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Contact: Lisa Marie Burcar
916-384-9026 (w)
916-212-8108 (c)

California High-Speed Rail Authority Hosts Networking Event Creating Contract Opportunities for Small Disadvantaged Businesses

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. – Today, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) hosted a Meet-the-Primes business networking event at California State University/Bakersfield, where more than 500 small disadvantaged businesses and potential subcontractors met with several representatives from five pre-qualified design-build contractors who will bid on the initial construction section of the project.

“The Governor declared May to be California Small Business month and we couldn’t think of a better way to support his commitment to the state’s Small Businesses,” said Board Vice-Chair Tom Richards who spoke at the event. “Under the Governor’s leadership and through our Board’s commitment to a 30% goal for small disadvantaged business participation, we are ensuring the statewide high-speed train project will help small businesses thrive and prosper.”

Through the Authority’s recently finalized Small Disadvantaged Business (SB) Program, the Authority has established an aggressive 30% participation goal for contracts let by the Authority. Competing teams are expected to exercise good faith efforts to obtain SB commitments equal to or exceeding that 30% goal and execute an SB Performance Plan that includes comprehensive outreach to small businesses, SB engagement and the team’s track record working with small disadvantaged businesses.

The CHSRA Meet-the-Primes event was designed to provide an Authority-sponsored opportunity for small disadvantaged businesses to meet with pre-qualified design-build contractors who will be competing for high-speed rail design-build contracts. After an introduction by Authority staff and Vice-Chair Richards, a presentation was given highlighting the initial construction packages and Request for Proposals (RFP) procurement process. Information was then presented by the Authority’s Small and Disadvantaged Business team explaining opportunities available through the SB program.

Following the presentations, small businesses, micro businesses and businesses owned by minorities, women and disabled veterans from throughout California had an opportunity to network with representatives from the five short-listed teams.

Additionally, representatives from many state and federal agencies were available to provide information on services and certifications offered to small businesses.

“Small Businesses will be the backbone of this project,” said Thomas Fellenz, Acting CEO for the California High-Speed Rail Authority. “We can’t build this project without the creativity and diversity of California’s Small Businesses. This Meet-the-Primes event provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to show the five pre-qualified design-build contractors what they do and why they are important to the success of the project.”

The first construction segment of the high-speed rail project will extend approximately 29 miles from Avenue 17 near the city of Madera to south of the city of Fresno. It will be the first section of 130 miles of high-speed rail in the Central Valley which will create an estimated 100,000 job-years over the next five years.

Earlier this year, the Authority completed a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process that resulted in five design-build teams being identified as qualified to bid for Authority work. The Authority’s RFP process will be conducted in two steps, with three Design-Build teams selected following a technical evaluation. The top three teams will then undergo a combined technical and price evaluation. Contracts are set to be finalized later this year.

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