



**CALIFORNIA  
HIGH-SPEED RAIL  
AUTHORITY**

## **San Jose to Merced High-Speed Train Section**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. Why build high-speed rail in California?**

- California's population is growing rapidly, and unless new transportation solutions are identified, traffic will only get worse and airport delays will continue to increase. To serve the same number of travelers as the high-speed train system, California would have to build up to 3,000 lane-miles of freeway plus five airport runways and 90 departure gates by 2020, with a price tag of nearly twice what it would cost to implement the high-speed train system.
- The proposed 220 mph high-speed train system will provide lower passenger costs than travel by automobile or air for the same city-to-city markets. It will increase mobility while cutting air pollution, reducing dependency on fossil fuels, and protecting the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. By moving people and goods quicker and cheaper than today, the system will boost California's productivity. The system will also enhance the economy by creating as many as 600,000 jobs in California.

#### **2. What stage is the project in? What are the next steps? When will it be built?**

- The San Jose to Merced section project is about 20 percent of the way through the environmental review process which culminates in the approval and certification of a Final Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS). The section is currently in the Alternatives Analysis (AA) phase. The AA will help identify the alignments and station locations to carry forward into the detailed environmental review. The Federal Railroad Administration and Authority will meet in spring 2010 to discuss the studies to date, and provide recommendations on the alignments to carry forward into the environmental review. Following review by the Authority Board of Directors, the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report public informational meetings will be held in order to capture agency and public comment on the findings.
- After the supplemental AA Report is published, the San Jose to Merced project team will move forward with preparing the EIR/EIS. After a Draft EIR/EIS is submitted for public review scheduled currently for 2011, a Final EIR/EIS will be prepared and issued in 2012.
- It is estimated that construction of the San Jose to Merced section could start in late 2012/early 2013.

**3. How will residents and other stakeholders be involved in the process? How will community input influence the project EIS/EIR and eventual selection of a design alternative?**

- Public involvement is an essential part of the environmental review process. The goal of the public participation process is to engage a broad, representative cross section of the public and stakeholders to help ensure that the project EIR/EIS reflects and incorporates agency and public input.
- There are multiple points during the process that require public participation. Several public meetings have already occurred in 2009 and in early 2010, including meetings focused on scoping and alternatives analysis, in San Jose, Merced and Gilroy. Meetings have also been conducted with agencies and stakeholder groups throughout the project area.
- There will be additional opportunities for public comment and involvement throughout the remainder of the environmental review process, including comments on preliminary engineering, station design and location, and the draft and final environmental documents.

**4. How much will the project cost? How will financial constraints affect the alternative selection process? How much will the San Jose to Merced section cost?**

- The most current estimated cost to build phase 1 (Anaheim/Los Angeles to San Francisco) of the 800-mile system is \$42.6 billion. Financial feasibility will be one of the factors that will inform the alternatives selection process. The process will involve public and community involvement, which along with an operations plan will determine what is desired; careful study of various alternatives to determine what is constructible; and a review of environmental, fiscal and other constraints to determine what is feasible.
- The 2009 Business Plan (available at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library.asp?p=8200](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library.asp?p=8200)) estimates the capital costs for the San Jose to Merced project to be \$5.4 billion.

**5. Given the recent lawsuit on the Bay Area to Central Valley Final Program EIR, will the high-speed trains still travel through the Pacheco Pass?**

- In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed a Final Statewide Program EIR/EIS) as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed high-speed train system. In July 2008, as part of a second program EIR/EIS, the Authority selected the Pacheco Pass to San Francisco via San Jose as the network alternative for connecting the Bay Area with the Central Valley. The selected Pacheco Pass network alternative included general alignments between San Jose and Gilroy, over the Pacheco Pass, across the San Joaquin Valley, and north to Merced, which would be studied further in project EIR/EIS. Due to a court ruling, the Authority re-opened the related program environmental document and is working to address issues identified by the court as part of a revised and re-circulated document. The revised document was released on March 4, 2010, with a 45-day review period beginning March 11, 2010. The Authority will consider the revised materials and the entire record before making a new certification decision on the revised program EIR/EIS under CEQA. It should be noted that the court ruling did not require the Authority to stop the work currently being conducted on the project-specific environmental review.

**6. How will the project affect my property values? If my property is acquired, how will I be compensated?**

- It is the duty of the Authority to ensure that property owners receive fair market value as if they sold their property privately in the open market.
- If only part of a property is needed for a project, every reasonable effort is made to ensure that the owner does not suffer damages to the remainder of the property. The total payment by the Authority will be for the property the Authority actually purchases and for any assessed loss in market value to the owner's remaining property. Additional information on how this process works can be found in the Right of Way section of the Authority website (available at <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library.asp?p=9118>).

**7. On what basis will the Authority decide which vertical (e.g. aerial above ground, at grade, trench or tunnel) and horizontal alignments are carried forward into the detailed environmental analysis?**

- The Alternatives Analysis Process is carried out to help focus study on a reasonable range of alternatives to be considered in the draft environmental document. Public input, agency coordination and technical analysis are all considered in developing a reasonable range of alternatives.
- Specific criteria and agreed upon system-wide standards will also contribute to the selection of alignment alternatives to carry forward. This includes the consideration of constructability and risk associated with likely construction methods.
- Specific objectives include maximizing ridership and revenue potential, maximizing accessibility, and minimizing operating and capital costs. The evaluation of the alignment alternatives will identify the alternatives that minimize impacts to communities, environmental resources, and natural resources.

