

California Transportation Plan CTP 2040

Highgrove Metrolink station needed

Submitted by R. A. "Barney" Barnett April 7, 2015

Chmn.: Highgrove Municipal Advisory Council

Editor: Highgrove Happenings Newspaper

Location:

Highgrove is 7 rail miles from the San Bernardino railroad depot and 3.5 rail miles from the Riverside Metrolink station. Highgrove is on the BNSF main line and is also where the Perris Valley Line railroad track connects to the BNSF railroad track near Main Street. The 17.22 acres property at Highgrove is owned by the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the west side of RCTC's property is where the daily Metrolink trains have passed through Highgrove without stopping since July 15, 2006. Over 20,000 commuter trains have passed through Highgrove since daily Metrolink train service was implemented. This does not include previous 5 day a week commuter train service before July 15, 2006. 20,000 trains carry a lot of commuters and it is hard to understand why this location has been opposed by RCTC for over 13 years!

There are 3 BNSF main lines that go through Highgrove but the # 3 main line is the one used for Metrolink trains between San Bernardino and Riverside Counties and the # 3 main line is located right next to RCTC's vacant land.

On the east side of RCTC's property is a single track called the Perris Valley Line railroad track that will eventually get Metrolink trains when track upgrades to the Perris Valley Line are completed.

Comparing Metrolink Locations and destinations

The Marlborough Ave. property and the Highgrove property are only one mile apart and both are owned by the Riverside County Transportation Commission but they have different destinations. RCTC states that they only need 38% of the 17.22 acres of vacant land at Highgrove for a curved track to connect the Perris Valley Line railroad track to the BNSF main line. (See "Uneconomic Remnant" below). But the remaining 62% of RCTC's un-needed property is the same exact property that has been needed for a parking lot for over 13 years that is right next to Metrolink's **Inland Empire Orange County Line**.

We do not object to building a Metrolink station at Marlborough Ave. on the Perris Valley Line for commuters to travel between Perris and Riverside but a station is also needed at Highgrove because the Highgrove property will enable commuters to travel northward to the San Bernardino depot where there are additional Metrolink connections on the **San Bernardino Line** into Los Angeles. Also at Highgrove in the opposite direction, commuters would be able to travel southward to Oceanside where there are other "Coaster" commuter trains to San Diego.

Future Metrolink commuters at the Marlborough Ave. station will **not** be able to get to San Bernardino on commuter trains because all destinations will be within Riverside County between Riverside and Perris.

After Congressman Mark Takano came to Highgrove on Oct. 24, 2014 to see both locations and the vast amount of room for future development he stated: ***“The Highgrove location should be in addition to not instead of because both locations are needed!”***

Please read “Comparing Metrolink Station Choice” in the Dec. 2012 issue of the Highgrove Happenings Newspaper by going to: www.highgrovehappenings.net and clicking on “Latest Issue” (Dec. 2012)

Station Costs:

To see cost of the property at Highgrove and Marlborough Ave. and RCTC’s letter dated Aug. 24, 2009 about only charging 38% of the actual cost of the property to the Perris Valley Line, please visit www.highgrovehappenings.net and click on Station Costs.

RCTC’s “uneconomic remnant” is where a parking lot is needed for the Highgrove Metrolink station and RCTC already owns this property that they don’t need for the Perris Valley Line. So why not put their \$5,347,500 investment in excess property to good use by building a parking lot on their property at Highgrove? The cost to build the Marlborough Ave. Metrolink station is also listed.

Housing:

89 apartment units named the **Highgrove Blossom Apartments** have just been completed in Highgrove by the library. 1,000 applications were received for these 89 units and all of the apartments are now rented.

And the **Spring Mountain Ranch** housing development is currently under construction that will add 1,409 homes to Highgrove one mile east of the Highgrove Metrolink station location. Some new residents have already moved in. Also, Foremost Land Co. owns 3 other vacant properties in Highgrove that will accommodate 132 more homes, Bixby Land Co. owns 68 acres of vacant land right in the middle of Highgrove that has room for 220 homes and the 75 acres of vacant land formerly known as the Springbrook Estates has room for 650 more homes.

Uneconomic remnant:

Here is a copy of RCTC’s letter to the FTA on Aug.24, 2009. This is the same exact property needed for a Highgrove Metrolink parking lot.

The logo for the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) features the letters "RCTC" in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a dark, rounded rectangular shape. This shape is set against a dark, textured background that resembles a stylized mountain or a road surface. The logo is positioned in the upper left corner of the document.

Riverside County Transportation Commission

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August 24, 2009

Ms. Melanie Robertson
Transportation Program Specialist
Federal Transit Administration
201 Mission Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, CA 94105Subject: Perris Valley Line Project – Citrus Connection Real Estate Issue
Request for GuidanceDear Ms. *Melanie* Robertson:

On April 9, 2008, Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) adopted the current Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that is on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) line at Citrus Avenue. The Perris Valley Line (PVL) will operate primarily on track used as a freight line known as the San Jacinto Branch Line (SJBL). RCTC needs to acquire rights for additional railroad right of way to connect the SJBL to the BNSF line and to the Downtown Riverside Metrolink station.

