

## Chugga' chugga' choose choose

Residents need to consider all sides of railroad relocation issue before making any decisions



ZACH HALL

As any Texas A&M student is well aware, a railroad track runs through the middle of the Big 12 school campus dividing it into "west" and "east" camps. However, if A&M Aggies' performance in the Lowrance bowl have their way, the railroad track will not be the case. Instead, the railroad track will be running through campus, the railroad 8-11 1/4 miles run along the Brazos River.

The issue is that the railroad track creates an inconvenience to the students, faculty and Bryan/College Station communities, though safety is also an important concern. The trains often cause studies to wait while they are going to the West Campus and B/CS citizens while they are going to work or home.

These are all valid arguments, but before jumping on the relocation bandwagon we should understand what the community potentially loses in future economic, tourist and aesthetic terms. Neither side of the railroad relocation debate doubts that there is a need to address certain current and future problems with the existing track layout running through Bryan-College Station. Traffic congestion, too many grade crossings, close proximity of emergency vehicles to campus, and access of emergency vehicles to campus are all concerns. A grade crossing is the intersection of a road and railroad that is showing a track.

There are no definite proposals for relocating the railroad issue. A&M commissioned a study that was concluded in May 1998 that said it would be feasible to move the tracks to the Brazos River. The estimated cost of relocating the 30 miles of existing track along the new route was projected at \$75 million. One proposal,

which was voted down by citizens within the past decade, was to place the tracks underground, or "low track", for the stretch of track running from FM 2818 to just past Villa Maria Road.

Other proposals call for separate interchanges, like the one at University and Wellborn Road, to be built at certain intersections, likely Villa Maria Road, George Bush Drive and FM 2818. In fact, according to Michael Parks, director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, there is a proposal to build an underpass or overpass at Villa Maria Rd. regardless of whether or not the tracks are moved.

However, the community simply cannot be motivated in a decision to relocate the tracks by the promise of less inconvenience. The railroad is the reason that Texas A&M is located where it is today. The name College Station itself is a reminder of the railroad that originated this community.

Residents cannot throw away a heritage or tradition simply because we want ever increasing convenience. This issue only exists because Bryan-College Station is small enough for a railroad to be diverted around the cities. Talk of railroad relocation in towns the size of Houston, San Antonio or Austin would be laughed at; after all the B-CS community is always striving to be more like the bigger cities.

In Dallas railroads are being used to combat traffic congestion, much like in the Northeast; and the cities of San Antonio and Austin are trying to devise a rail corridor to allow passengers to travel between the two cities; these could both be

possible uses for the railroad in Bryan-College Station.

Apart from the nostalgic and aesthetic appeal of a train running through town, residents could utilize the railroad as a tourist attraction. The B-CS community could use the train in conjunction with the Bush Library, much like it was used during the dedication when dignitaries and others were brought in on train, perhaps a rail-corridor with the LBJ Library in Austin.

The relocation debate is also very much a visionary issue. As the need for more effective transportation arises, the

railroads will be called upon to help address those needs. If we remove and relocate the tracks now, we may face the need someday to bring them back.

Regardless of the pro and cons of relocation, the answers to this debate need to come from the Bryan-College Station community. Multiple proposals need to be drawn up for relocation as well as the building of over/underpasses and then submitted to the public for a vote.

The public needs to educate itself about this issue. In fact, the Metropolitan Planning Organization will be holding a meeting March 3 at the Brazos Center to

discuss the relocation as well as a proposal by Union Pacific to lay down a second track alongside the existing one. Union Pacific owns the track and has about 24 trains running through the community per day.

The B-CS community cannot lose this railroad simply because it is more convenient or because it is what A&M wants; multiple options must be submitted and evaluated. The public must get involved in this process and in the end be allowed to make the final decision.

Zach Hall is a senior philosophy major.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

## Advances in fighting AIDS not license for dangerous sex

There is a disease that kills off the cells necessary to fight every infection, leaving the immune system virtually defenseless. Common viruses such as the flu strain can kill those infected. But do not panic because there is a solution.

This disease is completely preventable if people avoid risky behavior.

How many times would someone have to be told this before they started listening? In the case of HIV, which can later become AIDS, it seems no one is listening.

Instead, one would think with all of the media coverage in the last 15 years unprotected sex would be non-existent.

