



**HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR
JOINT POWERS AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, July 11, 2024 – 2:00 p.m.

Members of the public are welcome to participate via computer or by phone.
Please mute phones/computer audio, until you are called to speak.

HDC JPA Board Meeting Virtual Info:

Please Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83114976303?pwd=TTdqZ09HTGE1ZzlwQUhWcjdiYndZQT09>

Meeting ID: 831 1497 6303 Passcode: 384617

Please Join from Phone by Dialing +1 669 900 9128 (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 831 1497 6303 Passcode: 384617

TELECONFERENCE AVAILABLE AT THESE ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

	Elizabeth Becerra & Bob Harriman Victorville City Hall 14343 Civic Drive Conference Rm A Victorville, CA 92392	Gabriel Reyes & Daniel Ramos Adelanto City Hall 11600 Air Express Way Adelanto, CA 92301
Lauren Hughes-Leslie Lancaster City Hall 44933 Fern Avenue Conference Room A Lancaster, CA 93534	Eric Ohlsen & Richard Loa Palmdale City Hall 38300 Sierra Hwy Suite B Palmdale, CA 93550	Ara Najarian 500 N. Brand Blvd Suite 830 Glendale, CA 91203

HDC JPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS

Chair Kathryn Barger, Supervisor, 5th Supervisorial District, Los Angeles County
Vice Chair Elizabeth Becerra, Mayor, City of Victorville
Gabriel Reyes, Mayor, City of Adelanto
Lauren Hughes-Leslie, Council Member, City of Lancaster
Eric Ohlsen, Council Member, City of Palmdale
Ara Najarian, Director, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

HDC JPA BOARD MEMBER ALTERNATES

Richard Loa, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Palmdale
Bob Harriman, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Victorville
Daniel Ramos, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Adelanto

HDC JPA STAFF

Executive Director: Arthur V. Sohikian
Legal Counsel: Laura Jacobson, Deputy County Counsel, Los Angeles County

OPEN SESSION

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Kathryn Barger, Chair
- 2. ROLL CALL** – Arthur V. Sohikian, Secretary
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

HDC JPA is conducting business remotely. HDC JPA is committed to ensuring that our public meetings are accessible to the public and that the public can observe and address the meeting and to participate by providing written and oral comment on HDC matters. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Executive Director Arthur V. Sohikian at sohikian@highdesertcorrdior.org. At this time members of the public can address the HDC JPA Board of Directors regarding any items within the subject matter jurisdiction of the agency that are not separately listed on this agenda. When possible, lengthy testimony should be presented to the Board in writing and only pertinent points presented orally.

HDC JPA BOARD CONSENT CALENDAR

All items listed under the Consent Calendar are routine and may be enacted by one motion. Prior to the motion to consider any action by the Board, any public comments on any of the Consent Calendar items will be heard. There will be no separate action unless Board Members request items be removed from the Consent Calendar.

- 5. HDC JPA BOARD MEETING MINUTES/RECAP OF PROCEEDINGS**

Recommended Action: Approve April 11, 2024, HDC JPA Board Meeting Minutes/Recap of Proceedings held via virtual zoom webinar format.

HDC JPA BOARD REGULAR CALENDAR

6. **HDC JPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – *HDC JPA Executive Director***
Recommended Action: *Receive and file report.*
7. **CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT UPDATE**
Recommended Action: *Receive and file report.*
8. **HDC JPA BOARD MEMBER FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
9. **ADJOURNMENT. Next HDC JPA Board Meeting is October 10, 2024, 2 pm**



AGENDA REPORT – BOARD ITEM 5

High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency

Date: July 11, 2024

To: Board of Director Members of the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency (HDC)

From: Arthur V. Sohikian, Executive Director

Subject: HDC JPA Board Meeting Minutes/Recap of Proceedings

Recommendation Action:

Approve April 11, 2024, HDC JPA Board Minutes/Recap of Proceedings held via virtual zoom webinar format.

1. April 11, 2024 HDC JPA CALL TO ORDER – Vice Chair Becerra calls virtual Board meeting to order at 2:01pm

2. ROLL CALL – Quorum Present, 5 voting members as follows:

HDC JPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS – present/voting members

Elizabeth Becerra, Mayor, City of Victorville

Gabriel Reyes, Mayor, City of Adelanto

Lauren Hughes-Leslie, Council Member, City of Lancaster

Eric Ohlsen, City of Palmdale

Ara Najarian, Director, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

HDC JPA STAFF

Executive Director: Arthur V. Sohikian

Legal Counsel: Laura Jacobson, Deputy County Counsel, Los Angeles County

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Director Najarian

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS – No Public Comment

5. HDC JPA BOARD MEETING MINUTES/RECAP OF PROCEEDINGS

Recommended Action: *Approve January 11, 2024, HDC JPA Board Meeting Minutes/Recap of Proceedings held via virtual zoom webinar format.*

Approved Item 5 by Motion by Director Reyes, second by Director Ohlsen

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

6. HDC JPA PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET

Recommended Action:

- A. Approve High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency Proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget of \$6,174,000. Attachment A – HDC JPA Proposed FY24-25 Budget and HDC JPA FY23-24 Approved Budget.
- B. Authorize the Executive Director and Los Angeles County Counsel to execute all necessary funding agreements with Metro.
- C. Authorize the Executive Director contractual signing authority for an amount not to exceed \$299,000.
- D. Authorize the Executive Director to continue the agreement with Los Angeles County Public Works for procurement support services.

Approved Item 6 by Motion by Vice Chair Becerra, second by Director Reyes

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

7. RESOLUTION OF THE HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS AGENCY AUTHORIZING THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR JOINT POWERS AGENCY TO EXECUTE A MASTER AGREEMENT, AND PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTS FOR STATE-FUNDED TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

Recommended Action:

- A. Approve HDC JPA Resolution FY23/24-01 (Attachment A) of the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency Authorizing the Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Director of the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency to Execute Master Agreement (No. 64HDCJPAMA), and Program Supplements for State-Funded Transportation Projects.
- B. Authorize the Chair of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Los Angeles County Counsel to execute all necessary funding agreements.

Approved Item 7 by Motion by Director Ohlsen, second by Director Najarian

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

8. COMMUNITY WORKFORCE AGREEMENT FOR HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR PROJECT WITH THE CALIFORNIA STATE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA AND LOS ANGELES/ORANGE COUNTIES BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL AND THE SAN BERNARDINO-RIVERSIDE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL AND THE SIGNATORY CRAFT COUNCILS AND UNIONS

Recommended Action:

- A. Approve Community Workforce Agreement for High Desert Corridor Project with State Building and Construction Trades Council of California and Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, and the San Bernardino-Riverside Building and Construction Trades Council and the Signatory Craft Councils and Unions.
- B. Authorize the Chair of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Los Angeles County Counsel to execute all necessary agreements.

Approved Item 8 by Motion by Vice Chair Becerra, second by Director Hughes-Leslie

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

9. HIGH SPEED RAIL LABOR COALITION AGREEMENT TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECT

Recommended Action:

- A. Approve High Speed Rail Labor Coalition Agreement with 13 Rail Unions to Operate and Maintain the High Desert Corridor High Speed Rail Project.
- B. Authorize the Chair of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Los Angeles County Counsel to execute all necessary agreements.

Approved Item 9 by Motion by Director Najarian, second by Vice Chair Becerra

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

10. HDC JPA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH AVS CONSULTING, INC. FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND AGENCY ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Recommended Action:

Approve the AVS Consulting, Inc. Contract Extension, including subcontractors, for a not-to-exceed annual amount of \$1,188,800 to conduct the agency management activities of the HDC JPA including those of the Executive Director and Agency Administration Support Services with a period of performance from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, pending funding of the FY2024-2025 adopted budget.

Approved Item 10 by Motion by Director Reyes, second by Vice Chair Becerra

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

11. HDC JPA CONTRACT MODIFICATION TO EXISTING AMENDMENT NO 9 WITH TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Recommended Action:

Approve a modification to the existing Transportation Solutions Contract Amendment No 9, including subcontractors, for a not-to-exceed amount of \$358,000 to conduct additional tasks that have

come up in the current fiscal year to support the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Record of Decision (ROD) processes, with a period of performance to coincide with the current period of performance that runs from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. The current year Budget of \$710,000 for this item will be adjusted with the \$358,000 modification for a revised total amount of \$1,068,000. The \$358,000 modification to this contract does not increase the overall HDC JPA FY24 Budget because the funds will be reallocated from unexpended funds in the current budget. These additional tasks are related to right-of-way planning and environmental/conceptual engineering design activities to reflect the minor adjustment made to the route alignment.

