

## **APPENDIX H: COMMENTS RECEIVED BETWEEN THE PUBLICATION OF THE FINAL EIR/EIS AND THE JUNE 26-27, 2024 BOARD MEETING**

No.	Name	Business/ Organization	Summary of Stakeholder Comments/Issues	Responses/Status Update
1	Skylar Feltman	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	<p>Commenter expressed disagreement with the Authority's conclusion that a dedicated wildlife crossing in Bee Canyon would not benefit mountain lion. The commenter recommended that the Authority work with CDFW and Caltrans to identify wildlife crossing opportunities and/or opportunities for land acquisition within the San Gabriel-Castaic Linkage as mitigation for project impacts to wildlife connectivity in Bee Canyon.</p>	<p>The Authority acknowledges CDFW's position regarding the benefit of a dedicated wildlife crossing in Bee Canyon. The Authority's conclusion that providing a wildlife crossing at Bee Canyon would not constitute a benefit to mountain lions and other species was based on its technical studies, undertaken by wildlife connectivity technical experts, which assessed a number of factors in reaching its conclusion, including the existing Caltrans State Route 14 and the challenges that it represents to wildlife permeability. These studies were documented in the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS (see responses to prior comments from CDFW in Submission 4512 in Volume 4). This analysis and conclusions were discussed with CDFW during a workshop held with the agency on April 11, 2024.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the differing views on this topic, the Authority is committed to continuing to work with CDFW, Caltrans, and other stakeholders having technical expertise to identify opportunities that would enhance regional wildlife connectivity within the project area. Accordingly, the Authority proposes a commitment to convene a wildlife connectivity working group for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section to advance the technical knowledge and science, and to support and seek joint funding options to address existing barriers and conflicts between wildlife and transportation infrastructure within the resource study area of the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section. (See BIO-MM#105)</p> <p>As documented in the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS and Wildlife Connectivity Assessment, the project would implement a number of wildlife connectivity improvements in this project section including full permeability of approximately 83 percent of the proposed alignment (via tunnels, cut and cover, and elevated structures), as well as committing to the</p>

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				<p>construction of 2 wildlife crossings in the Palmdale area. Impacts to wildlife movement are less than significant with the mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS and no additional mitigation is required under CEQA.</p> <p>In addition, although not required to reduce a significant impact, the Authority commits to convening the wildlife connectivity working group within one year of project approval. This requirement has been incorporated as part of BIO-MM#105: Wildlife Movement Working Group on Existing Wildlife Movement Barriers into approval documents, including the Record of Decision and Mitigation Monitoring Enforcement Plan, for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section.</p>
2	Alexander Friedman	Individual	Commenter expressed support for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section and the California HSR program as a whole.	The Authority acknowledges the comment and appreciates the support from the commenter.
3	Anonymous (email: ducks23271@yahoo.com)	Individual	Commenter asked why the Authority is building a Palmdale to Burbank Project Section when Metrolink already has a track from Palmdale to Burbank.	As described in Chapter 1, Project Purpose, Need, and Objectives, of the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section Final EIR/EIS, the purpose of the Palmdale to Burbank Section of the California HSR system is to provide the public with electric-powered HSR service that provides predictable and consistent travel times between the Antelope Valley and the San Fernando Valley, and provides connectivity to airports, mass transit systems, and the highway network in the Antelope Valley and the San Fernando Valley; and to connect the Northern and Southern portions of the Statewide HSR system. While the existing Metrolink network of rail services operates between Palmdale and Burbank, it does not meet the objectives adopted

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				<p>by the Authority to meet future intercity travel demand that would be unmet by current transportation systems and increase capacity for intercity mobility, maximize intermodal transportation opportunities by locating stations to connect with local transit, airports, and highways, and improve the intercity travel experience for Californians by providing comfortable, safe, frequent, and reliable high-speed travel. Non-HSR trains between Palmdale and downtown Burbank currently have a run time that varies from 1 hour 24 minutes to 1 hour 53 minutes. Proposition 1A travel time objectives for HSR travel would not be achievable if the section between Palmdale and Burbank required this much time to traverse. The Selected Alternative would include 38.38 miles of alignment, designed at speeds that would support a 13-minute nonstop travel time, with operation time about 17 minutes. Thus, the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section would provide HSR service that would reduce the overall travel time between Palmdale and Burbank and facilitate connectivity within the region.</p>
4	Donald Dunham	Individual	<p>Commenter expressed support for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section and the California HSR program as a whole, but expressed opposition to a route that extends along I-210 through the Northeast San Fernando Valley, Angeles Forest, Angeles mountains, Hansen Dam, or Shadow Hills-Sunland areas. The commenter asserted that the train speeds, noise,</p>	<p>The Authority acknowledges the commenter’s support for the California HSR program and recommendations regarding alignment alternatives for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section. Please refer to Standard Response PB-Response-ALT-1: Alternatives Selection and Evaluation Process, in Volume 4 of the Final EIR/EIS, which discusses the Authority’s evaluation of various alternative routes, including routes following the I-5 freeway corridor, and why these alternative routes and alignments were not carried forward.</p> <p>Operational noise and vibration impacts of the project have been fully analyzed in the EIR/EIS. Refer to Section 3.4, Noise and Vibration in the Final EIR/EIS. With respect to the specific locations of concern raised by the commenter, the community of Shadow Hills and the Hansen Dam open space is approximately</p>

