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March 10, 2021

Brian Kelly, CEO  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: 2020 Revised Draft Business Plan

Dear Mr. Kelly:

The Train Riders Association of California ("TRAC") is a statewide rail advocacy organization that has worked since 1984 to improve passenger rail service in California. We are long-time supporters of high-speed rail and are confident HSR would be a very successful business if implemented by competent business people. However, we find CHSRA's project to be so flawed that we cannot support it. All page number citations are to the 2020 Revised Draft Business Plan ("the Plan").

Perhaps the most cogent comment in the Plan is this advice from the Peer Review Group:

"The Legislature should consider whether completion of the Merced to Bakersfield system would increase the probability of eventually completing the links to San Francisco and Los Angeles/Anaheim, given that added sources of financing will clearly be required if the system is to be extended beyond the Central valley. If there is a low likelihood that the full system will be completed eventually, the case for the Authority's plan would be weaker and the argument for considering other options would be strengthened." (p. 155.)

At this time, there is no new funding available to build a full system. We believe the question the Legislature should be considering is what level of funding can realistically be expected from the federal government. **Without \$18 billion, this project can't connect to the Bay Area.** We can't imagine California being given funds on that scale. Without that level of contribution, we don't see any feasibility of this project ever going beyond the Valley. (See immediately below for a discussion of private capital.) As a result, **we conclude there is no justification for a new appropriation of Prop. 1A funds.**

The Business Aspects of the Business Plan

In TRAC's opinion, the 2020 Draft Business Plan ("Plan") fails the fundamental test of a business plan: it offers no concrete realizable steps for how to get to the point of having a business.

The Plan currently calls for matching the bond funds with Cap and Trade funds. The Legislature had never intended the State to be the sole funder of the project. The absence of any investment participation in the project at this time broadcasts its infeasibility.

TRAC understands that the CHSRA's project is universally seen in the rail industry as a money-loser: too long a route, too slow to be competitive with air travel, and too expensive to build. See Attachment 2, the May 2011 centerfold of our newspaper, *California Rail News* entitled "10 Ways to Straighten Out the Crooked HSR Proposal."

The Plan dissembles when it claims that "the reason that no private-sector funding is being used is that we are too early in the process and the required investment is too high." (p. 100.) Neither of those was a problem for Brightline-West. Brightline West is able to raise capital to build an HSR line connecting Las Vegas to California. Why is CHSRA unable to attract any private investment? The answer is clear to TRAC: No one in the rail industry trusts CHSRA's revenue and ridership projections, while someone trusted Brightline's. All the excuses offered as to the need to demonstrate operating profits are just excuses.

**Without private-sector investment, the Authority has no financial ability to build anything beyond the proposed Central Valley Line.** The Valley-to-Valley and Phase 1 sections of this document are fantasy, because CHSRA has selected a system map that the private sector will not invest in.

The privately funded 240-mile Texas Central HSR project has signed a \$6 billion contract to design, build and run the United States' first ever high-speed rail line. The reported design cost is \$311 million. How do you explain how the unit costs of the CHSRA Central Valley Line project can be 4.7 times those of the Texas project?  
<http://www.rfi.fr/en/wires/20200220-renfe-inks-6-bn-deal-build-first-high-speed-train-us>

Paying for reports from consultants does not make CHSRA's plans "realistic and pragmatic." The recommendation to proceed with Bakersfield-Merced is so unreasonable that TRAC has zero confidence in the consultants.

The three reviews discussed above, along with the prior KPMG and ETO studies, validate the Authority's recommendation to advance the Merced to Bakersfield corridor as the first building block for interim high-speed rail service on our path to building the entirety of the San Francisco to Anaheim system. This is a realistic and pragmatic approach to continuing to expand outward from current construction in the Central Valley. (pp. 68-69.)

Ridership for such a line would be limited by its continued reliance on bus travelers from Southern California, preventing the development of sufficient ridership to justify the cost.

The Ridership and Revenue Projections section was entirely silent on the subject of whether the pandemic will result in a long-term change in travel demand, as more

people work from home, affecting the propensity to commute. This is a hot subject in transportation, and it should have been addressed.

By assuming operations of the Valley to Valley line in 2031, and Phase I two years later, the projections on pp. 139 and 143 are meaningless. There is no possibility the Authority can make those dates. Nothing useful can be learned from these tables.

The Peer Review Group was concerned about the spending rate and the ARRA deadline. (p. 154.) Chair Kelly's testimony at the Assembly hearing today asserted that the ARRA match is almost complete. Please describe how it went from 60% to 90+%.

