Good morning Chairman Richards and members of the High-Speed Rail Board of Directors,

I want to start by thanking the high-speed rail board of directors for the opportunity to address the board once again. I also would like to thank your fellow Board Member, Anthony Williams, for coming down to Wasco and spending some time listening and seeing the impact the project is having on our community first hand. Governor Newsom said on March 18th that the high-speed rail project is the future. The project is the future and the future of my community hangs in the balance.

The City of Wasco reaffirms its position that the California High-Speed Rail Authority needs to mitigate the adverse impact it has created in our community. I would encourage the board members to review the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Record of Decision for the California High-Speed Train Fresno to Bakersfield Section which it released in June of 2014. The Environmental Justice Finding in the F.R.A.’s Decision concluded that the high-speed rail project, and I quote, “will result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations in Fresno, Wasco, Shafter, Bakersfield, and the rural areas of Newark Avenue, 5th Avenue, and Waukena Avenue in Corcoran, and the community of Crome south of Shafter. These impacts would include an increase in both ambient noise levels and vibration impacts; disruption of existing communities, residential and business displacements, and the displacement of important community facilities; impacts to park resources; decreases in visual quality. Minority and low-income populations may also experience adverse cumulative noise and vibration, community cohesion, and aesthetics and visual impacts” It goes on to reference mitigation measures and state, “these measures would not completely eliminate the adverse impacts, which would likely be more severe in urban areas where minority and low-income populations reside.”

The entire City of Wasco is either located in an SB 535 and AB 1550 Disadvantaged and Low-Income Community Area, or is located within half a mile of these areas.

The Authority and its Board of Directors has reached settlement agreements that resulted in the dismissal of lawsuits brought by various communities including the cities, of Fresno, Shafter, Bakersfield as well as Kern and Kings County.

In 2016, the Authority and its Board of Directors authorized the approval of a mitigation agreement with the City of Wasco for the relocation of residents at the Wasco Farm Labor Housing complex.

The Authority needed these residents to be relocated in order to avoid more costly mitigation and construction measures. The issue of the vacant complex and deteriorating condition was frequently raised by the City to the Authority and always told to trust the Authority because any adverse impact would have to be addressed by the Authority. The complex would not be vacant today if it were not for the Authority’s benefit to construct the high-speed rail project.

The impacts the project has had on our community go beyond the condition of the vacant farm labor housing complex. They include the damage to our local roads adjacent to the construction corridor caused by heavy weight trucks used to haul material to and from the construction area. Hundreds of trucks per