



## San Jose to Merced High-Speed Train Section Frequently Asked Questions Updated March 2011

### Statewide System

#### 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 more than 3,000 lane-miles of freeway plus five airport runways and 90 departure gates by 2020, with a price tag of more than 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 600,000 construction-related jobs over the course of building the project, and 450,000 permanent new jobs created by the economic growth high-speed rail will bring over the next 25 years.

#### 2. How much will the project cost? How will financial constraints affect the alternative selection process? \*

- The 2009 Business Plan estimated cost to build phase 1 (Anaheim/Los Angeles to San Francisco) of the 800-mile system is \$42.6 billion, estimated at year of expenditure and provided in 2009 dollars. Cost figures and construction schedule are being updated and will be incorporated into an updated business plan slated for late 2011 or early 2012. For more information, please refer to the 2009 Business Plan at [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Business\\_Plan\\_reports.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Business_Plan_reports.aspx).
- 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.

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

Questions marked with an asterisk were included in the May 2010 FAQs and have updated responses. 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.

## Funding

### 3. How will the project be funded?

- The California high-speed train system will be paid for through a combination of state, federal, local, and private funds. Following the passage of Proposition 1A in November 2008, California can draw on a \$9-billion, voter-approved, general obligation bond to provide critical state proceeds for high-speed rail construction. The Authority is also seeking approximately \$17-19 billion in federal funding. The funding currently available for construction is \$5.5 billion (federal funds matched with state and local funding). The Authority is targeting \$4-5 billion in local support including funds through public-private partnerships (P3s) such as transit oriented development, parking concessions and naming rights opportunities. In addition the Authority is targeting \$10-12 billion in private sector participation through innovative P3s to provide the capital funding to help complete the system.
- In December 2010, the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board voted to begin construction of the system connecting Los Angeles to the Bay Area in the heart of the state's Central Valley, choosing an option that makes the best use of available funding and lays the foundation for expanding the track both north and south. This initial segment will use about \$4.15 billion of the available \$5.5 billion to build two new stations, acquire rights of way, construct viaducts, prepare the site, grade, restore vegetation, build rail bridges, realign roadways and relocate existing railways and utilities. The project will create thousands of jobs in one of the areas in California hit hardest by the national economic recession, and no construction can begin until the Authority completes its environmental reviews of the project. Construction is expected to begin in 2012 and finish in 2017, as required by federal funding guidelines.

### 3a. Will cities along the corridor be expected to pay for stations and station amenities, such as parking?

- Local support will provide an important funding source for high-speed rail development, and can be divided into two main parts: 1) cost sharing or local government support, and 2) private participation in station or area development. The Authority's Financing Plan for the Anaheim to San Francisco system targets \$4-5 billion in local support, including support from P3s. Local government support is estimated to be between \$2-3 billion and is based on population and possible contribution levels from communities across the state. In addition, the Authority is targeting opportunities such as naming rights and P3 development around stations totaling another \$1-2 billion. The Authority has been engaged in preliminary discussions with transportation authorities in several areas of the state and identified a number of projects where costs might be shared between the Authority and local agencies. To date, the Authority has focused on those projects that would benefit commuter rail service in addition to high-speed rail. The San Francisco to San Jose and Los Angeles to Anaheim corridors are two examples where the Authority believes significant cost sharing opportunities may exist.

## Environmental review process and decision timeline

### 4. What is the status of the lawsuits on the Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR, and will the high-speed trains still travel through the Pacheco Pass?\*

