

Application 06-12-005 *et al.*

Exhibit \_\_\_\_\_

Date: August \_\_\_\_, 2008

**PREPARED TESTIMONY  
OF  
CAMERON BEACH**

**Q. Please state your name, professional position, and business address.**

A. My name is Cameron Beach. I am the principal of Beach Consulting, my personal transportation consulting practice. My business address is 359 Wawona Street, San Francisco, CA 94127.

**Q. Please describe your educational background and your professional qualifications and relevant employment history.**

A. From 1991 through 2006 I served as Chief Operating Officer for the Sacramento Regional Transit District (“SRTD”). As head of the Operations Division for SRTD, I was responsible for the overall operational management of the District’s bus, Neighborhood Ride, and light rail transit (“LRT”) systems, including the transportation and maintenance functions for each of these operating systems. In directing the Operations Division, I also was responsible for Police Services, Fare Inspection, and Security, including sworn and non-sworn personnel.

From 1983 to 1991, I served as Light Rail Manager for SRTD, with responsibilities including coordination and start-up of the District’s first 18.3 mile light rail system. My specific duties included creation of an operating plan, design review

and inspection of system components, regulatory coordination, and public safety.

During my 23 year career with SRTD, I chaired or participated in more than ten “peer reviews” of LRT systems planned and operating across the nation.

My 44-year career in transportation has included employment with a Class One railroad, a private bus charter and leasing firm, and an airline. I have started up and managed local, suburban, and intercity bus services, as well as LRT and heritage streetcar operations.

In addition to my work with SRTD, I have served since March 2007 as a Member of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (“SFMTA”), which is responsible for managing San Francisco’s Municipal Railway and its Department of Parking and Traffic. During my tenure with SFMTA, the agency has been engaged in a system-wide performance review scheduled for completion in the fall of 2008.

I also have served in recent years as Chair of California Operation Lifesaver, a nationally recognized railroad grade crossing safety organization, and as Chair of the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, a member of the Board of Directors of Market Street Railway, and a Board member for the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee. I also have chaired the Light Rail Committee of the American Public Transportation Association (“APTA”) and have served as Vice Chair of APTA’s Committee on Public Safety and as a Member of the APTA Alternate Fuels Committee, APTA Heritage Streetcar Subcommittee, and APTA Light Rail Transit Technical Forum.

I attended Golden Gate University, in San Francisco, for both undergraduate and graduate level courses in transportation.

**Q. On whose behalf are you providing the present testimony?**

A. I am providing this testimony on behalf of Expo Authority.

**Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

A. I have been asked by Expo Authority to provide my perspective, based on well over 20 years of active participation in the planning and operation of light rail transit (“LRT”) systems in California, on the role that light rail can and should play in helping to address and ameliorate the serious transportation problems facing the urban communities of California, such as the west side of Los Angeles County.

**Q. Please provide your perspective on the role of light rail transit in addressing local transportation problems.**

A. As I have indicated, my professional experience is primarily with the transportation systems of the Sacramento and San Francisco metropolitan areas. Public opinion polls in recent years have indicated that transportation problems – primarily traffic congestion – are consistently among the public issues of greatest concern to residents of the San Francisco Bay Area, and they also are of great concern to Sacramento area residents. If anything, the transportation problems experienced by residents of the west side of Los Angeles County are even more severe than those in northern California. As other witnesses for Expo Authority will testify, the Expo Rail LRT system is an important step toward addressing those problems.

**Q. What is the role of light rail transit in meeting the public transit needs of developed urban communities such as the west side of Los Angeles County?**

A. Many of our nation's largest urban communities, especially in the West and Southwest, saw their most rapid growth in the latter half of the 20th century, when city planning and transportation planning relied on the automobile as the primary mode of transportation and residential, commercial, and industrial areas were developed consistently with that model. Many urban rail systems were curtailed or abandoned during those years, replaced in most cases by passenger bus systems.

Recent decades have seen a resurgence of interest and support for passenger rail systems in urban areas, especially light rail systems. In many situations light rail presents a viable alternative for commuters, more comfortable and often speedier than buses and so more likely to persuade drivers to leave their cars at home, thereby relieving traffic congestion on busy streets.

Because it can operate in mixed traffic settings, light rail can be a very practical alternative – less costly than heavy rail systems that require exclusive rights of way and more closely integrated into urban communities. Another advantage of LRT systems is that they can foster transit oriented development, including the location of shopping and employment opportunities, as well as denser housing and commercial projects, within convenient walking distance of transit stations. Rail transit stations can provide a catalyst for the development of compact, walkable urban centers, enhancing the accessibility of urban resources and improving the quality of urban life.

A vivid example of the latter is the “T-THIRD Line” project that was recently brought to completion after 20 years of planning in San Francisco. The T-THIRD Metro line, which initiated full service in April 2007, connects all of the Third Street neighborhoods on the City's southeast side to the full Muni Metro system, providing a

vital link between the economically disadvantaged southeast sector of San Francisco and the rest of the City. The hope of city planners and transportation planners is that the new T-THIRD Line will be an important step toward revitalizing the Hunter's Point, Bayview, and Sunnydale neighborhoods, integrating them more fully into San Francisco's strong local economy, and enhancing economic opportunity for residents and businesses in the vicinity of the new light rail route. As the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") noted in its decision approving the 18 at-grade crossings in Segment C of this project, the Third Street Extension was "intended to serve as a key infrastructure improvement to help support the economic and physical revitalization of the Bayview-Hunters Point commercial core along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and the planned development in Mission Bay." Decision 03-05-028, adopted May 8, 2003, page 1.<sup>1</sup> After just one year of revenue operations, the T-THIRD Line appears to be well on its way toward fulfilling that promise.

