

California High-Speed Rail Authority  
Attn: Draft 2020 Business Plan  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814

May 22, 2020

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

Dear Honorable Vice Chair Richards and Members of the High-Speed Rail Authority Board of Directors,

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.

**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.

After reviewing the draft 2020 Business Plan, SPUR offers the following comments:

1. **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 constructing 119 of the 171-mile initial operating segment, 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. Let's stay the course and complete this segment, ultimately connecting the Bay Area and Los Angeles through the Central Valley.
2. **SPUR encourages the Authority to continue with an electrified high-speed system.** The value of high-speed rail is in creating a clean, electrified rail system that reconnects all of California. Additionally, only electrified trains will be able to achieve shorter trip times.
3. **SPUR strongly encourages the state to secure funding to complete the entire Phase I of the project.** 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 held back by limited funding and uncertainty. Additionally, investments in public transportation are proven job generators. With over 4.5 million people out of work and 1.6 million people employed in the transportation sector in California, a new investment in high-speed rail can create and preserve high-quality jobs.
4. **SPUR encourages the Legislature to proactively shape land use around stations in order to stop sprawl, reduce emissions and strengthen local and regional economies.** Over the past several years, SPUR has been particularly focused on how high-speed rail can support sustainable urban development and economic growth in the cities it serves. In September, SPUR, together with the California High-Speed Rail Authority, GOBiz, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Council of Infill Builders, held a convening of high-speed rail station cities from northern California and the Central Valley to identify how the Authority and the state could support cities in their efforts to shape growth around new stations. We encourage the Authority and Legislature to work together to take additional steps to support growth, affordable housing and economic growth near stations.

5. **SPUR appreciates the efforts that the Authority has taken to control project risks and costs.** 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 commend the Authority's efforts to bring costs and schedule under control, including adding more organizational capacity, securing NEPA Assignment authority, improving contract management, among other steps.

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 be 'Laura Tolhoff', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Laura Tolhoff  
Regional Planning Policy Director