

Mayors Lobby Congress For BART Extension

By Ron McNicoll

The five Tri-Valley mayors are back from a trip to Washington, D.C. where they lobbied the area's congressional delegation for a Livermore BART extension, money for the Tri-Valley for homeland security, and restraint on any new law limiting cities' eminent domain powers.

The mayors were attending the annual session of the U.S. Mayors Conference in Washington last week. However, they broke away for meetings with California's two senators and Reps. Ellen Tauscher and Richard Pombo, whose House districts include the mayors' cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin, San Ramon and Danville.

Congress was not in session at the time, so the elected officials were not there. However, the united delegation made a big impression on the staffs of the officials, who gave them "more than a cordial reception," said Livermore Mayor Marshall Kamena.

It was the first time that mayors from all five cities had taken a regional approach and backed the Livermore BART extension, said Kamena.

Kamena noted he is going back to Washington to a transit conference in March as chairman of LAVTA to make further efforts in trying to get BART money.

The Pleasanton city council, in a separate action, had a letter on its consent calendar Feb. 7 asking the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to include the Livermore BART extension in its regional transportation plan.

DIRECTOR STARTING EXTENSION COMMITTEE

The Tri-Valley mayors' support comes at a time when BART director Zoyd Luce and Livermore resident Linda Jeffery Sailors are working on marshaling public support for BART.

Sailors, a former Dublin mayor, told the Independent that she thought the extension was on its way in 1992, when she left the Dublin city council. She started a petition drive about two months ago. Sailors said Tuesday that she has collected over 1000 signatures so far, just off the internet and people passing the petition copies to friends.

But the most significant action was her meeting with Luce, about a week ago. Luce told the Independent that the meeting prompted him to organize a committee about getting BART to Livermore. The committee being invited by Luce would have the Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore city councils send one representative each, one from the chamber of commerce from each city, one from the Valley Transportation Authority, and one from the Tri-Valley Valley Business council.

Supervisor Scott Haggerty's office would be invited. There would be four or five people at-large, with Sailors as one of them. There also would be a representative of the real estate community.

Luce said that he made his own visit recently to Washington to lobby for the BART station. He talked to the offices of Tauscher and Pombo, and also the powerful Federal Transportation Authority, which holds the key to projects. "I was struck by how many were willing to listen and give me direction," said Luce.

Although some initial stages have been done on the extension, there still remains the need to prepare engineering and an environmental study. Estimated cost for that is \$10 million, said Luce.

Luce also reported that three of his fellow BART board members are being very supportive of the Livermore extension. Gail Murray in Walnut Creek, Bob Franklin in Berkeley, and Tom Redulavich in San Francisco "all have a wealth of experiences, and I asked them to join with me," said Luce. "It will be difficult, because of the lack of money. But I think we will be successful."

HOMELAND SECURITY IN VALLEY

The mayors lobbying on homeland security amounted to making the point that the law now has states such as Iowa, with few high-priority targets, receiving as much money as more populous states with many more targets. The formula should be changed to funding areas with the greatest need.

Livermore, with LLNL and an airport, and San Ramon, with SBC headquarters, are higher priorities for security than other areas, and the formula should reflect it. Livermore "gets zero dollars right now" for disaster preparedness, said Kamena.

On the property condemnations, some Congress members are talking about writing a bill that would greatly reduce or eliminate cities' right to the power of eminent domain, including for its use by redevelopment authorities. The mayors said that while the current federal law, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court on a 5-4 vote, may have been draconian for property owners, California has a much more moderate law, which treats property owners fairly.

The mayors made the point that Congress should use the California model, which puts negotiations ahead of condemnation, instead of throwing out the whole notion of eminent domain, Kamena said.