



Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority?

A: Passed during the 78th legislative session, Senate Bill 457 authorized the governor to develop the Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority (NHSRA or Authority). The Authority is tasked with facilitating the implementation of a high-speed rail system connecting southern California and southern Nevada. This includes selecting a franchisee to construct and operate the system. Governor Brian Sandoval appointed five members to the Authority on September 10, 2015.

Q: Who are the members of the Authority?

A: **George Smith**, executive vice president of Bank of America Merrill Lynch (Authority chairman)
Fred Dilger, principal of Black Mountain Research
Peter Thomas, managing partner of Thomas and Mack Company
Tina Quigley, chief executive officer of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) (**NOTE:** Effective June 30, 2019, Ms. Quigley no longer served on the Authority.)
Hualiang (Harry) Teng, director of railroad, high-speed rail, and transit initiative and associate professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Q: What criteria did the Authority use to select a franchisee?

A: The Authority will follow the criteria listed in SB 457:

- The extent to which environmental studies have been completed;
- Confirmation of the level of private investment;
- A review of the readiness of a potential franchisee to engage in construction of the system; and
- Pending or completed permit applications to implement the system.

Q: What occurred during the inaugural meeting on September 29, 2015, of the High Speed Rail Authority?

A: Authority members unanimously selected George Smith, executive vice president of Bank of America Merrill Lynch, as its chairman through June 2017. They requested that the RTC supply support staff and resources for the Authority. The board also approved posting a public notice soliciting applications for a franchisee. Two presentations were given: an overview of Senate Bill 457, which authorized the governor to appoint members to the Authority, and an overview of the process for selecting a franchisee.

Q: What was the submission deadline for franchisee applications?

A: Monday, October 26, 2015

Q: Where was the public notice for franchisee applications been posted?

A: Following the inaugural meeting, a public notice soliciting applications for a franchisee was posted in four locations:

- **Clark County Government Center**, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, NV
- **City of Henderson**, 240 S. Water Street, Henderson, NV
- **Regional Justice Center**, 200 Lewis Avenue, Las Vegas, NV
- **Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada**, 600 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, NV

The notice was also posted on the RTC website, www.rtcnv.com.

Q: Has the Authority selected a franchisee?

A: Yes, the Authority selected XpressWest as the franchisee at the NHSRA's November 18, 2015 meeting. Virgin Trains USA acquired XpressWest and the transaction closed in March 2019.

Q: Is the selected franchisee subject to any additional state approvals?

A: No.

Q: What is expected of the franchisee selected by the Authority?

A: Once selected, the franchisee will be responsible for constructing and operating the Nevada high-speed rail system.

In conjunction with this responsibility, the selected franchisee may, with the assistance of the Authority, acquire or gain access to land for the system, conduct engineering and other studies related to selection and acquisition of land, and accept funding from a variety of public and private entities.

The selected franchisee must coordinate the implementation with all governmental entities that have jurisdiction over the system, including, without limitation, the relevant counties and the Nevada Department of Transportation.

It is also expected that the franchisee will report its progress on the system to the Authority every six months.

Q: What are the benefits of a high-speed rail system?

A: The statutory purpose of implementing a high-speed rail system is to:

- Provide economic benefits to both southern California and southern Nevada;
- Reduce reliance on gasoline- and diesel-fueled engines and encourage the use of alternative energy sources;
- Reduce congestion and travel delay on Interstate 15;

- Provide a working example of a transportation system that could play an essential role in the development of future commuter and high-speed rail service; and
- Provide quick and convenient transportation service for residents and visitors in southern California and southern Nevada.

Q: Where will the system go?

A: The Nevada high-speed rail system will connect southern Nevada and southern California, which includes the counties of Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego.

Q: How will costs for the system be covered?

A: It will be up to the franchisee to determine funding for the system. At this point, no funding mechanisms have been considered by the Authority.

Q: Why is the RTC involved in the Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority?

A: RTC Chief Executive Officer Tina Quigley had been appointed to the Authority, and Authority members requested support staff and resources from the RTC. As the agency responsible for transportation planning in southern Nevada, the RTC encourages and supports multi-modal transportation options like high-speed rail. Please note that Ms. Quigley is no longer serving on the Authority, effective June 30, 2019.