



February 21, 2011

To:

The United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Senator Barbara Boxer, Chair

The United States House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

Congressman John Mica, Chair

**Written Testimony for the joint Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Hearing in Los Angeles on February 23, 2011**

Thank you both for inviting Californians For High Speed Rail to submit written testimony to the joint Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing in Los Angeles on February 23, 2011. We are excited that you have chosen Los Angeles as the setting for this session, as this city is well on its way to showing what can be done when transportation improvements and urban development are accomplished together. Bold new infrastructure initiatives, such as the local funding from "Measure R," passed by over two-thirds of the county's voters in 2008, along with Mayor Villaraigosa's "30/10 Plan" to accelerate transit projects, including many that will connect to the California High-Speed Rail (CHSR) project, will cement Los Angeles as the southern anchor of CHSR system.

The CHSR project compares favorably to the market served by America's first fast train route, the North East Corridor (NEC), which connects Washington D.C., New York, and Boston. Similar to the NEC's transformative impact on commerce and travel (which will be furthered with additional investments in 21st century high-speed rail infrastructure), the route between Southern California and the Bay Area will reshape cities around each station by revitalizing their downtowns, while providing relief to many of the state's most congested freeways, including Interstate 5 and California State Route 99. Just as the fast trains introduced at the end of the last century have handily cornered over 50% of the air market between NEC cities, true 21st century high-speed rail will introduce Californians to an attractive new alternative to the over-crowded gates and runways that comprise the nation's 2nd busiest air market.

The costs of subsidizing the status quo to meet California's growing population and commercial demands are staggering. Californians For High Speed Rail agrees with the assessment of the former Executive Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, Mehdi Morshed, who wrote in 2009 that, "According to the Authority's updated business plan... high-speed trains will alleviate the need to spend nearly \$100 billion to build about 3,000 miles of new freeway, five airport runways and 90 departure gates during the next two decades."

Private business also recognizes the value in moving people more quickly and efficiently in this market. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation announced in January 2011 that it would be willing to finance half of the CHSR project's cost, an amount equal to about \$21.3 billion. This offer from the Japanese is no high-stakes bet. Their more than 46 years of operating the Shinkansen high-speed train network has demonstrated time and again that large profits come to regions that are connected by clean and fast trains. Additionally, China and

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several international consortiums have also expressed great interest in participating in the construction and operation of the CHSR system, indicating the great feasibility of high-speed rail in California.

The first segment of our 520 mile system to break ground is an ideally located corridor, approximately 120 miles in length, in the center of the state, between Fresno and Bakersfield. This area, hit hard by the current economic downturn, has some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. The 80,000 jobs that will be created in the near-term as a result of the initial construction of this segment will greatly help to stimulate the economy of the region.

Just as the NEC does not begin or end in Baltimore or Wilmington, Bakersfield and Fresno comprise the midsection of California's full high-speed rail line between the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Californians For High Speed Rail applauds the plan to start construction of our high-speed rail system outward from the center of the state, where planning and engineering are further along than in the large urban areas, in which more complex issues still need to be resolved. Furthermore, this first segment is the lowest cost-per-mile section of the project. The more track that can be laid initially, the greater the momentum for the project, which in turn will help to attract private investment.

Californians are not averse to rail travel as our reputation as an automobile paradise might lead one to believe. California's three intercity corridor trains have been whetting the appetites of in-state travelers and tourists to the prospects of high-speed rail for nearly two decades. California's tradition of rail popularity is backed up by the numbers, as nearly half a million passengers in December 2010 boarded our state's trains, which are consistently ranked the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th in ridership in the country.

A commitment to the success of high-speed trains should be a crucial component of our national security policy. Rising oil prices, brought on in no small part by new rounds of destabilization within many of the world's oil producing nations, threatens to cripple our economic recovery, just when the private sector is poised for a rebound. High-speed trains are the only mode of transportation that can effectively move large numbers of people on domestically-produced electricity. California's system has the potential to reduce our dependence on foreign oil by up to 12.7 million barrels per year and eliminate as much as 12 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions annually.<sup>1</sup> The CHSR project will also utilize renewable power generation to supply electricity for the system, opening up new green-collar jobs for California's high tech workers.

Much of the same technological know-how that has been perfected by California's aerospace industry is utilized in the development and construction of high-speed rail systems. Building the CHSR from Los Angeles to San Francisco will be one of the most monumental public-private projects ever undertaken in North America, resulting in 100,000 construction-related jobs each year that the system is being built.<sup>2</sup> From state-of-the-art signaling systems, to efficient and aerodynamic trainsets, to 21st Century construction methods, our project will keep America's most precious resource – the physical and intellectual prowess of its workers – active, prosperous, and secure.

Californians For High Speed Rail requests that your committees take every measure to ensure that California becomes home to this 21st century, true high-speed rail corridor, along with other critical high-speed rail projects around the United States. You can help us provide relief to our state's over-crowded airports and road networks while we reduce our consumption of foreign oil and our production of greenhouse gasses. The passenger demand is strong and getting stronger; the private sector commitment is strong and getting stronger; and the determination to build the entire line between Northern and Southern California is

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<sup>1</sup> California High-Speed Rail Authority, "Project Vision and Scope," [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/project\\_vision.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/project_vision.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

unwavering in California. With your support, we can look toward a brighter future; one that includes trains whipping across the state at speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour.

Thank you for your consideration of our pursuit to establish true high-speed rail in California.

Written testimony submitted by the following people from Californians For High-Speed Rail

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