

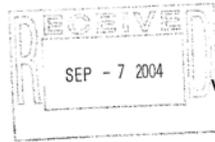
Comment Letter AL055



County of Fresno
CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SUPERVISOR SUSAN B. ANDERSON - DISTRICT TWO

August 27, 2004

Joseph E. Petrillo, Chair
High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814



VIA FAX: (916) 322-0827

SUBJECT: High Speed Rail Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement & Environmental Impact Report (DPEIS/EIR)

Dear Mr. Petrillo:

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors, along with the Cities of Fresno County, is pleased to support high speed rail, and offers the attached consensus positions as comments on the High Speed Rail DPEIS/EIR. As you make your final decisions, we hope that you will consider our comments carefully, as your decisions will have a tremendous influence on our cities and rural areas. Thoughtful planning as well as adequate funding for thorough mitigation of impacts must be insured to make high speed rail a success not only for the State but for all of the cities and regions along its length.

We join with the City of Fresno in strongly supporting location of all high speed train tracks through the City of Fresno along the Union Pacific/State Route 99 corridor. This established transportation corridor is best suited to serve all of the rail transportation needs in Fresno County, including the planned freight rail and Amtrak consolidation. Location of all rail services along this corridor will insure that the Downtown Fresno station will serve as a regional multi-modal hub for the San Joaquin Valley, and keep impacts localized to a single corridor. We strongly encourage you to work with us to insure that construction of the High Speed Rail does not preclude other vital uses of the corridor, but facilitates regional rail needs to accomplish State transportation goals.

Although very supportive of high speed rail, we are very concerned about the impacts on the south Fresno County cities of Fowler, Selma, and Kingsburg should the Authority select the Union Pacific alignment in the south Valley. The existing Union Pacific railroad bisects each of these towns in their downtown areas. A grade-separated corridor would eliminate much of their downtowns, divide the community, and would impose severe and unmitigable visual and noise impacts on their small communities. We therefore cannot support placing the High Speed Rail in these towns.

We also strongly encourage you to consider Fresno County as a site for the maintenance and/or storage facility. There are numerous reasons, including access and affordability, that recommend the Fresno area for these facilities. Through the Council of Fresno County Governments, we are appointing a regional task force to identify and facilitate location of a maintenance/storage site here that best serves the needs of the high speed rail.

Room 300, Hall of Records / 2281 Tulare Street / Fresno, California 93721-2198 / (559) 488-3542 / FAX (559) 488-6830 / 1-800-742-1011
Equal Employment Opportunity • Affirmative Action • Disabled Employer

Mr. Petrillo
August 27, 2004
Page 2

Fresno County remains a steadfast supporter of High Speed Rail, to improve transportation opportunities for all residents of the State, and looks forward to having the San Joaquin Valley portion as the first constructed link between southern California and the Bay/South Bay area. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please call Lynn Gorman of the Public Works and Planning Department at (559) 262-4091.

Sincerely,

Susan B. Anderson (handwritten signature)

Susan B. Anderson, Chair
Fresno County Board of Supervisors

Attachment

- cc: Board of Supervisors
Bart Bohn, County Administrative Officer
Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director, California High Speed Rail Authority
Carrie Pourvahidi, California High Speed Rail Authority
Barbara Goodwin, Council of Fresno County Governments
Andy Richter, Public Works and Planning Department

AL055-1

AL055-2

AL055-3



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Comment Letter AL055 Continued

**Council of Fresno County Governments
High Speed Rail Recommendations 8-26-04**

Support High Speed Rail in California

Farmland Impacts

The potential impacts of high-speed rail on farmland must be analyzed and minimized. It is preferable that, where possible, existing railroad rights-of-way should be utilized because they would be least disruptive to farmland.

Level of Service

In addition to non-express trains, at least five (5) of the daily "express trains" in each direction must stop in Fresno to accommodate commuters to the major metropolitan areas.

AL055-4

Freight Capability

In light of State air quality issues, the high-speed rail system should still consider accommodating truck trailers and containers, thereby reducing congestion on highways and improving air quality. Freight service should be feasible at times when it does not interfere with passenger service. The greater the system's freight capability, the greater its financial viability.

Growth and Economic Impacts

Creating a high-speed rail connection to other parts of the State is paramount in moving people and improving air quality, while creating jobs and improving our economy. It will also relieve congestion and provide modal choice. However, construction of lengthy overpasses and/or underpasses through the smaller cities of Fowler, Selma and Kingsburg would jeopardize the viability of their downtown business, given the size of those towns relative to construction.

