

Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SUNLAND TUJUNGA

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October 22, 2015

Angles National Forest
Attn: George Farra
701 N. Santa Anita Ave.
Arcadia, CA 91006

SUBJECT: HSRA GI

Dear Mr. Farra:

Thank you for requesting input from stakeholders regarding HSRA GI. The Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council (STNC) greatly appreciates being able to participate and encourage the stakeholders of the Sunland-Tujunga community to participate as well. The STNC is the elected board representing the Sunland-Tujunga Community. The STNC was Certified by the City of Los Angeles in 2003 and is one of 96 Certified Neighborhood Councils in the City of Los Angeles. We share our concerns regarding HSRA GI with our neighbor Neighborhood Councils: Foothill Trails District, Sun Valley Area, Pacoima, Mission Hills and Sylmar.

We ask that the Angeles National Forest Service to please protect our Communities, Big Tujunga Wash, Water Supplies and National Forest!

The STNC opposes all proposed high speed rail route alternatives – E1, E2, E3 and SR14 – due to the damage they would create to our residents, neighboring communities, wildlife and sensitive environmental areas. We are opposed to tunneling through the Angeles National Forest. As such, we are concerned about any destruction to our Angeles National Forest. Should a Geophysical/Geotechnical investigation (GI) occur, we submit the following comments:

The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is planning to study groundwater, earthquake factors and tunneling issues in Angeles National Forest, which is our part of the "Rim of the Valley" and they have submitted highly technical "geophysical and geotechnical investigations" (referred to as "GI" plans). We support a study, if it does not negatively affect our protected wildlife, but, we oppose this poorly prepared plan. The United States Forest Service (USFS) should deny CHSRA's request for a Special Use Permit to conduct these studies without significant improvements.

STNC supports the Save Angeles Forest for Everyone's (S.A.F.E). For detailed comments visit: http://www.dontrailroad.us/wp/downloads/Letter-to-USFS_10-19-15_withAttachments.pdf;

As S.A.F.E as stated, "Our community wants CHSRA studies to be done correctly. All water resources, wildlife, equestrian and natural resources must be protected through careful management by our Angeles National Forest staff. The "scars" of the testing will be visible in our Forest forever. CHSRA, which has never built anything, is taking on the largest proposed infrastructure project in the country and we are concerned about their qualifications. They must be open and transparent and be inclusive of outside expertise and involvement. Our Forest and our residents deserve their best efforts and we will hold CHSRA to the highest standard to meet or exceed that standard or we will oppose these studies and all future operations."

Thank you for being the most proactive government agency to date relative to high speed rail. Your review of the CHSRA GI plans to date has been thorough and transparent.

Note that CHSRA did not provide USFS with a complete list of persons who had previously submitted comments on the high speed rail project. And many people were not made aware of the USFS Comment period. CHSRA must provide full stakeholder information to the USFS and the comment period must be extended at least 30 days to allow our communities time to study the plans and submit comments. We request that testing be postponed until a third party review is in place.

Also, CHSRA has not followed through on discussions with community and elected leaders to create an independent, third-party peer review team (ITP) to guard against CHSRA cutting corners to meet funding and timeline constraints. CHSRA needs to do the job right. Without professional input and feedback on highly technical issues they will not be doing the job right. CHSRA has NEVER built a high speed rail system anywhere in the world and lacks experience to do the job alone. The GI testing should be delayed until the ITP is in place, properly briefed and able to provide input.

We also need CHSRA to pay USFS for strong oversight and monitoring to assure compliance because their track record is lacking. Their ability to conduct the GI testing without a strong combination of an independent, third-party peer review process and strong USFS monitoring and oversight is highly questionable. The USFS is busy already protecting our public lands and open space. The USFS should not be diverted from its primary activities. Wherever the USFS needs to deploy resources related to the CHSRA project and tests, the USFS should be properly compensated.

We need the USFS to be extremely vigilant on high speed rail and the Special Use Permits as local elected officials are not being proactive, passing the buck and say it is in "the National Forest and is not in my District." As community leaders we hear this often when emergencies occur whether it be the Station Fire or heavy rains and flooding and the impacted community is left scrambling for assistance.

CHSRA's plans do not give adequate detail about how to safeguard local water wells and supplies from the planned drilling and testing activities. We need more information about chemicals being used in the drilling that will come in contact with the water table. Water monitoring and testing must be done upstream and downstream from test sites before, during and after drilling to ensure local water supplies and environmentally sensitive areas are not damaged by CHSRA drilling activities. In addition, due to the severe drought and local water use restrictions, CHSRA must not use local, precious City of LA potable water supplies for drilling or dust suppression. As a State project, they must use State supplied water.

No heavy equipment or highly intrusive drilling activities should occur during the height of the fire season or on/near "red flag" days in the Angeles National Forest. They must also provide specific plans and funding contingencies for weather, earthquake and for emergencies as well as provide information regarding procedures in the event of a disaster such as fire, floods, etc. There must be collaboration and communication. Our community abuts multi jurisdictions; there must be collaboration and communication with the community and it must be active and accurate.

CHSR must also prove that they are adequately insured and the USFS must monitor their accounts. Due to the complexity of changing seasons, CHSRA's plan to just do testing at one point in time is insufficient. A yearlong baseline study ought to be conducted, with regular testing thereafter. Because of the current drought and suspected coming El Nino condition, this would be a good year to conduct a baseline study.

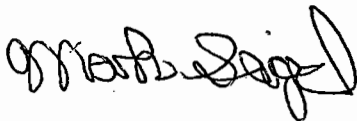
CHSRA also needs to identify how routine equestrian, hiking, biking, camping, hang gliding and other activities and participants will be protected from truck traffic, noise, vibration and other testing-related impacts as well as the impacts on the surrounding residents and nearby community and its businesses. More detail is needed about how drilling information (time, location, noise levels, road closures, flagmen, etc.) will be made public (a website and emails to community leaders and local press are recommended). Sunland-Tujunga is an active community and accurate communications are a critical.

CHSRA should start with the deepest core drilling first to gain experience and to focus on doing the initial, deepest and most complicated test first. Then, once that test is completed, and after results are reviewed by the independent, third-party peer review panel to their satisfaction, then subsequent GI work would continue on a one-by-one basis. Also, CHSRA's plans do not specify the number of trucks, the times where truck traffic will be worst and the types of trucks/fuel being used. This is another critical communication area that the Sunland-Tujunga and surrounding communities will be monitoring. Our roads are narrow and old.

We appreciate that the USFS has provided us a an "early warning notice of CHRS's intentions and we are sure that you will look out after the interest of our community by protecting **our National Forest and our precious natural resources for everyone.**

In closing, the invites and encourages the USFS to attend our STNC meetings regularly and to stay in contact with the STNC leadership. Please keep us informed with updates on this application as you progress. Please contact us if we can be helpful in any way

Sincerely,



Mark Seigel
President
Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council