



# SAVE OUR RURAL TOWN

March 23, 2020

California High-Speed Rail Authority  
Attn: Draft 2020 Business Plan  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Electronic transmission of three (3) pages to:  
DraftBP2020@hsr.ca.gov

Subject: Save Our Rural Town Comments on the California High Speed Rail 2020 Business Plan for the California High Speed Rail Project.

Reference: Request for Comments Solicited by the California High Speed Rail Authority.

Honorable Chairman Mendonca;

Save Our Rural Town ("SORT") respectfully submits the following comments on the Draft 2020 Business Plan released by the California High Speed Rail Authority ("CHSRA") on February 12, 2020.

SORT is particularly concerned by the "Ridership and Revenue Forecasting" Technical Document, which projects that ridership rates for short (<50 miles) commuter trips in the Los Angeles Area will be less than 100,000 per year [see Table 5-3]. This corresponds to a service rate of *less than 400 commuters per day throughout all of Greater Los Angeles*<sup>1</sup>. These paltry ridership estimates will not even make a dent in the 110,000 commuter cars per day that now travel between the Antelope Valley and the Los Angeles Basin. Thus, it can only be concluded that HSR will NOT reduce freeway congestion anywhere in Los Angeles or Orange County.

SORT is profoundly troubled by CHSRA's apparent disinterest in serving commuters in Southern California or providing benefits such as reducing freeway congestion and air pollution in the Los Angeles basin. We take this opportunity to remind CHSRA that,

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<sup>1</sup> 100,000 travelers/year, reconciled with 52 weeks/year and 5 days/week means that only 385 commuter trips are projected to occur per work day.

*from inception*, a fundamental purpose of the HSR project was to reduce freeway congestion in the urban portions of California; in fact, commuter service was touted as a primary benefit of the HSR project. For instance:

- In 2008 Oversight Hearings on the California High-Speed Rail Authority, the California State Senate Committee on Transportation & Housing was informed that HSR would service more than 18 million local "in basin" trips in Southern California.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2008, CHSRA itself affirmed that the segments in and around the Los Angeles basin "will provide immediate benefit to improved local commuter rail service"<sup>3</sup>
- In 2012, CHSRA rejected the I-5 corridor alternative primarily because the I-5 corridor does not provide serve to the Antelope Valley or provide "connectivity" between the Antelope Valley and Metrolink<sup>4</sup>.

It is not only CHSRA who touted the commuter service benefits of the HSR project in Southern California; numerous cities in the greater Los Angeles area are looking to HSR to provide essential commuter benefits and, by extension, eliminate local traffic congestion and reduce air pollution<sup>5</sup>. In short, support for the HSR project from local agencies in Southern California is entirely contingent on the expectation that the HSR project will provide substantial commuter benefits. However, and according to the 2020 "Ridership and Revenue Forecasting" report, the HSR project does not provide any commuter benefits because HSR will not be used for commuter purposes in Southern California.

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<sup>2</sup> California State Senate, Committee on Transportation & Housing, Oversight Hearings for the California High-Speed Rail Authority, June 2008, Chart 4, p. 20 [https://archive.senate.ca.gov/sites/archive.senate.ca.gov/files/committees/2015-16/stran.senate.ca.gov/sites/stran.senate.ca.gov/files/FINALHSRREPORT.pdf].

<sup>3</sup> See the "Completion Risk" section on page 25 of the 2008 Business Plan found here: https://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/about/business\_plans/BPlan\_2008\_FullRpt.pdf

<sup>4</sup> See page 42 of CHSRA's "Conceptual I-5 Corridor Study Bakersfield to San Fernando (Sylmar)" Issued January 2012.

<sup>5</sup> According to the City of Palmdale, the crucial benefit of HSR is that "High speed rail service to the San Fernando Valley and City of Los Angeles will provide greatly needed travel options for commuters" [ https://www.cityofpalmdale.org/788/High-Speed-Rail ]. Similarly, Los Angeles County METRO claims the benefit that HSR will provide a 20-minute travel time between Los Angeles and Anaheim [ https://www.metro.net/projects/regionalrail/high-speed-rail/ ]. The General Plan adopted by the City of Anaheim states that, with HSR, "commuters would enjoy the benefits of a system designed to connect with existing rail, and to reduce aviation and highway system infrastructure demands" [Page C-3].

CHSRA has an obligation to "set the record straight" and correct the misimpression held by many cities and government agencies in Southern California that the HSR will provide commuter benefits and reduce congestion on local freeways and highways. Therefore, SORT respectfully requests that CHSRA reach out to all the Counties and Cities in Southern California that are in support of the HSR Project and explain to them in a simple and straightforward manner that the HSR project will not, and is not intended to, serve commuters in the greater Los Angeles Area and thereby reduce congestion on local freeways and highways as reflected in the 2020 Business Plan and the of the "Ridership and Revenue Forecasting" report.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [airspecial@aol.com](mailto:airspecial@aol.com).

Sincerely,

/S/ Jacqueline Ayer

Jacqueline Ayer

Director, Save Our Rural Town

cc: NNCTC c/o Arthur Sohikian [[sohikian@northcountytransportationcoalition.org](mailto:sohikian@northcountytransportationcoalition.org)]  
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