

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Madera High Speed Rail (HSR) Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3)

SCOPING PERIOD: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2023 – FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 2024

DATE: November 22, 2023
TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
FROM: San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Madera HSR Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJPPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Madera High-Speed Rail (HSR) Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3) (Project). SJPPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that SJPPA plans to prepare the EIR and to request input on the scope of the environmental analysis to be performed. From public agencies, we are inviting comments on the scope and context of the environmental information relevant to each agency's statutory responsibilities for the Project. SJPPA is also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of what environmental topics the EIR will evaluate and what alternatives are to be evaluated.

A. Scoping Period

The public scoping period will begin on Wednesday, November 22nd, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Friday, January 5th, 2024. Please send written comments to:

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: Madera HSR Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3)
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Your comments may also be sent by email to info@maderastation.com. Please include "Madera HSR Phase 3 Project" in the subject line.

B. Scoping Meeting

The scoping meeting for the Project will take place online:

- Date and Time: December 13, 2023 (9:30 am – 11:30 am)
- Meeting Details: <https://kearnswest.zoom.us/j/82159113485>

Visit the Project webpage at <https://sjppa.com/madera-station-relocation-project/> to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting. The scoping meeting will be held virtually and will begin with a presentation providing an overview of the Project and the CEQA process. Following the presentation,

interested agencies, organizations, and individuals will have the opportunity to visit informational open house stations and ask questions related to the scope and content of the EIR.

C. Project History

At the November 2016, SJJPA Board Meeting, SJJPA staff presented an assessment of the existing connectivity between the San Joaquins and local transit services. During this assessment, SJJPA identified that the Madera Turlock/Denair San Joaquins Station and Madera San Joaquins Station (Madera Station) had connectivity challenges compared to other San Joaquins stations due to the lack of local or regional bus services. SJJPA worked with Madera County, the City of Madera, the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), and the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) to identify the site at Avenue 12, southeast of the City of Madera, as the best service option for a relocated San Joaquins Amtrak station and a future HSR station to serve Madera County.

With new funding opportunities provided by California's Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), SJJPA identified an opportunity to obtain State resources to relocate the Madera Station. In 2018, CalSTA announced an award of \$500.5 million to the SJJPA/San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) application (Valley Rail Program) that included funding for the Relocated Madera San Joaquins Station (Phase 1). Following the TIRCP award, SJJPA prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND^{1,2}). The IS/MND was certified in January 2021 and analyzed Phases 1 and 2: San Joaquins Relocated Station (Phase 1) and HSR Interim Operating Segment Station (Phase 2). SJJPA is the expected initial operator for the HSR Early Operating Segment (EOS) and is responsible for securing funding and implementing the Madera HSR Station for the HSR EOS.

The current HSR program map, included in the 2022 CHSRA Business Plan, is shown in **Figure 1**. The CHSRA Board approved an extension of Construction Package 1³ by approximately 2.72 miles northward in March 2016, within the environmentally cleared Merced-Fresno Project Section Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) (CHSRA and FRA, 2012).⁴ The SJJPA's subsequent CEQA IS/MND document provided clearance for the Madera HSR Station (Phase 2) for the EOS with service of 18 trains per day round trip (36 total trains). These improvements would be in place when HSR commences as part of the planned "Merced-Bakersfield CHSR Early Operating Segment" (as described in the 2020 and 2022 CAHSR Business Plans) in 2030-2033.

During 2018 and 2019, SJJPA developed preliminary engineering plans for the Relocated Madera San Joaquins Station (Phase 1).⁵ Design was coordinated with CHSRA and CalSTA to ensure the relocated station could accommodate future HSR service and minimize construction impacts. It is included in the MCTC

¹ *Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Documents*. (n.d.). San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority. Retrieved October 26, 2023, from <https://sjjpa.com/final-initial-study-mitigated-negative-declaration-documents/>

² *Ridership Technical Memorandum Madera Station Relocation Project*. https://cdn.sjjpa.com/wp-content/uploads/MaderaStn_FinalISMND_ApxG_RidershipTechMemo_Jan2021.pdf

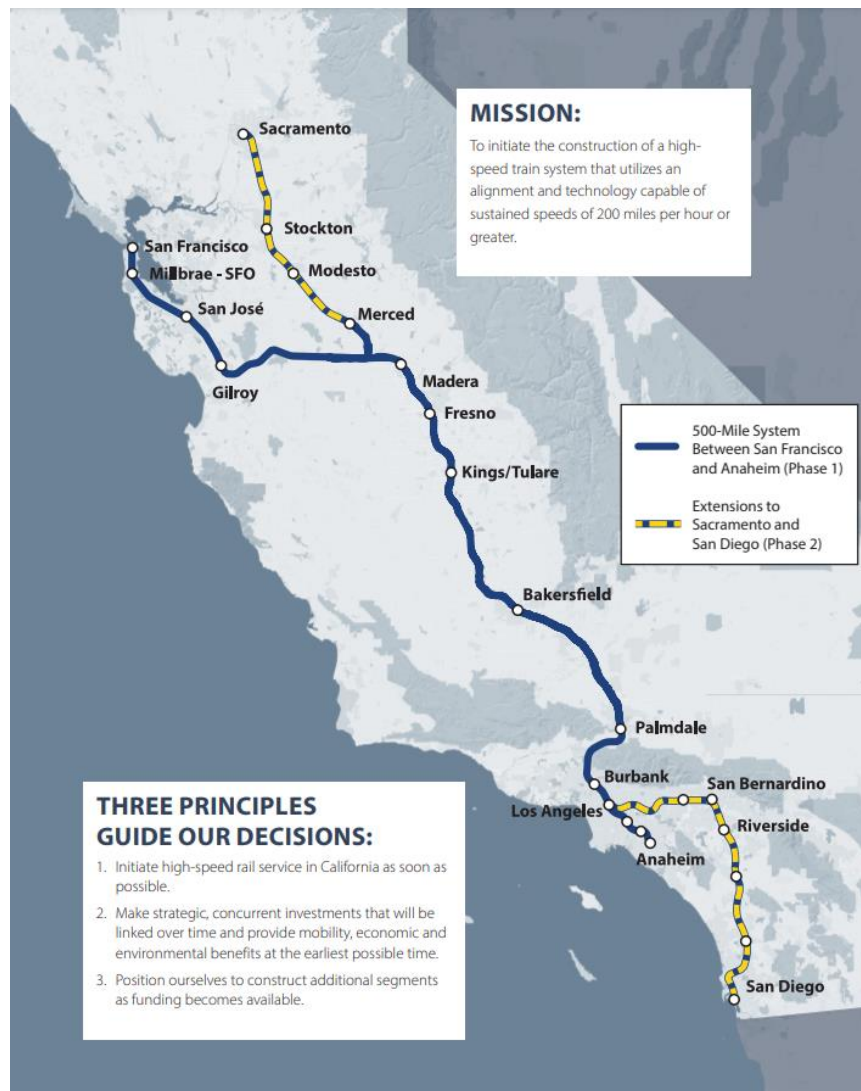
³ High-Speed Rail Program. (n.d.). *Construction Package 1/BuildHSR*. BuildHSR: High-Speed Rail Projects. <https://buildhsr.com/construction-packages/construction-package-1/>

⁴ High Speed Rail. (2012, September 18). *California High-Speed Train Merced to Fresno Section*. California High Speed Rail Authority. https://hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/docs/programs/merced-fresno-eir/final_EIR_MerFres_FRA09182012.pdf

⁵ SJJPA. (2022). *Madera Station Plans Phase 2*. San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA). <https://cdn.sjjpa.com/wp-content/uploads/Phase-2-Madera-Station-Plans-5-17-22.pdf>

Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS⁶). It was also added to the MCTC 2019 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) as part of Amendment #14 and adopted by the MCTC in May 2020.⁷ In 2020, Amendment #14 was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Figure 1 Service Map



⁶ Madera CTC. (2019, March 20). *2018 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy*. https://www.maderactc.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/transportation/page/5651/mctc_2018_rtp_am_1_technical_revision.pdf

⁷ *Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) / Caltrans*. (n.d.). Dot.ca.gov. Retrieved October 25, 2023, from <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/financial-programming/ftip-fstip-amendment-approvals/mctc>

According to the 2022 CHSRA Business Plan, following interim operations, CHSRA would implement the “Valley to Valley” service, extending HSR to the San Francisco Bay Area. HSR Phase 1 plans include an extension to Southern California. With these proposed service expansions, the Madera HSR Station will need to be expanded to allow higher frequency service and non-stop express service not envisioned for interim operations.