### Connectivity

Although the Peer Review Group identified elements of Draft 2020 Plan that needed to be supplemented, none of these was covered in the Revised Draft Plan:

Description at an appropriate level of detail of the facilities needed to put the interim operation plan into operation along with commitments from all partners on their investment and construction management roles. This should include, for example, the expected station layout needed to achieve the integrated services proposed by the Early Train Operator. Any investment and schedule risks to HSRA from behavior by the partners should be clearly identified. (p. 160.)

The required plans and commitments to construct and operate do not yet exist and the existing services do not operate at the high level of reliability assumed in the plan for interim service. Unless the connecting service is as reliable as envisioned, the demand could fall below estimates and the potential support [i.e., subsidy] could consequently be higher. (p. 154.)

The claim that the Central Valley line would "improve access and connectivity to other California destinations through better connections to the Bay Area and Sacramento..." (p. 51) is false and misleading. **As of the time of the Plan, there are no plans and no identified funding for projects that would enable each of the 18 HSR trains a day to be met by a train to the Bay Area.** The Service Planning Methodology element of the Plan is devoid of any interim planning to connect HSR to the Bay Area. A mere 4 daily round trips for ACE and 7-9 trips by the San Joaquins will not provide "improve[d] access and connectivity." The transfer-at-Merced concept is inherently inferior to through-trains because the transfer penalty will discourage ridership and negate the advantages of a faster train. It also imposes additional burdens on the handicapped community.

### Legalities

While clever, the explanations fail as to why the proposed Interim Service Model is consistent with the requirements of Proposition 1A:

The interim service model will not be provided by the Authority or pursuant to its authority, and, therefore, the “no subsidy” requirement of the Bond Act is inapplicable. ...

Section 185032 was enacted to give the Authority sole and exclusive authority among state agencies. It does not preclude the provision of high-speed rail service by a non-State actor under an arrangement in which the Authority exercises no control over its operation and assumes no liability for its costs. (p. 68.)

Without CHSRA granting SJJPA access to its ROW and rolling stock, SJJPA would not be able to operate HSR trains. By necessity, SJJPA would be operating pursuant to CHSRA's authority. The second assertion is mere handwaving: No operation of HSR equipment can take place that is not authorized by CHSRA, no matter what the terms of the agreement are.

We would advise CHSRA that a "statutory clarification around operating subsidy requirements and provisions related to what entities can provide high-speed rail service in California" (p. 160) would provoke a challenge as to the constitutionality of changing a voter-approved bond measure.

#### Air and GHG Emissions

**The glowing descriptions of GHG emissions reductions on pp. 11-12 are highly deceptive.** Rather than showing the emissions reductions from the funded segment of the project, the Plan instead shows emissions reductions for the full Phase I system, which is not only unfunded, but unfundable. These emissions reductions are unattainable.

HSR's principal environmental benefit (if it were ever to operate) would be to divert travellers who would have otherwise driven or flown, thus reducing the growth in VMT. Because HSR trips could only ever be a small percentage of the overall trips in the State, HSR will play a numerically tiny role in the State's effort to shift drivers to transit.

While construction GHG emissions may be being offset (p. 10), the Authority has persisted ever since 2013 in pretending that its use of concrete and steel have no lifecycle GHG emissions that need to be counted against the project. After counting these emissions, it is expected that HSR will be a net GHG emitter.

The boxed quotation from Mr. Hamilton (p. 12) about diesel pollution is also deceptive. While trains a decade ago emitted heavy diesel particulates, advances in diesel technology have changed the emissions profile for new diesel locomotives. We suspect this is an out-of-date quote, dragged out of the past to mislead.

As long-time climate advocates, TRAC stresses that in allocating funding for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions, what's most important is maximizing the number of train passengers diverted from driving. The motive power for the train is irrelevant, because the emissions of modern diesel locomotives are insignificant in the context of

the vast number of motor vehicles in the state. For that reason, maximal climate benefits will come from enhancing transit and intercity rail ridership in metropolitan areas. Using higher-speed Tier 4 diesel locomotives in the Central Valley and avoiding transfers at Merced far superior to the CHSRA's Plan.

Proposing to extend the Cap-and-Trade program until 2050 (p. 94)--or asking the State to guarantee the funds (p. 96)--demonstrates a fundamentally flawed understanding of that program: This is a revenue stream that is intended to decline over time, as the State phases out its dependence on fossil fuels. With the Governor's Executive Order N-79-20 calling for an end to the sale of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles by 2035, the demand for petroleum products will decline even more.