- In August 2008, a lawsuit was filed challenging the Authority's July 2008 certification of the Final Program EIR/EIS for the Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train and its selection of the Pacheco Pass network alternative for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The case is *Town of Atherton v. California High-Speed Rail Authority*, Sacramento Superior Court No. 34-2008-8000022. The November 2009 final judgment in the case upheld much of the work in the 2008 Final Program EIR/EIS, including its examination of a reasonable range of alternatives, but also required the Authority to rescind its 2008 decisions and undertake additional work to comply with CEQA.
- To comply with the court judgment, the Authority rescinded its prior decisions and circulated a Revised Draft Program EIR for a 45-day public comment period in March and April 2010. The Authority issued a revised Final Program EIR in August 2010, including an entire volume of responses to the thousands of comments received. At a two-day meeting in September 2010, the Authority certified the Revised Final Program EIR for its compliance with CEQA and selected the Pacheco Pass network alternative, including general HST 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.
- The 2008 litigation over the Authority's compliance with the original court ruling continues, and is now focused on whether the Authority has complied with the final judgment in the case. The 2008 case has been coordinated with a new lawsuit filed in October 2010 challenging the Authority's compliance with CEQA for the Revised Final Program EIR. The new case is entitled *Town of Atherton v. California High-Speed Rail Authority*, Sacramento Superior Court No. 34-2010-80000679.
- While the litigation is in progress, the Authority has continued to proceed with its high-speed rail planning based on the Pacheco Pass. The outcome of the two court cases may or may not require the Authority to undertake additional CEQA work, and may or may not result in changes to its prior decisions about the Pacheco Pass. A hearing on the merits of the two cases will be held in August 2011 and a decision is expected by the end of the year.
- The Authority also indicated that they would pursue a regional joint-use rail project in the Altamont Corridor as an independent project to meet a purpose and need separate from the proposed HST system, which might provide both HST compatible infrastructure and connection(s) to the statewide HST System. This project is the Altamont Corridor Rail Project. For more information on the Altamont Corridor Rail Project, visit [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/lib\\_Altamont\\_Corridor.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/lib_Altamont_Corridor.aspx).

**5. What factors are involved in evaluating the alignment alternatives? How long does this take?**

- The Authority and FRA have chosen to seek extensive public and agency input on preliminary alternatives. For all sections of the California HST system, the initial development of potential HST alternatives for study in EIR/EISs is being described in public reports presented to the Authority Board. Those reports, moreover, are the subject of one or more rounds of public and agency comment. The Authority has actively sought input from the public and affected government agencies – both through written requests for input and public information meetings. The Authority and FRA have taken that input into account in their initial review of potential alternatives for study and summarized these reviews in Alternatives Analyses (AA) documents. These AA documents are issued well before any draft EIR is published. The first public AA reports are called Preliminary. Many are followed by Supplemental AA reports, which are also presented to the Authority Board in public meetings. In addition, the Authority and FRA consult with federal regulatory agencies in determining the alternatives ultimately to be analyzed in draft EIR/EISs. All of the AA documentation informs the draft EIR/EISs and the final EIR/EISs, and then becomes part of the EIR/EIS written record to be considered by the Authority Board in making future decisions.
- 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 also contribute to the design and selection of alignment alternatives to carry forward. This includes the consideration of practicability of the constructability of the alternatives and determining if they meet the purpose and need of the project. The evaluation of the alignment alternatives will identify the alternatives that minimize impacts to communities, environmental resources, and natural resources.
- The project team is currently engaged in detailed environmental and technical study of each alignment identified in the Preliminary AA Report. The studies include consideration of environmental resources (biological, hydrological, etc.), impacts to communities and existing transportation corridors, and adherence to specific criteria and agreed upon system-wide standards. The results of these studies will be reflected in the Draft EIR/EIS, scheduled to be circulated in the beginning of 2012.
- The San Jose to Merced section team is conducting the environmental review based on a schedule that meets the voter-approved mandates of Proposition 1A, specifically to have completed all necessary work to operate trains between San Francisco and Los Angeles by 2020.

**6. 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 San Jose to Merced project team considered all of the alignment alternatives suggested during the scoping process. The results of these evaluations were presented in the Preliminary

Alternatives Analysis (AA) Report on June 3, 2010, and included recommendations on the alignments to carry forward into the environmental review. Following the Board presentation, Technical Working Group and public information meetings on the Preliminary AA Report were 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 in a Supplemental AA Report. Recommended changes focusing on the Central Valley through Morgan Hill subsections will be presented to the Board in May 2011. Recommendations regarding San Jose will be discussed at a later meeting. The project team will continue to conduct technical and environmental review of the alignment alternatives, stations, and design options identified in the Supplemental AA Report, and anticipates releasing the Draft EIR/EIS for public review and comment at the beginning of 2012. 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.

