



CALIFORNIA High-Speed Rail Authority

BRIEFING: NOVEMBER 15, 2018 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS #2 & 5

TO: Chairman Richard and Board Members

FROM: Michelle Boehm, Southern California Regional Director
Melissa de la Peña, Project Manager
Mark McLoughlin, Director of Environmental Services

DATE: November 15, 2018

RE: Consider Concurring with the Staff Recommended State Preferred Alternative for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section for Identification in the Draft EIR/EIS

Summary of Recommended Action

California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) staff recommends that the Board of Directors (Board) identify the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative as the State's Preferred Alternative for preparing the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Staff's recommendation is based on the conceptual engineering, environmental analysis, and numerous public, stakeholder, and agency meetings conducted to date.

Upon receiving the Board's concurrence, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative will be identified as the State's Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIR/EIS. Identification of the State's Preferred Alternative and/or concurrence from the Board is neither an approval nor a final decision, and the Authority may change the preferred alternative depending on the comments received during public and agency review of the Draft EIR/EIS, which the Authority anticipates releasing in late 2019 for public and agency review and comment. Staff will take those comments into consideration while developing the Final EIR/EIS and, subsequently, Staff will return to the Board to request final project approval of an alternative once the Final EIR/EIS has been prepared.

Staff will seek concurrence regarding the Preferred Alternative from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). With FRA's concurrence, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would be identified both as the State's Preferred Alternative and the FRA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Preferred Alternative.

Background

The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section was originally part of the larger Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section. Various corridor alternatives for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section were evaluated in the 2005 Program EIR/EIS for the overall proposed California High-Speed Rail System. In this Tier 1 environmental document, all corridors that were considered in this highly urbanized and constrained built environment would follow existing transportation corridors (highways and railroads). Ultimately, the Authority Board approved the Final Program EIR/EIS selection of the existing Metro/Metrolink rail corridor as the preferred corridor for further study for the Los Angeles Basin portion of the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section.

Following the identification of the preferred corridor, preparation of a Tier 2 project-level EIR/EIS document was initiated to develop and evaluate a range of alignment alternatives within the Metro/Metrolink rail corridor portion of the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section. Activities conducted during this process included:

- Scoping for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section in 2007;
- Preparing the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section Preliminary Alternatives Analysis in 2010; and,
- Preparing the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section Supplemental Alternatives Analyses in 2011 and 2014.

In 2014, the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section was separated into the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections. The Authority and FRA determined that separate environmental documents would be more beneficial to address environmental impacts and conduct stakeholder outreach. On July 24, 2014, the Authority released a CEQA Notice of Preparation, and the FRA published a NEPA Notice of Intent to prepare separate EIR/EIS documents for the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections.

The Authority conducted further planning studies to continue to analyze potential alignments between Burbank and Los Angeles, including:

- Scoping for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section in 2014; and,
- Preparing the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Supplemental Alternatives Analyses in 2016 and 2018.

Starting in 2017, after stakeholder input and based on concerns about community impacts, the Authority undertook further refinement of the station options at Hollywood Burbank Airport. The refinement included withdrawing one at-grade station option that would have significant community impacts, and revising alignments and the depth of the below-ground station option such that the intensity of construction is less than previously envisioned. The refined below-ground station would be adjacent to the relocated Hollywood Burbank Airport, which would allow for the opportunity to directly link these two important transportation hubs.

Stakeholder Engagement

Over the course of developing alternatives, the Authority has proactively sought to initiate meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, resource agencies, municipalities, landowners, community leaders, and interested members of the public, going beyond the extent of outreach required by the NEPA and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) processes. Engagement with the existing railroad corridor owner (Metro) and users (Metrolink, Amtrak, UPRR) has been a priority and has been productive to date. The Authority has frequently held public meetings to inform the development of the project design and the preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS. To date, over 250 meetings with stakeholders and community organizations have been held throughout the project section.

Authority staff has engaged with the public in a variety of ways, including responding to questions, one-on-one meetings, small group meetings, public meetings, participation in local events, and presentations at community meetings and stakeholder working groups. Most recently, Authority staff engaged with agencies, stakeholders,

and the public to provide information about the staff-recommended State's Preferred Alternative and solicit feedback on the proposed recommendation. These activities included:

- Preferred alternative briefing with Southern California regulatory agencies on August 8, 2018; and
- Three community open houses between September 5, 2018 and September 17, 2018 in the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles.