Please calculate the cost per metric ton of achieving the 37 years of GHG emissions reductions cited on p. 137, including both capital and operating costs.

#### Additional Comments

Not only does the siting of an HSR station in Madera violate CHSRA design standards as to building in a greenfield location, it violates station spacing standards, being only 16 miles away from Fresno. It also probably exceeds the statutory total number of permissible stations, enacted to prevent precisely this kind of local boosterism.

The Plan asserts that HSR will help with "facing a housing crisis" (p. 13): "vast new access to affordable housing." (p. 4.) What the Plan omits here is the high cost of travel by high-speed rail. Table 2.2 in the 2020 Revenue and Ridership Forecasting appendix, the round-trip fare cited for Fresno to San Jose is \$142 as part of a Valley-to-Valley or Phase 1 system. (Note that the Central Valley Side-by-Side study assumed current Amtrak San Joaquin fares. That choice suggests that there is no market demand for premium HSR service in the Central Valley.) **No matter what kind of discount is arranged, HSR commuting will simply be unaffordable** to people that have to move to the Central Valley because they can't afford to live in the Bay Area.

#### Conclusion

For years now, the primary rationale for CHSRA's project has been economic development. It was obvious from today's Assembly Joint Committee hearing that few of the organizations supporting the project were focused on the transportation benefits of the project. The discussion of GHG benefits above should make it clear that the State cannot legitimately claim to be pursuing both economic development and GHG emissions reduction. In the fiscal crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the State will need to make a choice as to which goal it will prioritize.

**While we do not support a new appropriation for CHSRA, we urge the Legislature to adopt the following options suggested by the Legislative Analyst if it does approve further funding:**

- Passing statutory language barring HSRA from entering into a contract for electrified rolling stock at this time.
- limit the contract to only the scope required under the federal grant agreements (track and basic systems for the ICS, but not electrification)

- Delaying taking action on the appropriation of some or all of the requested Proposition 1A funds

TRAC fails to find anything substantive in this so-called Business Plan. We have attached our newspaper, *California Rail News*, to offer you our explanation for the problems faced by the Authority, and the solutions we propose to achieve better rail service for a much larger number of Californians, with substantially larger GHG benefits. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn, President, TRAC

Attachment: *California Rail News*, "Let's Spend HSR Money Where the People Are,"  
December 2019  
*California Rail News* centerfold, "10 Ways to Straighten Out the  
Crooked HSR Proposal," May 2011

CC: Governor Newsom  
Senate President Pro Tem Atkins  
Assembly Speaker Rendon  
Assembly Transportation Committee Chair Friedman and Members  
Senate Transportation Committee Chair Gonzalez and Members  
Joint Legislative Budget Committee Chair Mitchell and Members  
Chad Edison, CalSTA



# California Rail News

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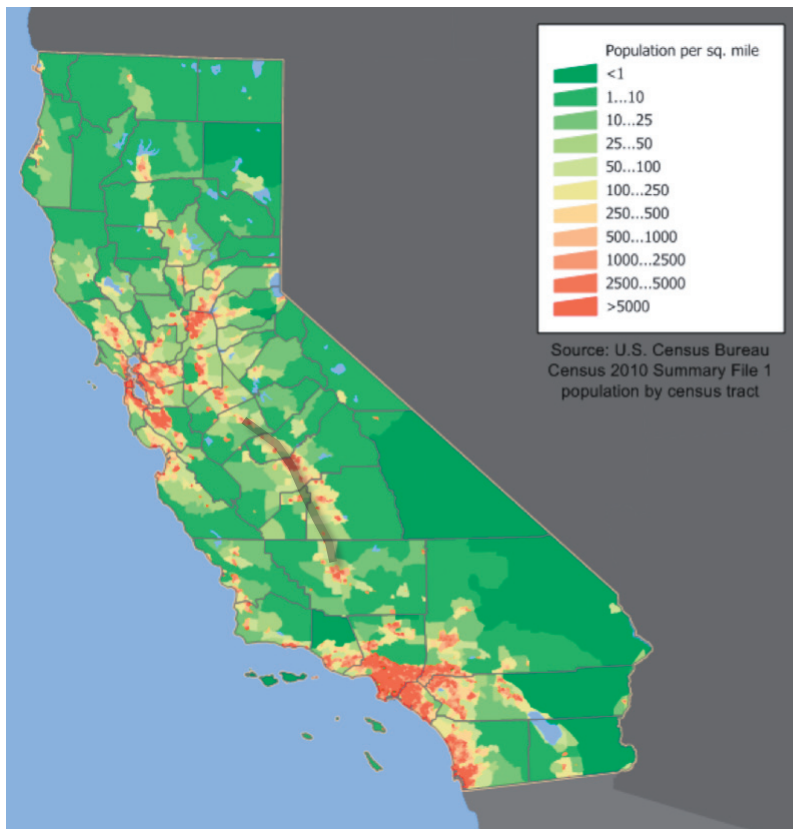
## Assembly: Let's Spend High-Speed Rail Money Where the People Are!

