



April 10, 2020

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

Subject: CHSRA Draft 2020 Business Plan

Dear Chair Mendonca,

On behalf of the Innovation Tri-Valley Leadership Group (ITV), I wish to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CHSRA 2020 Draft Business Plan for advancing a Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment.

The interim plan will provide high-speed rail service to Californians at the earliest possible date, and the alignment with vital State Rail improvements north of Merced will leverage both existing and planned rail infrastructure for near-term Bay Area connectivity. To that end, I respectfully request that the Valley Link Project be clearly identified in the CHSRA 2020 Business Plan, as it is a vital and cost-effective link in this interim operating plan which can unlock many of the transformative economic and environmental benefits of the emerging system.

ITV is led by business leaders and influencers committed to connecting the businesses, research labs, educational institutions, and civic leaders in the Tri-Valley, one of the fastest growing and economically robust regions in the state of California. According to the Bay Area Council's Economic Institute in the "Tri-Valley Rising" report they published in 2018, the Tri-Valley has a \$42 billion GDP with over 450 high-tech companies, and is a region that is globally connected, regionally united, and locally unique. As such, any planning around major rail improvements in the State of California should keep the Altamont Corridor at the forefront and make direct





efforts for connectivity with a Tri-Valley region which sits at the center of the Northern California mega-region that directly intersects with both the Bay Area and Central Valley.

The upgraded San Joaquin/ACE service and Valley Link will provide the Bay Area with an early connection to the high-speed rail system by providing an option to connect to the existing BART Dublin/Pleasanton BART station. Valley Link will connect two major intermodal hubs: at North Lathrop where it will link with the San Joaquin's service from Merced and at the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station where it will provide fast and frequent service throughout the Bay Area. Further access on BART from the Tri-Valley to Diridon Station will be possible when the BART Silicon Valley Phase 2 project is complete – providing a vital interim connection to the Silicon Valley while completion of the Phase 1 project segment is further advanced.

The planned and substantially funded Bay Fair Connector Project could further enhance this travel through a possible one-seat BART ride from the Tri-Valley to Silicon Valley. In the foreseeable future, this means that a passenger would be able to board an electrified passenger rail train in the Tri-Valley and seamlessly travel to destinations throughout the Bay Area, Central Valley and the state of California. Furthermore, all of the San Joaquin's line would intersect at a proposed North Lathrop station – where passengers would have the option of going north and south – but could also board a Valley Link train for a direct connection to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station or take an ACE train to Silicon Valley.

The 42-mile, 7 station Valley Link project serves communities and households in the Northern San Joaquin Valley with some of our state's highest poverty rates. It will readily connect our state's future high-speed rail system to BART with direct and seamless service to major employment centers in all parts of the Bay Area. It links our Northern California Megaregion's workforce to affordable housing, provides opportunities for compact transit-oriented development and is projected to have a significant impact on the reduction of VMT and greenhouse gas emissions.

In short, Valley Link is vital to our state's economy, environment and the quality of life in our communities. An estimated 98,500 of our Bay Area workers are now living in the San Joaquin Valley, driving by car through the Altamont Pass with an average 78-minute commute each way. This hurts our environment. It hurts our economy. But importantly, it translates to the loss of 28 days per year on average for each individual commuter – and this hurts our families.





Valley Link has widespread support from all sectors of the Northern California Megaregion and at project inception, has an unprecedented 1/3 of its funding already identified through local sources. Project development continues to advance with urgency - environmental clearance is nearly complete and a targeted revenue service date for Valley Link is set for 2027. Valley Link is also working in partnership with the SJPA and ACE on the Altamont Vision – a longer-term plan for complementary system improvements. Phase 1 of the Altamont Corridor Vision includes a tunneling enhancement that will straighten track through the Altamont Pass, improving passenger travel time and project effectiveness even further - with an estimated 70% increase in ridership.

In summary, Valley Link is an early CHSRA connector to the Bay Area, it leverages existing and planned improvements, potentially provides near-term service to the Diridon station while the Pacheco connection advances in fulfillment of the long-term vision, has frequent headways, provides significant environmental benefits, and assures equitable access and economic opportunity for both the Central Valley and Bay Area.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments on the Draft CHSRA 2020 Business Plan. We look forward to working with the CHSRA to advance our project in support of the proposed interim operating plan.

Sincerely,

Lynn Naylor
CEO, Innovation TRIVALLEY Leadership Group

Attachment: Valley Link Fact Sheet

