

MERCED TO FRESNO SECTION: CENTRAL VALLEY WYE

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September 2020 Board Briefing



CENTRAL VALLEY WYE

Agenda

- **Background on Merced to Fresno Section**
- **Central Valley Wye – Alternatives/Identification of Preferred Alternative**
- **Central Valley Wye - Supplemental EIR/EIS Analysis**
- **Stakeholder Outreach**
- **Summary of Key Issues**
- **Public Comment Summary**
- **Actions for Board of Directors Consideration**



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September 2020 Proposed Board Actions

The Board will consider the Merced to Fresno: Central Valley Wye Final Supplemental EIR/EIS, along with the 2012 Final EIR/EIS to:

- Certify the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS as CEQA Lead Agency**
- Approve the Preferred Alternative and related CEQA decision documents**
- Direct the Authority Chief Executive Officer to issue the Supplemental Record of Decision (ROD) under the Authority's NEPA Assignment**



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Environmental Review History

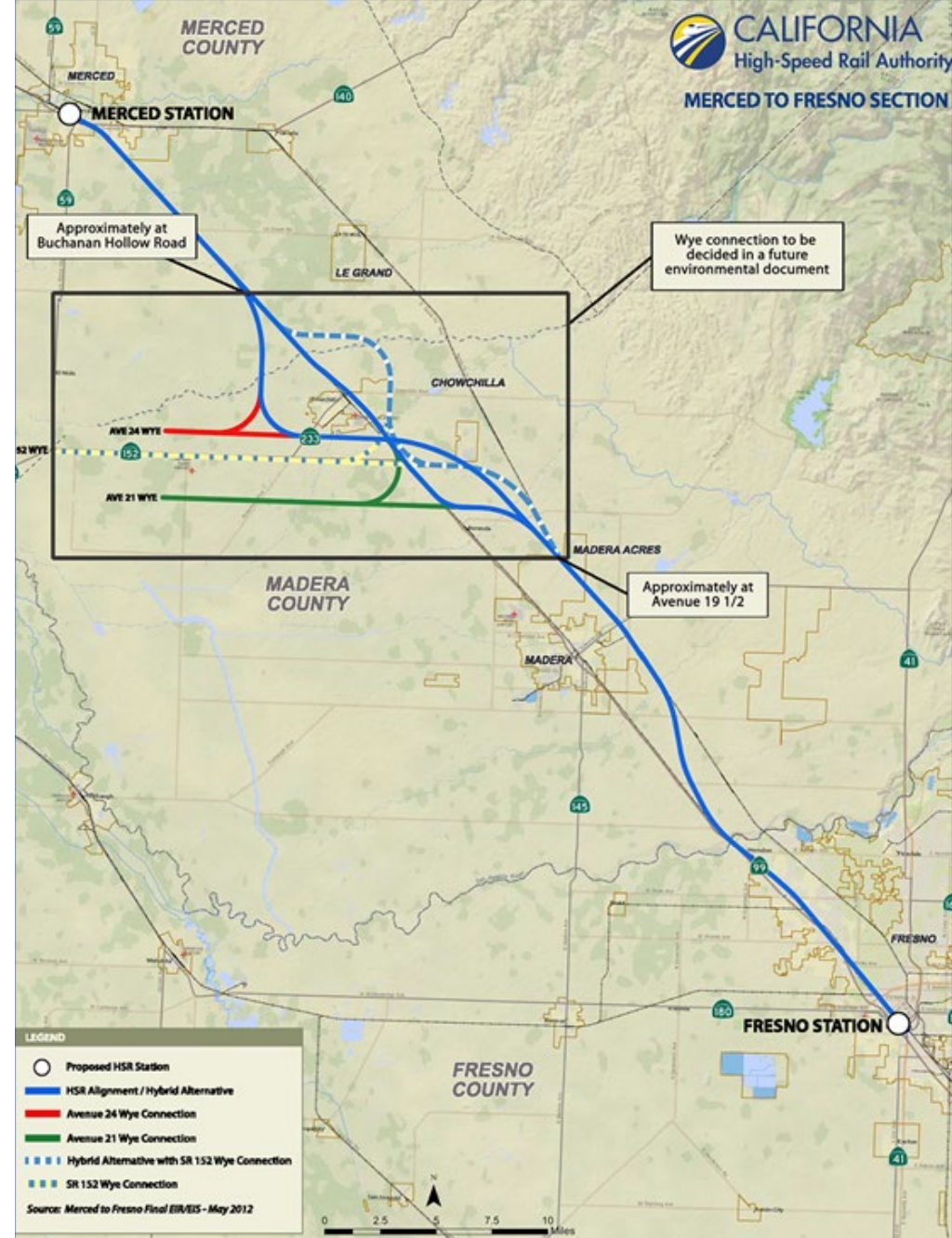
- The Board certified the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS in May 2012 and approved the Hybrid Alternative
- These approvals deferred a decision on the “wye connection” pending additional environmental analysis
- The wye will form the 3-way connection between Madera to Merced, Merced to San Jose, and San Jose to Madera



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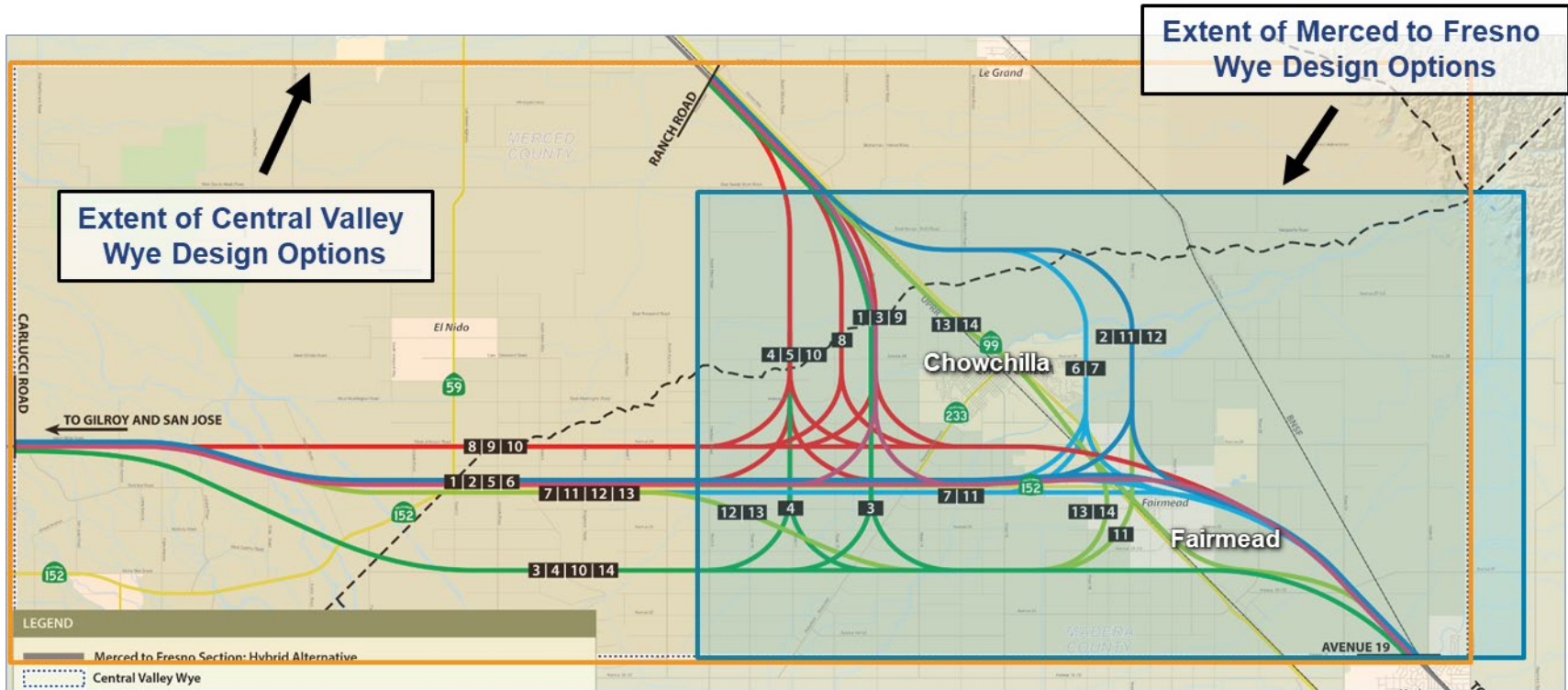
Wye Alternatives Background

- Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS included Avenue 21 Alternative and Avenue 24 Alternative for the wye connection
- Since 2012, 17 alternative alignments have been evaluated in the Central Valley Wye area
- Extensive stakeholder outreach was conducted to identify the best alternatives for further evaluation



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Wye Alternatives Background



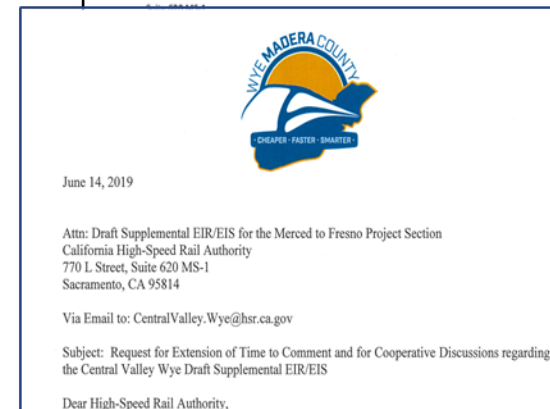
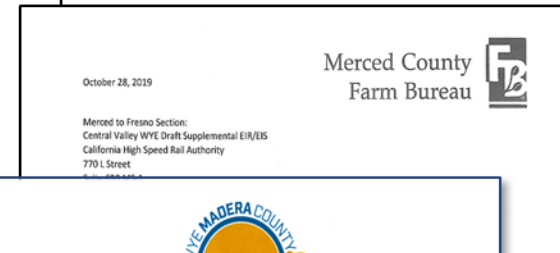
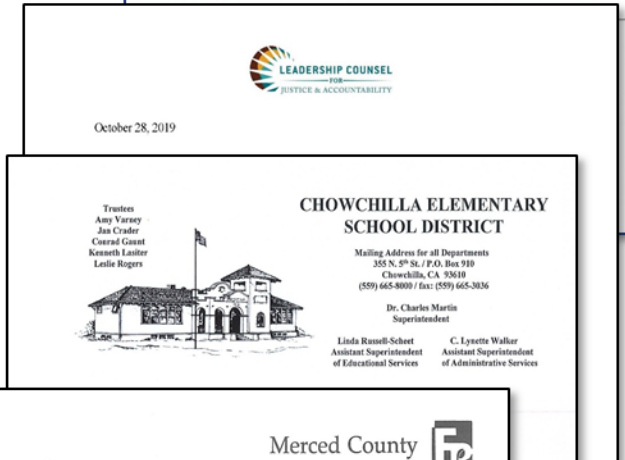
The wye alternatives incorporated refinements that increased the project study area.



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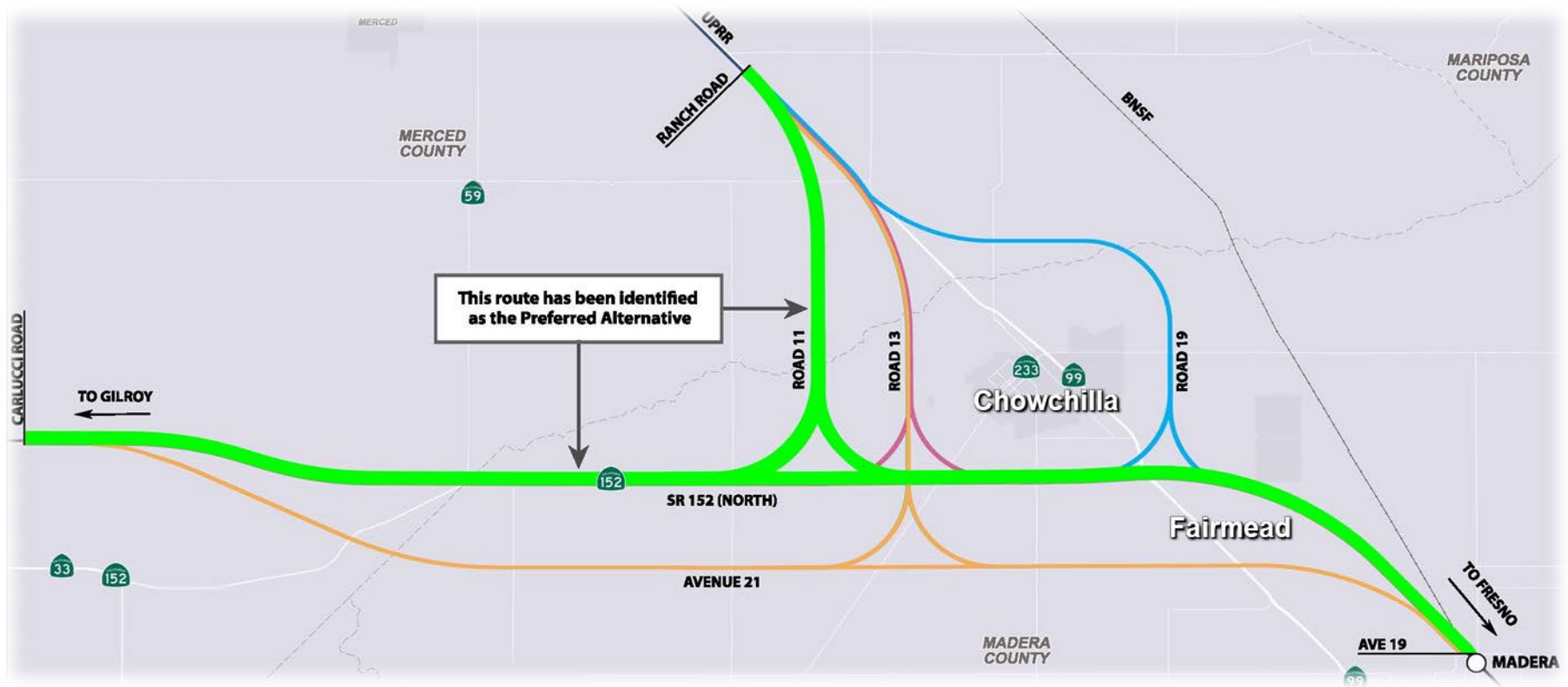
Public and Agency Involvement

- Since 2012, the Authority has hosted approximately 165 meetings with the public and agency representatives to discuss the wye alternatives and to inform the alternatives that would be studied in the environmental document
- Approximately 25 Agency Coordination Meetings
- Approximately 140 Stakeholder Meetings
- 5 Community Open Houses
- Focused outreach with Fairmead community





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Alternatives in Supplemental EIR/EIS



Four Alternatives were studied in the Supplemental EIR/EIS

- SR 152 (North) to Road 13 
- SR 152 (North) to Road 19 
- Avenue 21 to Road 13 
- SR 152 (North) to Road 11 
Preferred Alternative



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SR 152 and Avenue 21 Alternatives Comparison

Tradeoffs between SR 152 and Avenue 21 Alternatives

	SR 152 Alternatives	Avenue 21 Alternative
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjacent to main existing transportation corridors• Minimizes impacts to agricultural parcels• Improved safety along SR 152	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not divide Fairmead Community
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divisions and disruptions to Fairmead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a limited access area between Avenue 21 and SR 152• Displacement of highest number of agricultural facilities among alternatives