By David Schonbrunn  
TRAC President

Los Angeles and Orange counties have nearly 14 times the amount of driving per square mile as the counties of the Central Valley. That vast difference in traffic made the decision contentious to build the first segment of the High-Speed Rail project in the Central Valley. That controversy, smoldering for at least a decade, has now burst into open flames. After spending \$6 billion in the Central Valley with nothing much to show for it, state legislators are signaling their unwillingness to sink another \$11 billion there. Legislators want that money spent where there are many more potential passengers and voters.

Assembly Democrats from Southern California are vocal about their increasing skepticism over spending \$20+ billion on a Central Valley HSR line. Opinion pieces by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) and Assemblymembers Laura Friedman (D-Burbank) and Tom Daly (D-Anaheim) call for holding off electrification of the Central Valley line until there is a larger completed project. "Greater investment in trains running from Burbank to Anaheim will help millions of riders get where they need to go quickly," they wrote.

This should sound familiar: As reported in 2012, "The objections spawn from the construction starting point being in the Central Valley. Several key Democrats — including State Senator Mark DeSaulnier of Concord, who is the chairman of the Senate transportation committee, and state Sen. Alan Lowenthal of Long Beach, who chairs a special committee about



Historical Population		
Census	State Pop.	CV%
1850	92,597	—
1860	379,994	310.4%
1870	560,247	47.4%
1880	864,694	54.3%
1890	1,213,398	40.3%
1900	1,485,053	22.4%
1910	2,377,549	60.1%
1920	3,426,861	44.1%
1930	5,677,251	65.7%
1940	6,907,387	21.7%
1950	10,586,223	53.3%
1960	15,717,204	48.5%
1970	19,953,134	27.0%
1980	23,667,902	18.6%
1990	29,760,021	25.7%
2000	33,871,648	13.8%
2010	37,253,956	10.0%
Est. 2017	39,536,653	6.1%

Only 10% of Californians live in Central Valley counties near HSR. (Source: 2010 U.S. Census)

the high-speed rail project – want to move the funds away from the Central Valley and toward the northern and southern terminuses, which they say will have higher ridership out of the gate." Governor Jerry Brown was able to rally just enough Senate support to overpower these Chairmen. While he managed to keep a lid on this controversy for the rest of his terms, that period of enforced quiet is over.

The High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is pushing back hard against the growing dissent: It is now soliciting bidders for a contract to install track, signals and electrification systems on its Central Valley project. It is seeking to tie the State to a 30-year contract for maintenance of these systems.

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# HSR's Time Runs Out

(continued from Page One)

This looks to TRAC like the Authority is daring the Assembly to stop electrification. It remains to be seen whether the Assembly will move to block it. Adding to the drama, the Federal Railroad Administration sent a letter disapproving the release of the bid package, and asserting that its permission to do so is required under the \$2.6 billion grant agreement. CHSRA moved forward anyway, in defiance of the FRA.

CHSRA is now attempting to sell the project as an "Everyone will want to ride it" phenomenon, but leaders like Assemblymember Friedman aren't buying it. She asked hard questions at a Fresno hearing: "Why does it matter that it goes fast, if not all that many people ride it?" The only response from Brian Kelly, CHSRA's Chief, was that the voters of the State had directed the Authority to build electrified High-Speed Rail.

"I don't think you change culture by demonstrating that you can run a fast train," Friedman added. "I think you change culture by giving people who need to get somewhere a way

to get there quickly and that's more convenient than driving. ... Assuming that our goal is to build from San Diego to San Francisco ... the way we get there is by increasing ridership anywhere on the line where you have a large population saying, 'OK, we're now in on the train ... and we demand that you give us that whole system,'" she said.

