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CHAIR, CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS ON VIETNAM

June 20, 2020

California High-Speed Rail Authority
Attn: Draft San Jose to Merced Project Section EIR/EIS
100 Paseo de San Antonio, Suite 300
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: San Jose to Merced Project Section Draft EIR/EIS Comments

This submission responds to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the San Jose to Merced Project Section of the California High-Speed Rail (HSR) Project released on April 24, 2020. Specifically, this comment focuses on the impacts the Authority's preferred track alignment, "Alternative 4," will have on the 19th Congressional district and my constituents.

The State of California, and especially the San Francisco Bay Area, could benefit from the increased connectivity and reductions in traffic congestion that high speed rail may potentially deliver. As I have shared with the Authority previously, the Project's benefits must not come at disproportionate cost to the communities it serves, and local feedback must be taken into consideration.

Track Alignment Along US 101 and I-280

At various stages of the Project's development, I have had the opportunity to discuss the merits of potential track alignment alternatives for the San Jose to Merced Project Section directly with the Authority. And, on several occasions I have raised the benefits of running this section of track parallel to the US 101 and I-280 highways. I continue to hear from my constituents that a route that runs along the US 101 and I-280 would be least disruptive to the communities in the 19th Congressional district. I am taking this opportunity to submit a comment to, once again, relay the strong preference, on behalf of the many residents of CA's 19th Congressional District who have contacted me, for the San Jose to Merced Project Section to be built along the US 101 and I-280.

State's Preferred Track Alignment - Alternative 4

While the benefits of extended Caltrain electrification and potential for construction efficiency that come with using Caltrain and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) presented by Track Alternative 4 have not gone unnoticed, this alternative also comes with negative impacts that significant portions of "at-grade" track bring to communities along this route. These include but

are not limited to the sound, vibration, aesthetic, and logistical impacts of HSR trains running through communities on at-grade tracks.

There are myriad concerns presented by Alternative 4 that make it a disadvantageous alternative for my constituents. I would like to use this comment to highlight just one in particular as an example —the threat posed to a United States Historic Landmark located in Morgan Hill, Villa Mira Monte (VMM). VMM is the site of the founder of the City of Morgan Hill's home, built in the 1880's. The property is used for education, cultural, fundraising, and private events, and is maintained by funds raised by these events. Alternative 4 would have tracks built adjacent to the eastern boundary of VMM, potentially compromising the site's historical integrity and disrupting the events held there. I recently shared with the Authority a letter I received from the Morgan Hill Historical Society (MHHS), the organization that holds title to VMM and is required to maintain and preserve the site. I echo MHHS's concerns and urge you to take them under strong consideration.

Community collaboration and engagement is key to ensuring that HSR is a success. I appreciate the opportunity to comment and hope the Authority will consider my comments seriously.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Zoe Lofgren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

