

By Charles McGlashan and Debora Fudge, on behalf of the SMART Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District offers our sincere thanks to the voters of the North Bay, who overwhelmingly voiced your approval of Measure Q on Election Day.

This historic election will be remembered for many reasons in every corner of our great nation. In this particular corner, though, it will leave the lasting legacy of an alternative transportation system that will be good for the environment, the economy and the quality of life of our region for generations to come.

We thank you not just for approving a quarter-cent sales tax to fund the SMART train and pathway, but for doing so at a time of such economic uncertainty. We admire your ability to see beyond the financial problems of the present and look toward a brighter future with a clear vision of what you want your community to look like.

Almost 7 out of 10 of you decided you want that future to include a train.

Now it is our responsibility as directors of SMART to make sure that train is the best public transportation project possible. We are honored to take on that task, and we will work tirelessly to provide a project that transforms transit in these two counties.

Our first task will be to select the rail vehicles that one day will be the most visible image of SMART. Beyond how they look, though, we have critical decisions to make as to how they operate, how many passengers they carry, how many bicycles will fit on board and many other details. We expect this process to take us into the middle of next year. Final engineering and design work will continue through 2010, and we expect to begin construction in 2011. The beginning of train service is currently scheduled in 2014.

Along the way, we will need the support and the participation of the public – just as we have been aided by public input through the years of planning and environmental review leading up to today. This is a project that isn't for one group or another, or one county or the other, but for everyone who wants improved mobility throughout our District.

Our work didn't end on Nov. 4; it became more urgent. We ask all of you to join us in getting it done, and we promise to do our best to make you proud of the project that you all have had a hand in creating.