



Craig McNamara
Board President
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June 6, 2012

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Executive Director

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Kerry Tucker, CEO
Nuffer, Smith, Tucker,
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Mr. Dan Richard
Chairperson
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 800
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairperson Richard:

The California State Board of Food and Agriculture recently held a public meeting focusing on high-speed rail and its potential impact on farmers and ranchers within this state. With various testimony provided by agricultural associations, individual farmers and farm communities – the Board has found that the California High-Speed Rail Authority would benefit by developing a process to better address the concerns of the agricultural community as it relates to land-owner mitigation and HSR implementation.

It is a past failure of the Authority not to have actively engaged with the agricultural community in properly addressing local concerns and agricultural land loss associated with HSR. Of particular concern is the deviation from existing transportation or utility corridors for rail segments which severely impact agricultural operations throughout this state. Greater transparency, communication, and engagement are needed by the Authority within the agricultural community.

Your leadership provides an opportunity to rectify the situation for the benefit of this project and future infrastructure projects within the state. The Board pledges its cooperation to facilitate a process to assure California farmers and ranchers that agricultural land and operational impacts are carefully evaluated and mitigated to the best extent possible.

To this end, the Board proposes the following actions by the Authority to mitigate the impacts of HSR on landowners and communities within the Central Valley:

- Re-establish the Agricultural Working Group (AWG), in coordination with the Secretary of Food and Agriculture, to be an effective liaison between concerned farmers and the Authority to offer expert advice on the ways to mitigate some of the impacts to agriculture. The AWG should conduct hearings within the Central Valley to accurately document the concerns of farmers and ranchers; determine agricultural economic impacts/agricultural land loss statistics in cooperation with the University of California and/or the California State University System; and develop actionable recommendations to the Authority. The AWG shall also report to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, as determined, prior to making recommendations to the Authority for consideration.



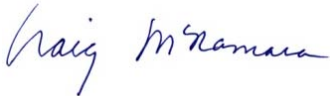
The AWG shall be comprised of pragmatic, influential individuals in the Central Valley that would address issues facing the agricultural community related to HSR. The Authority will need to be responsive to the AWG's recommendations which will be representative of the agricultural community. To move forward on HSR implementation without significant involvement by the agricultural community is not acceptable. Funding for the AWG is to be made available through existing Authority resources.

- Establish an "Office of the Ombudsman for Agricultural Impacts" – this office would provide an administrative process for handling site-specific impact and complaints stemming from the implementation of HSR. Related agricultural impacts for individual landowners vary in complexity and degree. With a variety of issues related to land bifurcation, irrigation/gas/transmission lines, equipment turnarounds, etc. – individual farmers have several questions that need to be addressed and mitigated through a positive administrative process. This office can be a one-stop-shop for individual landowners to work through complex issues related to HSR implementation and receive much needed answers.

High-speed rail is a challenging issue for the agricultural community. Statewide agricultural land loss from urban sprawl, renewable energy development and large scale infrastructure continues to increase. This directly impacts the long term sustainability of the farming sector. Moving forward with HSR and the complexity of issues surrounding it will not be an easy process, but like all statewide infrastructure projects, it is important for California's future. The Board strongly recommends that the Authority work collectively with the agricultural sector and local communities to implement a beneficial plan for all of California.

We appreciate your attention on this important issue and look forward to a collaborative working relationship with the Authority.

Sincerely,



Craig McNamara
President

cc: The Honorable Karen Ross