Station Location

The high-speed rail station in Fresno County should be located in downtown Fresno. This location must allow for the maximum multimodal interface with other means of regional and local passenger transportation.

Alignment

High-speed trains through portions of the cities of Fowler, Selma, and Kingsburg are not supported. If the decision is made to utilize the UPRR corridor, an alternative alignment around these three cities will be developed and any additional cost associated with this option must be included in the high-speed rail financing. All high-speed trains, including express, operating within the Fresno Metropolitan Area, will operate along the UPRR corridor. Furthermore, the \$780 million identified in the Draft EIR/EIS to construct a bypass loop around the City of Fresno will be used to relocate Amtrak and BNSF services within the UPRR corridor. If it is determined that relocating Amtrak and BNSF services into this corridor is not technically feasible, the HSR Authority will meet with the County of Fresno, City of Fresno, Fresno COG, and the affected railroads to determine how these funds would be used to effectively mitigate the impact to rail consolidation/relocation and other regional rail issues created by the placement of high-speed trains within the UP corridor.

Maintenance and Storage Facility

The HSR Authority should consider locating the proposed maintenance and storage facility in the City of Fresno or Fresno area.

Project Phasing

The Central Valley segment of the high-speed rail system should be completed first since its construction is not as complex or costly.



**Response to Comments of Susan B. Anderson, Chair, County of Fresno, Board of Supervisors, August 30, 2004
(Letter AL055)**

AL055-1

Acknowledged. The Authority has identified the UPRR alignment (without an express loop) as the preferred alignment through the Fresno urban area. The Authority has also identified the Downtown Fresno site as the preferred station location for a potential HST station to serve Fresno County. Please also see standard response 6.20.5. The Authority will continue to work with the County of Fresno to ensure that construction of the HST does not preclude other vital uses in the corridor.

AL055-2

Acknowledged. The Authority has identified the BNSF alignment as the preferred alignment between Fresno (outside the urban area) and Bakersfield. Please see standard response 6.15.4.

AL055-3

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 2.35.1.

AL055-4

See responses to Comment Letter AL056.

Comment Letter AL056

AL056



2100 Tulare Street, Suite 619
Fresno, California 93721-2111
Telephone: [559] 233-4148 • Fax: [559] 233-9645
Website Address: www.fresnocog.org

August 27, 2004

Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Morshed:

Subject: Official Comments from the Council of Fresno County Governments
Regarding the Draft Program Environmental Impact
Report/Environmental Impact Statement

The following statements are the official comments of the Council of Fresno County
Governments on the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact
Statement. We look forward to the responses to these official comments from the
Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration in the Final Program EIR/EIS.

Farmland Impacts

The potential impacts of high-speed rail on farmland must be analyzed and minimized. It
is preferable that, where possible, existing railroad rights-of-way should be utilized
because they would be least disruptive to farmland.

AL056-1

Level of Service

In addition to non-express trains, at least five (5) of the daily "express trains" in each
direction must stop in Fresno to accommodate commuters to the major metropolitan
areas.

AL056-2

Freight Capability

In light of State air quality issues, the high-speed rail system should still consider
accommodating truck trailers and containers, thereby reducing congestion on highways
and improving air quality. Freight service should be feasible at times when it does not
interfere with passenger service. The greater the system's freight capability, the greater
its financial viability.

AL056-3

Growth and Economic Impacts

Creating a high-speed rail connection to other parts of the State is paramount in moving
people and improving air quality, while creating jobs and improving our economy. It will
also relieve congestion and provide modal choice. However, construction of lengthy
overpasses and/or underpasses through the smaller cities of Fowler, Selma and

AL056-4

Member Agencies: The cities of Clovis, Coalinga, Firebaugh, Fowler, Fresno, Huron, Kerman,
Kingsburg, Mendota, Orange Cove, Parlier, Reedley, San Joaquin, Sanger, Selma & Fresno County

Kingsburg would jeopardize the viability of their downtown business, given the size of
those towns relative to construction.

AL056-4
cont.

Station Location

The high-speed rail station in Fresno County should be located in downtown Fresno.
This location must allow for the maximum multimodal interface with other means of
regional and local passenger transportation.