The property that is the subject of this request for guidance is necessary for that connection (Citrus Connection) under the LPA and identified as Assessor Parcel Numbers 247-106-006, 247-112-002, and 247-150-011 and consolidated for development as a result of a city of Riverside approved Lot Line Adjustment. A copy of the Lot Line Adjustment is attached as Exhibit A. The property is fully entitled and is approximately 17.23 acres of vacant land. On July 30, 2009, a Request for Concurrence in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding 23 CFR 771.117(d)(12), was sent to Mr. Leslie T. Rogers for protective acquisition of land for the PVL project.

The portion of the property needed for the PVL project is approximately 6.6096 acres or 38% of the full parcel. A partial acquisition of the property is not feasible at this time for the following reasons: (a) Condition of Approval No. 23 on page 7 indicates that Villa Street may only be used as emergency access. A partial acquisition will leave the remainder of the property an uneconomic remnant. (A copy of Approval of Development Application by the city of Riverside Community Development Department is attached as Exhibit B); and (b) since this is an Advanced Acquisition for Protection, RCTC cannot exercise its power of eminent domain.

RCTC's intent is to make an offer to acquire the property and to use project funds to acquire the 6.6096 acres required to connect the SJBL to the BNSF line. The remaining 62% of the cost to acquire the property will be financed using RCTC Measure A funds (local funds) and held for RCTC's future use.

B.02.02.11.04.04

Ms. Melanie Robertson

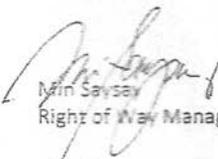
August 24, 2009

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RCTC is requesting FTA's guidance in its plan to charge only the cost of the 38% portion of the parcel to the PVL project. RCTC's request is predicated on controlling project costs and to remain below the \$250 million New Starts threshold. RCTC will secure an appraisal of the property if it receives a response from FTA in the next two weeks.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,



Min Sarsay
Right of Way Manager

Attachments

cc: Edda Rosso

Vacant Land:

There are 1,550 acres of vacant land in Highgrove that used to be citrus groves. This is where future growth will be due to its location and availability of vacant land.

Supporting Documents:

Please go to www.highgrovehappenings.net and click on “Supporting Docs” and “8 years of comments” to see the public support the Highgrove Metrolink station has received over the last 13 years. Click on each item under Supporting Docs to see the original document and look at the dates. These items do not include the previous verbal support presented to RCTC by members from both counties during the public comments periods at RCTC meetings.

Maps

Please look at the maps on our web site www.highgrovehappenings.net that show both Metrolink locations. The green location is where the people have supported a Metrolink station for over 13 years and the conceptual map shows how the Highgrove property could be used for a Metrolink parking lot if the existing commuter trains between the 2 counties would just stop long enough for passengers. The red location is where RCTC is currently building the Marlborough Ave. Metrolink station.

Complaints against RCTC

Please refer to : www.highgrovehappenings.net click on Metrolink then “RCTC’s inappropriate actions to prevent a Highgrove Metrolink station 2004 to 2010”.

HERE ARE THE FACTS:

The long term reasons for RCTC opposing a Highgrove Metrolink station have now been eliminated:

1. The Colton Flyover has been completed.
2. The new homes in Spring Mountain Ranch are now under construction.
3. The Perris Valley Line is under construction
4. RCTC admits in their letter dated Aug 24, 2009 that they do not need the excess property at Highgrove for the Perris Valley Line track.
5. A parking lot on RCTC’s excess property at Highgrove will not stop construction on the Perris Valley Line.
6. There have been daily Metrolink trains passing through Highgrove in each direction since July 15, 2006.
7. All that is need is a parking lot at Highgrove and for the existing daily trains to just stop momentarily for passengers.
8. No new track is needed on the west side of RCTC’s property because the BNSF railroad maintains their main line track where the existing Metrolink trains and freight trains operate.

9. No new equipment such as engines or cars is needed because the existing Metrolink trains are already on a timetable between San Bernardino County and Riverside County.

10. Commuters boarding future Metrolink trains at Marlborough Ave. will **not** be able to get to San Bernardino because all of the Perris Valley Line trains will go to Riverside or Perris but not to San Bernardino County.

11. Commuters boarding the existing Metrolink trains at Highgrove will be able to go in both directions to destinations in Riverside County and to San Bernardino.

12. Written resolutions from Grand Terrace and Loma Linda in San Bernardino County have supported the Highgrove Metrolink station since 2001 and 2002. See Supporting Docs on our web site: www.highgrovehappenings.net

13. Other civic organizations and personal testimonials from both counties can be seen on the same web site under Supporting Docs and 8 years of comments. 8 Years of comments was compiled over 5 years ago on Jan. 14, 2010.

14. According to the Riverside County EDA, even before the 1,409 new homes in Spring Mountain Ranch are added, in 2008 there were 33,000 residents within a 2 mile radius of the Highgrove Metrolink station.

15. The Highgrove Metrolink station is supported by Congressman Mark Takano, California State Senators Jeff Stone from Riverside County, and California State Senator Mike Morrell from San Bernardino County.

If all of the above statements are true (which they are), the real question is why does RCTC continue to oppose building a station at Highgrove when this transportation agency already has \$5,347,500.00 invested in vacant land they do not need? What else should this excess vacant land be used for if it is not used for a parking lot next to the track where there are daily Metrolink trains between the 2 counties? A parking lot at Highgrove is the most economical and logical investment that deserves our transportation tax dollars especially since it is already owned by the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

It is time for our Federal and State elected officials to start asking this County transportation agency some serious questions because Federal, State and Local transportation funds should be used for transportation projects that help reduce freeway congestion.

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