

Spanish team poised to win new high-speed rail contract

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A construction consortium headed by a Spanish company is in line to win a contract to build the third segment of a high-speed rail line through the San Joaquin Valley.

California Rail Builders submitted the “apparent best value” bid of about \$347.5 million to the California High-Speed Rail Authority to design and build a 22-mile stretch of the bullet-train route from the Tulare-Kern county line to Poplar Avenue northwest of Bakersfield. That was the lowest of five bids received by the rail authority in late November.

The bids were submitted Nov. 25; the proposals were evaluated by the rail authority’s staff and a representative from the city of Wasco. The results of the evaluations were announced Tuesday, and the rail authority’s board is expected to award a contract at its meeting Tuesday in Sacramento.

This will be the third construction contract to be awarded by the rail authority. The first was awarded in 2013 for about 29 miles of the rail route between Avenue 17 near Madera to American Avenue at the southern edge of Fresno. Its value was about \$1 billion. The second contract, awarded about a year ago for about \$1.3 billion, was for a 65-mile stretch southward to just north of the Tulare-Kern county line.

California Rail Builders includes Ferrovial Agroman US Corp., an American subsidiary of the Spanish construction firm Ferrovial SA. Its total bid amounted to \$347,557,000. The work will include construction of roadway overpasses, waterway and wildlife crossings, as well as relocating four miles of the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway freight line.

Planners and engineers for the rail agency had estimated the project would cost \$400 million to \$500 million.

The other bids submitted to the rail authority were:

- \$377,142,737 by Salini Impregilo/Security Paving Joint Venture, composed of Italian construction company Salini Impregilo S.p.A. and Security Paving Co., based in Sun Valley.
- \$461,954,000 by Dragados/Flatiron Joint Venture, a team that includes Dragados USA Inc., an American subsidiary Grupo ACS and Dragados S.A. of Spain, and Flatiron West Inc. of San Marcos. The Dragados team was the winning firm for the 65-mile stretch last year.
- \$581,877 by Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons, a consortium that includes Tutor Perini Corp. of Sylmar, Zachry Construction of Texas and Pasadena-based Parsons Corp. The Tutor Perini consortium won the first contract in 2013.
- A fifth bid, submitted by Central Valley Connection Builders, composed of Spanish firms FCC Construcción S.A. and Corsan-Corviam Construcción S.A., was disqualified from consideration because the team could not provide some of the documentation required in the bidding process, the rail authority reported.

The rail agency has about \$6 billion available for construction in the San Joaquin Valley, touted as the “backbone” of a statewide bullet train system to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles. The money is a combination of federal stimulus and transportation funds, and bond funds from Proposition 1A, a high-speed rail bond measure approved by California voters in 2008. But the project remains mired in controversy, including several lawsuits that have yet to be decided.

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