L001

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

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BY:

RICHARD J. BENSON
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

P.O. Box 784
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338
(209) 966-3222
1-800-736-1252
FAX (209) 966-5147
www.mariposacounty.org/board

July 13, 2007

California High Speed Rail Authority
ATTN: Judge Quentin Kopp
925 L St., Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Hearing Process on "Draft Bay" Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS

Dear Judge Kopp:

Mariposa County is the newest member of the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee (SJVRC) and, as such, we are very concerned about the plans and implementation of future high speed rail transportation. L001-1

As we progress through the planning stage for the high-speed rail route between Los Angeles, through the San Joaquin Valley, to San Francisco, we are approaching a very critical decision point regarding the route to traverse the Diablo Mountain Range into the San Francisco Bay area and the city of San Francisco. L001-2

Historically, Altamont Pass has been recognized by most as the preferred route as compared to Pacheco Pass to the south. The Altamont route offers a shorter distance between Los Angeles and San Francisco and offers high speed service to a greater number of passengers. Additionally, the Altamont route will allow more San Joaquin Valley cities to be served by high speed rail. By contrast, the Pacheco route will be longer through more rugged terrain and will enter the South Bay area cities, which are in very close proximity to each other. High speed rail will have to compete with other established forms of surface transportation such as BART and commuter rail service, while being unable to attain a significant speed advantage. The southern route will not address service beyond Fresno, eliminating the cities of Merced, Modesto and Stockton, in addition to many of the vacation destinations in the Sierras such as Yosemite National Park, which one day may be connected by intermountain rail. L001-3

At the June 27th HSRA Meeting in San Carlos, a list of five hearing sites on the draft EIR were presented, which included only Bay Area cities. During this meeting a request was made by Chair John Pedrozo of the Merced County Board of Supervisors to conduct an EIR hearing in the central valley. Dan Leavitt, HSRA Deputy Director, gave a verbal confirmation to schedule an additional meeting in Merced on August 30, 2007. L001-4

Although the Merced meeting is welcome, if a true measure of public sentiment is to be received, the HSRA should consider hearings in more San Joaquin Valley cities including (but certainly not limited to) Bakersfield, Fresno, Modesto and Stockton, keeping in mind that the Bay Area sites are in close proximity to each other, while the San Joaquin Valley sites are not. Of the six meetings currently scheduled, only one is outside the tight knit group of cities in the Bay Area. L001-4 cont.

The southern section of the high speed rail system offers unique challenges. Bakersfield to Los Angeles via Tehachapi, the high desert cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, Saugus, Newhall, San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles all have a vested interested in the entire HSR route. Palmdale is a future site for an International Airport, which will serve much of the Los Angeles area, bringing more passengers into the high speed rail system. The high desert area has grown considerably and that growth will continue well into the future. The route will include the San Fernando Valley and continue on to Los Angeles. All of these population centers along the HSR route have a stake in what we propose along the entire route. L001-5

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors believes that public comment should include all the areas along the HSR line. It's been over two years since Los Angeles has had a public hearing. The high desert communities should certainly be included also. After the public input process is completed and fairly assessed, we believe that the choice between Altamont and Pacheco will show that Altamont is by far the best and only choice to complete the run into the Bay Area. With this outcome, we strongly believe that the High Speed Rail will become the grand system where all communities will have had the ability to have a say in its development and that future generations will enjoy the high speed rail benefits within the state of California. L001-6

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to participating in the development of the high speed rail system.

Sincerely,

Janet Bibby

JANET BIBBY
Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

JB/BA/MJ

cc: Daniel Leavitt, Deputy Director, California High Speed Rail Authority

cc-

Arthur L. Lloyd
20 Arapahoe Court
Portola Valley, CA 94028-7616

Attn: Rob Owen or Chris Cypret
Division of Rail MS 74
P.O. Box 942874
Sacramento, CA 94274-0001

BART Director Tom Blalock
42666 Sully Street
Fremont, CA 94539

Michael Snyder
2378 Tokay Court
Paradise, CA 95969

Supervisor Federal E. Glover
Contra Costa District 5
315 East Leland Avenue
Pittsburg, CA 94565

Howard Abelson
3150 Hilltop Mall Road #34
Richmond, CA 94806

Supervisor Henry Perea
Fresno County Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare Street, Room 300
Fresno, CA 93721-2198

Larry Miller
1584 East Utah Avenue
Fresno, CA 93720

Mayor Harvey L. Hall
City of Bakersfield
1501 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Supervisor Ray Watson
Kern County Board of Supervisors
1115 truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Supervisor Alene Taylor
Kings County Government Center
1400 West Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, CA 93230

Maged El-Rabaa
County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
P.O. Box 1460
Alhambra, CA 91802-1460

Bruce Heard
204 East Cordova Street
Pasadena, CA 91101-2425

Supervisor Max Rodriguez
Madera County Government Center
209 West Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637-3534

Supervisor Vern Moss
121 Holiday Way
Chowchilla, CA 93610

Supervisor John Pedrozo
Merced County Board of Supervisors
2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340

Angelo Lamas,
Merced County Administration Building
2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340

Supervisor Illa Collin
7423 Braeridge Way
Sacramento, CA 95831

Cameron Beach
359 Wawona Street
San Francisco, CA 94127

Supervisor Leroy Ornellas
San Joaquin County Courthouse
222 East Weber Avenue, Room 701
Stockton, CA 95202

Stacey Mortensen
San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Supervisor Jim DeMartini
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors
1010 Tenth Street, Suite 6500
Modesto, CA 95354

George Gaekle
302 Northgate Drive
Modesto, CA 95350

Supervisor Mike Ennis
Tulare County Board of Supervisors
2800 West Burrel Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291-4582

Ty Holscher
1395 South K Street
Tulare, CA 93274-6426