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			<p>and vibration would adversely affect small ranches, horseback riding, and equestrian facilities in these areas. The commenter suggested that the alignment should instead travel along the I-5 freeway and through San Fernando.</p>	<p>1.5 miles east of the Preferred Alternative, SR14A, at its nearest location. As discussed in the Final EIR/EIS under Impact BIO#14, Noise and Vibration, noise levels at this distance would not be expected to disturb domestic animals (horses) and wildlife. Standard Response PB-Response-N&amp;V-3: Noise Impacts on Domestic Animals/Wildlife provides additional detail regarding the potential effects of the Build Alternatives and the Preferred Alternative on domestic animals (horses), ranches, and wildlife and summarizes measures incorporated into the project design (IAMFs) and mitigation measures.</p>
5	Kristin Sabo	Individual	<p>The commenter asserts that the Final EIR/EIS does not address the construction impacts of the ADIT SR14-A-1 on the Migratory Bird Flyway through Bear Divide. The commenter recommends ADIT SR14-A-1 be removed from consideration as it is more impactful than the A-2 and A-3 ADIT choices.</p>	<p>The SR14A Build Alternative includes three options for adits, only one of which would be selected (see pages 2-122 and 2-123 of the Final EIR/EIS for description of each of the adit options). The Authority has not yet selected which adit location will be utilized, if any. The Authority acknowledges that the adit location noted by the commenter is located within a well-established migratory bird flyway. Section 3.7, Biological and Aquatic Resources, of the Final EIR/EIS identifies relevant federal statutes and regulations, including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as well as the Protection of Migratory Bird Populations (USEO 13186). The project's effects on migratory birds are evaluated under Impact BIO#3: Project Construction Effects on Special-Status Bird Habitat. The Final EIR/EIS includes numerous mitigation requirements to address project impacts on birds, including migratory birds (beginning on page 3.7-151). For example, refer to BIO-MM#58 which requires the Project Biologist to monitor construction activities to ensure the appropriate avoidance and minimization measures are applied, including establishment of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). The establishment of ESAs would reduce impacts on</p>

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				<p>areas that support special-status birds (including migratory birds) or associated habitat as access to these areas would be restricted during construction activities. With the mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS, impacts to migratory birds would be less than significant with any of the ADIT locations.</p>
6	George Lange	Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority	<p>Commenter recommended that the Authority contribute to a new State Route 14 (SR 14) wildlife crossing structure in Bee Canyon and highlights the importance of habitat connectivity in the Angeles National Forest (ANF). The commenter also recommended that the Authority fully mitigate construction and operation impacts to natural, public recreation, and fire resources at Lang Station Open Space and Bee Canyon.</p>	<p>The Authority acknowledges the commenter’s recommendations related to contributions towards a new wildlife crossing of SR 14 in Bee Canyon. The Final EIR/EIS includes detailed responses to comments on wildlife crossing opportunities, including in Bee Canyon. Please refer to Standard Response PB-Response-BIO-3, Wildlife Movement Corridors, and the response to comment #8697 in Chapter 22, Business and/or Organizations, of Volume 4 of the Final EIR/EIS. In addition, the Authority has committed to convening a wildlife connectivity working group (as part of BIO-MM#105) in the project approval documents, including the Record of Decision and Mitigation Monitoring Enforcement Plan, for the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section.</p> <p>As described in Standard Response PB-Response-BIO-1, Impacts in Bee Canyon, the SR14A Build Alternative would pass through Bee Canyon on an at-grade (above ground) alignment. In response to comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS raising concerns for impacts to species in Bee Canyon and requesting an underground alternative, the Authority conducted an assessment of the feasibility of tunneling through Bee Canyon, thereby avoiding impacts to suitable habitat for special-status species. However, the Authority concluded that the tunneling options for each alignment conflict with engineering design requirements such that they are not feasible. The Draft EIR/EIS fully evaluated potential impacts to biological resources in Bee Canyon that would result from construction and operation of an at-grade segment. Mitigation measures outlined in Section</p>

