



RailPAC
Rail Passenger Association
of California and Nevada

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March 15, 2021

California State Senate Sub-Committee #5 - Transportation
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Chairs Gonzalez, Durazo and Sub-Committee Members:

After review of the California High Speed Rail Authority Revised Draft 2020 California Business Plan, the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) recommends that the Revised 2020 Business Plan be adopted. RailPAC also supports the appropriation of the remaining Proposition 1A funds to complete the core 119-mile Central Valley segment. RailPAC feels it is critical to continue to focus on completing the rail line from Merced to Bakersfield and initiating the Interim Central Valley Operating Plan as the best strategy forward.

In order to sustain and accelerate project momentum and avoid cash flow issues, it is critical that the remaining Proposition 1A funds be appropriated to finish the core 119-mile segment between Madera and Poplar Ave. This would eliminate a major current risk (COVID driven short-fall in Cap and Trade funds) while positioning California's high-speed rail project as the strongest candidate for additional Federal funds.

Ironically some of the project options proposed by others substantially increases project risk resulting in a high probability of an increase in costs due to delays. Suggestions that the Proposition 1A appropriation be postponed rests on the assumption that the cash flow shortfall can be mitigated. This is speculative and the recommendation increases risk. In addition, not providing a steady funding source prevents the agency from taking advantage of any opportunities to accelerate construction. This suggestion also assumes that the Biden Administration will favorably view projects that are not taking actions to best position themselves to leverage Federal investment.

Among the other postponements suggested, none creates a greater risk than the delay of the Track and Systems contract. First, the core 119-mile segment requires a track to meet ARRA requirements, second all of the core 119-mile designs for civil works will be completed by the time the Track and Systems contract is finalized, third the Track and Systems project will require many months of design and pre-construction activities all of which occur off-site without impacting civil construction. The fourth issue is extremely critical and the activity most impacted by any delay. Much of the Track and Systems components (such as rail, ties, signal components, etc.) are long-lead time items in an environment of a major federal infrastructure initiative where the capacity of the railroad supply industry is geared to lower, normal levels of railroad investment. Delay risks putting California's HSR project behind the Northeast Corridor, Brightline, Texas Central and Chicago Hub passenger rail capacity projects in acquiring track and signal components.

One of the key initiatives of the CHSRA Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan is to initially construct the Merced to Bakersfield operating segment as a single track line (with passing sidings). This is an example of focusing in on what is critical to start-up. A single-track rail line is adequate for systems and rail equipment testing. Given the Interim Operating Plan's proposed service level (hourly service from Bakersfield and Merced 18 hours per day); a single track with passing sidings is sufficient. It is not until hourly service is added between Bakersfield and the Bay Area that a double-track railway will be required. During testing and subsequent interim operations additional segments of double track can be safely constructed. Amtrak totally reconstructs its Northeast Corridor tracks even as operations safely continue on adjacent tracks.

The CHSRA Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan presents a viable plan that substantially improves the California passenger rail network. The Interim Operating Plan brings true high-speed rail service to California sooner than any alternative option. It demonstrates the potential of high-speed rail while facilitating an improved and expanded ACE/San Joaquin/HSR network reaching all of California and delivering a broad integrated California transportation network with the high-speed rail service as its core link. This network also creates the most financially viable option for increasing service and reducing the required operating subsidy compared to the current standalone ACE and San Joaquin services.

The Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada is a bi-state organization with membership throughout California and Nevada. RailPAC is a strong advocate for an expanded comprehensive public transportation network serving the entire state. RailPAC is an all-volunteer non-profit passenger rail advocacy group, founded in 1978. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input on this vital issue.

Yours truly,
Steve Roberts
President Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada



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March 4, 2021

California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
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Chair Richards and CHSRA Board Members:

After review of the California High Speed Rail Authority Revised Draft 2020 California Business Plan and the proposed Interim Operating Plan, the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) recommends that the Board adopt both the Revised 2020 Business Plan and re-phasing of the remaining Proposition 1A funds to complete the core 119 mile Central Valley segment. RailPAC supports the continued focus on completing the rail line from Merced to Bakersfield and initiating the Interim Central Valley Operating Plan as the best strategy forward.

The Interim Operating Plan brings true high-speed rail service to California sooner than any alternative option. It demonstrates the potential of high-speed rail while facilitating an improved and expanded ACE/San Joaquin/HSR network reaching all of California and delivering a broad integrated California transportation network with the high-speed rail service as its core link. This network also creates the most financially viable option for increasing service and reducing the required operating subsidy compared to the current standalone ACE and San Joaquin services.

RailPAC supports the effort to “right-size” the Track and Systems procurement to improve efficiency and timeline by matching track constructed to operating requirements during early testing and interim operations. RailPAC also applauds the effort to match equipment requirements, by stage, by looking at leases of equipment. Also given the fact that Merced – Bakersfield is a standalone HSR line, existing production trainsets, perhaps from two or more manufacturers, can be evaluated side-by-side. Finally, RailPAC supports the forward leaning commitment to begin property mapping, geotechnical investigations, identification of utility relocations, engineering, and detailed design on environmentally cleared extensions from Madera to San Francisco and Bakersfield to Anaheim. This key initiative will allow California High Speed Rail to take advantage of available funding as it becomes available.

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Yours truly,
Steve Roberts

President Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada

cc: Brian Kelly, CEO California High-Speed Rail Authority
Dan Levitt, Manager of Regional Initiatives San Joaquin Regional Rail Authority