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Assembly California Legislature



FRANK BIGELOW
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NATURAL RESOURCES
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April 9, 2013

Cynthia Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0111

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I am writing to request that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) provide notice to my office, as an elected state official with fiduciary responsibilities, if the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) requests any action from STB, including any application or exemption request for California's High-Speed Rail project. I am also requesting notice of any future submissions from CHSRA so that a response may be filed.

As you know, CHSRA has filed a request for exemption from the construction permit requirement for its planned construction in the Central Valley, while also filing a motion to dismiss, in effect arguing that STB does not have jurisdiction because the 29 mile Initial Operating Segment from Merced to Fresno will not affect interstate commerce.

The larger issue here for California is the massive disruption that could occur to a number of counties and communities should the project be built "as is" under current plans. The 114 mile segment of track CHSRA plans to build will dissect valuable, productive farmland, most of which is statutorily protected through State preservation contracts and classified by USDA as important or prime agricultural land, as noted by the Kings County Board of Supervisors.

Madera County, and in particular the City of Chowchilla and the Chowchilla Water District (CWD), will face adverse impacts if CHSRA continues with its current route without making the project route compatible with existing infrastructure to the fullest extent possible.

The San Joaquin Valley is an area with a rich agricultural history that provides the majority of fruits, nuts and vegetables to consumers in the United States. With respect to Chowchilla, CWD consists of approximately 80,000 acres, all within the city boundaries. This project presents the potential for real harm to CWD, the City of Chowchilla, and California's biggest industry in a time of great economic uncertainty and high unemployment, particularly in the Central Valley.

To my knowledge, CHSRA has not applied or received the required permit it needs from STB. In light of this, I respectfully request to be notified if and when this occurs. As a fiscal steward for the state of California, I am obligated to ensure that our state's largest industry is not adversely affected by the construction of a high-speed rail line through the Central Valley.

Sincerely,



Frank Bigelow
Assemblyman, 5th District

cc: Dan Maddelena, Board of Directors, Chowchilla Water District
Michael Mandala, Board of Directors, Chowchilla Water District
Vince Taylor, Board of Directors, Chowchilla Water District
Kole M. Upton, Board of Directors, Chowchilla Water District
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