Unfortunately, people seem to be content with the new drugs that allow HIV-positive people to live longer and relatively healthy lives, but there is still no cure for this fatal disease.

Rather than holding themselves accountable for their own actions, people are engaging in unprotected sex and leaving it to doctors and scientists to fix the problem.

In 1997 the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS (UNAIDS) reported 30 million people worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS and 16,000 were infected everyday.

One out of every 100 adults ages 15-49 were thought to be infected with the virus and only one out of every 10 knew of their infection.

Many people argue things are getting better because of the dramatic decrease in deaths due to AIDS.

Unfortunately, it is the researchers who are getting smarter, while people are behaving more and more stupid.

In Oct. 1998, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reported death rates of AIDS-infected persons declined an unprecedented 47 percent from 1996 to 1997, making AIDS the sixth leading killer in the United States.

But HHS secretary Donna E. Shalala made it clear the reason for the decrease was because of new medications.

She stressed the necessity of working at prevention.

"These figures mean that new treatments have been very effective in extending the lives of people who already have HIV infection — but they do not mean that we have

significantly reduced HIV transmission," Shalala said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the annual number of new HIV infections is still increasing in the United States, with 40,000 new infections each year.

Blatantly taking sexual risks is not only stupid but disrespectful, too.

First of all, it is disrespectful to all the medical researchers who have worked so hard to develop these new drugs, so irresponsibly infected people can have a longer and more healthy life.

The last thing these amazingly selfless researchers need is to have people take advantage of the new drugs.

These doctors are working to save lives from a horrible disease, not provide an easy solution to careless action.

Researchers wish to wipe out this epidemic completely, and this requires prevention as well as a cure.

While they are working diligently to find this cure, thousands of people around the world, despite the fact it is completely preventable now, are working diligently to spread the epidemic.

Carelessly becoming infected is also disrespectful to those who have already succumbed to the disease.

Many who, through their suffering, have taught the nation to take every precaution possible to avoid this tragedy.

How many people remember Ryan White? White, who became infected with AIDS through a contaminated blood transfusion he received prior to 1985, used his life to fight his infection and promote awareness.

Actress and AIDS prevention advocate Judith Light said, "He was not able to choose whether he got AIDS, or other hardships which fell in his path."

But he chose to turn whatever happened to him into a contribution to others."

It is lazy and irresponsible to ignore the risk of HIV and leave it to others to take care of the problem.

HIV is not an outrageous infection that can rapidly spread through the air, so try and have respect for researchers, prevention advocates and especially everyone else by avoiding this disease.

Most people do not need to be told more than once that jumping off a cliff without a parachute will ultimately lead to death.

Christina Barrows is a sophomore English major.



CHRISTINA BARROWS



MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA (NATION)

### MAIL CALL

#### Congress must pay attention to voters

In response to Zach Hall's Feb. 16 opinion column.

Hall repeats an often-heard opinion of impeachment supporters when he says "Contrary to their (the American people) public opinion, they should have had no influence ... in this impeachment process."

If Hall had paid more attention in political science classes or perhaps at the Constitution he refers to so many times in his article, he would know who pays the salary of those congressmen and women.

To say that the American people could elect their representatives and senators, pay their wages and then expect to have no influence over their actions is ludicrous.

Any of the House managers or any other elected official who wants to go to his district and tell the people

that they deserve no voice in the workings of their congress will be in for a rude awakening in November.

Will Reinhart  
Class of '02

#### Prostitution goes against Biblical law

In response to Brendan Guy's Feb. 15 opinion article.

Sometimes when people are trying to justify something like legalized prostitution, they attempt to "muddy the waters." They try to blur the definition of profanity or sin. Prostitution is old.

Sin is old. We all sin. Sin is our choice. The definition of sin is not our choice. If you do not accept my religion (Christianity) or its definitions of sin, that is your choice, but leave it at that. God defines sin. According to the Bible we can have sex with the one person (of the opposite sex) we

are married to, but sex with anyone or anything else is sin. In fact, the Bible commands us to have sex with our spouse!

It is OK if once in a while our laws agree with God's laws. That is not what our founding fathers meant with the concept of separation of church and state.

Brian Park  
Class of '95

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call  
013 Reed McDonald  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX  
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111  
Fax: (409) 845-2647  
E-mail: batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu