



FARM BUREAU

June 15, 2010

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Madera County Board of Supervisors
400 4TH Street
Madera, CA 93637

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Executive Director

RE: High Speed Rail Proposed Routes A-1 (Oppose) and A-2 (Support)

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Madera County Farm Bureau has taken a position of opposition to the Proposed High Speed Rail Route A-1 (Santa Fe) for a myriad of reasons. As you know, Madera County Farm Bureau (MCFB) is in support of the Proposed High Speed Rail (HSR) Route A-2 (Hwy 99/UP).

Limited Road Access

One of the notable differences between the two routes is the issue of road closures. The greatest asset that the HSR route A-2 (Hwy99/UP) has to offer is that it will require no road closures. Because the A-1 (Santa Fe) route will be built at grade (which explains the lower price tag when compared to A-2), many roads will have to be closed in order to keep the train at the required speed. The 220-250mph speed of the HSR train dictates that traditional, at-grade crossings will not be allowed due to safety issues. Overcrossings and/or undercrossing will have to be utilized.

Inevitably, many of the 20+ roads will be closed, and the overpasses/underpasses will be few and far between, as it will be extremely expensive to build the number of crossings necessary to continue current farming practices and to maintain access to services in the City of Madera. The High Speed Rail staff has indicated that over/undercrossing will be built only every 2-3 miles. Not to mention, from an engineering standpoint, building an overcrossing per mile would send passengers on a rollercoaster ride that is both unpleasant and inefficient.

The response by police and fire services to rural areas will be hamstrung by loss of road access. The Proposed Route A-1 (Santa Fe) unfairly burdens the rural community by closing off access to the city services, police and fire needed by the constituents of Madera County.

A-2 is an Opportunity to Improve Existing Transportation Corridors

We see many development proposals from the Resource Management Agency crafted in an effort to raise funds for expansion and improvement the interchanges on Highway 99. Why wouldn't the County of Madera take the opportunity to allow federal and state dollars to improve these interchanges through mitigation required by the HSR construction of route A-2 (Hwy99/UP)? A prime example is the Robertson Boulevard overpass, which needs expansion to accommodate police and fire access.

Madera County Farm Bureau

Maintenance Facility Eligibility

There are proposals submitted to the High Speed Rail Authority for the highly coveted HSR Heavy Maintenance Facility on both the A-2 (Hwy99/UP) and the A-1(Santa Fe) routes. This project will bring untold amounts of economic activity and an infusion of employment to the county. It seems counterintuitive for the County of Madera to endorse one HSR route over another, when this action eliminates the County's ability keep its options open, effectively decreasing the County's opportunity to bring the facility home to its constituents.

Agricultural Production Loss

MCFB opposes A-1(Santa Fe) for the obvious reason that early estimates find that a minimum of 720 acres of farmland will be taken out of production in its construction. As you know, the tax base in Madera County is largely dependent on farm dollars for its healthy economic future. There are additional operating costs associated with farming on the existing Santa Rail railway, which will only increase with the elimination of additional road crossings.

Again, it appears counterintuitive to lend your support to the A-1(Santa Fe) route which eliminates capital-generating farmland acreage; while simultaneously opposing A-2(Hwy99/UP), which has an active heavy maintenance facility proposal on record with the High Speed Rail Authority - also an opportunity for an economic boon to our county.

Your constituents are counting on you to consult with property owners who are affected by your support of Route A-1(Santa Fe), and any opposition to Route A-2(Hwy99/UP). There is not enough information at the High Speed Rail Staff level or at the local level from your county businesses and landowners for a decision on a project such as this that will change the landscape of our county forever.

Sincerely,



Jim Erickson
Board President