September 18, 2020

Tom Richards, Vice Chair
Board of Directors
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
Sacramento, CA 95814
boardmembers@hsr.ca.gov

Re: High-Speed Rail Project Impact to Wasco and Communities in California’s Senate District 14

Dear Mr. Richards,

I am writing to you today in regards to the City of Wasco, and the impact the High-Speed Rail project has had on the community. The City has recently created a page on its website documenting the impact the project is having on the community. Specifically, the former Wasco Farm Labor Housing property and the possible future loss of Amtrak Service are significant impacts that are of special concern to me.

As the Authority is aware, the High-Speed Rail project will navigate through the central valley and be a prominent feature of California’s Senate District 14. The project is intended to improve mobility and connectivity throughout the central valley while being mindful of the social and environmental impact it will have on the communities along its path. Many of the communities within my district have significant minority and low-income populations. These communities are the life and soul that support the region’s agriculture and economic engine of the central valley.

Wasco has endured significant impacts as a result of the High-Speed Rail project. I appreciate the Authority’s initial mitigation efforts that assisted in the development of Rosaleda Village and relocated residents from the former Wasco Farm Labor Housing complex. Early in the project development, the Authority’s 2012 business plan established a key principle “to evaluate new opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances.” It also developed its 2012 Environmental Justice Guidance and the three (3) fundamental environmental justice principles. The Environmental Justice Guidance’s implementation requires that the Authority plans, designs, and delivers the High-Speed Rail project and recognizes the potential social and environmental impacts that project activities may have on certain segments of the public that require mitigation measures.

The Authority’s Board of Directors and its executive staff have a responsibility to adhere to its principle of adapting to changing circumstances and to mitigate circumstances and conditions that fail to fulfill the principles established in the Environmental Justice Guidance. Given the Authority’s record of change orders for the project, it is clearly capable of adapting to changing circumstances. The negative impacts in Wasco and the burden the City of Wasco is faced with should be no different. The condition of the former
Wasco Farm Labor Housing complex and other impacts the community faces must not be the legacy that residents in Wasco and California’s 32nd Assembly District come to remember the High-Speed Rail project by.

On behalf of my constituents in California’s Senate District 14 in Wasco, CA, I hold the Authority accountable to address and remedy the negative impacts that have been created in Wasco or any community due to the construction of the High-Speed Rail project. The Authority must mitigate the issues and concerns raised by the City of Wasco and that Mayor Teofilo Cortez spoke of at the California High-Speed Rail Board of Directors meeting on August 13, 2020.

Sincerely,

Senator Melissa Hurtado
State Senate District 14

CC:
Mayor Teofilo Cortez Jr., City of Wasco
Brian P. Kelly, CEO, California High-Speed Rail Authority: brian.kelly@hsr.ca.gov
Garth Fernandez, Interim Central Valley Regional Director, California High-Speed Rail Authority: Garth.Fernandez@hsr.ca.gov
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