
APPENDIX A: MEETING MINUTES

Merced County Technical Working Group June 4, 2009 Meeting Summary

Introductions

John Clerici (CirclePoint) welcomed the TWG Members and then asked for self introductions. He then invited Ken Sislak (AECOM and Merced to Fresno EIR/EIS PM) to introduce the technical team. John provided an overview of the meeting goals, the agenda and the anticipated schedule. He added that primary purpose of the TWG is to exchange information on the environmental process, stations and alternatives under consideration.

In reviewing the proposed schedule John pointed out that at the beginning of the process it is likely that meetings may be held every six to eight weeks. Once some of the initial items are taken care of meetings will be held ever three months or so. Attendance at each meeting may vary by topic or issue. We want to make sure that the right people are in the room and that we don't take up everyone's time unnecessarily.

He emphasized that while the team is here to provide information it is critically important that the TWG members provide relevant feedback to the team. It is anticipated that we will all use our professional discretion in distributing materials that we receive in both directions. The environmental team also requests that any questions or concerns be directed to the outreach team (Beverly Mason – AECOM and John).

California High-Speed Train Overview

Ken Sislak provided an overview of the statewide high-speed train system, the project's purpose and need, benefits of the project, and an update on the other 8 sections of the project (slides 7-13). He emphasized that while the Caltrain corridor in the Bay area and the Metro Link in the Los Angeles area are getting a great deal of attention, the valley will not be overlooked. He pointed out that before any high speed trains can be used they must first be assembled and tested somewhere in the Central Valley. The Central Valley section of the high speed train is the is critical to the system since the heavy maintenance facility and the test track will occur in the Valley. The Valley is also the only place in the HST system will reach their maximum operating speed. Three stations are slated for this section, Merced, Fresno, and Bakersfield. There is a possibility of a station in the Tulare, Visalia or Hanford area as well. There will be running service shops at strategic locations along the system, but the heavy maintenance depot will be in this vicinity. The heavy maintenance facility will require high tech/computer related jobs as well as skilled labor such as metal bending, welding, fiberglass repair, and upholsterers.

Scoping Summary

Lauren Swift (CH2M Hill) provided an overview of the March Scoping meetings including a summary of the comments that were received from local, state and federal agencies as well as the public. Lauren discussed the purpose of the scoping meetings, how the public was notified, meeting set up and displays, meeting attendance, how comments were submitted and the types of comments that were received. Major comment themes included: strong support for the project and an interest in "fast tracking", Castel AFB as maintenance station and a few alternative alignments (see slides 14 – 29).

Alternatives

Kwong Chang (CH2M Hill) provided an overview of the alternatives that were developed as a result of the scoping comments. He began the presentation by highlighting the key operating and design criteria for HST (See slides 31-32). Kwong shared two maps with the TWG. The first showed the alternatives developed in the Program EIS/EIR. The second showed the Alternatives that were added as a result of the scoping process. He provided a list of the station and maintenance facility locations that were developed through scoping (slide 35) and provided a map of those alternatives (slide 36).

Kwong discussed the different types of structures that would be used along the alignment in order to accommodate HST (slide 37). He provided a detailed explanation of each of the alignment alternatives broken down into four areas, the Merced Vicinity, Chowchilla Vicinity, Madera Vicinity and Fresno Vicinity (slides 38 – 50). Following the overview of the alternatives Chang highlighted a few of the site specific adaptations that were used during the conceptual development of the alternatives from scoping. The adaptations discussed included

- The overcrossing in South Merced where one design options is favored in terms of construction but another options reduces impacts to water ways.
- Relocation of the BNSF in order to make a curve that would allow the train to operate at high speeds
- Potentially very high overcrossing needed to go over a highway 99 overpass.
- The need to use an elevated track through a congested city center in order to avoid at grade crossings.

Slides 51-58 contain the complete list of adaptations discussed in the meeting.

Stations

Rick Phillips (HNTB) spoke to the group about the HST station. He discussed the role of the station, station design principles, a typical station "footprint", typical station design elements, the scale of the station and a typical station cross section (Slides 59 – 65).

Rick also discussed the station location alternatives being considered in Merced (slides 66-67). He explained that the dotted/dashed circle around each station indicates a half-mile radius that would be the primary area influenced by the station. Within that circle, everything is within easy walking distance of the station. The solid circle is a mile radius around the station and indicates the second tier area that would be influenced by the station.