SJJPA is now completing the final design of Phase 1 and is scheduled to complete the construction of the project by 2029 and begin operations by 2030-2033. The Madera HSR Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3) will enable the additional improvements to be implemented so that the station will meet all requirements needed for “Valley to Valley” and full-build HSR operations.

D. Project Location

The Project is located southeast to the City of Madera (36° 56' 5" N and 119° 59' 7" W) and is primarily within the boundaries of the Madera State Center Community College (SCCC) Specific Plan (July 1995) boundary. It is less than two miles from the city limits and accessed by exiting SR 99 at Avenue 12 and traveling two and a half miles east (**Figure 2**). The main Project footprint sits approximately one-mile northeast of the Madera Community College Center and just under one mile north of Avenue 12. The station facilities are located within a wedge-shaped site defined by the existing BNSF Stockton Subdivision Corridor (BNSF Corridor) to the east and the HSR Project corridor to the west and is located on land owned by CAHSR. The proposed access road connecting the station facilities to Avenue 12 would generally run along the HSR Project corridor.

E. Project Goals and Objectives

The Madera HSR Station Full-Build Project (Phase 3) builds upon SJJPA’s Phase 1- Madera San Joaquins Station Relocation Project, and Phase 2- Madera HSR Early Operating Segment (EOS) Station. The primary objective of the Project is to improve access to passenger rail service within Madera County and the San Joaquin Valley Region. The Project will provide unprecedented economic, mobility, and safety benefits for Madera County. The project goals and objectives are to enhance the following needs as identified in the previous IS/MND:

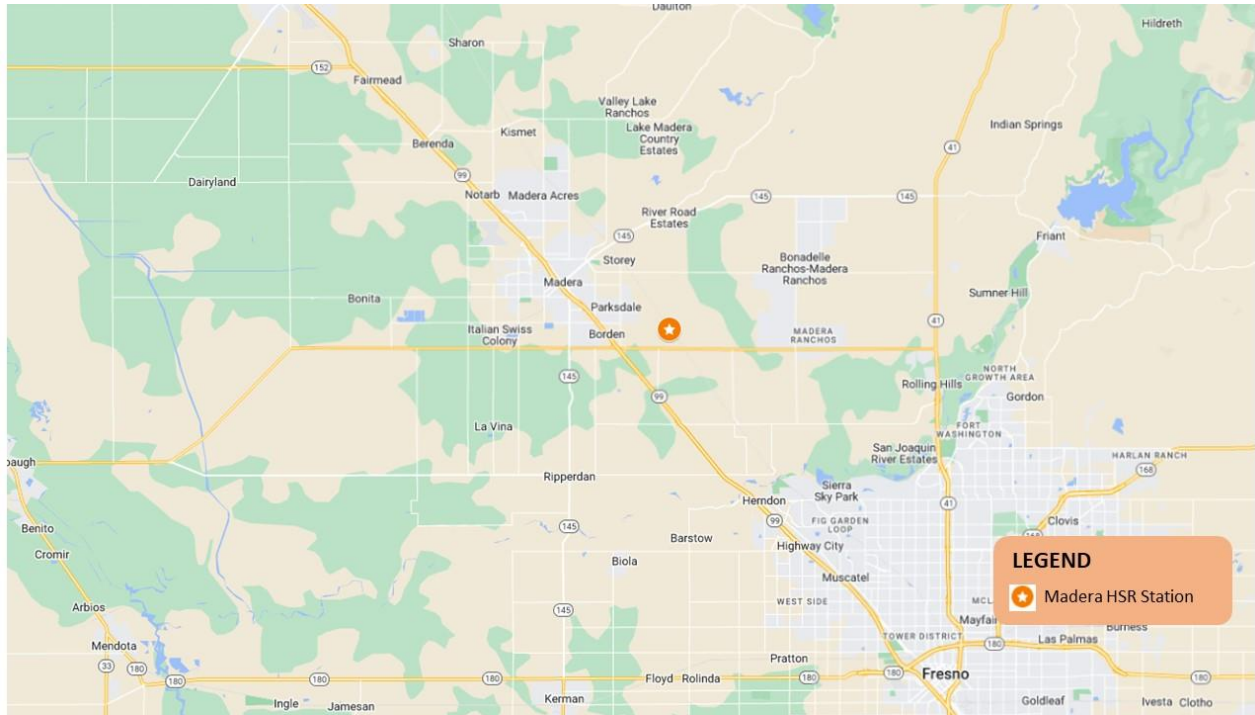
Climate Change, Resiliency, and the Environment

