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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Via E-Filing

May 9, 2013

Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 35724, California High-Speed Rail Authority—Construction
Exemption—In Merced, Madera and Fresno Counties, California

Dear Ms. Brown:

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) is considering the California High-Speed Rail Authority's (Authority) petition for an exemption (Petition) from the Board's more formal application procedures to permit the Authority to construct the initial section of California's high-speed train system, approximately 65 miles of a dedicated high-speed passenger rail line between Merced and Fresno, California (Project). On April 18, 2013, the Board extended the initial April 16 deadline for replies to the Petition to May 8. This extension more than doubled the usual comment period, from twenty days to forty-two days. On May 8, the Board received a request to again double the comment period to July 15.

As a public agency of the State of California, the Authority takes its responsibilities for full and open public participation in its processes seriously. The Authority and the U.S. Department of Transportation, acting through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), worked hard to ensure that all interested parties had an opportunity to comment on the Project during the now-complete environmental review process for the construction of this initial 65-mile segment (the only portion of the planned system now before the Board). That process was governed by the public participation provisions of both the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, and included 285 public and agency meetings, the consideration of almost 900 public comments, and a 60-day comment period, 15 days beyond the requirements. All of the public comments and other information from the environmental process are available to the Board for its

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consideration of our Petition, and the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis has independently reviewed and "agrees with its analysis and conclusions."¹

The volume and depth of replies submitted by the May 8 deadline demonstrates that the extension the Board granted has allowed ample time for the public to comment on the Petition. It is worth noting that there were no requests from the general public or local officials in the Project area seeking additional time to file comments.

Holding to the current schedule would strike the right balance of public interests: affording sufficient time for meaningful public comment to the Board and avoiding unnecessary delay that would lead to increased costs to the taxpayers. The Authority looks forward to working closely with the Board to address any and all public comments or other issues, and respectfully requests that the Board process this application as expeditiously as possible."

Sincerely,



Dan Richard
Chairman



Jeff Morales
Chief Executive Officer

¹ "Surface Transportation Board, Notice of Adoption Recommendation and Recirculation of Final Environmental Impact Statement, 78 Fed. Reg. 22031, 22032 (Apr. 12, 2013)"

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on May 10, 2013, I served the foregoing letter upon the following parties of record in this proceeding:

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