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California High Speed Rail - The Broken Tracks of Communication

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California High Speed Rail
The Broken Tracks of Communication

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
University of San Francisco

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS in the PUBLIC AFFAIRS and
PRACTICAL POLITICS PROGRAM

by

Nathalie Nguyen

December, 2012

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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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December, 2012

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members,
this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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Abstract

Proposition 1A, “Safe, Reliable, High –Speed Passenger Train Bond Act” was passed on November 8, 2008. Fifty-two percent of Californians voted to issue \$10 billion in bonds to fund the clean, efficient, and safe high-speed train service, which is known today as the California High Speed Rail system (CHSR). The rail system will provide a mass transit system up and down the state of California if constructed, planned, and funded successfully.

This paper analyzes the City and County of Merced’s approach to planning for this high-speed rail while engaging in public discussion with the California High Speed Rail Authorities (CHSRA) at a state level. The Merced project is a case study of the developing policy and statewide vision for the CHSR project and highlights the interaction between different government spheres. The conclusion of this paper argues that the goals of the state will not prove to be successful at a regional and local level as this high-speed rail project continues.

Executive Summary

The CHSR project may be a failure for the State of California because of a lack of organization in terms of planning, funding and resources. All government spheres: state, county, and local are not working together to ensure that the success of the project prevails. The situation has created problematic issues with other policy goals the state is already facing. The CHSR project was proposed to create success for California, but now the state is faced with other issues such as lack of housing development, ongoing budget issues and economic development.

The case of Merced's CHSR Project¹ involves many parties and voices. The public discussion brings together state, regional, and locals stake holders with constituent's needs and desires. It is clear that the real issue behind the project is the multiple views and voices that will somehow have to find common ground, especially if they all want to see the initial construction of the rail system begin.

In order to include everyone in the conversation and illustrate that success will prevail in the decision to invest in the high-speed rail system; the state has chosen to designate a separate authority to oversee the project. The authority oversees not only the planning, but also the implementation and construction as well. The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) consists of people who are politically powerful who have the ability to push the political agenda and oversee the state funding of the overall project and ultimately want to see the rail station implemented.

The City and County of Merced have chosen to create a "Merced California High Speed Rail committee" or MHSRC to ensure that all constituents and stakeholders are all represented in the public discussion of the project. The board consists of 15 members, who represent a range of

¹ The station is to be constructed in downtown, next to the Union Pacific RR and Transportation Center. Please refer to Appendix 4 to see the illustration of the rail station.

small business owners, city leaders, stakeholders, and other private entities. The purpose of the committee is to “provide a link or platform for constituents, city leaders, or power players to consistently engage all parties in the discussion of the project” (A. Lamas, personal communications, October 3, 2012). Public discussion includes concerns of private poverty, current agenda points of the project, or touching base and informing constituents on the current discussions of the CHSR project on a state, regional, and local level.

Despite the outlet for members of the public and private to engage in discussion, there is still serious issues of obvious concerns that show evidence that the channels of communication are not effectively developed enough on the levels of government. The concerns arising in the project range from a variety of issues evident in the public discussion. The role each of the three government entities will play in the overall project: The California High Speed Rail authority, the County of Merced, and the City of Merced are not cooperating together. There is an unfair unequal distribution of resources, which include a lack of funding. The City of Merced has not been given any funds to ensure the initial steps or foundations for the project are readily available. The ability to access resources to further not just plans for the rail station, but redeveloping the City of Merced has been a problematic point in the discussion. The issue of displacement has not been solved.

This paper argues that the Merced CHSR project is a case study that reflects the present failures in planning of the statewide vision for the CHSR project. The City of Merced shows how the implementation of this project lacks basic essential tools: communication between government entities. This paper tells the story of the Merced project in the context of the larger development over the high-speed rail development, highlighting the interaction between different

government spheres. The conclusion argues that the CHSR project's goal of the state will not prove successful on a regional and local level.

Finally this paper offers recommendations for effective planning that may improve large-scale projects such as the CHSR. These critiques will be proved through an additional case study that discusses similar issues the City of Merced is currently encountering in this project. This analysis will provide an understanding that the possibility of effective planning and communication will prevail if approached properly.

Background

The California State Legislature created the CHSRA to develop a plan for the construction, operation and financing of a "statewide intercity" high-speed rail system. The authorities and appointed constituents¹ worked together to plan for the rail system and to prepare for the November 2008 ballot, in which Proposition 1A would appear before voters to approve the initial funding for the rail system.

On November 4, 2008 voters approved the passage of Proposition 1A, the "Safe, Reliable, High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act". Fifty-two point percent of California voters supported the initiative to provide \$10 billion in bonds towards partially funding a clean, efficient, and safe high-speed train service known as the California High Speed Rail system. The proposed train would provide transportation services connecting Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley, and the Bay Area. The voter approved proposition created and marked one of the most "ambitious steps any state has ever taken to finance and construct a true high speed rail system" (Lin, 2012), the first of its kind in the United States. Backed by powerful wealthy political players the discussion of the rail system's proposal took six years to be placed on the

¹ Appointed constituents are chosen based on their background, ethnicity, and interests that the CHSRA believed would provide a voice that represented a sample group. Most appointed constituents were representatives of their communities or well-known local business members.

ballot despite the constant political discussion behind closed doors. The most interesting question that continues to arise in public discussion, why did the high speed rail system, proposition 1A, finally pass in 2008 despite California's struggling economy?

California is currently facing a budget crisis, which will force cuts to schools and public safety (Lin, 2012). Many constituents wanted Proposition 1A to pass because high unemployment rates within the state. "This legislation will help put thousands of people in California back to work ... by improving regional transportation systems, we are investing in the future of our state and making California a better place to live and work" (Martinez, 2012). Although, Governor Brown was not in office at the time of the initial proposal to the high-speed rail system, he subsequently pushed the political agenda further onto the legislature house floor for further approval. The project appeared at one of California's most grueling economic and troubling time.

Governor Brown signed a bill on July 6th, 2012 authorizing the state to begin selling \$4.5 billion in voter-approved bonds to build the initial 130-mile project of the rail line. It was debated that, "Brown had pushed for the massive infrastructure project to accommodate expected growth in the nation's most populous state, which now has 37 million people. The project is sorely needed to create jobs in a region with higher than average unemployment" (Lin, 2012). This day marked a major political victory for Democratic Governor Jerry Brown, the Obama administration, and supporters of the California High Speed Rail system.

The vision of the high-speed rail system is expected to meet the growing demand of transportation infrastructure. "Initially running from San Francisco to Los Angeles via the Central Valley, and later to Sacramento and San Diego, high-speed trains will travel between LA and San Francisco in under two hours and forty minutes, at speeds of 220 mph, and will

interconnect with other transportation alternatives, providing environmentally friendly option to traveling by plane or car” (CAHighSpeedRail, 2010).

The scope of the plan is eight hundred miles of track with up to twenty-four stations. Because of what the project will entail, the planning process will be divided into phases. The first is assessing a need and service for the statewide system in a particular area and presenting policy choices. The second phase is a more in depth detail of determining how to implement these rail stations. The result of these two phases will create “greater community input, resulting in the best system for all Californians” (CAHighSpeedRail, 2010).

Now that the project is approved all government entities must work together collectively to ensure that the construction of the nation’s first high-speed rail system performs with clean energy and is fast and efficient with the projected implementation year of roughly 2020.

Primary Conclusion

The CHSR project is an expensive, time-consuming and under developed vision that is already raising questions and criticisms. The initial proposal lacks the foundation to construct this fast, efficient and safe service. California has a large deficit and the rail system will only raise more costs, time and money. The problem in the project lies in the ineffectiveness of CHSRA’s approach to the project. The CHSRA needs to develop a concise and thorough plan to ensure that the high-speed rail will be a complete success for the state.

The CHSR will be constructed someday even if the time invested and the price tag is high. Naturally, obstacles will be encountered and situations may be in question leaving the proper authorities to address them. However, despite the circumstance or situation, the plan and process to ensure the rail station is completely developed to reflect the state’s goals and vision must be developed concisely.

The City of Merced provides a case study that analyzes the problems the CHSR project is currently facing. Although this study only utilizes one city, Merced provides an illustrated vision of the problems and its dynamics. The city's obstacle raises the question that similarities may arise in other cities also planning for the rail system.

Local entities are in need of funding for the high-speed rail. Other cities that receive funding face the reality that the mandatory requirement by the state for a construction of a rail station to be implemented, cities must also do their share. Local governments must match the same amount of grant money awarded to them before they are given all the funds. However, many cities have suffered from hard deficits and cannot provide any contribution to the state vision.

The City of Merced is unlike any of the other twenty-three cities approved for a rail station. The area thrives on agriculture, yet after the foreclosure crisis, the city took a hard local deficit hit. Unemployment has been at an all time high, with a heavy population of minorities and little to no revenue has been generated through UC Merced and their own economic activity. As a result, the city is currently in a depression. Merced has been approved for a rail station, but given the city's circumstance, the construction of the rail station seems to be a mere vision.

Other areas proposed in the state vision might be facing the same under developed planning process as the City of Merced has. Displacement of citizens, the need for better redevelopment policies and a weak local economy are issues that all cities may be facing as Merced has.

The City of Merced has not been able to receive funds to begin the initial stages of developing a plan and policies for the Merced area. The focus of the CHSRA has been on other cities that have allocated for the funds needed to begin construction. This shifted attention away from cities who need assistance to thrive is not only unfair, but creates discontinuity between cities in California contributing to the overall growth of the state. As a result, the CHSRA needs to ensure that every entity is working for the common state goal.

The underdeveloped approach the CHSRA are utilizing to approach a policy planning process entails broad initial stages of a vision and scope. The promise of money continues to appear in public discussion when working alongside regional and local entities. As the authorities sit back, the cities are left to raise monetary funds to match the promised grant money. At the same time cities must plan their own policies and processes to the construction of the high-speed rail project. After a city succeeds these stages, the rail authorities then step in to assist in the last few steps of the project. This current ineffective approach to policy is detrimental to California as it creates discontinuity between all levels of government agencies.

The high –speed rail is an important example of how state entities must approach projects with the goal of creating effective policies and processes. Under developed plans will create problematic circumstances for California if entities are not working together to ensure success. There is value in state agencies working with regional and local levels of government. However, the CHSRA must take on the responsibility in more than just overseeing the execution of the project. The agency must work with each entity from beginning to end of the planning process. The result will be a successful policy and process that can be utilized and replicated in other projects.

Detailed Examination

Overview

Behind this very expensive project lies a group of government officials on all levels of the state that will determine the fate of California. They are the political leaders that will essentially determine whether the CHSR project will be beneficial to not only the cities approved for the station, but for the overall economic impact of the entire golden state. The success of the high-speed rail system will only prove effective, if every proposed city on the map successfully constructs, implements, and provides a station that will serve the entire state of California. However, at the very core of this voter approved project lies a situation already showing proof that without the proper precautions, resources and tools, the project will result at a downfall. Issues arising are not on the minor scale, but prove to be far more damaging for the future of California. They include a greater financial debt, no job creation, and a troubling economy.

The City of Merced is currently facing the impacts from the ineffective planning with the CHSR project. The city faces a shortage of resources from funding to allocate the initial stages of blueprint planning to redevelopment money to assist the citizens who will be displaced because their homes are in demand for the project. Most importantly, the City of Merced has been left out of the public discussion with the county and state authorities in the next steps they need to take to ensure their contribution to the project prevails and benefits will be received.

Literature Review

The following pieces of literature prove to be relevant to the case of the CHSR project. The City of Merced lacks resources such as funding, effective tools of planning and is not participating in public discussions with other governmental spheres. This is a statewide level project which should have the necessary steps to ensure success prevails out of the process. The

city also faces a housing displacement issue due to the project's proposal to initiate construction on existing homes. These residents are working class members of society and make up the City of Merced's majority minority ethnic make-up.

The government needs to incorporate all communities and minorities that are affected by projects or desire to be included in the public discussion of a large-scale project. In the article, "Injustices of Engagement: Issues in Housing Needs Assessments with Minority Ethnic Communities", by Bogusia Temple and Andy Steele. They draw up issues that are related to housing needs particularly in minority communities. They identify the process, in which the minorities are categorized in society based on their housing needs. The authors criticize the government in their approach to include ethnic communities into the public discussion on housing and the criteria the government utilizes to base judgment on whether families are qualified for affordable housing or not. They conclude, "the majority of housing needs assessment are service provider led and based on an undifferentiated view of minority ethnic communities" (Temple & Steele, 553). They also mention the "lack of community participating in defining the agenda means that communities are not represented" (Temple & Steele, 553). Projects at all government spheres should be open to constituents for engagement on public discussion.

The CHSR project will more than likely engage constituents who are against the construction and implementation of the rail system. Some of these constituents will be those affected directly by the project because their homes are built on the proposed site. The City of Merced might have to consider utilizing eminent domain in order to ensure that the initial stages of the CHSR project are constructed. "Eminent Domain" by Amnon Lehavi and Amir Licht analyzes this process. "Large-scale, for profit development projects require the assembly of land

from numerous private property owners” (1704, Lehavi & Licht) meaning large scale projects often require private land from constituents be given or handed over to other private entities such as the state governments. Eminent Domain offers a damaging effect to homeowners because they are under compensated and under valued when the government decides that constituents’ property is more important and must be utilized for private use (Leung, 2009). The authors argue that eminent domain should only be exercised if the property will be used to maximize the social welfare of the public. Does the CHSR benefit the public and maximize the State of California’s social welfare? Or will the project be a complete waste of state, federal, and local funds? Will the process prove whether the outcome will be beneficial to the State of California, Merced County, and the City of Merced?

State Level Government

The state of California has ensured that the CHSRA has been working diligently to ensure that the voter-approved bonds are and will be used effectively. The CHSRA, directed by Gregg Allbright, has already begun their process of research, illustrating a blueprint, working with local and regional governments, and has provided any necessary resources to both local and regional governments as reassurance that the project flows smoothly within the designated timeframe of completion by 2028.

In an interview with Brian Stanke, the project manager of the CHSR project assisting Allbright, stated “the role of the CHSR authority is to work with these regional and city governments in receiving a grant, which will essentially assist the local jurisdictions in their planning” (B. Stanke, personal communications, September 27, 2012). Many constituents believe the CHSRA is responsible for implementing the rail station from its initial stages to the fully functioning high-rail system. Many people believe that an entity or department of the state

should be responsible for doing more than just urging local communities to be apart of the public discussion. Rather, the authorities should be responsible for overseeing the complete project within each city. They should not be part of just one segment of the project. The CHSRA has admitted that as of now they are only in part of the public discussion with local entities in their “stationary planning” blueprints.² The CHSRA has admitted that ultimately, the city at a local level is responsible for the success of the CHSR project. The reason is because the CHSRA has a different role in assisting local governments, which is to ensure the success of the station *after* its implementation.

