

Sonoma County Alliance Position Paper on supporting the SMART ballot Measure

In order to maintain a healthy economy and a sound environment, Sonoma County needs to improve its transportation systems. The Sonoma County Alliance (SCA) has endorsed the concept of a multi-modal transportation plan of the Sonoma/Marin Multi-Modal Transportation and Land Use Study (Calthorpe Study) that was completed in 1997.

The need for a diverse, multi-modal improved transportation system within Sonoma and Marin counties is evident with the growing congestion, travel times and delays experienced on Highway 101. Even with the future addition of a third lane to Highway 101, there will be future capacity constraints and the need to provide an alternative to the use of Highway 101.

The November, 2006 election will contain a ballot measure to fund the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART). The project is to provide passenger train service to Sonoma and Marin County residents along 70 miles of the Northwestern Pacific rail corridor that parallels Highway 101. Also included in the project is the construction of a class one bicycle/pedestrian pathway parallel to the railroad and 14 rail stations. The ballot measure seeks a 20-year, ¼ cent sales tax to assist with the funding of the project.

The Sonoma County Alliance is supporting the SMART ballot measure for the following reasons:

- The SMART train should contribute to the reduction of traffic delays that we are, and will continue to experience
- SMART will provide an alternative transportation option to automobile travel in the Highway 101 corridor with links to bus and bicycle access
- Having permanent train stations will attract development near the train stations, thus reducing traffic as a result of the county's future planned growth
- Efficient, affordable and rapid commute by train between employment centers in Marin and Sonoma Counties will be a stimulus to further economic growth, especially for the biotechnology, software, telecommunications industries and destination travel
- The improved rail system would provide the potential for freight service which can provide revenue for the systems operation and provide the business communities the ability to import and export product or raw materials.

SMART is an important component of a multi-modal transportation solution to our transportation requirements. The Sonoma County Alliance believes that multi-modal transportation options gives us an important community benefit in having an alternative, other than Highway 101, for our transportation needs and requirements for the future.