Approved Item 11 by Motion by Vice Chair Becerra, second by Director Najarian

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

12. HDC JPA CONTRACT AMENDMENT 10 WITH TRANSPORTATION

SOLUTIONS

Recommended Action:

Approve the Transportation Solutions Contract Amendment 10, including subcontractors, for a not-to-exceed amount of \$977,000 to complete the project's remaining tasks related to National Environmental Policy Act and Record of Decision processes with a period of performance from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, pending funding in the FY2024-2025 adopted budget.

Approved Item 12 by Motion by Director Reyes, second by Director Ohlsen

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

13. HDC JPA EXPERT PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS ADVISORY SERVICES FOR THE HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

Recommended Action:

- A. Find that the award of contract is not a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.
- B. Award contract to InfraStrategies LLC for Professional Financial and Business Advisory Services in the amount of \$3,500,000 for a three-year base contract with two one-year options.
- C. Authorize the Executive Director and Los Angeles County Counsel, representing HDC JPA, to execute the contract.
- D. Authorize the Executive Director to execute amendments to:
 - (a) exercise the term extension options to extend the term of the Agreement for up to two additional one-year periods;
 - (b) add, delete, and/or change Agreement terms and conditions that are non-substantive, required by the HDC JPA Board, or necessary for compliance with applicable law;
 - (c) approve necessary changes to

scope of services; (d) supplement the initial not-to-exceed contract amount of \$3,500,000 by up to 15% contingency of the original contract amount based on workload requirements; (e) to suspend and/or terminate the contract for convenience.

Approved Item 13 by Motion by Vice Chair Becerra, second by Director Najarian

EB	GR	LHL	EO	AN	
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

14. HDC JPA EEXECUTIVE DRIECTOR REPORT – HDC JPA Executive Director
Recommended Action: *Receive and file report.*

15. HDC JPA BOARD MEMBER FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

16. ADJOURNMENT 2:51pm. Next HDC JPA Board Meeting is July 11, 2024, 2 pm



AGENDA REPORT – BOARD ITEM 6

High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency

Date: July 11, 2024

To: Board of Director Members of the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency (HDC JPA)

From: Arthur V. Sohikian, Executive Director

Subject: HDC JPA Executive Director Report

Recommended Action: Receive and File Report

New Era for US High Speed Rail

The passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill ushered in a new era of national high speed rail legislation and funding by creating the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (CID). The FRA CID created a new planning, environmental review, and funding process for high-speed rail projects in the US (Attachment A).

The HDC JPA entrance into the FRA CID Program in December 2023, requires the HDC HSR Project to engage in additional planning activities as contained in the updated Service Development Plan guidelines/framework (SDP), before the FRA can act on the HDC JPA NEPA Reevaluation request submitted in April 2021, which was before the passage of the legislation.

The High Desert Intercity High Speed Rail Project objective is to progress with the FRA NEPA process to receive the Record of Decision (ROD) and Notice of Determination (NOD). Therefore, to improve the HDC HSR Project before further NEPA Reevaluation review, the HDC JPA will integrate and align the high-speed rail project planning with the environmental review process as outlined by FRA in the new CID framework.

To further HDC HSR planning within the FRA CID, the HDC JPA will:

- Update the 2023 Draft HDC Service Development Plan (HDC SDP) with additional CID created sections as outlined in the HDC SDP “additional requirements analysis.”
- The HDC SDP will seek to address interim operating conditions in Palmdale, prior to the arrival of the California High Speed Rail project, including a conceptual plan for the proposed rail station in Palmdale. The HDC SDP will also include Metrolink service and clarifies the governance structure that will be necessary to bring this project to fruition.
- HDC SDP will include a conceptual plan for a rail station in Victor Valley with Brightline West and clarifies the governance structure.
- Prepare a funding plan for the HDC project that includes government grants, private sector funding opportunities, and potential FRA Railroad Rehabilitation Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan funds.

- Conduct in-person and virtual public engagement opportunities along the project corridor in affected communities.
- Advance Right of Way (ROW) planning, particularly long lead items.
- Advance cultural resource (Section 106) activities such as data collection and preparing an administrative draft Programmatic Agreement (PA).
- Advance Section 7 and 404 discussions with United States Fire and Wildlife Safety (USFWS) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE).

What HDC is asking from our federal partner, the Federal Railroad Administration:

- Provide HDC a formal communication acknowledging FRA as the lead agency for NEPA final agency action
- Committing to respond to each draft deliverable submitted by HDC in a timely manner.

2. High Desert Intercity High Speed Rail Project Map & Project Highlights



HDC JPA is seeking NEPA Reevaluation approvals with a federal Record of Decision (ROD) and Notice of Determination (NOD).

2016: High Desert Corridor Multi-purpose corridor receives California CEQA clearance which included a highway and high-speed rail line in the Locally Approved Alternative (LPA). EIR/EIS completed in 2016; 8-year Public Process.

2018: High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority (HDC JPA) supports study of an alternative to the HDC

2020: Caltrans declares No Build for the highway portion.

April 2021: HDC JPA submits Reevaluation petition to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Surface Transportation Board (STB) to receive NEPA clearance and receive the Rail Project Record of Decision (ROD/NOD).

The High Desert Intercity High Speed Rail Project proposes a 54-mile corridor (Palmdale to Victor Valley) that can be traveled in under 30-minutes providing future connection to the California High Speed Rail Project and the Brightline West DesertXpress West Project.

One station in Palmdale and one station in Victor Valley: Proposed integration with Palmdale California High Speed Rail Station and Brightline West Desert Xpress Victor Valley Station.

Equitable transportation mobility options. The HDC HSR represents a significant investment in historically underserved and underinvested communities in the high desert communities of Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties.

The HDC JPA High Speed Rail Project is consistent with the CA State Rail Plan's objectives to improve connectivity of the California statewide rail network.

The HDC HSR Project will improve travel safety and reliability from rural communities to major urban centers in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties.

The HDC High-Speed Rail Project, a zero-emission high speed rail technology, will reduce vehicle miles traveled, contributing to improved air quality and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The HDC High-Speed Rail Project is estimated to generate more than \$12 billion in economic activity during development and construction.

New business development will help create jobs closer to and within the growing communities in Southern California. Access to affordable housing options.

Over \$2 billion of Los Angeles County Measure M funds are dedicated to the project.

December 2023, \$8M in CA Grant Funds allocated.

December 2023, HDC HSR Project accepted into Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (CID) Stage 1, with a \$500,000 grant award.

Summer 2024, HDC HSR Project Labor Agreements completed with CA Trades Councils for construction and US Rail Labor Coalition for Operation & Maintenance.

Summer 2024, HDC JPA Board approves, with Metro Board concurrence, the FY2024-25 budget allocating \$6,174,000 to proceed with HDC JPA High Speed Rail Project development activities.

HDC High Speed Rail project changes from 2016 CEQA Locally Preferred Alternative



- Removal of Freeway Component, Caltrans “No-Build” Alternative, Dec 2020.
- Rail alignment between Palmdale and Victorville is located within footprint studied by Caltrans EIR/EIS except:
 - **Palmdale Station Connection** – Revised to connect to current California HSR Palmdale Station design – realigned approximately 1.5 miles of track.
 - **Victor Valley Station Connection** – Revised to connect to Brightline West I-15 median in-line station at Dale Evans Pkwy in Victor Valley – realigned approximately 4 miles of track.
 - **Southern alignment near Mojave River to avoid Ecological Sensitive Area (ESA) and a historical San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Serrano Tribal Village.**

RAIL

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD

HDC July 11, 2024 Board Report 6 – Executive Director Update ATTACHMENT A

APTA Rail Conference 2024

FRA Project Delivery and Environmental Review

Presenters:

Karla Maffett – Deputy Director, Project Delivery Coordination & Strategy

Amanda Ciampolillo – Deputy Director, Office of Environmental Program Management

Project Delivery Update

U.S. Department of Transportation 2022-2026 Strategic Goals

SAFETY • ECONOMIC STRENGTH & DEVELOPMENT • EQUITY • CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY • TRANSFORMATION • ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Federal Railroad Administration FY 2023-2024 Focus Areas

The Federal Railroad Administration's mission is to enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future.

