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February 6, 2020

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 Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) supports the Governor’s rail plan and CHSRA’s policy recommendations to continue pursuing a Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment (IOS) for high speed rail. The Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment will leverage the maximum degree of connectivity to other intercity rail services, including the improvements to the ACE/San Joaquin services that link our region to the IOS terminus in Merced.

SACOG’s adopted 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) assumes enhanced intercity rail connections integrated with high speed rail over the coming years. The plan also lays out a transportation investment and land use strategy to support a prosperous region, with access to jobs and economic opportunity, transportation options, and affordable housing that serves all residents. Outcomes we anticipate from implementing the MTP/SCS include better air quality, open space and natural resources preservation, and helping California achieve its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) that contribute to climate change.

The Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment is an important step forward in expanding mobility options throughout the Central Valley and beyond. The success of this early interim service is essential towards implementing the ultimate high-speed rail system between the Bay Area, Sacramento, San Joaquin Valley and Southern California. SACOG is very pleased to submit this letter of support for the Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield Interim Operating Segment.

Sincerely,

James Corless
Executive Director

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

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