

Preface

What Is This Document?

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) proposes to construct, operate, and maintain an electric-powered high-speed rail (HSR) system in California. When completed, the 800-mile HSR system will provide new passenger rail service to California’s major metropolitan areas and through the counties that are home to more than 90 percent of the state’s population. The approximately 14-mile-long Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section would provide the public with electric-powered HSR service that provides predictable and consistent travel times between major urban centers and connectivity to airports, mass transit systems, and the highway networks in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles Basin. It would help connect the northern and southern portions of the statewide HSR system. The project section would provide HSR service between the Burbank Airport Station at Hollywood Burbank Airport to Los Angeles Union Station.

One project alternative (HSR Build Alternative) and the no project alternative are analyzed in this joint California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

Pursuant to 23 U.S. Code Section 327, under the NEPA Assignment Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the State of California, effective July 23, 2019, the Authority is the project sponsor and the lead federal agency for compliance with NEPA and other federal laws for the California HSR System, including the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section. The Authority is also the state lead agency under CEQA.

The Council on Environmental Quality provides for NEPA decision-making through a phased process (42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.) known as *tiering*.¹ This phased process supports a broad-level programmatic decision using a first-tier Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The first-tier process is followed by more specific decisions at the second tier, with one or more second-tier EISs. The NEPA tiering process allows incremental decision making for large projects that would be too extensive and cumbersome to analyze in one traditional project EIS. CEQA (Public Resources Code § 21000 et seq.) also encourages tiering and provides for first-tier and second-tier Environmental Impact Reports (EIR).

The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section EIR/EIS is a second-tier EIR/EIS that tiers off of first-tier program EIR/EIS documents and provides project-level information for decision making on this portion of the HSR system. The Authority and the FRA prepared the 2005 *Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train*

Sequence of California HSR Tiered Environmental Documents

Tier 1/Program Documents

- Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (2005)
- San Francisco Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Final Program EIR/EIS (2008)
- Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Partially Revised Final Program EIR (2012)

Tier 2/Project Documents

- Merced to Fresno Section Final EIR/EIS (2012)
- Merced to Fresno Section: Central Valley Wye Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS (2020)
- San Francisco to San Jose Section Draft EIR/EIS (2020)
- Bakersfield to Palmdale Section Draft EIR/EIS (2020)
- San Jose to Merced Project Section Draft EIR/EIS (2020)
- Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft EIR/EIS (this document)
- Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Draft EIR/EIS (2021)
- Los Angeles to Anaheim Project Section Draft EIR/EIS (2021)

¹ The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued new regulations, effective September 4, 2020, updating the NEPA implementing procedures at 40 CFR 1500-1508. However, because this project initiated the NEPA process before September 14, 2020, it is not subject to the new regulations. The Authority is relying on the regulations as they existed prior to September 14, 2020. Therefore, all citations to CEQ regulations in this environmental document refer to the 1978 regulations, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.13 (2020) and the preamble at 85 Fed. Reg. 43340.

System (Authority and FRA 2005), which provided a first-tier analysis of the general effects of implementing the HSR system across two-thirds of the state. The 2008 *Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Final Program EIR/EIS* (Authority and FRA 2008) and the Authority's 2012 *Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Partially Revised Final Program EIR* (Authority 2012) were also first-tier programmatic documents, but they focused on the Bay Area to Central Valley region. These first-tier EIR/EIS documents provided the Authority and the FRA with the environmental analyses necessary to evaluate the overall HSR system and make broad decisions about general HSR alignments and station locations for further study in the second-tier EIR/EISs. Between Burbank and Los Angeles, the corridor advanced for Tier 2 study was the Metropolitan Transportation Authority/Metrolink corridor. The station locations advanced for Tier 2 study included Los Angeles Union Station and a Burbank Metrolink/Media City downtown station. The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section was initially considered a part of the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section.

The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section EIR/EIS analyzes the environmental impacts and benefits of implementing the HSR between the Burbank Airport Station and Los Angeles Union Station and is based on more detailed project planning and engineering. The analysis therefore builds on the earlier decisions and program EIR/EISs and provides more site-specific and detailed analysis.

This Final EIR/EIS does the following:

- Describes one project alternative (HSR Build Alternative) and the no project alternative and their potential environmental impacts
- Provides environmental information to assist decision makers in selecting the project alternative to be built
- Identifies measures to avoid and minimize impacts and, when necessary, to compensate for adverse impacts
- Considers cumulative impacts as part of the environmental review process

The Authority widely circulated the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR/EIS to affected local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, tribes, community organizations, other interest groups, and interested individuals. The document was made available to the public on May 29, 2020, on the Authority's website (www.hsr.ca.gov) for the original 45-day public comment period. However, in response to agency and stakeholder requests, and in consideration of limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Authority elected to extend the public review and comment period twice, first to July 31, 2020, and then again to August 31, 2020, for a total public review period of 94 days. The Authority held a virtual public hearing on July 8, 2020, to receive oral testimony on the HSR project and the Draft EIR/EIS. In addition, the Authority held two telephone town hall meetings on June 29, 2020, and August 19, 2020, and a virtual open house meeting on June 18, 2020.