These meetings provided participants with a forum to ask questions and share comments and concerns about the staff-recommended State's Preferred Alternative and the project section in general. Approximately 175 community members participated in the open houses, an a few community members logged in for a live stream (of the City of Los Angeles open house), and the Authority received 32 comments. The City of Los Angeles open house included English and Spanish presentation as well as a live webcast. Questions and concerns expressed by the public in these meetings included, but were not limited to: noise and vibration, right-of-way acquisition, operations and maintenance, travel time, trip frequency, project cost, station locations, safety features, design features, gentrification, and cultural resources.

Prior Board Action

- On July 8, 2010, Authority staff presented the 2010 Palmdale to Los Angeles Preliminary Alternatives Analysis (PAA). The 2010 PAA introduced an initial range of alternatives based on the 2005 Program EIR/EIS in the area that is now the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section. Staff recommended alternatives to be carried forward for further analysis. The Board voted to adopt the staff recommendation.
- On March 3, 2011, Authority staff presented the 2011 Palmdale to Los Angeles Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA). The 2011 SAA focused on the area within the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, and introduced refinements to tunnel and surface alternatives, as well as withdrew off corridor alignments. The Board voted to adopt the staff recommendation.
- On June 3, 2014, Authority staff presented the 2014 Palmdale to Los Angeles (SAA), which provided detailed technical analysis, a summary of outreach conducted in 2013 and 2014, and refinements made to the initial alternatives identified in the 2010 PAA and 2011 SAA. Staff recommended that the San Fernando Valley Station be located in Burbank and that two alignments (one with a tunnel component and a surface one) be carried for further analysis. In addition, staff recommended that the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section be split into the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections. This was presented as an informational item only, and no Board action was taken.
- On April 12, 2016, Authority staff presented the 2016 Burbank to Los Angeles SAA, which detailed further refinements made to the alternatives identified in the 2014 SAA. Staff presented one build alternative with two operational design options for further study in the Draft EIR/EIS. This was presented as an informational item only, and no Board action was taken.

Project Alternative Design Overview

In the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, the Authority has one build alternative proposed. The High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would begin below grade at the proposed Burbank Airport Station adjacent to the relocated Hollywood Burbank Airport terminal of Hollywood Way in the City of Burbank. After exiting the

underground station, the alignment would travel south parallel to Hollywood Way beneath existing airport land uses in a cut-and-cover tunnel which would curve east and daylight within the existing Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) co-owned railroad right-of-way, currently used by the Metrolink (governed by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority) Ventura rail line, National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), and freight. At the intersection of this corridor with the north-south Metro/Metrolink Corridor, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would transition into the Metro/Metrolink Corridor and stay at grade on the west side of this corridor through the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles before terminating at Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) in Downtown Los Angeles.

Along the way, six new grade separations are proposed for the few remaining at-grade crossings left in this corridor. The Metro/Metrolink Corridor is owned by Metro, while Amtrak, Metrolink, and UPRR operate passenger and freight service along the corridor. The High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would be primarily located within this existing railroad right-of-way, which is typically 70 to 100 feet wide, and would include both northbound and southbound electrified tracks for high-speed trains, that will also be able to accommodate non-electric Metrolink and Amtrak trains. The High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would include new and upgraded track, systems facilities, grade separations, drainage, communication towers, security fencing, and other necessary facilities to introduce high-speed rail service. The High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would also parallel the Los Angeles River south of State Route 134 and cross it on an existing railroad bridge where the Los Angeles River and Arroyo Seco converge. South of this point, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would share the existing railroad right-of-way on the west bank of the Los Angeles River and access platforms within the railyard at LA Union Station, this project section's southern terminus.

Discussion

In general, the construction of a complex and innovative project, such as high-speed rail, would always alter the physical landscape and character, be it in an urbanized area or in an existing rail corridor. What may be of more utility to decision-makers is an explanation of the relative benefits and challenges that the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would have, relative to not constructing the system. These benefits and challenges are summarized below and detailed in Appendix A of the Staff Report. They include:

- Air quality and global climate change – Although temporary construction activities may have temporary localized air quality effects, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would have a long-term regional net beneficial effect in terms of operational emissions, including a net decrease of pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions compared to the No Project Alternative. Therefore, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would result in long-term overall beneficial effects to regional air quality and global climate change.
- Noise and vibration – Generally, high-speed trains would be quieter than existing diesel trains that utilize this corridor. However, moving existing tracks (which carry the diesel trains) closer to sensitive receptors along the corridor could result in noise impacts.
- Hazardous materials and wastes – Construction of the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative could have potential impacts related to hazardous emissions or the handling of hazardous materials, particularly near the Hollywood Burbank Airport due to the known contamination from historic industrial uses.

