



MIKE LEONARDO
Executive Director

May 26, 2020

California Assembly Transportation Committee
Attention: Eric Thronson, Chief Consultant
P.O. Box 942849,
Sacramento, CA 94249-0011

Re: Public Comment on the Governor's High Speed Rail Business Plan

I am the Executive Director for the Fresno County Transportation Authority which is responsible for administering Measure C, the one-half percent sales tax for transportation in Fresno County.

The purpose of this note is to voice our support for the Governor's California High Speed Rail Business Plan as it has been presented to the Legislature.

Fresno County and the City of Fresno have long been supporters of High Speed Rail. The County and City governments have expended considerable time, effort, and expense to plan how our local transportation systems will accommodate and integrate with High Speed Rail facilities and operations. It is critical that the State continue their commitment to completing High Speed Rail through the Central Valley, and ultimately the State of California. Utilizing the High Speed Rail alignment for Amtrak services, as some have suggested, would be a slap in the face to the Valley and Fresno County in particular. Utilizing the High Speed Rail alignment for anything other than fully electrified trains running at 220 MPH is inconsistent with the promises made to the valley to improve connectivity, reduce congestion, and improve air quality.

Besides these benefits, operation and maintenance of this system will also bring skilled, good paying jobs to the most disadvantaged area in the state. With the added burden of the COVID 19 shut down, the last thing this region needs is eliminating the potential this transformative project brings to the Valley.

Fresno is the 5th largest city in the state yet is isolated from the other major metropolitan areas due to limited transportation options. High Speed Rail, as contemplated in the Governor's Business Plan, will go a long way towards making those connections. The Plan's proposal to connect the section currently under construction with Bakersfield and Merced provides a near-term interim connection into northern California via a connection with ACE service in Merced.

Now is not the time to change gears and shift these vitally needed funds to Southern California. Now is the time to complete the first segment of High Speed Rail as an electrified system and continue the State's commitment to linking the valley to northern and southern California.

Thank you for your consideration.