

PREFACE

What are the Project Changes that Require an Environmental Document?

The *Fresno to Bakersfield Section California High-Speed Train Final Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS)* (Authority and FRA, 2014) considered several alternatives between the cities of Fresno and Bakersfield and ultimately identified a Preferred Alternative from the Fresno High-Speed Rail (HSR) Station to the Bakersfield HSR Station to Oswell Street in Bakersfield. The Preferred Alternative identified in the 2014 Final EIR/EIS consists of the BNSF Alternative with the Kings/Tulare – East Station in combination with the Corcoran Bypass, Allensworth Bypass, Bakersfield Hybrid alternatives, and the Truxtun Avenue Station. In the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS and this Final Supplemental EIR, approximately 24 miles of the Preferred Alternative is referred to as the “May 2014 Project,” which consists of a portion of the BNSF Alternative (from Poplar Avenue to Hageman Road) and the Bakersfield Hybrid Alternative (from Hageman Road to Oswell Street). The May 2014 Project included a station that would be constructed at the corner of Truxtun and Union Avenues/State Route (SR) 204 as well as a maintenance of infrastructure facility (MOIF) that would be located along the alignment just north of the City of Bakersfield and 7th Standard Road. For the purposes of this Final Supplemental EIR, the “May 2014 Project” refers to the portion of the Preferred Alternative alignment from north of Poplar Avenue in Shafter to Oswell Street in Bakersfield.

Following publication of the *Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS*, in May 2014, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Board of Directors (Board) certified the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS and approved the Preferred Alternative from the southern limit of the Fresno Station to the north side of 7th Standard Road, the city limit of the City of Bakersfield.

In June 2014, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Record of Decision (ROD), which considered the information and analysis contained in the 2011 Draft EIS, the 2012 Supplemental Draft EIS, and the 2014 Final EIS, and substantive public and agency comments, including comments filed after the issuance of the Final EIS. Through the ROD, the FRA approved the Preferred Alternative in its entirety from the Fresno Station to the Bakersfield Station at Truxtun Avenue.

As a result of coordination by the Authority with local agencies and stakeholders, a new alternative was identified for the Fresno to Bakersfield project. The Locally Generated Alternative includes an alternative alignment from Poplar Avenue north of Shafter to Oswell Street south of Bakersfield. An alternative HSR Station would be located at the intersection of F Street and SR 204 (Golden State Avenue). The new alternative, the Fresno to Bakersfield Locally Generated Alternative (F-B LGA), includes an MOIF in Shafter.

What is this Document?

This document is a final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (Final Supplemental EIR) to the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS. This document evaluates the potential environmental impacts from a new project alternative and compares those alternative-specific environmental impacts with the environmental impacts from the portion of the Preferred Alternative south of Poplar Avenue in the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS (i.e., May 2014 Project).

This Final Supplemental EIR provides the following environmental information to assist the Authority and the FRA in understanding the potential impacts of the F-B LGA:

- Describes the new alternative, the F-B LGA and analyzes its potential environmental impacts
- Identifies feasible avoidance and minimization measures and mitigation including, where appropriate, compensation for adverse impacts, for the potential impacts of the F-B LGA
- Considers cumulative impacts of the F-B LGA

The Authority and FRA widely circulated the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS to affected local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, tribes, community organizations, other interest groups, and interested individuals. The document was also available at Authority offices, public libraries, and community centers. The 60-day public comment period closed on January 16, 2018. During this period, a public hearing was held on December 19, 2017 in Bakersfield to receive oral testimony on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. This Final Supplemental EIR addresses the comments received during the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS comment period. The shaded areas in this Final Supplemental EIR are intended to provide the reader with a simplified way to identify the revised language changes and refinements that differ from the text in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

Why is this Document a Supplemental EIR?

The Authority is preparing a CEQA Supplemental EIR to evaluate the F-B LGA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15162 and 15163. As described above, the area of the F-B LGA and the May 2014 Project extends south from Poplar Avenue in Kern County into downtown Bakersfield, and thus represents a geographically discrete subsection of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section.

Why is this Document a Final Supplemental EIR and not a Final Supplemental EIR/EIS?

The Fresno to Bakersfield Section Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS was prepared as a joint document to meet all pertinent requirements of both CEQA and NEPA.

However, following publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA have agreed to prepare this Final Supplemental EIR separate from the Final Supplemental EIS.

The Authority is the lead agency under CEQA and prepared this Final Supplemental EIR; this Final Supplemental EIR does not specifically address FRA's NEPA compliance and should not be understood to substitute for a Final Supplemental EIS. The Authority will collaborate with the FRA in the subsequent preparation of a Final Supplemental EIS and Supplemental Record of Decision (ROD) for the Project in compliance with NEPA. The Final Supplemental EIS and Supplemental ROD are expected to be published in late 2018.

What is the Organization of this Final Supplemental EIR?

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15088, 15089, and 15132, the Authority, as Lead Agency, has prepared this Final Supplemental EIR for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section.

As described in Sections 15089 and 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency must prepare a Final EIR before approving a project. The purpose of a Final EIR is to provide an opportunity for the lead agency to respond to comments made by the public and agencies regarding a project's Draft EIR. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, this Final Supplemental EIR includes a revised summary, corrections and additions to the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, a list of persons, organizations, and agencies that provided comments on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, and responses to comments received regarding the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

The purpose of environmental documents prepared under CEQA is to disclose information to decision makers and the public as part of the decision making process for project approval, denial, or approval with conditions. Although the science and analysis that supports this Final Supplemental EIR is complex, this document is intended for the general public. Every attempt has been made to limit technical terms and the use of acronyms. Where this cannot be avoided, the terms and acronyms are defined the first time they are used in each chapter, and a list of acronyms and abbreviations is provided (please refer to Chapter 15 of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS). This Final Supplemental EIR and the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS can be found on the Authority website.

Volume I of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS is organized into 15 chapters and a Summary. Volume II contains the technical appendices. Volume III shows the F-B LGA alignment and other F-B LGA design plans.

This Final Supplemental EIR constitutes the second part of the Supplemental EIR for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section and is intended to be a companion to the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. The Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section, circulated for public review and comment from November 9, 2017, through January 16, 2018, constitutes the first part of the Supplemental EIR and is hereby incorporated by reference and bound separately. (Refer to Volumes I through III of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, which is available on the [Authority's website](#).) This Final Supplemental EIR is organized into six main sections as follows:

- **Executive Summary.** This section provides an overview of the F-B LGA and its potential impacts. Also included in this section are areas of controversy, an overview of the public review process that was completed for the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, and the identification of the Preferred Alternative for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section from just north of Poplar Avenue south to Oswell Street.
- **Chapter 16, Changes to the Final Report Resulting from Comments on the Draft Report.** This new chapter shows changes made to the text, tables, and figures (as applicable) in the Supplemental EIR that were made since publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- **Technical Appendix 2-I.** This new technical appendix evaluates the feasibility of an interim terminal station at the F Street Station location, consistent with the Authority's 2018 Business Plan (Authority 2018).
- **Section H, Sound Barrier Plans.** This section includes the sound barrier plans that were inadvertently omitted from Volume III of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- **Standard Responses.** This section provides the Authority's Standard Responses that address the most frequently raised issues. Following the numbering sequence of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, Standard Responses are provided in Chapter 18 (English) and Chapter 19 (Spanish).
- **Comments on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS and Responses to Comments.** Chapters 20 through 26 provide a list of all commenters on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, reproductions of the original written comments, and responses to the comments.

What Has Changed?

Since the close of the public comment period on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS in January 2018, the Authority has reviewed the public and agency comments received. The Authority has continued to work closely with local jurisdictions and regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over some components of the Project. These consultations have resulted in minor revisions to the Final Supplemental EIR and no changes to the project design.

Subsequent to publication of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, in May 2018, the Authority, on behalf of the FRA, requested reinitiation of formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and was issued a Biological Opinion Amendment for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section in July 2018 (USFWS 2018). The Biological Opinion Amendment incorporates the F-B LGA into the overall Fresno to Bakersfield Section Biological Opinion (08ESMF00-2012-F-0247). As discussed in Table 3.7-1 of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, the conservation measures identified in the 2014 and 2017 Biological Opinions would still apply to the F-B LGA.

The Authority has determined after evaluation that recirculation of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS is not required here. Under CEQA, recirculation of a Draft EIR is required only when significant new information is added to an EIR after public review, but before certification. (Guidelines, § 15088.5.) "New information added to an EIR is not 'significant' unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a

substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project's proponents have declined to implement.” (Guidelines, § 15088.5(a)).

What is the Analysis Based On?

The methods used to collect data and evaluate potential impacts in this Final Supplemental EIR are similar and consistent to the data collection and impact evaluation methods used in the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS. The resource study areas presented in the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS are used to evaluate resources in this Final Supplemental EIR, as appropriate. Where applicable, data collected for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS (including data from 2010) has been used to evaluate impacts associated with development of the F-B LGA.

The types of data sets that were used for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS have been used for the evaluation of the F-B LGA so that a direct comparison between the May 2014 Project and the F-B LGA could be made. Any data sets updated for the analysis of the F-B LGA were also updated for the May 2014 Project to account for any changes that have occurred since circulation of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS, to reflect the most current conditions in the project area, and to provide an accurate and equivalent comparison with the F-B LGA. For example, analysis of the F-B LGA station (proposed F Street Station) required current traffic counts, so updated traffic counts were taken for study area roadways and intersections in the vicinity of the F Street Station and the Truxtun Station to accurately reflect roadway modifications not yet developed nor planned when the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS was approved. Data sets for socioeconomic and communities and agricultural lands were also updated for the May 2014 Project analyses.

What else is happening on the Fresno to Bakersfield Project?

The Authority is currently advancing project activities within the approved portion of the Fresno to Bakersfield section between the Fresno station and Poplar Avenue in Kern County. These activities are consistent with the Authority's May 2014 approval and the FRA's June 2014 ROD, and the Mitigation Monitoring and Enforcement Plan (MMEP) for this section. Key milestones include:

Acquire Right-of-Way

- Acquire right-of-way for Fresno to Bakersfield section north of Poplar Avenue
- Conduct property maintenance activities (e.g., fencing, mowing, establishing fire breaks, etc.)
- Demolish structures and capping wells to maintain public health, safety, and welfare
- Close real estate transactions
- Acquire additional property in excess of right-of-way
- Resolve severed access issues, consistent with MMEP
- Implement Farmland Consolidation Program

Retain Design-Build Contractors, Develop Design, Begin Construction, Work with Stakeholders and Public as Project is Implemented

- Retain design-build contractors to construct Fresno to Bakersfield section alignment between Fresno and Poplar Avenue in Kern County
- Refine project electrical interconnection facilities
- Adopt Design Criteria Manual (May 2015)
- Advance project design to final design, including some refinements such as:
 - Utility relocations and other early work
 - Closing some roadways and opening others
 - Refining the vertical profile of the track

- Shifting the alignment to avoid major infrastructure
- Adding drainage basins
- Column placement based on refined bridge design
- Implement impact avoidance and minimization measures and mitigation measures
- Engage with stakeholders and public as project is implemented

Implement Habitat Mitigation

- Retain habitat mitigation services firm
- Proceed with real estate transactions
- Establishing fencing and habitat restoration
- Implement mitigation strategies identified in the amended Fresno to Bakersfield Biological Opinion (USFWS 2017a) for the Buena Vista Lake ornate shrew

Ongoing Collaboration with Local Agencies

- Develop and implement early works for Tulare County
- Final design of grade separation of BNSF railway
- Eliminate an over crossing at the request of local residents
- Coordinate with Ponderosa Pines neighborhood

Study Electrical Interconnections and Network Upgrades

- Project changes to electrical interconnection facilities resulting from further design include:
 - Minor movement of traction power supply stations, switching stations, and electrical tie-lines
 - Expansion of the existing substation to accommodate HSR equipment
 - New utility switching stations and HSR traction power supply station
- Completion of the Pacific Gas & Electric 2015 Technical Study Report, reviewed by the Authority and its technical consultant, determined what network upgrades would be required to existing Pacific Gas & Electric infrastructure to meet the projected power demands of the HSR system. Within the geographic limits of the F-B LGA, it was determined that PG&E network upgrades would not be immediately needed.

As part of the design/build process, contractors may propose project design refinements as project engineering advances. In response to these refinements, the Authority determines whether a subsequent or supplemental environmental document should be prepared and circulated. The Authority has determined the project design refinements incorporated to date do not result in any new or substantially more severe impacts than previously identified in the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS.

How will the Authority use this Document?

The Authority is the State Lead Agency. The purpose of this Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final Supplemental EIR is to inform the Authority’s project approval into the City of Bakersfield.

California High-Speed Rail Authority

Although the Authority Board certified the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS, which evaluated the alignment from the Fresno HSR Station to the Bakersfield Truxtun Avenue HSR Station, the Authority Board only approved the Project from the Fresno HSR Station to 7th Standard Road (7th Standard Road is the northern city limit of the City of Bakersfield). In May 2016, the Authority Board determined that the F-B LGA is the Preliminary Preferred Alternative between 7th Standard Road and Oswell Street. The Authority Board will determine if it will approve the F-B LGA, the comparable segment of the May 2014 Project, or no project at all

based on the analysis in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, agency comments, public comments and testimony, and a Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

What Happens Next?

On May 10, 2016, the Authority Board accepted the Authority staff's recommendation to identify the F-B LGA as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

After issuance of the Final Supplemental EIR, the Board will consider certifying the Final Supplemental EIR for compliance with CEQA and making a final decision on the project, including adopting CEQA findings of fact, a statement of overriding considerations, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan. If the Board certifies the Final Supplemental EIR and makes a project decision, it will file a notice of determination with the State Clearinghouse.

Fresno to Bakersfield Locally Generated Alternative Milestone Schedule

November 2017	Public Release of Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS
October 2018	Final Supplemental EIR released and Notice of Determination
November/December 2018	Final Supplemental EIS and Supplemental Record of Decision

The schedule for final design, construction, and operation would be refined as the project moves closer to the end of the environmental review and preliminary design phase. The Authority envisions that high-speed rail service would be provided through Bakersfield by 2026.