



October 9, 2019

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

RE: Support for Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment

Dear Chair Mendonca,

Fresno County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) strongly supports HSRA's plan to pursue a Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment. This will provide high-speed rail service to Californians as soon as possible. As an early stakeholder in and supporter of the project, the Fresno County EDC recognizes the economic benefits that come from such a consequential public works project and the City of Fresno has planned extensive development around the site of the future Fresno Station, much of which hinges on a fully functional station and trains operating from within Downtown Fresno.

The Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment will leverage the maximum degree of connectivity to other improving rail services, while important project development work also continues in other parts of the state. Direct connections in Merced to ACE and the San Joaquins will also translate into faster connections to the Capitols, Caltrain, BART, SacRT, Valley Link and VTA systems, which will also experience higher ridership. The success of this early interim service is essential towards implementing the ultimate high-speed rail system between the Bay Area, Sacramento, San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

We understand the significant benefits of the entire project which include:

- Providing a much faster, more frequent and more reliable passenger rail service than is currently available in this corridor;
- Reducing travel times for rail passengers between Sacramento and the Bay Area to Bakersfield by up to 90 to 100 minutes;
- Providing the highest ridership and revenue potential of any Central Valley option;
- Improving air quality in the Central Valley by shifting from diesel to clean, electrically powered trains;
- Providing an overall infrastructure configuration offering significant benefits to both passenger and freight movement; and
- Allowing early testing of high-speed operations and passenger use and reduces ramp-up time for future extensions.

In addition, our civic leaders and institutions are poised to take advantage of being home to the first high-speed train system in the United States. California State University Fresno has started a rail engineering course while State Center Community College, the trades, and our local workforce agencies are all training a new class of welders, electricians, and numerous other vocational skills that are anticipated to be necessary for operation and maintenance of train sets. These are just a few examples of how high-speed rail is already changing not just our landscape, but also our economy.

Our community and others along the alignment deserve a functional, profitable, and sensible operating segment at the earliest possible time. To delay the opportunity to have a functional, profitable operating segment is to delay opportunities to Fresno County residents who will build, ride, and ultimately help make high-speed rail a success.

With these things in mind, Fresno County EDC is pleased to submit this letter of support for the Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lee Ann Eager', written in a cursive style.

Lee Ann Eager
President/CEO
Fresno County Economic Development Corporation

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