



## **California High-Speed Rail** **BRIEFING: September 23, 2021 AGENDA ITEM #6**

**TO:** Board Chair Richards and Board Members  
**FROM:** Margaret Cederoth, Director of Planning and Sustainability  
**DATE:** September 23, 2021  
**RE:** 2021 Sustainability Report

---

### **Summary**

Informational item.

### **Background**

HSR POLI-PLAN-03, adopted by the Board in April 2019, states that the Authority will produce a sustainability report every year that reflects environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues and conforms with global best practice.

The Authority developed an annual report compliant with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) G4 standards, a reporting protocol used by several peer rail organizations as well as companies globally. Through this annual report, the Authority honors its commitment to transparency, providing stakeholders with quantitative and qualitative data on progress against key commitments and other topics identified as highly significant in disclosing the sustainability of the system.

The 2021 Sustainability Report is the sixth published report, covering calendar year 2020, with some data points updated to reflect progress to date. The Authority published its first report, covering calendar year 2015, in December 2016.

### **Prior Board Action**

The Board passed Resolution #HSRA 19-02 in April 2019, approving an updated sustainability policy.

Resolution #HSRA 19-02 directed staff to:

1. Revise specifications and contract provisions to continue to advance the achievement of carbon neutral construction and other sustainability goals and stated Board objectives;
2. Use materials data and construction data to inform the scoring of construction bids to demonstrate compliance with the Authority's sustainability policy;
3. Carry out information sessions with industry providers and contractors;
4. Carry out partnering sessions with station communities;

5. Continue identification of climate vulnerability and asset risk, and implement climate adaptation measures; and,
6. Report to the Board and public on the overall impacts of implementing sustainable infrastructure principles in the high-speed rail program, and how such a program furthers the state's low carbon, natural resources and community benefit goals.

## **Discussion**

The Policy states: “The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) will deliver a sustainable high-speed rail system for California that serves as a model for sustainable rail infrastructure. The Authority has developed and will continue to implement Sustainability practices that inform and affect the planning, siting, designing, construction, mitigation, operation, and maintenance of the high-speed rail system.”

Annual reporting offers a periodic snapshot of the effectiveness of the Authority’s implementation actions across the program. The report provides consistent measurement of indicators that provide the Authority with reliable data to inform the refinement of contract requirements, policy, and organization activities. The report also illustrates where corrective action is necessary to achieve success.

Specific progress in 2020 included:

- Receiving the highest sustainability rating possible for our program from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure: Envision Platinum.
- Preserving or restoring more than 2,320 acres of habitat.
- Securing 1,434 acres of agriculture preservation easements in 2020, which results in more than 151,000 metric tons of avoided carbon dioxide emissions.
- Finalizing tree planting in disadvantaged communities, more than 6,000 trees statewide, that provide local benefits as well as capturing carbon emissions. This concluded the first round of projects that balance construction emissions; this work was undertaken through a funding agreement with CalFIRE who in turn funded Tree Fresno and the California Urban Forest Coalition.
- Avoiding more than 200,000 pounds of criteria air pollutants cumulatively since the start of construction through clean equipment requirements.
- Dispatching 6,200 workers across the construction sites; more than 40 percent of these workers live in disadvantaged communities, keeping jobs, employment and economic activity in these vulnerable communities.
- Generating economic opportunity for hundreds of businesses, including 626 small and disadvantaged businesses, of which 201 are Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and 70 are Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises.
- Advancing station site planning work with Fresno, Kings-Tulare and Bakersfield stakeholders and identifying specific ways for site activity and access to improve surrounding communities.
- Updating EMMA 2.0, the program sustainability data collection mechanism, incorporating feedback from field use and facilitating cyclical reporting that further improves the timeliness, accuracy, validity and efficiency of our reporting, while also anticipating new environmental, social and governance requirements for upcoming contracts.
- Completing the Authority’s Climate Adaptation Plan, a milestone in the ongoing work to incorporate climate risk mitigation throughout the program and address any specific risks to high-speed rail assets.

As identified previously, we continue to move forward with key activities, continuing implementation work in the following areas:

**Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions:** Continuing to actively manage carbon information including monitoring and accounting for the GHG emissions produced, sequestered and avoided in project delivery; Applying the

insights from the life-cycle (embodied) carbon models for the project and refining a baseline of materials and construction emissions with information from the 2020 Business Plan and Program Baseline.

**Verification:** Finalized the initial documentation for Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure to verify and validate the program's sustainability claims; the Authority successfully demonstrated achievement of Envision Platinum and will wrap up additional documentation as environmental documents and construction packages complete.

**Station Communities:** Finalizing station site action planning that illustrate a building block approach to the stations, prioritizing universal accessibility, sustainable design, pedestrian access, and community connections.

**Renewable Energy:** Refining the study of Authority parcels for renewable energy generation and developing a final approach to energy storage and renewable energy procurement.

**Climate Change:** Continuing implementation of climate adaptation and climate analysis work to support program delivery, aligned with state resilience and adaptation guidance.

**Organization:** Refining Sustainability Implementation to make necessary updates to targets, definitions of program sustainability elements, milestones, and measures for success.

**Reporting:** Providing continued transparency through monthly reporting and the EMMA dashboard and explore refined ESG dashboarding for the monthly program delivery report.

**Procurement:** Continuing the Authority's demonstrated leadership in sustainable procurement with an internal, multidisciplinary working team which has been implementing sustainable procurement strategies and increasing attention on influencing equity through procurement.

**Engagement:** Engaging with and listening to external stakeholders to identify social, environmental and economic shocks and stressors that could diminish the resiliency of the system; collaborating with peers on best sustainability practice for transit and rail systems; and using our partners (Rail Delivery and Early Train Operator) to leverage worldwide best practices in sustainability, climate adaptation and resiliency.

The actions of every member of the Authority and its delivery partners contribute to the positive outcomes and progress detailed in this Sustainability Report.

### **Legal Approval**

The Legal Office has reviewed, and this item complies with Authority policy.

### **Budget and Fiscal Impact**

This is an informational item on the Authority's 2021 Sustainability Report, and by itself, does not have a budget or fiscal impact.

<b>REVIEWER INFORMATION</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
Reviewer Name and Title: Brian Annis Chief Financial Officer	Signature verifying budget analysis: September 16, 2021
Reviewer Name and Title: Alicia Fowler Chief Counsel	Signature verifying legal analysis: September 16, 2021

### **Recommendations**

This is an informational item.

### **Attachments**

2021 Sustainability Report