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Preferred Alternative Designation

- **SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye Alternative strikes the best balance among:**
 - Stakeholder input
 - Project objectives, including transportation investments and safety
 - Environmental impacts to local communities
 - Federal agencies' concurrence on the preliminary Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA)
- **Board identified the SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye alternative as the Preferred Alternative for the Draft SEIR/EIS**
 - Resolution #HSRA 17-01 passed by the Board in January 2017



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Public Circulations of Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS

- ❑ **Since the preferred alternative was identified, approximately 55 meetings were held with local stakeholders, and state and federal agencies**
- ❑ **CEQA Circulation (May – June 2019)**
 - ❑ Open House in Fairmead
 - ❑ Public Hearing in Chowchilla
- ❑ **NEPA Circulation (September – October 2019)**
 - ❑ Public Hearing in Chowchilla
- ❑ **Revised/Second Draft SEIR/EIS (March – April 2020)**
 - ❑ Focused document on Crotch Bumble bee
- ❑ **Comments received by the Authority:**
 - ❑ 82 submissions and 731 discrete comments



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Public Comments on Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS

- **Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS frequently heard comments:**
 - **Consistency with Business Plan and 2019 Governor's State of the State Speech**
 - General Response #5 clarifies phased implementation of the statewide system
 - **Acquisition and construction period impacts on local property**
 - Socioeconomic Response #1 highlights the reduced number of impacts along existing corridors and mitigations for noise and visual impacts
 - **Impacts on agricultural land/operations and infrastructure**
 - Agriculture Response #1 details disruption to property access, utility and irrigation infrastructure
 - Project features are detailed in the response that would minimize these disruptions



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Public Comments on Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS (Continued)

- **Detailed request for compensatory mitigation from local agencies**
 - Held meetings with stakeholders to review their requests
 - Individual responses acknowledge requests and address on a case by case basis
- **Requests to modify project features and mitigations to increase local oversight or local approval**
 - Held meetings with stakeholders to review their requests
 - Individual responses acknowledge requests and address on a case by case basis
 - Authority will pursue agreements with local agencies
- **Petition for expanded mitigation for Fairmead**
 - Mitigation measure restructured to provide funding for a stand-alone community center
 - Held meetings with stakeholders to review their requests



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Changes to Draft SEIR/EIS

- ❑ A number of comments resulted in text revisions in the document
- ❑ Locations of revisions are shown with a black vertical bar in the outside margin
- ❑ Each section includes a summary of the changes made to the section since the publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS
- ❑ Example from Chapter 2:

Since publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, this chapter has been updated to reflect global issues described in Section S.1.2, Global Changes in the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS, of the Summary as well as the following:

- Text has been added to Section 2.3, Updated Travel Demand and Ridership Forecasts, and Section 2.4, Updated Operations and Service Plan, regarding updates to the Authority's **Business Plan since printing and publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS**
- Text has also been added to Section 2.4.2, Maintenance Activities, reflecting program updates to the Authority's maintenance of its properties.
- Table 2-2 has been updated in response to a comment on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS (refer to Volume IV, submission 247, comment 214)



