

1.0 Purpose and Need for the High-Speed Train System in California

1.1 Purpose of the Statewide High-Speed Train System in California

The purpose of the Statewide High Speed Train (HST) system is to provide reliable high-speed train service that links Southern California cities, the Central Valley, Sacramento, and Bay Area, and that delivers predictable and consistent travel times using electric powered steel wheel trains. The HST System will provide greater access and choice of transportation modes, which will increase mobility throughout California.

The California High Speed Rail Authority's statutory mandate is to plan, build, and operate a HST system that is coordinated with the California's existing transportation network, particularly intercity rail and bus lines, commuter rail lines, urban rail transit lines, highways, and airports.

The Authority's objectives and policies for the proposed HST system are:

- Minimize capital and operating costs related to construction operations and maintenance of the statewide HST system.
- Provide intercity travel capacity to supplement critically over-used interstate highways and commercial airports.
- Meet future intercity travel demand that will be unmet by present transportation systems and increase capacity for intercity mobility.
- Maximize intermodal transportation opportunities by locating stations to connect with local transit, airports, and highways.
- Improve the intercity travel experience for Californians by providing comfortable, safe, frequent, and reliable high-speed travel.
- Provide a sustainable reduction in travel time between major urban centers.
- Increase the efficiency of the intercity transportation system.
- Preserve environmental quality and protect California's sensitive environmental resources by reducing emissions and vehicle kilometers/vehicle miles traveled for intercity trips.
- Consult with resource and regulatory agencies for each section of the HST System during the Tier 2 environmental review and use all available information for identifying the alternative that is most likely to yield the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative by avoiding sensitive natural resources (e.g., wetlands, habitat areas, and conservation areas) where feasible.
- Maximize the use of existing transportation corridors and rights-of-way, to the extent feasible.
- Develop a practical and economically viable transportation system that can be implemented in phases by 2020 and generate revenues in excess of operations and maintenance costs.

Further system-wide objectives are to:

- Provide interfaces between the HST System and major commercial airports, mass transit, and the highway network
- Relieve capacity constraints of the existing transportation system in a manner sensitive to and protective of the Southern California region's and California's unique natural resources.

1.0.1 Statewide Need for High-Speed Train System

A. Statewide Need

The need for a California HST system is directly related to the expected growth in population and to increases in intercity travel demand in California over the next 20 years and beyond. As stated and supported in the California High-Speed Train Program EIR/EIS, the capacity of California's intercity transportation system is insufficient to meet existing and future demand, and the current and projected future congestion of the system will continue to result in deteriorating air quality, reduced reliability, and increased travel times on California highways and at airports. In addition, there will be negative effects on the economy, quality of life, and air quality in and around California's metropolitan areas from a transportation system that will become less reliable as travel demand increases. The system has not kept pace with the tremendous increase in population, economic activity, and tourism in the state. The interstate highway system, commercial airports, and conventional passenger rail system serving the intercity travel market are operating at or near capacity and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion to meet existing demand and future growth. Moreover, the ability to expand many major highways and key airports is uncertain; some needed expansions may be impractical or may be constrained by physical, political, and other factors. Simply stated, the need for improvements serving intercity travel in California relates to the following issues:

- Future growth in demand for intercity travel.
- Capacity constraints that will result in increasing congestion and travel delays.
- Unreliability of travel stemming from congestion and delays, weather conditions, accidents, and other factors that affect the quality of life and economic well-being of residents, businesses, and tourism in California.
- Reduced mobility as a result of increasing demand on limited modal connections between major airports, transit systems, and passenger rail in the state.
- Poor and deteriorating air quality and pressure on natural resources as a result of expanded highways and airports.