in their homes for many years and some even for decades.

Their neighborhoods today are 'home' and many will see the Caltrans' sales program as a great opportunity to achieve a life-long dream of homeownership.

No existing tenants who qualify to purchase their home - either in the affordable or market-rate - should be forced to vacate their homes if they are financially qualified to purchase their property.

Adequate time must be provided to tenants to respond to the Caltrans' offer and to identify a lender and to go through the lengthy and complex process of completing the loan agreement.

We continue to support former Senator Roberti's dual goals of protecting affordable housing for current residents who qualify and for a return of the neighborhoods through private home-ownership. At the recent Public Hearing sponsored by Caltrans in Pasadena in July 2014, the Senator spoke most eloquently about those two goals of his legislation.

Careful Review and Supervision of Affordable Housing Organizations

We urge that the Rules & Regulations include a process whereby each of the cities works in cooperation with any private affordable housing groups that will be seeking ownership of Caltrans homes. The housing organizations must be experienced and must have completed other successful affordable housing projects that can be reviewed.

We would suggest that Caltrans seriously consider selling some of the vacant lands to the individual cities at reduced rates with the understanding that the land would be used in the future for affordable housing - low income, moderate low income - along with some market-rate.

Task Force to Assist with Sales

Each community - El Sereno, South Pasadena and Pasadena - is unique. Problems and challenges will differ in each of the three communities.

At earlier meetings sponsored by Caltrans, it was suggested that a separate Task Force be formed in each community to assist with problem solving related to the sales program. Persons selected to serve on a Task Force should represent the various stakeholders, such as current renters/buyers, City Councils or their designated representatives, and City Housing staff. The Task Force members will serve as a *liaison* between Caltrans and the communities.

Historic Preservation Issues

I urge that each Task Force include local and experienced historic preservationists from organizations, including Pasadena Heritage and Los Angeles Conservancy. It

would be important to seek assistance from the California State Office of Historic Preservation. The entire 710 Corridor includes historic properties and during the past 60 years, many properties have been declared eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Other properties have never been surveyed or not for many years and may now qualify for listing.

Once an updated historic survey of the properties in all three communities has been completed, Caltrans, the cities, and local historic preservation organizations should work in cooperation to create a sensible easement agreement, which will protect the historic resources in perpetuity.

Properties Maintained by Schools and Non-Profits

Along the 710 Corridor, there are a number of properties, which are under lease to schools and non-profits.

In my immediate neighborhood, such properties include:

Arlington Garden
The Storrier-Stearns Garden
Ronald McDonald House
Cottage Co-op Nursery School
Sequoyah School
Waverly Schools and Garden
Community Garden on Pasadena Avenue

These organizations, which lease their properties from Caltrans, provide valuable community services. Many of these properties have been leased for years and improved by the schools and non-profits – at their cost.

In disposing of these properties, I believe that Caltrans should recognize the non-profit status, the self-funded improvements and maintenance, and the significant community benefits provided. Caltrans needs to treat these properties in a different manner than other Caltrans properties and release the land and improvements to the schools and non-profits – at no cost or at the original purchase price paid by Caltrans.

There are additional properties, similarly situated and located along the 710 Corridor. All should be treated with special consideration by Caltrans for transfer to a school and/or non-profit on favorable terms.

Restoration of St. John Avenue and Pasadena Avenue

During the 1970s, Caltrans initiated a supposedly temporary traffic plan in Pasadena along St. John Avenue and Pasadena Avenue, which is often referred to as the 'wishbone'. At that time, concrete sidewalks were removed, parkways and their mature camphor trees were demolished, and streets were re-designed as one-way streets.

Now, 35 years later, the earlier existing neighborhood conditions need to be restored. Streets should be returned to their original two-way traffic. Concrete sidewalks, street parking, and landscaped parkways with camphor trees should be returned so that the neighborhood is made 'whole' again.

Use of Local Expertise: Realtors, Appraisers, and Lending Assistants

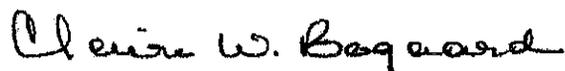
The sale of the 500 properties will be complicated and a challenge for all. I believe that Caltrans should engage experienced, professional real estate persons to assist with the sales. In each community, Caltrans should work in cooperation with local realtors who know the market well and have lists of buyers interested in purchasing properties within these cities.

The Rules & Regulations should re-consider the terms of the covenants. Fifteen years is a more acceptable term rather than 30 years.

It is my understanding that houses in South Pasadena and Pasadena sell very quickly these days and that the inventory is low. On the other hand, identifying lenders is often a time consuming challenge, and that part of each transaction may be very difficult, particularly for first time buyers. Caltrans should consider hiring an adequate number of trained and experienced staff to guide buyers, especially first-time buyers, through the borrowing process so that the sales will close in a reasonable period of time.

We sincerely appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Rules and Regulations. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Claire W. Bogaard

- cc. The Honorable Carol Liu, Senator, 25th District
- The Honorable Chris Holden, Assembly Member 41st District
- Carol Roland-Nawi, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Steve Madison, Councilman, City of Pasadena
- William J. Bogaard, Mayor, City of Pasadena
- Michael Beck, City Manager, City of Pasadena
- Susan Mossman, Pasadena Heritage
- Linda Dishman, Los Angeles Conservancy