AL056-5

Alignment

High-speed trains through portions of the cities of Fowler, Selma, and Kingsburg are not
supported. If the decision is made to utilize the UPRR corridor, an alternative alignment
around these three cities will be developed and any additional cost associated with this
option must be included in the high-speed rail financing. All high-speed trains, including
express, operating within the Fresno Metropolitan Area, will operate along the UPRR
corridor. Furthermore, the \$780 million identified in the Draft EIR/EIS to construct a
bypass loop around the City of Fresno will be used to relocate Amtrak and BNSF
services within the UPRR corridor. If it is determined that relocating Amtrak and BNSF
services into this corridor is not technically feasible, the HSR Authority will meet with the
County of Fresno, City of Fresno, Fresno COG, and the affected railroads to determine
how these funds would be used to effectively mitigate the impact to rail
consolidation/relocation and other regional rail issues created by the placement of high-
speed trains within the UP corridor.

AL056-6

Maintenance and Storage Facility

The HSR Authority should consider locating the proposed maintenance and storage
facility in the City of Fresno or Fresno area.

AL056-7

Project Phasing

The Central Valley segment of the high-speed rail system should be completed first
since its construction is not as complex or costly.

AL056-8

Should you have any questions about any of these official comments, please feel free to
contact either myself or Clark Thompson of my staff at (559) 233-4148.

Sincerely,

Clark C. Thompson, for

BARBARA GOODWIN, Executive Director
Council of Fresno County Governments

Cc: Carrie Pourvahidi, Deputy Director
Rachel Vandenburg, PE

Response to Comments of Clark C. Thompson for Barbara Goodwin, Executive Director, Council of Fresno County Governments, August 30, 2004 (Letter AL056)

AL056-1

Acknowledged. It is the Authority's and the FRA's objective to maximize the use of existing transportation corridors and right-of-way for the HST system, to the extent feasible in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources. Furthermore, the Authority has committed to "pursuing agreements with existing owners/rail operators to place the HST alignment within existing rail rights-of-way" (see the Summary – Section S.4.5 and Section 3.8.5 of Final Program EIR/EIS). Potential impacts on farmlands are quantified in Section 3.8 of the Draft Program EIR/EIS. More detailed evaluation of potential farmland impacts would be part of future project level studies should the HST proposal move forward. Please also see standard response 6.15.4.

AL056-2

Acknowledged. The determination of an operational plan for the HST system is beyond the scope of this program EIR/EIS. Should the HST proposal move forward, more detailed operations analysis will be undertaken. The operational plan used to develop the ridership and revenue forecasts assumed about 12 (in each direction) "skip stop" express trains stopping in Fresno (see Authority's June 2000 Business Plan page 59 for details).

AL056-3

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 2.7.3, standard response 2.7.2, and standard response 2.7.1.

AL056-4

Acknowledged. The Authority has identified the BNSF alignment as the preferred alignment between Fresno (outside the urban area) and Bakersfield. Please see standard response 6.15.4.

The potential for overpasses or underpasses to affect the local economies of individual communities will be addressed in the project level environmental analysis when site-specific alignments and design options are considered. Assessment of any potential effects of this type requires design details and data specificity that are neither available nor appropriate at a program level of analysis.

AL056-5

Acknowledged. The Authority has also identified the Downtown Fresno site as the preferred station location for a potential HST station to serve Fresno County. Please see standard response 6.20.5.

AL056-6

Acknowledged. The Authority has identified the BNSF alignment as the preferred alignment between Fresno (outside the urban area) and Bakersfield. Please also see standard response 6.15.4. The Authority has identified the UPRR alignment (without an express loop) as the preferred alignment through the Fresno urban area and the Authority has also identified the Downtown Fresno site as the preferred station location for a potential HST station to serve Fresno County. Please also see standard response 6.20.5. Relocating Amtrak and BNSF services is not the responsibility of the Authority and the analysis for a "loop" line for these purposes is beyond the scope of this program EIR/EIS process. Further review of potential issues related to the relocation of Amtrak service and coordination with the proposed HST service would occur in the project level environmental studies.

AL056-7

Please see standard response 2.35.1.

AL056-8

Please see standard response 10.1.7.