- Reduce emissions by providing a cleaner mode of transportation, reduces VMT, and promote increased transit use and transit-oriented development.

Equity, Multimodal Options, and Quality of Life:

- Improve rail and transit transportation access for Historically Disadvantaged Communities and Areas of Persistent Poverty
- Enhance mobility and accessibility by providing an improved mode of state-wide transportation

Figure 2 Project Location Map



Economic Impacts and Job Creation:

- Provide employment opportunities related to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the staffed facilities
- Connect travelers to destinations throughout California
- Enhance connection to educational and employment centers

Safety

- Lessen auto travel/vehicle miles travelled (VMT) by shifting travel to a safer mode of transport – rail

F. Project Description

The Madera HSR Station Full-Build (Phase 3) Project (Project) is necessary to enable a high-speed rail (HSR) station in Madera County, California, for expanded HSR operations beyond the Merced-Bakersfield California HSR Early Operating Segment. This project is required to facilitate continued service in Madera County, as an HSR Station, once HSR extends to the Bay Area and “Silicon Valley to Central Valley” service has begun. A Madera HSR Station is critical for providing better connectivity, and economic and sustainability opportunities for Madera County.

The Project would include the following series of improvements, which can also be seen in **Figure 3**:

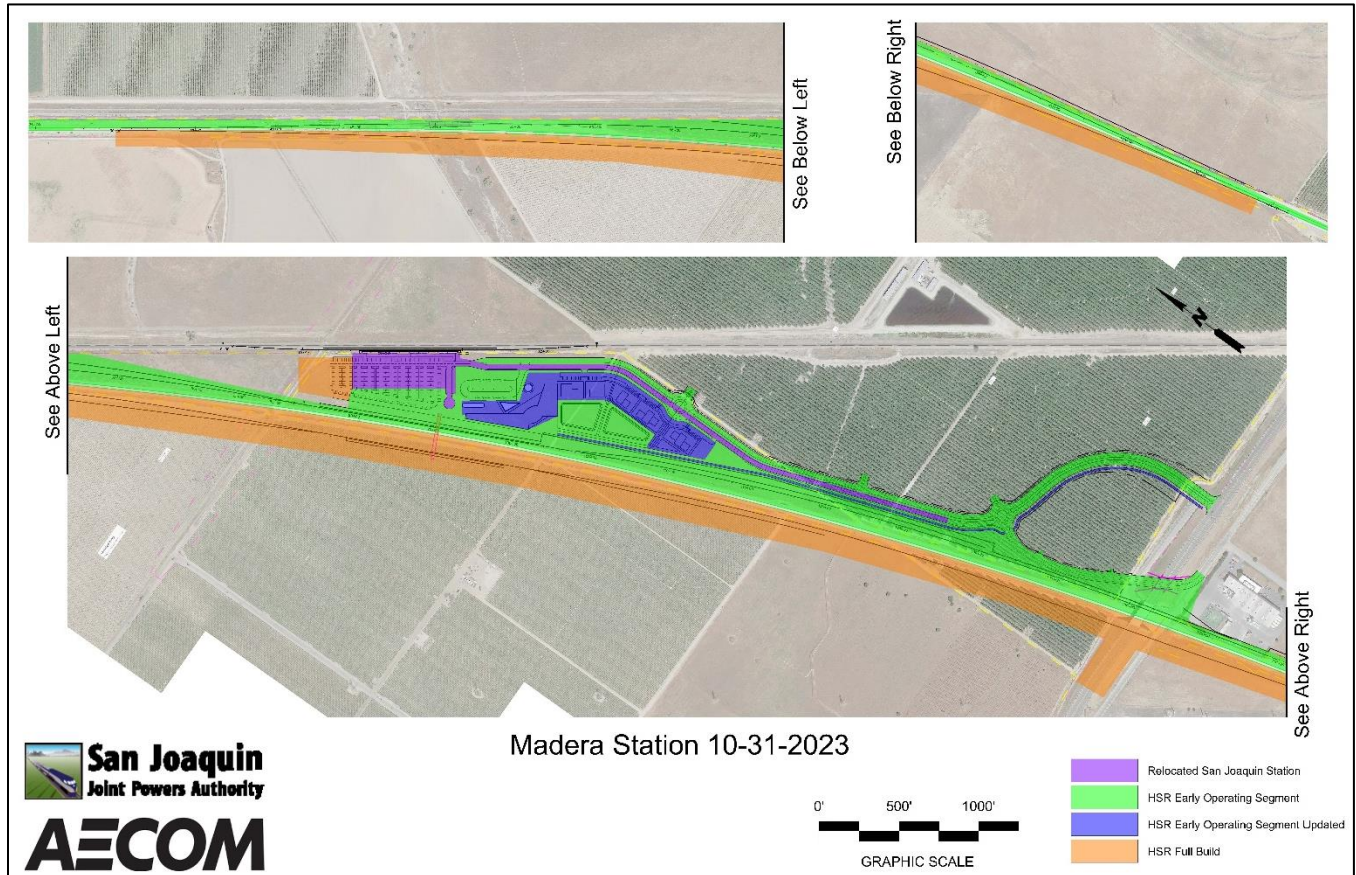
- **Platform:** A single side-loaded platform would be constructed parallel to, and west of the HSR trackwork (under construction) and immediately adjacent to the proposed station siding track. The platform would be approximately 1410 feet long, include canopies, and the height would accommodate trainsets for the HSR system. Additionally, in order to provide access for passengers to the side loaded platform on the west side, a pedestrian bridge would be constructed to connect the east side station area to the west side station platform.