## The New Business Plan

While one would expect the agency to be providing some kind of service by now, all it is currently delivering is promotional pieces. CHSRA's 2020 Draft Business Plan is primarily a sales document. TRAC is unaware of any transportation project in the world that has spent so much money and so much time without entering into revenue operations.

CHSRA has made much about Virgin Train's HSR project to connect Victorville to Las Vegas. The Business Plan touts "350 miles of electrified high-speed rail under development." It turns out that the reality behind that surprising claim is that 130 miles of that total are being undertaken by Virgin Trains, and so, have nothing whatsoever to do with CHSRA's efforts.

Another 51 miles, Caltrain tracks on the San Francisco Peninsula, cannot be used for HSR without additional construction, and that is unfunded. Like all big projects, Caltrain's electrification project will probably have huge cost overruns.

To justify its decisions, the Authority typically has consultants prepare reports. The latest one, the *Early Train Operator's Side-by-Side Study Quantitative Report*, claims that investing in the Central Valley will yield greater benefits in ridership, congestion relief and GHG reductions than similar investments in Southern California or the Caltrain Corridor. These findings violate all common sense. It seems clear that Assemblymembers don't believe them.

## HSR: No Business Case

TRAC applauds the Assembly for its leadership in breaking a decade-long taboo on questioning whether or how the CHSRA's project should go forward. However, we suspect they don't recog-

nize that California's HSR project has no future. Even though it keeps moving forward, spending billions, it is already dead.

The project died when CHSRA insisted on sticking with its route decision despite the refusal of rail operators to invest. There is no way the current project can be expanded into a statewide HSR system without private sector investment. There is no business case for the private sector to invest in a route that is more expensive to build and too slow, because of its two major detours.

TRAC dismisses out of hand CHSRA's assertion that all it needs to do for the pipeline of private funding to flow is demonstrate the profitability of HSR between Bakersfield and San Jose. First, that approach unacceptably puts \$34 billion of entrepreneurial risk on California taxpayers. Second, it fails to explain why it is possible for Virgin Train's HSR project to go forward now with only private sector equity funding, when CHSRA can't get to first base.

The private sector *will* invest in routes that are the most direct, the straightest and unburdened by obstacles. The fact that Virgin Trains is breaking ground indicates that sophisticated finance people have confidence that the ridership and revenue projections for a completed line will enable them to be repaid and earn a sizeable return on investment. The fact that there is no private investment in the CHSRA project is definitive proof that no one in the rail business believes CHSRA's ridership and revenue projections.

CHSRA presently doesn't have the funds to build its project connecting San Jose to Merced. Neither can it proceed to connect Northern California to Southern California. It is highly unlikely that the State will cough up an additional \$60 billion. Without private investment, TRAC sees no realistic way forward for a statewide HSR project.

Because there is no prospect of grants from the Trump Administration, the Authority has given up on realistic planning. It instead is betting on the come. CHSRA will run out of major funding unless the Democrats win big

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# California Rail News

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## HSR's Time Runs Out (continued from Page Two)

in November, capturing the Presidency and both Houses of Congress. The question would then become, which Democrats would control the funding? Those willing to give CHSRA a blank check, or those that demand value for the money?

### TRAC's Alternative

Ridership from an isolated Central Valley Line would be disappointing after spending \$20+ billion. That much money could support a huge increase in intercity rail ridership in California. TRAC urges a major rethinking, focused on delivering value to Californians.

TRAC has recommended that the Governor invite experienced HSR operators to contact him about their interest in building rail projects in California. We know that HSR would be a viable business here. Because of its population size, HSR in California should be more successful than projects in Florida or Texas. Private sector equity participation--starting from the commencement of a new project--would open for the first time a *feasible path to a statewide HSR system*.

TRAC is aware of private sector operators that are interested right now in building a fast route from Sacramento to San Jose in the Altamont Corridor. While such a line could be eventually upgraded to high-speed, it would probably be built initially for 110-150 mph service. A Public-Private Partnership like this might only require public funds for the environmental review process, to eliminate that risk for a venture partner.

The investment of public funds in speed improvements for existing intercity corridors would provide fast local service for the cities of the Central Valley. For a fraction of the HSR project's cost estimate, the current San Joaquin Corridor would be upgraded to run 110 - 125 mph. A negotiated arrangement with BNSF could result in fast passenger-only tracks either in the railroad right-of-way, or adjacent to it.

The investment of public funds in speed improvements for existing intercity corridors would provide fast local service for the cities of the Central Valley. For a fraction of the HSR project's cost estimate, the current San Joaquin Corridor would be upgraded to run 110 - 125 mph. A negotiated arrangement with BNSF could result in fast passenger-only tracks either in the railroad right-of-way, or adjacent to it.

