

## Fact Sheet

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### Project Name

California High-Speed Rail Project, Merced to Fresno Section: Central Valley Wye

### Project Description

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) proposes to construct and operate the Merced to Fresno Section project, with an approximately 51- to 55-mile portion for the Central Valley Wye, as part of the larger, 800-mile California High Speed Rail (HSR) system planned throughout California. The HSR system will connect the major population centers of Sacramento, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, Orange County, and San Diego. As part of the Merced to Fresno Section of the statewide HSR system, the Central Valley Wye would create the east-west HSR connection between the San Jose to Merced Section to the west and the north-south Merced to Fresno Section to the east.

This Merced to Fresno Section: Central Valley Wye Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS) is a supplement to the Merced to Fresno Section Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS). The Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS identified the Hybrid Alternative as the preferred alternative, for the north/south alignment of the high-speed rail, but did not select a preferred alternative for the Central Valley Wye. The Authority Board of Directors certified the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) on May 3, 2012, and filed a Notice of Determination on May 4, 2012 and approved the Hybrid Alternative. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on September 18, 2012, and the Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued a ROD on June 13, 2013. Although the Authority Board of Directors and FRA approved portions of the Hybrid Alternative outside the wye for the north/south alignment of the high-speed rail and the Downtown Merced and Downtown Fresno Mariposa Street station locations, these approvals deferred a decision on the area known as the “wye connection”, that is, the east-west high-speed rail connection between the San Jose to Merced Section to the west and the north-south portion of the Merced to Fresno Section to the east, to allow for additional environmental analysis.

The Central Valley Wye portion of the Merced to Fresno Section would create the east-west connection between the San Jose to Merced Section to the west and the approved Merced to Fresno alignment. The Central Valley Wye is located in Merced and Madera counties near the City of Chowchilla with related electrical facilities extending into Fresno and Stanislaus counties.

This Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS is the next step in the environmental review process to select a wye connection. This document evaluates the impacts and benefits of implementing a wye connection in the geographically limited area of the wye connection between the cities of Merced and Madera and is based on additional project planning and engineering that has occurred over the last several years. This Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS also evaluates the No Project Alternative<sup>1</sup> and four Central Valley Wye alternatives: the State Route (SR) 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye Alternative, SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye Alternative, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye Alternative, and SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative.

The Authority has identified the Preferred Alternative in this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS as the SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative. The Authority based this identification on balancing the impacts of the Central Valley Wye alternatives on community resources and the natural environment, as presented in this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS in the context of CEQA, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), stakeholder preferences, and capital construction

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<sup>1</sup> The No Project Alternative as defined in this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS serves as both the No Project Alternative under CEQA and the No Action Alternative under NEPA.

costs. This alternative would generally have less intensive community impacts than other alternatives, although it would still result in impacts on the community of Fairmead. Relative to the other alternatives, the SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would have the fewest residential displacements, least daytime construction noise impacts, least permanent conversion of Important Farmland, and would require the relocation or reconfiguration of the fewest dairies. This alternative would also result in the fewest linear feet of disturbance to the historic Robertson Boulevard Tree Row. The SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would expose two sensitive receptors to a permanent increase in traffic noise, and train operations would expose 35 sensitive receptors to severe noise impacts, all single-family residences. This alternative would have more such impacts than the other alternatives because it would displace fewer homes. With regard to the natural environment, the SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative would have the least potential for direct impacts on special-status plant communities because it would have the least vegetation removal. It would have the least potential for impacts on wetlands and waters of the United States, including on vernal pools and associated species.

### Joint Lead Agencies

Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, W36-444  
Washington, D.C. 20590

California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### NEPA Lead Agency

FRA is the lead agency for NEPA compliance.

As permitted under the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program (STPD Program), the State of California has requested that the FRA assign its responsibilities under NEPA and related federal environmental laws to the Authority. The STPD Program is authorized by 23 United States Code section 327 to be implemented by the Federal Highway Administration, FRA and the Federal Transit Administration through joint regulations defining project and applicant eligibility, the application requirements, and the requirements for a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) approving the assignment.

The Authority, in partnership with the California State Transportation Agency, made available for public review and comment, a draft application to the FRA to assume federal environmental responsibilities under the NEPA. The official comment period on the draft application began Thursday, November 9, 2017, and ended Monday, December 11, 2017. Public comments received during this period were reviewed and considered prior to submitting the final application to the FRA in February 2018. The FRA published the final application and draft MOU in the *Federal Register* on Wednesday, May 2, 2018, and solicited public comment for 30 days, which ended June 1, 2018. The final application and MOU can be viewed on the California High-Speed Rail Authority website at: [http://www.hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental\\_Planning/nepa\\_assignment.html](http://www.hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental_Planning/nepa_assignment.html). These comment periods do not substitute for, or duplicate, the comment period for this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

The FRA remains the lead agency under NEPA for this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS until the application process is complete and FRA has signed the MOU. If FRA signs the MOU and does so prior to the ROD for this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, the Authority would issue the ROD and finalize any related environmental reviews in lieu of FRA.

