



Press Release

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High-Speed Rail Authority Board of Directors Approves Alignment Within Fresno to Bakersfield High-Speed Rail Section *Board Also Approves Agreement with Central Valley Air Pollution Control District to Offset Emissions During Construction*

FRESNO, Calif. – The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Board of Directors today certified the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Fresno to Bakersfield project section of the high-speed rail program and approved a high-speed rail alignment within the Fresno to Bakersfield project section. This allows the Authority to take additional steps toward continuing major work on the project from Fresno to the south. Today's action also approved the preferred alignment from the southern edge of the already-approved Fresno Mariposa Street station to the 7th Standard Road in Kern County northwest of Bakersfield.

“This document represents a culmination of the work done by the Authority to identify a preferred alignment for the project that is consistent with the parameters of Proposition 1A requirements, and extensive input and feedback from members of the community, local and elected officials, a variety of stakeholders and our state and federal partners,” said Board Chair Dan Richard. “I know that I have personally, along with my colleagues on the Board and Authority staff, spoken with hundreds of people that live and work within this project section. As this process moves forward, we are all committed to and will continue to work with property owners and businesses to ensure that impacts from the high-speed rail project are mitigated and that the project benefits Central Valley residents now and into the future.”

The Fresno to Bakersfield high-speed rail section is approximately 114 miles long from south of the terminus of the Merced to Fresno project section to north of the City of Bakersfield. The preferred alternative is comprised of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe alternative (BNSF), the Corcoran Bypass alternative, the Allensworth Bypass alternative and the Bakersfield Hybrid alternative. Proposed stations are identified as the Downtown Bakersfield station on Truxtun Avenue, and the East of Hanford/west of Visalia station option located near State Route 198.

On Tuesday, the Board of Directors heard a staff presentation and took public comments on the Fresno to Bakersfield Final EIR/EIS. After deliberations, today the Board of Directors considered whether to certify the document under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by approving the project to 7th Standard Road and adopting document required under CEQA. The Board then voted unanimously to certify the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS. Then they unanimously approved a high-speed rail alignment within the Fresno to Bakersfield project section.

In the next step, the Federal Railroad Administration will consider approving the project and issuing a Record of Decision under the National Environmental Policy Act, anticipated in June 2014.

The Final EIR/EIS and associated documents are available online at the Authority's website at http://www.hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental_Planning/final_fresno_bakersfield.html.

Also at today's meeting, the Board of Directors approved entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District that commits the Authority to offset its construction criteria

pollutant emissions, commits the District to source, procure and secure the offsets on behalf of the Authority and outlines a process for detailed Voluntary Emission Reduction Agreements (VERA) as the Authority builds out the high-speed rail project within the District boundaries. The MOU will ensure that while thousands of Valley residents get to work on construction of the project, their families and communities will not suffer negative impacts from the construction emissions and other pollutants. The District has established offset programs for replacing aging farm and other equipment, including replacing school bus engines and irrigation pumps. These mitigations complement the Authority's requirements of the design-build contractors to use clean construction vehicles and recycle 100 percent of steel and concrete.

“This agreement is an extremely important investment in our future that will benefit Central Valley residents as we still have unacceptably poor air quality, which we see that through high asthma rates for children,” said Board Vice-Chair Tom Richards. “Just last week, reports from the California Environmental Protection Agency and the American Lung Association found that the Central Valley still has some of the worst air quality in the nation.” As both a Central Valley resident and business owner, I believe that through high-speed rail, we will be able improve the livability of the valley and make the air cleaner for everyone, while at the same time, building new economic and job opportunities for our region.”

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About California High-Speed Rail Authority

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) is responsible for planning, designing, building and operation of the first high-speed rail system in the nation. California high-speed rail will connect the mega-regions of the state, contribute to economic development and a cleaner environment, create jobs and preserve agricultural and protected lands. By 2029, the system will run from San Francisco to the Los Angeles basin in under three hours at speeds capable of over 200 miles per hour. The system will eventually extend to Sacramento and San Diego, totaling 800 miles with up to 24 stations. In addition, the Authority is working with regional partners to implement a statewide rail modernization plan that will invest billions of dollars in local and regional rail lines to meet the state's 21st century transportation needs. To learn more visit the Authority's website at <http://www.hsr.ca.gov> and join us on [facebook.com/CaliforniaHighSpeedRail](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaHighSpeedRail) and follow us at twitter.com/cahsra