



March 12, 2021

California High-Speed Rail Authority
Attn: Draft 2020 Business Plan
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Email to: DraftBP2020@hsr.ca.gov

Subject: Comments on California High-Speed Rail Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan

Dear California High-Speed Rail Authority,

This letter provides WYE Madera County’s input to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (“CHSRA”) on the *California High Speed Rail Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan* issued on February 9, 2021. WYE Madera County is a collaborative of agencies in Madera County with common interests pertaining to the California High-Speed Rail (“HSR”). WYE Madera County members are:

- County of Madera
- City of Chowchilla
- City of Madera
- Madera County Transportation Commission
- Madera Unified School District
- Workforce Development Board of Madera County
- Madera County Economic Development Commission

WYE Madera County compliments CHSRA on many aspects of the Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan, and we are supportive of the plan’s emphasis on development of Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Service with stops at Kings/Tulare and Madera to provide electrified, high-speed rail service at the earliest possible time. The electrified Interim Operating Segment between Merced and Bakersfield coordinated with improvements aligned with the State Rail Plan has the potential to create significant statewide and regional benefits in advance of completion of a statewide HSR system. Notwithstanding these potential benefits, Madera County residents and businesses also stand to experience adverse effects associated with the development of rail line and operation of HSR trains in our communities. Therefore, we continue to request and emphasize the need for comprehensive planning of facilities and operations in Madera County to minimize adverse effects and maximize the benefits of the HSR system in the County.

WYE Madera County focuses our comments here on: 1) the importance of a permanent Madera Station, 2) request for clarification of CHSRA’s intent for siting HSR maintenance facilities; and 3) outlining measures to reduce adverse effects of HSR and to provide offsetting benefits in Madera County.

1. Importance of Permanent Madera Station

In Madera County, the benefits of HSR will be largely dependent on the availability of local access to HSR provided by a Madera Station. WYE Madera County is supportive of the Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan’s identification of a Madera Station as an integral component of the HSR system. The Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan discusses CHSRA’s intent to “carry the four Central Valley station projects (Merced, Fresno, Kings/Tulare and Bakersfield) into advanced design,” and notes that, “[d]esign work on the Madera



Station will be managed by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority.” (pg. 70) Notwithstanding the assignment of the Madera Station design work to the San Joaquin JPA, WYE Madera County members urge CHSRA to recognize the Madera Station as an integral and permanent component of the statewide HSR system. Greater certainty regarding a permanent Madera Station will foster confidence in land use planning and development decisions that contribute to the success of HSR and allow HSR to result in local and regional benefits. Therefore, WYE Madera County requests that the 2020 Business Plan be revised to clarify the Authority’s intent for integrating a permanent Madera Station into the Central Valley segment and recognize the importance of a Madera Station in the viability of HSR.

2. Maintenance and Other Operational Facilities Siting

The Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan is unclear regarding CHSRA’s current intent for the siting of maintenance and other HSR operational facilities. The revised plan eliminates discussion of a heavy maintenance facility and does not clearly describe near-term or long-term plans for determining necessary facilities or where such facilities will be sited. We note that a February 2021 “Capital Cost Basis Estimate Plan” associated with the Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan assumes that the heavy maintenance facility would be replaced by a Trainset Certification Facility (TCF) and further assumes that the TCF will be located within the Fresno Works Maintenance of Way Facility. However, these assumptions do not appear to be discussed in the Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan and CHSRA’s intent is unclear.

WYE Madera County has previously expressed the importance of opportunities to seek siting of maintenance or other HSR operations facilities in Madera County to help to offset adverse socioeconomic effects of HSR. We request that the 2020 Business Plan clarify CHSRA’s current intent regarding HSR facilities, and we urge CHSRA to engage WYE Madera County and its member agencies for input prior to making final siting decisions.

3. Measures to Reduce Adverse Effects and Provide Local Benefits

As detailed in previous comments to CHSRA, WYE Madera County has suggested several measures that would aid in offsetting the adverse socioeconomic effects of HSR in Madera County and the cities of Chowchilla and Madera. We continue to urge CHSRA to commit to implementing these measures, and request that the 2020 Business Plan identify that these measures will be implemented to ensure HSR development does not result in disproportionate adverse effects to disadvantaged communities in Madera County. The requested measures include:

