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March 9, 2011

The Hon. Michael Rubio, Senator
16th District
State Capitol, Room 2066
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for SB 325 – Short Haul Rail Authority Bill

Senator Rubio:

I am writing to you to express Lemoore City Council's strong support for Senate Bill 325 to create a Central California Rail Authority. We understand that the purpose for your interest in creating a Rail Authority is to ensure the continuation of short-line railroad operations in the Counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare.

Short-haul rail lines are being threatened due to abandonment, bankruptcy, sale and discontinuance of service. Already, a 30-mile section of track has been removed from Tulare and Kern counties. These lines are an essential element in the transportation of goods to and from our local businesses and are instrumental in reducing the number of trucks from our valley roads. Fewer truck trips means there will be less deterioration of our roadways and will potentially help improve the valley's air quality.

In addition, short-haul rail lines are good for economic development. Lemoore is a rural community approximately eight miles west of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad and approximately 25 miles west of the Union Pacific railroad. Without the short-haul rail lines, businesses in Lemoore would not be able to connect to those lines, which would essentially eliminate all rail shipments and potentially increasing costs considerably.

Short-haul rail is crucial for businesses located in Lemoore. Leprino Foods Company operates two plants, including the largest mozzarella cheese production facility in the world here in our community. It employs nearly 1,300 people in the two separate plants. Both plants are rail served. The abandonment of such rail lines could be detrimental to this company and therefore, many jobs may be lost. Now more than ever, California needs to make every effort to protect jobs and the economy.

On behalf of the Lemoore City Council, we thank you for introducing SB 325 into legislation and strongly support your efforts to create a Central California Rail Authority.

Sincerely,

Willard J. Rodarmel, Mayor

CC: The Hon. Senator Mark DeSaulnier
The Hon. Senator Ted Gaines (Vice Chair)
The Hon. Senator Tom Harman
The Hon. Senator Robert Huff
The Hon. Senator Christine Kehoe
The Hon. Senator Alan Lowenthal
The Hon. Senator Fran Pavley
The Hon. Senator Joe Simitian
John Lehn, Kings County EDC
Steve Samuelian, California Consulting

Introduced by Senator Rubio

February 14, 2011

An act to add Title 12.5 (commencing with Section 93300) to the Government Code, relating to railroads.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 325, as introduced, Rubio. Central California Railroad Authority. Existing law authorizes the creation of railroad authorities in various parts of the state.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature relative to the creation of the Central California Railroad Authority as an alternative for ensuring continuation of short-line railroad operations in the Counties of Kern, Kings, Tulare, and Fresno.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 12.5 (commencing with Section 93300) is
2 added to the Government Code, to read:

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TITLE 12.5. CENTRAL CALIFORNIA RAILROAD
AUTHORITY

7 93300. This title shall be known, and may be cited, as the
8 Central California Railroad Authority Act.

9 93301. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

10 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature, in enacting this title, to
11 provide an alternative for ensuring continuation of railroad service

1 if the Surface Transportation Board authorizes abandonment or
2 discontinuance of service on, or in the event of bankruptcy of, or
3 sale of, the existing short-line railroad operations in the Counties
4 of Kern, Kings, Tulare, and Fresno.

5 (b) It is further the intent of the Legislature to provide a means
6 to consider and, if justified, to pursue economic development
7 opportunities and projects related to rail service on the affected
8 short lines described in subdivision (a).

9 (c) It is further the intent of the Legislature that enactment of
10 this title not provide a justification for the Surface Transportation
11 Board to grant a petition for abandonment or discontinuance of
12 service on the affected short lines.

13 (d) It is further the intent of the Legislature that the coverage
14 of this title be expanded to include short-line railroad operations
15 in the Counties of Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin
16 if that becomes feasible at a future date.

17 93302. The Legislature finds and declares that creation of the
18 Central California Railroad Authority and the retention of railroad
19 service will provide economic and other related benefits, as
20 follows:

21 (a) Continuation of short-line railroad service in affected
22 counties.

23 (b) The opportunity to explore expanded freight service
24 operations between the Port of Oakland and the affected counties.

25 (c) The reduced reliance on motor vehicles and the benefits that
26 result from use of alternative transportation means.

27 (d) Reduced traffic congestion on and deterioration of State
28 Highway Routes 5 and 99.

29 (e) The provision of convenient and attractive alternative
30 transportation options for shippers in central California and
31 elsewhere.

32 93303. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation
33 that would create the Central California Railroad Authority. It is
34 also the intent of the Legislature that the authority, when created,
35 shall be a local agency for purposes of the Disaster Assistance Act
36 (Chapter 7.5 (commencing with Section 8680) of Division 1 of
37 Title 2).

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