**8. Why is tunneling so difficult in the downtown San Jose area? If BART can do it in San Jose, why can't high-speed rail?**

- A high-speed rail tunnel and underground station in the downtown San Jose area faces a multitude of challenges, including construction underneath an existing freeway, a high water table, soils that are characterized by the presence of high water flows and accommodation of a future BART station and other planned development. There will also be significant surface impacts from a tunnel, including impacts from construction, ground stabilization requirements and access and ventilation openings necessary for what's referred to as Fire Life Safety.
- Discussions are underway to determine if a tunnel/station option could be evaluated at a decreased depth, which would reduce some of the challenges and potentially allow cut and cover construction for the station and a portion of the alignment. However, this would likely require the BART tunnel to be moved below the HST system, transferring construction risk and high cost associated with deep tunneling to the BART project.
- Studies conducted on a tunnel option will be discussed in the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report.

## **9. How many trains will travel through the area per hour? How loud will they be?**

- During peak periods at full build out in 2035, there could be up to 10 to 12 trains per hour in each direction. During the off-peak, there could be 6 to 8 trains per hour in each direction. Trains will not run 24 hours a day. The first train will run at approximately 5 a.m., and the last train will run at approximately 11 p.m.
- Noise will be evaluated as part of the environmental document, and the Authority's analysis will follow Federal Railroad Administration guidance for preparing noise studies. The analysis will also take into account existing noise ordinances and conditions that may exist in each city within the sub-section, and include this information in a baseline conditions study.
- In general, high-speed train noise is more about aerodynamics as opposed to engine noise – a "whoosh" noise. The "clickety clack" sound of wheels on tracks will not be heard with high-speed trains because of the steel wheel technology.

## **10. How will my home be protected during construction? Will vibrations from the train damage building foundations?**

- Different construction techniques will be thoroughly studied and identified in the environmental document. During the construction phase, extensive preconstruction surveys will be conducted to document existing conditions. These conditions will be continuously monitored during construction. A post-construction survey will be completed afterwards, and any differences between preconstruction and post-construction conditions will be corrected.
- Thorough analysis of the potential for ground vibrations will be conducted as part of the detailed environmental studies. Sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project will be identified to determine if the potential for ground vibrations is a possibility and what mitigation measures might be employed to avoid or minimize these impacts.

## **11. How will historic buildings and structures be preserved?**

- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has required the team to look at the historic status of different buildings and structures throughout the sub-section, including Diridon Station. The project team is working to ensure that design of the system is sensitive to and protective of these historical resources.

## **12. What is the decision making process when it comes to determining which alignment alternatives are carried forward into the draft environmental document? Who makes that decision?**

- The environmental project team will evaluate all of the alignment alternatives suggested during the scoping process. The results of these evaluations will be presented in the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis (AA) Report anticipated to be released in the summer of 2010, which will include recommendations on the alignments to carry forward into the environmental review. The Preliminary AA Report will be presented to the Authority Board and at the same time made available to the public on the Authority Web site. Following the Board presentation, Technical

Working Group and public information meetings on the Preliminary AA Report will be held to capture input and feedback on the findings. Any recommended changes to the Preliminary AA Report as the result of public and agency input will be presented to the Board, and any changes approved by the Board will be reflected in a supplemental AA Report. The Authority Board and the FRA will not select a final alternative until after the circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS, responding to public comments and preparing a Final EIR/EIS.

**13. To what extent is cost a factor in deciding which alternatives to carry forward?**

- While cost is not a deciding factor, a reasonable range of alternatives includes those that can expect to be supported financially. If an alignment, or portion thereof, is found to be significantly more expensive than anticipated, the Authority Board and FRA will have to decide whether there is a reasonable likelihood that these costs could be covered.

**14. Will Union Pacific allow the CHSRA to use part of their right-of-way? If not, how will that affect your plans in the San Jose to Gilroy section?**

- The High Speed Rail Authority and the Union Pacific Railroad are currently in talks regarding right-of-way considerations. Until those talks are concluded, the project team is moving forward with the evaluation of possible alignment alternatives that do not require any UP right-of-way.

**15. When will you be able to tell me if my property will be impacted by this project?**

- The ultimate decision about which alignment will be selected for construction will not be completely finalized until the environmental document is certified by the High Speed Authority Board and a Record of Decision is obtained from the Federal Railroad Administration. Currently, that is anticipated to be sometime in early 2012. During that time, some of the alternative alignments may be withdrawn from consideration and the list of potential alignment alternatives in various locations may be narrowed. However, that does not preclude a new or different alignment from being introduced should new information obtained during the detailed analysis become available.

**DISCLAIMER:**

Please note that all design and engineering information mentioned above is subject to change. No final decisions will be made until the Final EIR/EIS has been released and approved.

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