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June 5, 2013

Mr. Dan Richard
Chair
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 800
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairperson Richard:

Thank you for participating at the May 7th meeting of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. Your discussion with us on the issue of high-speed rail was very informative and we appreciate the opportunity of having a direct dialogue with you on this matter.

Last year, this Board recommended that the California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSR) take proactive steps to help mitigate the impact of HSR on landowners and communities in the Central Valley. This recommendation included the re-establishment of the Agricultural Working Group and the hiring of an agricultural liaison/advocate to assist with the site specific impacts on farms and ranches.

Given our discussion at the Board meeting with you and agriculture representatives, we see that some of the initial concerns of this Board have been mitigated by the recent agricultural settlement agreement with entities in Madera and Merced counties. This settlement agreement, along with the continued proactive dialogue between the Authority and impacted agricultural entities, has significantly improved stakeholder relations in the Central Valley. This has primarily been achieved through direct personal interaction by yourself and other Authority representatives with agricultural stakeholders. We are pleased by these developments and are confident that the Authority's outreach and engagement efforts with the agricultural communities will continue.

However, as our meeting demonstrated, concerns still exist in agricultural communities in regards to HSR. There remains a critical need for the Authority to have engagement with farmers and ranchers as the HSR project transitions from a planning to an implementation phase. Based on input we have received, the best approach to accomplish effective engagement may not be the concept of an agricultural liaison/advocate who would be an employee of the Authority. An alternative approach may be a county/locally based model of consultation and third-party agricultural based mediation that should be available to local farmers. The Board recommends that the Authority actively work with Farm Bureaus located within the impacted counties to develop a mutually agreed upon locally-based solution model for individual farmer/rancher mitigation issues.



June 5, 2013

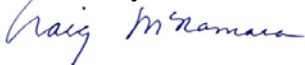
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In addition, while an Authority-based agricultural liaison/advocate may not be the best approach for engagement, a re-established Agricultural Working Group as an advisory body to the Authority on agricultural issues could be of further assistance in addressing concerns within the Central Valley. Members of this advisory body could be nominated from agricultural groups and local Farm Bureaus.

Further, we strongly recommend that the Authority partner with the University of California and/or the California State University system to determine the agricultural economic impacts and agricultural land loss statistics associated with the HSR project. Understanding the cumulative impact of a major infrastructure project upon agricultural land, a vital sector of the state's economy, is critical. Timely collection of this information will be very beneficial in assisting local communities with internal planning as they consider future HSR related development options.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We appreciate your leadership and personal commitment to the Authority's engagement with the agricultural community and look forward to continued updates. Please know that we want to do all we can to support your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig McNamara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig McNamara
President

cc: Secretary Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture