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Assembly California Legislature



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236999
FD 35861

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
November 6, 2014
Part of
Public Record

OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN
2014 NOV -5 PM 2:48

November 3, 2014

The Honorable Daniel R. Elliott III, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Oppose California High Speed Rail Authority – Petition for Declaratory Order

Dear Chairman Elliott:

As a Legislator in the California State Assembly for the past six years, I have studied in detail the proposed, as well as the previously proposed, High Speed Rail plans for California.

In 2009, I began to immerse myself in the plan as part of a review of the state's overall financial crisis. From inception, the plan lacked sufficient funding, route planning, and design, and was unable to meet with requirements of the bond, the federal matching-funds, the state audits, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and nearly every facet of any previous agreement or approval process.

Six years later, we find ourselves at the same juncture, with no set plan, no source of future funding and as apparent by the subject petition, an inability to meet state requirements. While there are times when the CEQA process is used as a weapon for project opponents to prevent approvals of an otherwise viable project, such is not the case with this petition. Continual changes in routes, track, rolling stock, method of operations and funding sources, should further emphasize the need for the Authority to meet all CEQA and NEPA mitigation requirements.

The proposed Fresno-Bakersfield alignment will traverse through historic tribal lands, prime agriculture farmland, and minority communities. The Authority should, after six years understand and have planned for the CEQA process and be ready to comply to provide proper mitigation to protect the environment, as well as the rights of those who will be affected along the proposed route.

This project is contained within the borders of the State of California, and should be subject to the state's environmental review. If the Legislature desires to waive any of the requirements, they may in their collective wisdom, vote to do so. I urge you to deny the petition.

Sincerely,

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