

May 13, 2013

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Cynthia T. Brown, Chief
Section of Administration
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W., Room 100
Washington, D.C. 20024

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
May 14, 2013
Part of
Public Record

RE: Finance Docket No. 35724, California High-Speed Rail Authority – Construction
Exemption - in Merced, Madera and Fresno Counties, California

1. PETITION FOR EXEMPTION
2. MOTION TO DISMISS PETITION FOR EXEMPTION OF CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

Response to California High Speed Rail Authority's letter to Surface Transportation Board
Filed on May 10, 2013

Dear Ms. Brown:

Your Agency filed a Reply from the High Speed Rail Authority, (CHSRA) responding to a previous filing made to your agency by members of Congress requesting an extension of the comment period concerning this matter. It is my understanding that the filing deadline for comments on Finance Docket No. 35724 was May 8, 2013. CHSRA's late May 10, 2013 filing date suggests that the STB should consider granting another extension to the comment period.

In CHSRA's May 10 Reply, they state that "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." I am a part of the "general public" and live within the High Speed Rail "Project" area. With that being said, I respectfully request that this letter be filed by STB for consideration as you deliberate the merits of this matter and that STB grant another extension to the comment period so that the general public and other stakeholders have adequate time to comment on this very serious matter.

The May 10 letter explains CHSRA is seeking exemption for the initial 65 mile section of the high speed rail project from Merced to Fresno. In earlier CHSRA documents, the initial section is described as being only 29 miles. Whatever the length the Initial section truly is; that section is extremely important because it is the foundation of a massive and technically challenging, 800 mile long passenger rail project that will cost hundreds of billions of dollars to construct and impact untold thousands of business, community and private property stakeholders.

Environmental study for all portions of the project that are necessary to run high speed trains on it must be completed prior to beginning construction of any portion of the project. The portion of the project necessary for high speed train operation that has not been environmentally studied puts at risk the portion that has been studied. Federal and state funds will be at risk of suffering a huge stranded investment.

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The CHSRA is making plans to award a “Design Build” contract to construct the initial section of track between Merced and Fresno to the least technically qualified bidder. Only the best qualified contractors must be considered for this exceedingly complicated project, not necessarily the cheapest. Technical expertise is essential for a huge passenger rail project of this scope and complexity. CHSRA’s decision to award the contract to the least technically qualified bidder will be a recipe for failure.

Please grant an extension for public comments on this important matter.

AND,

Please deny CHSRA’s Petition for Exemption from Surface Transportation Board application procedures. Please require CHSRA to meet STB permit qualifications prior to issuing a permit to construct any portion of the California High Speed Rail Project.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Taylor
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