Safety • Investments • Community • Workforce

OFFICE OF RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT (RRD)

Vision: *World-class rail connects America's communities*

Mission: *Partner to advance effective rail investments*

RRD INVESTMENT GOALS AND OUTCOMES



Rail Safety & Resilience

Enhance community safety & rail network performance:

- Upgraded short-line railroad infrastructure
- Safer grade crossings & connected neighborhoods
- Cleaner, more efficient locomotives & rail yards
- Increased capacity on freight & shared rail lines



Passenger Rail Development

Develop world-class passenger rail service:

- New & enhanced corridors across the U.S.
- A modernized Northeast Corridor
- Renewed Amtrak fleet, facilities & assets
- Improved accessibility, customer experience & reliability

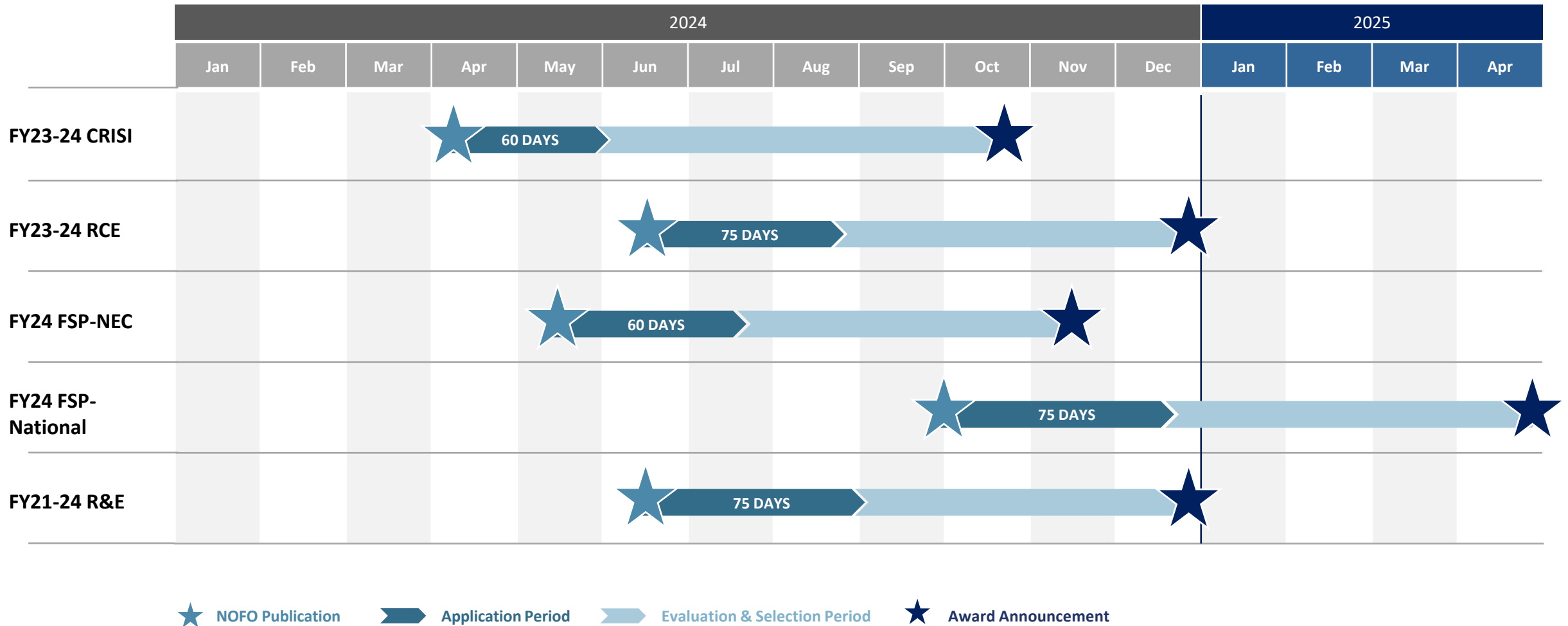


Program Innovation & Capacity

Modernize program infrastructure and workforce:

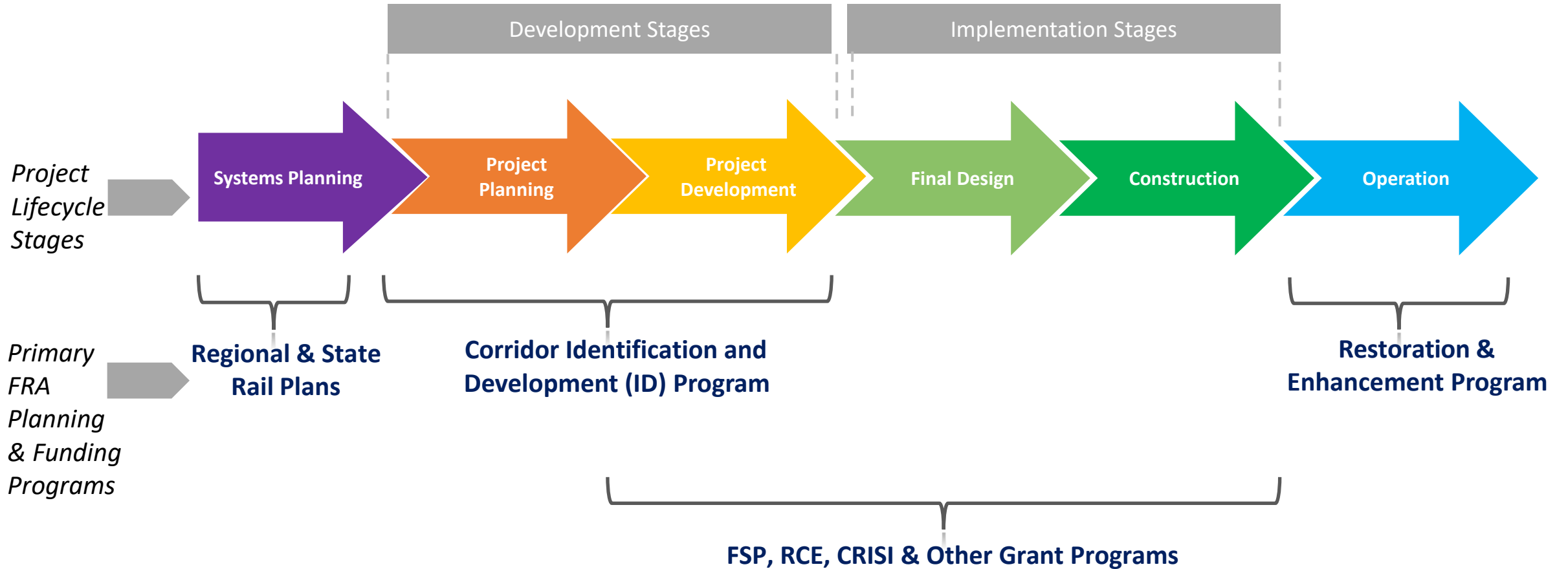
- User-friendly program tools & guidance
- Programmatic planning & environmental processes
- Lifecycle support for efficient project delivery
- Technical assistance & workforce development
- Sound financial stewardship & oversight practices

CY 2024 FRA Discretionary Grant Calendar



NOFO CYCLE STAGES ARE ESTIMATED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES, AND NOT EXACT DURATIONS OR DATES. CHANGES MAY OCCUR, AND FRA WILL UPDATE ACCORDINGLY.

FRA Project Lifecycle & Program Framework



Grant Lifecycle and Approximate Time Frames



FRA Streamlining Initiatives

- Increased hiring of transportation and project delivery professionals
- Restructured FRA Offices to better align internal process and external partnership
 - Stakeholder Outreach Division
 - Training and Capacity Building Division
 - Business Process Improvements Division
 - Office of Research, Data, and Innovation
- FRA Website Improvements
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Public Guidance Documents and FAQs
- Streamlined Grant Agreement Templates
- Webinars & Conference Presentations



July 30 & 31, 2024

WORKSHOP
WEBSITE



Streamlining Opportunities for Partners

Attend FRA Webinars
& Conferences

Refer to FRA Website for
valuable resources

Refer to the NOFO for
program and project
specific pre-requisites

Submit applications with
reasonable schedules, a
confirmed scope, and
secured funding



Partner with infrastructure
owners for project support
and implementation

Adhere to FRA and DOT
project delivery guidance

Submit quality and
responsive deliverables

Contact FRA with application
questions or concerns:
FRA-NOFO-Support@dot.gov

Environmental Review

FRA's Office of Environmental Program Management

- For rail stakeholders pursuing federal investment or project approval, the Office of Environmental Program Management:
 - **Oversees** implementation of environmental laws and regulations,
 - **Advises** on environmental policy, and
 - **Ensures integration** of project development with environmental work

Environmental Coordination & Strategy

Serves as the principal **advisory group** and provides senior-level technical assistance, strategy, and support for the office director and office staff.

Environmental Policy

Oversees the **development and implementation** of environmental policy and clear guidance including:

- Human & natural environment policy
- NEPA policy, both internally and with rail stakeholders
- Realty and real estate matters

Environmental Review

Oversees **compliance** with NEPA and other applicable environmental laws and regulations for projects with FRA funding or action.

Cultural Resources

Oversees **integration of cultural resources and historic preservation requirements** and policies into FRA projects and programs.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance is a Requirement

- FRA's environmental and cultural resource staff are responsible for **managing the environmental and cultural resource review process** for projects that receive financial assistance from FRA
- Environmental and cultural resource review is a required **part of program delivery** and a key component of the overall grant lifecycle
- The level/depth of environmental and cultural resource review needed varies by project



“Why does environmental review take so long?”

- The more complex an environmental review, the more time and effort needed from the grantee/sponsor
- **Common triggers for more detailed environmental work:**
 - Impacts outside of ROW or in previously undisturbed areas
 - Impacts to waters/wetlands or protected species or their habitat (clearing, bridge work)
 - Impacts to Section 4(f) resources such as publicly-owned parks, recreational areas, etc.
 - Impacts involving Impacts to listed or eligible historic properties
 - Evaluations are generally required for properties over 50 years old
 - Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and tribes is generally required



Streamlining Tips

Grantees can...

- ☐ **Supply a draft Categorial Exclusion (CE) Worksheet**
 - Include a CE worksheet or in-depth discussion of environmental and cultural resources and potential impacts in the application.
- ☐ **Include an accurate scope of work**
 - Provide a clear, complete scope of work in an application to help FRA environmental and cultural resources staff focus on potential project impacts earlier.
- ☐ **Get the right project team**
 - Determine if the support of a consultant is needed. Grantees/sponsors with projects involving environmental and/or cultural resources field work or surveys may benefit.
- ☐ **Determine need for natural and/or cultural resources work**
 - Plan project schedules accordingly if adverse impacts to habitat or historic properties are expected.

FRA is...

- ☐ **Working on internal policies and procedures**
 - To improve predictability for grantees across RRD grants and programs
- ☐ **Revising CE Worksheet and guidebook**
- ☐ **Developing templates for other environmental review documents**
- ☐ **Streamlining NEPA compliance**
 - For faster obligation of grants
- ☐ **Working to reduce duplication of environmental review efforts**
 - For multi-modal projects
 - Working closely with the other DOT modes

Contact Us

Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590



Connect with us **USDOTFRA**



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Karla Maffett

Deputy Director,
Project Delivery Coordination & Strategy

Phone: 202-494-3938

Email: karla.maffett@dot.gov

Amanda Ciampolillo

Deputy Director,
Office of Environmental Program Management

Phone: 617.866.9398

Email: amanda.ciampolillo@dot.gov



AGENDA REPORT – BOARD ITEM 7

High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency

Date: July 11, 2024

To: Board of Director Members of the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency (HDC JPA)

From: Arthur V. Sohikian, Executive Director

Subject: California High Speed Rail Authority High Speed Rail Project Update

Recommended Action: Receive and File Report

On June 27, 2024, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Board of Directors certified the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section.

The Palmdale to Burbank Project Section is part of Phase 1 of the statewide California High-Speed Rail System between San Francisco and Los Angeles/Anaheim. The Palmdale to Burbank Project Section connects to the already-approved portions of the high-speed rail system between San Francisco to Palmdale to the north and from Burbank to Los Angeles Union Station to the south.

The High Desert Corridor JPA sent a support letter to the CHSRA for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section dated June 25, 2024, is contained in Attachment A.

The CHSRA presentation to the HDC JPA Board of Directors July 11, 2024, meeting is contained in Attachment A.



June 25, 2024

Honorable Tom Richards
Chair, California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620-MS-1
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: High Desert Corridor JPA Comments to CA High Speed Rail Authority June 26/27, 2024, Board of Directors meeting Agenda Items 2,8, 9, 10 and 11; Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS and Proposed Selection of the Preferred Alternative. Sent Via email to boardmembers@hsr.ca.gov

Dear Chair Richards and Board Members:

On behalf of the High Desert Corridor JPA (HDC JPA) members, we are pleased to strongly support the California High-Speed Rail Authority Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS and the Authority's continued efforts to mitigate project impacts.

The High Desert Corridor JPA is currently developing the High Desert Corridor High-Speed Rail Project to serve the historically underserved high-desert communities in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties that will connect the California High Speed Rail Project's Palmdale Station in Los Angeles County to the Brightline West DesertXpress Victor Valley Station in San Bernardino County.

The HDC JPA High Speed Rail Project is the crucial connector within the California State Rail Plan that seeks to enhance and expand accessibility to passenger rail service linking to the national historic investments made by the federal bi-partisan Infrastructure Bill. The HDC JPA is proud to collaborate with CHSRA and Brightline West to ensure seamless high speed rail operations between California and Nevada.

The Palmdale to Burbank Project Section, as well as the HDC HSR Project, support the federal and state's greenhouse gas reduction efforts and provides economic development and equity benefits for the region. The HDC JPA looks forward to working with the CA High-Speed Rail Authority and others to make high-speed rail a reality for communities seeking safe, climate-friendly mobility options.

The HDC JPA strongly supports the CHSRA Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Arthur V. Sohikian".

Arthur V. Sohikian
Executive Director

www.highdesertcorridor.org



High Desert Corridor JPA Board Meeting California High-Speed Rail Update

July 11, 2024

Statewide Program Update



California High-Speed Rail Program

- 494-mile project
- Connecting:
 - » San Francisco Bay Area
 - » Central Valley
 - » Los Angeles
- Total trip time: less than 3 hours



- Electrified service offering speeds up to 220 mph
- Creating jobs
- Reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions
- Increasing rail ridership

Current Status

- 463 of 494 miles environmentally cleared (as of June 27, 2024)
- 171 miles from Merced to Bakersfield under construction or in advanced design phase
- Bookend Projects underway
 - » Caltrain electrification construction complete and testing underway in Northern CA
 - » Funding committed for LA Union Station improvements
 - » Rosecrans/Marquardt (Santa Fe Springs) grade separation improvements underway
- Applying for funding for the next phase



2023 Program Accomplishments & Look Ahead



2023 Accomplishments

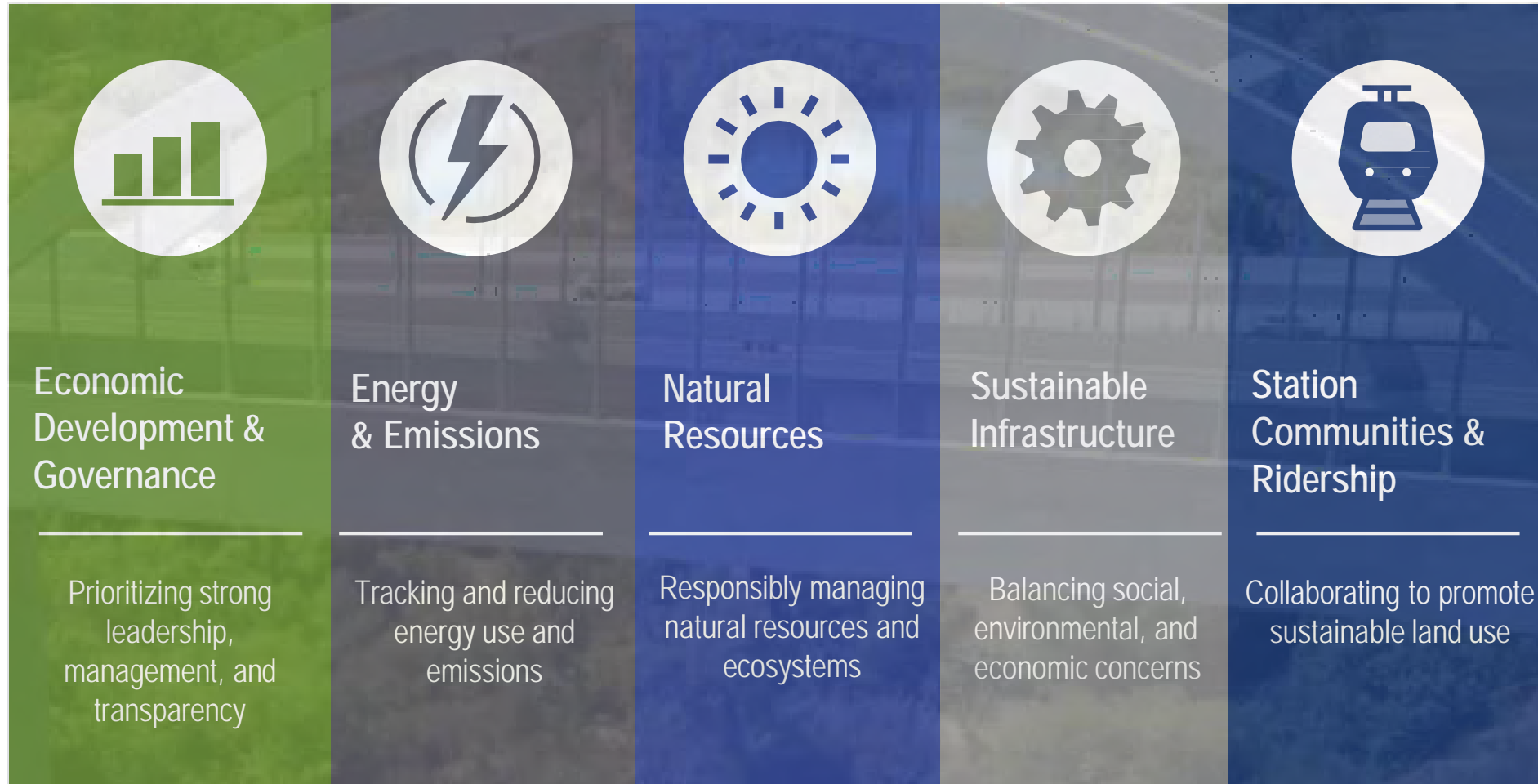
- Awarded \$3.3 billion in new federal funds (reinvested/renewed partnership)
- Advanced procurements to move the project toward operations
- Construction jobs exceeded 12,200 in 2023, record high numbers for daily workers on job sites, and record number of structures completed
- Designs for the extensions to Merced and Bakersfield are on schedule, meeting contract milestones

Next Steps

- Finish design and construction for Merced to Bakersfield
- Continue environmental review of remaining project sections: Palmdale to Burbank and LA to Anaheim
- Advance collaborative projects in Northern and Southern California regions
- Execute procurements to advance rail strategy (trainsets, systems, overhead contact system)

Sustainability Commitment

Our approach to sustainability reflects our organization and mission to deliver a complex rail mega project.



High-Speed Rail in Southern California



**Bakersfield to
Palmdale**
79 miles

**Palmdale to
Burbank**
41 miles

**Burbank to
Los Angeles**
13 miles

**Los Angeles to
Anaheim**
30 miles

163 miles





Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Overview

Palmdale to Burbank Project Section – Benefits



Connects Antelope Valley and Los Angeles Basin at speeds **designed to support non-stop travel time of 13 minutes** with operation time about 17 minutes



Efficient use of land development and resources, **partnering to develop Palmdale and Burbank Station opportunities**



Plane to train connection at the Hollywood Burbank Airport, and first HSR/commercial airport intermodal connection in the US



Fully dedicated high-speed rail corridor improves safety and reliability and travel time for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists with new grade separations



Enhanced safety and operations measures (Positive Train Control, early earthquake warning, intrusion barriers, and more)



Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and decreased traffic congestion for an overall net reduction in VMT between the Los Angeles Basin and Antelope Valley



Economic and employment benefits for the community, region, and the state



Connects employees and employers along the high-speed rail alignment, including connections to **existing Metrolink stations and potential future connection to Brightline West via Palmdale**

Palmdale to Burbank Project Section – Engagement

Since 2014, the Authority has hosted more than **450** meetings with the general public, stakeholders, and agencies that have reached more than **5,000** stakeholders. Outreach includes:

- 50+ Community Presentations and Workshops
- 400+ Briefings to Cities, Agencies and Stakeholders
- 44,000+ Final EIR/EIS Notices distributed via mail throughout corridor
- 2,700+ stakeholders received emailed Final EIR/EIS notice
- Key materials translated into Spanish
- 9 Final EIR/EIS Advertisements in local newspapers

Stakeholder input informed project changes, including:

- Minimizing impacts to community residents and businesses
- Minimizing impacts to Una Lake, Angeles National Forest, and Pacific Crest Trail
- Minimizing impacts from grade separations



Palmdale to Burbank Project Section – Evolution of Alternatives

- 2005 Program EIR/EIS
- 2008 Second Program EIR/EIS
- 2010-2014 Alternatives Development for Palmdale to Los Angeles
- 2014 Project Scoping for Palmdale to Burbank
- 2014-2018 Alternatives Development for Palmdale to Burbank
- 2018 Identification of the Preferred Alternative (Refined SR14)
- 2020 CEO update of the Preferred Alternative to SR14A, including two modified alternatives
- 2022 Draft EIR/EIS



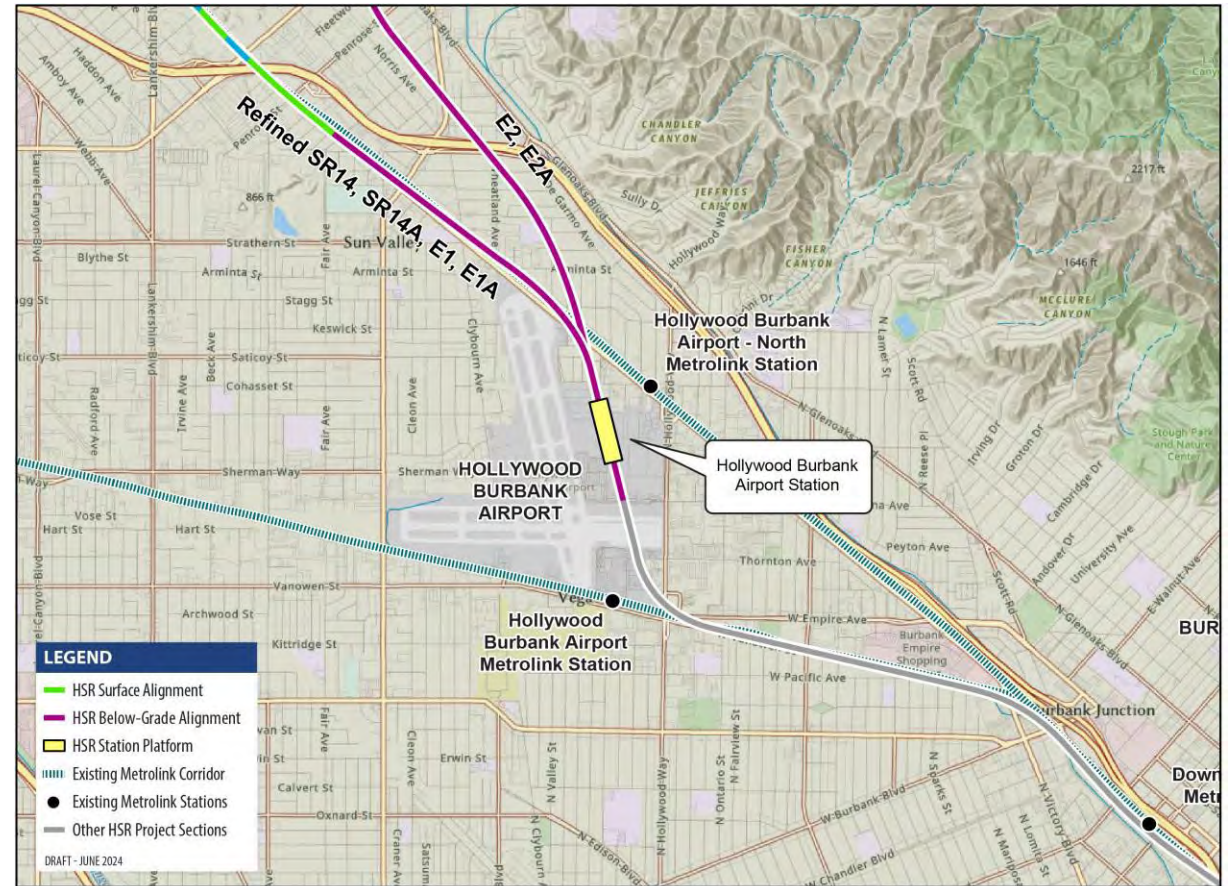
Project Section Overview

- Approximately 31-38 miles
- Design speeds support **non-stop travel time of 13 minutes** with operation time of about 17 minutes
- Fully grade separated
- Six Build Alternatives
 - » Refined SR14, SR14A, E1, E1A, E2, E2A
 - » Preferred Alternative: SR14A
- Connects Stations
 - » Palmdale Transportation Center approved in Bakersfield to Palmdale Project Section
 - » Burbank Airport Station approved in Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section and reaffirmed in this project section



Burbank Airport Station

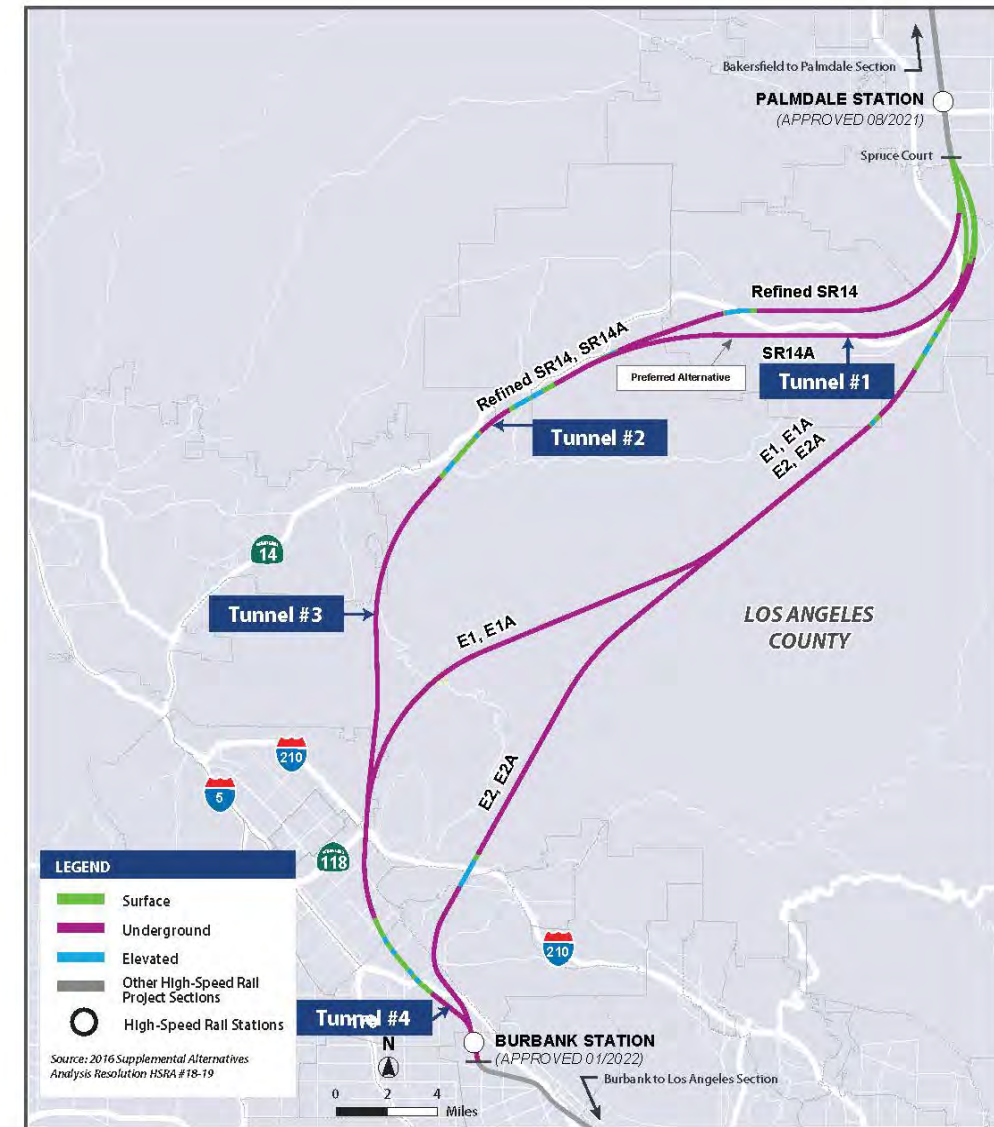
- All six Build Alternatives connect to Burbank Airport Station featuring:
 - » Near (approximately 500 feet) the future Hollywood Burbank Airport replacement airport terminal providing air to rail connectivity
 - » Underground platform and tracks minimizing impacts to businesses and residential areas
 - » Provides intermodal connection to two Metrolink lines
- Committed to ongoing coordination with the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority



NOTE: Burbank Airport Station was also studied in Burbank-to-Los Angeles Project Section EIR/EIS and was approved in that process. The Authority will be reaffirming that approval as a part of this subsection, as design remains unchanged.

Tunnels for Build Alternatives

- **Tunnels** – Mountainous terrain necessitates tunnels to cross the Angeles National Forest between the Antelope Valley and the San Fernando Valley.
 - » Tunnels would significantly reduce travel times and allow the Authority to meet the Prop 1A trip time.
 - » Risk to tunnel construction, hydrogeologic, and geologic conditions.
- **Accommodates high speeds** – Without tunnels, steep grades and sharp curves would be needed to traverse the mountains preventing trains from traveling safely at high speeds, up to 220 mph.
- **Fewest impacts to communities and wildlife** – Tunnels avoid and reduce the project's impacts to both communities and to wildlife habitat.

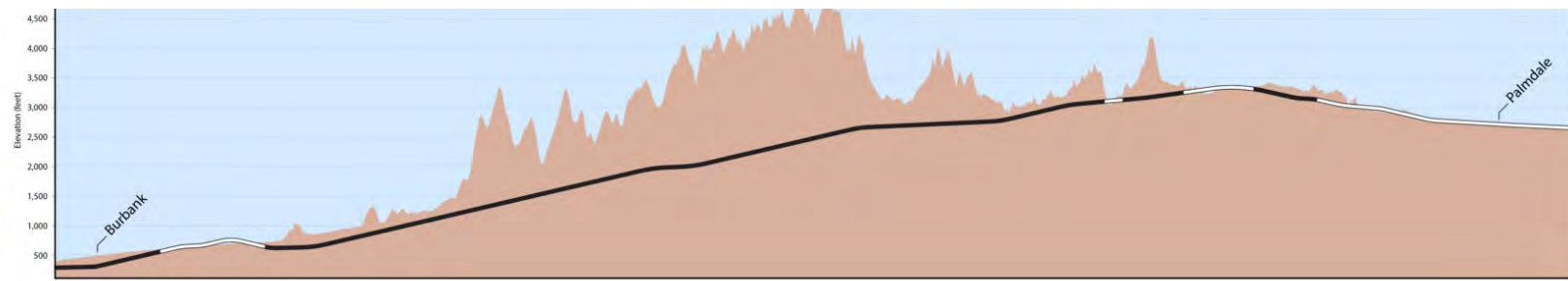


Map showing the locations of tunnels (purple) in the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section

Tunnel Profiles – E1A, E2A and SR14A

- Alternatives E1A, E2A traverse the Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument with long and deep tunnels
- SR14A has the lowest average tunnel depth with shorter tunnel segments.

Alternative E1A



Alternative E2A



Alternative SR14A (Preferred Alternative)



SR14A Preferred Alternative – Comparison to Other Alternatives

- SR14 alignments have:
 - » Shortest amount of tunneling within the Angeles National Forest and the San Gabriel Mountain National Monument
 - » Lowest risk of impacts on surface, groundwater and wildlife within the Angeles National Forest because of fewest surface hydrogeologic features
- SR14A avoids Una Lake, an aquatic resource that provides an important water source for local wildlife and suitable habitat for listed species



Build Alternatives – Design Feature Comparison

	Build Alternatives					
Design Feature (mi)	SR14A*	E1A	E2A	Refined SR14	E1	E2
Total Length	38.3	36.1	31.6	37.0	35.0	31.2
Surface	10.3	9.9	8.3	10.3	10.6	9.0
Elevated	1.5	1.0	1.7	2.9	0.8	1.5
Underground – Tunnel	27.9	26.3	24.1	25.5	24.6	22.4
Tunnel Segment 1	13.2	1.7	1.7	7.3	1.6	1.6
Tunnel Segment 2	1.0	1.6	1.6	3.1	21.7	16.6
Tunnel Segment 3	12.4	21.7	16.6	0.5	1.4	4.2
Tunnel Segment 4	1.4	1.4	4.2	0.9		
Tunnel Segment 5				12.4		
Tunnel Segment 6				1.4		
Underground – Other	2.0	1.6	0.8	2.0	2.6	1.8

**Denotes Preferred Alternative/CEQA proposed project*

Project Cost Development

- Cost estimate is **\$21.91 to \$22.89 billion** depending on alternative
 - » Preferred alternative **SR14A** is **\$22.55 billion**
- Capital cost estimates were reviewed and updated between publication of the Draft EIR/EIS and Final EIR/EIS
- Cost revisions were made to:
 - » Correct errors (double-counting)
 - » Include key changes in the project resulting from the Authority's consideration of public comments (project footprint reductions)
 - » Account for inflation escalation and cost increases (professional services, unallocated contingency)
- The 2025 Project Update Report will include updated cost estimate range for the project section.

Authority Cost Estimate	Refined SR14 Build Alternative	SR14A Build Alternative	E1 Build Alternative	E1A Build Alternative	E2 Build Alternative	E2A Build Alternative
Total	\$21,906	\$22,550	\$22,064	\$22,405	\$22,139	\$22,894



Environmental Review

Environmental Process

- Analysis of potential impacts to the natural and human environment is required under:
 - » National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – federal requirement
 - » California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – California requirement
- Purpose and Need
- Considers practicable and reasonable range of Alternatives
- Discloses if impacts are adverse/significant
- NEPA and CEQA require adverse/significant impacts to be mitigated (if feasible) via:
 - » Avoidance
 - » Minimization
 - » Reduction
 - » Compensation
- Public involvement process
- Selects alternative that best balances adverse effects and public policy benefits

Resource Topics Considered in EIR / EIS

- Transportation
- Air Quality and Global Climate Change
- Noise and Vibration
- Electromagnetic Interference / Electromagnetic Fields
- Public Utilities and Energy
- Biological and Aquatic Resources
- Hydrology and Water Resources
- Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Paleontological Resources
- Hazardous Materials and Wastes
- Safety and Security
- Socioeconomics and Communities
- Station Planning, Land Use, and Development
- Agricultural Farmland and Forest Land
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Aesthetics and Visual Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Regional Growth
- Cumulative Impacts
- Final Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Evaluations
- Environmental Justice

Comments Received on Draft EIR/EIS - Overview

Draft released and comments received **September 2022 – December 2022**

Approximately **2,500 comments** received, which covered a wide range of issues, including:

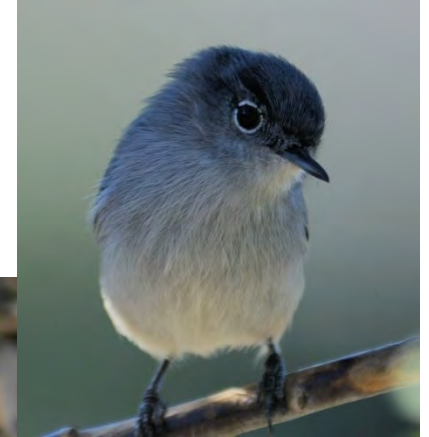
- **Tunneling** – Hydrology/water quality, biological resources, and noise and vibration.
- **Funding** – Project costs, funding availability for construction and operation, and prudent use of public funding.
- **Construction** – Construction effects on surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Property acquisition** – Right-of-way acquisition process, relocation assistance, and potential impacts on property values.
- **Environmental justice** – Potential impacts to environmental justice populations including residential and business displacement in Pacoima, Sun Valley, Sylmar, and Lake View Terrace
- **Sensitive biological resources** – Special status species, sensitive habitat, and wildlife connectivity, including in Una Lake, Santa Clara River, and Bee Canyon
- **Construction water demand and impact on private wells** – Amount of water required during construction and source of the water.

Plants, Wildlife and Sensitive Habitat

- Impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and their habitat are minimized and mitigated to a level of **less-than-significant**
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion concludes **No Jeopardy/No Adverse Modification** for:
 - » Coastal California gnatcatcher
 - » Least Bell's vireo
 - » Southwestern willow flycatcher
 - » Arroyo toad and critical habitat
 - » Slender-horned spineflower
- The Authority will implement **measures** requiring no-work zones, pre-construction surveys, biological monitors, construction employee training, compensatory mitigation, and habitat restoration



Arroyo toad



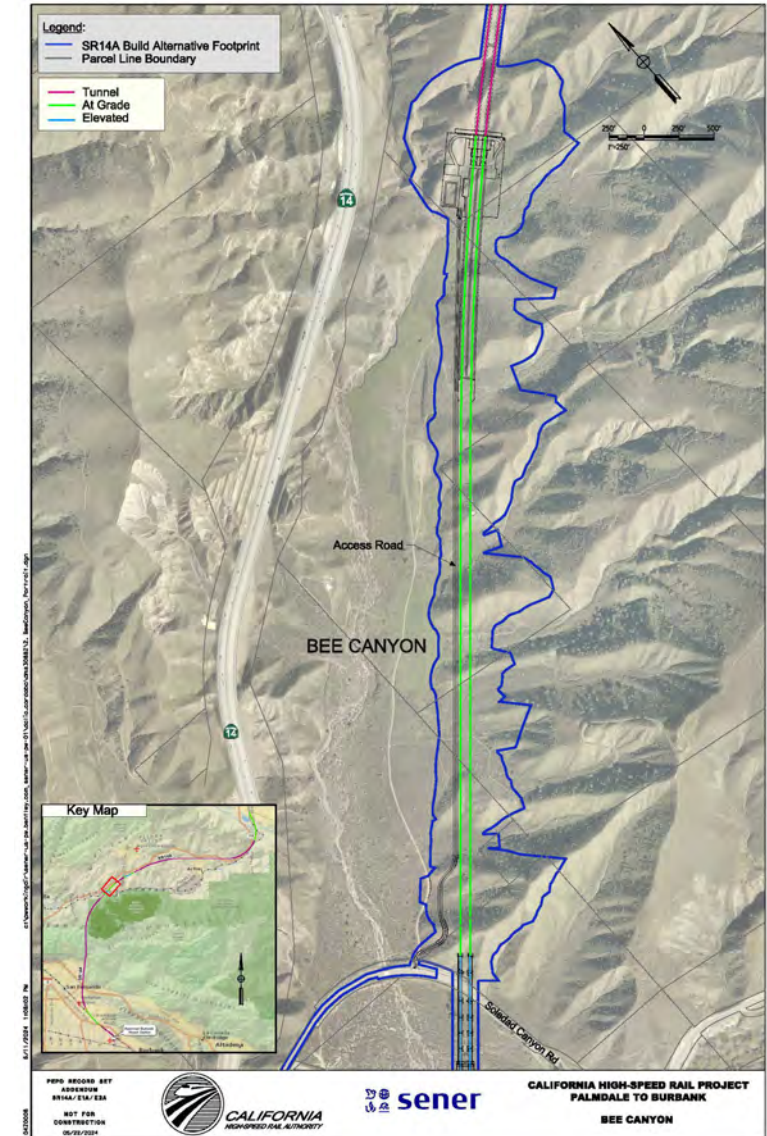
Coastal California
gnatcatcher



Slender-horned spineflower

Bee Canyon and Santa Clara River

- Permanent footprint in Bee Canyon reduced by 22% and temporary footprint in Bee Canyon reduced to 0 acres
- Refined footprint reduces impacts to suitable habitat for the endangered **slender-horned spineflower** and the threatened **coastal California gnatcatcher**
- **Sound walls** are anticipated, which will reduce noise impacts to sensitive bird species in Bee Canyon and at the Santa Clara River
- Monitoring and maintenance of **hydrologic conditions** to support slender-horned spineflower in Bee Canyon
- **Bridge spans the Santa Clara River** avoiding impacts to the Fully Protected unarmored threespine stickleback



Wildlife Movement

- Impacts to wildlife movement from the Preferred Alternative are mitigated to a level **less-than-significant**
- Project design maintains current wildlife movement corridors: approximately **80% of the alignment is in tunnel or on viaduct**
- Adopts FHWA wildlife crossing standards
- **Two wildlife crossings** will be constructed to maintain connectivity: east of Una Lake and south of the California Aqueduct



Mountain lion



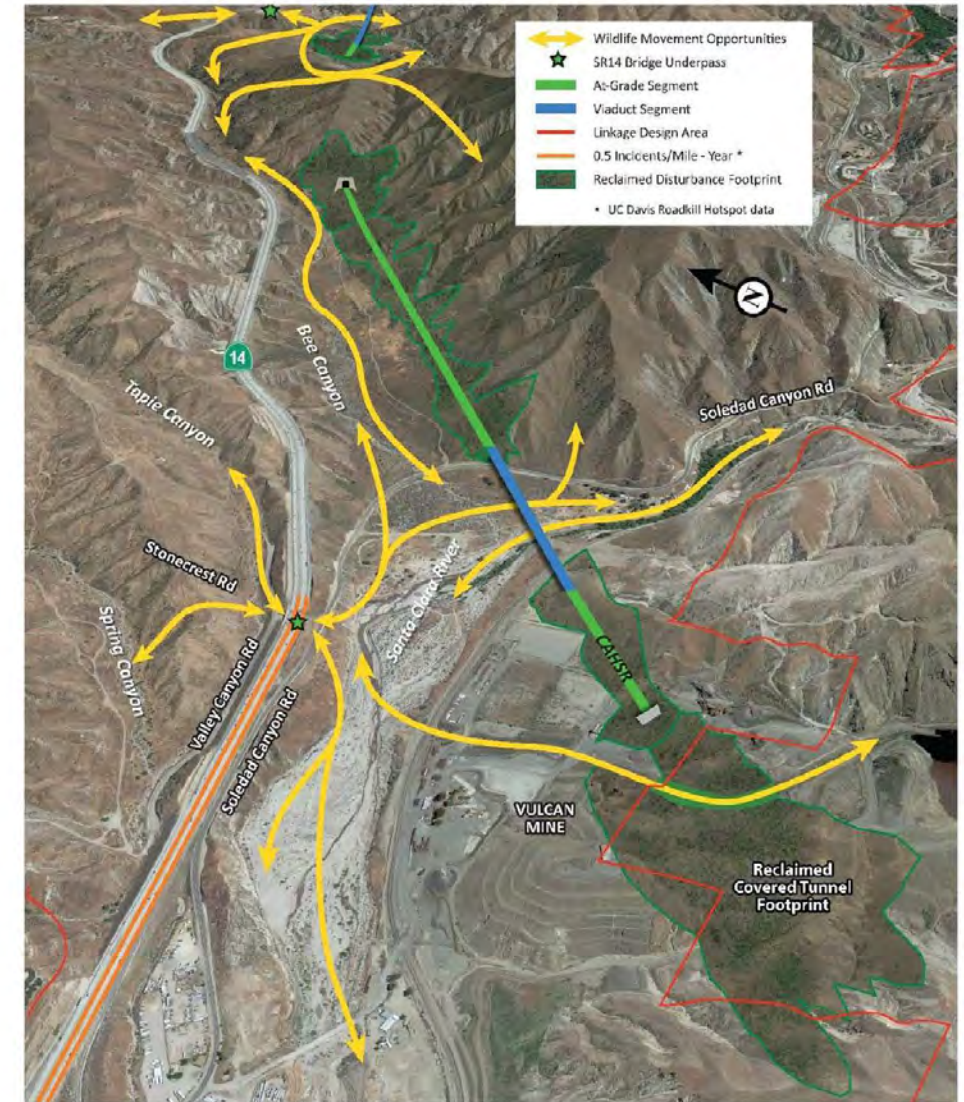
Southern mule deer



American badger

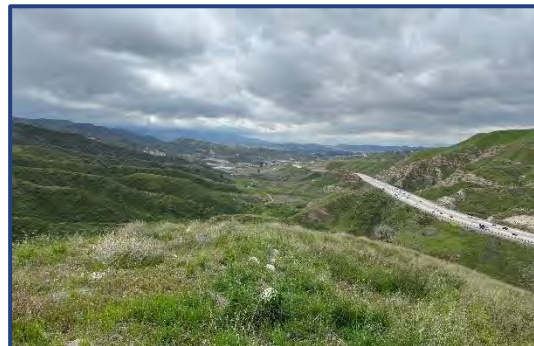
Wildlife Movement in Bee Canyon

- Based on field research, extensive evaluation and best professional judgment, the Authority will **substantially maintain wildlife movement** through Bee Canyon
- **Alignment on embankment for 1.13 miles** in the same area where SR 14 is an existing barrier to wildlife movement
- In response to comments on the Draft EIR/EIS, staff evaluated **eight wildlife crossings** across SR 14 and the alignment
- Wildlife Movement Working Group with CDFW and Caltrans will lead **collaborative effort** to advance wildlife connectivity



Lang Station Open Space at Bee Canyon

- Public open space – 208 acres owned by City of Santa Clarita
- 1.15 miles of trails
- All possible planning to **minimize harm** including multiple design options to avoid/minimize project effects on property
 - » Replacement trails in area
 - » Coordination with property owner
 - » Compensatory mitigation
 - » Design refinements considered and incorporated



Looking southeast



Existing view: Looking northeast



Visual simulation: Looking northeast



Grade Separations

What is a Grade Separation?

A grade separation is a roadway that is re-aligned over or under train tracks to eliminate hazards. High-speed rail proposes to grade-separate existing roads. Benefits of grade separations include:

Improves Safety

Grade separations eliminate conflicts between trains and vehicles/pedestrians.



Reduces Noise

Trains do not sound horns when crossing an intersection.



Increases Speed

Trains can travel through areas at a greater speed.



Decreases Traffic Congestion

Traffic can continue to flow when a train is crossing the intersection.



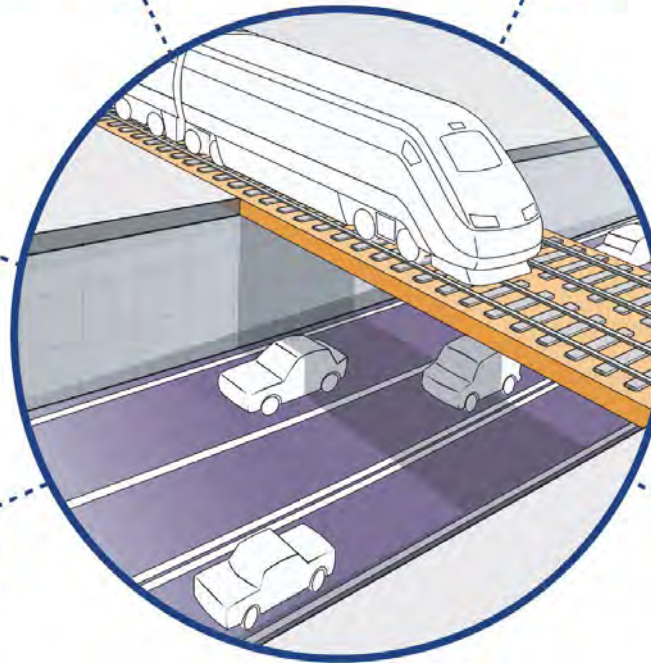
Improves Train Operations Reliability

Provides an opportunity for increased passenger rail service.

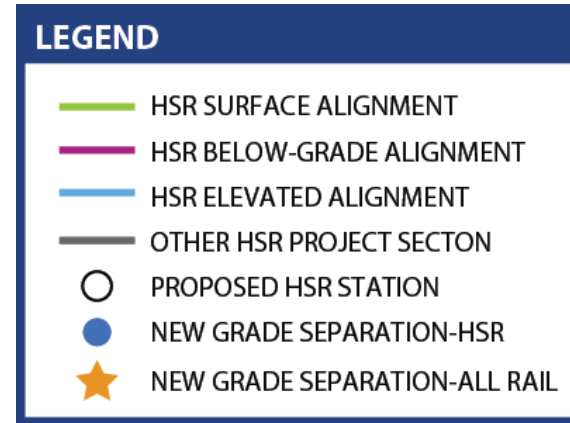


Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Vehicles do not have to idle while waiting for an approaching train.



Grade Separations – Palmdale, Acton



- One new grade separation for all rail operators at E Ave S in Palmdale
- One new grade separation for HSR only at Barrel Springs Rd south of Lake Palmdale

Property Impacts

The Authority understands that stakeholders may be concerned about potential impacts to their property and has developed an interactive map (meethrsocal.org/p-b/interactive-map/) to provide more information.



Scan the QR Code to
visit the Interactive map

Right-of-Way Process

In accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (Uniform Act):



Please refer to: “Your Property, Your High-Speed Rail Project” and “Relocation Assistance Program Information fact sheets located at: https://www.hsr.ca.gov/programs/private_property/ or scan the QR code to the right.





Final EIR / EIS Release

Final Environmental Document Release – May 2024

Public Availability of Document

- Released May 24, 2024
- Available at www.hsr.ca.gov
- At the Southern California Regional Office (Los Angeles) – by appointment only
- At the California High-Speed Rail Office (Sacramento) – during normal business hours
- Additional materials, including interactive map and videos, available at: www.meethsrsocal.org

Notification

- Printed in *LA Daily News*, *La Opinión* and *The Antelope Valley Press* on May 24, 2024
- Mailing to 44,000 stakeholders, Authority eblasts, and social media ads
- Display ads online and in print publications in English and Spanish

Printed and digital copies available at LA County public libraries:

- Acton/Agua Dulce Library
- Lake View Terrace Branch Library
- Pacoima Branch Library
- San Fernando Library
- Sun Valley Branch Library
- Sylmar Branch Library
- Sunland-Tujunga Branch Library
- Santa Clarita Public Library, Canyon Country Jo Anne Darcy Library
- Palmdale City Library
- Burbank Northwest Branch Library

Authority Board Action – June 2024

Palmdale to Burbank Final EIR/EIS and Preferred Alternative:

- Presented to the Authority's Board of Directors for deliberation and consideration during a two-day meeting on June 26–27 at the Los Angeles Marriott Burbank Airport Hotel
- Board approved on June 27, 2024
 - » Certification of the Final EIR/EIS as CEQA Lead Agency
 - » Approval of the Preferred Alternative and related CEQA decision documents
 - » Direct the Authority CEO to proceed with a Record of Decision under the Authority's NEPA Assignment



Stay Connected

Palmdale to Burbank Project Section

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Visit the California High-Speed Rail Authority website at hsr.ca.gov
and Build HSR California at BuildHSR.com

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