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## Peninsulans plan to bombard high-speed rail authority with letters, e-mails

By Mike Rosenberg  
San Mateo County Times

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Whether they're fired up or fuming mad about the high-speed rail project, residents around the Peninsula intend to bombard the state with letters and e-mails during what should be a critical stage in shaping the electric railroad.

Many people with a stake in the project are passing out templates and guides, reaching out to local leaders and hosting meetings to ensure as many people as possible submit their worries, fears and praises to the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

They say it is important because few have the time or expertise to address the technical issues in the complex, jargon-filled reports that run in excess of 100 pages, including a key document released last month and another to be unveiled Thursday.

A letter-writing campaign is picking up steam in San Mateo, where residents are passing out one-page templates that already include citations, figures and background. All residents have to do is sign their names and addresses, check boxes on topics that concern them, such as property-takings through eminent domain or noise and vibration, and send the form to the rail authority.

The Burlingame City Council, after being notified about the campaign, discussed Monday whether to join it or start one of its own. The council's high-speed rail subcommittee, which consists of Mayor Cathy Baylock and Vice Mayor Terry Nagel, expects to discuss the issue this week.

Another resident group on the Peninsula, Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Development, is pushing residents to use a more personal touch. Its members have posted a letter-writing guide including "quick tips" on its Web site and are hosting presentations for local chambers of commerce, school districts, the League of Women Voters and neighborhood groups, said Nadia Naik, one of four Palo Alto women who founded the group.

"It's not a simple template letter, because we feel like it's a very complex issue, and people need to dive into it," Naik said. "We're urging people to be specific as possible."

Another resident group, the Community Coalition on High-Speed Rail, has organized an environmental impact report workshop called "EIR 101" next week in Atherton, said member Russ Peterson. It has also sent postcards with advice on making comments.

It's a critical time for public comment, and the formal responses to the reports are perhaps the most efficient and official way residents can get involved.

The authority last month released a revised environmental report that, if approved, would again pick the Pacheco Pass through the Peninsula as the Bay Area route after a lawsuit led the authority to rescind and restudy its original decision. That

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comment period will expire April 26.

And on Thursday, the authority will release a report detailing potential track alignments along the Caltrain corridor and begin taking comment on it. State officials said they won't put a time limit on submitting those comments but want them soon.

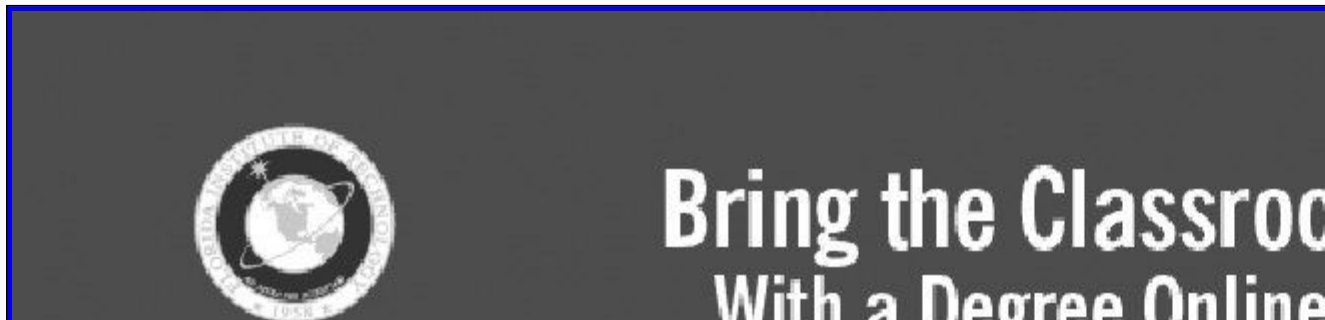
Under state environmental law, the rail authority must compile and address all unique comments it receives. Rail authority Deputy Director Jeff Barker noted the body has, when releasing reports, consistently gone beyond what the state requires for comment periods and public hearings, and it values the input it receives.

Those wanting to submit comments can send an e-mail to [comments@hsr.ca.gov](mailto:comments@hsr.ca.gov) or mail the rail authority at 925 L St., Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814. The rail authority board is also meeting in the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors chambers in San Jose at 9 a.m. Thursday and plans to schedule further outreach meetings in the coming months.

The Bay Area to Central Valley environmental report is posted at [cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://cahighspeedrail.ca.gov), and the route study, called the alternatives analysis, will be posted there Thursday.

Contact Mike Rosenberg at 650-348-4324.

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