CSHRA has worked with local governments in finding and encouraging application for funding through a process in which they may receive grant money provided by state agencies. After the application process and the logistics have been approved, local governments must match the same grant funds that have been awarded to them. This is to ensure that the other half of the rail construction funds have been raised by local legislatures granting them authority in partially owning a state project. Stanke mentions that “only local and regional governments will have the answers to what is conducive for their communities. They have engineers, contractors, guidelines, constituents, etc that they know better than the CHSRA. Therefore, the state and the local level have a two-way relationship that meets at a half point. Every entity does its part and the end result is a final product that benefits everyone” (B. Stanke, personal communication, September 27, 2012).

So what exactly is the point of CHSRA, if all they seem to do is provide guidance in the initial grant application process? What about the communities who do not have any adequate

² The term stationary planning pertains to plans that will redevelop areas outside of the rail station within a certain amount of miles, whether that is business, homes, etc in reviving their communities.

resources even after the grant is awarded or while they are awaiting the funds? The responsibility of the state especially in a statewide collective project that has every state agency's interest and entire California population should reside in helping develop the project to its full capacity, from beginning to end. This means that the state agency should provide guidance and additional resources (whether that may be construction, planning tools, or land use studies) to the communities who have none, so that the success of the project can be foreseeable.

The CHSRA has already been criticized for how it has chosen to run their state agency. Their deputy director has already seemingly illustrated an image of hard work the CHSRA has portrayed, "the new deputy director for communications was caught sleeping at a public meeting" (Jaffe, 1). The CHSRA is not taking their roles in the project and in the state seriously. The whole purpose of the state agency is to "address California's critical infrastructure needs over the next X years" (Strategic Growth Council [SGC], 2012). Yet, has this state agency done its part to address or offer this role?

Currently, the CHSRA are working with other agencies to ensure that all the grant money available within government agencies are not dispersed into the same entity. Stanke claims, "CHSR is working with the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) and CALTrans to ensure that not all the money from these different entities are given to the same city or groups" (B.Stanke, personal communication, September 27, 2012). Although this is important and necessary, state agencies are there to guide California's interests, so that the "critical infrastructure needs are addressed over the next 20 years" and further after. State agencies must work collectively with one another, city and regional, so that the vital "infrastructure future for California" is intact and successful (Strategic Growth Council, 2012). Is CHSR keeping in line with California's goal if they are not working closely with local entities, but rather on the sidelines of oversight to ensure

that only one resource, money, is readily available for these local communities? Or are state entities like CHSRA leaving local communities vulnerable and open for failure without the proper one on one, close guidance that state agencies should provide for regional and local governments?

CHSRA has faced a lot of criticism in terms of its role in the CHSR project. Since its implementation by the state, “The CHSR authority now has a new board chairman, a new chief executive officer, and a revised business plan” (Wood, 1), which leaves the public to think that the CHSRA are not prepared and does not have a strong foundation. CHSRA have changed their directive board more times than the planning process has begun.

Other criticisms include its choice of favoritism when working with local agencies on the project. Fresno has received numerous help from the CHSRA because of their capability to match the grant money given to them by the CHSRA and SGC. Is this fair to favor another city over another because of one’s success and allocated resources to raise money for the project? Fresno “has been considered the golden child” (B. Stanke, personal communication, September 27, 2012) in the project because of their success to raise funds for the CHSR project. Other cities have not been able to receive funding because they are not qualified for the grants or have been awarded the grants, but cannot push forth with their proposal because of a lack in resources or additional funding.

These resources include effective planning tools, city leaders with qualified positions for state level planning on large-scale projects, or simply additional staff members to ensure deadlines are meant. Others lack funding to provide income for a team of planners, additional research for state policies and permits, or even providing outreach materials for constituents. Money and resources are needed, so that state level projects can be planned effectively and

successfully. Should the state be responsible for providing this for Merced? Or should it be the city's responsibility to find income and resources if they want the station implemented in their jurisdiction? Whoever is responsible, all agencies are there to help all government spheres to ensure the success of California.

Kim Espinosa, City of Merced's planning manager stated that Merced did not have the resources or the funding to proceed with mocking up a drafted plan for the station. They have not been awarded the grant money because of the city's lack of resources to mock a plan for redevelopment purposes. "We are limited on resources and can't afford to spend money on initial steps if we know that the same money needs to be used later elsewhere. We have asked for help and more funding, but it's been given to other cities but here. And we need it because Merced is high in poverty" (K. Espinosa, personal communication, October 3, 2012). According to the U.S Census Bureau Merced's poverty rate was reported at 30%, a significant jump from the 27.4% reported the previous year (2011). Is it fair to say that cities like Merced who suffer from high poverty rates should be given extra assistance to ensure that not only their poverty rate diminishes, but also to include a redevelopment process occurs and that the goals of the CHSR project are projected at the end of its implementation? Shouldn't the CHSRA work with cities like Merced asking for assistance? The CHSRA needs to do more than just illustrate a blueprint for the entire state. The success of a project is only measured if all cities and parties involve prevail.

The County of Merced

The County of Merced is located at the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, which is comprised of several cities including Merced, Livingston, Gustine, and Atwater. The county is responsible for 255,793 (U.S Census Bureau) residents who contribute to the economic state of

the county. This includes managing everything from public health to public commodities that benefit the entire area collectively. The county's largest priority at the moment is ensuring that Merced County can survive in difficult economic times. As a result, the county is supporting the CHSR project and participating in the process to ensure that the implementation of the rail station and what is current in public discussion as of now is that the heavy maintenance facility is here to stay in Merced County. The county officials who are involved in the discussion believe that this will be the answer to solving the economic hardships the area has faced.

The County of Merced has formulated the CHSR committee similar to the role of what the state authorities involved in the rail project are. The Merced California High Speed Rail Committee (MCHSRC) is responsible for planning the success of the rail station in the County of Merced. According to an interview with Mark Hendrickson, committee member and Merced County's Director of Commerce, "the committee is responsible for overseeing the success of the project to ensure that voices are heard, jobs are created, redevelopment is happening, and most importantly that Merced will be on the map" (M. Hendrickson, personal communications, October 3, 2012).

The National Association of Counties (NACO) reports that "counties perform state-mandated duties", which include everything from property, record keeping, maintenance of roads, economic development, planning and zoning, and even state projects that vary across the map. It is only natural that the County of Merced be involved in the statewide project of the rail system. Currently, the county has already begun the discussion in its blueprint plans for when the implementation of the rail might happen when the funds are available. With a meeting held once a month, they invite constituents to attend or visit along their website where they post the agenda and the notes to the meeting publicly. They have also initiated separate meetings for constituents

to express and voice their concerns or receive information on current talks about the CHSR. The committee consists of different communities leaders. As a result, the board members are easily accessible to constituents. If citizens cannot attend meetings, they may receive information on a personal basis through the committee.

However, the agenda of the committee and the county is essentially not the rail system. According to recent agenda materials and reports posted online, the county is mainly concerned with the heavy maintenance facility for the rail system. The county owns the proposed site up for proposal, which is Castle Air Force Base (Appendix 1). They have been urging the placement of the heavy maintenance facility, which is also up for discussion in Fresno County. They believe that the location of the maintenance facility in Merced would mean “immediate employment for a wide pool of diverse and qualified workers with sustainable wages and benefits and more direction and indirect economic benefits to the Merced and the Valley regional community” (Appendix 2). Every component of the project is important to contribute to Merced’s economic state, it is also important that the rail system be constructed first as it would be the system that would house the maintenance facility. The priorities of the county based on the agenda and reports posted online do not seem like they are in order. Rather, they are focusing on other aspects of the project, but not the rail project.

Even the committee’s website, the most up to date information is not available for viewing. Constituents who cannot attend meetings, receive information about the meetings, or have the desire to know more about the project have no access to the information. For one, the information has not been recently updated with the last news article published in 2009. With the year dated at 2012, constituents show evidence that information is not readily available. In an interview with Angelo Lamas, MCHSRC director, stated, “the county has taken extra measures

to ensure that all the public's questions are answered, constituents are able to get any questions or concerns they have answered" (A. Lamas, personal communications, October 3, 2012).

However, a small local business member stated that there was hardly any news circulating the county because he hadn't been informed. "The county hasn't reached out to me. I know I should be the one they are contacting because not only am I a businessman circulating revenue for Merced, but rather because I know my property will be up for grabs when this supposed high-speed rail system is coming" (Anonymous, personal communications, October 3, 2012). The project already shows signs of ineffective communication with the public. People are not receiving information, cannot access information, and most importantly believe the county has not included them in their planning process.

Alongside with communicating effectively with the constituents, the county must also initiate channels of an effective planning process with local governments. To ensure that the success of the rail system is implemented successfully, the County of Merced must work with the City of Merced to ensure that the proper steps are being taken to include state mandates for a successful project.

Local Government

According to County officials involved in the planning process, the City Mayor Stan Thurston is against the CHSR project. He stated, "There was no identifiable funding source to build the project in Merced" (Sheehan, 2012). With an unemployment rate of 30%, the Mayor feels the city's priorities should be saving money for the city, not spending on expensive projects. The money could be allotted for job outreach for the citizens of the city. One can argue this to be true, since UC Merced was brought to the city in 2005 for the same reasons the rail station is being proposed in Merced. Both the university and rail system have been argued that

with the implementation of large projects such as this will benefit the city overall. Yet, UC Merced has not “transform[ed] the region... hampered by the recession and the economic woes that followed and that were strongly felt in the region” (Amaro, 2012). Does the rail system prove to be significantly possible to prove the same outcome as the university has shown?

The City of Merced fought tirelessly for the rights to build a new college campus. UC Merced was opened in 2005 and became the 10th campus in the UC system in California. The choice to fight for the university was the expectation that the college would help bring revenue to Merced. “Our city is poor. It’s one of the poorest cities. We needed help” stated the city’s planning department. (K, Espinosa, personal communications, October 3, 2012). Universities are big projects like the CHSR and are expected to boost local economies. “At Merced the distance between the existing town and the new campus appears to impede initial opportunities for synergy between the campus and the Merced Community” (Bender & Parman, 2005). The city spent time lobbying for the rights to the new campus, money to write proposals and conduct research, and space for the new campus. UC Merced is proof that even with time, money and space –the project can be problematic for the city. This could be an example that the same scenario could be argued for the CHSR project.

And then there’s the conflict between the Mayor and the Board revolving around the high-speed rail project. The Mayor disagreed with the implementation of the rail-system in the City of Merced. The conflict has even been more evident than just during voting process. Hendrickson and Lamas both stated in their interviews that the Mayor seems to be uncooperative when it comes to the planning process of the project. The Mayor has voiced his concerns that the project is not conducive to the city, voted against most proposals placed forth on the council, and

has started conversations with city officials that the rail-system is not economic problem solver for the city.

City council members involved in the project believe that the high-speed rail is what will alleviate the city of Merced out of poverty. The council members voted for the project, like Councilman Josh Pedroza, who stated, “this is the one thing you can do to help our community” while Mayor Thurston has voted no. He says that the application was not prepared adequately and needs to contain more information on the site area and with reports on the impacts to housing and businesses. He urged city planners to put public workshops on the “front end” of future planning (Whitaker, 2012). The result is an obvious disconnect between public and private entity behind the rail project.

The proposal was not developed adequately to satisfy the Mayor and does not address plans to save homes and businesses. The most evident aspect of the existing proposal is that the priorities of city council leaders are to implement high-income projects when funds are not readily available to do so. The current city agenda should be to fix the city’s current problems; help businesses without spending more money. This may be proof that the city has not worked endlessly to devise plans that are best for Merced.

It may also be evident that the city has diverted its attention away from Merced’s current goals. The “Merced Vision 2030” is a set of guidelines the city devised for effective planning to ensure the city reaches its future goals as a contribution to the economic well being of California. The guidelines are required by the state requiring all cities and counties devise a plan in support of the community’s future growth and development. The guidelines range from different issues with two topics including transportation and housing. In order for Merced to be successful, the implementation of these guidelines should resonate in all future city plans, including the CHSR

project. However, the planning guide currently has one published page (Appendix 3) briefly discussing the overall vision for the CHSR project. This is evident to indicate that Merced has not initiated a planning process in the city's current political agenda. Rather than planning for a high-income project where money is not evident; city members, officials, and the Mayor should work towards goals published in the planning guidelines and work to devise a financial plan that will benefit all businesses and residents.

Colony Lane

The disconnected lines of communication between the different governmental levels, from state to county to local, prove to be damaging and will affect the citizens of the city. Colony Lane (Appendix 4) is a residential area that is part of the rail system's proposal. It will be completely removed. "Colony Lane is filled with senior citizens, folks larger on the age scale, and have been there for years and years. It's unfortunate because originally the plan was to relocate these displaced citizens of Merced. However, our redevelopment grant money was cut and now we have no plans or back up plans on how we will save the residents of Colony Lane" (K. Espinosa, personal communications, October 3, 2012). This proves that there is a lack of government communication because the residents impacted by the project are left to suffer, especially after not being included in the initial political discussion. The city of Merced must now deal with a poor economy in need of help with no additional assistance or resources due to a history of poor planning. While the county and state are left irresponsible for their harsh decision to cut funds for redevelopment plans. The system is broken because every sector chooses a decision that impacts California in a negative way.

According to the U.S Census Bureau, the city of Merced is comprised of 47% Hispanic and 53% White residents. City planners know that Colony Lane is inhabited by residents who

fall under these two categories, mainly Hispanic and often of low-income. Originally, the proposed site was chosen so that redevelopment money could assist in relocating the displaced residents of Colony Lane affected by the CHSR project. The displaced residents would be relocated to a better area, a place where better and greater economic prosperity could be visible and offer lower numbers in terms of crime rate.

The process of redevelopment involves “assisting city and county governments to eliminate blight within designated project areas. It encompasses residential, commercial, industrial and retail development” (City of Merced). A city who needs additional funding and cannot provide for the process themselves, may apply through the state or federal government seeking additional funds to assist in the project. Espinosa stated, “When the City of Merced mocked up a plan for the CHSR project, the intention behind it was that the people who had to leave on the proposed site, Colony Lane would have a plan for their displacement. We would receive redevelopment money and ensure that the residents wouldn’t have to give up everything in this hard economy. We would make their lives a bit easier and maybe even give them a better living situation” (K. Espinosa, personal communications, October 3, 2012). As she furthered explained the grant process it was clear that the City of Merced lacked funding and did not receive the grant money they intended from the application.

