

# Contractors asked to qualify for next California high-speed rail bids

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The Fresno Bee October 10, 2013

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2013/10/10/3546320/contractors-asked-to-qualify-for.html?sp=/99/406/263/1256/>

Ground has yet to be broken in the central San Joaquin Valley on the first 29-mile stretch of California's proposed high-speed train system, but the state is already on the lookout for contractors to work on the second major section.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority issued a request for qualifications Thursday to companies interested in bidding on a 60-mile segment from the south end of Fresno to the Tulare-Kern county line near the historic community of Allensworth. The request for qualifications is a preliminary step; only contractors deemed qualified by the rail agency will later be allowed to submit formal bids next year to design and build the project.

Contractors have until Dec. 6 to submit their qualifications.

Earlier this year, the rail authority signed a \$985 million contract with a consortium comprised of Tutor Perini Corp. of Sylmar, Zachry Construction from Texas and Pasadena-based Parsons Corp. to design and build the first construction segment from Avenue 17, at the northeast edge of Madera, to American Avenue south of Fresno. While construction has yet to begin, the companies are working on engineering the project and have established a local office in downtown Fresno.

Engineers had originally planned for the 60-mile Fresno-Allensworth stretch to be divided into two separate contracts, but the two are being merged into one construction package with an estimated cost between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion. Two additional contracts are planned in the Valley -- one to build the line south from Allensworth toward the northwestern outskirts of Bakersfield, and one to install steel rails on the railbed built in the first three contracts.

The rail authority has received more than \$3.2 billion in federal stimulus and transportation funds for high-speed rail construction in the Valley, and is obligated to put up another \$2.6 billion in money from Proposition 1A, a high-speed rail bond measure approved by California voters in 2008.

But the agency continues to face a legal challenge filed by Kings County and two of its residents over whether its plans for the statewide rail network comply with Prop. 1A. It also awaits a judge's ruling on whether the state can legally sell the bonds authorized by Prop. 1A. More lawsuits are likely next summer, when the authority is expected to approve environmental

certifications for its planned Fresno-Bakersfield section and decide the route for the tracks through the southern San Joaquin Valley.

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