

## 8.0 Public and Agency Involvement

Pursuant to the requirements of NEPA and CEQA, the Authority and FRA, as lead agencies, conducted a public and agency involvement program as part of the environmental review process. This chapter describes the public and agency involvement efforts conducted in the preparation of this Project EIR/EIS. The public and agency involvement program includes the following efforts:

- Public involvement and outreach – informational materials including fact sheets; informational and scoping meetings, including town hall meetings, public and agency scoping meetings, meetings with individuals and groups, presentations; and briefings.
- Agency involvement – agency scoping meetings, interagency working group, meetings with agency representatives, and other agency consultation.
- Notification and circulation of the Project EIR/EIS.

In addition, the Authority posts meeting notices and public documents on its web site, [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov). The site includes information about HSTs, the proposed HST route, the Authority's updated Final Business Plan, newsletters, press releases, board of directors meetings, recent developments, status of the environmental review process, Authority contact information, and related links. Authority Board of Directors meetings are open to the public, and one of the first items on the meeting agenda is to provide an opportunity for public comment on any public agenda item.

### California High-Speed Train Authority Web Site

Information on HST project activities, including meeting notices and publications, are available on-line at:

[www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)

Throughout the environmental process, some of the most frequently asked questions related to the location of the HMF. Other frequently asked questions regarded the timing of the project; funding for constructing and operating the project, including which alignment would be selected; right-of-way acquisition; and potential impacts on agricultural land. Project staff addressed these and other questions, often referring to the environmental analysis already underway for the Project EIR/EIS and informing people of upcoming opportunities to make comments. Project staff also assessed impacts of other alternatives or changes that individuals and organizations had suggested. Outreach staff logged unanswered questions for direct follow-up with the individual or organization that had inquired or as items to be addressed at future meetings. Upon request, project staff offered to provide meetings and briefings.

## 8.1 Environmental Justice Outreach

The Authority conducted specific outreach efforts to low-income and minority populations and to communities of concern. The purpose of this outreach was to increase understanding of how the Project may potentially affect these populations. Environmental justice populations were identified by using 2007 data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The *Merced to Fresno Section Community Impact Assessment Technical Report* (Authority and FRA 2012) contains a list of environmental justice-related interest groups that were engaged through outreach efforts. The Authority contacted groups with interest in environmental and economic social justice issues, such as the Great Valley Center and Merced Area Agency on Aging, and Latino and Laotian civic and group leaders. Materials for public meetings hosted by the Authority were translated into Spanish. If required, Spanish, Lao, and Hmong language interpreters were available at the public information meetings and Draft EIR/EIS hearings. For additional information about environmental justice outreach to low-income and minority populations and communities of concern, please see Section 3.12, Socioeconomics, Communities, and Environmental Justice. Table 8-1, which is provided at the end of this chapter, lists the meetings held as part of the Authority's outreach effort, both during and after scoping. As further described in Section 3.12, environmental justice outreach will continue throughout project design and implementation to so issues important to communities of concerns are fully understood and addressed.

## 8.2 Public and Agency Scoping

Public scoping is an important element in determining the focus and content of an EIR/EIS and provides an opportunity for public involvement. Scoping helps identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth. It also helps focus detailed study on those issues pertinent to the final decision on the proposed project.

### 8.2.1 Notices of Preparation, Notices of Intent, and Public Information Materials

On February 24, 2009, a Notice of Preparation was distributed to the State Clearinghouse; elected officials; local, regional, and state agencies; and the interested public. A Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on March 16, 2009, notifying the public of FRA's intention to prepare an EIS for the Merced to Bakersfield section of the HST System (74 FR 11172, March 16, 2009). The Authority and FRA subsequently determined that the environmental impacts of the HST System from Merced to Bakersfield would be more appropriately assessed in two separate EIR/EIS documents, one from Merced to Fresno and another from Fresno to Bakersfield. A Notice of Preparation (SCH Number 2009091125) and Notice of Intent (74 FR 50868, October 1, 2009) for the Project EIR/EIS, amending the environmental process were issued on September 29, 2009, and October 1, 2009, respectively. Information from the scoping meetings is available online at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov), including the Merced to Fresno High-Speed Train Fact Sheet (English and Spanish), scoping meeting notification postcard mailer (English and Spanish), public meeting presentations, and Agency Coordination Plan.

#### Information from Scoping Meetings Available On-line

Scoping meeting materials available at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov) include the following:

- Merced to Fresno High-Speed Train Fact Sheet (English and Spanish)
- Scoping meeting notification postcard mailer (English and Spanish)
- Public Meeting Presentations
- Agency Coordination Plan

### 8.2.2 Scoping Meetings

The public is encouraged to provide input on the scope of an EIR/EIS throughout the environmental review process. As part of public outreach for the Merced to Fresno Section, three public and agency scoping meetings were held between March 18 and March 26, 2009, in Merced, Madera, and Fresno in the Merced to Fresno corridor. A total of 400 people attended the meetings as part of the HST project section that had been defined for the corridor between Merced and Bakersfield. The scoping meetings held in March 2009 for the Merced to Fresno Section EIR/EIS are an important component of the scoping process for both the state and federal environmental review.

All meetings were held between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. to allow representatives from agencies and the public the opportunity to participate. The format of the scoping meetings was an open house, which allowed people to arrive at any time to obtain information and provide input. Agendas, fact sheets, and scoping period comment sheets were distributed at the scoping meetings. The comments received at the meetings were documented and are summarized below and in the final *California HST Project EIR/EIS Merced to Fresno Section Scoping Report* (Authority and FRA 2010a). Approximately 2,980 people listed in the Merced to Fresno Section database received direct mail announcements of the public scoping meetings, which were also announced on the Authority's web site. Local newspapers published advertisements of the meetings, and local media outlets received press releases. Approximately 270 people participated in the formal scoping meetings in Merced, Madera, and Fresno. The places and dates of the public and agency scoping meetings are listed below:

- Merced: Merced Community Senior Center, March 18, 2009.
- Madera: Madera County Fairgrounds, March 19, 2009.
- Fresno: Fresno Convention Center Exhibit Hall, March 25, 2009.

In addition to these formal scoping meetings, public input on the scope of the environmental review was sought through other means, including presentations, briefings, and workshops. Table 8-1, provided at the end of this chapter, lists the meetings held as part of the lead agencies' outreach effort.

### 8.2.3 Scoping Comments

The scoping process helped the lead agencies identify general environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR/EIS. The Merced to Fresno Section scoping process identified issues with proposed HST alignments and stations; suggestions for new or modified alignments, HST stations, maintenance facilities; and areas of potential concern related to the proposed project. The NOP/NOI requested that comments be submitted by October 30, 2009; extending the requested comment submittal date by 1 month. Most of the comments about station preferences supported HST stations in the downtown areas of Merced and Fresno. Concerns about proposed route alternatives consisted of potential community and natural resource impacts under the BNSF Alternative and potential community impacts in Madera and Chowchilla under the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative. The Merced City Manager stated a preference for the alternative along the UPRR in several public comments. The City of Madera and Madera County expressed concern over both of the programmatic route alternatives. The City of Chowchilla preferred the route along the BNSF Railway corridor. Other commenters suggested other routes to consider: a Sierra Foothills alternative parallel to SR 99 approximately 5 miles east of SR 99, and a western Madera alternative suggested by the City of Madera and Madera County that is similar to the alternative parallel to the UPRR except that it would deviate west around Chowchilla and Madera before returning to the UPRR corridor. Representatives of the Madera County Farm Bureau and Chowchilla Water District expressed concerns regarding any route west of SR 99. Most of those expressing an opinion supported the location of the HMF at Castle Commerce Center. Environmental and other issues mentioned in scoping comments included the following:

- Location of HST stations and alignment
- Location of the maintenance facility
- Air quality, congestion, and economic benefits
- Connections to local transit
- General support for the project
- Fast tracking of the project
- Agricultural impacts
- Natural resource impacts
- Noise impacts
- Cost and financing of the HST System
- Rail consolidation
- Power source and system requirements
- Economic growth
- Benefits and impacts on local businesses
- Employment opportunities
- Ridership estimates
- Property acquisition
- Displacement of people
- Potential devaluation of property
- Use of domestic labor and products for construction

The Merced to Fresno EIR/EIS Scoping Summary Report (Authority and FRA 2010a) is available on the Authority's web site.

## 8.3 Alternatives Analysis Process

The alternatives analysis process uses preliminary planning, environmental, and engineering information to identify feasible and practicable alternatives to carry forward for environmental review and preliminary engineering design in the EIR/EIS. The *Merced to Fresno Section High-Speed Train Project EIR/EIS Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010b) and *Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010c) are intended to identify the range of potentially feasible alternatives to analyze in the EIR/EIS. The reports document the preliminary evaluation of alternatives, and indicate how each of the alternatives would meet the purpose of the project, how evaluation criteria were applied and used to determine which alternatives to carry forward for detailed environmental analysis, and which alternatives should not be carried forward for further analysis.

The analysis began with the corridors selected in the 2005 Statewide Program EIR/EIS process, as updated by the 2008 Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS and Bay Area to Central Valley Revised Final Program EIR (Authority 2010). Four primary alternatives were considered in the initial review of alternatives for the Merced to Fresno Section. These included the two preferred alternatives identified in those EIR/EIS documents: a route parallel to the BNSF, and a route parallel to the UPRR. In addition, the analysis included consideration of the two previously described alternatives suggested during the scoping process: the Sierra Foothills Alternative parallel to SR 99 and the western Madera alternative that would avoid Chowchilla and Madera. The alternatives analysis process also included the study of two wye alternatives connecting the Merced to Fresno Section to the Bay Area, as suggested by the City of Chowchilla and Madera County, one north of SR 152 and a new alternative wye south of SR 152. Based on public and agency comments during scoping, various design options to the main north-south alternatives and six HST station options were considered and are detailed in the *Merced to Fresno Section Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010b).

**Alternatives Analysis Reports Available for Public Review**

The Preliminary and Supplemental Alternative Analysis Reports, are available on-line at:

[www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/lib\\_Merced\\_Fresno.aspx](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/lib_Merced_Fresno.aspx)

Public and agency comments received during the EIR/EIS scoping period and during ongoing interagency coordination meetings helped to identify the initial alternatives to carry forward for detailed evaluation. After initial project alternatives were identified, alignment plans, preliminary profile concepts, and cross-sections were developed and used for a detailed evaluation of the alternatives.

The Statewide Program EIR/EIS identified the Castle Commerce Center site as the preferred alternative for the location of the HMF. The Authority evaluated seven additional potential HMF sites identified through a Request for Expression of Interest process. Application of the alternatives analysis criteria, which were based on construction feasibility and community environmental impacts, resulted in the selection of five sites for evaluation in the EIR/EIS. The Authority presented the proposed HMF sites to agencies through the technical working group (TWG) meetings and to the public through public information meetings.

Public and agency input on issues to be studied, city and county land use and planning information, and input on the range of alternatives provided valuable information to assist in evaluating the alternatives. After the initial review of these alternatives, a series of TWG meetings were held to review results and gather input. An additional alternative suggested by the City of Chowchilla and Merced County through the TWG meeting process described below was included. This alternative would travel along the UPRR and SR 99 corridors and diverge to the east, north of the City of Chowchilla, joining the alternative along the BNSF near Le Grand and continuing along the BNSF Alternative to the proposed Downtown Fresno Station. Other agency comments resulted in adjustments to alignments and profiles of the alternatives to avoid and minimize environmental and community impacts. On December 3, 2009, the Authority Board of Directors received a briefing on the alternatives analysis. On April 8, 2010, project staff presented the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report, and the board identified the alternatives to carry forward for detailed evaluation: the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative and the BNSF Alternative.

The alternatives analysis process continued after the April 8, 2010, Authority Board of Directors meeting, with additional public and agency input, including TWG meetings, public information meetings, and individual meetings with local agencies and individuals. On August 5, 2010, the Authority reviewed the *Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010c), which resulted in the addition of the Hybrid Alternative, the West Chowchilla design option, and the HMFs to the alternatives selected for detailed evaluation. The HMF sites identified for detailed evaluation were the Castle Commerce Center, Harris-DeJager, Fagundes, Gordon-Shaw, and Kojima Development sites.

Following additional input, the May 2011 *Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report* was prepared. This update presented revisions to reduce some potential impacts such as visual, noise, and at-grade crossing safety issues. Revisions presented, including changing previously elevated tracks for the Merced and Fresno stations to at-grade and reducing the overall length of elevated structures where feasible, reduced the cost for construction.

### 8.3.1 Public Information Meetings and Materials during the Alternatives Analysis Process

Public information meetings were held during the alternatives analysis process to inform the public about the Merced to Fresno Section alternatives analysis recommendations. Various meeting formats, such as open house, formal presentation, and question and comment sessions, were used to present information and provide opportunities for input by participants. Project information and announcements were posted on the Authority's web site. See Table 8-1 at the end of this chapter for a list of public meeting dates and topics.

The *Merced to Fresno Section Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010b) was prepared to provide information to the public regarding the alternatives analysis process, the initial range of alternatives considered, and the criteria for evaluating those alternatives. Detailed information displays about the alternatives analysis process were also provided at public meetings. In addition to the public information meetings, another element of the outreach was to provide updates and presentations to clubs, organizations, farm bureaus, and business owners, and the cities and counties of Merced and Madera, to facilitate an inclusive and transparent process. Common comments included concerns about impacts on agricultural fields, effects on community resources, and the desire for alignment changes. Coordination with the San Jose to Merced Section led to a review of additional wye connections to that section's alternatives. Similar outreach occurred for the *Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2010c).

#### Public Meeting Materials Available On-line

Various publications and materials are available on-line at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov).

Some key publications (in English and Spanish) include:

- Merced to Fresno High-Speed Train Fact Sheet
- Your Property, Your High-Speed Rail Project
- Permit to Enter Fact Sheet

### 8.3.2 Technical Working Group Meetings during the Alternatives Analysis Process

The Authority formed an agency TWG composed of senior staff from county and city public works and planning departments, redevelopment agencies, and economic development agencies. The purpose of the TWG was to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas during the course of the study. See Table 8-1, provided at the end of this chapter, for a list of TWG meeting dates and topics.

After the scoping period ended, the initial range of alternatives was developed. In June 2009, the Merced to Fresno Section alternatives were presented to the TWG in Merced, Madera, and Fresno. The TWG provided input on the alternatives and information about city and county land use, transportation and other planning projects, as well as updates to their boards or councils.

The Project team met with the TWG in Merced and Madera again to review the initial range of alternatives and receive more detailed information about transportation and land use development patterns that could be affected by the HST alternatives. The meeting included additional representatives from the Madera Irrigation District and Chowchilla Water District. The TWG members offered insights about important community features, proposed and additional infrastructure plans, and existing utilities. These insights resulted in adjustments in the position and profile of the alternatives to avoid and minimize impacts on community resources.

After the preliminary alternatives analysis findings were available, but before publication of the alternatives analysis report, the results and findings were communicated to the TWG, the public, and the Authority Board of Directors in December 2009. The Authority convened TWG meetings following Board action on both the Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report and the Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report, in April 2010 and September 2010, respectively. The Authority also convened TWG meetings in advance of the May 2011 *Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report* (Authority and FRA 2011).

### 8.3.3 Environmental Resource Agency Meetings during the Alternatives Analysis Process

The Authority and FRA consulted with environmental resource agencies, including the Environmental Agency TWG for the Merced to Fresno Section, during the alternatives analysis process. The meetings provided an overview and review of the alternatives analysis process and presented recommendations. Primary feedback included information about subsequent environmental permitting processes and site-specific knowledge. These meetings are discussed in Section 8.4.3 and listed in Table 8-1.

## 8.4 Development of the EIR/EIS

While developing the EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA held meetings to consult with federal, state, and local agencies and meetings to provide project updates and obtain feedback from the public. The following subsections provide details of these activities.

### 8.4.1 Public Information Materials and Meetings

The Authority and FRA held informal and formal public meetings during preparation of the EIR/EIS. Various meeting formats, such as open house, formal presentation, and question and comment sessions, were used to present information and provide opportunities for input by participants. Project information and announcements were posted on the Authority's web site. Meetings are described in Section 8.3.1 and listed in Table 8-1 at the end of this chapter.

Public information meetings were held during preparation of the EIR/EIS to inform the public about the alternatives analysis recommendations for the Merced to Fresno Section and the status of the EIR/EIS preparation. In addition, these meetings provided information on various HST project components and served as forums for obtaining feedback. The public information meetings included brief presentations and project information materials (on display and in fact sheets); project staff were available to answer questions. Meetings were announced through direct mail to those on the project database, advertisements in local newspapers, and postings on the Authority's web sites ([www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)). Various publications and materials were also made available at this web site, including the *Merced-Fresno High-Speed Train Fact Sheet*, *Merced to Fresno Frequently Asked Questions*, *Your Property, Your High Speed Rail Project*, and the *Permit to Enter* fact sheet.

### 8.4.2 Technical Working Group Meetings

The TWG continued to meet regularly through the EIR/EIS preparation process to facilitate information exchanges about modifications to alignments selected for analysis in the EIR/EIS, HST station and alignment design details, and identification of potential resource impacts and avoidance alternatives. Meetings are described in Section 8.3.2 and listed in Table 8-1 at the end of this chapter.

### 8.4.3 Agency Meetings and Consultation

The Authority and FRA consulted with cooperating federal, state, and local agencies under NEPA and with trustee and responsible agencies under CEQA regarding specific resource areas associated with these agencies. To date, the Authority and FRA have held four statewide agency meetings. On June 13, 2007, and April 8, 2008, the Authority and FRA held statewide agency group meetings to discuss agency participation and coordination efforts for the project-level EIR/EIS documents for the HST Project. On July 29, 2009, the Authority and FRA held a statewide agency group meeting to provide an update on the project environmental review process, the status of project-level EIR/EIS reports, and project-level scoping comments from state and federal agencies. At this meeting, the Authority also requested agency review and comment on the EIR/EIS methodologies posted on the Authority web site. On December 13, 2010, the Authority held a statewide meeting to provide an update on the Central Valley sections of the HST System, including the Merced to Fresno Section. Federal and state representatives from the following agencies attended these meetings:

- Federal agencies:
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - Federal Highway Administration
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  
- State agencies:
  - Air Resources Board
  - Caltrans
  - California Environmental Protection Agency
  - Central Valley Flood Protection Board
  - Coastal Commission
  - Department of Conservation
  - Department of Fish and Game
  - Department of Parks and Recreation
  - Department of Water Resources
  - Natural Resources Agency
  - Office of Planning and Research/Strategic Growth Council
  - Public Utilities Commission
  - State Historic Preservation Office
  - Transportation Commission
  - State Lands Commission
  - State Water Resources Control Board

One federal agency, USACE, was designated as a cooperating agency under NEPA for the preparation of the EIR/EIS. Numerous federal and state agencies were invited to become Participating Agencies under NEPA, and those agencies are listed in the *Draft Agency Coordination Plan: Merced to Fresno Section High-Speed Train Project EIR/EIS* (Authority 2009). The Authority hosted an Environmental Resource Agency meeting on October 8, 2009. Staff representatives of the various Participating Agencies were invited, including the FHWA, USFWS, EPA, NOAA, the Department of Health Services, Caltrans, California State Lands Commission, SJVAPCD, DWR, SWRCB, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, CDFG, the State Lands Commission, CVFPB, DOC, and California State Parks.

The biological survey methodology was discussed with USFWS, USACE, and the CDFG during a meeting on November 5, 2009. The Authority met with NOAA representatives to discuss fisheries on January 5, 2010. The Authority met with EPA, USACE, and USFWS representatives for purposes of NEPA and Section 404 (Clean Water Act [CWA]) consultation on February 10, 2010. The Authority presented an overview of the project to EPA Region 9 to discuss agency coordination, environmental approval guidance, and the Authority's sustainability initiative on October 26, 2010. On January 29, 2009, the Authority met with SHPO staff to review the methodology of the analysis for the EIR/EIS documents, discuss the mitigation measures from the Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005) and the Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2008), and consider developing an MOA for the project sections. On June 29, 2009, the Authority met with SHPO staff to review the analysis methodology for all of the EIR/EIS documents, discuss the mitigation measures in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS and Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS, and consider developing an MOA for the project sections. On July 29, 2009, the Authority again met with SHPO staff to define the area of potential effect for the archaeology and historical property evaluation, discuss the analysis methodology, and prepare a programmatic agreement (PA) for the overall HST Project. On February 3, 2010, the Authority and SHPO met to discuss revisions to the draft PA. On April 1, 2010, the FRA and ACHP met to discuss revisions to the draft PA, as well as an approach to tribal consultation.

Native American outreach activities are ongoing. Native American tribes have been consulted during the project in accordance with the framework in Attachment E of the PA. Tribal entities were notified about the initiation of the Section 106 process in 2009, and were consulted during the preparation of the PA

between 2010 and its execution in 2011. Native Americans have also been consulted about the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the National Historic Preservation Act and about potentially sensitive cultural and archaeological resources. Native Americans will continue to be consulted at each key decision point of the Section 106, CEQA, and NEPA processes, and their input integrated into the project planning process. Additional information is available in Section 3.17, Cultural and Paleontological Resources.

A more thorough discussion of SHPO, ACHP, and Native American outreach efforts can be found in Section 3.17, Cultural Resources and Paleontological Resources.

## 8.5 Notification and Circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS

Notice regarding the availability and the circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS has been provided pursuant to NEPA and CEQA requirements. Notice included publication of an announcement in newspapers that have general circulation in areas potentially affected by the proposed project. The announcement indicated the availability of the Draft EIR/EIS, the time and location of public hearings, and the period during which public comments will be received. A postcard announcement was mailed to those on the mailing list. A notice of completion (NOC) and notice of availability (NOA) were prepared by the Authority to satisfy CEQA. The NOC notified the reviewers that the Draft EIR/EIS was complete; and the NOA let public agencies and individuals know that the Draft EIR/EIS was available for review and comment and was published by FRA in the *Federal Register* on August 12, 2011. The Draft EIR/EIS, NOC, and NOA were submitted to the State Clearinghouse and to state agencies. The USACE published a Notice of Permit Application for the Project on the district web site on August 15, 2011.

The Draft EIR/EIS was circulated among federal, state, and local agencies, regional transportation agencies, and organizations and persons who expressed an interest in the project. The Draft EIR/EIS was made available on the Authority's web site and on compact disc upon request. Public hearing dates and locations were also posted on the Authority's web site. A distribution list for the Draft EIR/EIS is provided in Chapter 9, EIR/EIS Distribution.

## 8.6 Publication and Review of the Draft EIR/EIS

The Draft EIR/EIS was posted on the Authority's web site for public review on August 9, 2011, and was formally made available to California state agencies by the State Clearinghouse beginning August 10, 2011. On September 8, 2011, FRA published a notice in the *Federal Register* advising the public that the comment period would be extended until October 13, 2011. The formal comment period ended on October 13, 2011, 60 days after the document was first published for public review and comment. All comments submitted are attached in Volume IV and include responses or, where appropriate, direction to a specific Master Responses, which are also available in Volume IV as Chapter 16.

### 8.6.1 Public and Agency Information Meetings and Hearings

Several advertised public workshops were held in the project area during the review period to present the Draft EIR/EIS and to give the public an opportunity to ask questions and collect information about the project. Four public workshops were held during the last week of August 2011 in Chowchilla, Fairmead, Fresno, and Le Grand, at which members of the public could review copies of the Draft EIR/EIS and obtain help in identifying how the project might affect their property. The Authority and FRA held formal hearings in Merced, Madera, and Fresno, and written and verbal comments were accepted on September 14, 15, and 20, 2011. Public meetings and hearings held after publication of the Draft EIR/EIS are listed in Table 8-1 at the end of this chapter.

The Draft EIR/EIS was made available for review in several ways. The document was posted on the Authority's web site, beginning on August 9, 2011. The document was also made available on FRA's website. Printed and electronic copies were made available in 12 libraries and community centers located in Atwater, Chowchilla, Fairmead, Fresno, Le Grand, Los Banos, Madera, Madera Ranchos, Merced, and Planada (see Chapter 10). Copies were sent to cooperating federal agencies, state responsible and trustee agencies (including copies sent through the State Clearinghouse), and were available at the



Authority's office in Sacramento. CDs with the Draft EIR/EIS in electronic form were sent, without charge, to anyone who requested them.

### 8.6.2 Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS

In order to provide the greatest opportunity for agencies and the public to review and comment on the Draft EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA provided widespread notice of its availability. On August 9, 2011, the Authority sent a press release to all major newspapers in the area advising the public of the availability of the Draft EIR/EIS on the Authority's web site. As required by law, notices were placed in newspapers of general circulation in the area and in the *Federal Register*.

The public was given the opportunity to comment in any of several ways. Comments could be submitted to the Authority and FRA by card or letter (including cards and letters submitted at the public hearings), through the Authority web site, verbally at the three public hearings, and by means of e-mail. During the comment period, there were 895 comment submittals on the Merced to Fresno Section Draft EIR/EIS.

The Authority and FRA assessed and considered all substantive comments on the Draft EIR/EIS that were received by the close of the comment period and included a response, where necessary, in the Final EIR/EIS. However, the formal review period did not limit the consideration of comments received from agencies, organizations, and the public after the end of the comment period. The Authority and FRA considered comments received after October 13, 2011, and reproduced them in the Final EIR/EIS. Responses to comments received from August 8, 2011, through October 13, 2011, are available in Volume IV). A summary of comments received is provided below.

Most comment submittals expressed support or opposition opinions about the project or its alternatives. Of the 895 submittals, approximately 107 generally supported and 127 were generally opposed to the project. Most comments came from individuals living, working, or with property interests in the project study area. About a fourth of the comments submitted were regarding the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative. Few preferred the BNSF Alternative; most comments on the BNSF Alternative expressed opposition to this alternative. Only a few comments mentioned the Hybrid Alternative by name. (Some comments referred to the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative and BNSF Alternative by their earlier titles of Alternative A2 and Alternative A1, respectively. This chapter refers to the HST alternatives by their existing titles.)

Potential effects on agricultural and private property were the major concerns about the project. Many comments did not mention the content of the Draft EIR/EIS but rather strongly urged that the comment period be extended 60 to 90 days or even 6 months. Also, comments expressed concern over the project cost estimates, funding availability (including whether any money should be spent on this type of project in light of state and federal budget deficits), and questions regarding the accuracy of the ridership projections. Common issues also covered safety at stations, station access limitations for vehicles and pedestrians, and connectivity to ultimate destinations upon arriving at HST stations. Other common environmental concerns included noise and vibration, ecosystem effects, neighborhoods, and construction effects.

Approximately 109 submittals included suggestions to change the Merced to Fresno Section HST alternatives. Most common among these comments was that the alternatives do not strictly remain within or along existing transportation corridors. These comments most often referenced the east-west wye connections from San Jose and the BNSF Alternative. The primary suggestion was to consider an alignment adjacent to I-5 that would bypass this Merced to Fresno corridor and the HST stations in Merced and Fresno altogether. In addition, other comments suggested a preference for the State of California to invest in the development of the Amtrak system instead of HST or use funding for other infrastructure improvements.

The following sections list how many comment submittals referenced each alternative, summarize the general comments received from individuals on particular alternatives, and highlight which alternatives received the most support from organizations and agencies.

### 8.6.2.1 UPRR/SR 99 Alternative

More than 140 comment submittals mentioned the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative. Of those, most (approximately 120) expressed a preference for this alternative because commenters believed that it more closely adheres to the transportation corridor compared to the other alternatives, that it reduces agricultural impacts, and that it best consolidates infrastructure. One particular grassroots effort, named Madera Friends of High-Speed Rail, sent in 22 submittals generally grouped in 9 standardized letters from 1,113 different people, each supporting the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative. Themes from their letters expressing support for this alternative include that it would protect farmlands; provide connectivity, economic opportunities, and jobs in Madera; grade-separate the existing track through Madera; eliminate blight along the "E" Street corridor through the City of Madera; and, with mitigation, could improve the City of Madera. Those who did not support this alternative asserted that it would have severe adverse impacts on the City of Madera and would further divide the community. Others opposing this alternative were concerned about business and economic impacts.

### 8.6.2.2 BNSF Alternative

Approximately 100 submittals were received that mentioned the BNSF Alternative. Most of the comments (over 90) expressed opposition to this alternative, asserting that it would result in negative effects to their community and the agricultural economy. Since most of these were received during or directly following the open house at Le Grand, many t address the potential impacts to Le Grand and the surrounding agricultural communities. Fewer, but still a notable number of, comments expressed concern about the potential effects of the BNSF Alternative on the wildlife in the areas surrounding the BNSF Alternative.

No comments mentioned the various wye options connecting to the BNSF Alternative. A few comments indicated displeasure with the Ave 24 Wye due to impacts on farmlands and asserted that it did not follow existing transportation corridors. Commenters did not note a preference for or differences between the East of Le Grand design options. Two commenters mentioned that the Mariposa Ave design option would affect their dairy business and agricultural operations.

### 8.6.2.3 Hybrid Alternative

Relatively few comments (approximately 10) mentioned the Hybrid Alternative. A few expressed support for this alternative because it avoids both Madera and Le Grand community impacts. Two businesses expressed a concern that this alternative would remove property and thus limit their future expansion plans.

### 8.6.2.4 Stations

Comments on stations ranged from requesting a station in Madera to pedestrian safety and traffic issues around the proposed stations. Transit connectivity, safety for school access routes, parking availability, and traffic congestion getting to and from SR 99 were also mentioned. Commenters from Fresno proposed potential changes to the design to help facilitate traffic circulation and meet future land use plans objectives.

### 8.6.2.5 Heavy Maintenance Facilities

Almost 50 comments mentioned the heavy maintenance facility alternatives. One comment from the property owner stated that the Harris-DeJager HMF site was no longer available for an HMF. The Fagundes HMF site property owner commented that either their business would have to be purchased entirely or their property and dairy operations would be adversely affected. A few persons from the Merced area commented that the access tracks for the Castle Commerce Center HMF should be considered as part of the tracks northbound for future sections. A few comments from Madera residents urged that the HMF be placed in Madera County, noting that no HST station is proposed in the county and asserting that the HMF site would create much-needed job opportunities.

### 8.6.2.6 Suggestions for Modified and New Project Alternatives

Some individuals opposed the Merced to Fresno Section HST alternatives as defined in the Draft EIR/EIS and suggested changes to the alternatives. Some questioned the project's use of HST technology, wondering whether the high speeds could actually be achieved. In addition, some commenters questioned whether the ridership projections were realistic. Approximately five submittals, including from EPA and the USACE, referenced the Western Madera alternative from the preliminary alternatives analysis process. The Authority and FRA determined that this alternative was not a reasonable alternative, and it was dismissed during the preliminary alternatives screening phase of the project. Several members of the public suggested that Madera should have a station, and without one there would be less ridership from this area. One commenter wondered why the BNSF Alternative design options that crossed the San Joaquin River further east than at the UPRR/SR 99 were eliminated from further consideration, because they felt that these would not impact residential land uses.

Only a few commenters submitted suggestions for minor modifications to existing alternatives. These modifications were suggested mainly in order to reduce property acquisitions, business impacts, agricultural impacts, and biological impacts, or to serve specific areas. Several commenters requested that additional design options between the BNSF and UPRR railways south of Madera Acres continue to be considered, which were options previously eliminated from further analysis due to high property impacts in Fresno. Businesses along Golden State Boulevard in Fresno felt that by changing the location of this roadway, their businesses would have limited accessibility and cause a hardship in this area; therefore, they felt the alignment would be best along SR 99. Several commenters, including Preserve Our Heritage, Planning and Conservation League, and a manufacturing business, felt that the I-5 route should be considered in the EIR/EIS. Several commenters in the City of Fresno noted that they would prefer the alignment to go around Fresno to avoid impacts on their properties. The mayor of Fresno requested a trench alignment through Downtown Fresno. The owner of a dairy farm that would be affected by the project requested that the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative be designed with a smaller loop around Madera to minimize agricultural impacts in the surrounding rural areas.