Alternatives Analysis

Jodi Ketelson (CH2M Hill) described the alternatives analysis process the team is currently engaged in and how the alternatives will be finalized. She explained that we are in the initial screening process that involves looking back at what the Programmatic EIS/EIR looked and ruled out or included for further study. The team is making sure that alternatives meet the project purpose and need, and that there are fatal flaws or excessive impacts to the environment. Once the initial screening process is completed the team will delve into detailed study of each of the remaining alternatives (slides 78-79).

Wrap Up and Next Meeting

John Clerici helped wrap up the meeting with a commitment on the part of the technical team to send agendas, information requests, and other materials to the TWG ahead of time so that you can react and bring any pertinent information to the meeting. He added that a secure ftp site will be set up to share information since many of maps we want to share are too large of files to send via email. John added that the team also wants to get suggestions from the TWG for agenda and discussion items as well.

The next TWG meeting is expected to be held in about 6-8 weeks (mid July). The schedule on slide 78 provides a good overview of what you can expect from the project over the next few months and years.

Questions and Answers

Q: What is the anticipated criteria for the maintenance station?

A: We are working at the criteria right now. Generally we are looking for a place with access to mainline railroads, access to water, sewer, highway electricity. The Authority is putting requirements together and once those go out, that will sort of be an invitation to bid.

Q: How many people will the facility employ?

A: The French high-speed train maintenance facility employs about 1,000 people. Right now there is no way to tell exactly how many people will be employed by this facility but it is likely to be on the same scale as the French facility and will employ a lot of people. The smaller facilities along the route will employ about 150-200 people.

Q: How big is the area needed for the facility, roughly?

A: 100-150 acres or so.

Q: When we will have the maintenance facility criteria?

A: End of June or early July is the current time frame.

Q: Who leads the southern team (Fresno to Palmdale)?

A: Bob Shavitz and Eric Vonberg (URS) are the local people on the southern team (Fresno to Bakersfield). Bryn Forhan is the regional outreach manager and Beverly Mason is also a contact for the entire area.

Q: In regards to some of the design adaptations needed to cross over SR 99, instead of assuming the built environment is a constant, would it be easier to reconstruct 99 to fit the train rather than fit the train to the current 99 route?

A: The team is operating under the assumption that the built environment is a constant, but if the city or county has plans to modify or improve roadways it is important for this team to know what those plans are. For example, if the county knows that what is currently a 2 lane road will eventually be expanded into a 4 or 6 lane road, this team needs to know that and we will build the train to accommodate those planned improvements. Once the train is built, there's no changing it so we need to be able to plan ahead.

Meeting Attendees

Oksana Newman, County of Merced
Bill Cahill, City of Merced
Kim Espinosa, City of Merced
Angelo Lamas, County of Merced
John Bramble, City of Merced
Jesse Brown, MCAG
Scott McBride, City of Atwater
Charlie Woods, City of Atwater
Bobby Lewis, County of Merced
Ken Sislak, AECOM
Beverly Mason, AECOM
Allan Boone, AECOM
Jodi Ketelson, CH2M Hill
Lauren Swift, CH2M Hill
Kwong Chang, CH2M Hill
Rick Phillips, HNTB
Mike Lynch, Mike Lynch Consulting
John Clerici, CirclePoint
Shay Humphrey, CirclePoint

Madera County Technical Working Group June 4, 2009 Meeting Summary

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Questions and Answers

Q: Are there other TWG groups? And if so, who do they involve?

A: Yes, there are other Technical Working Groups for Fresno to Bakersfield section as well as a TWG for Merced County. The members of those groups hold the same types of positions as the people in this group for those jurisdictions. City and County planning, develop, engineering, transpiration, etc.

Q: Who is responsible for the "Y" (connection to the SJ to Merced Section)?

A: This team is responsible for the connection at Chowchilla.

Q: Additional stations are there for Madera because of Scoping, correct?

A: Yes. Those station alternatives are likely to be ruled out before we get any further along in the process (Programmatic EIR/EIS).

Q: What about the UP2? Is it just a line on a page?

A: No, the UP2 alternative is legitimate and has gained the interest of the Authority.

Q: When we will be getting the requirements for the maintenance facility?

A: End of July or early August its the most likely timeframe.

Q: For things like future road crossings, how do you plan to deal with local road improvements and highway widening?

A: We are going to coordinate with those agencies that have specific knowledge. If we know that there are plans for a road widening we will build to accommodate that improvement. The TWG is important to this and we want to make sure we don't impact the things your community is planning to do.

