

July 8, 2010

California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Re: Docket No. 09-ALT-1
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

DOCKET
09-ALT-1

DATE JUL 08 2010

RECD. JUL 08 2010

Subject: 09-ALT-1, 2010-2011 Investment Plan

To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of the City of San Jose to respectfully request the California Energy Commission to expand the portfolio of technologies included in the *2010-2011 Investment Plan for The Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program* to include Personal Rapid Transit (PRT).

We applaud the Commission's continued commitment to accelerating the deployment of clean, low-carbon technologies in the state. With approximately 32 million cars registered in California, reducing emissions from vehicles is fundamental to meeting the state's greenhouse gas emissions targets. However, clean, low-carbon technologies can also be used to remove some of those vehicle trips from our roadways, reducing greenhouse gas emissions further while improving our air quality and communities.

The City of San José is considering building what will likely be the first PRT system built in the nation. PRT is an innovative, new form of transit technology that blends the convenience of the personal automobile with the environmental and social benefits of mass transit. One of the distinctions of a PRT is its ability to provide non-stop travel, from point of origin to destination. Stations are off the main line, allowing vehicles to bypass stations unimpeded by those stopping to pick up passengers. The vehicles are small (4-6 passenger), lightweight, and computer-controlled (driverless). There are no fixed schedules or routes; Passengers specify their destination. Service is available on demand, 24-hours a day.

PRT systems are more sustainable than traditional transit systems. The vehicles are powered by electricity and only operate when necessary. The propulsion systems vary widely. Some PRT companies use battery-powered vehicles, others employ linear induction motors embedded in the track, and still others are experimenting with new energy technologies such as magnetic levitation. The system requires less energy than conventional transit to operate, which opens the door to relying on renewable energy for a portion, if not all, of its energy needs

The application of this new technology also has the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, PRT systems can:

- **Improve Transit Efficiency:** In moderate- to low-density cities such as San José, there is a continual tension between offering sufficient breadth and frequency of service to attract riders and the cost to provide that service. PRT systems can help resolve that tension by delivering a more flexible, less expensive service delivered in “right-sized” vehicles, on demand.
- **Boost Transit Usage:** A PRT can increase the effectiveness of existing transit service by serving as a feeder system and bridging the “last mile” gap between the transit station and a passenger’s ultimate destination. A PRT can interconnect disparate locations within a residential development, office park, college campus or shopping center and link them to mass transit, thereby expanding the quarter-mile radius around a transit station normally considered walkable to two- or three-miles.
- **Facilitate Smart Growth:** A PRT can encourage smart growth by creating new land use options. For example, a PRT could facilitate the construction of an affordable, transit-oriented development on less expensive, underutilized land by connecting it to transit. Or it could enable a parking facility serving a transit hub to be located at a distance from the station, preserving the land close-in for transit- and pedestrian-supportive uses. This would also protect sensitive populations, including children and seniors, from auto-generated pollutants.

The concept of an ATN has been around for some time. Various factors, including the need for technology to catch up to the vision of inventors, hindered its realization. That has begun to change. In April 2010, the first modern ATN system opened to the public at Heathrow-London Airport. Another ATN system built in the United Arab Emirates is in testing mode and is expected to open later this year. A third ATN firm has signed a contract to build a system in South Korea. And Sweden has committed funds to build an ATN system in one of its major cities.

Many cities around the nation, including a number in California, have expressed interest in building a PRT system. There are sizable obstacles to the realization of this goal, including the fact that the technology has not yet been standardized. By helping to advance this nascent industry, the CEC could accelerate California’s efforts to reduce its GHG emissions, foster a new clean tech industry in the state, and set the standard for the nation. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Manuel Pineda,
Acting Deputy Director of Transportation