Comment Letter AL057

AL057



City of Gilroy

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
7351 Rosanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

Planning Division (408) 846-0440 FAX (408) 846-0429
Engineering Division (408) 846-0450 FAX (408) 846-0429
Building, Life & Environmental Safety Division (408) 846-0430 FAX (408) 846-0429
Housing & Community Development (408) 846-0290 FAX (408) 846-0429

August 24, 2004

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

Subject: California High-Speed Train Program Draft EIR/EIS
City of Gilroy review comments

Thank you for including the City of Gilroy in the environmental review process for the High-Speed Train (HST) project. The City of Gilroy staff are recommending to the City Council support for the Pacheco Pass via Gilroy alignment for the High-Speed Train alternative. The City of Gilroy staff believe that there are opportunities for the City and the California High Speed Rail Authority to work cooperatively for a project that is mutually beneficial.

AL057-1

A new High-Speed Train station could be built in the downtown area such as the old train yard adjacent to the Caltrain Station, the Sig Sanchez Building area or the old Indian Motorcycle Headquarters. This area has good access to the downtown, the Caltrain station and US 101 and SR 152 via 10th Street (see attached aerial).

AL057-2

We have reviewed the Draft EIR/EIS and have the following comments.

- 1. It is the City of Gilroy's understanding that if the HST alternative is selected, subsequent multimodal access and circulation studies would be conducted at proposed station areas along proposed alignments as plans for alignments, stations, and operations are refined. Additional environmental analysis would be required in conjunction with these studies to ascertain the exact locations of potential project-generated traffic impacts and potential parking demand impacts. Station area circulation studies would be expected as part of project-level environmental document. Please confirm that if the Pacheco Pass via Gilroy alignment for the HST alternative is selected that project level environmental studies will be performed for the Gilroy station and track section through the City of Gilroy.

AL057-3

- 2. The City of Gilroy has a concern about the potentially significant impact the project may have to traffic volume and congestion. In order to adequately address our concerns regarding the High Speed Train Project via Gilroy and the Pacheco Pass, we recommend a specific project traffic impact analysis be prepared. The traffic impact analysis should include, but not be limited to the following:
a. Information on the project's traffic impacts in terms of trip generation, distribution, and assignment for the train station in Gilroy. The assumptions and methodologies used in compiling this information should be addressed.
b. Current Average Daily Traffic (ADT) and AM and PM peak hour volumes on all significantly affected streets and intersections, highway segments and freeway ramps, for the Gilroy train station and elevated rail section through the City.
c. Schematic illustrations of traffic conditions for: 1) existing, 2) existing plus background traffic, 3) existing plus background traffic plus train station project, and cumulative impact for intersections in the train station and elevated grade crossing locations.
d. Calculation of cumulative traffic volumes should consider all traffic-generating developments, both existing and future, that would affect the roadways being evaluated. The City of Gilroy has a development project list.
e. A detailed parking analysis must be prepared that identifies the existing parking condition around the proposed train station and the project level demand for parking for the HST station. Reasonable walking distances must be assumed for the construction of new parking facilities so that residential neighborhoods are not impacted.
3. The City has a concern about the potentially significant impact the project may have to noise and vibration issues.
a. The project-level EIR will have to address the impacts of noise and vibrations to existing buildings and residences in Gilroy, and will have to mitigate noise levels to meet Gilroy's noise standards. In addition, special studies may be required to determine that impact of the trains' vibrations on unreinforced masonry structures downtown.
4. The City has a concern about the potentially significant impact the project may have during construction of the HST train station and elevated track.
a. The construction of a train station and elevated train tracks will cause traffic circulation problems during the construction phase. The construction phase needs to be reviewed in the environmental document and mitigation measures for handling traffic disruption identified.

AL057-4

AL057-5

AL057-6



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Comment Letter AL057 Continued

b. Noise and vibration issues are also a major concern for the Downtown area during construction. The construction impacts must be reviewed and mitigated.

AL057-6
cont.

If you have any questions concerning information in this letter, please contact Don Dey, City Transportation Engineer at (408) 846-0450.

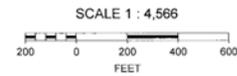
Sincerely,



Wendie Rooney
Community Development Director

Dd:ct

Cc: Jay Baksa, City Administrator
Don Dey, City Transportation Engineer



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**Response to Comments of Wendie Rooney, Community Development Director, City of Gilroy, August 30, 2004
(Letter AL057)**

AL057-1

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.3.1.

AL057-2

Acknowledged.

