



South Land Park

Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 22903 Sacramento, CA 95822

February 11, 2015

Editor,
Sacramento Bee

Re: Letter to the Editor

Rebuttal to *Let's Take the Train* editorial

Dear Editor:

The editorial by Rob Turner in the January 31, 2015 Forum section entitled, *Let's Take the Train- All the Way to the Zoo*, was disappointing, inaccurate, and frankly offensive to residents of South Land Park. The piece contains several serious misstatements and omissions of fact.

First, Mr. Turner claims that the plan to extend tourist trains from Old Sacramento to Hood was “derailed” and “shelved” last year by “NIMBYism.” In fact, the Zoo extension was approved, and the Pocket Road to Hood train route was approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Moreover, the South Land Park Neighborhood Association did not oppose the Hood or Zoo train lines. We opposed only a third “maintenance line” connecting the Zoo to Pocket Road. We proposed instead that State Parks should build a small train maintenance facility south of the city, rather than using our cherished neighborhood greenbelt.

Second, the article fails to mention that the State Parks environmental report overlooked the entire South Land Park section of the city. Your readers should take a look at Google maps to see how close these heavy locomotives would travel: within a few feet of a preschool playground; within several feet of bedrooms, parks, pools, and schools; and on quiet streets that haven't seen a train on the tracks in two generations.

Third, the article cavalierly assumes the old train tracks in South Land Park are usable. This minor rail spur was briefly active in the 20th century and was abandoned two generations ago. The rails have been paved over and removed in many sections, ties have disintegrated, and nature has reclaimed much of the land, creating a neighborhood greenbelt. Much of the old rail line is now used for nature walks and jogging. The environmental and financial cost of clear cutting our neighborhood greenbelt, installing crossing arms and bells, and introducing heavy locomotives with 110 decibel train horn blasts within a few feet of homes, schools, parks, and pools is unacceptable.

Fourth, we do not appreciate the tone of the article implying that we are somehow standing in the way of progress, tourism, or Mary Healy's vision. SLPNA Board members personally met with Mary Healy last year

and assured her that we were neutral on the rail expansion to the Zoo. Let us be clear: the section from the Zoo to Pocket Road is the objectionable portion.

Lastly, Mr. Turner strangely invokes Walt Disney's name in his argument to run tourist trains in South Land Park. Our neighborhood unequivocally rejects a rumbling, smoke belching Matterhorn next to our homes. Sacramentans should be smart about growth. We prefer the abandoned land to be used for a neighborhood greenbelt and trail, not for a toxic tourist train. Homeowners, area students, and the City have already begun partnering on such a community endeavor. Our community trail plan is truly "smart growth" and definitely not NIMBYism.

Furthermore, your readers should know SLPNA only got involved after state planners failed to adequately notify residents along the rail corridor during the planning phase. We applaud Senator Darrell Steinberg for formally requesting in 2014 that State Parks talk to residents before adopting the plan. We also appreciate that City Council Member Jay Schenirer voiced consistent opposition to the South Land Park rail extension. These leaders helped us dodge this toxic train.

Sincerely,
Board of Directors,
South Land Park Neighborhood Association

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