



BRIEFING: NOVEMBER 17, 2015 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #4

TO: Chairman Richard and Board Members

FROM: Diana Gomez, Central Valley Regional Director
Mark McLoughlin, Director of Environmental Services

DATE: November 17, 2015

RE: Bakersfield Locally Generated Alternative Update

Background

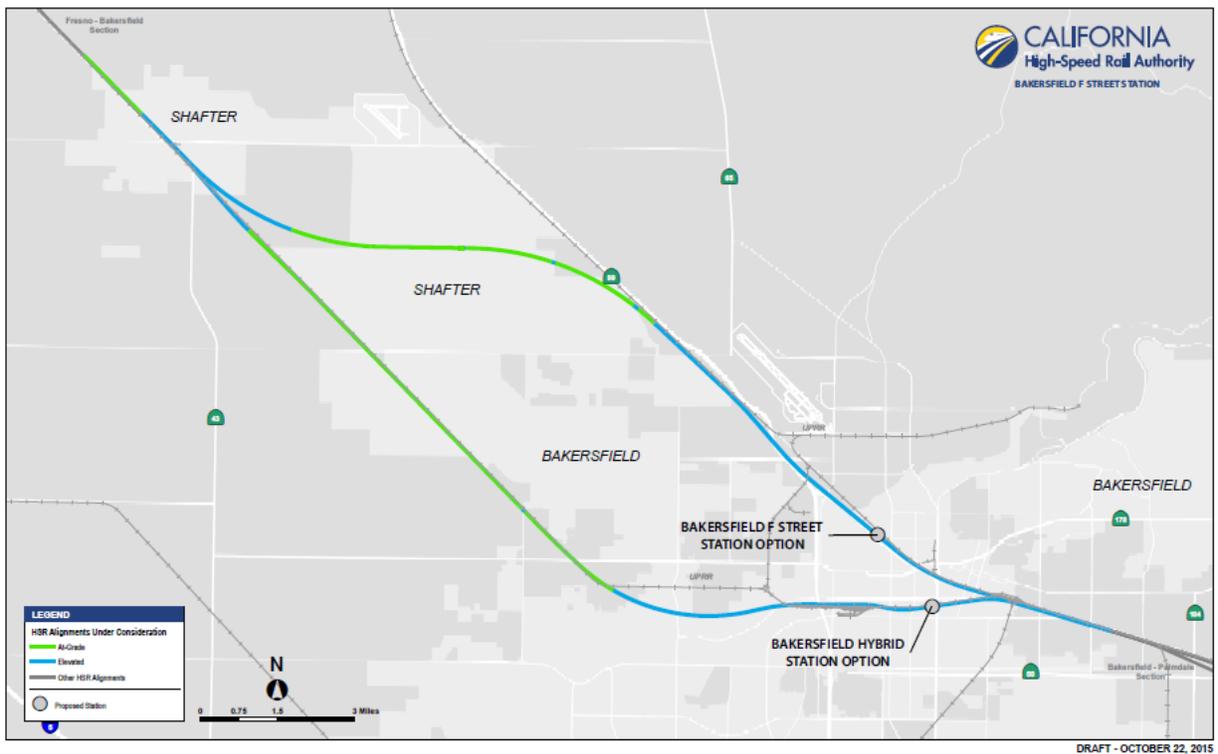
On May 7, 2014, the Authority's Board of Directors certified the Fresno to Bakersfield Project Section Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (FEIR/EIS). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Record of Decision based on the FEIR/EIS on June 27, 2014. The FEIR/EIS identified the facilities and a high-speed rail preferred alignment (BNSF-through-town in Shafter and Bakersfield Hybrid Alignment in Bakersfield) from the Fresno high-speed rail station to a station located at Truxtun Avenue in the City of Bakersfield, although the Authority Board did not approve at the time an alignment or facilities within Bakersfield city limits, instead stopping at 7th Standard Road.

In December 2014, the Authority and the City of Bakersfield (City) announced an agreement to study an alignment and station through Bakersfield that the City preferred, denoted as the Locally Generated Alignment (LGA). The LGA station would be located at F Street and Golden State Avenue; accordingly, the LGA alignment under consideration is also known as the Bakersfield F Street Station Alignment (BFSSA).

The scope of the LGA study extends from Poplar Avenue in the north, paralleling the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad corridor through the City of Shafter, then diverging east along Burbank Street (there are plans unaffiliated with the Authority's project that call for a future expansion of this street to a more major vehicle thoroughfare to be known as the Northern Beltway). The alignment runs south to parallel the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor through Bakersfield to the F Street station. At Oswell Street, the alignment would join alignments currently under evaluation to proceed to Palmdale. Based on an initial feasibility analysis and environmental constraints, staff has determined that the LGA alternative merits continued evaluation.

The LGA is being studied by the Authority and the FRA in a supplemental environmental document to the 2014 Fresno to Bakersfield Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (FEIR/EIS) that will compare the LGA with the BNSF Alignment (Wasco-

Shafter through town) and the Bakersfield Hybrid Alignment which were studied previously. See map below comparing the LGA with the Bakersfield Hybrid Alignment.



General Description of Bakersfield F Street Station Alignment Alternative (LGA)

The LGA would consist of the following characteristics and elements:

- Total length of the alignment is approximately 23.11 miles.
- Total length of at-grade track alignment is approximately 8.6 miles.
- Total length of track on retained fill is approximately 0.9 miles; total length of track on viaduct is approximately 14.3 miles, making the total length of elevated profile approximately 15.2 miles.
- No track would be below grade or in a trench.
- Length of track within the City of Bakersfield is approximately 9.53 miles.
- Average height above existing ground is 60 feet.
- Straddle bents would be used in various locations where center support columns could not be used, such as canal crossings where the span length would be too long.
- Crosses several existing railroads including BNSF spur, BNSF connection to UPRR south of Olive Drive and the BNSF double track connection to UPRR.
- Crosses one major waterway, the Kern River, within the City of Bakersfield.
- Crosses seven canals, some of which could include canal relocation.
- Includes 42 road crossings, including 40 overcrossings and two undercrossings.
 - Eleven of the 40 roadway overcrossings are located within the City of Shafter, north to south: Shafter Avenue, Tulare Avenue, Central Avenue, Mannel Avenue, Lerdo Highway, Beech Avenue, Los Angeles Avenue, Gold's, Riverside Street, Cherry Avenue, and 7th Standard Road.

- Twenty nine of the 40 roadway overcrossings are within the City of Bakersfield, north to south: 7th Standard Road, Fruitvale Avenue, Snow Road, Knudsen, SR 99, Olive Road, State Road (three times), Airport Drive, 32nd Street, Chester Avenue, 30th Street, M Street, O Street, Q Street, SR 178, 24th Street, Sumner Avenue, Union Avenue, Baker Street, Beale Avenue, Truxtun Avenue, Chamberlain, Washington, Exchange, Ogden, Webster, Quantico, and Mt. Vernon Avenue.
- Two roadway undercrossing are located within the City of Shafter, at Poplar Avenue and at Fresno Avenue.
- Road improvements are proposed for F Street and 34th Street in the City of Bakersfield.
- Two cul-de-sacs would be developed, one at Mettler Avenue and one at Madera Avenue, in the City of Shafter; additional cul-de-sacs are also being considered at Miller and Haley in Bakersfield.

The LGA is a Comparable Alignment to the Bakersfield Hybrid Alignment

Based on an early assessment, staff considers the LGA to be a comparable alignment and station location to the Bakersfield Hybrid alignment and station location. Staff will study the LGA for the following reasons that give the LGA merit compared to the Bakersfield Hybrid:

- The LGA is a shorter alignment in miles of construction and travel times
- The LGA has fewer impacts on residential properties and school facilities
- The LGA could be more consistent with the City of Bakersfield's land use plans
- The LGA may coordinate better with intermodal travel options and open space in the city

F Street Station

The proposed site of the Bakersfield station is located at F Street and Golden State Avenue (SR 204/99B) approximately one mile north of the downtown area. It is located at the confluence of the SR 99, SR 204 and SR 178 corridors with direct connection to Chester Avenue, a main north/south corridor through the City. The site is located between a mix of uses including Kern River Parkway trail system, Sam Lynn Ball Park, and the Kern County Museum. It provides linkages to not only the downtown to the south, but the Bakersfield Memorial Medical Center to the northeast along 34th Street and residential access to the southwest. The station provides an opportunity to weave these areas together through redevelopment and access via pedestrian and bicycle trails, Bus Rapid Transit corridor development along Chester, and revised Golden Empire Transit services providing easy access to the city and surrounding services and amenities.

The Authority has recently executed an \$850,000 station area planning grant agreement with the City for the evaluation of land use and development opportunities related to the implementation of high-speed rail. That effort focuses on engaging the community in developing a vision, development direction, and local land use changes to support growth. It will also evaluate local transportation efforts to improve connectivity through the city improving access to key destinations in and around the city.

Stakeholder Meetings and Outreach

The Authority has been engaged in an extensive, in-depth outreach and consultation program to support the development of the draft Fresno to Bakersfield supplemental environmental document that will evaluate the LGA. This includes working with the cities of Bakersfield and Shafter, Kern County, Kern Council of Governments as well as local residents, stakeholders, and regulatory agencies to refine the LGA. Specifically, staff has conducted five Technical Working Group meetings with the City of Bakersfield, four Technical Working Group meetings with the City of Shafter, three Community Open Houses, a Stakeholder Working Group meeting with businesses located along Sumner Street, a special outreach event was held at the Mercado Latino to explain the LGA, and more than 30 formal one-on-one stakeholder meetings. In addition, staff met with representatives of the UPRR to brief them on the proposed alignment to be studied. The outreach and consultation program has yielded significant input to inform the development of the alignment and to identify, avoid and minimize potential impacts.

As a result of public comments and preliminary environmental studies, staff modified the alignment just north of the proposed station to address concerns and avoid potential issues related to Section 4(f) of the U.S. Transportation Act. In addition, the alignment through the Saco Ranch property was changed, moving from a berm to a viaduct, to minimize impacts to the Bidart Bros. property. There has been considerable positive response to the benefits presented by the potential new alignment, with the City of Bakersfield and several local stakeholders, including school districts, providing encouraging feedback regarding minimized impacts related to individual property takes including residences, schools, and public assets.

Next Steps

Below is a general outline of the next steps to occur in the process of evaluating and eventually approving an alignment to and through Bakersfield for construction and operation supplemental environmental review process. Please note that many of these steps are not sequential, but rather overlap.

1. Staff to complete analysis and drafting of the draft supplemental environmental document. [Now through the winter and spring 2016]
2. Staff to recommend a preferred alternative to designate in the draft supplemental environmental document for Board consideration and concurrence, and subject to regulatory agency concurrence. [Spring 2016]
3. Staff to circulate the draft supplemental environmental document for public and agency review and comment, including comment on the preferred alternative. [Summer 2016]
4. Staff to confer with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to seek/obtain concurrence on the Preliminary Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA); depending on results, staff may return and further brief the Board on the preferred alternative/LEDPA. [Summer 2016]
5. Staff to circulate a final supplemental environmental document. [Late fall 2016]
6. Board and FRA approval of final supplemental environmental document and an alternative alignment and Bakersfield station for construction. [Winter 2016/2017]