1. Establish the HMF, and/or other HSR system operations facilities, in Madera County to provide for efficiencies to the HSR system and to help offset the disproportionate environmental, economic, and community impacts of HSR in Madera County;
2. Include "local hire" requirements in agreements with construction contractors working on various phases of HSR in Madera County, and specify consultation with Madera County's Workforce Development Board, the cities of Chowchilla and Madera, and Madera County regarding available positions to assist with ensuring local residents benefit from available employment associated with HSR construction and operation;
3. Provide funding to local agencies in Madera County sufficient for updating land use plans, transportation plans, and other local planning documents as necessary due to HSR effects on land use compatibility, parcel acquisition and division, effects on established communities, and effects on the County's transportation network (existing and planned roads and bike/pedestrian facilities);
4. Provide funding to local land use authorities in Madera County sufficient for updating zoning designations as necessary due to HSR effects on land use and properties;
5. Provide financial assurances sufficient to fund local agency completion/cleanup of work initiated at various HSR construction sites if necessary due to HSR funding delays or shortfall;



6. Provide for developing and permanently retaining an HSR Madera Station in Madera County to ensure continued value of infrastructure and access provisions developed for the proposed temporary station and to enable HSR to serve residents and businesses in Madera County;
7. Provide funding for upgrades to local emergency service equipment and personnel training as needed to provide emergency response associated with HSR operations and facilities;
8. Provide a source of long-term ongoing funding for operation and maintenance of the Fairmead Elementary School property after transferring it back to Madera County for operation and maintenance as a community center, as proposed in the DSEIR;
9. Establish a mechanism for HSR construction practices that will minimize construction-related traffic effects (e.g., detours, closures, increased vehicle miles traveled [VMT]) with specific requirements for construction scheduling and phasing, and include defined processes for review and approval of construction traffic management plans by affected local agencies in Madera County;
10. Establish mechanism to ensure construction contractors are accountable to CHSRA and to local agencies for adherence to construction/traffic management plans and mitigation requirements;
11. Provide a mechanism to aid in funding the extension and connection of Avenue 17 westward to SR 145 to compensate for east/west road closures and the loss of connectivity resulting from HSR and to ensure emergency access and acceptable response times between areas east and west of HSR facilities;
12. Provide for the design, permitting, and reconstruction of the State Route (SR) 99/SR 152 interchange with a design that includes on- and off-ramps to both northbound and southbound SR 99;
13. Provide specific measures that will ensure permanent closures of local roads and road crossings are minimized;
14. Provide specific measures to reconstruct and improve existing local roads and intersections sufficient to mitigate construction impacts and to accommodate increased use due to closure of other roads and future traffic;
15. Provide analysis and measures sufficient to ensure the phased development of the HSR system, in consideration of initial components in Madera County and the Central Valley, does not adversely affect the region's ability to comply with Federal Clean Air Act Transportation Conformity requirements;
16. Provide compensation to local agencies and community groups for the economic and community impacts of HSR in Madera County;
17. Provide compensation to local agencies for loss of property tax revenue from properties acquired for HSR facilities or otherwise decreased in value as a result of HSR (e.g., payments in lieu of taxes);
18. Provide compensation to local agencies and to communities for reduced jobs and income associated with permanent loss of agricultural land and productivity as a result of HSR;
19. Provide enhanced aesthetic features, with Task Force involvement, in the design of HSR structures and other infrastructure to be developed or reconstructed as a result of HSR, including but not limited to, interchanges, overpasses, and elevated track structures;
20. Provide a mechanism, with Task Force involvement, to design, fund, install, and maintain a minimum of eight (8) "Welcome to Madera County," "Welcome to the City of Chowchilla," and "Welcome to the City of Madera" high-quality, lighted signs along HSR facilities to promote Madera County and its cities to HSR users;



21. Provide a mechanism to ensure that surface water and groundwater rights associated with acquired or otherwise affected properties are sufficient for retaining local access to groundwater and aquifer for regional water supply and groundwater recharge needs;
22. Provide opportunities for shared utility use of the HSR corridor and fund and install utility connections when available and feasible for communities adversely affected by HSR (e.g., installation of conveyance facilities for water and sewer services to the affected community of Fairmead); and
23. Provide funding for training, equipment, vehicles, and facilities as needed for local emergency response agencies to supplement their capabilities to provide emergency response for HSR-related construction and operations.

Conclusion

WYE Madera County submits these comments for consideration by the Authority in completing the 2020 Business Plan and in furthering collaboration with between the CHSRA and WYE Madera County member agencies to ensure that HSR development achieves statewide and regional transportation objectives while minimizing adverse effects and providing benefits to the residents and businesses of Madera County.

Please feel free to contact Matthew Treber at 559-675-7821 or matthew.treber@maderacounty.com with any questions and to schedule a meeting to discuss these issues with the Task Force. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Matthew Treber
Chief of Development Services
Madera County

Patricia Taylor, Executive Director
Madera County Transportation Commission

Rod Pruett, City Administrator
City of Chowchilla

Tracie Scott-Contreras, Executive Director
Madera County Workforce Investment Board

Arnoldo Rodriguez, City Manager
City of Madera

Bobby Kahn, Executive Director
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