DOUG VERBOON

Supervisor
District 3

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Kings County Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard
Hanford, California 93230
Phone (559) 582-3211 - Ext. 2366
Fax (559) 585-8047

May 28, 2013

The Honorable Jeff Denham, Chairman
Committee On Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Testimony of Doug Verboon, Chairman, Kings County Board of Supervisors

Good morning,

My name is Doug Verboon. I serve as Chairman of the Kings County Board of Supervisors. I would like to thank Chairman Denham and the Subcommittee members for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Oversight of California High Speed Rail.

Since we last testified in 2011, the situation has worsened. It has devolved into a project Proposition 1A voters would not recognize.

We have chronicled unaddressed concerns in volumes of correspondence.

The project ignores environmental precedent in favor of political posturing.

The County was completely excluded during the corridor refinement process.

This exclusion caused the Authority to realize "too late" that it chose one of the most well-planned, completely protected and ag-sustaining areas in California to anoint the "spine" of the project.

It has steadfastly ignored Kings County ever since, essentially stating it is too late.

Kings County can't possibly be the least environmentally damaging project alternative, when only 20 miles east Highways 99 and 198 converge with the Visalia Airport.

Visalia has tirelessly lobbied to have the Authority open its eyes and receive this perfect gift.

The 2012 Business Plan *may* shave dollars, at least on paper, but also robs the bond money, bestows it on conventional commuter rail, and blends the project into one that Prop. 1A voters would not recognize.

68 billion dollars would allegedly build phase one, plus 32 billion to electrify that 100 miles; and billions more to complete phase two.

Phase one will shift Amtrak and bypass cities whose people and economies have become dependent on them, including Hanford and Corcoran in Kings County.

The result is a project that:

Will not be electrified.

Will be standard diesel.

Will be subsidized.

Will compete with conventional passenger and freight service.

Will travel at 79 mph – not the 200 plus indicated in Prop. 1A.

Will not provide a non-stop L.A. to San Francisco Prop. 1A required trip.

Will not be "green", but it will seek cap-and-trade money claiming it is.

Will rely on speculative funding sources.

Will not have additional Federal money.

Will not entice venture capital.

Will not have independent utility.

Will clog the cash-strapped courts with condemnation cases.

Will be politically expedient for some, but at the cost of the environment, environmental justice and Prop. 1A.

The project has no construction permit, but claims it will start construction in July… of 2013.

It does not have ARRA –required agreements with BNSF or Union Pacific.

It does not have the necessary environmental permits to complete even the 29 mile initial construction segment, let alone drift into the Fresno to Bakersfield segment that has yet to be certified.

Even so, the Authority certified to the Legislature that it will, *in the future*, comply with required environmental thresholds, even though Prop. 1A requires all environmental certifications be obtained, for Merced to Palmdale, before bond approval.

Senator Rosenthal recently asked Chairman Richard if, "for all this money, ... we [are] going to get genuine high speed rail?". He said "no, but you are going to get a lot." Hmmmmm.

If they cannot comply with Prop. 1A, they must stop. The federal funding agreement requires compliance with state law.

On January 3, 2012, the Prop. 1A-commissioned Peer Group reported to the State Legislature "We cannot overemphasize the fact that moving ahead on the (high-speed rail) without credible sources of adequate funding, without a definitive business model, without a strategy to maximize the independent utility and value to the state, and without the appropriate management resources, represents an immense financial risk on the part of the State of California."

High speed rail in California, as defined in Prop. 1A, is a worthy objective and one that my County initially supported, so long as it followed existing transportation corridors.

It has devolved to a project voters would not recognize and, given the truth, the Governor would probably decline to endorse.

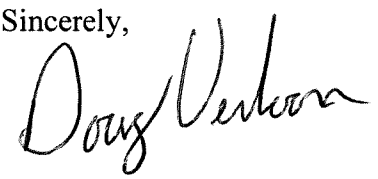
This should concern the Authority's federal partner, the Federal Railroad Administration.

This project needs more oversight, more accountability, more common sense, and less antics.

In reflecting on it's implementation, I am reminded of the children's story of the *Three Little Pigs* and the consequences of building a house of straw.

There is so much more to say, but I will close with an invitation to meet and discuss any questions you may have and offer to provide you with all the information we have gathered to date.

Sincerely,



Doug Verboon, Chairman

Kings County Board of Supervisors

H:/High Speed Rail/Congressional Testimony/Verboon Testimony to Subcommittee 5-28-13 at 1:25 am