

May 27, 2020
Assembly Transportation Committee Hearing 5/27
Comments RE:2020 HSR Business Plan

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Assembly Transportation Committee, I am an Assistant Professor at California State University, Fresno, where I specialize in Railroad Engineering. Today I am writing in support of the Governor's 2020 Business Plan for California High Speed Rail as it is currently proposed. In 2018, travelers made 18 million trips between the San Francisco Bay area and the Los Angeles region. With our airports reaching their capacity, and demand still growing as our population expands towards 50 million people, true high-speed rail at 220 mph, will provide the mobility to keep our economy growing. In order to travel at these speeds and provide travel times competitive with airline flights, the trains need to be electrically-powered. Diesel-fueled locomotives cannot provide enough power to overcome the wind resistance generated at such high speeds, and therefore have much-lower maximum operating speeds.

An additional benefit of electrically-powered trains over diesel-fueled trains is a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The zero-emission electric trains powered by renewable energy sources are predicted to prevent 1.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually from being emitted into the atmosphere. That is the amount of carbon dioxide produced annually by 400,000 automobiles.

Furthermore, the current plans for the California High-Speed Rail project have already created and will continue to generate thousands of jobs in the Central Valley – one of the state's regions most economically devastated by COVID-19. Besides the over 4,000 construction jobs already created, the training of skilled workers to be performed by career centers in communities such as Selma, in Fresno County, and the education of engineers, managers, and system operators through the railway engineering program of Fresno State will help create the high-tech workforce of California's future right here in the Central Valley. In the long term, just as it has in countries around the world, the HSR will help foster economic growth of our region.

Right now is the time for action. Let's complete what the voters asked for – a true high-speed rail system, running at 220 mph, that connects eight of the ten most-populated regions of the state. Doing so will give Californians a new world of opportunities, where they can move out of crowded urban areas into communities in the Central Valley, while still working in the San Francisco Bay and Los Angeles areas. When they do so, the new Central Valley residents will remove cars from the freeways and will contribute to building economic prosperity in the interior of the state.

Sincerely,

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