### 8.6.2.7 California Legislators

State Senator Michael Rubi and Assembly Member David Valadao, as well as House of Representatives members, Congressman Kevin McCarthy (majority whip), and Congressman Jim Costa, submitted a request to extend the public review period to a minimum of 60 days total due to the magnitude of the project and material to review. In addition, State Senator Anthony Cannella submitted similar concerns for inadequate review time, due to the importance of fully considering agricultural impacts and effects on the agricultural operations, such as fertilizing and other spraying requirements.

Congressman Dennis Cardoza supports the project; more specifically, he supports the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative because it best follows existing transportation corridors. His comment notes that this project represents job and economic opportunities. However, he noted that it is premature to decide on the HMF at this time, requesting that the evaluation and discussion of HMF options be removed from the Final EIR/EIS and evaluated at a more appropriate time.

State Assembly member Cathleen Galgiani expressed support for the project, its purpose and economic benefit connecting over 5 million persons in the San Joaquin Valley, and potential improvements on traffic along SR 99 and I-5, as well as subsequent improvements to air quality. She believes that linking to UC-Merced will be valuable, but, most important, she believes the project may support additional jobs and economic recovery.

### 8.6.2.8 Comments Received from Public Agencies

Public agencies are categorized into project area jurisdictions (local cities, counties, and related organizations), federal agencies, state agencies, regional public agencies, and other public agencies, such as public utility districts. These categories also include several agencies that support the jurisdictions in the project area or those outside the project area, but that choose to comment on this Draft EIR/EIS.

Some agencies that are involved in project development and that are continuing to participate chose not to comment on the Draft EIR/EIS, including Native American Tribes, Advisory Council of Historic Preservation, and California State Department of Fish and Game. Comments from these organizations will continue to be considered in the development of the Final EIR/EIS as coordination with them continues.

### **Project Area Jurisdictions**

Each jurisdiction within the study area submitted comments, which are summarized herein. Comments from the unincorporated communities and from conservation, school, and water districts within the study area are summarized under the Other Public Agencies section below.

#### ***City of Merced***

The City of Merced, represented by John Bramble, the City Manager, noted support for the project, and specifically for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative, which the City considers to be the most environmentally friendly. The City indicated that the project will provide benefits to both Merced and Fresno and will allow for economic diversification within the Central Valley. The City also suggested that the track between the Downtown Merced Station and the BNSF Alternative track should be evaluated in terms of the future extension to Sacramento and not just as an HMF track, which penalizes the Castle Commerce Center HMF for track that will eventually be used for the mainline.

#### ***City of Chowchilla***

David Alexander, the Mayor of the City of Chowchilla, provided comments stating the City's support for the BNSF Alternative and Ave 21 Wye, and believes that the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative, Ave 24 Wye connection, and Hybrid Alternative with the Ave 21 Wye would disrupt their community and conflict with planned transportation improvements in the project area. His comment letter asserts that there are inconsistencies between the San Jose to Merced Section and the Merced to Fresno Section Draft EIR/EIS documents, and between the program-level documents completed earlier for these segments and the later project-level documents. The City commented that the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative prior to completion of the project-level EIR/EIS process, and that this alternative was in conflict with what was identified in the 2005 Program EIR/EIS, which "approved the alignment of the BNSF (A-1) alignment in Madera County." The City of Chowchilla suggests that the mitigation proposed is inadequate and does not meet CEQA guidelines, and that the San Jose to Merced Section EIR/EIS must also be considered when determining a location for the HMF. The City's letter states that the impact evaluation criteria used are inadequate, and that the analyses do not thoroughly analyze the impacts on rural communities such as Chowchilla. Specific resource analyses the City believes are deficient include land use, use of natural resources, noise and vibration, traffic and circulation, social impacts, and air quality.

The City asserts that no request was made for traffic studies that have been completed in the Chowchilla area and that this information is not reflected in the Draft EIR/EIS. The City suggests that traffic counts should have been conducted during the fall harvest season when traffic is highest rather than in the winter. The City of Chowchilla believes it would suffer economic impacts not identified due to changes in land use, traffic impacts, and the division of the City, and that the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative and the Ave 24 Wye would prevent the City from growing as planned.

#### ***City of Madera***

Robert Pothyress, Mayor of the City of Madera, expressed a preference for the BNSF and Hybrid alternatives and does not support the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative, which the City believes would result in detrimental impacts to the community that cannot be fully mitigated. The City also believes that not all feasible mitigation measures that would lessen the severity of impacts to the Madera communities were identified in the Draft EIR/EIS. In addition, specific comments on the following topics were provided:

**General:** The City commented that the review period is inadequate for the size of document and because many local governments are understaffed. In addition, the City indicated that the mitigation measures

identified were too general and did not provide enough detail. The comment letter also suggested that the justification supporting the determination that the impacts from the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative are less than significant was not accurate.

Alternatives: The City requested consideration of at-grade or below-grade alternatives for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative in Madera. It also had detailed questions about the BNSF and Hybrid alternatives, the use of Amtrak facilities, overall system design and capabilities, communications towers, stations, traction power substation locations, power lines, road modifications, maintenance train noise, changes in land use patterns, and economic impacts related to statements in Draft EIR/EIS Chapter 2, Alternatives.

Transportation: The City was concerned that not all applicable goals and policies from their General Plan are included in the Draft EIR/EIS. Other concerns included the analysis of construction period impacts, changes in passenger rail service, pedestrian and bicycle impacts, and changes in freight rail transportation. The City also felt the following issues should have been discussed in this chapter: the increased cost and future property acquisition required for future grade-separated crossings, spacing of columns related to future road widening, reconstruction of the interchange at Gateway and Cleveland, interaction and possible conflicts with future capital improvements projects, impacts from roadway modifications on individual properties, potential changes in standards for SR 99, and permit requirements for work in public right-of-way.

Noise: The City asked how city and county plans were incorporated into the noise analysis and about the sufficiency of the proposed mitigation. There were a number of questions concerning the assumptions used to determine the methodology, as well as questions about noise levels within 100 feet of the track and beneath the elevated guideway, the impacts to pedestrians, the change in noise due to demolition of acquired buildings, SEL noise levels, and the lack of detail for mitigation.

Utilities and Energy: The City noted that the document references the 1992 General Plan instead of the 2009 General Plan. They also had questions concerning the discussion of solid waste, the need to conform to the City's undergrounding policy for new utilities, conflicts with existing utilities, and reduced access to utilities in the HST right-of-way.

Hydrology: The City noted that the document references the 1992 General Plan instead of the 2009 General Plan and the current requirements for the project to pay a development impact fee where stormwater may be conveyed to a city facility.

Safety and Security: The City noted that it believes an alternative in a rural area is inherently safer than one in an urban area. They noted their inability to be first responders where there is elevated guideway. They disagree with the assessment of the risks of accidents or acts of violence being insignificant. They also requested additional information in the high-risk facility analysis and a clearer comparison of alternatives related to public safety hazards.

Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice: The City believes that insufficient efforts were made to solicit participation of minority and low-income populations. They question some of the data used in this analysis and the conclusions drawn. The City believes the project would have disproportionate and adverse effects on populations of concern and that the project would create an increased barrier between communities than currently exists. They also question the economic impacts, both adverse and beneficial, as described in the document and are concerned about effects on property values.

Land Use: The City believes the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative will discourage infill and that this should be discussed in the EIR/EIS. They disagree with some of the land use impact conclusions and with the conclusion regarding no significant impacts to land use in Madera. The City requests additional mitigation measures, including funding an update of its General Plan, to develop design and development guidelines for the project, and to set up a development fund.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space: The City's letter included comments relating to the lack of detailed mitigation, connectivity under elevated guideways, construction period impacts, and how some

conclusions were drawn. They also would like additional information about a few of the parks included in the Affected Environment section of the EIR/EIS.

**Aesthetics and Visual Resources:** The City disagrees with some of the conclusions based on the analysis included in the Draft EIR/EIS, and believes that mitigation does not contain enough detail. They also list several policies from their General Plan that should be considered in this analysis.

### ***City of Fresno***

Mark Scott, City Manager for the City of Fresno, submitted comments focused on the following categories:

- Need for underpasses versus overpasses.
- Construction impacts.
- Adequacy and timing of certain traffic mitigations.
- Economic impacts.
- Need to trench profile through downtown Fresno.
- Protection of existing and planned utilities.
- Noise and vibration.
- Historic resources.
- Impacts to Roeding Park.

Generally, the City believes the Draft EIR/EIS did not adequately analyze all potentially significant impacts to the City of Fresno. They commented that one alternative through Fresno is inadequate, and that a trench option should also be evaluated. The City is concerned that project construction has the potential for adverse effects to emergency response, public safety, traffic congestion, and short-term air quality. The City is not confident in the efficacy of many of the mitigation measures included and suggests several specific mitigation measures to be incorporated during construction. Regarding noise and vibration, the City is particularly concerned with potential vibration impacts at the Fresno Zoo located within Roeding Park and requests additional analysis at this location.

The City provides a number of comments related to requirements for reconstruction of water and sewer utilities and proposes additional mitigation. Additional information about safety and security is provided and suggestions for additional analysis on this topic are included.

Regarding socioeconomic, communities, and environmental justice, the City provides additional information about the affected environment and requests that 2010 U.S. Census data be used. The City requests additional analysis for the complete Fresno "corridor" (rather than splitting between two documents) concerning the effects of the loss of property tax revenue for the entire City, the potential for urban decay, and a more detailed analysis of relocation opportunities. The City requests that updated economic condition and employment data be used. They believe the mitigation proposed for displacements and economic impacts is inadequate and propose several additional mitigation measures. They also note that the Fresno City Council adopted a motion on October 13, 2011 finding that the EIR/EIS is legally inadequate.

The City commented that Roeding Park will experience construction impacts because some of the park would be needed for construction. They note that the project conflicts with the Zoo Master Plan. The City suggests changes to some of the proposed mitigation measures. The City disagrees with some of the visual assessment, specifically related to overpasses and retaining walls, and also believes this mitigation is inadequate.

Regarding historic resources, the City requests that the Belmont Circle, the Belmont Underpass, and Railroad Bridge be evaluated for potential historic significance, that additional mitigation be incorporated for the Forestiere Underground Gardens, and that additional properties be identified for the Fresno Register of Historic Places. They would also like the downtown rail station analysis from the Fresno to Bakersfield EIR/EIS be included in the Merced to Fresno document.

The City also provided a number of detailed comments on the 15% conceptual design plans. The City supports a Mariposa Street alignment for an east-facing station over the Kern Street west-facing station.

Ashley Swearingin, Mayor of the City of Fresno, also submitted a letter expressing support for the project, but also highlighting several of the City's concerns with the project. These concerns included the need for underpasses instead of overpasses for many crossings, the need for more detail related to traffic management during construction, reconstruction of Veteran's Boulevard, economic assistance for impacted businesses, impacts to Roeding Zoo, and the City's wish for a depressed (trenched) alignment through downtown Fresno.

Oliver Baines III, Councilmember for the City of Fresno, submitted comments at the hearing, as well as in a comment letter. He stated his support for the project and the economic benefits it will have in the Central Valley. He noted that he has received comments from constituents concerned that the document is inadequate, and therefore is concerned about the public involvement process. He suggests creation of an ombudsman office in Fresno to help facilitate public interaction. He also is concerned about ensuring that the project will create jobs in the Fresno area.

### ***Merced County and County Planning Department***

Chairman and Rail Representative John Pedrozo for Merced County offered the County's support for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative because of the lower impact on the community, the farmland, and the environment. Also, Chairman Pedrozo submitted several comment cards developed by his office and filled out by residents stating their preference for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative and in opposition of the BNSF Alternative. Additionally, the County seeks cooperation to prevent any inconsistencies from arising with respect to land use, agricultural, and natural resources.

Bill Nicholson, the Assistant Planning Director for Merced County, noted that there are three segments of the HST project intersecting their county that are being reviewed by separate environmental documents, and this affects the ability for impacts to Merced County to be fully evaluated, particularly for the HMF. He also expressed preference for alternatives in the UPRR right-of-way, following SR 99, over alternatives in the BNSF right-of-way, which have greater impacts to farmlands and the natural environment. Use of the UPRR corridor also supports the county's current planning efforts.

### ***Madera County, County Planning Department and County Department of Agriculture***

The Board of Supervisors, as represented by Chair Frank Bigelow, requested a 90-day review period justifying that a project this large and with significant material for review requires additional time. Chairman Bigelow also submitted comments acknowledging they did not receive an extension but thanking the Authority for the extension provided to the State Department of Conservation for the Williamson Act review.

Norman Allinder, Planning Director for the Madera County Planning Department, submitted comments stating that the DEIR/DEIS is inadequate in its description of the affected environment as well as in several qualitative and quantitative analyses. The Planning Department requests that the document be amended and recirculated for further comments. They also believe the San Jose to Merced EIR/EIS analysis should be included in any decisions regarding alternatives and that the project has been piecemealed. Specific comments on the following topics were included:

**Interactive Community Involvement:** The Department commented that detailed mitigation measures for noise and vibration impacts be developed through interactive community workshops prior to finalizing the EIR/EIS.

**Impacts to Schools:** The Department expressed concern that not all schools near the alternatives were identified as noise sensitive receivers, and that school transportation activity could be disrupted by project construction.

**Transportation:** The Department does not believe that the mitigation measures provided were detailed enough to address potential impacts in Merced and Fresno, and that that the traffic analysis in rural areas was insufficient, especially during construction. They requested an analysis of impacts to the Madera Amtrak station and also were concerned about deviations in existing rural road alignments due to overcrossings.

**Safety and Security:** The Department suggested the HST Project be put on hold until safety and security standards are adopted for a high speed rail system within the U.S. They stated that there is a safety concern regarding children crossing the UPRR tracks in transit to schools.

**Socioeconomics:** The Department believes the County will not see any economic benefit from the project because no station is located within the County. They commented that Madera County is an ideal location for a HMF and support the HMF alternatives within the County. Other concerns include a loss in property values in affected communities, and the potential impacts to local employment as a result of impacts to affected businesses.

**Public Utilities and Energy:** The Department is requesting a mitigation measure to require the recycling of construction and demolition waste to reduce impacts to the Fairmead Landfill. They are also concerned about potential impacts to rural energy supplies as a result of the project.

**Biological Resources and Wetlands:** The Department is concerned about the possibility of introducing invasive species through the use of non-native soil as fill.

**Station Planning, Land Use, and Development:** The Department disagrees that the impact to land use is less than significant and no mitigation is required. They believe that local land use plans were not sufficiently analyzed and that funding will be required to amend these plans to accommodate the HST Project. Induced growth along SR 152 from remnant parcels is also a concern.

**Aesthetics and Visual Quality:** The Department commented that all alternatives would have significant visual impacts after mitigation and that impacts to Sierra Nevada views from Madera County are overlooked. The Department requests more detailed mitigation measures. Graffiti abatement is also of concern. The Department suggested that impacts to all communities could be reduced by lowering the train height from 50 to 25 feet.

**Regional Growth:** The Department disagrees that the project will not induce growth in their county, as the commute times between Fresno and Merced and Bay Area cities will be reduced.

**Air Quality and Global Climate Change:** The Department suggests that quarries within the three-county area be used for ballast material to reduce emissions and promote economic activity. They also request more detail on how the decrease in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) was calculated, and are concerned that VMT within their county may increase. They also request analysis of particulate matter and fugitive pollutants dispersed by the trains.

**Noise and Vibration:** The Department requests that the Madera County noise and vibration standards be addressed in the EIR/EIS, and does not believe that the day-night sound level ( $L_{dn}$ ) is an adequate measure of noise impacts to receivers. They also request that impacts to rural areas be analyzed separately from urban areas and that noise impacts to poultry and dairy operations be assessed.

**Agriculture:** The Department believes the impacts to agricultural operations were not fully analyzed, including the loss of sales tax from agricultural conversions, the impacts to agricultural infrastructure, division of farms, impacts to farm buildings and capital improvements, potential impacts to financing, and impacts to Williamson Act lands.

**Hydrology and Water Resources:** The Department is concerned about potential flooding in agricultural lands from at-grade crossings of irrigation channels.



**Independent Utility:** The Department states that a discussion of the independent utility of the track needs to be included.

**Alternatives:** The Department requests that an alternative be included that utilizes the existing Amtrak system.

The County Planning Department provided comments on mitigation measures relating to noise and vibration, socioeconomics, safety and security, agricultural lands, and aesthetics and visual resources. The County Department of Agriculture submitted comments relating to potential impacts to aerial spraying of agricultural fields not disclosed in the Draft EIR/EIS were the project to shift either vertically or horizontally. They also note that the footprint of the Castle Commerce Center HMF would overlap with an interchange that is part of this project and request that the design be refined to allow for both projects.

### **Federal Agencies and Tribes**

#### ***U.S. Environmental Protection Agency***

Enrique Manzallia, Director of Communities and Ecosystems Division, submitted comments suggesting that the Draft EIR/EIS has insufficient information, but EPA also recognizes the potential benefits of the project. Despite coordination efforts under the NEPA and CWA Sections 404 and 408 integration process, EPA expressed concerns over aquatic resource impacts and refinements on measures to maintain wildlife connectivity and movement. Additionally, EPA outlines its concern about reducing the project's construction period impact to communities and farms, specifically the potential to exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and farming and community impacts along the corridor. EPA commends the September 2011 Authority- and FRA-signed *Memorandum of Understanding for Achieving an Environmentally Sustainable High-Speed Train System in California*.

EPA notes that the Final EIR/EIS should clearly and consistently identify impacts in the NEPA impact summaries using the term "significant" where appropriate, as defined by CEQ 40 CFR Part 1508.27. EPA finds that the Draft EIR/EIS is not detailed enough to fulfill the CWA 404 requirements, and therefore they offer direction on the Alternatives Analysis, Protecting Water Quality and Sensitive Species, including storm water discharge regulations, and mitigation. EPA requested that the Western Madera Alternative be studied. EPA also requested additional studies on impacts on aquatic resources including quantifying indirect impacts, clarifying the permanent and temporary impacts, and providing a functional assessment of aquatic resource impacts. EPA is concerned that the project may result in erosion and other construction-related impacts on water resources, and therefore EPA requests additional detail. Regarding special status and wildlife movement corridors, EPA would like the San Joaquin River Crossing to be expanded to include more detail on crossing designs and best available methods to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat.

To address exceedances in ambient air emissions during construction, EPA requests confirmation of direct and indirect emissions, the identification of additional mitigation measures, and completion of the interagency consultation process for determinations in the San Joaquin Valley. EPA also requests that the effects of air emissions on health of children be explained and addressed with additional mitigation measures. EPA requests that the agricultural resource section include information on increased operational expenses on farming around the HST Project and other effects from property acquisition valuation on agricultural practices, such as road closures and access changes.

EPA requests that the induced growth and land consumption analysis fully acknowledge historic patterns and review the potential for commuters to be using HST to live in the Valley and work elsewhere in the state. EPA would like there to be stronger commitments to protect rural lands from development by supporting agricultural land conservation easements and similar programs. Likewise, EPA would like to have additional information about cooperation with cities to densify land use around station locations and similar coordination with transit agencies to enhance connectivity. EPA suggests that station planning

incorporate brownfield use and reuse, safety in access planning at stations, and programs that promote equitable development practices.

EPA requests that additional outreach be performed to receive input for the areas under the elevated guideway. EPA notes that Executive Order 13045 on Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks needs to be addressed in the Draft EIR/EIS both for construction and operation, assessing direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

With regard to Environmental Justice, EPA includes suggestions about evaluating effects on the localized communities due to access, noise, and economics and noting any outreach efforts identifying these communities' concerns. EPA also would like additional information about the impacts on commercial and residential displacement and economic impacts, such as changes to the job market.

EPA notes inconsistencies in the Noise and Vibration analyses between the Merced to Fresno and the Fresno to Bakersfield sections, particularly around the proposed HMFs and in the cumulative impacts assessment. EPA would also like a summary table noting details of noise barriers and more understanding for the potential of changes relating to traffic noise. EPA would like a better explanation about change in potential noise and vibration impacts due to the potential slab track design and has concerns about the vibration mitigation proposed.

EPA references the Memorandum of Understanding on Sustainability practices in the High Speed Rail Project. EPA would like the Final EIR/EIS to reference this document and associated commitments. Similarly, EPA would like commitments to identify, minimize, track, and control hazardous materials use in construction and operations of the HST Project. Finally, EPA requests that medical laboratories and research/technical parks be added to the list of facilities reviewed and mitigated for impacts from electromagnetic fields.

### ***U.S. Army Corp of Engineers***

Michael Jewell, Chief of the Regulatory Division for the USACE, submitted comments expressing that the Draft EIR/EIS may not be sufficient to meet its requirements under NEPA and the 404(b)(1) guidelines. USACE does not agree with the elimination of the Western Madera Alternative (originally referred to as Alternative A3) and SR 152 Wye Connection alternatives. Without a formal explanation for this elimination, USACE cannot close Checkpoint B of the NEPA/404/408 integration process. They would like to see more progress on the draft compensatory mitigation plan, which USACE believes is necessary in order to make a preliminary determination of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA). They provide a number of specific comments on the text related to aquatic habitats and waters of the U.S., costs and funding, construction impacts and BMPs, and cumulative impacts. The USACE also commented that some construction impacts are more than temporary and cannot be adequately restored to pre-construction conditions.

### ***U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service***

Maria Rea, Sacramento Area Office Supervisor for National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), submitted comments stating that they needed to be added to discussions of agencies consulted, both generally and under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The project needs to include California Central Valley steelhead on lists of aquatic species present, and additional detail regarding direct and indirect impacts needs to be included. Also, Essential Fish Habitat needs to be included as a habitat of concern. They included questions and suggestions relating to aquatic mitigation measures. NMFS clarified that informal consultation has not been initiated as stated in the document and requested that this statement be corrected in the document.

***U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard***

D. H. Sulouff, Chief of the Bridge Section for the U.S. Coast Guard, has reviewed the project area and determined that neither the Merced to Fresno nor the Fresno to Bakersfield sections require Coast Guard involvement for bridge permit purposes.

***U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance***

Patricia Sanderson, Regional Environmental Officer, submitted a statement that they had reviewed the environmental documents and had no comments to offer.

***Amtrak***

Wendy Wenner, High-Speed Rail Coordinator for Amtrak, submitted detailed comments on a number of aspects of the document, including purpose and need, project description, transportation, air quality, and project costs. Most comments were specific to document text or suggested additional analyses.

**State Agencies**

***California State Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection***

Jacquelyn Ramsay, an Environmental Planner for the California State Department of Conservation, requested a 30-day extension for their review of both the Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield environmental documents. Between the two sections, there are 148 properties to be evaluated under the Williamson Act.

***California State Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources***

Yuko Sakano, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist for the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources, submitted comments that focused on the presence of oil wells in the project proximity, with a total of 60 wells identified in the Merced to Fresno Section. The comment letter outlines safety requirements for rail within 100 feet of wells, along with protocols for dealing with abandoned or unrecorded wells.

***California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Quality***

Catherine Woody, Environmental Scientist for the State Water Resources Control Board, provided a letter stating they will be providing comments regarding stormwater, but they will be late.

***California State Department of Conservation, Williamson Act Program***

John Lowrie, Williamson Act Program Manager, submitted comments regarding impacts to farmland within the Williamson Act and the process required for acquiring lands within this program. The Williamson Act Division is also preparing a response to the public acquisition notice process. They provide information on Williamson Act Cancellation Findings and provide suggested revisions to mitigation measures Ag-MM#1 and Ag-MM#2. These comments were submitted after the comment deadline.

***California State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation***

Deborah Hysen, Deputy Director of Facility Planning, Construction and Management for the California State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, commented on impacts to the Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) from the BNSF Alternative with the Ave 24 Wye and to the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) from both the BNSF Alternative with the Ave 24 Wye and the Hybrid Alternative with Ave 24 Wye. Each alternative would encroach on one or both of these facilities and would remove land within the prison from agricultural production, resulting in an economic impact. Both alternatives would be incompatible with security standards. Safety related to train derailment was also listed as a concern. The BNSF Alternative would also have impacts to Road 21 outside the VSPW that could compromise security of the facility. The Department states that the S&S Mitigation Measure 1 is not sufficient and that only an alternative that completely avoids the facilities is acceptable.

In addition, the Department emphasized that maintaining access on Ave 24 and Road 22 is important regardless of the alternative selected.

### ***California State Department of Transportation, Caltrans***

Christine Inouye, High-Speed Rail Coordinator for Caltrans, provided comments that stated that additional detail regarding mitigation is needed for completion of a Project Report for work within the State Highway System (SHS). Other issues of concern are compatibility with future expansions of the SHS, especially SR 99, additional right-of way needs for drainage, jacking of the reinforced concrete box under SR 180, and the impacts from closure of part of Golden State Boulevard. Detailed comments were submitted regarding hazardous waste, landscape, stormwater, and noise and vibration impacts, along with comments on the detailed plans and the transportation report.

### ***Governor's Office of Planning and Research***

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit, sent a memorandum to all relevant state agencies regarding the extension of the comment period from 45 to 60 days.

### ***California State Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery***

Lynn Smith, Integrated Waste Management Specialist for the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, submitted comments focused on closed solid waste facilities within 1,000 feet of the project. Concern about these facilities in proximity to the project is related to the presence of landfill gas, which includes methane, and could be a health and safety concern for the project. Recommendations for work in these areas are included in the comment letter.

### ***Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)***

Dave Singleton, Program Analyst for the NAHC, did not offer comments on the content or the project description, but rather advised that the project coordinator use their submitted list of Native American Tribes to engage input and consultation from affected Native American tribes in support of Section 106 and 4(f) of the Federal National Historic Preservation Act.

### ***University of California, Merced***

Ms. Janet Young submitted comments on behalf of the UC-Merced campus supporting the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative referencing least impact on farmlands and most environmentally sensitive. She also suggested that the Merced Station and rail be at-grade in Merced. Finally, she requested that the connections north of Merced be considered part of the Merced to Sacramento Section, thereby attributing the cost to that section rather than attributing the cost as part of the Castle Commerce Center HMF site.

### ***California State Lands Commission***

Cy Oggins, Chief of the Environmental Planning and Management Division of the California State Lands Commission, submitted comments stating that a lease will be needed from their agency for use of sovereign lands in the San Joaquin River. The Commission requests more information on the use of piles for the river crossing, including timing and construction methods. If these methods will be described in a future, more detailed CEQA document, the Commission requests that this be disclosed in the EIR/EIS. In their general comments on the document, the Commission states that more information is needed on how the mitigation measures do or do not reduce impacts below the threshold of significance. Regarding biological resources, the Commission asserts that mitigation has been deferred and more detail is needed regarding mitigation, and if this is not possible, then performance standards need to be included. The Commission also asserts that by not including the specific mitigation measures, agencies and the public do not have an opportunity to comment on the adequacy of these measures. In addition, the Commission requests additional analysis on the impact of underwater noise on the fish in the river. The

Commission notes that all cultural resources, including shipwrecks, on sovereign land are under the jurisdiction of the state and provides information for coordinating with their agency on these resources.

### ***California Public Utilities Commission***

Daren Gilbert, Program Manager for the Consumer Protection and Safety Division of the California Public Utilities Commission, submitted comments encouraging the Authority to involve their agency early on in planning to help identify impacts and appropriate mitigation. The Commission will need to approve any modifications of tracks or new tracks across roadways and should be identified as a permitting authority. The letter states that unless absolutely necessary due to engineering factors, all tracks should be grade separated when adjacent HST tracks are grade separated, and where existing at-grade crossings are modified, pedestrian facilities should be incorporated into these crossings. The letter notes that accident statistics in Technical Appendix 3.11-A (Safety & Security Data) do not match their accident records and that several underpasses shown in Volume III (Alignments and Other Plans) barely meet the 15-foot vertical clearance requirement. The letter provides additional California Public Utility Codes (CPUC) that should be referenced in the EIR/EIS and request that all CPUC requirements be included in the Mitigation Measures sections of the Final EIR/EIS.

### ***California Department of Fish and Game***

Jeffrey Single, Ph.D, Regional Manager for the California Department of Fish and Game, submitted comments regarding their regulatory requirements, including a Lake and Stream Alteration Agreement, which they expect to be needed for at least some of the many stream crossings, and additional analysis and mitigation they would like to see in the Final EIR/EIS. The Department of Fish and Game is concerned about east-west wildlife movement across the project corridor and requests that elevated profiles be used instead of wildlife underpasses or overpasses to facilitate wildlife movement. If underpasses or overpasses are used, more analysis is needed before an alternative is selected. The Department feels that the scope of analysis for wildlife movement was too narrow and that other areas besides Essential Connectivity Areas be considered.

The Department of Fish and Game is concerned that construction and operation of HST facilities within or near Department-managed lands may reduce the wildlife and public use values of these lands, and point out the greater impacts that the BNSF Alternative, and specifically the Le Grand design options, would have on Department lands. The Department notes that the acquisition of property or an easement at Camp Pashayan would be Section 4(f) impact and that the EIR/EIS does not evaluate an alternative that would avoid this property. The Department feels that the economic impacts from lost revenue due to the HST traveling through Camp Pashayan should be evaluated. The Department recommends that the HST alignment be elevated where it runs adjacent to Department properties in order to facilitate wildlife movement underneath.

Regarding special-status plant species, the Department feels the one survey was not adequate and that focused, repeated surveys should be conducted prior to the Final EIR/EIS and not be deferred to the pre-construction period. The Department notes that no surveys were conducted for the California tiger salamander and that relocation is not a minimization measure in the USFWS guidance as stated in the Draft EIR/EIS. Relocation would constitute a "take" under California Fish and Game Code, and no Department-approved mitigation banks or in-lieu fee programs are available to purchase credits for mitigation for the California tiger salamander, as suggested in the Draft EIR/EIS. Alternative mitigation would need to be developed during the incidental take permitting process. For special-status raptors, the Department feels that the 1,000-foot buffer for active nests is inadequate and requests a 0.5-mile buffer.

### **Regional Public Agencies**

#### ***Central Valley Flood Protection Board***

Curt Taras, Chief of Permitting and Enforcement Branch for the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, provided information on the conditions under which a permit from their agency would be approved, as well as a number of text changes and additions related to the Board's jurisdiction and the actual

floodplains in the project area. Design requirements and the permitting schedule for working in a regulated floodplain were also provided.

### ***San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District***

Arnaud Marjollet, Permit Services Manager for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, commented that construction-related air quality impacts are understated in the Draft EIR/EIS and that not all feasible mitigation measures have been included. Specific concerns are related to assumptions regarding the construction equipment in modeling impacts, as well as the model itself. For mitigation, the District recommends that Voluntary Emissions Reduction Agreements be included as mitigation in addition to measures already included. They also note that the Health Risk Assessment (HRA) for the HMF may not be adequate and request to review the methodology prior to the Final HRA being completed.

### **Other Public Agencies**

#### ***Central California Irrigation District***

Chris White, General Manager for the Central California Irrigation District, provided comments regarding impacts to their irrigation facilities and requested that reasonable and inexpensive access be provided for farmers to cross the project and for the farmland, irrigation, and drainage facilities to be treated respectfully.

#### ***Chowchilla Water District***

Douglas Welch, General Manager of the Chowchilla Water District, submitted comments regarding impacts to the District, including closures to county roads, farm roads, and the District's irrigation distribution system roads where they would cross the HST tracks. The District also expressed concern about impacts on air quality related to additional miles driven to access the limited crossings. The District also states they submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to FRA in December 2010 that has not received a response. Because of these unmitigated impacts on their district, they support the No Project Alternative.

Dan Maddalena, President of the Chowchilla Water District, also submitted comments, requesting a meeting to discuss impacts to the District.

