

**Second Report Addendum to the
September 10, 2013 Checkpoint B
Summary Reports**

in Support of the

San Jose to Merced Section and Merced
to Fresno Section: Wye Alternatives

Section 404(b)(1) Analysis and Draft
Subsequent Environmental Impact
Report/Supplemental Environmental Impact
Statement

August 2014

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1 1.0 INTRODUCTION

On September 10, 2013 the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) submitted to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), two Checkpoint B Summary Reports for the California High Speed Train: the San Jose to Merced Section Checkpoint B package and the Merced to Fresno Section: Wye Alternatives Supplemental Checkpoint B package (together, the Checkpoint B packages). The Checkpoint B packages were prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act/Clean Water Act Section 404/Rivers and Harbors Act Section 14 Integration Process for the California High-Speed Train Program Memorandum of Understanding dated November 2010 (NEPA/404/408 MOU).

Based on comments received from the USACE and EPA on those Checkpoint B packages and additional stakeholder outreach, a supplemental Addendum was prepared and submitted on May 15, 2014. The content of that Addendum included a description of alignment refinements since the original Checkpoint B packages, an analysis of potential impacts to community character, cohesion and environmental justice, responses to USACE and EPA comments, a summary of agency and public input received and a revised summary of conclusions. Each section included discussions of both the San Jose to Merced Section and the Merced to Fresno Section: Wye Alternatives.

For the area of the wyes, the Checkpoint B packages and May 2014 Addendum analyzed 17 potential wye alignments. Four alignment alternatives were identified to be carried forward for analysis in subsequent environmental documents the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye and the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye. The remaining wye alternatives were proposed to be withdrawn from consideration for reasons described in the Checkpoint B packages and May 2014 Addendum.

Since the May 2014 Addendum, the Authority and FRA have continued to coordinate with the USACE and EPA and to conduct public outreach with local communities and stakeholders. This coordination has provided additional information about the wye alternatives and has assisted with the further definition of the alternatives proposed to be carried forward or withdrawn. Three alternatives are now proposed to be carried forward SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, and SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye.

This Second Addendum summarizes the rationale behind the proposal to carry forward these three alternatives. It does not restate information and data presented in the previous Checkpoint B packages and May 2014 Addendum. References to previous data are provided where appropriate.

2 2.0 WYE ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENTS

The Checkpoint B packages and May 2014 Addendum proposed four wye alignment alternatives to be carried forward; the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, the Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye, the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye and the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye. These four alternatives were selected primarily because they represented the lowest overall aquatic impact within each of four possible geographic areas to the east or west of the City of Chowchilla and to the north or south of the SR 152 highway. See Section 6.2 of the May 2014 Addendum for additional details.

As discussed in Section 6.2 of the May 2014 Addendum, the Authority and FRA proposed to keep an alignment alternative in each of the four geographic areas based on receiving stakeholder and public comments that identified varying support for the different alignment options. By selecting the alignments with the lowest overall aquatic impacts in each area, the Authority and FRA intended to insure that the

suite of alternatives carried forward likely included the Least Environmentally Damaging Practical Alternative (LEDPA). The preliminary LEDPA will be identified in subsequent environmental documents prepared for the Project, including Checkpoint C.

Since the May 2014 Addendum, the Authority and FRA have continued to coordinate with the USACE and EPA and to conduct public outreach with local communities and stakeholders. Stakeholders, particularly the City of Chowchilla, have expressed support for the consideration of Road 19 alternatives, rather than the Road 18 Refined group of alternatives, in order to maximize the distance from residential areas. Based on these public concerns and for the reasons detailed in the following sections, the Authority and FRA are now proposing to carry forward three alternatives: SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye, Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye. Compared to the alternatives carried forward in the May 2014 Addendum, these alternatives represent two changes, both of which reflect community outreach and stakeholder support for the Road 19 alternatives. Rather than carrying forward the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye Alternative, it is proposed to carry forward the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye. The withdrawal of the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye Alternative is also proposed. These changes both involve alignment alternatives to the east of the City of Chowchilla. In both cases, the proposal reflects the benefits of the Road 19 alternatives over the Road 18 alternatives with respect to community impacts and impacts on high-quality aquatic resources.

