



April 13, 2014

CA State Parks and Recreation Commission
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Re: South Land Park Neighborhood Association OPPOSED to Old Sacramento General Plan/EIR (OSSHP)

Dear Commissioners:

This letter serves as notification that the South Land Park Neighborhood Association convened its annual meeting on March 26, 2014 and took a formal vote on the Old Sacramento Historic State Park (OSSHP) General Plan and Environmental Impact Report. Over 100 residents attended the meeting and **by a unanimous vote, SLPNA voted to OPPOSE the OSSHP General Plan and EIR.** Specifically, residents were primarily concerned with the four mile long proposed maintenance spur that would cut through several neighborhoods within our association boundaries. Some of the concerns raised by association members and residents are listed below:

- 1) **INADEQUATE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES.** No in-depth environmental studies have been completed on the neighborhoods in the area of the maintenance rail line.
- 2) **TRAIN VIBRATION.** Homeowners are concerned about effects of ground vibrations on home foundations near the tracks. Many homes and pools are within 15-50 feet of the tracks. One homeowner measured 42 feet to his bedroom. The EIR studied vibration only at 50 feet from tracks near the Zoo and not in our neighborhoods.
- 3) **PRIVACY.** Loss of privacy due to trains running directly next to homes.
- 4) **CLEAR CUTTING/TREE REMOVAL/M.O.W. work.** Loss of trees and shrubs, loss of the quiet trail aspect of the unused rail line that has become a greenbelt. Year-round "maintenance of way" operations on the train line will disrupt the community.

- 5) **NOISE.** Engine noise, wheel and track noise, and braking noise will destroy our community characteristics. Train horn blasts of over 100 decibels throughout our quiet neighborhood streets, plus noise from crossing arms with bells, are inconsistent with our train-free environment. Parks cannot put a firm number on how often train movements and MOW work would occur on the “maintenance line.”
- 6) **HERBICIDE USE.** Use of herbicides for vegetation control is worrisome to homeowners that abut the tracks. Residents are particularly concerned about the presence of small children, pets, pools, and gardens next to the “maintenance of way” operations.
- 7) **FREQUENCY OF TRAINS MISREPRESENTED.** The EIR states that trains mostly run on summer weekends, but that is factually false. The RR Museum rents charter trains on weekday nights, even in the Fall. This means that the EIR underestimates sensitive receptor exposure to the project’s negative effects, like noise, pollution, traffic, etc. This oversight alone undermines the entire EIR.
- 8) **FISCAL CONCERNS.** State Parks has over a billion dollars in deferred maintenance costs. Many Parks are on the verge of closing. Each rail crossing costs \$400,000 per Cal Trans estimates. Voters cannot understand why State Parks would spend considerable resources on planning and building this tourist train, while the Department can barely keep the current state parks open and fully maintained.
- 9) **OWNERSHIP OF RIGHT OF WAY.** State Parks does not own the right of way.
- 10) **AIR POLLUTION.** Many people are concerned about the air quality, especially for the elderly and asthmatic children that live adjacent to the right of way. The heavy smoke emitted from the trains, in addition to the dust and rock ballast equipment next to their homes, can be a health hazard. The Sutterville Preschool playground is adjacent the right of way.
- 11) **PUBLIC USE OF RIGHT OF WAY.** This right-of-way has been out of use by railroads for over 40 years. It has a long established public use: as a greenbelt and trail. This General Plan would infringe on the neighborhood use of its train-free greenbelt.
- 12) **INCONSISTENT WITH OLD SACRAMENTO MISSION.** Old Sacramento honors the region’s 19th century history. The rail line is not a historic line, and had no role in the Gold Rush history of Sacramento. The railway operated briefly as a minor agricultural spur in the 20th century (1907 through the 1960’s).
- 13) **CONFLICT WITH AIRPORT LAND USE PLAN.** The EIR acknowledges that trains are prohibited from traveling through the landing zones of the Executive Airport. The smoke, glare, and flashing lights that are associated with train traffic can cause pilot error. No solutions to this dangerous issue are offered in the EIR.
- 14) **PROPERTY VALUES.** Property values will suffer throughout the entire neighborhood as comparable sales prices are pushed downward. One realtor estimated a loss of \$25,000 per home near the right-of-way, and a multiplier effect for over a mile away from the

proposed rail line. This loss of property values could occur immediately when Parks adopts the General Plan, because this expansion of rail service will have to be disclosed on real estate transactions.

15) **REVENUE LOSS TO COUNTY.** As homes are reassessed, the loss of home values cited above (#14) would lead to a significant drop in property tax revenues to the County of Sacramento.

16) **LESS INTRUSIVE OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE.** Parks can operate "Line #2" (southern excursion train route from Pocket Road to Hood) without using the rail lines in our neighborhoods. A small maintenance facility could be built in Hood, or a route can be explored along the river levees or over a bridge into the more rural Yolo County.

Until the above issues are remedied, SLPNA is opposed to the Old Sacramento General Plan and EIR. We encourage the Commission to have the State Parks and Recreation Department reassess the General Plan and EIR for a nonintrusive alternative to the South Land Park neighborhoods. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this letter via email slpna@slpna.org.

Sincerely,



Mike Ellison
President, SLPNA

cc: Senator Darrell Steinberg
Assembly Member Richard Pan
Hon. John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources