



March 8th, 2021

RE: Support for CHSRA Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan

Dear Honorable Chair Richards,

On behalf of the East Bay Transit Riders Union, I am very pleased to submit this letter of support for the staff recommendations of the CA High-Speed Rail Authority Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan.

Independent peer review has confirmed the Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield corridor will result in the highest forecast ridership increase at the lowest increase in cost versus other transit alternatives. The 171-mile line Interim Operating Segment extending north to Merced and south to Bakersfield coordinated with improvements in both Northern and Southern California will create significant benefits including:

- **Critical Economic Investment in the Central Valley.** Merced to Bakersfield HSR Interim Service will generate significant economic benefits, with over \$38 billion in total economic activity and over 200,000 job-years of employment.
- **Significant Ridership Gains and Saved Subsidy Costs.** Corridor-wide ridership increases from 2.6 million passengers in 2017 to 8.8 million passengers in 2029 that results in reduced state subsidies for passenger rail services.
- **Fight Climate Change by Reducing Emissions.** Improves air quality in the Central Valley and reduces GHG emissions by shifting from diesel to clean, electrically powered trains.
- **Improves Connectivity to Rail Service Throughout the State.** The Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield HSR Interim Service will leverage the maximum degree of connectivity to other rail services, while important project development work also continues in other parts of the state.
- **Saves Time.** Reduces travel times for rail passengers between Sacramento and the Bay Area to Bakersfield by up to 90 to 100 minutes.
- **Improves Connectivity to Public Transit Throughout the State.** Improves access and connectivity to other California destinations through better connections with expanded

ACE and San Joaquins rail services to the north at a multimodal hub in Merced and Thruway Bus Service at Bakersfield for travel to Southern California.

- **Proof of Concept for High Speed Rail.** Allows for early testing of high-speed operations and passenger use and reduces ramp-up time for future extensions.

I, and East Bay Transit Riders Union, also strongly support the recommendation that the \$4.1 billion in remaining Prop 1A HSR bond funds be directed to complete delivery of the 119-mile Central Valley Segment, and the remaining \$100 million in HSR bond funds be used for early design and completing environmental on in environmental review on San Francisco to Los Angeles Phase 1 segments of HSR. This funding is required to implement Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield HSR Interim Service and to extend HSR to San Francisco and Southern California in the future, extensions which will be critical to fighting climate change and working towards socioeconomic and racial equity in California in the next decade.

Sincerely,

Derek Sagehorn
Chair, East Bay Transit Riders Union