

8 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND STATION SITES

8.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the California High-Speed Rail Authority’s (Authority) Preferred Alternative for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section of the California High-Speed Rail (HSR) Project. The HSR Build Alternative is the Authority’s Preferred Alternative for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section (Figure 8-1).

The Preferred Alternative extends from Burbank to downtown Los Angeles, with stations near Hollywood Burbank Airport and at the Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS). The alignment is approximately 14 miles long, crossing the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles, largely within an existing railroad right-of-way. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) owns the railroad right-of-way, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink) owns the track and operates the Metrolink commuter rail service, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) provides intercity passenger service, and the Union Pacific Railroad holds track access rights and operates freight trains. The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) does not identify a preferred heavy maintenance facility site because the heavy maintenance facility would be within either the Merced to Fresno Project Section or the Fresno to Bakersfield Project Section corridors. In addition, the design and spacing of other types of maintenance facilities along the HSR system do not require the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section to include any maintenance facilities within the limits of the project section.

The identification of the Preferred Alternative is based on the analysis presented in this Draft EIR/EIS, as well as the supporting technical reports. Earlier efforts conducted extensive analysis in preliminary and supplemental alternative analyses. The identification of the Preferred Alternative is also based on comments provided by members of the public, local communities, businesses, organizations, and government stakeholders in meetings held during project scoping in 2007 and 2014 and ongoing public outreach conducted by the Authority since that time (Authority 2007, 2014b).

This Draft EIR/EIS provides information on the physical and operational characteristics and potential environmental consequences associated with the HSR Build Alternative and station locations, including the following:

- Physical/Operational Characteristics
 - Alignment
 - Length
 - Capital cost
 - Travel time
 - Ridership
 - Constructability
- Environmental Impacts
 - Transportation-related topics (air quality, noise and vibration, and energy)
 - Human environment (land use and community impacts, farmlands and agriculture, regional growth, aesthetics and visual resources, socioeconomics, environmental justice, safety and security, utilities and public services, hazardous materials and wastes)
 - Cultural resources (archaeological resources, historical properties)
 - Natural environment (geology and seismic hazards, paleontological resources, hydrology and water resources, and biological resources and wetlands)
 - Sections 4(f) or 6(f) properties (certain types of publicly owned parklands, recreation areas, wildlife/waterfowl refuges, and significant historical sites regardless of ownership)



Source: California High-Speed Rail Authority, 2019

Figure 8-1 Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Preliminary Preferred Alternative

In identifying a Preferred Alternative, the Authority was guided by the project purpose and need and project objectives described in Chapter 1, Project Purpose, Need, and Objectives; the HSR performance criteria identified in Chapter 2, Alternatives; and the prior work developed for and recorded in the following:

- *Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (2005 Statewide Program EIR/EIS; Authority and FRA 2005)*
- *Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section (Authority 2010)*
- *Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report for the Sylmar to Los Angeles Subsection (Authority 2011)*
- *Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section (Authority 2014a)*
- *Supplemental Alternative Analysis Report for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section (Authority 2016a)*
- *Supplemental Alternative Analysis Report for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section (Authority 2016b)*

Additionally, the criteria to identify the Preferred Alternative are consistent with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Section 101 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (§ 15126.6(e)(2)).

8.2 Summary of Comments

As described in Section 2.4, the initial efforts to obtain comments on the proposed Burbank to Los Angeles Project began with scoping for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section. In March 2007, the Authority released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and distributed the notice to the State Clearinghouse (State Clearinghouse No. 2007031066); elected officials; local, regional, and state agencies; and the interested public (Authority 2014c). FRA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* in March 2007 (FRA 2014). The NOP and NOI identified the purpose of the project, the project limits, and a description of project alternatives; the need for agency input; potential environmental impacts of the project; points of contact for additional information; and the dates and locations of the scoping meetings. Since the 2007 NOP, several alternatives analyses have been conducted to refine project-level alternatives and to discuss the concept of evaluating the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles corridors as separate project sections. In July 2014, the Authority and FRA released a NOP and NOI to prepare separate EIR/EIS documents for the two project sections.

Scoping

The process of determining the focus and content of an environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) is known as scoping. Scoping helps to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures analyzed in an EIR/EIS.

As part of public outreach specifically for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, seven public scoping meetings were held between August 5 and August 19, 2014. They were held in several locations in and around the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section corridor. Additionally, one federal agency scoping meeting was held on August 8, 2014, and information provided therein was tailored to the specific resource agencies (Authority 2014b).

The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section scoping comments identified issues with the proposed alignments and stations, suggestions for new or modified alignments and stations, and other issues of potential concern related to the proposed project. Overall, the Authority received 81 comment submittals from agencies, organizations, and individuals, including comment forms received at scoping meetings, mailed comment forms, letters, emails, and telephone calls. These 81 submissions contained 608 individual comments.

Consideration of the public and agency comments received during the planning and scoping processes helped to identify various design options to the main alternatives for the HSR alignment and station sites, which were evaluated in the 2016 Burbank to Los Angeles Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA) (Authority 2016a). This report refined the previously evaluated alignments, the concepts at the Burbank Airport Station, and the alignments from south of the Burbank Airport Station to Alameda Avenue in the City of Burbank. The SAA was prepared to provide information to the public and agencies regarding the alternatives analysis process, the initial range of alternatives considered, and the criteria for evaluating those alternatives.

This detailed information, displays about the alternatives analysis process, and updates to the alignments were provided at public and agency information meetings. One-on-one briefings and small group meetings were held and updates and presentations were given to clubs, organizations, business owners, and local government agencies, including Los Angeles County and the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles. The purpose of these outreach meetings was to facilitate an inclusive and transparent public decision-making process. The Authority has also conducted ongoing consultation with federal and state regulatory agencies to identify and protect resources of concern.

The Authority held stakeholder meetings during the development of the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft EIR/EIS. Various meeting formats, such as open houses, formal presentations, workshops, and question and comment sessions, were used to consult with federal, state, and local agencies, provide project updates, and obtain public feedback. In addition, the Authority conducted focused outreach efforts with low-income and minority populations as well as with other communities of concern. The purpose of this focused outreach was to increase the Authority's understanding of potential project effects on these populations, including environmental justice, Section 4(f)/6(f) resources, and tribal cultural resources. The Authority and FRA conducted outreach activities and public meetings beyond the requirements of public review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as well as tribal consultation under Section 106 and Section 4(f) coordination under Title 49 of the U.S. Code.

Chapter 9, Public and Agency Involvement, includes additional detail about stakeholder coordination and lists the public meeting dates and content that was covered. Table 8-1 summarizes commonly heard comments and concerns received at the public meetings held for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section.

Table 8-1 Key Issues Considered during Development of Alternatives and Draft EIR/EIS

Topic	Key Issues
Protection of Communities and the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impacts of the proposed HSR Build Alternative on the mobility of low-income/minority populations ▪ Impacts on property value and potential for property damage related to displacements ▪ Impacts on schools, churches, and other community facilities ▪ Visual impacts, including overhead catenary wires and “green screens” near residences ▪ Compliance with federal and state air quality regulations and minimization of emissions ▪ Impacts on Native American and archaeological sites ▪ Impacts on biological resources, including wetlands ▪ Evaluation of soils for stability, erosion, and sedimentation potential, and how to handle soils removed during construction ▪ Impacts on the Los Angeles River/Arroyo Seco confluence, storm drains/flood channels, carrying capacity of systems, and waters of the U.S. ▪ Construction and operational noise and vibration impacts, noise pollution, potential noise abatement, and sensitive receptors ▪ Impacts on equestrian land uses and parks, and overlap with the planned Los Angeles River Revitalization Project ▪ Land use changes around station locations, multimodal use potential, and conflicts with existing or future development, including Hollywood Burbank Airport ▪ Safety corridor buffer size, rail crossing safety, public and pedestrian safety, and potential screens for trains
Connectivity and Coordination with/ Impacts on Other Transportation Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routing alignments along existing transportation corridors; tunneling and trench alternatives ▪ Maximizing connectivity to other transit providers at LAUS and the newly proposed location of the Hollywood Burbank Airport terminal ▪ Electromagnetic interference/electromagnetic field impacts that might affect navigation or other equipment at Hollywood Burbank Airport ▪ Impacts on transit providers, pedestrian connectivity, and goods movement; traffic management plan and upgrades to existing infrastructure
Train Technology and Constructability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project demands on the electrical system; renewable energy sources ▪ Tunneling in mountainous regions ▪ Maglev technology
Project Funding and Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall cost of the project

EIR/EIS = Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement
 HSR = High-Speed Rail
 LAUS = Los Angeles Union Station

8.2.1 California Legislators

During refinement of the HSR Build Alternative, the Authority worked with state elected officials representing areas near the project section corridor to ensure effective communication, coordination, and discussion of concerns. The Authority accomplished this through legislative staff and state-elected officials group briefings at key project milestones and prior to public meetings. Additionally, Authority staff provided legislative staff with one-on-one meetings as necessary.

Staff for the offices of U.S. Senators Diane Feinstein and Kamala Harris attended staff briefings in August 2018 but did not raise any specific issues of concern. Issues raised in briefings with various California Congressional, State Senate, and State Assembly representatives include the following:

- Potential impacts from grade separations (Congressional District 28, State Senate District 25, and Assembly District 43)
- Potential impacts related to the Los Angeles River (Congressional District 28)
- Coordination with Metro at LAUS (Congressional District 28 and Los Angeles Supervisorial County District 1)
- Coordination with the Atwater Village Neighborhood Council (State Senate District 25 and State Assembly District 43)
- Potential impacts on the historic Glendale Metrolink Station (State Senate District 25)
- Potential impacts on the Burbank Airport (State Senate District 25 and State Assembly District 43)

8.2.2 Project Area Local Governments

The Authority conducted outreach activities with project area local governments. Separate agency staff meetings supplemented the working group meetings and included briefings, regular coordination meetings, alignment review meetings, and design workshops or targeted meetings. The Authority met with representatives from Los Angeles County and the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles to discuss traffic impacts, grade separations, potential impacts on community resources, and station area planning, as well as other concerns. The following sections provide details of these local government comments.

8.2.2.1 Los Angeles County

Several meetings and briefings have been held with representatives from the Los Angeles County Supervisorial Districts between 2014 and 2018. During these meetings, the county expressed concerns regarding coordination with Metro at LAUS, as well as impacts on schools, safety, and noise.

8.2.2.2 City of Los Angeles

The City of Los Angeles has participated in technical working group meetings with the Authority since 2009 to provide ongoing input regarding the development of the HSR Build Alternative. The city requested that these meetings resume as soon as possible to address important issues and develop refinements to the alternative alignments. City staff expressed concern regarding the design of the proposed grade separation at Chevy Chase Drive and its impacts on the Atwater Village community, and generally wanted to gain a better understanding of the potential implications of grade-separation projects. Staff from the City of Los Angeles expressed concerns regarding compatibility with the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan with both surface and tunnel alternatives and also identified several potential negative impacts on other community facilities. The city staff requested collaboration between the City of Los Angeles, the Authority, and Metro on “early action projects” to discuss how these projects could be designed to complement ongoing efforts by the city related to the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan.

The city staff expressed additional concerns regarding horizontal and vertical alignments and questioned how they would enable the city to plan for and meet its policy objectives relating to local mobility and transportation connectivity, promote economic development, and revitalize and improve access to the Los Angeles River. Specifically, the City of Los Angeles requested that below-grade configurations be formally added to the range of alternatives analyzed within the corridor to provide an additional option and allow the city to achieve its goals of implementing the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, preserving historically sensitive areas, reducing potentially negative impacts associated with aerial structures, and ensuring the future viability of

clean technology industries within the city's Clean Tech Corridor. The City of Los Angeles staff also identified a list of possible mitigation strategies for consideration.

Staff from the City of Los Angeles Planning Department suggested that the proposed project include easily accessible and economical park-and-ride facilities and connections to other multimodal systems in order to provide an effective and efficient alternative travel mode to aviation. Staff also suggested that train speed should be comparable to other world systems and that there should be a check-in and boarding system that is fast, convenient, and safe.

8.2.2.3 City of Glendale

Staff at the City of Glendale requested that they be added to all Authority correspondence associated with the proposed project. Staff commented that residents are very sensitive to noise and that aerial structures would not be ideal. City staff stressed that residents would prefer crossings under roads and would not want elevated tracks due to noise issues. City of Glendale staff asked about proposed configurations of grade separations along the corridor. In some cases, the City of Glendale expressed interest in building cul-de-sacs but acknowledged they may reduce circulation in Los Angeles.

City of Glendale staff advised the Authority that the Glendale Homeowners Association would oppose any impacts from the HSR system and mentioned the group is a proponent of a horn-free rail system. The city staff also noted that the Pelanconi Estates Homeowners Association is very interested in the proposed Doran Street grade separation and will likely request more information regarding proposed improvements at that location. City staff also mentioned that the equestrian communities in the foothills and quiet zones are important to Glendale residents. The city asked the Authority to minimize impacts on residents.

City of Glendale staff also indicated that neighborhoods near the Walt Disney Company facility would be sensitive to impacts and would prefer streets to be rebuilt as cul-de-sacs rather than grade-separated crossings. City staff also expressed their own concerns with impacts on Grandview Avenue near the Walt Disney Company facility. City staff asked for impacts on Glenair Inc. to be as minimal as possible because the company is a major employer in the city. City staff also asked about potential impacts on Golden Road Brewing Company and on a car dealership.

City of Glendale staff are concerned about the Glendale Water and Power facility potentially becoming landlocked between the Los Angeles River and the HSR rail alignment. The facility serves the entire City of Glendale in emergencies. Furthermore, staff pointed out that the design of grade separations must be able to handle large emergency vehicles and access must be maintained to the Glendale Water and Power facility.

City of Glendale staff asked if conversations related to moving the Metrolink station occurred with the City of Los Angeles. Glendale staff recognize that the existing station has low ridership and implementation of the HSR system may be an opportunity to relocate the station. The city staff commented the station could be better located near the Walt Disney Company facility to provide access for employees and improve connections to the North Hollywood/Pasadena area. The city's staff, however, added that it would be challenging to change the Metrolink station layout due to the historic building and the limited right-of-way. The City of Glendale also asked the Authority to add the Pasadena to North Hollywood Metro bus route to HSR system connections map.

8.2.2.4 City of Burbank

To date, no formal comments from the City of Burbank have been received.

8.2.3 Federal Agencies

Cooperating agencies under NEPA include the Surface Transportation Board, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the Federal Transit Administration. Multiple other federal agencies have been involved in and contributed to the NEPA process, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Parks Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Federal Highway Administration, and other agencies as appropriate.

Recurring regulatory agency meetings have occurred on the second Wednesday of each month since January 2016 for all four Southern California HSR project sections, including the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section. All potentially affected federal and state regulatory agencies are invited to participate and to discuss issues and concerns, and they receive regular updates on the project. Agency comments and concerns specific to the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section include:

- Minimizing impacts on the Los Angeles River and other waters of the U.S. and state
- Minimizing water quality impacts
- Concerns about bird strikes on the overhead contact system and new bridge structures

The Authority has met with the USACE in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbor Act (codified at 33 U.S.C. 408). The purpose of these meetings has been to provide updates on the regulatory processes, to provide general project updates, and to identify and discuss proposed project crossing locations over various waterways. Meetings between the Authority and USACE occurred on June 6 and November 10, 2016.

8.2.4 State Agencies

Several state and regional California agencies would have to issue permits or approvals for implementation of the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section; therefore, they serve as CEQA responsible agencies. These agencies include the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Department of Transportation, the California Public Utilities Commission, the California State Lands Commission, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District.

The Authority invited these state agencies to the recurring regulatory agency meetings held on the second Wednesday of each month for all four Southern California HSR project sections, including the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section. The agencies are invited to participate to discuss issues and concerns, and to receive regular updates on the HSR project. State agency comments and concerns specific to the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section include:

- Minimizing impacts on the Los Angeles River and other waters of the U.S. and the state
- Minimizing water quality impacts
- Concerns about bird strikes on the overhead contact system and new bridge structures
- Concerns about Section 4(f) and park resources
- Concerns about cultural resources

The Authority has conducted ongoing coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer per the Section 106 process and the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (refer to Section 9.4.2 for more information on the Programmatic Agreement). The Authority held meetings and conference calls with Office of Historic Preservation staff to update them on the project status and continue early coordination and consultation on October 20, 2015, November 3, 2015, and May 2, 2016.

8.2.5 Tribal Consultation

Tribal outreach and consultation for the statewide HSR program began in 2001 during preparation of the Statewide Program EIR/EIS, which was finalized in 2005. Tribes and individuals were identified for coordination through the Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File, and this contact information has been updated regularly throughout the planning and environmental review processes.

Early tribal outreach for the original Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section began in 2012. The Authority sent letters on February 16, 2012, to 11 local tribal governments listed with the Native American Heritage Commission for Los Angeles County, and follow-up outreach was conducted via telephone. Communications in May 2014 invited tribal leaders and representatives to a series of community open houses that month. In August 2014, the updated Native American Heritage Commission list included 34 Native American individuals from approximately 16 different tribes. The Authority invited all of these tribes and representatives to a September 25, 2014, Tribal Information Meeting, and emails were sent to each of the invited tribes reminding them of the

meeting and encouraging attendance and participation. The Tribal Information Meeting was held in Sylmar and offered an opportunity for invitees to discuss issues of concern for both the Palmdale to Burbank and the Burbank to Los Angeles project sections in a closed session.

The Authority also invited the tribes to become Section 106 consulting parties in September and October 2014. Formal consulting parties under Section 106 include the Fernandeño Tataviam Tribe, the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians—Kizh Nation, and the Gabriellino-Tongva Tribe. Coordination and outreach has been and will continue to be performed at each key Section 106 decision point per the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (refer to Section 9.4.2 for more information on the Programmatic Agreement).

8.2.6 Regional and Other Public Agencies

The Authority consulted additional regional and other public agencies during project planning and the development of this Draft EIR/EIS. In particular, the Authority has been coordinating with Metro and is, under NEPA Assignment, the federal lead agency for the Metro Link Union Station (US) Project EIS. Metro previously certified a Final EIR for this project in June 2019, on which the Authority is a responsible agency under CEQA. The Link US Project would add run-through tracks to the station by extending tracks south of U.S. Route 101, as well as develop a new passenger concourse. These changes would be completed prior to the introduction of HSR service. The proposed HSR station at LAUS would be within the Link US Project limits of disturbance and would only include raising the train platforms and adding overhead contact system infrastructure at LAUS. Coordination between the Authority and Metro has been ongoing to ensure the HSR project is incorporated into the Link US Project design and environmental analysis. In addition to the Link US Project, Metro also requested that, where the HSR alignment is within or adjacent to Metro right-of-way, all tracks, including conventional passenger and freight tracks, would be grade-separated.

The Authority coordinated with several agencies concerning potential impacts on the Los Angeles River. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works requested that any impacts of the HSR Build Alternative to properties/land maintained by the Department of Public Works and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District be disclosed in the environmental document. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power also expressed concern about impacts on existing or planned projects along the Los Angeles River, projects that are consistent with the city's Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan, the county's Los Angeles River Master Plan, and the USACE's Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Study. The City of Los Angeles provided a list of mitigation measures it would like the Authority to consider if impacts occur.

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation requested geographic information system shapefiles of the proposed rail alignment to determine if the proposed project would affect any county trails. The analysis identified two trails—the Los Angeles River Extension (Los Angeles County) and Rim of the Valley Trail (multijurisdictional)—that either bisect or run parallel to the HSR Build Alternative. The Department of Parks and Recreation's main concern is for continued multiuse (equestrian, hiking, and mountain bicycling) trail connectivity. During project planning, the Department of Parks and Recreation offered solutions to address potential conflicts between the trails and the alternative alignments. Potential solutions included trail undercrossings and trail rerouting. Additional concerns identified by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation include aesthetics, noise, and air quality impacts during construction and operation, because these impacts may affect user experience. The Department of Parks and Recreation proposed that vegetative screening of the project site could create visual relief for trail users.

The Los Angeles Unified School District asked to receive information about project updates.

The Metropolitan Water District has expressed concerns that the proposed HSR project could affect the Santa Monica Feeder and stated that the Metropolitan Water District must be allowed to maintain all of its rights-of-way and unobstructed access to its facilities. In addition, the Metropolitan Water District has requested that construction plans for construction equipment and soil removal and placement must be submitted to the Metropolitan Water District for review and approval 30 days prior to the start of construction in the vicinity of its facilities.

8.2.7 Businesses

The following four businesses provided comments:

- CMI Management, Inc.—Concerns regarding the cost of the project as well as impacts on the City of San Fernando from sound barriers and underpasses, which could physically divide the community
- Southern California Gas Company—Concerns regarding construction-related impacts on utility lines
- Walt Disney Company—Concerns related to noise, rights-of-way, grade separations, and existing rail operations
- Union Pacific Railroad—Concerns related to rights-of-way, existing rail operations, safety, freight rail easements, environmental justice, electromagnetic fields, and cumulative impacts

8.2.8 Organizations

The following four organizations provided comments:

- Glendale Neighborhood Association—Concerns regarding noise, speed, emissions, traffic, and other impacts on local residents, in conjunction with construction of infrastructure projects in the area.
- Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation—Concerns regarding access and recreational opportunities along the Los Angeles River
- Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple—Concerns about construction-related impacts, including dust and noise, and permanent impacts related to noise, vibration, and shadows
- Natural Resources Defense Council—Concerns regarding impacts related to environmental justice, wetlands and riparian habitats, state parks, and the Los Angeles River.

8.2.9 Individuals

The Authority held several open houses in the communities along the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section corridor. Individuals expressed concerns about the following:

- Community impacts from the Chevy Chase Drive grade separation
- Cumulative impacts from ongoing infrastructure projects
- Noise impacts
- Bicycle and pedestrian access, specifically on parks and recreation resources
- Traffic impacts
- Visual impacts

8.3 Alternatives Considered

The Los Angeles Basin, in which the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section is located, is substantially constrained by dense urban development and restricted linear rights-of-way (including existing transportation corridors along freeways and rail corridors). The constrained nature of this area shaped development of the alternatives considered.

The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section was formerly part of the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section. The decision to prepare a separate Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section EIR/EIS was based on design refinements and public input over several years, as summarized below. Additionally, as described in Section 2.1.1, it has been established that the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section would have independent utility as it would be able to operate as a standalone project in the event the other project sections of the HSR system are not constructed. For more information on the alternatives analysis process, please see Section 2.4, Potential Alternatives Considered during Alternatives Screening Process.

After the 2005 Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005), the Authority and FRA selected the existing railroad corridor as the preferred option for the HSR system between Sylmar and Los Angeles for further study in a second-tier, project-level EIR/EIS. This option was studied in the 2010 Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section Preliminary Alternatives Analysis (Authority 2010), which recommended multiple alignment and station options, including alignments within the existing railroad corridor, tunnel alignments through the northern downtown Los Angeles area, and multiple stations within the San Fernando Valley and Burbank. The 2011 Sylmar to Los Angeles Project Section SAA (Authority 2011) focused specifically on the community of Sylmar to LAUS and recommended a smaller set of tunnel alignments and station options to be carried forward.

In June 2014, the Authority published the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section SAA (Authority 2014). This report reevaluated all proposed alignment alternatives and recommended splitting the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section into two separate sections—the Palmdale to Burbank and the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections. On July 24, 2014, the Authority released a NOP and FRA published a NOI to prepare the EIR/EIS documents for the Palmdale to Burbank and the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections. Further analysis resulted in the 2016 Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section SAA (Authority 2016a) and the 2016 Palmdale to Burbank Project Section SAA (Authority 2016b). These documents evaluated the alignments between Burbank and Los Angeles and recommended two station options near Hollywood Burbank Airport, two alignment options from the proposed stations to Alameda Avenue, and a single at-grade alignment within the existing railroad corridor from Alameda Avenue to LAUS.

Following the publication of the 2016 SAA reports described above, the Authority continued to refine the project design for the assessment of potential environmental consequences. This EIR/EIS evaluates one underground station near the Hollywood Burbank Airport (Burbank Airport Station). Project elements occurring at and around LAUS would be incorporated into future station plans for the LAUS campus and are addressed in Metro’s Link US Project EIR, for which the Authority is a responsible agency under CEQA (Metro 2019). Under NEPA Assignment, the Authority is the federal lead agency for the Link US Project EIS.

For more information on the alternatives analysis process, please see Chapter 2, Alternatives, Section 2.4, Potential Alternatives Considered during the Alternatives Screening Process.

8.4 Preferred Alternative

The following sections describe the Preferred Alternative, the selection of that alternative, and the formal acceptance of the recommended HSR Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

8.4.1 Description

The Authority’s Preferred Alternative for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section is the HSR Build Alternative (Figure 8-1). The Preferred Alternative includes stations at Burbank Airport and LAUS (included in Metro’s Link US Project). The Preferred Alternative would be entirely grade-separated at crossings, meaning that roads, railroads, and other transportation facilities would be at different heights so that the HSR system would neither interrupt nor interface with other modes of transport, including vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian. The Preferred Alternative would be fenced to prohibit public or unauthorized vehicle access. The Preferred Alternative would be primarily within the existing railroad right-of-way, which is typically 70 to 100 feet wide, and it would include northbound and southbound electrified tracks for high-speed trains. The Preferred Alternative would include new and upgraded track, systems facilities, grade separations, drainage, communication towers, security fencing, and other necessary facilities to introduce HSR service.

The Preferred Alternative would begin at the underground Burbank Airport Station and would consist of two new electrified tracks. The Burbank Airport Station would have both underground and aboveground facilities and would include train boarding platforms, a station building (which would house ticketing areas, passenger waiting areas, restrooms, and related facilities), pick-up/drop-off facilities for private automobiles, a transit center for buses and shuttles, surface parking areas, and stormwater capture/drainage facilities. After exiting the underground station, the Preferred Alternative would travel southeast beneath the Runway 8-26, Taxiway D, the

proposed extended Taxiway C, and critical airport safety zones at Hollywood Burbank Airport in a tunnel. The Preferred Alternative south of the airport would be below-grade traveling south from the Burbank Airport Station and would transition to a surface alignment heading south to the surface station at LAUS. The electrified tracks and HSR station platforms would be on the west side of LAUS, while the non-electrified tracks would merge with the Metrolink and Amtrak tracks. The existing LAUS campus and surrounding tracks are being reconfigured as part of the Metro Link US Project. The Preferred Alternative would require additional modifications within the Link US Project area. These modifications include raising the platform heights and installing an overhead catenary system. The surface portion of the alignment would be designed with structural flexibility to accommodate shared operations with other passenger rail operators. Throughout most of the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section (between Alameda Avenue and State Route 110), two new electrified tracks would be placed along the west side of the existing railroad right-of-way, which would be useable for HSR and other passenger rail operators. The existing tracks would be replaced with nonelectrified tracks placed farther east within the railroad right-of-way, which would be usable for freight and other passenger rail operators but not for HSR.

8.4.2 Identification of the Preferred Alternative

The Authority identified the Preferred Alternative that the agency believes would fulfill its statutory mission and responsibilities by giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical, and other factors. The Authority identified the Preferred Alternative on a balanced consideration of the environmental information presented in this Draft EIR/EIS in the context of CEQA, NEPA, local and regional land use plans, community preferences, and cost. Taking this holistic approach means that there was no single determining factor in identifying the Preferred Alternative in any given geographic area. The Authority weighed the issues, including natural resource and community impacts, the input of the communities along the route, the views of federal and state resource agencies, project costs, and constructability to identify what both agencies believe is the best alternative to achieve the project's purpose and need.

The identification of the Preferred Alternative also integrates the Authority's evaluation under Section 4(f) pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327 and the terms of the NEPA Assignment Memorandum of Understanding (FRA and State of California 2019) assigning the Authority responsibility for compliance with NEPA and other federal environmental laws, including Section 4(f) (49 U.S. Code 303) and related U.S. Department of Transportation orders and guidance. As described in Chapter 4, Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation, Section 4(f) properties can only be used by federally funded transportation projects if a *de minimis* impact finding is made or there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative and all possible planning has been taken to minimize harm to any Section 4(f) property used by the project. For more information on the Authority's evaluation under Section 4(f), please see Chapter 4.

While other alignment alternatives outside of the existing railroad right-of-way were evaluated in the 2005 Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005) and the alternatives analyses development process, the Authority determined that the alternative located within the existing railroad corridor would have the least environmental impacts. The Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section would provide blended service within the existing railroad corridor, meaning the HSR Build Alternative would share right-of-way and tracks with other passenger rail and freight operators.

As described above, the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section is substantially constrained by dense urban development and restricted linear rights of way. Accordingly, the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section does not have a broad range of alignment alternatives with separate impacts for each alternative. Therefore, the HSR Build Alternative is the Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative is estimated to have capital costs of approximately \$3,553,500,000 in first-quarter 2018 dollars (Authority and FRA 2018).

8.4.3 Preferred Alternative Acceptance Decision

The Authority Board reviewed the proposed Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section during its meeting on November 15, 2018. The Board's objective was to evaluate whether to identify the HSR Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIR/EIS. The alternatives considered were the HSR Build Alternative and the No Project Alternative. The Authority Board concurred with the staff recommendation that the HSR Build Alternative should be identified as the state's Preferred Alternative in the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section Draft EIR/EIS. Resolution #HSRA 18-X20 can be found on the Authority's website (https://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/brdmeetings/2018/brdmtg_111518_Item5_Final_Resolution_HSRA18_20_PREFERRED_Alternative_for_Burb-LA.pdf). The HSR Build Alternative would meet the program and project purpose and need, as stated in the 2005 Statewide Program EIR/EIS and Chapter 1 of this Draft EIR/EIS, which are summarized below:

- The program-wide purpose of the HSR system is “to provide a reliable high-speed electric-powered train system that links the major metropolitan areas of the state, and that delivers predictable and consistent travel times. A further objective is to provide an interface with commercial airports, mass transit, and the highway network and to relieve capacity constraints of the existing transportation system as increases in intercity travel demand in California occur, in a manner sensitive to and protective of California’s unique natural resources” (Authority and FRA 2005).
- The purpose of the project is to implement the Burbank to Los Angeles HSR Project Section of the California HSR system to provide the public with electric-powered high-speed rail service that provides predictable and consistent travel times between major urban centers and connectivity to airports, mass transit systems, and the highway network in the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles Basin, and to connect the Northern and Southern portions of the Statewide HSR system.

In addition, the HSR Build Alternative would meet the program and project CEQA objectives described in Chapter 1 of this Draft EIR/EIS.

The Authority's statutory mandate is to plan, build, and operate an HSR system in coordination with California's existing transportation network, particularly intercity rail and bus lines, commuter rail lines, urban rail lines, highways, and airports. In accordance with Section 15124 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Authority has responded to this mandate by adopting the following objectives and policies for the proposed HSR system:

- Provide intercity travel capacity to supplement critically overused interstate highways and commercial airports
- Meet future intercity travel demand that will be unmet by present transportation systems, and increase capacity for intercity mobility
- Maximize intermodal transportation opportunities by locating stations to connect with local transit, airports, and highways
- Improve the intercity travel experience for Californians by providing comfortable, safe, frequent, and reliable high-speed travel
- Provide a sustainable reduction in travel time between major urban centers
- Increase the efficiency of the intercity transportation system
- Maximize the use of existing transportation corridors and rights-of-way to the extent feasible
- Develop a practical and economically viable transportation system that can be implemented in phases and generate revenues in excess of operations and maintenance costs
- Provide intercity travel in a manner sensitive to and protective of the region's natural and agricultural resources, and reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled for intercity trips

The No Project Alternative would not meet the program and project purpose and need, nor would it meet CEQA objectives.

This Draft EIR/EIS evaluates the Preferred Alternative in comparison to the No Project Alternative. In the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, only one build alternative is proposed: the HSR Build Alternative. In general, the construction of a complex and innovative project, such as the HSR Build Alternative, would always alter the physical landscape and character, even in an urbanized area or within an existing rail corridor. Decision-makers can consider the relative benefits and challenges that the HSR Build Alternative would have, compared to not building it at all. While building the HSR Build Alternative would cause temporary and permanent impacts, there would be many long-term benefits compared to the No Project Alternative. Table 8-2 summarizes these benefits.

Table 8-2 Benefits of the High-Speed Rail Build Alternative

Topic	Benefits
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved transit, bicycle, and pedestrian safety ▪ Additional mode of intercity transportation ▪ Improved future levels-of-service of the regional roadway system
Air Quality and Global Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-term regional air quality and global climate change improvements during operation resulting from reductions in vehicle miles traveled ▪ Net emission decreases in criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced emergency response times and enhanced roadway safety, as a result of grade separating existing crossings
Socioeconomics and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beneficial long-term effect due to creation of direct and induced jobs by 2040.
Station Planning, Land Use, and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved growth and investment in station areas by increasing statewide accessibility and reducing travel time ▪ Compatibility with the goals and policies of the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles that support development of an HSR station ▪ Strong catalyst for the improved accessibility and transit-oriented development envisioned in local planning documents
Regional Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short- and long-term employment benefits during construction and operation
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved access to jobs, community amenities, and new employment opportunities ▪ Improved community cohesion, access, and safety as a result of grade separations and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities ▪ Beneficial effects related to sales tax gains, regional employment, regional transportation, transportation safety, and regional air quality

8.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The CEQA Guidelines (§ 15126.6(e)(2)) state that if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, then the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. For the reasons described in this Draft EIR/EIS, the environmentally superior alternative is not the No Project Alternative. The HSR Build Alternative would provide benefits that would not be realized under the No Project Alternative, including reducing vehicle trips on freeways and roadways, lowering regional air pollutants, reducing need for freeway and airport expansion, and lessening greenhouse gas emissions to help California meet its Senate Bill 32 reduction targets for 2030 and beyond. Accordingly, the Preferred Alternative (i.e., HSR Build Alternative) is the environmentally superior alternative. Implementing

the HSR project between Burbank and Los Angeles would have adverse environmental impacts, but, overall, the Preferred Alternative provides the environmentally superior alternative by best meeting environmental regulatory requirements and best minimizing impacts on the natural environment and communities.

8.6 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The “environmentally preferable alternative” is a NEPA term for the alternative that would promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA Section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources. As required by the regulations implementing NEPA, the Authority will identify the environmentally preferable alternative in its Record of Decision for the Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section.

This page intentionally left blank