### ***Fresno County***

Henry Perea, Supervisor for the County of Fresno, submitted their support for the BNSF Alternative within the Fresno to Bakersfield Section while understanding that there will be local impacts on property owners and construction disturbances to businesses, farms, and the transportation network.

#### ***Fresno Irrigation District***

William Stretch, Chief Engineer for the Fresno Irrigation District, submitted comments related to impacts on their facilities and included maps and tables indicating areas of conflict. In the letter, the Fresno Irrigation District notes that changes to their facilities will likely increase their operations and maintenance costs, and provided information on the requirements of their review process and their design standards. The District also provided markups for the 15% conceptual design drawings.

#### ***Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District***

Jerry Lakeman, District Engineer for the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, provided comments relating to the Drainage Fee required for projects in their district, compatibility with the District's Master Plan, design considerations, and impacts to existing district facilities. These comments also identify District-planned facilities that would need to be constructed by the Authority prior to project construction. The District offers that it has fill material available within the project area that could be a material source

for the project, and also discusses compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements both during construction and operation.

### ***City of Gilroy***

Thomas Haglund, City Administrator for the City of Gilroy, submitted comments stating that the project's approach to mitigating fire, rescue, and emergency services impacts is inadequate for the degraded response times and will place an unfair cost burden on the cities of Merced and Fresno.

### ***Greater Bakersfield Separation of Grade District***

Jeffrey Cutherell, President of the Greater Bakersfield Separation of Grade District, submitted comments regarding grade separations with major roadways within their jurisdiction. These locations are within the Merced to Bakersfield Section of the HST Project.

### ***Kern County***

Mike Maggard, Chairman of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, requested additional extension of time for review of both the Fresno to Bakersfield Section as well as the Merced to Fresno Section Draft EIR/EIS documents. The letter acknowledged that both the effects of the alternative on over 2.2 million Central Valley residents as well as the importance of considering the location for the HMF justifies their interest, but that the level of detail requires careful review and assessment.

### ***Kings County Water District***

Donald Mills, General Manager for the Kings County Water District, requested an extension of the comment period for both Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield sections to February 2012, for a total comment period of 6 months, due to the length of the documents. The District also noted that none of the Merced to Fresno Section Draft EIR/EIS documents and the technical appendices for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Draft EIR/EIS were available at the public libraries in Kings County, and that the documents were available only in English.

### ***Lower San Joaquin Levee District***

Reggie Hill, Secretary-Manager for the Lower San Joaquin Levee District, submitted comments that a reduction in privately-held land within its boundaries would reduce their revenues, and that the HST Project will need to adhere to flood regulations. The District requests that the reduction in revenue be mitigated in perpetuity.

### ***Madera Irrigation District***

Lance Johnson, General Manager for the Madera Irrigation District, submitted comments stating they believe the analysis provided is programmatic in nature and insufficient, and requested more detailed analysis once a final alignment is selected. The District is concerned about impacts to water deliveries via pipes and canals that the project would cross, and impacts to their water carrying capacity. They stated that coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will be necessary for facilities on their property. They are concerned about the loss of farmland and the impacts to air quality from vehicles having to travel longer distances to cross the HST tracks. The District provides mitigation requests.

### ***Merced Irrigation District***

Ron Price, Associate Engineer for the Merced Irrigation District, submitted comments regarding impacts to their irrigation and drainage facilities by alternative, as well as impacts to their electrical distribution system.

### ***Merced, Madera, and Fresno County School Districts (6)***

The Alview-Dairyland Union, the Chowchilla High School, Plainsburg Union Elementary School, the Central Unified School District, the Madera Unified School District, and the Le Grand Union High School Districts submitted their request for immediate coordination regarding concerns about disruption to school bus routes, divisions within the district and potential loss of students, impacts on safety, and impairing property values and the agricultural community, which in turn affect the school districts' budgets and funding. The Plainsburg Union Elementary School District also noted that the review time was insufficient and they are concerned about their future bonding ability after a project alternative is chosen. The Madera Unified School District also listed three schools they feel need to be evaluated for noise and vibration impacts and requested more detail regarding impacts to schools within their district. The Madera Unified District voiced support for the Gordon-Shaw HMF within their district, which would provide an economic benefit for a community that would not get the economic benefit of having a station, and requested that the Hybrid Alternative be modified to be adjacent to this HMF site.

A summary of the concerns raised by school districts and the information from the Final EIR/EIS chapters, technical reports, and other supplemental information that addresses those concerns is included in Appendix 3.12-D, Summary of Issues/Concerns Affecting Schools. Appendix 3.12-D provides a comprehensive response to the environmentally related concerns and issues raised by the districts.

### ***San Joaquin River Conservancy***

The San Joaquin River Conservancy submitted comments that the project will negatively affect the planned San Joaquin River Parkway, existing Parkway public uses, and Camp Pashayan, a habitat conservation/reservation area. The Conservancy provides suggestions for minimization and mitigation measures.

### ***Stanislaus County***

Raul Mendez, Senior Management Consultant for Stanislaus County, submitted comments that the County conducted a review of the Merced to Fresno Draft EIR/EIS and did not offer any comments.

### ***Madera County Economic Development Commission***

Bobby Kahn, the Executive Director of the Madera County Economic Development Commission, submitted comments stating their opposition to Alternative A2 (UPRR/SR 99 Alternative) and supporting Alternative A1 (BNSF Alternative), and are requesting that below-grade profiles be considered for Alternative A2 (UPRR/SR 99 Alternative) within Madera County. The Commission believes that the economic analysis of displaced businesses and associated mitigation is insufficient, and that compensation should be provided for changes in property values once the alternative is chosen and after operation begins. The Commission is concerned about impacts on future development along Alternative A2 (UPRR/SR 99 Alternative) and feels that more analysis of this issue is needed. The Commission also asserted that the comment period was insufficient.

### ***Bay Area Air Quality Management District***

Jean Roggenkamp, Deputy Air Pollution Control Officer for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, submitted comments on the Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield sections, stating that materials hauling for the project will result in exceedances of CEQA significance thresholds for nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) within their management district. The District disagrees with the conclusion that these impacts remain significant because the District does not have an offset program for mobile sources, and feels that there could be more analysis of potential mitigation measures, such as an off-site mitigation program. The District also provided suggested text for expanding AQ-MM#9.



### ***Fresno County Housing Authority***

Allison Williams, Chief Planning and Developmental Officer for the Fresno County Housing Authority, submitted comments encouraging the Authority to achieve 30% minority participation in the project and provided information that they are working to provide certification assistance to minority-owned small businesses.

### ***Fresno City College***

Dr. Tim Woods, Dean of Business at Fresno City College and also representing the State Center Community College District, submitted comments regarding programs and initiatives they have that are helping to train the workforce needed for this project.

### **Comments Received from Organizations**

Comments on the Merced to Fresno Section Draft EIR/EIS from organizations have been grouped into those representing businesses, interest groups, and organizations representing environmental protection. (Comments from individuals are summarized in Section 8.6.2.9.) Summaries for each follow.

### ***Businesses and Business Groups***

Comments were received from 73 different businesses, which are listed below. The majority of comments from businesses were concerned with how the project would affect their businesses including relocation, access, changes to property values, effects to farming, and economic impacts. An overview of comments from businesses is presented in this section.

#### ***List of Commenters***

- 3393 N Parkway Dr. Fresno, CA
- Abbey Transportation Company
- Agriland Farming Company
- Allied Waste Services
- Azteca Milling L.P.
- Bradford Farms
- Bright's Nursery INC.
- Buzz Oates Group of Companies
- Cavalleto Ranches
- C.A.R.S.
- CertainTeed Insulation
- Chevron Environmental Management Company
- Chowchilla District Chamber of Commerce
- Church & Dwight Company
- Conservation Resources LLC
- Del Shebelut Farms
- Diana Thomas Recycling
- Dicker, William
- Doak Development
- Doctor Kelly Brooks
- Domingos Ribiero Dairy
- Double Creek Dairy
- Durey Libby West Inc.
- Etchart Real Estate Consulting Group
- Fagundes Brothers Dairy
- Fresno Chaffee Zoo
- Fresno Motel
- George Dakovich & Son Inc
- Giersch and Associates, INC.
- Grimmway Farms
- Holiday Motel
- J.G. Boswell Company
- J. Marchini Farms
- John R. Lawson Rock & Oil INC
- Jurkovich Doak Department
- Kansas Holstein Dairy
- Kelsey Ranch
- KB Home, South Bay INC
- Kojima Development Company
- Lazy K Ranch
- Live Oak Farms
- Manning Properties
- Meders Ranch/Carleton Properties
- Miller, Amanda
- Minturn Nut Co Inc
- Mordecai Ranch
- North Machine Company
- N&W Land Co. LLC/Red Top Jerseys
- Olam Farming
- Pacific Gas & Electric Co.
- Rancho Calera LLC
- Ready Roast Nut Company
- Republic Services
- Richland Homes, INC
- Riverside Landscape and Nursery Supplies Inc
- Rosedale Ranch

- RSA Investments LLC
- Santa Fe Farms
- Shasky Farms
- Shimmich Construction Co, Inc.
- Shute, Muhaly & Weinberger
- Siroonian Properties LTD INC
- Soares Dairy
- Swanson Farms
- T-Mobile USA
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Valley Venture LLC, Delta Valley
- Vineyard Restaurant
- Wells Nut Farm Inc.
- Unidentified business owner on Santa Fe Drive
- Unidentified manufacturing facility
- Unidentified real estate company
- Zelman Development Co

Summary of Comments

A common sentiment among most businesses was that the 60-day comment period did not allow enough time for property owners to engage and become familiar with the Draft EIR/EIS.

Almost half of the businesses (28 businesses) wondered how their property would be physically impacted by the project and asked for more information. Businesses that commented on acquisitions included Allied Waste Services, Amanda Miller, Azteca Milling L.P., Bradford Farms, Bright's Nursery Inc., an unidentified business owner on Santa Fe Drive, Cavalleto Ranches, CertainTeed Insulation, Durey Libby West Inc., Fresno Motel, Holiday Motel, Jurkovich Doak Department, KB Home, Republic Services, Richland Homes Inc., Rosedale Ranch, Santa Fe Farms, Soares Dairy, T-Mobile USA, Union Pacific Railroad, and Zelman Development Co. Businesses concerned about effects to their property also included Abbey Transportation Company, Buzz Oates Group of Companies, C.A.R.S., Double Creek Ranch, Grimmway Farms, Siroonian Properties LTD Inc., and William Dicker.

Two businesses, Etchart Real Estate Consulting Group and Rosedale Ranch, stated support for HST in general; three other businesses, Giersch and Associates Inc., Doctor Kelly Brooks, and Amanda Miller, were against HST. Seventeen other businesses stated that they were either against a particular alignment that would affect their businesses or for an alignment that would have lesser effects to their businesses. Businesses that stated a position for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative or against the BNSF Alternative included Agriland Farming Company, Cavalleto Ranches, Wells Nut Farm Inc., Olam Farming, Kelsey Ranch, Lazy K Ranch, Shasky Farms, Santa Fe Farms, and Swanson Farms. Businesses for the BNSF Alternative, or against the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative included Azteca Milling, Fagundes Brothers Dairy, George Dakovich & Son Inc., Ghosoph Real Estate, Jurkovich Doak Department, KB Home, Rancho Calera LLC, Ready Roast Nut Company, an unidentified business owner on Santa Fe Drive, an unidentified manufacturing facility, Valley Venture LLC, and the Vineyard Restaurant. Two businesses stated that they were against the Hybrid Alternative. These businesses were Cavalleto Ranches and an unidentified manufacturing facility.

Twenty-two farms or ranches expressed concern about impacts to agriculture and farmlands. These included Agriland Farming Company, Amanda Miller, Bradford Farms, Bright's Nursery Inc., Cavalleto Ranches, Del Shebelut Farms, Domingos Ribiero Dairy, Double Creek Dairy, Fagundes Brothers Dairy, J. Marchini Farms, Kansas Holstein Dairy, Lazy K Ranch, Meders Ranch/Carleton Properties, Minturn Nut Co. Inc., Mordecai Ranch, Olam Farming, Santa Fe Farms, Red Top Jerseys, Shasky Farms, Soares Dairy, Swanson Farms, and William Dicker. Domingos Ribiero Dairy, Fagundes Dairy, and Shasky Farms were concerned about farm owners' ability to comply with district water quality board regulations and state pesticide and drift regulations as a result of the project. Several farms noted that relocating livestock away from HST would increase the costs of farm operations and/or decrease the productivity of their farms. One commenter was concerned about the potential frightening or scaring of livestock and potential impacts to productivity resulting from the project. Red Top Jerseys also commented that noise, vibration, dust, and stray voltage may negatively impact the health of their milking herd, while Swanson Farms mentioned that noise, dust, and light would affect their poultry operation. Cavalleto Ranches was concerned with how a passing HST would affect their nut tree farm and cited increased dust, which would increase mites and defoliation, potential changes in pollinator bee flight patterns, and potential spray drifts. Santa Fe Ranch and Shasky Farms were concerned with changes to irrigation systems from

the BNSF Alternative and the resulting effect on farm productivity. Shasky Farms noted their role as a state-contracted social service provider of fresh produce and food services to surrounding lower income areas, local schools, and non-profit organizations, which they believe would be endangered if asked to relocate as a result of the project.

Fagundes Dairy and Amanda Miller commented on the adequacy of the Draft EIR/EIS, voicing opposition to the segmenting of the HST System into separate geographically based EIR/EISs. Church & Dwight, N&W Land Co. LLC/Red Top Jerseys, and J.G. Boswell Company also commented on the adequacy of the Draft EIR/EIS and asked that it be revised and recirculated. It was noted that the Draft EIR/EIS did not adequately describe the transmission lines needed for the project.

Businesses also voiced concern that acquisitions and relocations could affect jobs and the economy. Live Oak Farms, Meders Ranch, Shasky Farms, Soares Dairy, and Valley Venture LLC noted that the full-time and seasonal jobs that they provided could be eliminated if their farms were relocated or acquired. Doak Development was concerned that the HST would impact the viability of commercial business properties along Golden State Boulevard. Others expressed concern that tax revenues benefiting Madera and Merced could be reduced or eliminated if the HST Project passes through these communities. Other businesses such as Etchart Real Estate Consulting Group, Rosedale Ranch, and various farms noted their support for the project in anticipation of the future employment, development, and growth they perceive the project will generate.

Some businesses believe that environmental issues related to noise, traffic, rail travel time, air quality, visual quality, and construction could be detrimental to retaining and attracting customers. KB Home expressed concern that the project's effects on local traffic would affect their mitigation agreements with local agencies. Doctor Kelly Brooks was concerned with access to her medical office.

UPRR provided comments primarily related to their right-of-way and uses proposed in and adjacent to it. The UPRR letter states that their entire right-of-way must be preserved, and the project should not be located within that right-of-way. The UPRR letter states that they identified several encroachments and inconsistencies in the Draft EIR/EIS, including some UPRR right-of-way as belonging to BNSF, and that the detail provided is not adequate to evaluate these right-of-way issues fully. The UPRR letter states that the document failed to acknowledge acquisitions for eminent domain purposes, failed to evaluate the impacts of alignments adjacent to UPRR's right-of-way, failed to address construction encroachments, and failed to evaluate safety risks and mitigation. The UPRR also commented on the design requirements, stating that any flyover must comply with their engineering standards, that grade-separated road crossings may not preclude future grade separation of adjacent UPRR tracks, and that areas must be accounted for to provide access to their right-of-way for improvements. The UPRR also believes that the document did not adequately address land use, displacement, environmental justice, and natural resources impacts, as well as impacts from construction, maintenance, and operation of the project. They believe that these deficiencies need to be addressed and the document recirculated. UPRR provided its design standards as an attachment to these comments.

### ***Interest Groups***

Comments were received from 43 special interest or community organizations groups listed below. Special interest groups are generally divided among 1) those representing environmental interests such as The Nature Conservancy, 2) those representing farming interests such as the California Farm Bureau Federation, 3) those groups organized in response to this project, such as Community Coalition on High-Speed Rail, or 4) those representing other organized stakeholder groups, such as the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment.