A faster, more frequent San Joaquin would yield a dramatically better cost/benefit ratio than the HSR Valley project, while being very attractive and much more affordable for current auto commuters. This would not be an abandonment of HSR. Rather, along with a fast Altamont Corridor connection to the Bay Area, it could stimulate a new privately built north-south HSR trunk line, possibly along the I-5, offering seamless connections between Los Angeles, the Central

Valley, Sacramento, San Francisco and San Jose.

Speed improvements would massively increase ridership on an integrated Pacific Surfliner/Metrolink service between Ventura and San Diego. A funding package attractive to all the larger regions of the State could include:

- Convert LA Union Station from a stub-end terminal to an online station by adding run-through tracks.
- A tunnel under Rose Canyon, to speed up the Surfliner near San Diego by eliminating a lengthy slow-speed bypass.
- A tunnel to connect Caltrain in San Francisco to the new Salesforce Transit Center.
- A replacement rail route in response to the crumbling of the Del Mar bluffs. (See article on page 4.)

This package could be readily funded if the Legislature shifted the continuing appropriation of cap and trade funds from HSR to inter-city rail. TRAC proposes the HSR project be terminated after completing Construction Package 1, from Madera to Fresno. In preparation for such a major change in direction, TRAC suggests the Assembly pass a resolution signaling CHSRA that it does not support the track electrification contract going forward.

### Policy & Political Considerations

- A business-friendly approach could win bipartisan support, making it possible to reach a settlement with the federal government on the looming grant issues that complicate HSR decision-making.
- This proposal would result in a 21st Century rail system for California that connects Sacramento to San Diego and San Francisco. This would be very attractive to legislators.
- With large new private sector investments as well as the same public dollars being spent around the state, this would be very attractive to unions and the construction industry.
- The dramatic increase in rail ridership resulting from these projects would provide larger and quicker GHG reductions than a Central Valley HSR project.
- These projects, with lower costs than the Central Valley HSR project, would be far more affordable for both commuters and travellers. Good ridership requires affordability.
- Controversy surrounding the CHSRA project has already tainted all rail projects in the eyes of the public. Public support for future investments in passenger rail is at-risk, threatening the State's options for congestion relief and GHG reduction. That could also reduce the union jobs generated by new rail construction.

