

April 28, 2014

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Mr. Aaron Fukuda
Post Office Box 881
Hanford, California 93232
E-mail: cchsraorg@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Fukuda:

Thank you for your letter dated April 23, 2014 regarding the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Board's consideration of the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Fresno to Bakersfield Project Section. In the letter, you request that the Board delay considering certification of the Final EIR/EIS.

I appreciate your interest and involvement in the lengthy and thorough environmental process to date. Citizen engagement is a crucial aspect of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as well as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and your participation along with many others has helped inform and improve the Authority's work throughout this extensive and comprehensive process. The Board's consideration of the Final EIR/EIS next week will be just another step in a process that has spanned five years. Throughout this process, the Authority has consistently gone beyond what is legally required under CEQA to encourage public participation in forming the EIR/EIS.

The development of the Final EIR/EIS has included two draft EIR/EIS documents (in 2011 and in 2012). These documents were made available to the public and Board and the 2012 document was presented to the Board at its August 2012 meeting. The documents were circulated to the public and other government agencies for review and input. At the request of your organization and others, the public comment period on the draft documents was extended beyond the time required under CEQA – twice the time required, in the case of the 2012 document. As I am sure you know, CEQA only requires public comments on the draft EIR/EIS and not the final EIR/EIS. That public comment period (two of them), which ended some time ago, helped improve the environmental analysis and shape the project to reduce impacts, as the process is designed to do.

Since releasing the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority has made it widely available to the public on our website and throughout libraries in the project area far in advance of the regularly scheduled May 6 & 7 Authority Board meeting in Fresno when staff will request Board EIR/EIS certification among other actions.

I will also bring to your attention the fact that the May 6 & 7 Board meeting is structured in such a way that we can ensure maximum opportunity for public comment (as part of

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normal Board meeting protocol under the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act) on the Board's proposed actions regarding the Fresno-Bakersfield Section, including Final EIR/EIS certification and approval of the high-speed rail alignment and facilities. Our meetings typically are held in the morning. For this meeting, however, we are holding the first day of the meeting in the afternoon and evening, and will accept comment until at least 7:30, as noted in the Agenda. This approach provides all members of the public (including daytime workers) with an opportunity to participate.

I assure you that all Board members take very seriously their obligation to independently review the EIR/EIS. Staff notified Board members on April 18 that the Final EIR/EIS was posted on the Authority's website so that we could immediately begin reviewing it. I know that I and my colleagues will be paying special attention to comments that were received on the Draft EIR/EIS to ensure they are appropriately addressed. As stated previously, this document is a continuation of years of work, draft documents, and regular staff presentations to the Board and public regarding the progression of work.

For all of these reasons, we will not delay consideration of the Final EIR/EIS. Thank you again for contacting me and please do not hesitate to do so again in the future.

Sincerely,



Dan Richard
Chairman, Board of Directors

cc: Kings County
City of Bakersfield
Hon. David Valadao
Hon. Kevin McCarthy
Hon. Jeff Denham
Hon. Andy Vidak
Hon. Jim Patterson
David Valenstein, Federal Railroad Administration