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The environmental law centers at UCLA and UC Berkeley Schools of Law are releasing today a new report on policies to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of high speed rail in the San Joaquin Valley. "[A High Speed Foundation: How to Build a Better California Around High Speed Rail](#)" is the eleventh report in the [Climate Change and Business Research Initiative](#), funded by Bank of America. To launch the report, the law schools are holding a [lunch event in Fresno](#).

Despite the opposition and [legal uncertainty](#), the High Speed Rail Authority still plans to begin construction in the San Joaquin Valley this summer — which could mean in a matter of weeks. While the system promises to bring \$6 billion in construction investment to the Valley, high speed rail threatens to increase the outward expansion of Valley cities, trampling the region's \$43 billion agricultural resources, clogging already worn roads and freeways, and adding to the Valley's severe air quality problems.

To prevent this outcome, the report calls for Valley leaders to harness the opportunity presented by high speed rail to develop a unified, Valley-wide plan for economic development and environmental preservation tied to the system. Local leaders from businesses, community groups, and the public sector will need to use high speed rail funds to plan for thriving communities connected to the system and support programs to help catalyze private investment in development projects in line with these plans.

Valley residents will need to act quickly. With every day that passes as funds are spent, they will have less leverage over those diminishing dollars. But if they are successful, they will be able to show the rest of the state how to implement high speed rail successfully.