The Final EIR/EIS addresses the comments received during the public comment period for the Draft EIR/EIS. Throughout the Final EIR/EIS document, substantive changes in the text since publication of the draft document are indicated with a vertical line in the margin; minor editorial changes and clarifications are not identified. In addition, substantive changes are summarized at the beginning of each chapter and resource topic section of Chapter 3.

How Do I Use This Document?

The purpose of environmental documents prepared under NEPA and CEQA is to disclose information about a proposed project to decision makers and the public. While the science and analysis that supports this Final EIR/EIS are complex, this document is intended for the general public. Every attempt has been made to limit the use of technical terms and acronyms. Where this cannot be avoided, the terms and acronyms are defined the first time they are used in each chapter. This Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Final EIR/EIS has been prepared in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Web

Content Accessibility Guidelines, as required under Section 11546.7 of the California Government Code, and can be found on the Authority's website.

Volume 1 of this Final EIR/EIS is organized into 15 chapters and a Summary. Volume 2 contains technical appendices, Volume 3 provides plans and other relevant engineering drawings, and Volume 4 provides the comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS as well as the responses to those comments.

For a reader with limited time to devote to this document, the **Summary** is the place to start. It provides an overview of all of the substantive chapters in this document including the potential environmental impacts for each environmental resource topic. If the reader begins here but wants more information, the Summary directs the reader to more detailed discussion elsewhere in the document. Below is a list of the chapters of **Volume 1, Report**, and a short summary of each.

Chapter 1, Project Purpose, Need, and Objectives, explains the purpose and need for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, provides a history of the planning process, and describes the project's relationship to other plans, programs, and transportation projects.

Chapter 2, Alternatives, describes in detail the one project alternative (HSR Build Alternative) and the no project alternative that the Authority is considering in this Final EIR/EIS. It contains illustrations and maps and provides a review of construction activities. Chapter 2 identifies the HSR Build Alternative as the Authority's Preferred Alternative, which also serves as the proposed project for CEQA.

These first two chapters help the reader understand what is being analyzed in the remainder of the document.

Chapter 3, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures, is where the reader can find information about the existing transportation, environmental, and social conditions in the project area. This chapter provides the findings of the analysis of potential environmental impacts, along with methods to reduce these impacts (called mitigation measures). Chapter 3 is divided into the following sections (asterisks indicate a separate technical report is available):

- Section 3.1, Introduction
- Section 3.2, Transportation*
- Section 3.3, Air Quality and Global Climate Change*
- Section 3.4, Noise and Vibration*
- Section 3.5, Electromagnetic Fields and Electromagnetic Interference
- Section 3.6, Public Utilities and Energy
- Section 3.7, Biological and Aquatic Resources*
- Section 3.8, Hydrology and Water Resources*
- Section 3.9, Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Paleontological Resources*
- Section 3.10, Hazardous Materials and Wastes*
- Section 3.11, Safety and Security
- Section 3.12, Socioeconomics and Communities*
- Section 3.13, Station Planning, Land Use, and Development
- Section 3.14, Agricultural Farmland and Forest Land
- Section 3.15, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Section 3.16, Aesthetics and Visual Quality*
- Section 3.17, Cultural Resources*
- Section 3.18, Regional Growth
- Section 3.19, Cumulative Impacts

Chapter 4, Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation, provides the analysis to support the Authority's determinations to comply with the provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

Chapter 5, Environmental Justice, discusses whether the project alternative would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations.

Chapter 6, Project Costs and Operations, summarizes the estimated costs for building, operating, and maintaining the project alternative evaluated in this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 7, Other CEQA/NEPA Considerations, summarizes the unavoidable adverse effects under NEPA, the significant and unavoidable impacts under CEQA, the relationship between short-term uses of the environment and long-term productivity, and the significant irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would result from the project alternative.

Chapter 8, Preferred Alternative, describes the Preferred Alternative and the basis for identifying it.

Chapter 9, Public and Agency Involvement, describes the public and agency involvement efforts conducted for the preparation of this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 10, Distribution List, identifies the public agencies, tribes, and organizations that were informed of the availability of, and locations to review, this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 11, List of Preparers, provides the names and roles of the preparers of this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 12, References, lists the references used in writing this document.

Chapter 13, Glossary of Terms, provides a definition of certain terms used in this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 14, Index, provides a tool to cross-reference major topics in this Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 15, Acronyms and Abbreviations, defines the acronyms and abbreviations used in this document.