## Responsible NEPA Official

Paul Nissenbaum, Associate Administrator  
Railroad Policy and Development  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE, W36-444  
Washington, D.C. 20590

## CEQA Lead Agency

The California High-Speed Rail Authority is the lead agency for CEQA compliance.

## Responsible CEQA Official

Brian P. Kelly, Chief Executive Officer  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## Document Availability

This Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS is available online at: [http://hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental\\_Planning/supplemental\\_merced\\_fresno.html](http://hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental_Planning/supplemental_merced_fresno.html). The Authority website also contains technical reports that inform the analysis provided in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

Printed copies of this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS and related appendices along with electronic copies of the technical reports are available for review during business hours at the Authority's office at 770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1, Sacramento, CA, and the Authority's office at 1111 H Street, Fresno, CA. Printed and electronic copies of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS have been placed at the following public libraries and county clerk offices. See Chapter 10, Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS Distribution, for a complete list of locations where this document can be found. You may also request an electronic copy on compact disc (CD) of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS by calling (916) 324-1541

The Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS is also available for reference at: [www.hsr.ca.gov](http://www.hsr.ca.gov). You may also request an electronic copy on CD of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS by calling (916) 324-1541. This document is not currently part of the public review and comment process in that it was completed and finalized in 2012, however, it is available for review and reference.

## Contact Information

This Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS in its entirety has been posted on the Authority's [website](#) as well as the FRA's [website](#). In addition, the Authority published materials online (in English and Spanish) summarizing the purpose and contents of the document and how to participate in the public comment period. To obtain a copy of the environmental documents, contact:

California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 324-1541

## Permits, Approvals, and Consultations

### Federal

- **Surface Transportation Board** - Authority to construct and operate the project under Sections 10502 and 10901 of the ICC Termination Act of 1995.

- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** - Section 404 Permit for Discharge of Dredge or Fill Materials into Waters of the U.S., including wetlands. Also, Section 10 Permit for construction of any structure in or over any Navigable Water of the U.S.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** - Review of Environmental Justice conclusions; General Conformity Determination.
- **Federal Railroad Administration**, in consultation with the **California Office of Historic Preservation** and the **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation** - National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Consultation.
- **U.S. Department of Transportation** - Section 4(f) Evaluation.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** - Section 7 Consultation and Biological Opinion.
- **U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service** - Section 7 Consultation and Biological Opinion.
- **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation** - Permits to Enter; Temporary Construction Permits; Acquisition of Land Rights.

## State

- **California Department of Fish and Wildlife** - California Endangered Species Act (CESA) permits; Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement.
- **California Department of Transportation** - Encroachment permits.
- **California Public Utilities Commission** - Approval for construction and operation of railroad crossing of public roads and for construction of new transmission lines and substations.
- **California State Lands Commission** - Lease for crossing state sovereign lands.
- **State Water Resources Control Board, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board** - Permits under Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification; Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Waste Discharge Permit; Statewide Stormwater General Permit for Construction; Statewide Stormwater General Permit for Industrial Activities, Dewatering Permit (Order No. 98-67); Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures Plan (part of Section 402 process); Stormwater Construction and Operation Plan (part of Section 402 process).
- **Central Valley Flood Protection Board** - Encroachment permit under Section 208.10 (designated streams, flood control and protection facilities).

## Regional

- **San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District** - Permits under Rule 201, General Permit Requirements; Rule 403, Fugitive Dust; Rule 442 Architectural Coatings; Rule 902 Asbestos.

## Authors and Principal Contributors

Chapter 11, List of Preparers, contains a complete list of the persons involved in preparation of this Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

## Public Release of Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

## Subsequent Steps

This Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS will be circulated for a 45-day public review period per regulations set forth by CEQA and NEPA. The public and public agencies will have the chance to provide comments on environmental issues and the project. At the close of the 45-day public review period, the Authority will develop a Final Supplemental EIR/EIS. This document will contain the information that was revised from the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS in accordance with the comments received during the public review period. The Final Supplemental EIR/EIS will also contain responses to the comments received during the public review period of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. Once the Central Valley Wye Final Supplemental EIR/EIS is prepared,

the document will be reviewed by the Authority for in considering whether to approve the preferred alternative. In accordance with Section 1319 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP- 21), the FRA's ROD may be circulated with the Final EIS.