

**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

Mr. Ronald Batory, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, W12-140
Washington, DC 20590

May 23, 2019

Re: Response to the FRA's Notice of Termination for California High-Speed Rail Grant Agreement FR-HSR-0118-12-10-10

Dear Mr. Batory,

Through research, education and advocacy, SPUR promotes good planning and good government in the San Francisco Bay Area. We bring people together from across the political spectrum to develop solutions to the big problems cities face. With offices in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland, we are recognized as a leading civic planning organization and respected for our independent and holistic approach on infrastructure and urban issues.

SPUR is a supporter of high-speed rail in California and authored two reports about how to make it as successful as possible (*Beyond the Tracks* and *Harnessing High-Speed Rail*). We work with cities in the Bay Area and Central Valley to help ensure that High-Speed Rail in California fulfills its potential.

We strongly encourage the Federal Railroad Administration to fully re-commit its planned investment of \$929 million to California High-Speed Rail as a critical investment in our nation's economy.

California is one of the largest economies in the world. Failing to invest in a high-quality, high-speed rail system will drag down economic growth, not only in California but also the entire United States. A failure to build the high-speed rail system means that the United States will continue to lose its competitive advantage as other countries build and extend their high-speed rail networks.

In addition to creating jobs in construction, engineering, the business trades and professional services—good-paying jobs that are sorely needed—high-speed rail is also a major catalyst for private investment. Many of the areas around high-speed rail stations are also Opportunity Zones,

the signature reinvestment strategy of this Administration. These locations are more attractive investment sites with high-speed rail to connect them to each other and support clusters of industries and business activities.

We strongly discourage the Federal Railroad Administration from requiring the state of California return the \$2.5 billion ARRA funding.

California taxpayers were some of the hardest hit by the Great Recession. The foreclosure crisis started in the Central Valley, and many of the towns, residents and businesses have not recovered. California is also the largest contributor of federal taxes in the nation. ARRA funding for high-speed rail has put many people back to work and back on their feet. Taking that away would send a strong and disappointing signal to these communities.

Governor Newsom has not wavered from California high-speed rail. In fact, Governor Newsom has expressed a strong commitment to finishing the first segment of the system through the Central Valley – as originally planned. He has also recently launched a new initiative, Regions Rise Together, an endorsement of the project buildout and a promise to continue uplifting this important part of the state and nation's economy.

The Trump Administration has expressed a commitment to building needed infrastructure that helps provide good jobs and grows our nation's economy, particularly in some of the most rural parts of the country like the Central Valley. We encourage the Federal Railroad Authority to fulfill that promise by investing in California high-speed rail.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important decision. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions at ajohn-baptiste@spur.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia John-Baptiste', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Alicia John-Baptiste
CEO and President