In 2011, Governor Brown cut nearly 400 local redevelopment agencies. He believed that the property taxes should go to other programs such as schools and retail to help create a positive urban renewal. He also argued that redevelopment agencies were rife with corruption. This left redevelopment agencies to cut back on their own spending and eliminated their chances to provide funding for displaced communities or residents like the folks in Colony Lane. Shouldn’t the City of Merced have a back up plan if they knew the money was not guaranteed by the state

of the federal government? They should have since Merced is already being low on the poverty line.

“Without redevelopment agency in Merced, infrastructure associated with the high-speed rail ...will be affected” (Butt, 2011). The city was relying heavily on the assistance of these funds to ensure that Merced had a chance of developing a strong economy. In January 2011, “the Merced agency transferred its redevelopment funds to a separate entity, the City of Merced Public Financing and Economic Development Authority, which would complete future projects” (Butt, 2011). However, entities have to finish audits, transfer titles to other entities, and evaluate current contracts before initiating new ones. This means that the fate of the CHSR project may not foresee any redevelopment funds and the question of who will be paying for these developed areas after the state eliminated its funding.

Would it be appropriate to say that the CHSRA are to blame on wanting to implement a rail station where cities like Merced do not have funding or other resources? Would it be appropriate to say that the County of Merced does not have their priorities straight and need to reach out to Merced to help implement the rail station and not the maintenance facility? And would it be appropriate to say that Merced is approaching this project in all areas that are unorganized?

Targeting Colony Lane to plan a statewide project is wrong because it not only displaces the citizens currently occupying the street there, but rather it shows that Merced does not have their citizen's interests at heart.

The proposed site for the CHSR station was tactically placed by the City of Merced. Lamas explains, “the site lacks residents and businesses. There is already one plot of land completely empty and available for construction owned by the city and county” (A. Lamas,

personal communications, October 3, 2012) while Espinosa explains “the site was chosen because of the residents in Colony Lane. We were supposed to receive redevelopment funds for the project, which requires a certain number of residents being displaced in the application process” (K. Espinosa, personal communications, October 3, 2012). Espinosa is referring to the process of relocation through redevelopment. According to the State of California’s Redevelopment Agency, “relocation is the displacement of a business or family for the purpose of clearing land and preparing it for designated use. When a person or business meets the legal qualifications, the Redevelopment Agency pays for: assistance in finding a new location, payments to help cover moving costs and payments for certain other costs as provided by the law” (State of California). However, the state isn’t paying for redevelopment even though Colony Lane is somewhat part of the project proposal.

With Colony Lane occupied by mainly poor Hispanic constituents and it may be fair for one to say that the inclined target for the proposed rail station was offered because of tactical planning. One could argue that perhaps the residents of Colony Lane would offer less resistance. They are significantly poor and would lack funds to hire an attorney or a mediator. Although many of them may speak English, some may face a language barrier. Most importantly, targeting certain ethnic group resonates signs of low- income and poor only lead to evidence of a bad planning process.

Merced should utilize past successful case studies to ensure that the residents of Colony Lane are not displaced. The case study may provide insight and possible routes to place Merced in good economic standing in California and ensure that the city benefits from the CHSR project.

The Case of Successful Planning: Century Freeway

The CHSRA should continue to research and analyze all the factors, risk, and results as they continue to develop a plan and policy for the project. Century Freeway is a project presented, constructed, and implemented in the 80's who had faced similar obstacles the CHSR project is currently facing. The case study of the freeway may provide insight on approaching policies of housing, transportation, and economic development for the area. Century Freeway may also provide a study on how to develop an effective plan given the scale of the high-speed rail project.

Century Freeway, presently known as Interstate 105 is located in southern Los Angeles County. The Highway has also been referred to as the Glenn Anderson Freeway named after the Democratic politician who had advocated for its construction and redevelopment. The freeway is also known to intersect with Interstate 5, another dominant highway running through the State of California. The price tag of the highway project resulted in \$2.2 billion of taxpayer dollars.

The freeway project was essential to the construction of CalTran's plan for a successful Southern California freeway system. The plan's goal was to help alleviate congested traffic. Due to a number of factors such as environmental movements, budget cuts, and large community opposition by those affected from the project, the freeway was not completed until 1993.

The freeway plan indicated that property owned by predominantly African-Americans would be used for the success and implementation of the highway. Other concerns included that the path of the freeway would be built in low-income and high-crime areas leaving those situated along its route, displaced. In the past, "interstate highways and urban renewal programs often destroyed inner city housing units which inadvertently segregated urban neighborhoods

throughout the country” (Goodwin, 2009). This led to failures of communities, construction projects unfinished, and most importantly families and minorities displaced from homes.

As a response to the situation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the start of urban renewal and interstate highway policies that would alter the way communities functioned at the expense of the inner city poor. This federal policy was then utilized in the planning process of the Century Freeway project. Even though the CHSRA is still working to develop a state policy for the rail station, the same federal policy may be used as a model for effective planning.

Century freeway resonated evidence of poor planning in attempts to link the planning process with public or private housing policy and needs. Policymakers and stakeholders created legitimacy around the case that a highway was needed. However, without any research or concern, the reality of the project only created a destruction of minority and low-income communities. Issues of displacement and characteristics of bad urban renewal planning all resulted from an unnecessary statewide vision. “Highway planners often aimed interstate construction at poor, black neighborhoods. They justified this by claiming that was where the cheapest land was found for highway acquisitions” (Goodwin, 2009). This proves that politically powerful players who utilize affordable land to construct projects to fill their own agendas have not done their research. Constituents were affected, money was loss, and the planning process was ineffective.

The construction of the Century Freeway meant “the elimination of 7,000 houses and businesses and the displacement of about 20,000 residents” (Trombley &Hebert, 1987). The plan also outlined an area that was of low-income, high-crime, and predominately black. Outraged citizens demanded public discussion, but were denied. As a result, in 1972 a lawsuit was slammed onto the Los Angeles County’s desk. “Individuals and organizations that were

concerned about people being displaced by the proposed I-105, 'Century Freeway', construction, brought action against state and federal government officials. The plaintiffs sought injunctive relief" (Ralph W. Keith v. Volpe, 1997). The people had enough and decided to take matters into their own hands.

In 1979, a Federal decree was implemented to end the lawsuit, which required that additional and affordable housing units be built for those citizens displaced by the project. Four thousand one hundred fourteen subsidized units, mainly apartments, have now been constructed to help those displaced by the Interstate highway project. In addition to the implementation of these new homes, the Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration signed "a consent decree in which they reduced the width of the freeway and set aside highway money to build units of affordable housing. The Century Freeway Housing Program (CFHP), a wing of the state Department of Housing and Community Development, was created to carry out the mission" (Mitchell, 1997). The decision by the state to appoint a separate state department proved to be one of the most effective decisions ever made since the discussion of Century Freeway began.

The CFHP was created to manage the construction of housing units to ensure the residents displaced from the construction project would be granted a secondary living situation. The "idea was twofold: to provide replacement housing for some of the 20,000 people who have been uprooted by the construction of the freeway and also to replenish the supply of badly needed low-and moderate income housing along the southern tier of the city and county of Los Angeles" (Trombley, 1987). This approach to planning allowed for the state to receive the highway they desired while communities facing displacement were accommodated for.