The majority of comments from each of these interest group categories requested that the Authority grant a longer comment period referencing the size of the Draft EIR/EIS, the importance of the project, and the lasting effects of the decisions that will follow the Final EIR/EIS. Comments reflecting these issues were provided by the California Farm Bureau Federation; The Nature Conservancy; Sierra Club California; American Farm Trust; The Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment; Citizens for

California High-Speed Rail Accountability; Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design; Community Coalition on High Speed Rail; Endangered Habitats League; friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks; Kings County Farm Bureau; Madera County Farm Bureau; Merced County Farm Bureau; Preserve Our Heritage; Planning and Conservation League; California Cotton Ginners Association; California Cotton Growers Association; Fresno County Farm Bureau; Nisei Farmers League; Western Agricultural Processors Association; and the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter.

An overview of the submittals for each of these groupings is summarized below.

#### Organizations Representing Environmental Interests

- East Merced Resource Conservation District
- Endangered Habitats League
- The Nature Conservancy
- Planning and Conservation League
- San Joaquin River Conservancy
- Sierra Club California
- Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter

#### Organizations Representing Farming Interests

- American Farmland Trust
- California Cotton Ginners Association
- California Cotton Growers Association
- California Farm Bureau Federation
- California Agricultural Aircraft Association
- Fresno County Farm Bureau
- Kings County Farm Bureau
- Madera County Farm Bureau
- Merced County Farm Bureau
- Nisei Farmers League
- Western Agricultural Processors Association

#### Groups Formed in Response to High-Speed Train Project

- Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design
- Californians for High Speed Rail
- Citizens for High Speed Rail Accountability
- Community Coalition on High Speed Rail
- Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee
- Madera Friends of High Speed Rail
- Preserve Our Heritage

#### Other Stakeholder Groups

- Associated Professionals and Contractors of California
- Black Physicians of the Central Valley
- California Alliance for Jobs
- California State Parks Foundation
- Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment
- Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, Land Use and Transportation Committee
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates of Merced County
- Fresno City and County Historical Society
- Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
- Healthy House
- Iron Workers 155

- Operating Engineers Local 3
- Professional Engineers in California Government
- San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
- Sigma Lambda Chi, Fresno State
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- SMT Rail
- Commerce Aviation and Economic Development

***Organizations Representing Environmental Interests***

Those groups organized around protecting the natural environment, including local and national groups, were mostly concerned with farmland and biological impacts. For example, the East Merced Resource Conservation District was concerned with impacts to farmlands and biological resources. This organization expressed support for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative East Chowchilla design option because it has fewer potential impacts. The Nature Conservancy also cited concern that the alignments would impact habitat and farmland and introduce sprawl. The Nature Conservancy also was concerned that the Draft EIR/EIS does not address cumulative impacts and asks for revisions to the document including revisions to mitigation measures. The Sierra Club was concerned about indirect growth impacts and how such impacts might affect air quality and local traffic but voiced support for the HST Project.

The Planning and Conservation League believe that the Merced to Fresno Section of the proposed HST Project would lead to the removal of farmland, homes, schools, churches, and historic buildings; would not have the stated benefit of urban sprawl mitigation; and would provide no immediate benefit to the citizens of the Central Valley of California. This organization recommends that funding be used elsewhere and that the Authority revisit a HST route along I-5.

***Organizations Representing Farming Interests***

Most farming groups voiced concern with the amount of agricultural land that would be affected by the project and preferred the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative since it would have the fewest agricultural impacts. Such groups included the Madera County Farm Bureau and the Merced County Farm Bureau. These farm bureaus also asked for additional public outreach and thought that the SR 152 Wye should be included in the EIR/EIS to avoid piece-mealing. The American Farmland Trust was concerned that the proposed HST Project would result in growth that would convert farmland to suburban development instead of concentrating growth in downtown areas as claimed in the Draft EIR/EIS. The California Farm Bureau Federation was also concerned with the validity of the growth projections in the Draft EIR/EIS.

The California Cotton Ginners Association, California Cotton Growers Association, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Nisei Farmers League, and Western Agricultural Processors Association submitted a joint comment letter. These organizations commented that agricultural impacts are understated in the Draft EIR/EIS and that to minimize farmland impacts, the Draft EIR/EIS should have considered an alternative along I-5 or the California Aqueduct. Similar to the joint letter discussed above, the Kings County Farm Bureau also noted many areas where they believed the Draft EIR/EIS failed to adequately evaluate and mitigate impacts. They also commented that the Draft EIR/EIS failed to include an alignment that follows an existing transportation corridor that would avoid conversion of farmland.

The Merced County Farm Bureau also noted that there are additional agricultural-related impacts not discussed in the Draft EIR/EIS and that they felt the No Project Alternative assumptions were neither realistic nor accurate. The Madera County Farm Bureau and the California Farm Bureau Federation commented on many sections of the EIR/EIS and asked that additional mitigation be provided to address farmland impacts. The Madera County Farm Bureau expressed concern about the potential for relocations caused by the project and the lack of an HST business plan. The California Farm Bureau Federation was particularly concerned with the project description, the alternatives analysis, and impacts to agricultural resources, and requested that their concerns be addressed with another opportunity for public comment.

The California Agricultural Aircraft Association is concerned that towers associated with the project could cause a safety concern for pilots. They were also concerned with changes in spraying patterns because of the project, and they noted that wind from the high speeds of the train could cause pesticide drift.

### ***Groups Formed in Response to the High-Speed Train Project***

Some of the groups who formed in response of the HST Project offered critique of the project purpose rather than observations about the Draft EIR/EIS environmental review. The Community Coalition on High Speed Rail questions using federal funds, and suggests transferring funds to the Peninsula for the electrification of Caltrain. Other organizations cited insufficiencies in the Draft EIR/EIS, and requested that these insufficiencies be addressed and the document be recirculated for public review. These organizations included Preserve Our Heritage, Citizens for California High Speed Rail Accountability, and the Community Coalition on High Speed Rail. Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design identified failures in the EIR/EIS and inadequacies of the public outreach process. They also suggested that additional alternatives be considered because of funding concerns related to the current project.

Citizens for California High Speed Rail Accountability oppose the project and suggest that the Authority either revise or abandon the proposed project and believe that the negative impacts within the City of Fresno have been grossly underestimated and not properly analyzed.

Groups who voiced support for the HST Project because of job growth and economic benefits included the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee, the California Alliance for Jobs, Madera Friends of High Speed Rail, and Californians for High Speed Rail. Californians for High Speed Rail noted the need for mitigation when the alignment would either go through cities or circumvents them, as different alignments would result in differing impacts to the community or farmlands. Preserve Our Heritage expressed a preference for the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative and SR 152 Wye because they minimize impacts to farmland and biological resources. Madera Friends of High Speed Rail also supported the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative.

Several groups commented on the Merced and Fresno HST stations. Californians for High Speed Rail asked for the consideration of satellite parking facilities at the Merced and Fresno stations. The Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee asked for more information on the funding of the Merced Station and requested consideration of a fee included in HST tickets that would fund security in and around the proposed station. The Committee was also interested in local business and employment opportunities around the stations. Finally, the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee commented that the analysis of the Castle Commerce Center HMF was inadequate.

### ***Other Stakeholder Groups***

Some groups voiced support for High Speed Rail because of job growth and economic benefits. These groups include the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, Operating Engineers Local 3, Iron Workers 155, and Professional Engineers in California Government.

The Court Appointed Special Advocates of Merced County asked that the Authority consider how the HST will affect children. Black Physicians of the Central Valley asked that there be safe walking and biking paths for children to schools.

Other stakeholders showed concern of how minority populations would be affected by the project. Healthy House and the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment requested continued involvement of ethnically-diverse communities of the Central Valley. The Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment cited visual impacts, air quality impacts, hazardous materials impacts, impacts on dividing a community, and neighborhood impacts that could affect communities of concern in the Central Valley. This group commented that the public outreach process in the communities of Le Grand and Franklin-Beachwood was insufficient and requested more targeted outreach in the unincorporated communities where the HMF sites may be located. Associated Professionals and Contractors of California were also concerned with impacts related to environmental justice. They believe that the California HST has violated the principles of environmental justice and that the most affected communities of this region (low income,

minority, monolingual) were not given ample notice of the impacts of the project. The Associated Professionals and Contractors of California believe that impacts that would affect communities of concern were not fully and adequately disclosed, and they suggested additional mitigation.

The Land Use and Transportation Committee of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition also commented on environmental justice issues. They commented that the Draft EIR/EIS did not evaluate disproportionate impacts to disadvantaged communities or issues pertaining to transportation access and access to the new HST station facilities. Furthermore, the committee commented that the Draft EIR/EIS contains no specific mitigation measures for land use or growth-inducing impacts from HST station planning.

The San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust was concerned with visual and access impacts and changes to the recreational use of Camp Pashayan in Fresno, which is operated as a public park. The San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust requested improvements to the park as mitigation. The California State Parks Foundation was concerned with impacts to Allensworth Park and how the impacts were analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS. They noted that the Draft EIR/EIS stated that to minimize impacts to Allensworth Park, the BNSF railway could be relocated adjacent to the eastern side of the Allensworth Bypass but that the impacts from this relocation were not discussed in the Draft EIR/EIS.

The Fresno City and County Historical Society recommended measures to use in the subsequent design phases of the project to minimize impacts to historical resources in the Fresno area. The Fresno City and County Historical Society requested involvement in further stages of project design because their local knowledge is important in addressing issues related to historical resources.

#### **8.6.2.9 Comments Received from Individuals**

In addition to agencies, elected officials, and those representing businesses or other organizations, there were over 500 submittals from California residents who do not claim affiliation with any other organization or business. The views expressed by these individuals ranged from strongly supportive to strongly opposed to the entire statewide project. Those who were supportive expressed desires for alternative modes of transportation, reduced congestion, improved air quality, and increased accessibility to other parts of the state. Both supporters and those opposed to the project mentioned jobs in support of their position, either that the project would bring jobs or jobs would be sacrificed due to the project. Those who expressed opposition described lack of confidence in ridership projections, funding availability, and financial planning. They frequently mentioned that the project had higher than expected cost. Commenters in opposition also listed concerns over impacts to community, agricultural, wildlife, and water resources.

In addition to opinions either for or against HST or a particular alternative, the following discussion highlights the most commonly listed issues by individual commenters.

- **Agricultural Impacts:** While agricultural impact was frequently listed as a high concern, most comments merely listed it without adding more specifics. Typically, individuals who owned large properties articulated concerns about the effects on farming operations, reduced accessibility to different sides of the farm, reducing the viability of farming in this valley, and the effects on agricultural related and supporting jobs.
- **Cost:** Many expressed that HST Project costs are larger than expected. There were concerns regarding funding shortfalls or lack of adequate funding and concerns that funding inadequacies will cause further debt in the state of California and higher taxes.
- **Property Impacts:** Comments on property impacts ranged from wanting the project to avoid acquiring their property to concerns about bisecting their property, as well as generally questioning whether their property would be impacted. Still others expressed concerns that the noise and presence of HST would cause property devaluation.

- **Community Division:** Comments concerning community division were generally addressing individual alignment alternatives. Fairmead residents addressed UPRR/SR 99 and Hybrid alternatives while Le Grand residents expressed concern about the BNSF Alternative. Madera residents were generally concerned about impacts of the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative to the downtown area, but some also felt it would help redevelopment opportunities. Residents in Fairmead listed concerns about their community church and the cumulative impacts on their community since recent SR 99 construction has had effects on their community and their property. While many citizens in Le Grand expressed similar concerns as those in Fairmead, there were others who stated that the agriculture along the BNSF corridor was not worth protecting and that the HST project was a high value to the region. Those opposing the BNSF Alternative noted how that alternative would result in destroying their community and the agricultural economy surrounding Le Grand. Many residents in Le Grand felt that the BNSF Alternative does not adequately travel along transportation corridors. Individuals from Merced County submitted 159 comment forms distributed by County Supervisor's Pedrozo's office. The form provided four options of different combinations of either supporting the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative or opposing the BNSF Alternative or a combination of both. The form also provided an opportunity for persons to provide handwritten comments. Most continued to re-iterate their preference for or against the project or a particular alternative.

Commenters from Madera were mixed between those who felt that the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative would be detrimental to Downtown Madera and further divide the City (as SR 99 and the UPRR does) and those who felt that this alternative would help the community redevelop an area that is stagnating. Still others felt that Madera did not have anything to gain from the project unless it either had a station or the HMF.

- **Safety and Transportation Impacts:** Some comments concerned pedestrian accessibility and safety, and increased vehicular congestion around station areas. Many individuals also recognized the added access, added flexibility, and better transportation along SR 99 resulting from the HST.

The following summarizes comments received from individuals pertinent to each section of the Draft EIR/EIS. If the resource is not included below, direct comments were not provided on that particular topic.

### ***Chapter 1, Purpose and Need***

There were almost no comments on the purpose and need. No one questioned the primary need statements, only the facts that the growth projections were currently reflective of the economic downturn. Two persons referenced the benefits of the project to provide support for moving the project forward.

### ***Chapter 2, Alternatives Analysis***

The most frequently mentioned element of Chapter 2, Alternatives, was cost. Several commenters listed higher than expected project costs as justification for not pursuing the project. This comment was frequently combined with lack of trust for the availability and planning for project funding. A few wanted to know the ticket price and considerations for disability fares. Another common comment was the lack of trust for the ridership projections. Approximately 54 individuals commented on the range of alternatives considered. Several questioned whether the alternatives studied upheld the project objective to follow the transportation corridors to the extent possible. Several individuals stated that the BNSF Alternative and the UPRR/SR 99 Alternative West Chowchilla design option deviate from transportation corridors. Several wanted improvements to the Amtrak services and others wanted a Central Valley HST project to be located along I-5. About four individuals requested a stop in the City of Madera, and one person requested justification for the elimination of a design option linking BNSF to the UPRR near Fresno.

A few commenters referenced the growth trends in the Central Valley, with some listing that growth in the Valley cannot be supported and others listing a concern for lack of employment in the Central Valley.



**Chapter 3, Environmental Resources**

There were no specific comments on Section 4(f), Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Land Use, Hazardous Materials or Electromagnetic Fields/Electromagnetic Interference (EMF/EMI), analyses by individuals. The following topics received the greatest number of comments and are listed in the order of frequency mentioned:

- **Transportation:** Transportation issues listed included congestion around stations, safety of pedestrian access, and school walking routes. Additionally, a few mentioned increased difficulty of finding parking around the downtown areas where stations are proposed. One individual wanted to know if this project would displace bus services.
- **Air Quality:** Most commenters who listed air quality as a justification for supporting the HST Project mentioned that the operation would potentially remove automobile congestion. They also commented on dust disturbance during construction and operation, as well as disturbance of pesticides during operation.
- **Noise/Vibration:** Only a few individual comments mentioned noise impacts on residential areas, and no one listed concerns over vibration impacts.
- **Biology:** Individuals listed concern for impacts on the wildlife generally without details about which species or protected areas.
- **Geology:** One individual expressed concern regarding seismic faults lines along the BNSF Alternative alignment.
- **Safety:** Fewer than five individuals listed safety concerns. As mentioned under transportation, a few were concerned about pedestrian safety. Two commenters listed the concern for train collision incidents between freight and HST and wanted to make sure a collision barrier was planned.
- **Communities:** Specific community impacts concerns were listed above concerning Le Grand, Madera, or Chowchilla areas. In addition, three individuals listed their concern for the relocation of the Merced Mobility Estates due to the access track to the Castle Commerce Center HMF. The most frequent comments were related to property acquisition, relocation procedures, and the potential for the project to devalue their property. Supporters listed the potential for jobs as a benefit of the project, and opposition related concern about project effects on agricultural-related jobs.
- **Agricultural:** Approximately 178 individuals listed agricultural impacts, many of which listed these as the reason for opposing the project. While most were not specific about the types of agricultural impacts that concerned them, others mentioned bisecting farms, added difficulties in farming operations, and closing agricultural businesses. Also, individuals mentioned that the project would remove important economic businesses and jobs that accompany those businesses. People expressed that loss of agricultural resources was a nonrenewable resource and that the project had a duty to remain adjacent to existing transportation corridors and minimize the acres of agricultural impacts. A few reiterated some specific business concerns, such as the potential to bisect dairy farms. Others also listed the heritage of multi-generational family-owned farms that would be affected.
- **Utilities:** Approximately 20 individuals submitted comments related to utilities, generally concerning impacts of the project on utility rates, utility disruptions during construction, and the capacity of the electrical grid to handle the demand from the project.
- **Cumulative:** A few commenters expressed concern that the project would attract residents to the area who would work outside the region.

