

City of Palmdale shows support for Virgin/Brightline rail project

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Palmdale Mayor Steve Hofbauer and City Manager James Purtee were invited to tour the Siemens rail car plant in Sacramento. [Contributed]PALMDALE – Palmdale Mayor **Steve Hofbauer** and City Manager **James Purtee** traveled to the State Capitol in Sacramento earlier this week to provide testimony and support at the TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act) hearing for the infrastructure development bonds for the Virgin/Brightline trains planned to provide high speed rail service from Las Vegas to Victorville and Palmdale.

Also on hand to provide support were representatives from Victorville, Apple Valley, LA Metro, SanBag (San Bernardino Association of Governments), Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger’s office, San Bernardino County Supervisor Robert Lovingood’s office, Siemens, Morgan Stanley, and Virgin Trains.

“Both the executive director of the bank and the bond manager hearing officer commented that they couldn’t remember a hearing with such a large show of support,” Hofbauer stated in a news release. “Everyone realizes the magnitude

and importance of this project to the long term economic and quality of life future of our region.”

Last fall, Brightline, a Florida based private passenger rail company, acquired XpressWest, the high-speed rail project with an approved corridor between Las Vegas and Victorville, with plans to continue to Palmdale. In November, it was announced that the internationally known Virgin Group partnered with Brightline and rebranded the project as part of Virgin Trains USA.

After the hearings, Hofbauer and Purtee were invited to tour the Siemens rail car plant in Sacramento. Siemens currently employs 1,500 people at their light and heavy rail manufacturing plant.

“It was fascinating to follow the light rail and heavy rail equipment through the various fabrication and assembly processes,” Hofbauer said.