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				<p>3.7.8.2 of the Draft EIR/EIS would avoid, minimize, and offset construction and operation impacts on special-status plants and animals. As such, no additional mitigation is required.</p> <p>Following public circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS and through consultation with resource agencies, the Authority developed a design refinement in the vicinity of Bee Canyon that minimized the temporary and permanent footprint for the SR14A Build Alternative. In Bee Canyon, the temporary and permanent footprint along this 2.4-mile stretch of the alignment was reduced from 141.92 acres to 100.87 acres (a 22% reduction) for the SR14A Build Alternative, as described in Section 2.5.3, High-Speed Rail Build Alternatives – Detailed Description in Chapter 2, Alternatives. These refinements reduced impacts to slender-horned spineflower and coastal California gnatcatcher, as described in Section 3.7, Biological and Aquatic Resources, of the Final EIR/EIS.</p> <p>The commenter disagrees with the Authority’s evaluation of impacts to trails within Bee Canyon and notes that a spur trail and fire road that travels east across the project footprint would be impacted by the project. The Authority conducted field surveys and mapped trails in the vicinity of Lang Station Open Space and generally found that spur trails heading east of the main trail were unmarked and not clearly in use. The commenter has suggested a new connection to the ridgeline fire road on APN 3210-017-040 to provide a public recreation connection to the eastern portion of Lang Station Open Space to replace access that is currently provided to the main trail in Bee Canyon. The Authority does not currently have plans to provide the</p>

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				<p>suggested connection to the ridgeline fire road. However, mitigation measures PR-MM#8 and PR-MM#9 in Section 3.15, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, of the Final EIR/EIS, provide for the provision of alternate access to ensure that accessibility is maintained, and also requires that the Authority consult with potentially affected property owners regarding the specific conditions of changes to access and compensation for, or replacement or enhancement of, the access driveways or parking areas at the recreation resource. This consultation will occur during the advanced and final design stages, prior to any construction activity or potential disruption to access. In addition to PR-MM#8 and PR-MM#9, refer to Section 3.15, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, of the Final EIR/EIS for a description of the project features, such as PK-IAMF#1, that would maintain access to parks and recreation facilities. Other mitigation measures, including PR-MM#1, PR-MM#2, PR-MM#3, PR-MM#4, PR-MM#5, and PR-MM#7, would reduce impacts by maintaining or providing alternative access as necessary, compensating for loss of park or recreational land consistent with the California Park Preservation Act and in consultation with the public owner on appropriate conditions for compensation, developing a trail facilities plan, providing temporary or permanent replacement recreation uses as necessary, and providing alternative access if temporary closure restricts connectivity or accessibility to Lang Station Open Space.</p> <p>The commenter also proposes the purchase of a nearby property for an alternative parking and trailhead location. The commenter's suggestion would represent an expansion of the facilities compared to the existing condition, relocation of the trailhead to the south of Soledad Canyon Road, and would also require a new pedestrian crossing of Soledad Canyon Road. The property suggested by the commenter at APN 3210-017-</p>



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				<p>055 also lies mostly to the south of the Santa Clara River. As documented in the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority found that a minor adjustment to the location of the existing trailhead and a portion of the main trail could address the effect on the existing facilities from construction of the project. These relocated features would remain outside of the Bee Creek channel, and unlike the suggestion by the commenter they would not require the potential additional impacts of expanded facilities on APN 3210-017-055, new pedestrian facilities along Soledad Canyon Road, or a new potential crossing of Bee Creek Canyon or Santa Clara River. The Authority maintains that the potential effects of the project have been adequately addressed with the proposed minor adjustment to the location of the existing trailhead and main trail.</p> <p>The commenter recommends the Authority connect an existing dirt road on APN 3210-017-040 to the ridgeline fire road which could provide a replacement trail and serve the dual role of providing fire safety access. The information provided by the commenter does not include enough information for the Authority to determine if this is feasible. Additionally, the Authority will need confirmation from relevant property owners and fire safety officials to confirm that any such connections are appropriate and adequate. The Authority has committed to consulting with the public owner of the resource to identify suitable replacement trail locations (PR-MM#7 and PR-MM#9) and also has committed to consulting with local fire and safety officials in developing these measures at the appropriate design stage (SS-IAMF#1 and SS-IAMF#2). As described in PB-Response-S&amp;S-1: Wildfire, fire risks would be minimized through</p>

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				<p>the application of SS-IAMF#1 (Construction Safety Transportation Management Plan) and SS-IAMF#2 (Safety and Security Management Plan), which will require the development and incorporation of a fire and life safety program into the design and construction of the Palmdale to Burbank Project Section. Fire risks would also be reduced by the Authority’s formation of a statewide Fire and Life Safety and Security Committee (FLSSC) through implementation of SS-IAMF#2 (Safety and Security Management Plan), which will be composed of representatives from fire, police, and local building code agencies.</p>