



THE CITY OF  
**NOVATO**  
CALIFORNIA

75 Rowland Way #200  
Novato, CA 94945-5054  
415/899-8900  
FAX 415/899-8213  
www.ci.novato.ca.us

Mayor  
Jeanne MacLeamy  
Mayor Pro Tem  
Pat Eklund  
Councilmembers  
Carole Dillon-Knutson  
Ernie Gray  
Jim Leland

City Manager  
Daniel E. Keen

June 20, 2007

Chairman Al Boro &  
Members of the Board of Directors  
Sonoma-Marín Rail Transit Authority  
4040 Civic Center Drive, Suite 200  
San Rafael, California 94903

Dear Chairman Boro:

At the direction of the Novato City Council, I am writing this letter to you to request that your agency prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the SMART project, based upon new information concerning the North Coast Railroad Authority's (NCRA's) plans for freight operations.

The City of Novato has recently become aware of information provided by NCRA which estimates a dramatic increase in the volume of freight traffic over portions of the SMART-owned railroad tracks, including that segment in the City of Novato up to the Highway 37 Wye. This information suggests that, in contrast to the 6 freight trains per week originally analyzed in the June 2006 Final EIR, NCRA now projects as many as 32 trains per week, a greater than 500 percent increase in freight volume. Further, the City has learned that the length of the freight trains may be much longer than originally anticipated, increasing to as many as 60 cars in length.

The City of Novato is extremely concerned about the potentially significant and detrimental environmental impacts of this higher freight volume on our community. It can easily be anticipated that these trains will create a wide range of impacts never contemplated in the Final EIR, including greater noise and vibration, disruption of local traffic circulation, disruption of emergency service provider access to areas of the City, and exposure of residents to potentially toxic and hazardous substances. In addition, the cumulative impacts of this freight traffic when combined with the SMART project raises numerous questions about how the two operations will coexist. For example, will freight trains be forced to operate primarily during evening hours to avoid disruption of SMART's operations, and how will this nighttime freight traffic affect the numerous residents residing near the tracks?

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 15162(a)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Article 11), the City of Novato respectfully requests that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report be prepared, analyzing the environmental impacts of this new information, prior to a decision to place the SMART project before the voters in 2008.

Respectfully,

Daniel E. Keen, AICP  
City Manager

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