

TO: Executive Committee

DATE: 11/02/09

FROM: WIB Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: Comment Letter for High Speed Rail Project

PROPOSED MOTION(S): For Information Only.

DISCUSSION: On October 8, 2009, a public meeting was held in Merced to discuss the next steps in the environmental review of the San Jose to Merced section of the California High-Speed Train (HST) project as well as a review of input heard during the scoping session regarding potential additional alternatives that may be studied in detail. Attached is a comment letter regarding the information on the Alternative Analysis of the HST "San Jose to Merced" segment presented at the October 2009 public meeting.

ATTACHMENT(S):

WIB High Speed Rail Project Comment Letter



**WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD**
MERCED COUNTY

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October 22, 2009

Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
Attn: San Jose to Merced HST Project Alternatives Analysis EIR/EIS
925 "L" Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Alternative Analysis Comment for EIR/EIS on the HST San Jose to Merced Segment
Presented at the October 2009 Merced Public Meeting

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

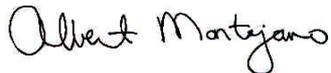
The Workforce Investment Board of Merced County is a supporter of the statewide California High-Speed Rail system and maintains that the Henry Miller/152 route (attached Map slide 12 of 13) is the most efficient route for crossing the San Joaquin Valley and accessing the Merced Station and proposed maintenance facility. We uphold this route due to the following:

- It is the most direct route across the Central Valley from Highway 99 to the Pacheco Pass Subsection.
- It has fewer impacts to wildlife migration corridors in the western Merced County foothills (such as for the San Joaquin kit fox).
- It minimizes conflicts to the wetland area with elevated tracks through the Grasslands Ecological Area.
- It is the most flexible en route selection over Pacheco Pass.
- It avoids conflicts with Interstate 5, Highway 33 and major canal systems.
- It is consistent with proposed development plans and meets the development principals of speed (straight line), costs (because of existing rights-of-way) and intermodal connection (because of the proximity to the Merced Station).
- It's the only alternative that uses existing east-west roadways for most of the route:
 - Henry Miller Road from Santa Nella to its eastern terminus on "Red" alignment;
 - Runs along Highway 152 following the new "Blue" alignment; and
 - Connects with new "Gold" alignment at the "Wye" favored by the City of Chowchilla with connection to Highway 99 "Red" route north into Merced's preferred station site, and to the BNSF "Pink" route to Fresno on the south.

The High Speed Rail (Henry Miller/152) route not only provides the least environmental impact, but overall is necessary for proper planning. The planning involved is not just for the next couple of years but for the next 20 to 30 years in order for California's economy to thrive. The types of jobs created by this project are classified as high wage/high growth jobs and in tune with the Merced County Workforce Investment Board's selected industry cluster of "transportation and logistics". We are prepared to be a part of the solution that will provide a capable and skilled workforce for this project.

Thank you for taking the time to review and include these comments into your report, we continue to appreciate the opportunity to provide community input and be supportive of this much needed transportation system. Please call me at 209-724-2008 or email me at pitd131@co.merced.ca.us if you have any questions regarding this letter or would like further clarification.

Respectfully,



Albert Montejano
Chairman

cc: Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani
Senator Jeff Denham
Congressman Dennis Cardoza
Merced County High-Speed Rail Committee