- **Trackwork and Overhead Contact System:** To access the HSR platform, a new station siding track would be constructed to the west of the two-track HSR mainline tracks (under construction). The length of the new station siding track, from the turnout locations at the north and south, would be approximately 14,600 feet. The station siding track would include a new rail bridge over Cottonwood Creek. The proposed bridge would be a single track, 5-span continuous cast-in-place, reinforced concrete slab structure. Two storage tracks for HSR trains would be constructed. The first would extend approximately 1,900 feet north from the station siding track and the second would extend south from the station siding track, approximately 1,900 feet.

The station siding track would also require modification of the newly constructed Avenue 12 grade separation. To accommodate the new track behind the existing western abutment, a new Avenue 12 bridge will be required west of the existing bridge. Additionally, due to the new station siding track, the project would extend existing drainage culverts and wildlife crossings underneath the new track.

An overhead contact system (OCS) would be constructed along the length of the station siding and storage tracks to provide power to electrified trainsets. A small transmission power substation (TPSS) may be needed to provide power to the OCS system.

- **Parking:** Additional parking would be provided to accommodate the demand of Phase 3.

Figure 3 Madera HSR Full-Build Project By Phase



H. Potential Environmental Effects

SJJPA has initially determined that the following topics will be included for evaluation in the EIR for the Project:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

The EIR will consider both temporary construction-period and permanent (operational) impacts. The EIR will also include a cumulative impact analysis of the impacts of the Project in combination with other planned projects, including railway projects, transportation improvements, and land use plans and projects along the Project corridor.

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR.