

This is intended as a quick guide to how to write effective comments for an Environmental Impact Report. For more information and examples, please read the full text on “How to Write an Effective EIR Comment” available at <http://www.calhsr.com/how-to-write-an-eir-comment/>.

It is perfectly OK to raise an issue under CEQA with no support. The burden of proof is on the Authority - not you. That said, if you have evidence or facts - even better. **Please don't let your "lack of expertise" prevent you from trying to comment on the environmental impact concerns you have.** With that in mind, here are a few tips:

1. Objectively evaluate the project and be VERY specific. Generalities can be dismissed with generalities.

2. Separate your concerns into clearly identifiable paragraphs or headings and keep a tight focus on each separate issue. Don't mix topics.

3. Avoid saying “I support the California High Speed Rail Project, but...” – just list your concerns or your letter may be classified as a letter of support instead of addressing your concerns.

4. Consider ways to avoid impacts or enforceable ways to reduce the severity of impacts. Quantify your objections whenever possible.

If a potential significant impact has not been adequately identified; **or** if no mitigation has been proposed for a potentially significant impact; **or** if the mitigation proposed doesn't appear to be sufficient or appropriate, then:

- Identify the specific impact in question;
- Explain why you believe the impact would occur;
- Explain why you believe the effect would be significant; and, if applicable,
- Explain what additional mitigation measure(s) or changes in proposed mitigations or to the project you would recommend.
- Explain why you would recommend any changes and support your recommendations.

5. Whenever possible, present facts or expert opinions. If not, provide personal experience or your personal observations. Don't just complain.

6. Include suggestions for making it better or offer specific alternatives and describe how they meet the requirements of the project. Your goal should be to write something that causes them to respond in a future document based on the evidence you have given.

7. Point out any inconsistencies in the document or the data. Point out outdated information or errors in logic. Focus on the sufficiency of the EIR in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts of the project on the environment.

8. Write a comment that includes a valid name and address. Submit it before the deadline. KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMMENTS. Send a copy to your city.

Disclaimer: The following is intended to serve as a guide and is not intended to be legal advice. Please seek professional help from a lawyer if you have legal questions or concerns.

9. Reviewing agencies or organizations should include the name of a contact person, who would be available for questions or consultation, along with their comments.
10. Send your comments in early, so they have time to consider your concerns.

5 Reasons Why You Should Comment on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the California High Speed Rail Project

1. The public process allows you participate in the once in a lifetime opportunity of designing a mass-transit system in your immediate area. Your input can help shape this project in a positive way.
2. If you are generally not worried about this project, then consider that it may still be built in ways that negatively affect you, your home, your kids, your neighborhood, or your state – and it may not have to be. The only way to make the Authority aware of your individual, immediate concerns is to send in comments during this period.
3. This is your opportunity to address any concerns related to scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental issues.
4. If you don't think your comments will have any effect, then consider that the only comments that are sure not to have any effect are the ones you don't write. Those you do write must be considered and addressed.
5. If you do not comment, you forgo many of your rights to any recourse in the future if there were inadequacies that were not addressed.

How to send a comment: Visit the Authority's website for specific information about how to send comments for your section. *

IMPORTANT: If you make reference to ANY document in your EIR comments (a letter or notice you received, a law in your city, a copy of a presentation you saw - even if it was given by the Authority, etc.) you should include a full copy as part of your EIR comments.

Think of your comments as testimony in a case. Any documents you are submitting in the future might be considered evidence.

Do NOT assume the Authority has a copy of any document you are referencing.

***Keep a copy of your comments. Send a copy to your city as well so they have a record of what the citizens are asking for or are concerned about relating to the project.**

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