The two alignment alternatives west of the City of Chowchilla corridor (Road 13) have not changed from what was identified in the Checkpoint B and May 2014 Addendum. As a result the SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye and Avenue 21 to Road 13 Wye alternatives are proposed to be carried forward.

2.1 SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye (Withdrawn)

The SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye alignment alternative was proposed to be carried forward for further study in the Checkpoint B packages and the May 2014 Addendum. For the reasons discussed below, the Authority and FRA are now proposing to withdraw this alternative. Based on current information and considering all aquatic impacts as equal, this alternative has the lowest overall aquatic impact of the alternatives analyzed, at 116.9 acres. However, this alternative's impacts on naturally occurring aquatic features (e.g. wetlands, lakes, rivers and marshes) are greater, at 113.2 acres, than the 111-acre impact of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative, as discussed below in Section 2.3. The man-made aquatic features that make up the difference, primarily retention and detention basins, would be reconfigured or relocated in connection with the Project to provide the same water storage functions as they currently provide. Consequently, these man-made features do not contribute functions or values to the aquatic ecosystem that are prioritized for protection under the Clean Water Act section 404(b)(1) (LEDPA) guidelines. See Table 1 for a comparison of the aquatic impacts.

As described in Section 2.0 of the May 2014 Addendum, the original SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Wye alignment was modified based on outreach with the City of Chowchilla and other local stakeholders. The original alignment was approximately 190 feet east of the Greenhills Estates community, part of the City of Chowchilla. The refined alignment described in the May 2014 Addendum moved this portion of the alternative approximately 3,300 feet further east. This refinement resulted in reduced noise and visual impact to the residential area. However, it also caused the alignment to bisect an agricultural area between the Road 18 and Road 19 corridors. Because of this refinement, the Road 18 alignments now follow existing transportation corridors to a lesser extent than the similarly aligned SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative, discussed below in Section 2.3, which is located approximately 250 feet to the east of the Road 19 right-of-way

2.1.1 Table 1
 Impacts to Aquatic Resources (Acres)

Wye Alternative	Natural Aquatic Features	Man-Made Features	Overall Aquatic
SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye (C)	111	24.9	135.9
SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye (W)	118.5	4.8	123.3
SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye (W)	113.3	3.6	116.9

(C) – Carried Forward, (W) - Withdrawn

Despite the refinement of the Road 18 alignments to be further away from the City of Chowchilla, the City and other stakeholders have continued to have concerns over the potential for noise and visual impacts. Among those alternatives that use a corridor to the east of the City of Chowchilla, the City has stated a preference for an alternative that uses a Road 19 alignment because it is further away from residential development.

Finally this alignment alternative is likely to have a higher overall impact to the community of Fairmead. As described in Sections 2.0 and 3.3 of the May 2014 Addendum, the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye alternative would pass within 500 feet of Fairmead Elementary School and would divide the community to a greater extent than either of the SR 152 North alternatives described below.

2.2 SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye (Withdrawn)

The SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye alignment alternative was proposed to be carried forward for further study in the Checkpoint B packages and the May 2014 Addendum. For the reasons discussed below, the Authority and FRA are now proposing to withdraw this alternative. In the May 2014 Addendum, this alternative was preferred over the similarly aligned SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alignment alternative because it has a lower overall aquatic impact of 123.3 acres compared to 135.9 acres. However, this alternative’s impacts on naturally occurring aquatic features (e.g. wetlands, lakes, rivers and marshes) are greater, at 118.5 acres, than the 111-acre impact of the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alignment alternative, discussed below in Section 2.3. As discussed in Section 2.1, the protection of naturally occurring aquatic resources has a higher priority than the protection of manmade waters. See Table 1 for a comparison of the aquatic impacts.

