

# Opinion

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## Why we need to keep the SMART train on track

**A** TOUGH ECONOMY and lower projected revenues have resulted in the need to phase implementation of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District train and pathway project. This and higher construction costs have caused some to question moving forward with the project.

Times like these require a bit of courage and backbone to get the job done. Every generation is called upon to build and make its own contribution for the betterment of society. Our great, great grandparents gave us the ferries and interurban railways. Our grandparents built the Golden Gate Bridge.

Our parents provided the freeway system, BART and California's universities. What will we

### JEFF RHOADS

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build for our grandchildren our children, and ourselves?

SMART is a critically important investment in the future of the North Bay. It's our gift to future generations. It will help our region evolve into an economical, environmentally and socially sustainable place.

Projects like SMART foster an ethic of a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship between cities and the natural environment. It will focus investment and growth into walkable, mixed-use communities — primarily traditional downtowns and vil-

lage centers.

This will occur along the rail corridor and feeder bus routes and lessen the pressure for new greenfield development accessible only by automobiles. Older parts of our communities will be revitalized.

Our population is aging. Who will care for us *geezer*s? Where are young families going to live?

Hand in hand with SMART is development of quality market-rate housing that allows our children to get a start and choose to live here. SMART will provide the choice of a gracious lifestyle without dependence on automobiles. People who live in transit-oriented, walkable communities are more physically active and maintain greater cognitive ability as they age.

SMART trains will provide

increased mobility for those who don't own or can't operate automobiles.

Highway 101 is the only north-south roadway linking the major cities in Marin and Sonoma counties. The SMART project offers three new parallel links: bicycle, passenger rail and freight rail. Each can create additional roadway capacity by diverting people and goods off the Highway 101 corridor. They will see greater use over time, as the cities evolve around them.

Cities are living, organic places. They must grow and evolve to survive, maintain vitality and serve future generations. Although change is inevitable, it need not be negative. Citizens will have ample opportunity to participate and comment as new development projects are consid-

ered for approval in their communities.

Evolution will occur gradually over time, softening its impact. The SMART project doesn't require current residents to change their lifestyles but it will improve the lives of present and future generations.

Let's stay the course. Decline to sign the Repeal SMART petition. Ask others to refuse to sign. Uncertainty associated with repeal effort has already resulted in the loss of \$17 million that would otherwise have been available for construction or purchase of rail cars. Further delay will increase construction cost and interest on the bonds and slow progress toward improving our cities.

Now is our chance. Let's seize this opportunity to build a great future for our North Bay cities.

### Letters

Confine them to 250 words. We don't have room for all of the letters we receive; we give preference to shorter letters and to letters from people who live in Marin or Southern Sonoma counties. Letters are edited for length, grammar, spelling, clarity, style, libel and civility. We do not

publish form letters, "open" letters, petitions, individual consumer complaints or letters published elsewhere. Letters must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number so we can verify authorship (we publish only the writer's name and hometown).

### Marin Voices

Columns are limited to 600 words and are edited like letters (see left). We give preference to writers who have personal or professional expertise on a topic. Submissions must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number for verification of authorship.

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