Meeting Attendees

John Weiser, Madera County
Richard Poythress, Madera County
Dave Merchen, City of Madera
Leona James, City of Chowchilla
Waseem Ahmed, City of Chowchilla
Tom Skinner, City of Chowchilla
Matt Treber, Madera County
Roy Price, City of Chowchilla
Glenna Jarvis, Madera County
Harry Turner, City of Chowchilla
Steve Greer, City of Madera
Keith Helmuth, City of Madera
Dave Randall, City of Madera
Mike Waiczis, URS
Ken Sislak, AECOM
Beverly Mason, AECOM
Allan Boone, AECOM
Jodi Ketelson, CH2M Hill
Lauren Swift, CH2M Hill
Kwong Chang, CH2M Hill
Rick Phillips, HNTB
Mike Lynch, Mike Lynch Consulting
John Clerici, CirclePoint
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Merced County Technical Working Group July 15, 2009 Meeting Summary

Introductions

John Clerici (CirclePoint) welcomed the TWG Members and then asked for self introductions. He then introduced the technical team. John provided an overview of the meeting goals and agenda.

Jodi Ketelsen (CH2M HILL) provided more detail on the purpose of the meeting and the planning process to date. She noted that the primary purpose of the meeting was to obtain input from city and county staff regarding the proposed alignments and planning constraints within their cities/counties. The initial portion of meeting would be an explanation of current alignments and station areas, and process to date; the second portion of the meeting would consist of breakout groups focused on alignments and station areas.

Overview of Planning Process Since Last TWG Meeting

Jodi provided an overview of the Federal Railroad Authority presentation on June 23, 2009 and walked the group through the 11x17 booklet that was used during that presentation. The booklet provided a quick overview of the alternatives currently under consideration. Jodi noted that the BN2 (A4) alignment was eliminated because it doesn't meet the project purpose and need. She also noted that the nomenclature for the alternatives is changing in order to be consistent with the Fresno to Bakersfield section of this project segment. Jodi briefly walked the group through the Alternatives Analysis Methods Technical Memorandum and noted that, although many of the evaluation criteria can be measured in GIS, there are others that can only be understood through local knowledge and input, which was the purpose of the July 15 TWG meeting.

Rick Phillips (HNTB) explained the station analysis to date. He noted that the project team is recommending that only the three Merced and Fresno station options be advanced to the EIR/EIS. The other stations proposed at Castle Commerce Center, Chowchilla, and Madera will be eliminated because they either do not meet the purpose and need of the project or they reduce travel time in the corridor.

Maintenance Facility Status

Carrie Bauen (HRA) explained the status of the maintenance facility planning process. She described some of the criteria the Authority is looking for in a maintenance facility site; she noted that the Authority will have the final criteria developed by the end of the week to distribute to communities. Because the maintenance facility planning is not currently following the same schedule as the alignment and station planning, an additional public process will be held in the

Merced to Bakersfield section to address the maintenance facility. Carrie noted that the Authority is unsure if the facility will be part of this EIS/EIR because the its planning process is not running concurrently with the remainder of the process; she planned to discuss this with the FRA the following week.

Workshop Groups

The meeting then dispersed into a workshop format, with one group of attendees focusing on the different alignments and another focusing on the two different station locations in Merced.

Input received from Stations Group

- City staff were concerned about the Amtrak Station site because the HST track would pass through a residential neighborhood. The neighborhoods near the Amtrak station would object to HST along the BNSF line through their neighborhoods.
- City staff prefer to see all alignments, including the BNSF alignment, tie into the Downtown Merced Station site instead of the Amtrak Station site.
- Staff identified a large number of land use considerations surrounding the Downtown Merced Station site, and these are noted on the marked up project team map, incorporated into these minutes by reference.
- The Atwater-Merced Expressway, marked on the map, is being studied in a CEQA document.
- A new Campus Parkway to UC Merced, marked on the map, is planned. It will create a loop between the expressway and Campus Parkway. The funding plan is in the CEQA document, and is contingent upon development fees.
- **ACTION ITEM: OBTAIN PLANS FOR BOTH PARKWAYS.**
- Castle/Atwater is extremely interested in having the maintenance facility locate in the vicinity. They view it as an opportunity to benefit from employment opportunities for higher skilled workers, and to partner with CU Merced for training.
- A detailed discussion between Rick Phillips and city staff occurred regarding the Downtown Merced Station.
 - The interchange with SR99 next to the station site was rebuilt by Caltrans within the last ten years and meets current design standards. The other interchanges in the downtown area are older and do not meet current design standards.
 - The area next to the blue hatched "potential" site on the map contains uses that could easily be redeveloped for TOD.
 - The intermodal bus center adjacent to the site feeds many other central California locations, such as Yosemite.
 - Jodi noted that four tracks would likely be needed for one mile on each side of the station to allow express trains to move through while local trains stop at the station.
- Staff had a number of comments about possible cultural sites identified on the project map.