Similar to the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye alignment discussed above in Section 2.1, the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye was modified in the May 2014 Addendum to reduce noise and visual impacts to the Greenhills Estates community. However as described above, in doing so the alignment now bisects an agricultural area between the original Road 18 and Road 19 alignments. Also, as noted earlier, the City of Chowchilla has continued to indicate a preference for an alternative that utilizes the Road 19 corridor over the original or refined Road 18 alignments.

2.3 SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye (Carried Forward)

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alignment alternative was proposed to be withdrawn in the original Checkpoint B packages and the May 2014 Addendum. For the reasons discussed below the Authority and FRA are now proposing to carry forward this alternative. This alignment has a higher overall aquatic

impact, 135.9 acres¹, than either the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye (116.9 acres) or SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye (123.3 acres) alignment alternatives. However, this alternative has a lower impact on naturally occurring aquatic resources (e.g. wetlands, lakes, rivers and marshes), at 111 acres, than either Road 18 Refined alternatives (113.3 and 118.5 acres respectively). As discussed in Section 2.1, the protection of naturally occurring aquatic resources has a higher priority than the protection of manmade waters. See Table 1 for a comparison of the aquatic impacts.

The SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alignment alternative, which is located approximately 250 feet to the east of the Road 19 right-of-way, follows an existing transportation corridor to a greater extent than either of the Road 18 Refined alignment alternatives.

To reduce impacts on the community of Fairmead to the greatest extent feasible, the Authority and FRA have committed to adding the refinement described in Section 2.0 of the May 2014 Addendum for the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye to all SR 152 North alternatives, including SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 13 Wye alternatives. This modification moves the SR 152 North alignments away from the Fairmead Elementary School and minimizes the impact to Fairmead.

In addition to the reduction of potential noise and visual impacts on the city of Chowchilla resulting from the greater distance between Road 19 and residential areas, the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative has lesser impacts to the community of Fairmead than either of the refined Road 18 alternatives. Compared to the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye, the alternatives that utilize an alignment to the north of SR 152 will have less impact on the community of Fairmead. Whereas the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye would pass within 500 feet of the Fairmead Elementary School, the SR 152 north alignments are approximately 1,500 feet to the north of the school and would directly affect a smaller portion of the overall Fairmead community.

Compared to the SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye alternative, the 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative's alignment further to the east results in less division of the community of Fairmead by the portion or "leg" of the wye travelling between the cities of Merced and Fresno, as discussed in Section 3.3 of the May 2014 Addendum.

3 3.0 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Based on continued community outreach with the City of Chowchilla and other stakeholders, additional consideration of the type and value of aquatic resources impacted, and further concentration on the reduction of impacts on Fairmead, the Authority and FRA propose to carry forward the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye for further consideration and to withdraw the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye alternatives from further study.

In comparison to the SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye alternatives, the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative:

- Has the lowest impact on naturally occurring aquatic resources;
- Follows existing transportation corridors to a greater extent;
- Is preferred by the City of Chowchilla for a potential to further minimize noise and visual impacts; and
- Creates the smallest division of existing communities and is further or equal distance from the Fairmead Elementary School and the center of the Fairmead community.

¹ After the May 2014 Addendum, the USACE identified a constructed basin that is impacted by this alignment alternative and appears to be mapped at a larger area than recent aerial images would support. The Authority has looked at this feature and agrees that it is probably inaccurately mapped. If this feature were mapped based on current aerials it would likely result in a reduction of approximately 9 acres. This change in impacts would not alter the overall order of the alternatives' aquatic impacts and does not change any of the conclusions made in this document. The Authority and FRA propose to address this issue in subsequent documents when the landscape level GIS currently used is further refined.

The SR 152 (South) to Road 18 Refined Wye and SR 152 (North) to Road 18 Refined Wye alternatives do not provide any significant benefit or alternative function than the SR 152 (North) to Road 19 Wye alternative not proposed to be carried forward.

The alternatives proposed to be carried forward constitute a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. They include the alternatives with the least impacts on naturally occurring aquatic resources within each of the primary alignment corridors under consideration.