



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

EI- 20342
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AUG 23 2013

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E St SW, # 1160
Washington, DC 20423

Re: Cooperating Agency Designation for the California High-Speed Train (HST) System -
Project Level EISs

Dear Ms. Rutson:

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), jointly with the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), has initiated the preparation of project-level Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the California High-Speed Train (HST) System. This letter responds to your request that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) serve as a cooperating agency, as defined by 40 C.F.R. §1508.5, for the preparation of the project-level EISs for remaining sections of the California HST System.

The Authority, as the project proponent, proposes to construct, operate, and maintain an electric-powered, steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST System on over 800 miles of track, capable of operating speeds of up to 220 mph on dedicated, fully grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. In 2001, the Authority and FRA began the first phase of a tiered environmental review process for the California HST System. In 2005, FRA and the Authority completed the Final Statewide Program EIS for the proposed HST System. The Statewide Program EIS established the purpose and need for the HST System, analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the HST System, and compared the proposed HST System with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. FRA subsequently issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on the Statewide Program EIS as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In approving the Statewide Program EIS, the FRA and Authority selected the HST alternative, selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations for further study, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST System at the project-level of environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. Subsequent to the 2005 Statewide Program EIS, FRA and the Authority published a second Program EIS covering the HST system between Bay Area and California's Central Valley. FRA issued a ROD for that Tier 1 EIS in 2008. The project-level EISs that are the subject of this letter tier off of both program-level EISs.

In accordance with 40 C.F.R. §1501.6, FRA affirms the designation of the STB as a cooperating agency for the project-level EISs. As a cooperating agency, your involvement in the preparation of the project-level EISs may include the activities listed below:

1. Assist FRA and the Authority in identifying potentially interested groups;
2. Participate in interagency coordination meetings;
3. Assist FRA as the lead agency in determining appropriate and practicable mitigation. These measures should reflect avoidance, minimization, and compensation;
4. Review administrative draft and administrative final environmental documents and provide FRA with your comment as early as practicable on the portions of the documents that pertain to your agency's jurisdiction;
5. Identify issues or any technical studies that the EISs should address to help STB fulfill its NEPA responsibilities and any other requirements to support STB approvals.

The FRA and Authority intend that the project-level EISs will enable you to fulfill your NEPA obligations. Likewise, your obligation is to tell us if, at any point in the process, your needs are not being met.

We look forward to working with you to advance this important transportation project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the projects in more detail or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of the EISs, please contact Stephanie Perez of my staff at stephanie.perez@dot.gov or (202) 493-0388, or myself at david.valenstein@dot.gov or (202) 493-6368. The Authority's environmental lead for the HST Project EISs is Mark McLoughlin, who may be reached at mark.mcloughlin@hsr.ca.gov or (916) 403-6934.

Sincerely,



David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning

cc: Mark McLoughlin, Deputy Director (Environment), California High-Speed Rail Authority
Lynne Marie Whately, PMT Environmental Manager