



## **California High-Speed Rail** **BRIEFING: November 18, 2021 Agenda Item # 3**

**TO:** Board Chair Richards and Board Members

**FROM:** Serge Stanich, Director of Environmental Services

**DATE:** November 18, 2021

**RE:** Burbank to Los Angeles EIR/EIS Update

---

### **Summary**

High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) staff is planning to present to the Authority Board of Directors (Board) a suite of staff recommended actions related to the review and approval of the Burbank to Los Angeles (B-LA) Project Section Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) and Preferred Alternative during a two-day Board meeting to occur January 19 and 20, 2022.

The Burbank to Los Angeles project section is an essential component of the Phase 1 high-speed rail (HSR) System and connects two key multi-modal transportation hubs, the Hollywood Burbank Airport and Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), providing an additional link to regional and local mass transit services as well as connectivity to airports and the highway networks in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles Basin. You will find attached a map figure showing the project section. To support the Board's preparation for proposed actions on the B-LA Project Section Final EIR/EIS, this memo provides:

- Information regarding the preparation of the B-LA Project Section EIR/EIS;
- Information regarding the documents provided for Board consideration of the B-LA Project Section Final EIR/EIS at the January Board meeting; and
- Next steps to anticipate and assist in your preparation for the January Board meeting.

### **Preparation of the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section EIR/EIS**

The B-LA Final EIR/EIS evaluates an approximately 14-mile high-speed rail (HSR) project section that starts from the city of Burbank, traverses the city of Glendale, and terminates in the city of Los Angeles at its existing LA Union Station. The B-LA project would utilize the existing Los Angeles Metro (Metro) railroad right-of-way to the greatest extent possible, adjacent to the Los Angeles River. At its northern end, the project section would include a new underground HSR station near Hollywood Burbank Airport and, at its southern end, the project would terminate at new platforms for HSR service at the existing LA Union Station. The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section is the first "blended" project section that the Board will consider for approval, meaning HSR trains would share new and upgraded tracks with existing passenger rail currently operating in the corridor and would operate at slower speeds (maximum 110 mph) than HSR trains elsewhere in the system. The Draft EIR/EIS evaluated a build alternative (the HSR Build Alternative) and a no-build or no-project alternative. In November 2018, the Authority Board of Directors identified the B-LA HSR Build Alternative as the State's Preferred Alternative.

The HSR Build Alternative would be entirely grade-separated at crossings, meaning that roads, railroads, and other transportation facilities would be located at different heights so that the HSR system would not interrupt nor interface with other modes of transport, including motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian. The HSR alignment would also be fenced to prohibit public or unauthorized vehicle access. The B-LA project section would be located primarily within the existing Metro railroad right-of-way, which is typically 70 to 100 feet wide, and would include both northbound and southbound electrified tracks for high-speed trains. The HSR Build Alternative would include new and upgraded track, systems facilities, grade separations, drainage, communication towers, security fencing, and other necessary facilities to introduce and operate HSR service.

From the proposed, below-grade Burbank Airport Station, the HSR Build Alternative alignment would remain below-grade traveling south for 1.96 miles and would then transition to a surface alignment heading south and then terminate at the existing LA Union Station, an at-grade station. The surface portion of the alignment would be designed with structural flexibility to accommodate shared operations with other passenger rail operators. Throughout most of the project section (between Alameda Avenue and State Route 110), two new electrified tracks would be placed along the west side of the existing Metro railroad right-of-way, which would be useable for HSR and other passenger rail operators. Existing tracks would be replaced with non-electrified tracks placed further east within the railroad right-of-way and would be useable for freight and other passenger rail operators but not for HSR.

### **Public Circulation of Draft EIR/EIS**

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. The original 45-day public comment period was extended to August 31, 2020, for a total public comment period of 94 days.

During the CEQA and NEPA review period for the Draft EIR/EIS, the Authority received 278 comment submissions through a combination of letters, e-mails, comment cards, and oral comments provided at the CEQA and NEPA public hearings. These submissions yielded a total of 1,298 discrete comments.

The Authority assessed and considered all substantive comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS, and revised document text where appropriate. Responses to comments are available in Volume 4 of this Final EIR/EIS. Topics from comments received included:

- Range of alternatives
- Capital costs
- Consistency with area land use plans
- Potential noise and vibration from project operations
- Property acquisitions
- Community impacts from construction of the alignment and grade separations
- Impacts on urban parks expansion and LA river restoration projects
- Impacts related to constructing an underground HSR station and tunnel near Burbank airport, including effects related to Superfund site remediation efforts

From 2014 to 2021, extensive public and agency outreach was conducted throughout the EIR/EIS process and will continue through the design and construction phases. This outreach is summarized in Chapters 5 and 9 of the Final EIR/EIS. Most recently in 2020 and 2021, the Authority met with a number of institutional stakeholders and commenters on the B-LA Draft EIR/EIS including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles, the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority, Metrolink, and Lockheed Martin.

### **Board Consideration of the Burbank to Los Angeles Final EIR/EIS for January Meeting**

To provide you with adequate time for the Board to consider the Final EIR/EIS, enclosed with this letter is a printed copy of the Executive Summary and an electronic copy of the entire 4-volume document. The

Executive Summary provides an overview of the analyses in the Final EIR/EIS. Volume 1 contains the environmental analysis, Volume 2 includes the technical appendices, Volume 3 contains the engineering drawings, and Volume 4 contains the comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS and the Authority’s responses to the comments.

**Next Steps**

The Bakersfield to Palmdale Project Section Final EIR/EIS was the last environmental document the Board considered and the last project section the Board approved in August 2021. To ensure that the Board has the tools and support it needs to prepare for the Board meeting, please anticipate the following next steps:

November 5	The Final EIR/EIS was transmitted with this letter to facilitate your review. The Final EIR/EIS will be made available to the public on this same day. NEPA requires a 30-day wait period prior to the issuance of a Record of Decision.
December 6-10	Final EIR/EIS Briefings. Staff are available for individual Board member briefings (in compliance with the open meetings requirements) on the Final EIR/EIS published on November 5, as schedules allow.
January 7-12	The agenda and Board materials (including the Draft CEQA/NEPA Decision Documents) will be published and delivered.
January 13-18	General Board Meeting Briefings. Staff is available for individual Board member briefings on all January 19-20, 2022, agenda items.
January 19-20	Board meeting days

**Prior Related Board Action**

N/A

**Legal Approval**

The Legal Office has reviewed, and this item complies with Authority policy.

**Budget and Fiscal Impact**

This is an informational item, and by itself, does not have a budget or fiscal impact.

REVIEWER INFORMATION	SIGNATURE
Reviewer Name and Title: Brian Annis Chief Financial Officer	Signature verifying budget analysis: Signed November 12, 2021
Reviewer Name and Title: Alicia Fowler Chief Counsel	Signature verifying legal analysis: Signed November 12, 2021

**Recommendations**

This is an informational item

**Attachments**

Presentation