



University of California, Merced
5200 N. Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343

October 11, 2019

Lenny Mendonca, Chair
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
Sacramento CA 95814

RE: Support for Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment

Dear Chair Mendonca,

The University of California Merced strongly supports the Governor's Plan and CHSRA's policy recommendations (2019 Project Update Report released May 1) to pursue a Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment with stops at Kings/Tulare and Madera to provide high-speed rail service to Californians at the earliest possible time.

Merced stands to play an integral role in the developing megaregion that would connect the San Francisco Bay Area to the San Joaquin Valley. Passenger rail is a vital component in the planning, including the extension of the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) and high-speed rail project. Merced will be a transit hub connecting the Bay Area, Silicon Valley, Northern and Southern San Joaquin Valley. UC Merced has been working closely with all stakeholders and the Bay Area Council to advance that initiative. High-speed rail is a critical component of the bright future we all imagine for our region and the state. We appreciate the regional approach to this planning process, which is essential to ensure our shared prosperity.

The Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment will leverage the maximum degree of connectivity to other improving rail services, while important project development work also continues in other parts of the state.

The 171-mile Interim Operating Segment extending north to Merced and south to Bakersfield coordinated with improvements aligned with the State Rail Plan north of Merced to Sacramento and to the Bay Area and bus connections south of Bakersfield to Southern California create significant benefits including:

- Providing much faster, more frequent and more reliable passenger rail service than is currently available in this corridor;

- Enhancing connectivity and accessibility to other passenger rail services;
- Improving air quality in the Central Valley by shifting from diesel to clean, electrically powered trains;
- Providing an overall infrastructure configuration offering significant benefits for both passenger and freight movement; and
- Allowing for early testing of high-speed operations and passenger use and reducing ramp-up time for future extensions.

U C Merced serves a student population, 99% of whom are Californians, representing every region and county of the state. Our students, their families, faculty and staff traveling for research and business, and all rail passengers in California will greatly benefit from reducing by 90 to 100 minutes their train travel between Southern California and the Sacramento and Bay Area regions in the north. Direct connections in Merced to A C E and the San Joaquins will translate into faster connections to the Capitol, Caltrain, BART, SacRT, Valley Link and VTA systems, which will also experience higher ridership. The success of this early interim service is essential to implementing the eventual high-speed rail system between the Bay Area, Sacramento, San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

U C Merced is pleased to submit this letter of support for the Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment and to continue working with the CHSRA and our regional partners to enhance the quality of life in our great state.

Sincerely,



Nathan Brostrom
Interim Chancellor

Cc: Brian Kelly, CEO; Brian Annis, CFO; Chad Edison, CalSTA