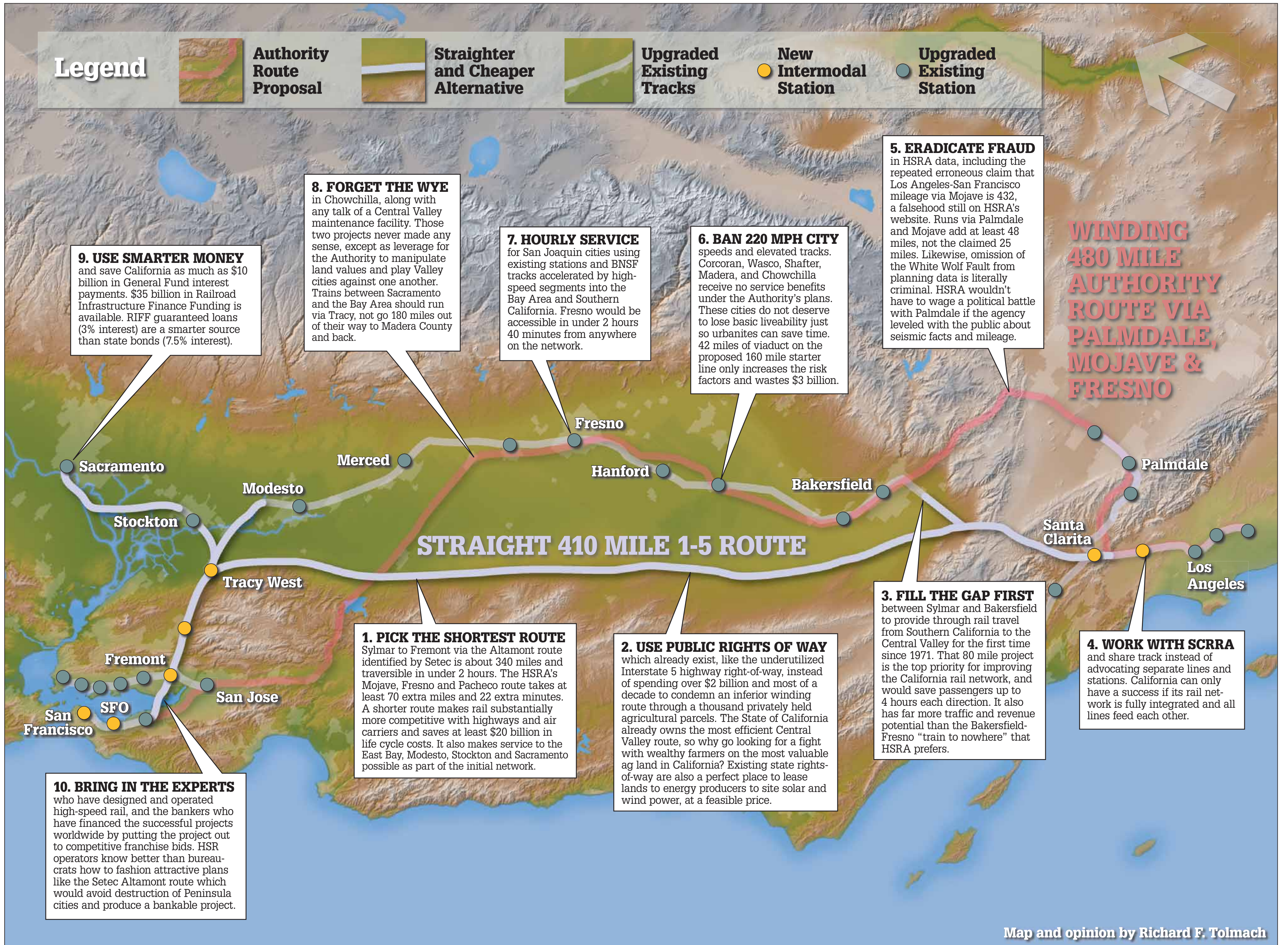
TRAC believes the time is right for an entirely new approach to rail infrastructure. This could finally turn the HSR project into a success. By opening the door to the private sector, the State can overcome the current constraints on financial resources available for HSR.

## Coast Observations

**ELON MUSK IS THE "WILLY WONKA" OF TRANSPORTATION, according to Chuck Marohn of Strong Towns, a national urban advocacy non-profit. This is because Musk offers proposals like HyperLoop, which are sugary and shiny, but have no substance. Marohn says this distracts from solutions that may lack flash, but which are realistic...A SANTA ROSA DEVELOPER SPENT \$1.7 MILLION TO KILL SMART'S 1/4 CENT SALES TAX EXTENSION MEASURE on the March Primary ballot. The \$1 million spent by Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, who own the Graton Casino & Resort in Rohnert Park, wasn't enough to undo the public's distrust of SMART, in part caused by its management's quirky refusal to release ridership numbers... SPEAKING OF SMART, SMART IS LOOKING AT LOW INCOME FARE DISCOUNTS in response to numerous public complaints that its fares are high...BART RIDERSHIP HAS DECLINED BY MORE THAN 10 MILLION ANNUAL RIDERS SINCE 2014. At least one editorial recommends full automation of BART trains, so BART can afford to run more frequent service without skyrocketing train driver costs...BART HAS RECENTLY IMPLEMENTED A TRIAL 'AMBASSADORS' PROGRAM TO IMPROVE SECURITY AND PASSENGER COMFORT. If BART trains can be fully automated, switching drivers over to these new positions would be cost effective, and no one would necessarily lose their jobs...SPEAKING OF THINGS THAT WILL PROVOKE RESISTANCE, A NEW BILL IN SACRAMENTO WOULD MANDATE BAY AREA TRANSIT AGENCIES TO INTEGRATE FARES, SCHEDULES AND MARKETING. This is despite--or maybe because of--an interagency group of transit agency managers put together by MTC having previously voted "no" on doing a transit integration study. It has been our observation that the priorities of too many bureaucrats are: (1) get the money; (2) get the money to go to agency salaries; (3) get the money to full fund the pensions; and (4) serve the public (a poor fourth)...WHILE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP HAS BEEN DECLINING IN PARTS OF CALIFORNIA, SACRAMENTO REGIONAL TRANSIT HAS DOUBLED YOUTH AND STUDENT RIDERSHIP due to free fares. Overall RT ridership is up 6% so far in FY 2020, reversing a worrying several-year trend...PRESIDENT TRUMP'S PROPOSED FY 2020-21 BUDGET WOULD CUT \$500 MILLION FROM AMTRAK, KILLING ALL LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS. As usual, this plan is DOA in Congress, even in Trump's Republican-controlled Senate...DON'T GO JAYWALKING IN PHOENIX, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO WALK ANOTHER 1/2 MILE TO A "LEGAL" CROSSING. Our Arizona neighbors are planning to INCREASE the fines for jaywalking. No reductions in carbon emissions there!... MEANWHILE, LOS ANGELES METRO OBTAINS ANOTHER \$1.3 BILLION FROM THE FEDS TO FINISH THE WILSHIRE AVENUE SUBWAY TO WEST L.A. Even L.A. is making slow, if steady progress in developing alternatives to the automobile...**