Century Housing has many successes as a result of the decree and the construction of the freeway. They have “exceeded its initial housing development goal, was privatized, and renamed ‘Century Housing Corporation’, the only California state program converted into a private, nonprofit corporation” as a success of their past in the project. The Century Highway Project also created a job training program, Century Freeway Pre-Apprenticeship Program to help assist in boosting the economy. They were able to report that they found work on the “highway and other jobs related to the project for more than 2,500 people, many of them were women and minorities” (Anderson, 1993). How can the CHSR project utilize Century Freeway for their own developing policies?

Century Freeway was costing the housing development company thousands of dollars, yet the project was able to find pathways, in which the homes could still be constructed. Numbers were met, and people who were displaced could be accommodated. They raised enough funds to allocate for additional construction of homes. Importantly, they created good developing processes that led to goals to benefit the state.

During the initial stages of the project, critics argued that the Century Housing Project had initial problems. “Troubled by high costs, shoddy construction, high vacancy rates, fierce community opposition and other problems, the attempt to provide several thousand units of affordable housing along the Century Freeway route is floundering” (Trombley, 1987). The animosity within the community was still very high and there was a lot of backlash on the project.

Years later the housing project decided to take a different turn to ensure the success of the homes were being built. CFHP decided to put less emphasis on “building and more on subsidizing projects built with public and private partners... [the result was] more being built

with less dollars” (Mitchell, 1993). CFHP also stated “Century’s Housing new mission is to make enough money to fulfill its commitment to the original goal of helping to build affordable housing” (Mitchell, 1993). The end goal proved to be successful with essentially homes built along the freeway corridor. Today, CFHP is able to offer residents childcare, tutoring, HIV and aids services to name a few. They have also been able to successfully plan and allocate future funds for further units to be built.

Despite the problems that arose during the planning process, CFHP constructed 4,114 units. Residents who were once displaced, forced out of their homes, pushed to relocate were provided housing. Successful implementation of affordable housing units led the housing development to change their name. In 1993, after the grand opening of the Century Freeway, the Century Housing Project is known as Century Housing Corporation. To this day, they still develop affordable housing units for communities.

Century Freeway proves to be a case study that reflects a successful approach to developing policies of housing, economic, and transportation issues. The CHSRA should look to see if Century Freeway’s approach, goals, vision, and process might be replicated during the CHSR project’s developing stages. Possible scenarios may arise and the CHSRA may look to the case for solutions.

Conclusion

The CHSRA must take full responsibility and control over the CHSR project to ensure that success prevails. Oversight on the development process is not enough rather the authorities should delegate the project from beginning to end ensuring that every government entity, stakeholder, and constituent receives the benefits from rail system. In doing so, the authorities

will be able to include every entity in the planning discussion leaving no room for weak policy developments and mistakes that will hurt California long-term.

The City of Merced is one in twenty-four rail stations proposed on this 800-mile track. The analysis and research in this paper evidently shows a disconnected planning process between every entity involved in the high-speed rail project. Basic effective tools of communication are not being utilized. The CHSRA, County of Merced, and the City of Merced are all engaging in different discussions and planning amongst themselves and not with one another. Every entity has a goal and vision for the implementation of the rail system in their jurisdiction. However, with broken tracks of communication, the interests of each entity will not prevail. The CHSR project will prove to be problematic for California if an effective planning process is not practiced.

It's important for the CHSRA to analyze the City of Merced's situation and their involvement with the CHSR project. Issues of displacement, lack of funds, and issues of redevelopment for the area are arising in conversation. Although the project is still in its infancy stages of developing a policy, the City of Merced's case proves to be important and viable. This city's concerns and issues in current discussion may arise in other cities involved with the implementation of the rail system. The case of Merced is evident and needs attention. Goals, plans, and approaches to developing policies for the CHSR project must pay more careful attention to cities like Merced that lack the most resources, have the most identified need, and are struggling, which is damaging because it is only adding to California's deficit.

The current role and process that the CHSRA is practicing as project manager of the overall project should be reevaluated. Proposing a vision and scope, conducting minimal research, approving rail stations, and giving instructions to local government entities to take

control over the planning in their jurisdiction is not enough. CHSRA are promising funds while local government entities must go and search for matching funds. When these local governments receive adequate funding, the CHSRA appear and take over the role of project manager until the implementation and construction of the rail station is complete. This is not effective. The department needs to take initiative and assist in the entire project as a role of the state entity. This will ensure success for the CHSR project.

Century Freeway may be utilized as a successful case study for the CHSRA to consider in continuing their discussions and research. The freeway project illustrated government entities engaging in communication effectively with one another to identify and assist a need during the planning process. However as time progressed, constituents began to make demands and express their anger. The Federal government then stepped in, took control, and steered the conversation to urge the state and local entities to work together to implement a successful project that reflected effective planning. The project became a success after the struggle and managed to exceed its initial goals. Century Freeway enabled the development of housing, redevelopment, and economic policies conducive to the area and to California.

The CHSRA should utilize the freeway project as a model for the rail system. Authorities need to take charge of the project from the beginning, assist in developing policies and continue the role until the very end of its implementation stage. Even after the goals and policies have been established, the CHSRA still needs to continue to play an active role in the success of the project.

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is a Department of the State of California. OPR's primary responsibility is working with state agencies and departments, planning organizations, and local jurisdictions on topics related to land use planning. The

department is also expected, as its role is to assist in formulating policies that will enable long-term goals of sustainability, population growth, urban expansion, land development and resource preservation.

Since working at OPR, I have been able analyze the current state's planning process and how these state officials engage with different government entities on projects. During the legislative session, Governor Brown signed a range of bills. Often different entities and agencies are impacted by the new legislative bill must now reevaluate their own policies. If they need to they may need to draft a new policy that reflects the expectations of the Governor, the new legislative bill, and the current economic and social state of California.