**8.6.2.10 Statewide Comments Received**

Some comments received during the public comment period were not specific to the Merced to Fresno section. They included topics not related to the environmental effects of the Merced to Fresno section, comments related to the Statewide project (which is not the subject of this EIR/EIS), or comments

requesting additional information about the project. These comments and the responses to them are included with the comments and responses on the Merced to Fresno section in Volume IV of this EIR/EIS. Comments of this type that were common (several received for each topic) were responded to by the Merced to Fresno Master Responses (Section 8.6.3.2 describes the use of Master Responses and Chapter 16 in Volume IV of the EIR/EIS presents the Master Responses). [Note: submission letters with both Merced to Fresno and Statewide-type comments may appear more than once in Volume IV, with responses shown separately for each type of comment within the letter.]

### **8.6.3 Responses to Common Comments**

This introduction explains the method used of responding to comments, as well as the organization of the responses to comments on the Merced to Fresno Section Final EIR/EIS. Written responses to public comments received between August 9, 2011, and October 13, 2011 are provided in Volume IV of this EIR/EIS. The comments received after October 13, 2011, were considered, but have not been responded to individually. Those comments are included in Table 2 of Volume IV of the EIR/EIS.

#### **8.6.3.1 Review and Comments on the Merced to Fresno Section EIR/EIS**

The Authority reviewed the comment transmittals and their attachments, identifying individual issues to which the comments pertained. After identifying the individual comments within the cards, letters, verbal transcripts, and e-mails, the Authority grouped individual comments by resource issue and assigned each set of comments to technical experts in the appropriate disciplines to prepare a response. After reading through their assigned comments, the technical experts grouped the individual comments by resource topic and prepared draft responses. Before completion of the Final EIR/EIS, senior-level experts then reviewed each response to ensure technical and scientific accuracy, clarity, and consistency, and to ensure that the response addressed the comment.

Where multiple commenters have submitted essentially the same comment, the Final EIR/EIS groups those comments and provides a single Master Response. Chapter 16 of Volume IV provides a summary of the comment themes and the Master Responses, as well as a list of the comment numbers that the responses are intended to address. When reading the comments submitted, a reference to find the Master Response is provided. In other cases, a custom response is provided in the attached comment submittals. The master responses shown in Chapter 16 of Volume IV are organized first by general themes, and then by EIR/EIS section (purpose/need, alternatives, environmental resource, etc.).

Where appropriate and consistent with CEQA and NEPA, Final EIR/EIS responds to the significant environmental issues that have been raised by commenters without necessarily responding to each individual comment. As required under CEQA and NEPA, the comments received are included and the commenters identified in Volume IV of this EIR/EIS.

California Public Resources Code Section 21091(d)(1) and (d)(2) provides the basis for this approach under CEQA:

(d) (1) The lead agency shall consider comments it receives on a draft environmental impact report, proposed negative declaration, or proposed mitigated negative declaration if those comments are received within the public review period.

(2) (A) With respect to the consideration of comments received on a draft environmental impact report, the lead agency shall evaluate comments on environmental issues that are received from persons who have reviewed the draft and shall prepare a written response pursuant to subparagraph (B). The lead agency may also respond to comments that are received after the close of the public review period.

(B) The written response shall describe the disposition of each significant environmental issue that is raised by commenters. The responses shall be prepared consistent with Section 15088 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, as those regulations existed on June 1, 1993.

Section 14(s) of the FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 101, pg. 28545) validates this approach under NEPA.

(s) In a final EIS, a compilation of all responsible comments received on the draft EIS, whether made in writing or at a public hearing, and responses to each comment. Comments may be collected and summarized except for comments by Federal agencies and where otherwise required by Federal law or regulation. Every effort should be made to resolve significant issues before the EIS is put into final form. The final EIS should reflect such issues, consultation and efforts to resolve such issues, including an explanation of why any remaining issues have not been resolved.

**Table 8-1**  
 Public and Agency Meetings

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Environmental Resource Agencies	June 13, 2007	Statewide meeting to discuss resource agency participation and coordination efforts for the project-level EIR/EIS documents.
Environmental Resource Agencies	April 8, 2008	Statewide meeting to discuss resource agency participation and coordination efforts for the project-level EIR/EIS documents.
Authority Board Meeting	December 3, 2008	Project update
Madera County Staff	December 10, 2008	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process.
City of Madera Staff	December 10, 2008	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process.
City of Chowchilla Staff	December 11, 2008	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process.
City of Merced Staff	December 11, 2008	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process.
Merced County Staff	December 11, 2008	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process.
Meeting with Fresno Mayor	January 13, 2009	HST in Fresno, invite to scoping meeting.
City of Fresno Staff	January 23, 2009	HST in Fresno, city/regional issues.
Centennial Corridor Open House – Caltrans/TRIP	January 27, 2009	HST in Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting.
Ahron Hakimi, Caltrans Corridor Project Manager, TRIP Office	January 29, 2009	HST in Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting.
State Historic Preservation Officer	January 29, 2009	Review Project EIR/EIS analysis methods, discuss programmatic mitigation measures, and consider preparing a Memorandum of Agreement.
Keith Bergthold, City of Fresno	February 6, 2009	HST station and maintenance facility criteria and moving forward on rail consolidation and HST, discuss scoping meetings.
Clark Thompson, Fresno COG, and Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation (FARRC)	February 6, 2009	HST and rail consolidation, discuss scoping meetings.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
City of Fresno Staff	February 6, 2009	Downtown station planning and alignments, discuss scoping meetings.
Fresno Business Council	February 10, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting.
Cross Valley Rail Joint Powers Authority	February 12, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting.
City of Chowchilla City Council	February 12, 2009	HST overview presentation, extend invitations to attend scoping meetings on March 18 and 19.
Frank Bigelow, Madera County Supervisor	February 19, 2009	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting.
Sam Armentrout, Madera Mayor	February 24, 2009	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting.
Sons of Retirement	March 3, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation.
Noah Lor, Merced City Council	March 4, 2009	HST in Merced, Central Valley.
Hub Walsh, Merced County Supervisor	March 4, 2009	HST in Merced, Central Valley.
Patricia Taylor, Madera County Transportation Commission	March 9, 2009	HST in Central Valley.
John Pedrozo, Merced County Supervisor	March 9, 2009	HST in Merced, Central Valley.
Vern Moss and Tom Wheeler, Madera County Supervisors	March 9, 2009	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting.
Robert Poythress, Madera City Councilman	March 9, 2009	HST in Madera, Central Valley.
Fresno County Board of Supervisors	March 10, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting.
Cynthia Sterling, City of Fresno Council President	March 11, 2009	HST in Fresno, invite to scoping meeting.
Presentation to Merced Support Group	March 11, 2009	HST in Merced, Central Valley Group included the mayor of Merced, Merced County Supervisors, Laotian Community representatives, business community representatives, City of Merced staff, a representative from Senator Denham's office, a representative from Representative Cardoza's office, the president of Merced College, and the UC-Merced Vice Chancellor.
Madera County and City of Madera Staff	March 12, 2009	HST in Madera County, Central Valley.
Max Rodriguez, Madera County Supervisor	March 12, 2009	HST in Madera, invite to scoping meeting.
Madera County Resources Management Agency	March 12, 2009	HST in Madera, invite to scoping meeting.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Fresno City Council	March 17, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting.
Merced to Bakersfield Section Scoping Meeting, Merced	March 18, 2009	Scoping
City of Chowchilla Mayor and Staff Meeting	March 19, 2009	HST in Central Valley.
Merced to Bakersfield Section Scoping Meeting, Madera	March 19, 2009	Scoping
Merced to Bakersfield Section Scoping Meeting, Fresno	March 25, 2009	Scoping
Caltrans Statewide Environmental Managers Meeting	March 26, 2009	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation.
Merced to Bakersfield Section Scoping Meeting, Bakersfield	March 26, 2009	Scoping
Le Grand Planning Community Meeting	May 4, 2009	Review material presented at scoping meetings, provide overview of station criteria and gather feedback on the HST alternatives and station criteria.
Great Valley Center Conference	May 6-7, 2009	Statewide project information.
Atwater City Council Meeting	May 21, 2009	Review material presented at scoping meetings, provide overview of station criteria and gather feedback on the HST alternatives and station criteria.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Technical Working Group Meeting	June 4, 2009	Project status, overview of alternatives, scoping comment summary, next steps.
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Technical Working Group Meeting	June 4, 2009	Project status, overview of alternatives, scoping comment summary, next steps.
SHPO	June 29, 2009	Review the analysis methods for project-level EIR/EIS documents, discuss programmatic mitigation measures, and consider preparing a Memorandum of Agreement.
Fresno Technical Advisory Group Meeting	July 1, 2009	Review HST project status and funding update, provide project scoping summary, overview and update of alternatives analysis process, review results from Visalia-Tulare-Hanford Station Study, <sup>a</sup> review current alignment and station alternatives, discuss next steps.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Technical Working Group Meeting	July 15, 2009	Review of alternatives refinement to date, overview of station criteria, feedback on alternatives and station criteria.
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Technical Working Group Meeting	July 15, 2009	Review of alternatives refinement to date, overview of station criteria, feedback on alternatives and station criteria.
Environmental Resource Agencies	July 29, 2009	Statewide meeting to discuss the project-level environmental review process, the status of project-level EIR/EIS reports, and project-level scoping comments.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
SHPO	August 4, 2009	Define the area of potential effect, discuss the analysis methodology, and prepare Programmatic Agreement.
SHPO	August 17, 2009	Review analytical methods and PA.
Merced Rotary Club	August 26, 2009	Provide an overview of the California HST Project.
San Jose to Merced Section: Technical Working Group Meeting	September 10, 2009	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced Section. Attendees include City of Merced, Merced County, and local agency staff.
San Jose to Merced Section: Environmental Agency Technical Working Group Coordination Meeting	September 10, 2009	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced Section.
Merced- Fresno and Fresno - Bakersfield Sections: Environmental Agency Technical Working Group Meeting	September 23, 2009	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield sections.
San Jose to Merced Section: Merced Public Meeting	October 8, 2009	Summarize the comments received during scoping and discuss the additional alternatives developed in response which may be carried out for further detailed study.
Environmental Resource Agencies	October 8, 2009	Initial meeting with environmental resource agencies for Merced to Fresno HST Project.
Caltrans Coordination Meeting	October 15, 2009	Initiate coordination and communication between project team and Caltrans Central Region (including District 6 and District 10 staff).
Caltrans District 6 Alignment Coordination Meeting	October 23, 2009	Discuss Caltrans vision for SR 99 improvements.
Chowchilla and Madera Coordination Meeting	October 29, 2009	Discuss draft alternative analysis results
USFWS, USACE, and CDFG	November 5, 2009	Technical meeting to discuss biological resource survey methods.
Authority Board Meeting	November 30, 2009	Project update
Authority Board Meeting	December 3, 2009	Alternatives analysis briefing.
Merced to Fresno Section and San Jose to Merced Section Joint Technical Working Group Meeting, Merced	December 14, 2009	Provide an overview of alternatives analysis process, review alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced and Merced to Fresno sections.
Merced to Fresno Section and San Jose to Merced Section Joint Participating Local and Transportation Agencies Meeting, Merced	December 14, 2009	Provide an overview of alternatives analysis process, review alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced and Merced to Fresno sections.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Merced to Fresno and San Jose to Merced Section Joint Participating Local and Transportation Agencies Meeting, Madera	December 14, 2009	Provide an overview of alternatives analysis process, review alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section.
Madera Public Information Meeting	December 17, 2009	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced and Merced to Fresno sections, gather feedback. Spanish interpreters provided.
Merced Public Information Meeting (Joint Meeting for Merced to Fresno and San Jose to Merced Sections)	December 17, 2009	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for San Jose to Merced and Merced to Fresno sections, gather feedback. Spanish interpreters provided.
DOC	January 4, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process.
NMFS	January 5, 2010	Discuss fisheries issues.
Merced County Board of Supervisors	January 12, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
Merced Council of Governments Technical Review Committee	January 13, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
Fresno to Bakersfield Public Information Meeting, Fresno (Merced to Fresno Section team supporting)	January 19, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Fresno to Bakersfield Section, gather feedback.
Merced to Sacramento Section Scoping Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section team supporting)	January 21, 2010	Scoping for the Merced to Sacramento Section. Merced to Fresno Section team available with graphics to provide information on the Merced to Fresno Section and respond to questions. Spanish interpreters provided.
SHPO	January 21, 2010	Discuss draft PA.
SHPO	February 4, 2010	Discuss SHPO edits to PA.
EPA, USACE, and USFWS	February 10, 2010	Discuss compliance process for CWA, Section 404.
Chowchilla Mayor and Officials Meeting	February 11, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
Chowchilla Mayor and Officials Meeting	February 18, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Madera City Council Meeting	March 2, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
Merced County Board of Supervisor Meeting	March 2, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
Chowchilla Officials Meeting	March 5, 2010	Provide requested additional information per their feedback on the overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather new feedback.
CVFPB	March 8, 2010	Discuss applicability of flood protection regulations.
EPA	March 11, 2010	Discuss alternatives analysis process.
Fresno to Bakersfield Section Public Information Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section team supporting)	March 16, 2010	Provide information about the alternatives for the north Fresno section of the Merced to Fresno Section and its relationship to the Fresno to Bakersfield Section.
Merced County Farm Bureau	March 30, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
John Pedrozo, Merced County Supervisor	March 30, 2010	Project update, alternatives analysis process and recommendations.
Merced Officials Meeting	March 30, 2010	Provide an overview of the alternatives analysis process, review the alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations for Merced to Fresno Section, gather feedback.
ACHP	April 1, 2010	Review Section 106 process for HST projects.
City of Merced Downtown Development Workshop (Merced to Fresno Section team supporting)	April 2, 2010	Discuss future downtown development. Merced to Fresno Section team provided information about the station design in Downtown Merced.
Authority Board Meeting	April 8, 2010	Present Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report and selection of alternatives to move forward for detailed environmental review.
Planada Community Advisory Council	April 8, 2010	Provide information about alternatives moving forward for detailed environmental review.
USACE, FHWA, USFWS, NMFS, State Lands Commission, CVFPB, SWRCB, RWQCB, DOC, and CDFG	April 21, 2010	Discuss coordination and permitting for water crossings.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Technical Working Group	April 27, 2010	Provide new station design information, review materials presented at the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options and HMF sites.



Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Technical Working Group	April 27, 2010	Provide new station design information, review materials presented at the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options and HMF sites.
Merced Public Information Meeting	April 29, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meetings and gather feedback on wye options and HMF site options. Spanish interpreters provided.
Madera Public Information Meeting	April 29, 2009	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meetings and gather feedback on wye options and HMF site options. Spanish interpreters provided.
Chowchilla Mayor and Officials Meeting	May 3, 2010	Provide requested additional information regarding alternatives analysis process, review alternatives analysis evaluation and recommendations, gather feedback.
Madera Multicultural Outreach – Hosted by the Madera County Health Department	May 12, 2010	Outreach to the Hispanic community in Madera to provide information about project status and gather feedback. Spanish interpreters provided.
City of Chowchilla Staff	May 13, 2010	Discuss engineering issues for alternatives.
Chowchilla Mayor and Officials Meeting	May 24, 2010	Provide additional information requested in previous feedback on overview of alternatives analysis process, review evaluation and recommendations, receive additional feedback.
City of Chowchilla City Council Meeting	May 24, 2010	Provide information and answer questions about alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Dumna Wo Wah Tribe	May 27, 2010	Discuss the HST project and provide information on potential areas of concern.
Le Grand, Plainsburg, and Planada Community Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section supporting)	June 1, 2010	Provide information, maps, and answer questions about the alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
USACE	June 2, 2010	Wetland delineation and permitting coordination.
CDFG	June 7, 2010	Permitting coordination.
USFWS	June 9, 2010	Permitting coordination.
City of Fresno Public Works Coordination Meeting	June 11, 2010	Coordinate HST planning efforts that interface with City of Fresno infrastructure.
Madera County Board of Supervisors	June 15, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options and HMF site options.
Madera County Farm Bureau	June 15, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options and HMF site options.
San Jose to Merced Los Banos Public Information Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section supporting)	June 15, 2010	Provide information and answer questions about alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Ahmed Brothers	June 16, 2010	Discuss property conflicts.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
San Jose to Merced Section Merced Technical Working Group (Merced to Fresno Section supporting)	June 17, 2010	Provide information and answer questions about alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Chowchilla business owner	June 17, 2010	Provide information regarding alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review and business concerns.
San Jose to Merced Section Dos Palos Public Information Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section supporting)	June 17, 2010	Provide information and answer questions about alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
CDFG	June 28, 2010	Camp Pashayan regulatory status.
Ahmed Brothers	July 15, 2010	Discuss property conflicts.
San Jose to Merced Section Merced Public Information Meeting (Merced to Fresno Section supporting)	July 15, 2010	Provide information and answer questions about alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Merced Officials Meeting	July 16, 2010	Provide information about the new Chowchilla design option, gather feedback.
Madera Board of Supervisors Meeting	July 20, 2010	Provide information about the new Chowchilla design option, gather feedback.
Chowchilla Mayor and Officials Meeting	July 20, 2010	Provide information about the new Chowchilla design option, gather feedback.
Fairmead Public Information Meeting	July 20, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options, new Chowchilla design option, and HMF site options.
Merced County Farm Bureau	July 22, 2010	Provide information about the new Chowchilla design option, gather feedback.
Chowchilla Public Information Meeting	July 22, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on wye options, new Chowchilla design option, and HMF site options.
Merced County Supervisor Pedrozo and the Owner of Fagundes HMF Site	July 28, 2010	Provide information about the new Chowchilla design option and gather feedback, tour of farmlands around the West Chowchilla design option.
Authority Board Meeting	August 5, 2010	Present Supplemental Alternative Analysis Report, and select alternatives to be carried forward for detailed analysis.
Tour of BNSF Alternative in Le Grand with Merced County Supervisor Pedrozo	August 13, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Authority board meeting and gather feedback on BNSF Alternative, including the Le Grand design options.
Azteca Milling	August 16, 2010	Provide information about the alternatives and gather feedback, tour of alignments.
Tribal Consultation Meeting	August 16, 2010	Provide information about the April 8, 2010, Supplemental Alignment Analysis Report; gather feedback on wye options, new Chowchilla design option, and HMF site options.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Merced Family Lao Community	August 25, 2010	Provide information about the HST project and the Merced to Fresno Section alternatives.
Preserve Our Heritage	September 15, 2010	Provide information about the HST project and the Merced to Fresno Section alternatives.
Fagundes Brothers & Supervisor Pedrozo	September 20, 2010	Tour the dairy and farm land potentially impacted by alignment alternatives. Listen to concerns.
Comprehensive Mitigation Strategy Meeting (with Fresno to Bakersfield and San Jose to Merced section project teams)	September 23, 2010	Discuss survey results and mitigation approaches with environmental resource agencies.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Technical Working Group	September 23, 2010	Provide information from Authority board meeting, including refined alternatives carried forward, HMF alternatives carried forward, and design options.
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Technical Working Group	September 23, 2010	Provide information from Authority board meeting, including refined alternatives carried forward, HMF alternatives carried forward, and design options.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Public Information Meeting	September 28, 2010	Present results of the August 5, 2010, Authority Board meeting on the <i>Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report</i> and alternatives carried forward.
Yosemite Farm Credit	October 5, 2010	Provide information from Authority board meeting, including refined alternatives carried forward, HMF alternatives carried forward, and design options.
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Public Information Meeting	October 5, 2010	Present results of the August 5, 2010, Authority board meeting on the <i>Merced to Fresno Section Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report</i> and alternatives carried forward.
EPA Region 9	October 26, 2010	Discuss agency coordination, environmental approval guidance, and sustainability.
Central Valley Agricultural Meeting	October 28, 2010	Authority meeting with members of agricultural leadership.
City of Chowchilla	December 10, 2010	Road modifications and visual effects in and near Chowchilla.
Environmental Resource Agencies	December 13, 2010	Statewide meeting to discuss status of Central Valley sections of the HST System.
Federally Recognized Native American Tribes	December 15, 2010	Coordination between the FRA and federally recognized Native American Tribes.
Public Record Act Request, City of Madera	December 17, 2010	Discuss type of information and timeline for delivery of requested information.
USACE and CVFPB	February 2, 2011	Review design requirements and data needs.
Environmental Resource Agencies	February 7, 2011	Statewide permitting workshop to discuss permit processes with environmental resource agencies.
DOC	February 24, 2011	Discuss mitigation strategies and ratios.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Caltrans District 6 (Fresno)	March 4, 2011	Caltrans Project Report (General Process of Review Discussion).
City of Fresno	March 16, 2011	Revised 15% at-grade design.
Caltrans District 6 (Fresno)	March 16, 2011	Caltrans Project Report (Fresno County).
Mitigation Measures Meeting – Madera	March 22, 2011	Review potential impacts and discuss conceptual mitigation measures, including noise, visual impacts, safety issues, road closures, etc.
Preserve Our Heritage	March 22, 2011	Discuss current alignments and questions.
Caltrans District 6 (Fresno)	March 24, 2011	Caltrans Project Report (Madera County).
Caltrans District 10 (Stockton)	March 29, 2011	Caltrans Project Report (Merced County).
EPA and USACE	April 6, 2011	Discuss Checkpoint B.
City of Merced Staff	April 14, 2011	Discuss location of station south of Martin Luther King Boulevard.
City of Madera	April 20, 2011	Discuss methodology, potential impacts, and standard mitigation measures for noise and visual resources associated with the City of Madera.
Merced to Fresno Section Madera Technical Working Group	April 21, 2011	Inform Technical Working Group participants of recent design changes in advance of May 5, 2011, Authority Board of Directors meeting.
Merced to Fresno Section Merced Technical Working Group	April 21, 2011	Inform Technical Working Group participants of recent design changes in advance of May 5, 2011, Authority Board of Directors meeting.
EPA, USFWS, USACE, NMFS	April 25, 2011	Discuss environmental process and permit scheduling relevant to the Merced to Fresno and Fresno to Bakersfield sections.
Fresno to Bakersfield Section Fresno Technical Working Group (Merced to Fresno Section Supporting)	April 26, 2011	Inform Technical Working Group participants of recent design changes in advance of May 5, 2011, Authority Board of Directors meeting.
Authority Board Meeting	May 5, 2011	Present Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report on the optimized alignments and the alignment profile to Downtown Fresno Station for selection of alternatives to move forward for detailed environmental review.
California Wildlife Conservation Board	May 12, 2011	Discuss options for how the Wildlife Conservation Board could help with mitigation requirements.
Fresno Public Information Meeting	May 17, 2011	Provide materials presented at the May 5, 2011, Authority Board Meeting on the optimized alignments and the alignment profile to Downtown Fresno Station.
State Water Resources Control Board	May 17, 2011	Discuss CWA Section 401 and 402 permit requirements.
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and the California Air Resources Board	May 19, 2011	Air Quality analysis, methodology, and preliminary results.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
SHPO	May 18, 2011	Finalize PA.
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	May 24, 2011	Potential effects on Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation facilities and mitigation measures
Dr. Chester University of California – Berkeley	May 27, 2011	Discuss potential air quality impacts and energy.
Merced Public Information Meeting	June 1, 2011	Provide materials presented at the May 5, 2011, Authority Board Meeting on the optimized alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Tribal Meeting	June 1, 2011	Project update, regulatory overview.
Madera Public Information Meeting	June 2, 2011	Provide materials presented at the May 5, 2011, Authority Board Meeting on the optimized alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
Authority Board Meeting	June 2, 2011	Project update
DWR and USBR	June 6, 2011	Coordination regarding the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.
State Lands Commission	June 10, 2011	Coordination for potential impacts on state lands.
Los Banos Public Information Meeting (San Jose-Merced hosted)	June 13, 2011	Provide information and maps, and answer questions about the alignments moving forward for detailed environmental review.
USFWS and NMFS	June 14, 2011	Endangered Species Act pre-application meeting.
Madera County	June 29, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	June 29, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation involving the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation property/facilities.
California Prison Industries Authority	July 5, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation involving the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation property/facilities.
Madera Irrigation District	July 6, 2011	Discuss potential impacts on Madera Irrigation District property/facilities.
Chowchilla City Council	July 11, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Authority Board Meeting	July 14, 2011	Project update
City of Merced	July 15, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Merced County Transportation	July 15, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Merced Council of Governments	July 15, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera Mayor Robert Poythress	July 20, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera Councilman Brett Frazier	July 20, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County Supervisor Ronn Dominici	July 20, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County Supervisor Davis Rogers	July 20, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Madera County Supervisor Frank Bigelow	July 25, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County Supervisor Tom Wheeler	July 25, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County Supervisor Max Rodriguez	July 25, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera Councilman Gary Svanda	July 25, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Tribal Consultation Meeting	July 28, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera City Council Meeting	August 17, 2011	Provide update on release of Draft EIR/EIS and invitation to hearings and workshops
Fairmead Public Information Meeting	August 23, 2011	Present the Draft EIR/EIS and provide the public an opportunity to ask questions.
Le Grand Public Information Meeting	August 24, 2011	Present the Draft EIR/EIS and provide the public an opportunity to ask questions.
Chowchilla Public Information Meeting	August 25, 2011	Present the Draft EIR/EIS and provide the public an opportunity to ask questions.
Fresno Public Information Meeting	August 30, 2011	Present the Draft EIR/EIS and provide the public an opportunity to ask questions.
Merced City School District Coordination Meeting	September 2, 2011	Discuss potential project effects on schools.
Planada Community Meeting	September 6, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Small Business Forum, Save Mart Center in Fresno	September 8, 2011	Provide project information
EPA and USACE Meeting	September 12, 2011	Guidance document discussion
Merced Public Hearing	September 14, 2011	Formal public hearing on the EIR/EIS.
Madera Public Hearing	September 15, 2011	Formal public hearing on the EIR/EIS.
Technical Working Group Meetings #1 and 2	September 15, 2011	CRAM analysis discussion
Fresno Public Hearing	September 20, 2011	Formal public hearing on the EIR/EIS.
Technical Working Group Meeting #3	September 28, 2011	Indirect Impacts, Watershed Planning and Permanent versus Temporary
Technical Working Group Meeting #4	September 30, 2011	Mitigation planning and schedules
Quarterly Board Meeting of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley	October 6, 2011	Project update
California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley – 2011 Summit	October 7, 2011	Provide project information

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Technical Working Group Meeting #5	October 11, 2011	Watershed planning meeting
Chowchilla Chamber of Commerce Presentation	October 18, 2011	Provide project information
USACE Mitigation Discussion	November 9, 2011	Mitigation discussion meeting
Caltrans District 10	November 15, 2011	
USFWS, CDFG, and USACE Meeting	November 22, 2011	Environmental team coordination meeting
USACE and EPA Meeting	November 28, 2011	Section 404 coordination
Chowchilla Unified School District and Alview-Dairyland School District Joint Meeting	November 29, 2011	Discuss potential project effects on schools.
Merced to Fresno Section San Joaquin River Crossing Agency Meeting	November 30, 2011	Present design refinement for San Joaquin River Crossing
Caltrans District 6 Coordination Meeting	December 1, 2011	Design Coordination Meeting
City of Chowchilla	December 1, 2011	Meeting with Mayor and City Manager
City of Merced	December 1, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
City of Madera	December 1, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Merced HSR Citizen's Support Committee	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
San Joaquin Valley Council of Governments directors meetings	December 1, 2011	Provide project information
Chowchilla Water District	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Preserve our Heritage	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
UC Merced Student HSR Supporters	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Madera County Farm Bureau	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Preserve Our Heritage	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Madera Friends for High Speed Rail	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Al Smith, Fresno Chamber	December 1, 2011	Project update
Mr. Aja, Operating Engineers Local 3/North Valley Labor Federation	December 1, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Mordecai Ranch	December 2, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Merced County Farm Bureau	December 2, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Merced County Representatives	December 2, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting

Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
Merced Rotary	December 2, 2011	Project information
City of Fresno	December 2, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
John Hernandez, Fresno Hispanic Chamber	December 2, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Tate Hill, Fresno Black Chamber	December 2, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Madera County Planning Department	December 5, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County Supervisor Frank Bigelow	December 5, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera City Manager	December 5, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Madera County	December 5, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Fairmead Community and Friends	December 7, 2011	Stakeholder Meeting
Church and Dwight	December 7, 2011	Discuss proposed alignment revisions.
Merced Rotary	December 7, 2011	Project update
EPA and USACE	December 12, 2011	Section 404 coordination
HSRA Board Meeting	December 13, 2011	Discussion regarding the preferred alternative
EPA and USACE Technical Working Group Meeting	December 20, 2011	Section 404 coordination
City of Chowchilla	December 21, 2011	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Justin White, Chief of Staff for Madera County Supervisor Ronn Dominici	January 5, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Anja Raudabaugh, Executive Director for Madera County Farm Bureau	January 5, 2012	Stakeholder Meeting
Fairmead Community Baptist Church	January 9, 2012	Joint public meeting with Merced to San Jose Section to discuss wye connection
Tribal Representatives Information Meeting	January 10, 2012	Discuss project impacts on tribal/cultural resources
CDFG	January 11, 2012	Wildlife movement
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District	January 19, 2012	Discussion regarding air quality modeling assumptions and analysis results.
Madera County Board of Supervisors	January 24, 2012	Project update
City of Chowchilla	January 25, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	January 26, 2012	Discussion regarding status of Section 106 reports and review process.
EPA and USACE	February 2, 2012	Discussion regarding evaluation of Waters of the U.S.



Organization/Individual	Date	Topic
USFWS, NMFS, and CDFG	February 3, 2012	Discussion regarding wildlife connectivity issues and project permitting process.
Agriculture Working Group	February 10, 2012	Project update
City of Fresno High-Speed Rail Roadshow	February 13, 2012	Provide project information
Individual meetings with Merced County Supervisors (Jerry O'Bannon, Linn Davis, Hub Walsh, and John Pedrozo)	February 14, 2012	Project update
Chowchilla Water District Meeting	February 15, 2012	Stakeholder meeting
Merced County Office of Education meeting	February 21, 2012	Project update
Plainsburg and Le Grand School Districts joint meeting	February 22, 2012	DEIR/EIS comment follow-up
Golden State Boulevard Property Owners and Businesses Workshop	February 24, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
State Permitting Agency meeting	February 29, 2012	Project update
USACE/EPA	March 1, 2012	Section 404 coordination
USFWS/CDFG meeting (weekly)	March 2, 2012	Project update
Madera and Chowchilla Officials	March 6, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	March 8, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
CDCR and Director of Prison Systems Meeting	March 8, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
USFWS/CDFG meeting (weekly)	March 9, 2012	Project update
San Joaquin Rail Consortium and Working Group	March 9, 2012	Project update
Partnership in San Joaquin Valley	March 9, 2012	Project update
Fresno Chaffee Zoo	March 14, 2012	Discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
Agriculture Working Group (Fresno)	March 14, 2012	Project update
Madera Farm Bureau (right-of-way meeting)	March 26, 2012	Project update
Plainsburg Elementary and Le Grand Union High School District	March 28, 2012	Draft EIR/EIS comment follow-up

<sup>a</sup> The Visalia-Tulare-Hanford Station Study refers to a station feasibility study conducted for the Fresno to Palmdale section of the HST System (Authority 2007).