Volume 2, Technical Appendices, provides additional details on the project alternative; the Final EIR/EIS process; and resource-specific background information, data, and other evidence supporting the analyses. Technical appendices are primarily related to the affected environment and environmental consequences analyses. These appendices are numbered to match their corresponding section in Chapter 3, as well as Chapter 2, of this Final EIR/EIS (e.g., 3.2-A is the first appendix for Section 3.2, Transportation).

Volume 3, Preliminary Engineering Plans, presents the design drawings, including trackway and roadway crossing designs.

Volume 4, Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS and Responses to Comments, provides a list of all commenters on the Draft EIR/EIS, reproductions of the original written comments, and responses to the comments. In addition, this volume provides the Authority's Standard Responses that address the most frequently raised issues. Standard Responses are provided in Chapter 17 (English).

Technical Reports provide more detailed technical analyses and data than those included in Chapter 3 of the Final EIR/EIS. The asterisks (*) in the list of Chapter 3 sections indicate topics for which a separate technical report has been prepared. Technical reports are not part of the Final EIR/EIS, but they are available upon request. For information on how to access and review technical reports, please refer to the Authority's website (www.hsr.ca.gov) or call (866) 300-3044.

What Has Changed?

Since the close of the public comment period on the Draft EIR/EIS on August 31, 2020, the Authority has reviewed the public comments received. The Authority has continued to consult with local jurisdictions and property owners about the HSR Build Alternative and continues to work closely with regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over some components of the project. These consultations have resulted in project refinements, minor changes to the impacts analysis, and refinement of mitigation measures. The following is a summary of these changes.

Summary of Changes

Analysis of Groundwater Impacts; Replacement of Groundwater Extraction Wells; and Impacts to San Fernando Valley Groundwater Basin Superfund Site and Remedy

In response to public comments on the Draft EIR/EIS, information regarding the replacement of groundwater extraction wells was updated as follows: Section 3.6 (Public Utilities and Energy) was revised to clarify impacts on extraction wells. Section 3.8 (Hydrology and Water Resources) was updated to amplify the discussion of groundwater quality and groundwater quality impacts within the San Fernando Valley Groundwater Basin Superfund site. Section 3.10 (Hazardous Wastes and Materials) was updated to include additional details about remediation facilities for the San Fernando Groundwater Basin Superfund site. The impact discussion was also revised to clarify the potential impacts of the HSR Build Alternative on the remedies for the San Fernando Groundwater Basin Superfund site.

Metrolink CMF Design

In response to public comments on the Draft EIR/EIS, the design of the Metrolink CMF was revised and the description in Chapter 2 was updated to state that existing yard operations would be maintained within the CMF. The description of the CMF was also updated to state that several facilities and utilities would need to be relocated within the CMF, including a progressive maintenance and wheel truing facility, emergency generator and electrical substation, hazardous materials storage, and an oil water separator.

Burbank Airport Station

In response to public comments on the Draft EIR/EIS, Section 3.11 Safety and Security was updated to clarify how the Authority is consulting with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure that above-ground and below-ground construction activities within or adjacent to the boundary of the Hollywood Burbank Airport do not obstruct air navigation or cause hazards related to airport operations. A new IAMF was also added to Section 3.11 which requires continued coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority to avoid conflicts due to overlapping construction schedules and future operations at Hollywood Burbank Airport and requires coordination to support full operations of the runway and taxiway systems during project construction. In addition, Section 3.11 was revised to clarify the actions to be taken if an amendment is needed to the Los Angeles County Airport Land Use Plan (Los Angeles County 2004a), including the process to be taken to obtain Federal Aviation Administration approval of the amendment.

Capital Cost Updates

In response to public comments on the Draft EIR/EIS, capital costs for the HSR Build Alternative were updated in Chapter 2, Chapter 6, and Section 3.18 Regional Growth to reflect the various engineering and design refinements that were incorporated into the HSR Build Alternative.

What Happens Next?

Following issuance of this Final EIR/EIS, the Authority will consider whether to certify the Final EIR/EIS for compliance with CEQA and whether to approve the Preferred Alternative, along with CEQA findings of fact, a statement of overriding considerations, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan. If the Authority certifies the Final EIR/EIS and approves the Preferred Alternative, it will file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse as required under CEQA. As the federal lead agency pursuant to the NEPA Assignment Memorandum of Understanding, the Authority would also consider whether to issue a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision would describe the project and alternatives considered; describe the selected alternative; make environmental findings and determinations as may be required by the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, and environmental justice pursuant to U.S. Executive Order 12898;

and describe required mitigation measures. Separately, FRA would make findings and determinations with regard to air quality conformity under the federal Clean Air Act.

Burbank to Los Angeles Milestone Schedule

- **May 2020**—Public Release of Draft EIR/EIS
- **October 2021**—Final EIR/EIS released
- **December 2021**—CEQA Notice of Determination and NEPA Record of Decision

The schedule for final design, construction, and operation would be refined as the project moves closer to the end of the environmental review and preliminary design phase.