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Changes to Draft SEIR/EIS

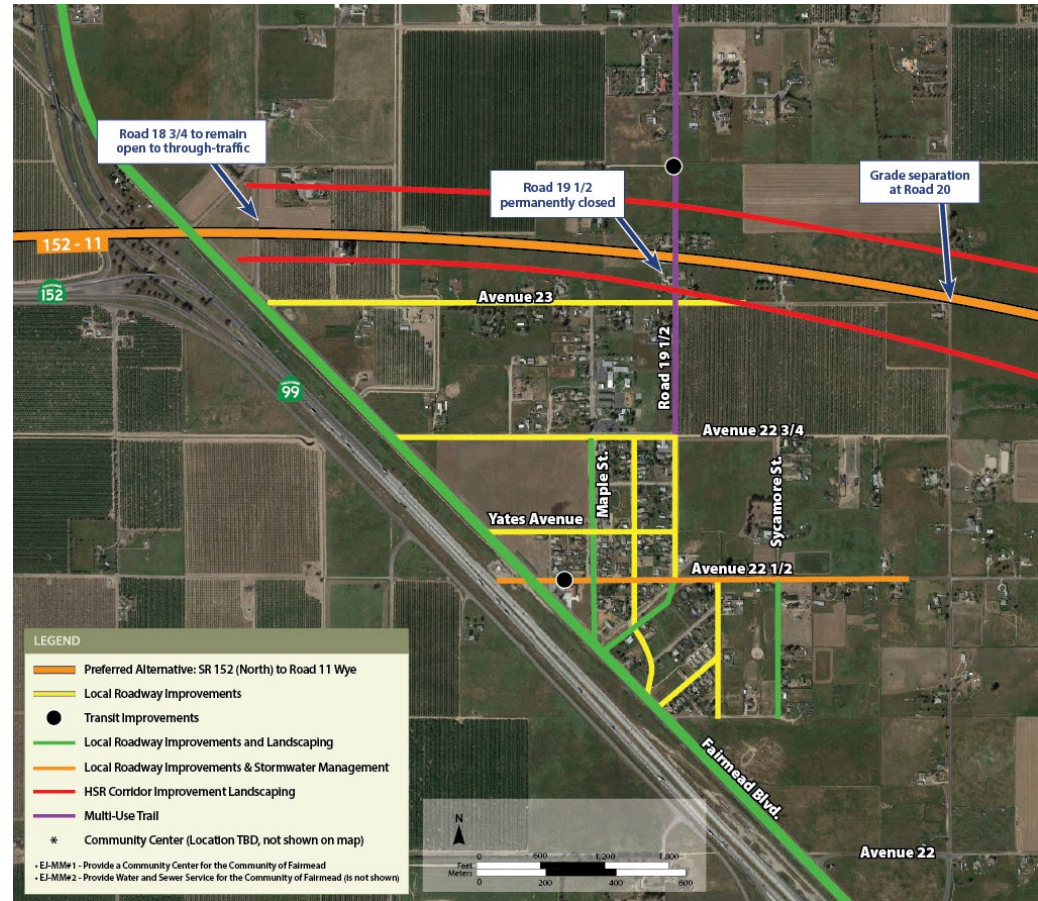
- ❑ **Other changes to Final SEIR/EIS since Draft**
 - ❑ Federal NEPA Assignment
 - ❑ Changes to Electrical Interconnections and Network Upgrades (EINU)
 - ❑ Minor revisions to mitigations and project features to be consistent with the high-speed rail statewide program
 - ❑ Environmental Justice Mitigation (EJ-MM#1) revised to provide funding for purpose-built community center in Fairmead



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Fairmead Community Mitigations

- Fairmead is a rural, low-income community
- Identified as an Environmental Justice community
- Specific mitigations were identified by the community
- Selected measures will improve and stabilize Fairmead
- Engaged with Fairmead Community, Madera County, City of Chowchilla and Chowchilla Elementary School District on implementation of mitigation



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Fairmead Community Mitigations

- Fairmead’s goal is “to build a safe, maintainable and proud community”

Request	Result
Community center to provide a community focal point and gathering area	Environmental document commits funding to Madera County for construction of a community facility within Fairmead
Provide reliable water and sewer service to community	Environmental document outlines funding for water and sewer services through Madera County and City of Chowchilla
Provide community green space and roadway improvements	The Authority worked with Fairmead community to identify locations for roadway, pedestrian, and landscaping improvements
Construct new affordable housing in Fairmead	The Authority is providing funding for both sewer and water connections to the community of Fairmead which will facilitate future development of affordable housing. In addition, the Authority has an established relocation program to secure replacement housing.



