

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 26, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
The Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

In February, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) awarded \$2.25 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to California's High Speed Rail Project. In the California application for those funds, the San Francisco-to-San Jose corridor was specifically identified as one of the eligible corridor programs.

We all share as an urgent priority creating jobs and putting Americans back to work. The ARRA funds have the maximum potential to do just that, but it is crucial that FRA and California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) officials direct funding to projects that can proceed with construction in advance of an FRA Record of Decision.

The SF/San Jose corridor presents a unique opportunity. Many projects within this corridor are environmentally cleared, which means construction can begin almost immediately, rather than waiting for the full corridor to obtain environmental approval.

Funding for these projects will allow construction to begin on essential elements of future high speed rail, it will provide an immediate benefit for existing passenger rail systems and it will create thousands of high-quality jobs.

These projects include construction of grade separations in San Bruno, electrification of the Caltrain corridor and the introduction of Positive Train Control (PTC), which will provide a significant improvement to existing Caltrain commuter rail service and pave the way for HSR. Also included in the program are new platforms and other improvements at the Caltrain Fourth and King Stations in San Francisco, and the first increment of the new expanded Diridon Station in downtown San Jose ... projects that fully serve the needs of HSR.

Caltrain has made significant progress by completing the environmental approval process for improvements that are essential components of the overall HSR corridor program. The PTC implementation and San Bruno Grade Separations have received a Categorical Exclusion from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the electrification implementation received a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from the FTA, and the Fourth and King Station improvements are also eligible for clearance under a Categorical Exclusion.

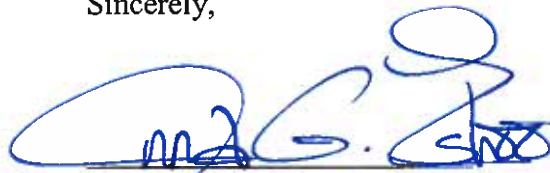
In short, these programs are ready to go – ready to provide jobs, ready to assist an existing passenger rail system and ready to move forward with components that will advance high-speed rail.

A funding strategy that allows work on these components to commence would result in immediate benefits to the overall corridor program consistent with ARRA goals and guidance. This would greatly enhance the State’s efforts to obligate its grant award in advance of ARRA deadlines and represents the best opportunity for expedited job creation.

This investment would also allow construction to proceed as soon as possible, laying the foundation for future HSR service as described in the overall program, but without predetermining alignment and design alternatives under consideration as a part of the corridor’s ongoing Project-level EIR/EIS review.

We urge you to direct the FRA to consider these factors carefully when working with CHSRA to determine how best to utilize California’s ARRA grant award.


Sincerely,



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



George Miller
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
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Michael M. Honda
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