



**BRIEFING: APRIL 12, 2016 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #7**

**TO: Chairman Richard and Board Members**

**FROM: Michelle Boehm, Southern California Regional Director**

**DATE: April 12, 2016**

**RE: Report on the Palmdale to Burbank Supplemental Alternatives Analysis**

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board and public on work accomplished on the Palmdale to Burbank Section since the release of the June 2015 Palmdale to Burbank Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA). This work is presented in the 2016 SAA that is included as an attachment to this Board item. The proposed alternatives have been developed and refined based on additional data collection and field studies, as well as outreach to communities, agencies, and stakeholders. This process, and the refinement of the alignments, are documented in the aforementioned 2016 SAA and presented here to inform the Board and public about the process and the current status of activities on the Palmdale to Burbank project section.

This is an information item only. Staff work efforts on this section are being presented to the Board for its information, but no Board action is involved at this time.

**Background**

In 2001, the Authority, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), started a tiered environmental review process for the statewide high-speed rail system. The 2005 approved first-tier California High-Speed Rail Program environmental document described the program alignment, which included a corridor between Palmdale and Los Angeles. The timeline of activities since then includes the following:

- The 2007 release of public scoping notices and scoping meetings presented the proposed Palmdale to Los Angeles project section study area to receive agency and public comments on the issues that should be analyzed in the environmental document. The 2007 Scoping Report summarized the scoping process, documented the comments received during the process, and outlined the next steps in the development of the environmental document.
- The 2010 Palmdale to Los Angeles Preliminary Alternatives Analysis presented and evaluated the initial alignment alternatives systematically using established criteria. Two

subsequent SAA documents for this project section, prepared in 2011 and 2012, further developed the alignment alternatives and station options based on stakeholder feedback.

- The May 2014 SAA further refined alignment alternatives and station options and discussed the evaluation of Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles as two separate project sections.
- The July 2014 scoping notices amended the 2007 Palmdale to Los Angeles scoping notices, providing for separate environmental documents for the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles project sections.
- The June 2015 SAA defined a broad range of alternatives for review and analysis in the Palmdale to Burbank project section.
- The April 2016 SAA included as an attachment to this Board item presents the latest project refinements and alternatives under consideration.

## **Discussion**

The Authority has engaged in a comprehensive public discussion and engagement program for the Palmdale to Burbank project section. Since June 2015, 56 individual and group meetings along the routes have been conducted, on top of the 165 meetings that led to the 2015 SAA and included four rounds of broad community meetings, community working group meetings, briefings to community, business, and civic organizations, and meetings with our agency partners. The coordination effort has resulted in a tremendous amount of feedback, which helped inform the refinements of the alternatives being considered.

Highlights of the specific work conducted on the Palmdale to Burbank project section since the June 2015 SAA and incorporated in the 2016 SAA are presented in the table below.

| <b>2016 SAA Highlights</b>           |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Palmdale</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support development of multi-modal station and connectivity to station area</li> <li>• Reduce impacts to surrounding community</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Acton</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce impacts in some of the more rural areas of Acton</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Santa Clarita</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce impacts in the Santa Clarita area</li> <li>• Eliminate impacts to schools and resources</li> </ul>   |
| <b>San Fernando Valley</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce impacts to communities in the Northeast San Fernando Valley, including Sylmar, the City of San Fernando, and Pacoima</li> <li>• Update platform options for the proposed Burbank Airport Station based on constructability, connectivity opportunities, and feedback</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Refined Range of Alternatives</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce length, travel time, and depth of tunnels</li> <li>• Optimize tunnel portal locations and improve constructability to advance tunneling concepts that allow substantial reduction in surface impacts to disadvantaged communities, natural and protected resources, and other key resources</li> <li>• Work with regulatory agencies to advance key activities including geophysical testing to support efforts</li> </ul> |

Based on the refinements and evaluations mentioned above, studies will continue as these alternatives for the Palmdale to Burbank project section presented in the SAA, and shown in Exhibit 1, move to full evaluation in the upcoming environmental document.

The development of the environmental document for the Palmdale to Burbank project section will advance based on the information collected and presented in all of the documents described above. Currently, the draft of this document is anticipated for release in spring of 2017. The release of the draft environmental document will be accompanied by public meetings as well as agency and public comment as required. Throughout this process comments from the public are collected and used, in conjunction with resource agency comments and technical studies, to support the development of the alternatives and ultimately the selection of a preferred alternative.

### **Next Steps**

- Complete technical studies on the range of alternatives presented in 2016 SAA (subject to regulatory agency concurrence) and prepare draft environmental document.
- Engage regulatory agency partners, stakeholders, and the community during the preparation of the technical studies and environmental documentation to support work activities, including in relation to the Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

### **Attachments**

– *Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report: Palmdale to Burbank (April 2016)*

# Exhibit 1. Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Map

