

State ready to seek bids for third high-speed rail segment in Kern County

By Tim Sheehan



An artist's depiction of a California high-speed rail train

SPECIAL TO THE BEE

- Rail board meeting
 - **What:** California High-Speed Rail Authority board of directors meeting
 - **When:** 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 12
 - **Where:** Sacramento County Board of Supervisors chambers, 700 H Street, Sacramento.
 - **Online:** The board meeting will be webcast [live](#) at www.hsr.ca.gov.
 - **Details:** The board meeting is open to the public. The agenda is available [online](#). The board's Finance & Audit Committee will also meet Tuesday from 8 to 9:30 a.m., also in the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors chambers.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority is expected to invite contractors to submit bids to design and build the third [segment of the proposed bullet-train route](#) through the San Joaquin Valley.

The rail board's [meeting Tuesday in Sacramento](#) comes only a few days after the State Public Works Board authorized the use of eminent domain to acquire more than a dozen pieces of property for the first two construction sections of the statewide rail project in Madera, Fresno and Tulare counties.

Five teams of contractors have already been prequalified to do the work on the 22-mile stretch of the rail line from just north of the Tulare-Kern county line to Poplar Avenue at the northwestern edge of Shafter. The work includes preparing the railbed and building structures such as road over- and underpasses, bridges and viaducts. The would-be contractors are:

- California Rail Builders, which includes Ferrovial Agroman US Corp., an American subsidiary of Ferrovial S.A., a Spanish company.
- Central Valley Connection Builders, composed of Spanish firms FCC Construcción S.A. and Corsan-Corviam Construcción S.A.
- Dragados/Flatiron Joint Venture, a team that includes Dragados USA Inc., an American subsidiary of Grupo ACS and Dragados S.A. of Spain; and Flatiron West Inc. of San Marcos.
- Salini Impregilo/Security Paving Joint Venture, composed of Italian construction company Salini Impregilo S.p.A. and Security Paving Co., based in Sun Valley.
- Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons, a consortium that includes Tutor Perini Corp. of Sylmar, Zachry Construction of Texas and Pasadena-based Parsons Corp.

Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons won a contract for about \$1 billion to build the first section of the state's proposed high-speed rail line, a 29-mile stretch between Fresno and Madera. Dragados and Flatiron are two of the three companies on the winning team for the second construction contract worth about \$1.3 billion to build a 65-mile segment from Fresno to the Tulare-Kern county line. Ferrovial Agroman was among the unsuccessful bidders for the first construction contract and withdrew from competition for the second contract. FCC Construcción, Corsan-Corviam Construcción, Salini Impregilo and Security Paving are new entrants to the high-speed rail bidding.

The rail authority's staff is recommending that if the board agrees to seek bids Tuesday, contractors would have until Oct. 16 to submit their proposals. A contract could be awarded in November or December. Engineers for the agency estimate the cost of the project at \$400 million to \$500 million.

A future contract would cover the installation of ballast and steel rails for the entire length of the rail route in the Valley from Madera to Bakersfield.

California has about \$6 billion available, through a combination of federal stimulus and transportation funds and state high-speed-rail bond money, to build the train route through the Valley from Merced to Bakersfield. The Valley stretch is intended to be the backbone of a statewide, \$68 billion system connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles with electric-powered trains traveling at up to 220 mph by 2028. Future stages would extend the system to Sacramento and San Diego.

The first portion of the line on which the rail authority hopes to begin running high-speed trains would run from Merced into the San Fernando Valley. That section, proposed to be operational in 2022, is expected to cost about \$31 billion.

More condemnations

As the rail agency forges ahead with its construction plans, the State Public Works board continues taking steps to help the authority get the property it needs for the railroad right of way. The board oversees the acquisition of land for state construction projects.

On Friday, the Public Works Board — made up of officials from the state's General Services, Transportation and Finance departments — adopted resolutions authorizing the use of eminent domain or condemnation for 14 pieces of property amounting to about 85 acres in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties. The properties range in size from less than one-tenth of an acre to almost 40 acres.

"Between March 2014 and January 2015, the various owners were provided with a first written offer to purchase the subject property" as required by state law, according to a memo to the board members. "Negotiations to acquire the properties are continuing; however, in order to keep the project on schedule, the adoption of resolutions of necessity to authorize the use of eminent domain is required."

Eminent domain is a legal process in which a government agency files suit to seize property for public purposes. A resolution of necessity, like the 14 adopted Friday by the state, is the first step in the process when negotiations between the agency and the property owner reach a stalemate. A court determines first whether the government agency is entitled to the land, and then hears arguments to decide the proper compensation that the government must pay to the owner.

Since December 2013, the board has adopted [207 such resolutions encompassing almost 510 acres](#). More than 1,060 pieces of property are needed for the first two construction sections from Madera to the Tulare-Kern county line. About 200 more parcels are required for construction southward to Shafter.

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