

Submission 872 (Dennis Cardoza, Congress of the United States, October 17, 2011)

DENNIS A. CARDOZA
18TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HORTICULTURE AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK, DAIRY AND POULTRY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSERVATION, CREDIT, ENERGY AND RESEARCH



10-17-11P04:44 RCVD

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0518

October 13, 2011

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1224 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6131

DISTRICT OFFICES:
2222 M STREET, SUITE 305
MERCED, CA 95340
(209) 383-4455

1010 10TH STREET, SUITE 5000
MADERA, CA 95354
(209) 527-1914

137 EAST WEBER AVENUE
STOCKTON, CA 95202
(209) 946-0361

Roelof van Ark
Executive Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 800
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director van Ark,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my written comments regarding the draft EIR/EIS for California's proposed High Speed Rail Project for the Merced-Fresno segment.

872-1 My staff and I have participated in numerous public forums and meetings with the High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Federal Rail Authority and other state and federal agencies regarding the alternative routes being evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS. I have reviewed the routes included in the draft, as well as others that have been considered but not included, and have determined that route A-2 along the Highway 99/Union Pacific corridor best meets the project purpose. I concur with the Greater Merced High Speed Rail Committee, the County of Merced, the City of Merced and many others in the Northern San Joaquin Valley that A-2 provides the most efficient route, the least impact on agriculture and natural resources compared to the other routes, and provides the greatest opportunity for transit oriented development in downtown Merced. I request that the CHSRA and the Federal Rail Authority direct staff to further evaluate the Highway 152 corridor for the Merced-San Jose segment for these same reasons.

872-2 I appreciate the CHSRA's local staff's efforts to efforts to keep me and my constituents informed about the project. I would like to stress the importance of the need for the CHSRA and the FRA to engage in an open and on-going process to communicate with farmers regarding impacts to agriculture, including irrigation systems, processing facilities and dairies. There remain many unanswered questions regarding specific avoidance of impacts, mitigation and compensation, so open and forthright communication with agricultural organizations and affected individual farmers is essential to the success of the project.

872-3 As the HSRA is aware, the San Joaquin Valley suffers from a variety of poor economic, environmental and societal indicators, including high unemployment, high housing foreclosure rates, low high school graduation and college going rates, poor air quality and poor health (including asthma, diabetes, obesity, heart disease and cancer). This region is committed to reversing these trends by bringing greater economic and educational opportunities to Valley

872-3

residents and improving the environmental quality of the Valley and the public health of Valley residents. Key to all these strategies is connecting the Valley to the other major regions of the state through improved transportation access, with high speed rail service at the top of the list. Therefore, it is crucial that the Merced-Fresno segment of the EIR/EIS include continued planning and development of the Merced downtown station along route A-2. The A-2 route and the Merced station are strategically located to serve the Northern San Joaquin Valley and to pave the way for further development of Phase II of the project. I request the HSRA reiterate its commitment to the Merced station and to its partnership with the City of Merced in continuing the planning process and in working toward a schedule for construction.

872-4

Lastly, I would like to request that the HSRA remove the evaluation and discussion of the Heavy Maintenance Facility (HMF) options in the final EIR/EIS. Stakeholders in Merced and the Northern Valley were informed by Executive Director Van Ark and HSRA staff on repeated occasions that that the HMF was not under evaluation at this stage of the process. Therefore, I was surprised to read in the draft what appears to be an evaluation of the various HMF sites. Not only does this run contrary to what we were told, but the information contained in the draft is incomplete and inaccurate. Rather than correct these inaccuracies at this stage (in which the HMF sites are not under evaluation), I would like to request instead a more thorough and accurate evaluation of the HMF sites at the appropriate time. I would also like to request that when this evaluation takes place that the HSRA work with the Greater Merced High Speed Rail Committee and the County of Merced to obtain more accurate information regarding details and options of the Castle Commerce Center site and points of access.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dennis Cardoza
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Response to Submission 872 (Dennis Cardoza, Congress of the United States, October 17, 2011)

872-1

See MF-Response-GENERAL-10 and MF-Response-GENERAL-16.

872-2

See MF-Response-GENERAL-17.

Outreach staff have contacted those individuals asking for additional information in order to assist them in locating their properties on the project maps contained in the Appendices to the EIR/EIS. The Authority/FRA held numerous workshops and hearings in the area during the EIR/EIS review period in order to provide additional information about the project and its impacts, and to solicit the views of the public (See Chapter 8 of the Final EIR/EIS).

872-3

See MF-Response-GENERAL-9.

872-4

See MF-Response-GENERAL-15.