

The Death Knell of High Speed Rail

Assemblyman Jim Patterson, Fox and Hounds Daily, 3-1-16

It may take several years before the Rail Authority and its zealous apologists are awakened from their build-it-at-all-cost fantasy. Until then, rail bosses will continue trying to distract the media, the public and politicians with happy-talk and lack luster progress reports. But with the recent realization that there are now no legitimate plans to get the train over the Tehachapi Mountain Range into southern California, the project that was approved by the voters is all but dead.

The High Speed Rail Authority's newly released "Draft 2016 Business Plan" is not only a tacit admission that they cannot build the entire project on time and on budget, it is the beginning of the end of what the Bakersfield California says can now officially be called a Train to Nowhere. Evidence of the growing public distrust and skepticism is now so clear that even the Oakland Tribune and the San Jose Mercury News are speaking out against the project, even though the new plans supposedly benefit their readers.

The 2016 business plan is really a fictional tale written to distract and misinform the public. In an attempt to lay as much track as soon as possible, the new plan drops the Tehachapi Mountain route to Southern California and will instead strand tech savvy train riders from the Silicon Valley in what is now a rural Shafter orchard. The train won't go any farther than that until they can squeeze \$2 billion more out of the federal government which means the myth of tunneling through the Tehachapi Mountains is all but dead. The new plans don't even give a cost estimate for that part of the route, which is a death knell to be sure.

The fact is that the funds don't – and likely never will – exist to complete the project voters approved. When the federal funds dry up and savvy investors again decline to pitch in as Bloomberg Financial reported they did in 2015, this story will finally be over. The Rail Authority will try to project a happy ending with ribbon cuttings and celebrations for the upgraded Bay Area and LA transit routes but we will all know the real story.

In the end, we will have spent billions but won't have anything worthwhile to show for it. Yet, as we've come to expect, the Rail Authority will applaud itself for mediocrity and call it a job well done.