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

- The San Jose to Merced section is about 50 percent of the way through the environmental review process which culminates in the approval and certification of a Final 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 Draft EIR/EIS, anticipated to be released in the beginning of 2012. Following public review and comment, a Final EIR/EIS will be prepared in late 2012. Upon approval of the Final EIR/EIS by the Authority and FRA, construction on this section of the system could potentially begin in late 2013.

**8. 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. Numerous public meetings have already occurred since 2009, 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.

**9. 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 AA 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. Alignments are eliminated if they are not practicable, do not meet purpose and need, or have more environmental impacts relative to other alignments under consideration. The evaluation of the alignment alternatives will identify the alternatives that minimize impacts to communities, environmental resources, and natural resources.

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

- 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. Costs can be factor in deciding which alternatives to carry forward. Prohibitively high cumulative costs can make alignments infeasible.

**11. 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 Authority and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) are continuing to dialogue regarding right-of-way related issues. The project team is moving forward with alignment alternatives to the east of and adjacent to UPRR's operating right-of-way.

**Impacts (environmental, property, construction, operations)**

**12. How will noise and air quality impacts be analyzed?**

- A thorough analysis will be conducted to determine potential noise and vibration impacts as part of the detailed environmental studies. The Authority's analysis of noise and vibration in the EIR/EIS will follow FRA guidance for preparing noise and vibration studies, and will also take into account existing noise ordinances and specific conditions that may exist in each city and county along the proposed HST system.
- Noise and vibration measurements will be conducted along the proposed alignment to determine the existing levels and use them to determine the extent of the future impacts. Noise and vibration impacts from construction activities will also be evaluated. Mitigation measures will be recommended as needed for the construction and operation.
- The Authority's analysis of air quality impacts in the EIR/EIS will follow USEPA General Conformity Determination requirements as detailed in the Federal Clean Air Act; and will also take into account the local CEQA environmental review requirements that are specific to each of the three

California air management district jurisdictions (i.e., Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District) the San Jose to Merced corridor crosses.

- More information on noise analysis is available on the Authority's website at: [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Project\\_Level\\_Environmental\\_Engineering\\_Guidelines.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Project_Level_Environmental_Engineering_Guidelines.aspx) (See document titled High-Speed Train Sound Fact Sheet).

### **13. 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, as high-speed trains will not have scheduled passenger service between midnight and 5 a.m. Grade separation will eliminate the need for blaring horns.
- The project team is currently conducting a detailed review of environmental impacts, including sound impacts. The Federal Railroad Administration has developed rigorous procedures to measure such potential noise impacts, and these procedures will guide the California High-Speed Rail Authority. 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. Once the Draft EIR/EIS is issued, the Authority will work with the public and local, state and federal agencies to consider feasible mitigation of significant sound impacts.
- Because high-speed trains are powered electrically rather than by noisy diesel engine, a high-speed train has to travel about 150 miles per hour before it makes as much sound as a commuter train at 79 miles per hour. The duration of the sound is also different; a high-speed train moving at 220 miles per hour will only be heard for about four seconds, while a freight train traveling at 30 miles per hour can be heard for 60 seconds. For more information about high-speed rail and sound, please consult the sound factsheet available on the Authority website at: [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/learn\\_more2.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/learn_more2.aspx).

### **14. 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.

### **15. 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.

**16. What are the impacts of the train on air and debris displacement?**

- Studies of high-speed trains show that – even at top speed of 220 mph – wind gusts caused by the trains last less than one second – even at a distance of 10 feet from the tracks. At 10 feet from the tracks, the gust will be approximately 10 mph. At the edge of the train right of way, approximately 21 feet from the train, the gust will be negligible.

**17. If local roads are impacted or closed, how will access be maintained?**

- The project team will work with local agency and property owner representatives to maintain access to all properties and businesses along the corridor. Some roads will be closed, and project team is evaluating ways to provide for alternative access. In some cases, adjacent roadways will provide access, and as a result, some individuals will experience longer travel distances to reach their destination. In other cases, frontage or new roads will be constructed to provide the necessary access.
- The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) often faces similar challenges with new access-controlled roadway (freeway) projects. As an example, in the rural areas of the section, Caltrans typically provides access via freeway crossings at approximately 2-mile intervals.

