

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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*From  
Oakland  
file*



August 10, 1999

Mr. Ken Bukowski  
Vice-Mayor of the City of Emeryville  
5880 Doyle Street  
Emeryville, California 94608

Dear Mr. Bukowski:

I have been asked to respond to your letter to an editor, faxed to Caltrans Director José Medina on July 20, 1999. In this letter, you discuss several different issues on the Bay Bridge East Spans project.

You state that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was inadequate and that it was given the lowest rating in history by the Federal EPA. It should be noted that EPA has given this rating before, and in fact, EPA has historically raised environmental concerns or objections with the great majority of the environmental impact statements it reviews. Furthermore, it is not unusual for reviewers with focused interests to consider that an environmental document is inadequate in its coverage of those interests. This was the case with EPA's rating of 3, which was given because EPA considered that there was inadequate information regarding one single issue, namely, dredging. In response to this, Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) consulted with EPA and circulated a technical report, the Dredged Material Management Plan, which details the dredging activities and proposals for dredged material disposal. Public circulation of this report has given the public and resource agencies the opportunity to comment on this aspect of the project. Comments on this report will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which is targeted for public circulation this fall.

You also state that the East Spans Seismic Safety project is not in compliance with the environmental process. By law, Caltrans and FHWA must pursue the project alternative that is approved through the environmental process. Caltrans is embarking on a risk design for the N-6 replacement simultaneous with the environmental review process. The risk is that the design for the N-6 alternative could not be used if a different alternative is approved pursuant to NEPA. Caltrans is taking this risk because it will reduce the time required to deliver a seismically upgraded east spans in the interests of public safety. The FEIS is now in preparation; in the document the preferred alternative is the N-6 replacement alternative.

You state that the existing bridge can be retrofitted for \$300 million. Caltrans designed the retrofit of the existing bridge to the 85% stage, and, in terms of 1998 dollars, found the cost to be \$909 million.

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You state that the Engineering and Design Advisory Panel (EDAP) Chair and other panel members have conflicts of interest on the project. The panel members were selected based on their recognized expertise in their respective fields. Their role is to conduct technical analyses of the design options and alignments. Neither the Chair nor any of the other panel members works for the design team.

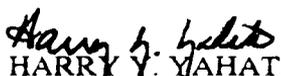
Your statement that the new bridge will have substantially less load bearing capability is unsubstantiated and incorrect. The new east span will have greater load bearing capacity than the existing bridge. The new east span is designed so that all ten lanes and four shoulders can accommodate modern heavy tractor-trailer trucks which are substantially heavier than the trucks for which the existing bridge was originally designed.

Lastly, you say that the new bridge design has questionable seismic capability. The internationally-renowned design firm of TY Lin/Moffatt Nichol was chosen after a rigorous selection process involving several competing firms. I assure you that the design of the east spans replacement applies state-of-the-art engineering, with diligent regard for seismic safety. Furthermore, we welcome professional engineering input that would question or improve the proposed design. An invitation was extended to present such input to the design team or the EDAP for rigorous professional review, and the invitation was declined. Therefore, the design team and the EDAP have no basis for questioning their professional judgment and their confidence in the design.

We invite you to contact us for additional information about the project to increase your technical knowledge of this vital public safety project and assure the accuracy of your public statements.

If you have further questions, please call Mr. Brian Maroney, Project Manager, at (510) 286-5885.

Sincerely,

  
HARRY Y. YAHATA  
District Director

c: Steve Heminger, MTC

Box 2, Folder 1

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