California High-Speed Train Merced to Bakersfield Section

- There are no remaining structures in the old Chinatown. It is shown on the project map in the same area as the proposed station platform.
- The fairgrounds, identified as a cultural site on the map, used to be a Japanese intern camp, but there are no longer any remaining structures on the site.
- Staff planners had no knowledge of any existing wetland mitigation banks in either the city or county of Merced.
- A new hospital will be located in north Merced.
- An underpass is proposed at G Street (under the BNSF) to allow emergency access to neighborhoods east of the railroad.

Project team maps marked up by TWG attendees are filed in the project records and are incorporated into these minutes by reference.

DRAFT

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Rick Phillips (HNTB) explained the station analysis to date. He noted that the project team is recommending that only the three Merced and Fresno station options be advanced to the EIR/EIS. The other stations proposed at Castle Commerce Center, Chowchilla, and Madera will be eliminated because they either do not meet the purpose and need of the project or they reduce travel time in the corridor.

A Madera planner asked whether the maintenance facility will also be allowed to be a public station stop. Jodi and Rick replied that this is unknown at this time. Castle Commerce Center could accommodate both.

Maintenance Facility Status

Carrie Bauen (HRA) explained the status of the maintenance facility planning process. She described some of the criteria the Authority is looking for in a maintenance facility site; she noted that the Authority will have the final criteria developed by the end of the week to distribute to communities. Because the maintenance facility planning is not currently following the same schedule as the alignment and station planning, an additional public process will be held in the Merced to Bakersfield section to address the maintenance facility. Carrie noted that the Authority is unsure if the facility will be part of this EIS/EIR because the its planning process is not running concurrently with the remainder of the process; she planned to discuss this with the FRA the following week.

Workshop Groups

The meeting then dispersed into a workshop format, with one group of attendees focusing on the alignments in Chowchilla and the other on the alignments in Madera.

Input received from Chowchilla Group

- City staff felt the 152 North Wye alignment was not a viable option for their city. The alignment conflicts with their general plan. They also have a brand new sewer line running under this alignment.
- The area near the north wye is acceptable for a maintenance facility but not the overall alignment.
- The curve from the south wye to the UP1 (A2) alignment is acceptable.
- ACTION ITEM: CHOWCHILLA WILL SEND THEIR GENERAL PLAN MAP TO THE TEAM.
- Chowchilla staff were happy with the on-152 alignment proposed by the PTG team.
 - Jodi explained some of the issues with the on-152 alignment, including the need to remain 1000 feet away from 152 (in order to allow roads to cross over or under the HST track and intersect with 152), and the resulting difficulty in accessing the remnant parcels that would be created between the HST track and 152.
- Chowchilla staff felt comfortable with the UP2 (A3) alignment with the south wye, but were concerned about the amount of agricultural land disturbed by the UP2 (A3) alignment.
- Staff noted that the agricultural land along the BNSF (A1) alignment is not as high quality as the land along the UP2 (A3) alignment. The quality of the farmland goes down as it approaches the foothills.
- ACTION ITEM: MADERA COUNTY WILL SEND A LIST OR MAP OF THEIR HIGHER PRIORITY FARM ROADS IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS ALONG THE UP2 (A3) ALIGNMENT.
- There is museum planned at the paleontology site south of Chowchilla. It is one of the largest paleontological sites in the world. This site is marked on the project map, which is incorporated into these minutes by reference.
- Entities the project team should speak with:

California High-Speed Train Merced to Bakersfield Section

- Farm Bureau – Julia Barry
- Madera Irrigation District (covers most of the UP2 (A3) alignment)
- Chowchilla Water District (primarily in the city)
- Friant Water Authority
- EPA has made waste sites available along the old Highway 99 route; old dump sites are noted there
 - ACTION ITEM: CALL LEONA FOR A COPY OF THE EPA EMAIL REGARDING THESE SITES
- The airport in Chowchilla is staying at its current site. Earlier this year, they thought the airport might move southwest of town, but that is no longer happening.
- Noise levels will be important/concern to citizens where the UP1 (A2) alignment crosses through the city south of the river.
- ACTION ITEM: TALK TO THE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION TO OBTAIN LOCATIONS OF RURAL SCHOOLS
- ACTION ITEM: OBTAIN UTILITY MAPS

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