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Mr. Lenny Mendonca, Chair
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
Sacramento CA 95814

Subject: CHSRA Draft 2020 Business Plan

Dear Chair Mendonca,

As Chair of the Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority), I write to express support for the CHSRA 2020 Draft Business Plan recommendation to advance a Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment. The interim plan will provide high-speed rail service to Californians at the earliest possible date and align with vital State Rail improvements north of Merced, leveraging both existing and planned rail infrastructure for near-term Bay Area connectivity and unlocking many of the transformative economic and environmental benefits of the emerging system. The Valley Link Project is a vital, and cost-effective link in this interim operating plan, and I respectfully ask that it be identified in the CHSRA 2020 Business Plan.

Valley Link will connect two major intermodal hubs with 25 round trips per day: at North Lathrop where it will link with the San Joaquins service from Merced and at the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station where it will provide riders fast and frequent service throughout the Bay Area.

The 42-mile, 7 station Valley Link project serves communities and households in the Northern San Joaquin Valley with some of our state's highest poverty rates. It will readily connect our state's future high-speed rail system to BART with direct and seamless service to major employment centers in all parts of the Bay Area. It links our Northern California Megaregion's workforce to affordable housing, provides opportunities for compact transit-oriented development and is projected to have a significant impact on the reduction of VMT and greenhouse gas emissions. In short, Valley Link is vital to our state's economy, environment and the quality of life in our communities. An estimated 98,500 of our Bay Area workers are now living in the San Joaquin Valley, driving by car through the Altamont Pass with an average 78-minute commute each way. This hurts our environment. It hurts our economy. But importantly, it translates to the loss of 28 days per year on average for each individual commuter – and this hurts our families.





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Valley Link has widespread support from all sectors of the Northern California Megaregion and at project inception, has an unprecedented 1/3 of its funding already identified through local sources. Project development continues to advance with urgency - environmental clearance is nearly complete and a targeted revenue service date for Valley Link is set for 2027. We are also working in partnership with the SJJPA and ACE on the Altamont Vision – a longer-term plan for complementary system improvements. Phase 1 of the Altamont Corridor Vision includes a tunneling enhancement that will straighten track through the Altamont Pass, improving passenger travel time and project effectiveness even further - with an estimated ridership increase of 70%.

On behalf of the 15-member Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Regional Rail Authority and the communities they represent, I thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Draft CHSRA 2020 Business Plan. We look forward to working with the CHSRA to advance our project in support of the proposed interim operating plan.

Sincerely,

Scott Haggerty, Chair
Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority

Attachment: Valley Link Fact Sheet

CC:
Brian Kelly, CEO
Brian Annis, CFO
Chad Edison, CalSTA