**Q. How does the Expo Rail project help to implement the policy goals you describe?**

A. If you look at the traffic on the Santa Monica Freeway going in either direction, you will see that the west side of Los Angeles County is in serious need of alternative modes of transportation. I agree with the prior testimony in this proceeding of Richard Thorpe, Expo Authority's Chief Executive Officer, that "Los Angeles County is literally choking on its own congestion. Improvements to our transportation infrastructure are not only necessary, but required, if we are to continue to move

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<sup>1</sup> By a series of five decisions over an 11-month period, the CPUC authorized a total of 58 at-grade crossings, two rail-to-rail crossings, and the widening of one grade-separated freeway overpass for the Third Street Extension project.

people and goods within the region.” I also agree with Mr. Thorpe’s characterization of the Expo Rail project as “not only an important transportation improvement” but also “a mitigation measure to our air quality.” (Prepared Testimony of Richard D. Thorpe, attached to Expo Authority’s Opening Brief, filed September 7, 2007.)

The Expo Rail LRT project will provide an efficient and comfortable transit alternative to serve residents and businesses in the Exposition corridor and beyond, while also relieving traffic congestion and mitigating the region’s severe air quality problems. This “trifecta” of value for the community as a whole must not be lost sight of when considering the very localized problems that arise in the siting of such a project.

**Q. Based on your experience with the Sacramento and San Francisco light rail systems, can you offer any insight into the issues presented by the proposed at-grade design for the Farmdale Avenue crossing on Expo Rail?**

A. Yes, I can. First and foremost, there is nothing unusual about light rail transit operating in a busy pedestrian environment. The SRTD system in Sacramento operates without gates or fences through the middle of a downtown pedestrian mall five city blocks in length and less than two city blocks away from the State Capitol. SRTD trains have been running safely through this “pedestrian rich” environment at up to 20 miles per hour seven days a week for the past 21 years.

The SRTD light rail system also operates in close proximity to several public schools. Its operations have been notably safe, with only 22 accidents reportable to the CPUC in the most recent recorded year (May 1, 2007 through April 30, 2008), when the SRTD light rail system operated about 4.1 million train miles.

I am also very familiar with operations of San Francisco's Muni Metro light rail system, which operates in several different modes, including exclusive and semi-exclusive rights of way, with both gated and signal-controlled crossings and a number of crossings that are simply controlled by stop signs and other passive signage. The Muni Metro system operates within one city block of at least a dozen public, parochial, and private schools, including Aptos Middle School, Commodore Sloat Elementary School, Edison Charter Academy, Everett Middle School, Jefferson Elementary School, Lick-Wilmerding High School, Mercy High School, Mission High School, St. Anne Elementary School, St. Gabriel Elementary School, and St. Paul's Intermediate School, and Waldorf High School. Where necessary and appropriate, these schools or the San Francisco Unified School District routinely provide crossing guards to assist school children in crossing intersections along the LRT routes where only passive signaling (stop signs) are provided. In my experience, when light rail vehicles travel with the flow of traffic on city streets, they present no greater danger than any other type of vehicle.

The new T-THIRD line operated by San Francisco's Muni Metro again provides a useful example. The recently opened Third Street Extension, along which the new line runs, includes 58 at-grade crossings – all either actively or passively traffic controlled but without vehicle or pedestrian gates. This 5.2 mile semi-exclusive alignment runs mainly along a center median strip of a divided four lane street, but sidewalks were narrowed and parking eliminated for much of the route to accommodate the tracks. In one of its several decisions approving the at-grade crossings proposed for the T-THIRD line, the CPUC noted that “[s]afety features at the crossings will include pavement markings, warning signs, some pedestrian refuge

areas, traffic signals, and video loop detection as agreed to by Rail Crossings Engineering Section (RCES) and Muni at field diagnostic meetings,” as well as integrated priority signaling for the light rail vehicles, signals for traffic in all directions at all regularly used crossings. and left-turn pockets equipped with active “Train Coming” signs interconnected with the train detection system. Decision 03-05-028, *supra*, pages 3-4.

During the first year of operations along the T-THIRD line, Muni statistics indicate that there were 18 motor vehicle accidents (virtually all the result of drivers making illegal left turns in front of the light rail vehicles and most involving no more than minor damage) and one alleged collision with a pedestrian. In the latter case, no injury was claimed and the operator reported that no contact between the vehicle and the pedestrian actually occurred.

The safety measures and devices included in the design of at-grade crossings for the T-THIRD line are consistent with the design that I understand Expo Authority to have submitted for at-grade crossings proposed for Expo Rail. In the case of the proposed Farmdale crossing, the design include substantial additional protections in the form of four-quadrant gates, pedestrian gates and Emergency Exit swing gates, and protected pedestrian queuing areas. These measures represent the state-of-the-art in safety design for LRT systems.

**Q. Does this complete your testimony?**

A. Yes, it does.