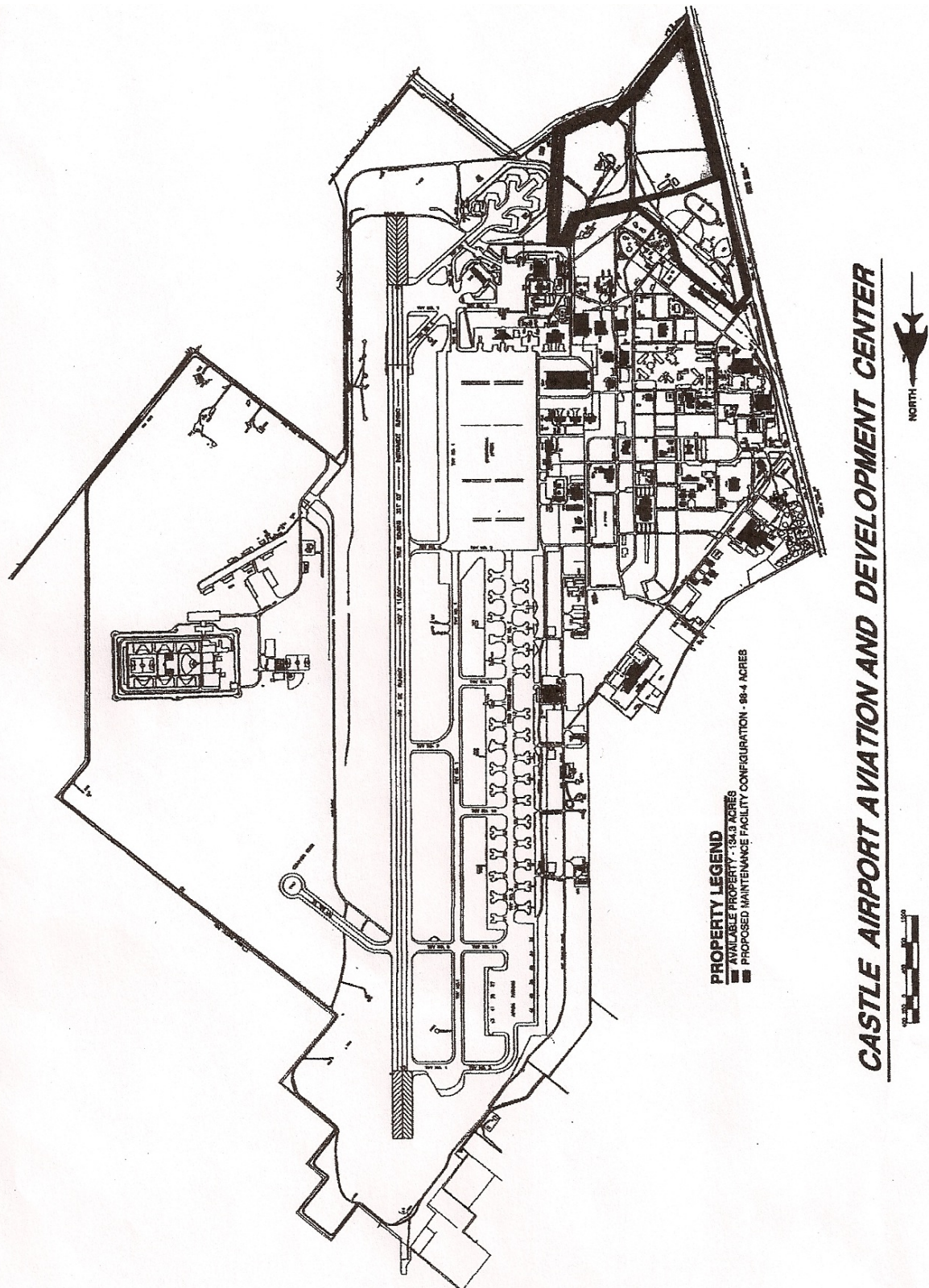
OPR has taken the initiative to assist these entities or agencies in developing their new policies, goals and vision. OPR provides additional research, resources and reports from and to the Governor. Feed back on impacts, effects, or other needs that arise in the entity or agencies planning are also considered. This relationship that the Governor, OPR and the different entities worked to cultivate is important because it proves that despite the different roles and levels, they are working together collectively for the interest of the state.

Recently, OPR hosted a summit convention on EV emissions and invited members of different corporate companies, state entities, constituents, researchers, and others possibly involved in EV emissions and energy renewals. At the convention, all those invited were offered a chance to share their thoughts and what their place of employment is currently doing to accommodate and contribute to California's overall vision, goals and needs. The public space provided insight, engaged others in discussion, allowed for critique on issues of concerns and allowed collaborative ideas to formulate.

The same method or approach should be utilized in the CHSR project's planning process. A public forum provides for conversation leading to effective processes of policies and collaborative ideas. Assistance in research from the state to the entity ensures that state goals are being reflected in the planning. Helping to locate additional resources such as funds can prove to be viable for the success of future projects if the state and entities work alongside each other. Collaborative methods contribute to the overall success of the project, possibly the CHSR project, in helping to develop a policy that will be reflective of the state's goals, vision and scope.

The CHSR project will only prevail and prove itself to be successful if the planning process reflects tools of good communication enabling effective developmental plans. The project is currently in its infancy stages of developing a policy and statewide vision for the rail system. The high-speed rail will not live to see its initial stage of construction if another proposal does not arise in discussion. The developing tactics currently being utilized needs to change. If the CHSR project never changes its approach to planning and answers the questions of transportation policies that arise in conversation, then the state is at loss. California will be underdeveloped, problematic for the ever-growing population, and will never reach its statewide goals and vision.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the Matter of

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE HIGH-
SPEED RAIL FOR CALIFORNIA AND A
HEAVY MAINTENANCE FACILITY FOR
MERCED COUNTY**

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RESOLUTION NO. 2010-11

WHEREAS, in 1996, the California State Legislature created the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) to develop a plan for the construction, operation and financing of a statewide, intercity high speed passenger rail system; and

WHEREAS, California officials and citizens have been working together to plan for a high speed rail system for California and in November 2008 California voters approved \$9.95 billion in bond funds to finance a high-speed rail system that will run from San Francisco through the Central Valley to Los Angeles, with trains that will travel at speeds up to 220 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, maintenance facilities will be required for the California High-Speed Rail system for repairing, maintaining, cleaning, fueling and storing the vehicles that will serve the system and locations for possible maintenance facilities will be decided by the CHSRA in the near future; and

WHEREAS, the CHSRA has released an Expression of Interest (RFEI) inviting interested parties to identify and submit potential sites for planned California High-Speed Train Maintenance Facilities that meet the criteria described in the RFEI and established Technical Memoranda 5.1 and 5.3; and

WHEREAS, the CHSRA encourages communities and other interested parties along the proposed high-speed train route to express their interest in locating a maintenance facility in their community by identifying potential locations that could meet the Authority's maintenance facility siting requirements, minimize environmental impacts, and offer financial incentives and other economic benefits to the State of California and the community; and

WHEREAS, the CHSRA has estimated that the construction and operation needs of a high-speed train heavy maintenance facility will require 1,500 employees including rolling stock maintenance staff, train operators, central control supervisors and staff, system-wide engineering, maintenance of way personnel, and CHSRA management staff; and

WHEREAS, Merced County recognizes the extraordinary direct and indirect economic benefits that siting a heavy maintenance facility would provide to the Merced County region, community workforce and regional transportation system.

WHEREAS, a maintenance facility located in Merced County would mean immediate employment for a wide pool of diverse and qualified workers with sustainable wages and benefits and more direct and indirect economic benefits to the Merced and the Valley regional community; and

WHEREAS, the community of Merced has a proven track record of enthusiastic support for the California High-Speed Rail Project through the formation of the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee made up of over 20 public officials, private sector leaders, educational institutions and community organizations; and

Appendix 2 (Continued)

WHEREAS, Merced County has identified the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee to be the entity to develop, compile and submit a competitive proposal to the CHSRA identifying heavy maintenance facility sites, economic incentives, labor force availability and training programs, land use and infrastructure benefits; and

WHEREAS, former Castle Air Force Base was conveyed to Merced County on December 19, 2006 and Merced County has adopted policies through its General Plan, a Castle Reuse Plan and a Castle Redevelopment Plan to guide the reuse of the Castle Commerce Center and Airport; and

WHEREAS, Merced County is prepared to make available a first-class site, currently undeveloped land at the southern corner of the Castle Commerce Center totaling approximately 160 acres for a heavy maintenance facility/hub to serve the system provided that the location of such a facility is consistent with the goals and policies of the County's General Plan, the Castle Reuse Plan, Redevelopment Plan and does not undermine the utility of the adjacent Castle Airport; and

WHEREAS, the southern Castle Commerce Center site can well accommodate a heavy maintenance facility and will provide a multitude of logistics opportunities thanks to its proximity to the adjacent Castle Airport, home to one of the longest runways in the western United States and has great intermodal capability with easy access to aviation, freight rail and highways, as well as regional proximity to three major California seaports; and

WHEREAS, a maintenance facility located in Merced County, specifically at the southern corner of Castle Commerce Center, would benefit the entire High-Speed Rail system through its convenient location at the junction of the lines running west to San Jose, south to Fresno and north to Sacramento; and

WHEREAS Merced County authorizes the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee to submit the southern corner of Castle Commerce Center, as a proposed site to locate the high-speed rail heavy maintenance facility in Merced County or Merced region; and

WHEREAS Merced County is anxious to work with the CHSRA staff to further understand the operational, infrastructure, environmental and workforce requirements of the needed heavy maintenance facility to ensure that our region continues to aggressively pursue federal economic development, reuse and infrastructure stimulus resources for the purpose of recruiting the facility.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of Merced County that the California High-Speed Rail heavy maintenance facility would greatly benefit the County of Merced and State of California and that the Board of Supervisors:

Supports the continuing development of high-speed rail on a statewide basis.

