

California State Assembly Transportation Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
1020 N Street, Room 112  
Sacramento, CA 95814

March 13, 2020

**Re: California High-Speed Rail Draft 2020 Business Plan Oversight Hearing**

Dear Honorable Chairman Frazier and Members of the Assembly Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Authority's Draft 2020 Business Plan. **SPUR supports high-speed rail and the vision of a future California it helps to achieve.** SPUR, the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, is a non-profit organization that promotes good planning and good government through research, education and advocacy in the San Francisco Bay Area. We have been supporting, commenting on, and producing policy reports and papers on high-speed rail for decades and engage in numerous local projects that are part of high-speed rail's investments in Northern California.

**We support the continued buildout of high-speed rail to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles through the Central Valley.** We are confident that high-speed rail is a sound and ambitious strategy to:

- Connect the Bay Area to Los Angeles through the Central Valley in less than three hours;
- Grow economic opportunity and jobs in the Central Valley instead of losing jobs to lower-cost states;
- Create a clean, electrified travel option through communities with some of the worst air quality in the country and who pay for it in poor health, often for life;
- Reshape growth around rail stations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Connect our diverse and interdependent regions, bringing inland cities closer to coastal cities.

**SPUR appreciates the \$3 billion investments in regional rail in Los Angeles and the Bay Area that the Authority has made, and would also like to see the initial operating segment completed in a timely manner.** In addition to having 350 miles under development, the Authority has invested \$3 billion in regional rail and stations in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. The California High-Speed Rail Authority estimates that the economic impact from its investments across the state has exceeds \$8 billion, almost as much as the initial financing. The value of high-speed rail is in creating a clean, electrified rail system that reconnects all of

California. Let's stay the course and complete this segment, ultimately connecting the Bay Area and Los Angeles through the Central Valley.

**SPUR appreciates the efforts that the Authority has taken to control project risks and costs,** as detailed in the business plan. As with all megaprojects, high-speed rail is a large, complex and long-term venture that can be transformational and have significant social and economic impacts. We appreciate the Authority's efforts undertaken since 2018 bring costs and schedule under control. These efforts will help ensure that public dollars are responsibly spent and build public support for future investment.

**As the business plan shows, high-speed rail is the most cost-effective way to build the capacity California needs to support population and economic growth.** California would need to build 4,200 new miles of highway, a new airport and to expand existing airports--costing double the estimated cost of high-speed rail. High-speed rail is less expensive than building highways and airports--and more sustainable than both.

**SPUR strongly encourages the state to secure funding to complete the entire Phase I of the project as soon as possible.** Though the Authority has successfully obtained a significant amount of federal and state funding to match the Prop 1A revenue, it will need more funding to deliver the entire Phase I project. The high-speed rail project has been hampered by limited funding and uncertainty. With unreliable funding and with public and political controversy, it will be difficult to recruit top talent and for the Authority to be perceived as a good faith partner at the local level. It will soon be necessary for the state to bring additional resources to ensure the project can be completed in a timely manner and to realize the full benefits of high-speed rail as soon as possible.

In conclusion, SPUR strongly supports high-speed rail and the direction of the 2020 Draft Business Plan and looks forward to working with the Authority and the California Legislature to ensure its successful implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Tolhoff', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Laura Tolhoff  
Regional Planning Policy Director