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May 8, 2013

Ms. Cynthia Brown  
Chief Section of Administration  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

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Office of Proceedings  
May 8, 2013  
Part of  
Public Record

**RE: Comments Concerning California High-Speed Rail Authority's (CHSRA) Petition for Exemption – Docket No. FD 35724**

Dear Ms. Brown:

On behalf of the Economic Development Corporation serving Fresno County (EDC), I write to respectfully urge the Surface Transportation Board to expeditiously grant the petition for exemption filed by the CHSRA for the construction of the 65-mile Madera to Fresno Section.

The EDC is a nonprofit organization established to market Fresno County as the premier location to expand and grow core industries. We strive to not only facilitate site selection for new businesses within Fresno County, but we also assist in the retention and expansion of businesses that are already located in the area.

As high-speed rail planning is happening throughout the nation and California's project is the first of its kind entering construction, I can appreciate that the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) decision has important implications from this point forward. As such, I do believe that careful consideration is warranted, but this should not result in lengthy delay. Expeditious approval of the petition for exemption is greatly needed for the reasons enumerated below.

The high-speed rail project will soon provide thousands of local jobs and contract opportunities for local businesses which are urgently needed. By putting local residents and businesses back to work, the project is not simply supporting those local companies directly contracting with the CHSRA, but other local businesses that benefit when residents have additional income to spend on items for themselves and their families.

Should the project face a prolonged delay, local businesses impacted by the high-speed rail alignment would be faced with great uncertainty. Many of these businesses have expressed a desire for a clear timeline for acquisition and compensation, and some would prefer an expeditious timeline. To have an extended period of uncertainty would be detrimental to the property owners and businesses. Those businesses that lease to others will find that their ability to retain/attract tenants may be further compromised. In addition, those businesses that have been making arrangements based on anticipated property acquisition schedules will lose trust with the process.

The EDC works tirelessly to expand and bring new opportunities to Fresno County and its businesses and residents. As the "Essential Connection" between businesses and the community, we are committed to seeing Fresno County prosper. In particular, the EDC's Local High-Speed Rail Business Support Team

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connects displaced businesses with private and governmental entities committed to responding to the needs of businesses; outreaches to and provides liaison services between displaced businesses and the CHSRA; and provides relocation planning and assistance to displaced businesses. The high-speed rail project will help enhance our region's vitality. For these reasons stated above, the EDC submits this letter of support to urge the Board to grant the petition for exemption for the Madera to Fresno Section.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Ann Eager". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lee Ann Eager  
President/CEO

CC: Secretary Ray LaHood, DOT  
Jeff Morales, CHSRA