



*Press Release*

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## High-Speed Rail and Tree Fresno Begin Tree Planting Program at West Fresno Middle School

**FRESNO, Calif.** – On Tuesday, May 29, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) and Tree Fresno began the first phase of tree planting at West Fresno Middle School. Nearly 200 trees were planted by volunteers and students. The trees are the first part of the Authority’s effort to offset greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) associated with high-speed rail construction and achieve the Authority’s goal of zero net direct GHG emissions from construction. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) administers funds for tree planting programs on behalf of the Authority per an Interagency Agreement.

Tree Fresno was awarded a grant to plant as many as 2,400 trees in several phases at West Fresno Middle School, West Fresno Elementary School, Mary Ella Brown Community Center, and parks and schools in the San Joaquin Valley.

“The West Fresno community is extremely excited to be a part of the CAL FIRE grant that entails planting hundreds of trees at West Fresno Elementary and West Fresno Middle School. This project is engaging our students, staff, community members and parents to create the first ever shady walking trail in the West Fresno community,” said Lucio Cortez, Principal of West Fresno Middle School.

The agreement with CAL FIRE provides for tree planting services through the Forestry Assistance and Urban and Community Forestry programs. Overall, grants and projects through these programs will remove approximately 200,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, the major greenhouse gas. Tree planting is just one measure being implemented by the Authority to sequester or avoid an amount of direct GHG emissions equivalent to that produced to construct the system.

So far, two organizations have received awards to plant tree in schools, parks and disadvantaged communities in the vicinity of the high-speed rail alignment.

The Authority selected tree planting for two main reasons:

- Trees pull carbon dioxide out of the air by transforming it into tree matter (wood, leaves, fruit, flowers, etc.) through photosynthesis.
- When planted strategically to shade buildings, trees reduce energy use for air conditioning and thus, reduce the production of GHG emitted during energy production.

“The Authority is committed to delivering sustainable infrastructure for California,” said Meg Cederoth, the Authority’s Sustainability Manager. “Trees not only help with the global problem of carbon dioxide, but by planting them locally, our communities enjoy the benefits of cleaner air, shade, and gorgeous places for recreation and community gatherings.”

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The trees planted in this first phase of the program include drought tolerant trees such as Chinese Elms, Deodar Cedars, Aleppo Pine and Scarlet Oak. Maintenance of the trees will be administered in partnership with CAL FIRE and the Authority through a grant program for the first three years.

CAL FIRE’s selection criteria related to their “California Forest Improvement and Green Trees for a Golden State” programs include planting in disadvantaged communities as part of the urban forestry program, finding locations with good habitat and conservation value, and optimum carbon sequestration.



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