Supports the continued work of the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee to advocate, plan, strategize and generate economic and workforce resources to remain competitive in the decision making process of locating the high-speed rail maintenance facility in Merced County.

NOW, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of Merced County that:

Merced County is prepared to offer an attractive long-term lease for the property it owns and manages within the southern Castle Commerce Center site at a rate of \$1 per year to the CHSRA should it ultimately be selected as the site for the heavy maintenance facility.

Appendix 3

Merced Vision 2030 General Plan
Chapter 4—Transportation and Circulation

4.3.7 Rail Service

Passenger Service

There are two railroad companies that operate through Merced County and the City of Merced. Both the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad provide freight service to Merced, while the BNSF provides Amtrak passenger service.

The UPRR rail line parallels 16th Street through much of the City. The BNSF line runs primarily along segments of Santa Fe Avenue (*Figure 4.8*). The Amtrak passenger station is located at 24th and K Streets.

The Amtrak San Joaquins have been serving Merced since 1974. These trains provide direct passenger service from Oakland and Sacramento to Bakersfield, with a bus feeder route running to southern California. Provision of direct rail service to Los Angeles remains both a local and State objective as a primary way for improving service and increasing ridership.



Much attention was focused in the past on possible rerouting of Amtrak onto the UPRR tracks. In anticipation of this possibility, local jurisdictions renovated the old Southern Pacific Rail Depot at 16th and N Streets, as part of an expanded Transpo Center complex completed in 1990.

Shifted State priorities make it unlikely that Amtrak will be rerouted in the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, the Transpo Center does serve as the center for all other land-based area transportation, including private bus lines and taxi-cabs, as well as the central transfer point for public bus service.

High Speed Rail



An additional regional issue is proposed high speed rail service between San Diego and San Francisco, passing through the Central Valley. In 1996, the California Intercity High Speed Rail Commission selected a Highway 99 route rather than an Interstate 5 route due to the larger number of people and communities which could be served along Highway 99. The preferred route has been selected and would locate a station in Merced. Stops are anticipated in Bakersfield, Tulare, Fresno, and Merced before the train continues on over SR 152 into the Bay Area. A 2nd line to Sacramento will be added in future phases.

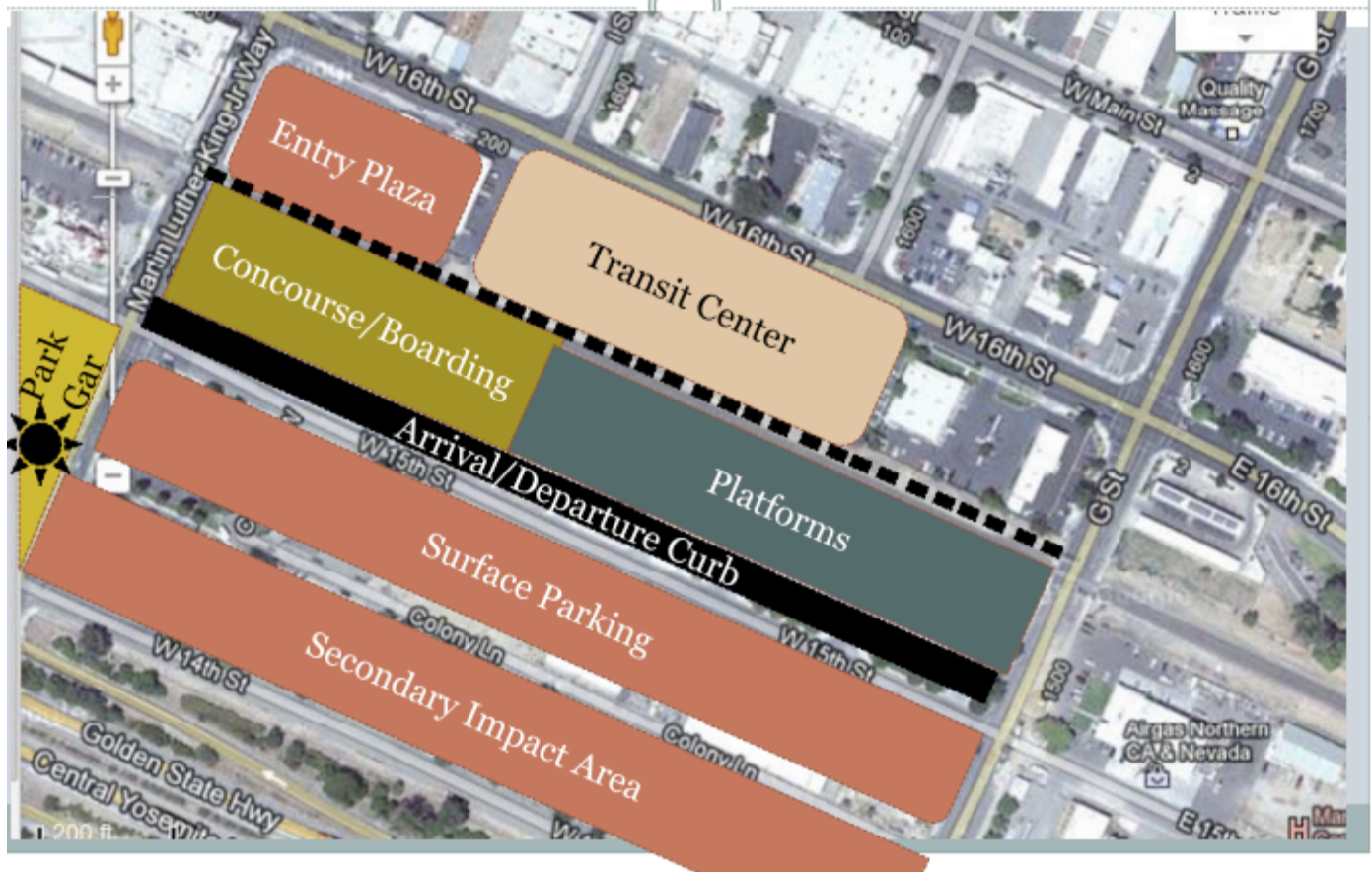
The project was approved by California voters on November 4, 2008 with the passage of *Proposition 1A* authorizing \$9.95 billion for the project. The California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is currently tasked with completing final planning, design, and environmental efforts. Construction efforts are anticipated to begin in the next few years.

Appendix 4



Appendix 4 (Continued)

HSR Station Location



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