**18. 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 Authority Board and a Record of Decision is obtained from the FRA. Currently, that is anticipated to be sometime in late 2012. Before the project is certified, some of the alternative alignments may be withdrawn from consideration and the list of potential alignment alternatives in various locations may be narrowed. Likewise, new or different alignments may be introduced should new information obtained during the detailed analysis become available before the project is certified.

**19. How much space is required for right-of-way?**

- Right of way requirements vary depending on a variety of factors. However, there are some general requirements for the operating corridor:
  - At-grade – Generally 100' wide in undeveloped areas and 50' wide in urban and suburban areas. However, the right-of way could be wider in areas where the tracks would be constructed on modest to high embankments or in areas of cuts in hilly terrain.
  - Station – Approximately 120' wide at the station accommodate through tracks, station stopping tracks and platforms and 100' beyond the platforms.
  - Maintenance of Way Facility – The potential maintenance of way facility in the Gilroy area would be generally linear and have a footprint of approximately 28 acres. This facility would most likely be located southeast of the City along the alignment in the general area of the Frazier Lake airport and SR 152 to the east of the airport. Evaluation of potential locations will consider potential impacts to the community, environmental resources, natural resources, operating and capital costs, as well as input received from local residents and agencies.

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

- The exact extent and nature of property impacts will not be certain until a final alignment has been selected, the Final EIR/EIS is certified by the Authority Board, and a Record of Decision is obtained from the FRA (anticipated to happen in late 2012). The Final EIR/EIS will include a detailed analysis of environmental impacts for consideration, including property impacts, visual impacts and more.
- 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 (<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/rightofway.aspx>).

**21. How will the South County Airport be affected? Will there be runway relocation and additional costs?**

- The project team is coordinating with the airport to evaluate the proposed alignment's impacts and to confirm all state and federal requirements are met. Currently, the alignments remain outside of the secure airspace and no runway relocations are anticipated.

**22. 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.
- The high construction risk for the deep mined station in unstable soils, and a high water table, was a major factor in determining the deep tunnel alternative to be impractical.
- A major reason the HST cut and cover facility is impractical is due to the magnitude of the HST tunnel and station complex in comparison to the proposed BART tunnel and station complex. The HST complex has over five times longer length of California High-Speed Train Project, San Jose to Merced Section tunnels, which are twice the diameter of the BART tunnels, and the HST station is almost twice as long as the BART station and two times wider. In all, the total volume of the HST tunnels and station approach six times larger than the BART tunnels and station.

- Additional information can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions prepared on November 1, 2010 and posted under Public Outreach Materials here, [http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Lib\\_San\\_Jose\\_Merced.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/Lib_San_Jose_Merced.aspx).
- Studies conducted on a tunnel option are discussed in the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report.

## Outreach

### 23. Where can I find maps of the alignments?

- Preliminary maps of alternative alignments are currently available online on the California High-Speed Rail Authority's website, in the San Jose to Merced Section Library ([http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/sj\\_m\\_aamaps.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/sj_m_aamaps.aspx)). Please note that these maps are still subject to change.
- Hardcopies of the maps are also available at libraries in the San Jose to Merced section; please check online for specific locations ([http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/sj\\_m\\_aamaps.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/sj_m_aamaps.aspx))

### 24. What else is the Authority doing to reach out to the public and other interested stakeholders?

- The San Jose to Merced section project team, with oversight from the Authority, regularly meets with elected officials, agencies, and the public to keep everyone informed of the latest developments. The project team also reaches out to smaller stakeholder groups for individual meetings that address these groups' specific concerns.
- The project team is in the midst of organizing localized planning workshops throughout the project area, such as in San Jose and South Santa Clara County, to allow local residents to provide input on ways the project can best serve the communities it will affect. The section team will work with local communities to balance local issues and concerns with the statewide HST system objectives.
- 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 on the environmental documents.
- To arrange for the project team to provide your organization with a briefing, please send an email to [san.jose\\_merced@hsr.ca.gov](mailto:san.jose_merced@hsr.ca.gov) or call 1-800-881-5799.

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