

What Has Changed in the Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement?

SAN JOSE TO MERCED PROJECT SECTION

The Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) is the final environmental document for high-speed rail between San Jose and the Central Valley Wye. It builds on:

- The Draft EIR/EIS, which was released on **April 24, 2020** and included a public review and comment period through **June 23, 2020**.
- The Revised/Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS (RDEIR/SDEIS), which was released on **April 23, 2021** and included a public review and comment period through **June 9, 2021**.

As part of the environmental review process, the EIR/EIS evaluates the impacts and benefits of introducing high-speed rail to this section and describes approaches to avoid, minimize, or mitigate project effects.

The determinations in the Final EIR/EIS take into account the views of affected communities, the effects of direct mitigation, and (for environmental justice), the value of project benefits and effects of proposed offsetting mitigation measures.

Public Comments and Responses:

During the two public comment periods, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) received over 750 submissions, providing a total of more than 5,000 comments. The project team developed responses to each of the comments, and these are included in the Final EIR/EIS.

NEXT STEPS

The Final EIR/EIS is available for the public to view beginning **February 25, 2022**.

The Authority's Board of Directors will meet in **April 2022** to consider whether to certify the Final EIR/EIS and approve the Preferred Alternative. They will also consider whether to direct the Authority to issue a Record of Decision (ROD), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Notice of Determination, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

These decisions would complete the environmental review process, allowing final design and construction to begin once funding is secured.

ANALYSIS AND MITIGATIONS

The Authority has continued to consult with local jurisdictions and property owners along the alignment and has continued to work closely with regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over some components of the project. This consultation has resulted in project refinements, updates to the impacts analysis, and additional or revised mitigation measures.

Some of the key updates include:

Transportation:

- Additional analysis of bus transit delays caused by construction in Alternative 4; clarifications on parking availability at Diridon Station; updated freight forecast and freight effects analysis.
- Site-specific traffic mitigation for certain local intersection effects; application of transit priority improvements during construction to minimize bus transit delay; additional measures to reduce effects on freight during construction.

Noise and Vibration:

- Additional analysis of the effectiveness of noise and vibration mitigation and of biological mitigation related to noise.
- Clarification that transparent materials will not be used for noise barriers in certain areas (where there is sensitive wildlife); clarification that the Authority will assist cities with quiet zone applications where local jurisdictions support this.

Socioeconomics:

- Updated information about private hunting areas in the San Joaquin Valley.
- New mitigation to provide additional support for displaced residents in areas with limited relocation availability.



Figure 1. Authority staff tabling at local Farmers Market

Safety & Security:

- Additional information regarding at-grade crossing safety.
- Additional clarification on airport safety issues.
- Revised emergency vehicle response mitigation to account for City of San Jose emergency vehicle pre-emption. For mitigation, clarified monitoring requirements and consultation with local cities and fire departments, to include initial operating cost if new fire stations are required, and partnership in certain areas to provide real-time train movement and at-grade crossing gate status with emergency response dispatch.

Biological Resources:

- Additional analysis of effects of lighting, noise, and wildlife movement.
- Revisions to address impacts on habitat for listed butterflies.
- Additional mitigation measures to address light, noise, and wildlife movement impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ)

An important element of the Final EIR/EIS is the evaluation of the potential effect of the project on minority populations and low-income populations (EJ communities) to examine if the project alternatives may result in Disproportionately High and Adverse Effects (DHAEs) to those communities.

The Authority, as part of the EJ evaluation, conducted an extensive outreach and engagement process. Since 2018, and throughout the preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS, Supplemental/Revised Draft EIR/EIS, and Final EIR/EIS, the Authority held more than 170 meetings with stakeholders of affected communities along the entire San Jose to Merced project section. This included identifying community improvements that could help to offset any residual DHAEs to EJ communities.

In September 2021, the Authority prepared a list of potential community improvements that could be implemented to offset residual DHAEs of the project on EJ communities. Authority representatives shared these potential community improvements with EJ community stakeholders and gathered their feedback through a series of meetings and via a survey.

This process helped finalize the list of community improvements that are proposed for implementation as offsetting mitigation measures in the Final EIR/EIS.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO THE FINAL EIR/EIS



Impacts in my community

- » **Volume I** Within each resource section, impact analysis is provided by project subsection: San Jose Diridon Approach, Monterey Corridor, Morgan Hill to Gilroy, Pacheco Pass, San Joaquin Valley



Maps of the alternatives

- » **Volume I, Chapter 2, Alternatives** – General Maps
- » **Volume II, Appendix 3.01-A** – Maps of Affected Properties
- » **Volume III** – Preliminary Engineering Design Plans



Visual simulations of the alternatives

- » **Volume I, Chapter 3, Section 3.16**, Aesthetics and Visual Quality



Responses to comments on the Draft EIR/EIS or the Revised/Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS

- » **Chapter 17** – Standard Responses
- » **Chapters 18 to 20** – Standard Responses in Spanish, Mandarin, and Vietnamese
- » **Chapters 21 to 27** – Responses to Agency, Official, Tribe, Business, Organization, and Individual Comments