

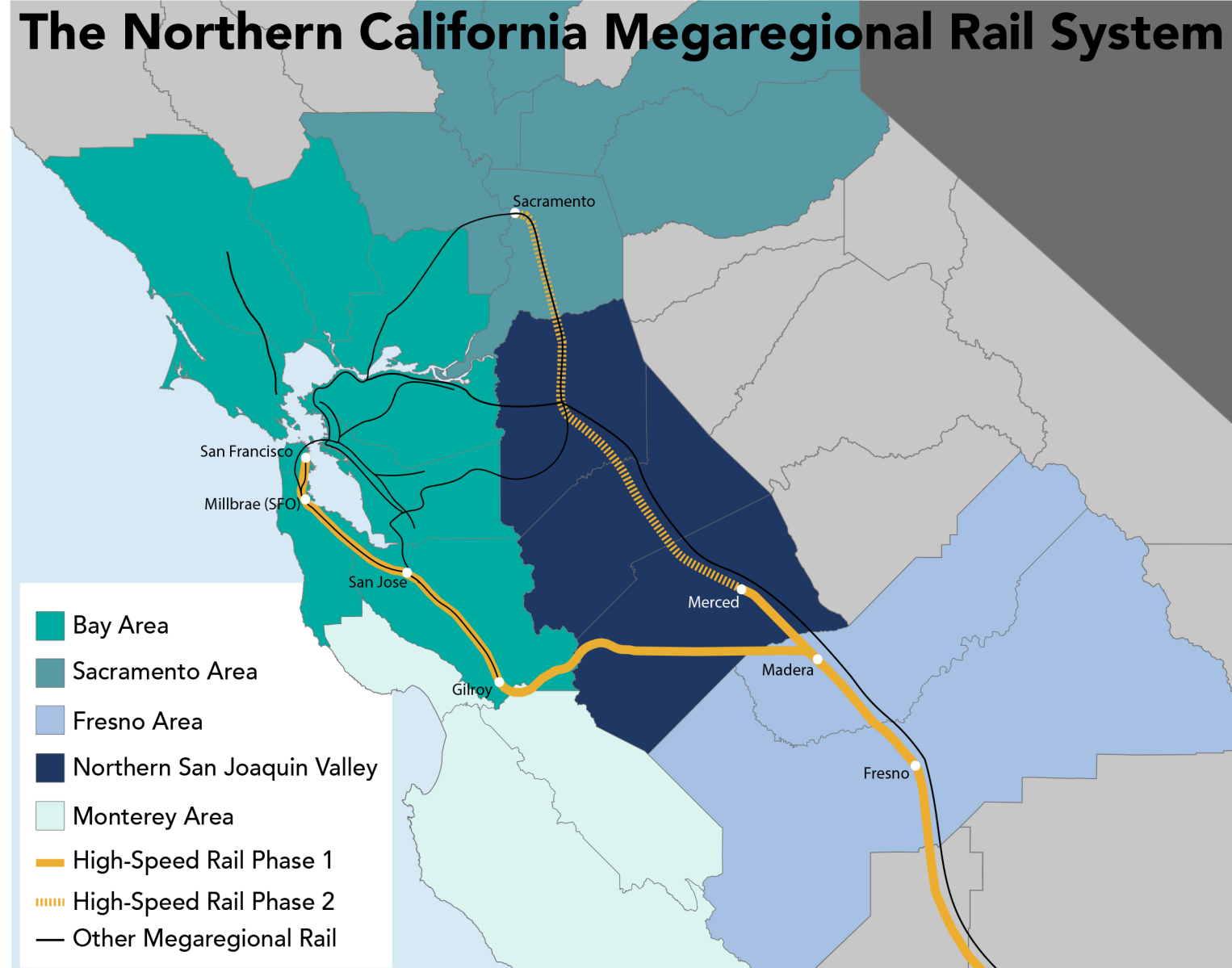
November 2019

The Future is Fresno: Exploring the Valley to Valley Opportunity



Policy and Partnerships

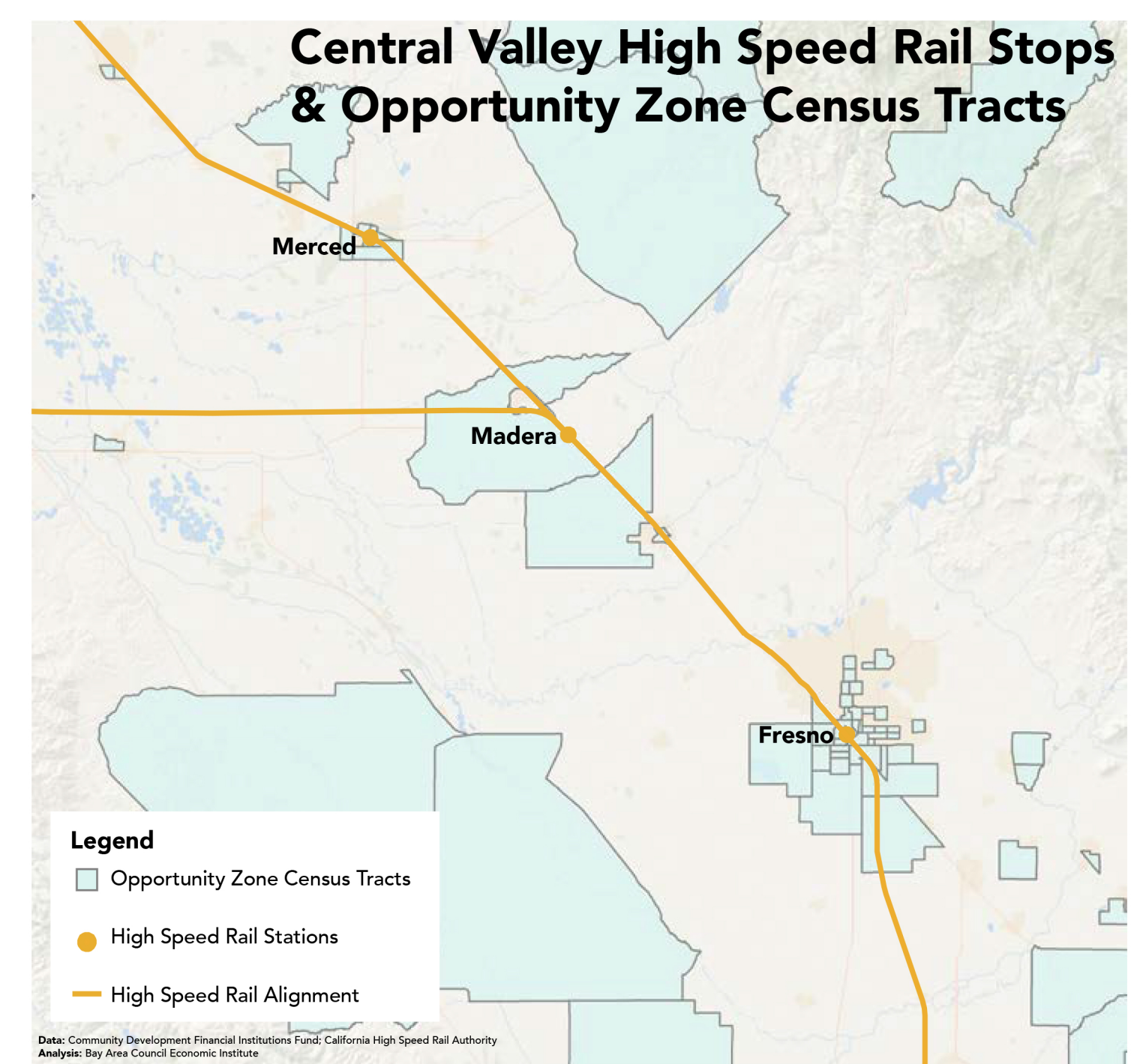
While Fresno's economy has its own unique strengths, policy and partnerships across government, businesses, universities, and other groups are needed to take full advantage of the high-speed rail connection that will bring immense opportunities to the Central Valley and the Northern California Megaregion. Many of the pieces of this strategy have already been put in place by local organizations, institutions, and leaders, but more can be done to build on this work and spur increased growth and economic transformation. To the right, we identify key recommendations and the policy or programmatic actions that can drive them toward implementation.



Recommendation #1: Livable and Workable Communities

POLICY ACTION: INCENTIVE OVERLAY AROUND HIGH-SPEED RAIL STATIONS

Allowing for, or even requiring, denser and more transit-oriented development, balanced with open spaces like parks, will help Fresno to grow in a way that supports a high quality of life. Opportunity Zones (depicted to the right) provide one avenue for incentivizing this type of growth. Created in 2017 by federal legislation, Opportunity Zones are designed to create investment in low-income communities through tax incentives. Fresno County's 24 zones give it the second highest total in the state. Additionally, the Central Valley's planned high-speed rail stations all lie within or adjacent to Opportunity Zones. Given that these zones have already been identified, an additional overlay that streamlines permitting and provides incentives for certain types of development can be an economic development catalyst.



Recommendation #2: Cradle to Career Workforce Strategy

POLICY ACTION: INCREASED FUNDING AND INVESTMENTS FOR THE CSU SYSTEM

To attract companies and build new ones from the ground up, a workforce that is trained for technical careers and high-skill jobs is necessary. Local-serving universities are crucial to the economic development of the surrounding region, therefore CSU Fresno is one of the most important existing assets that the Central Valley can leverage. Another key element of a cradle-to-career workforce strategy is career preparation. Fresno area high schools – such as Career Technical Education Charter High School – and community colleges have already begun to launch renowned programs to this end, and further investment in such programs will continue to upskill Fresno's local workforce.

around industries like agriculture and water. To build momentum, downtown Fresno can be activated in a way that facilitates the networks that are the building blocks to an innovation ecosystem. A mix of residential and commercial space is key to creating a downtown that is attractive to innovators, but space for innovation is also critical. Flexible live-work space or developments that cater to growth in research and development can differentiate Fresno from other locations and allow various types of companies and organizations to take advantage of the connectivity benefits produced by high-speed rail.

Recommendation #4: Drawing in Talent, Innovation, and Capital via the Valley to Valley Connection

POLICY ACTION: DEVELOP A PHYSICAL PRESENCE FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY IN SILICON VALLEY

Fresno's geographic proximity to the Bay Area—one of the world's foremost hubs of innovation, technology, capital, and highly-skilled workers—provides it with a unique advantage over other peer regions. High-speed rail not only connects California's regions together; it can also connect the state's universities. CSU Fresno and UC Merced can look to leverage their new proximity to the Bay Area's campuses by creating partnerships that allow for students, professors, and programs to take advantage of each campus's specific capabilities.

Recommendation #3: Homegrown Innovation Ecosystem

POLICY ACTION: FLEXIBLE ZONING FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CLUSTERS

Investing in an innovation ecosystem that facilitates the growth of local companies and attracts existing companies can help Fresno build out technology clusters, especially