# 10 WAYS TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE CROOKED HSR PROPOSAL



## Legend



**Authority Route Proposal**



**Straighter and Cheaper Alternative**



**Upgraded Existing Tracks**

**New Intermodal Station**

**Upgraded Existing Station**

**WINDING 480 MILE AUTHORITY ROUTE VIA PALMDALE, MOJAVE & FRESNO**

**STRAIGHT 410 MILE 1-5 ROUTE**

**9. USE SMARTER MONEY** and save California as much as \$10 billion in General Fund interest payments. \$35 billion in Railroad Infrastructure Finance Funding is available. RIFF guaranteed loans (3% interest) are a smarter source than state bonds (7.5% interest).

**8. FORGET THE WYE** in Chowchilla, along with any talk of a Central Valley maintenance facility. Those two projects never made any sense, except as leverage for the Authority to manipulate land values and play Valley cities against one another. Trains between Sacramento and the Bay Area should run via Tracy, not go 180 miles out of their way to Madera County and back.

**7. HOURLY SERVICE** for San Joaquin cities using existing stations and BNSF tracks accelerated by high-speed segments into the Bay Area and Southern California. Fresno would be accessible in under 2 hours 40 minutes from anywhere on the network.

**6. BAN 220 MPH CITY** speeds and elevated tracks. Corcoran, Wasco, Shafter, Madera, and Chowchilla receive no service benefits under the Authority's plans. These cities do not deserve to lose basic liveability just so urbanites can save time. 42 miles of viaduct on the proposed 160 mile starter line only increases the risk factors and wastes \$3 billion.

**5. ERADICATE FRAUD** in HSR data, including the repeated erroneous claim that Los Angeles-San Francisco mileage via Mojave is 432, a falsehood still on HSR's website. Runs via Palmdale and Mojave add at least 48 miles, not the claimed 25 miles. Likewise, omission of the White Wolf Fault from planning data is literally criminal. HSR wouldn't have to wage a political battle with Palmdale if the agency leveled with the public about seismic facts and mileage.

**1. PICK THE SHORTEST ROUTE** Sylmar to Fremont via the Altamont route identified by Setec is about 340 miles and traversible in under 2 hours. The HSR's Mojave, Fresno and Pacheco route takes at least 70 extra miles and 22 extra minutes. A shorter route makes rail substantially more competitive with highways and air carriers and saves at least \$20 billion in life cycle costs. It also makes service to the East Bay, Modesto, Stockton and Sacramento possible as part of the initial network.

**2. USE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY** which already exist, like the underutilized Interstate 5 highway right-of-way, instead of spending over \$2 billion and most of a decade to condemn an inferior winding route through a thousand privately held agricultural parcels. The State of California already owns the most efficient Central Valley route, so why go looking for a fight with wealthy farmers on the most valuable ag land in California? Existing state rights-of-way are also a perfect place to lease lands to energy producers to site solar and wind power, at a feasible price.

**3. FILL THE GAP FIRST** between Sylmar and Bakersfield to provide through rail travel from Southern California to the Central Valley for the first time since 1971. That 80 mile project is the top priority for improving the California rail network, and would save passengers up to 4 hours each direction. It also has far more traffic and revenue potential than the Bakersfield-Fresno "train to nowhere" that HSR prefers.

**4. WORK WITH SCRRRA** and share track instead of advocating separate lines and stations. California can only have a success if its rail network is fully integrated and all lines feed each other.

**10. BRING IN THE EXPERTS** who have designed and operated high-speed rail, and the bankers who have financed the successful projects worldwide by putting the project out to competitive franchise bids. HSR operators know better than bureaucrats how to fashion attractive plans like the Setec Altamont route which would avoid destruction of Peninsula cities and produce a bankable project.

Map and opinion by Richard F. Tolmarch