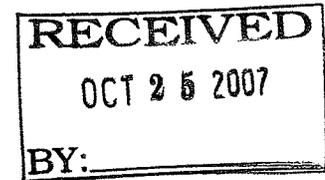




California Partnership for the
San Joaquin Valley



October 18, 2007

Quentin Kopp, Chairperson
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on Draft EIR/EIS for the Central Valley to Bay Area Corridor

Dear Chairperson Kopp:

On behalf of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley (Partnership), we thank you for this opportunity to submit comments for consideration by the California High-Speed Rail Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration regarding the draft EIR/EIS for the Central Valley to Bay Area Corridor. **In regard to alignment, the Partnership (a) supports connection for the whole Valley from Bakersfield to Sacramento; (b) recommends that the economic viability of developing both the Altamont and Pacheco Pass routes be evaluated; and (c) that if it turns out that only one route is economically viable, or if one route must be implemented before the other, recommends that the Altamont corridor be the preferred route.**

As you may know, the Partnership is a unique, public-private collaboration created by Governor Schwarzenegger to improve the economic vitality and quality of life for Valley residents. The Partnership was charged with developing a Strategic Action Proposal to provide actionable strategies for sustainable economic growth that will create jobs and improve environmental quality in the region. This plan was approved by the governor in November 2006. Work is well under way.

The Partnership held a special meeting of Valley stakeholders on August 9 on high-speed rail (HSR), obtaining comments from a large and diverse group of stakeholders. Following that meeting, the Partnership board approved its working position as follows:

- The HSR needs to serve the entire San Joaquin Valley (Bakersfield to Sacramento), and the region must stay together as it works toward implementation of this initiative. Amtrak should remain as a complementary service to HSR;
- \$15.5 million must stay in the 2007-08 budget as a minimum funding level;
- The HSR ballot measure must remain on the 2008 ballot;
- The federal government needs to contribute to the HSR project. Congress should seriously consider the establishment of a National High-Speed Rail Authority with powers similar to California's Authority;

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- Passenger rail also is a priority for the Valley and is meeting immediate demand, while the HSR initiative will address mid- and long-term demand;
- Land use patterns are a critical success factor for HSR. The Blueprint Regional Planning process needs to be tightly connected to the efforts to implement HSR in the Valley;
- The route between the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area will have a significant impact on the Valley being served as an entire region; and
- Submit a letter to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (a) supporting connection for the whole Valley from Bakersfield to Sacramento; (b) recommending that the economic viability of developing both the Altamont and Pacheco Pass routes be evaluated; and (c) that if it turns out that only one route is economically viable, or if one route must be implemented before the other, the Altamont corridor be the preferred route.

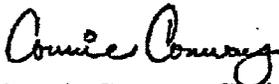
HSR is considered by the Partnership as foundational to the future prosperity of the San Joaquin Valley. For the past 20 years, while our population has increased by 60%, our vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) increased by 150%, two-and-a-half times as much – this in a region that is now generally acknowledged to have the worst air quality in the nation, where 80% of our NOx emissions come from mobile sources. With the highest population growth rate in the state, this trend is expected to continue. California's Department of Finance expects the Valley's population to increase 104% between 2000 and 2040. Projected growth in passenger vehicle travel in the region will only exacerbate the Valley's air problem.

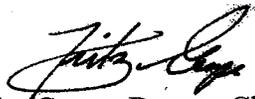
Significantly, 44% of the expected HSR ridership will involve people traveling within or in and out of the Valley. Those who choose to be transported by HSR rather than passenger vehicle will be part of the solution to our traffic congestion and air quality challenges. It is important that the train serve the *entire* Valley for this purpose and the reason why the Altamont corridor should be pursued.

We believe that HSR will have a positive impact on the Valley's economy. High unemployment rates have long been a challenge for the region, currently ranging anywhere from 7.3% in Madera County to 9.8% in Merced County, which has the second highest unemployment rate in the state. It is anticipated that HSR will create 450,000 permanent jobs by 2035 and 300,000 job-years of employment from construction. Additionally, core industry expansion and job creation efforts already under way could be significantly enhanced with a speedy commuter connection to northern and southern California.

We look forward to working with you to address these comments as you construct the final draft EIR/EIS for the Central Valley-Bay Area corridor. Please feel free to contact us or the Partnership's lead executive, Ashley Swearengin, at (559) 294-6021 or ashleys@csufresno.edu.

Sincerely,


Connie Conway, Chair


Fritz Grupe, Deputy Chair

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Cont.