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Mitigation Monitoring and Enforcement Plan (MMEP)

- ❑ **The alternatives incorporate program-wide and section specific Impact Avoidance and Minimization Features (IAMFs)**
- ❑ **After efforts to minimize, impacts still occur and the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS identifies feasible measures to mitigate impacts**
- ❑ **Mitigation Measures are detailed in the MMEP:**
 - ❑ The party responsible for implementation of Mitigation Measures
 - ❑ The timing of implementation
 - ❑ The implementation mechanism
- ❑ **The Authority is ultimately accountable for the overall administration and implementation of the MMEP**



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Regulatory Agency Coordination

- ❑ **Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
 - ❑ LEDPA concurrence and approval, November 2019
- ❑ **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
 - ❑ Issued Biological Opinion Amendment, September 2019
- ❑ **National Marine Fisheries Service**
 - ❑ Issued Biological Opinion Amendment, September 2019
- ❑ **State Historic Preservation Officer**
 - ❑ Concurred with Section 4(f) determination for Robertson Tree Row, April 2018
- ❑ **Federal Railroad Administration**
 - ❑ Agreed that Merced to Fresno Air Quality General Conformity applies to Central Valley Wye, April 2020
 - ❑ Tribal Coordination



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Evaluation of Preferred Alternative

Selecting an alternative is a balance of community concerns and natural resources.



Residential displacement



Agricultural facilities displacement



Proximity to existing transportation corridors



Construction Noise Impacts



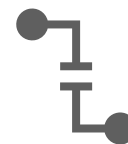
Impact on wetlands and waters



Impact on plant communities



Agricultural land conversion



Remnant farmland creation and property access loss



Impact on Wild movement corridors



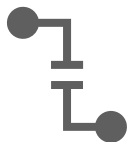
Capitol Construction Cost

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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



Mileage parallel to existing transportation corridors (miles)



Remnant farmland parcels (acres)

Property access loss (number of properties)

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
19.2	20.4	3.6	16.5
203	232	204	192
3	3	3	1



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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



Fewest residential displacement



Construction noise exposure during: daytime and

nighttime (number of residences)

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
96	119	65	62
65	106	70	66
107	314	80	101



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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



Fewest agricultural facilities displaced



Lowest acreage of agricultural conversion

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
21	17	29	16
2,182	2,305	2,263	2,145



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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



**Lowest permanent impact on:
Wetlands (acres) and
Non-wetland waters (acres)**

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
1.00	1.69	1.76	0.62
28.26	25.71	34.19	22.11



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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



Lowest impact on plant communities (acres), seasonal wetland habitat as example



Least impact on wildlife movement corridors (miles)

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
0.78	1.99	1.47	0.49
11.02	17.48	11.84	10.42



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Benefits of Preferred Alternative



**Lowest capital construction cost
(Cost in billions, 2015 dollars)**

SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye	Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye	SR 152 (North) to Road 11 Wye
\$3.83	\$4.21	\$3.76	\$3.61



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Evaluation of Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative provides the best balance of community concerns and impacts to natural resources.



Fewest Residential displacements



Fewest agricultural facilities displacement



Proximity to existing transportation corridors



Moderate construction Noise Impacts



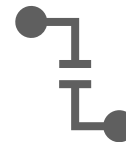
Lowest impact on wetlands and waters



Lowest impact on plant communities



Lowest acreage agricultural land conversion



Least remnant parcels and property access loss



Least impact on Wild movement corridors



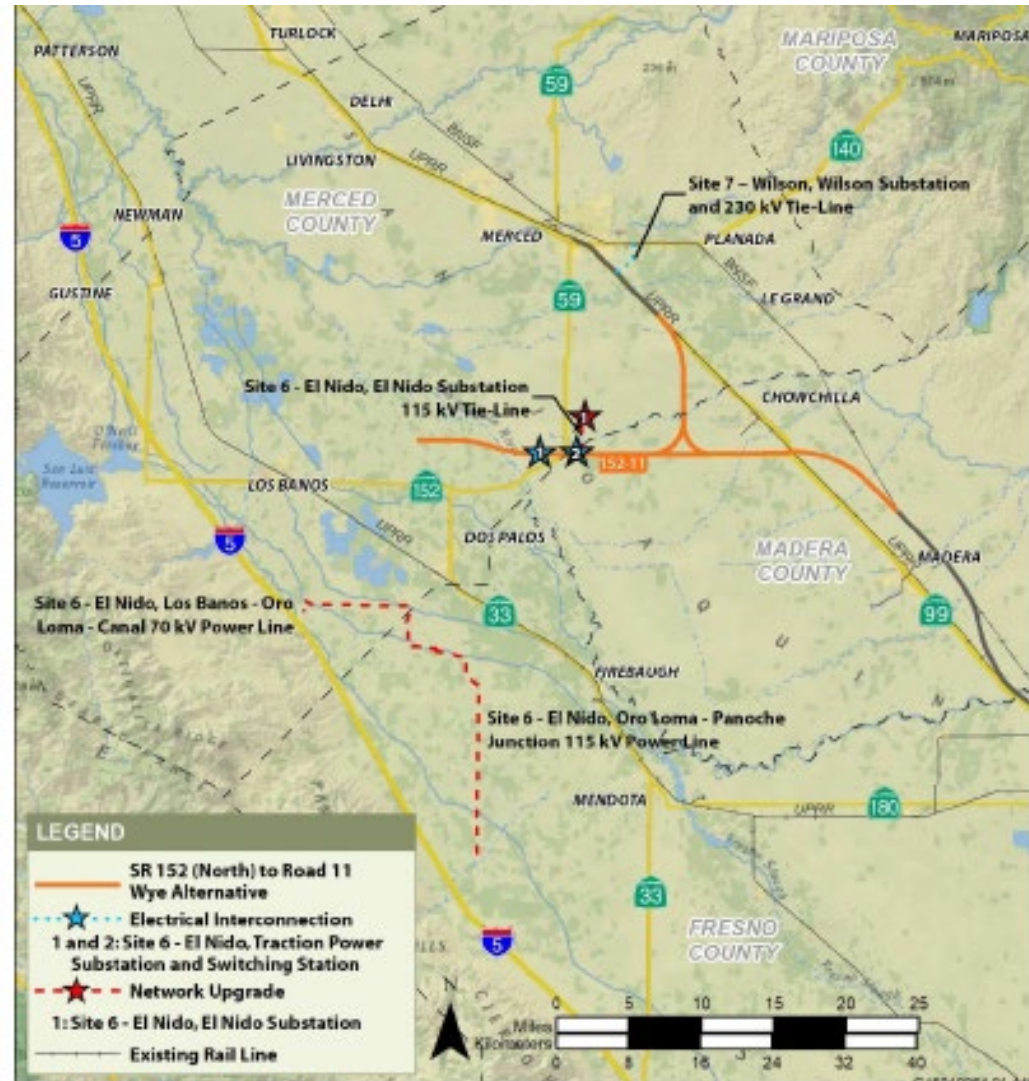
Lowest capital construction Cost



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Regional Benefits of the Preferred Alternative

- Some impacts remain even with mitigation
- The benefits viewed both individually and collectively outweigh the adverse impacts
- Increased transportation alternatives
- Improved air quality
- Employment opportunities during construction and operations



Source: ESRI/National Geographic, 2015

OCTOBER 30, 2019



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Next Steps Prior to Board deliberation and action

- ❑ **Public comments**
- ❑ **Board members direct staff to respond to public comments, as necessary**
- ❑ **Board deliberation and proposed action**
- ❑ **The Board will consider the Merced to Fresno: Central Valley Wye Final Supplemental EIR/EIS, along with the 2012 Final EIR/EIS to:**
 - ❑ Certify the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS as CEQA Lead Agency
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