Conversely, the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative would remove and remediate a large amount of contaminated soils in this corridor.

- Safety and security – Implementation of the grade separations could have beneficial effects to public safety from reduced public service response times, less accidents, and less idling (thereby improving air quality).
- Socioeconomics and communities – Although some displacements will be unavoidable (as of this level of engineering completed), beneficial effects to local businesses and populations would still be anticipated because of the creation of additional direct, indirect, and induced jobs.

Comparison of performance criteria

Alignment length and speed capacity for the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative are shown below.

Criterion	HSR Project Alternative
Alignment Length	14 miles
Speed capacity	110 mph

Capital cost estimates are detailed in the table below in 2018 dollars. The cost estimate includes the total effort and materials necessary to construct the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, including stations and modifications to roadways required to accommodate grade-separated guideways.

This project alternative is the same alternative evaluated in the 2018 Business Plan, but with updated design since the 2018 Business Plan. However, the capital costs outlined reflect a conservative scope and sufficient project footprint to accommodate project refinement through final design for construction documents. This allows the Authority to evaluate maximum impacts in the EIR/EIS and reduces the risk that environmental clearance does not cover all potential impacts. It is important to note that these cost estimates include duplications with adjacent project sections and are not additive (i.e., Burbank station and track transition is included in Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to LA environmental documents). Further, the Authority has not yet applied value engineering and other optimization measures to reduce these costs, including the Early Train Operator benchmarking review, footprint refinement and constructability mitigations.

Cost	HSR Project Alternative
Total in 2018 Dollars	\$3.55 Billion

Based on the above summary information, staff recommends that the Board identify the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative as the State’s Preferred Alternative.

Legal Approval

The Legal Office has confirmed that the Board may take the concurrence action being requested by staff.

Budget and Fiscal Impact

The selection of this preferred alternative does not have an additional cost impact on the program-wide cost included in the California High-Speed Rail Authority budget for Phase 1 RODs and reflected in the Capital Outlay Report.

2018-19 Fiscal Year Budget Impact

Contract Name	Contract Number	Current FY Contract Budget	Budget Change	Funding Source
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A


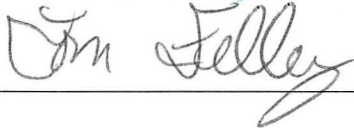
Total Program Budget Impact

Contract Name	Contract Number	Current FY Contract Budget	Budget Change	Funding Source
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

As stated in the description above of this Preferred Alternative, the level of design and the conservative scope used to determine the estimates in the EIR/EIS documents are different from the assumptions in the 2018 Business Plan and therefore capital costs should not be compared on a like-for-like basis. As a result, the estimate included in the Technical Memorandum supporting the capital cost estimate of the 2018 Business Plan differs from the estimate presented in the EIR/EIS documents. The main reasons can be summarized as follows:

- Duplications with adjacent project sections (e.g. station costs and approached to the stations)
- Wider footprint before refinement and optimization
- Constructability mitigation
- Value engineering and other optimization measures have not been applied in the EIR/EIS estimates

This is consistent with any environmental approach that aims to evaluate the maximal potential environmental impact of the project in the EIR/EIS document.

REVIEWER INFORMATION	
Reviewer Name and Title: Russell Fong Chief Financial Officer	Signature verifying budget analysis: 
Reviewer Name and Title: Tom Fellenz Chief Counsel	Signature verifying legal analysis: 

Recommendations

Based on comprehensive outreach efforts and on the evaluation criteria outlined above, staff recommends that the Board identify the High-Speed Rail Project Alternative as the State's Preferred Alternative for preparing the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft EIR/EIS.

Upon identification of the State's Preferred Alternative by the Board, Staff will work with FRA to get concurrence on the Preferred Alternative. The Board is not approving an alternative at this point. Staff will return to the Board with the Final EIR/EIS to request approval of an alternative.

Attachments

- Draft Resolution #HSRA 18-20
- Exhibit 1, Overview of HSR Project Alternative
- Preferred Alternative Staff Report for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section

Exhibit 1 Overview of HSR Project Alternative