AL057-3

Please see standard response 6.3.1. Should the HST proposal move forward, additional project level studies will be required, including analyses of potential circulation, traffic and parking demand impacts near proposed stations.

Prior to the implementation of any alignment and/or station option, project level engineering and environmental analysis would be conducted to identify precise placement of facilities and associated impacts, including potential project generated traffic impacts and potential parking demand impacts. In addition, the Authority is recommending further study of potential alignment and station options through the northern mountain crossing from Merced to San Jose, including those that traverse Gilroy.

AL057-4

Acknowledged.

AL057-5

Acknowledged.

AL057-6

Acknowledged. Section 3.18 of the Final Program EIR/EIS addresses construction methods and the potential for construction impacts in general. In addition, each section of Chapter 3 also outlines specific design features that will be applied to the implementation of the HST system to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts. However, construction impacts are highly site-specific in nature. Construction impacts will be addressed in detail during subsequent project level environmental review, based on more precise information regarding location and design of the facilities proposed and the phasing or sequencing of construction. The detail of engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential impacts.

Comment Letter AL058

AL058



**City of
Los Banos**
25 August 2004

California High-Speed Rail Authority
Mr. Joseph E. Petrillo, Chairman
925 L Street Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

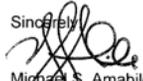
RE: Central Valley High Speed Rail – Pacheco Pass Alignment

Dear Mr. Petrillo;

The citizens of Los Banos are committed to furthering regional transportation endeavors, such as the High Speed Rail Project, which will provide an efficient alternative for intra-state travel; advance local and regional economies; and relieve traffic congestion, and air pollution.

The City of Los Banos, therefore, supports the Pacheco Pass Alignment as the preferred alternative for the High Speed Rail project, as it is the most efficient and economically beneficial alignment for the western region.

Sincerely,


Michael S. Amabile,
Mayor of the City of Los Banos

Cc: Senator Jeff Denham
2824 Park Ave., #C
Merced, CA 95348

Representative Barbara S. Mathews
31 East Channel Street Suite 306
Stockton, CA 95202

Mr. Jerry O'Banion
Supervisor, District Five
2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340

520 J STREET — LOS BANOS, CALIFORNIA 93635
TELEPHONE (209) 827-7000 — FAX (209) 827-7006 — TDD (209) 827-7010
www.losbanos.org

AL058-1

Response to Comments of Michael S. Amabile, Mayor, City of Los Banos, August 30, 2004 (Letter AL058)

AL058-1

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.3.1.



Comment Letter AL059



August 26, 2004

Joseph E. Petrillo
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Petrillo:

On Tuesday, August 24, 2004, the Merced County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in support of the California High Speed Rail System Diablo Range Route. The vote was split, 3/2 and I was one of the descending votes. Unfortunately, my vote could be easily interpreted as being against the High Speed Rail, but nothing could be further from the truth.

I am for the California High Speed Rail system. You have my support in campaigning for the ballot initiative and working diligently in making sure that the High Speed Rail System becomes a part of California's transportation network.

My reason for voting against the resolution was in regard to the wording for the Diablo Range route. I totally support Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center (CAADC) as both a high-speed rail stop and maintenance hub for the proposed High Speed Rail system. In addition, I support whatever route is selected that would embrace and support the stop and maintenance hub for CAADC. My objection is to limiting the route to Diablo if other routes would be considered providing Castle would remain a part of the selected route.

Merced County would benefit from the High Speed Rail system and I will continue to work for the realization of this worthy project. You may count on my support.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Crookham
Kathleen M. Crookham
Supervisor, District Two

cc: Board of Supervisors
Merced County High Speed Rail Citizen Committee

AL059
Board of Supervisors
Gloria Cortez Keene
Kathleen M. Crookham
Michael G. Nelson
Daidre F. Kelsey
Jerry O'Banion
Dimitrios O. Tatum
Merced County Administration Building
2222 "M" Street
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 385-7368
(209) 726-7977 Fax
www.co.merced.ca.us
Equal Opportunity Employer
Striving for Excellence

BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of

DECLARING SUPPORT FOR A CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL SYSTEM DIABLO RANGE ROUTE, STOPS IN MERCED COUNTY, LOCATING THE MAINTENANCE HUB AT CASTLE AIRPORT AVIATION AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER, AND FOR THE CITIZEN'S COMMITTEE MARKETING AND OUTREACH PLAN
RESOLUTION NO. 2004-154

