

September 17, 2024

Assistant Secretary Alejandra Y. Castillo
U.S. Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue. NW
Suite 71014
Washington, DC 20230

SUBJECT: Support for 2024 Good Jobs Challenge (GJC): ***The Rail Academy of Central California (TRACC) Project***

Dear Director Castillo,

On behalf of the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), I am writing to express support for the application by San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) to the United States Department of Commerce (USDOC)'s Economic Development Administration (EDA)'s Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) grant for ***The Rail Academy of Central California (TRACC) project (Project)***.

The rail and transit industries are struggling to attract new talent to replace a workforce that is aging. TRACC addresses our region's current training and accessibility gap. Sacramento City College (Sac City) has suspended its railroad workforce program in our region, hampering efforts to attract young talent. Many previous Sac City program graduates have successful, well-paying careers with Union Pacific Railroad, Amtrak, and SJRRC.

TRACC program was developed based on the FRA-approved original Sac City program while providing students with hands-on training at the Altamont Corridor Express Rail maintenance Facility (RMF) in Stockton. This modern, 157,000 sq. ft. facility provides students with an unrivaled opportunity to learn the skills they need to succeed and grow within the industry by working on actual equipment. The classroom-style instruction for the TRACC Program is held at Robert J. Cabral Station.

TRACC creates employment opportunities that will directly enhance our region's economic growth. SJRRC's goal and that of their sectoral partners, the Stockton Unified School District and Sac City, is to provide the youth of Stockton, California, and the adult learners of the surrounding region with the opportunity to gain marketable skills to position them for success in the rail industry. TRACC represents an innovative strategic partnership between educational, public, and business entities.

A strong national passenger rail system requires a strong workforce. The advancement of TRACC and other similar workforce development opportunities will result in mobility and growth for current employees, and new opportunities for currently unemployed and underemployed workers.

The Project aligns well with the GJC's objectives and implements strategies that meet employers' workforce needs, advance the skills and employment prospects of workers and jobseekers, grow regional economies, and increase employment in resilient and good jobs. The Project meets employer needs, produces long-term positive outcomes for workers and their communities. The Project meets the goals of GJC by providing training that leads to placement in good jobs in the rail industry. The Project also addresses San Joaquin County's comprehensive economic development strategy and its mutual goals to (1) create transformative job opportunities for residents, (2) develop and maintain an integrated, sustainable, multi-mode transportation system that enables safe and efficient movement of goods and people such as rail and (3) develop and nurture an innovation culture to facilitate technology-based business recruitment and job creation.

SJRRC is requesting \$1.5 million in grant funding for the TRACC Project. The requested funding will cover four (4) instructor costs, including salaries and equipment (such as instructor laptops and office supplies), class supplies for onboard instruction (such as railroad radios and railroad flares), personal protective equipment for students of the program (including safety glasses, earplugs, hard hats, safety vests, and work boots), contractual costs (marketing), and costs for the facility and transportation. The project has direct funding from Sacramento City College's Strong Workforce Program Legislation award. SJRRC has secured a total of approximately \$600,000 already for the Project.

MCTC would like to thank USDOC' EDA for considering and welcomes the opportunity to support SJRRC in the pursuit of this Project.

Sincerely,



Patricia Taylor
Executive Director
Madera County Transportation Commission