WHEREAS, in 1996, the California State Legislature created the California High-Speed Rail Authority to develop a plan for the construction, operation and financing of a statewide, intercity high-speed passenger rail system; and

WHEREAS, plans are being developed for a High-Speed Rail System that will run from Sacramento through the Central Valley to San Diego, with portions of the system branching out to San Jose and the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, the California High-Speed Rail System will include Merced County sites among the various Central Valley stops; and

WHEREAS, a citizens' committee indorsed by the Board of Supervisors, has been developed to promote and coordinate the Merced community for establishing the presence of a High-Speed Rail System route in Merced County; and

WHEREAS, the California High-Speed Rail System will benefit Merced County by creating greatly needed local jobs, by reducing Central Valley mobile source air pollution, by providing residents a new choice for travel that connects to statewide existing airports and other transit terminals, by alleviating highway congestion, and by utilizing Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center as a maintenance hub for the High-Speed Rail System.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors for County of Merced, supports a California High-Speed Rail system on the Diablo route as the preferred site, supports Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center as a high-speed train route stop, and supports Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center as a maintenance and construction facility hub for the proposed high-speed train system.

Comment Letter AL059 Continued

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS supports the Merced County High-Speed Rail Committee in the implementation of a marketing and education outreach plan on the value of high-speed rail to the Merced community and the Central Valley region.

I, DEMITRIOS O. TATUM, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Merced, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was regularly introduced, passed and adopted by said Board at a regular meeting thereof held on the 24th day of August, 2004, by the following vote:

SUPERVISORS

AYES: Deidre F. Kelsey, Gloria Cortez Keene, Jerry O'Banion

NOES: Kathleen Crookham, Mike Nelson

ABSENT: None

WITNESS MY HAND AND THE Seal of this Board this 24th day of August, 2004.

DEMITRIOS O. TATUM, CLERK

By *Tracy Warrick*
Deputy

**Response to Comments of Kathleen M. Crookham, Supervisor, District Two, County of Merced, August 30, 2004
(Letter AL059)**

AL059-1

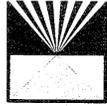
Acknowledged. The Authority has identified the Downtown Merced and the Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center as a potential HST station sites to serve Merced County. In regards to the selection of a maintenance hub site, please see standard response 2.35.1.

AL059-2

Please see standard response 6.3.1.

Comment Letter AL060

AL060



Merced County Association of Governments

369 W. 18th Street • Merced, CA 95340 • Phone (209)723-3153 • FAX (209)723-0322

August 26, 2004

Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director
California High-Speed Train
Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Mr. Morshed,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the California High-Speed Train Program EIR/EIS. MCAG recognizes the monumental undertaking of the High-Speed Rail Authority to put together a program of this magnitude.

MCAG supports the development of High-Speed Rail (HSR), recognizing the need for efficient mass transportation. The project proposes routes through Merced County, with a few alternative choices to specific county jurisdictions. Merced County is an agriculture-based region, and so the impacts of the HSR project will be felt. However, traffic studies show that, unless alternatives to usual travel modes are implemented, impacts to the county's agricultural and environmental lands will be enormous based on growth patterns, sprawl, leapfrog development and increased use of automobiles, with miles driven increasing threefold per capita.

As for air quality, Merced County lies in the center of a large non-attainment area. Steps to reach attainment have included lessening perceived quality of life for residents, and cost-increasing measures for business and industry. The HSR EIR indicates that the project will help to propel this area towards acceptable air quality.

Merced County is an agriculture-based region as well as home to vast wetlands. The impacts of HSR will be felt here. Therefore, we feel that the State HSR authority should be responsible for mitigation, and not put that responsibility on the local communities.

One suggestion of a minor nature: Table 2.6-7, pg 2 of the chart on Page 2-57: Please refer to the University as University of California at Merced or UC-Merced. "Merced University" is not the correct name and is misleading as the county does have an educational institution named Merced College.

AL060-1

Sincerely,

Michael Amabile
MCAG Governing Board Chair

The service-oriented Association of Governments of Atwater, Livingston, Gustine,
Los Banos, Dos Palos, Merced and Merced County, California



CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Response to Comments of Michael Amabile, MCAAG Governing Board Chair, Merced County Association of Governments, August 30, 2004 (Letter AL060)

AL060-1

Table 2.6-7; has been revised to reflect the University of California at Merced (UC Merced).

