



- [California HSR- Merced to Fresno](#)
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California HSR- Merced to Fresno

Record of Decision

FRA has issued its Record of Decision (ROD) for the Merced–Fresno High Speed Rail (HSR) Project. FRA considered the information and analysis contained in the 2011 Draft EIS and 2012 Final EIS. FRA also considered public and agency comments received during the public comment period for the Draft EIS and the waiting period following the Final EIS. Based on the analysis of the Project's potential environmental effects (both adverse and beneficial) in the EIS Documents and substantive agency and public comments, FRA selects the north-south Hybrid Alternative and the Downtown Merced Station and Downtown Fresno Mariposa Street Station alternatives. Specifically, this ROD:

- Provides background on the NEPA process leading to the Final EIS, including a summary of public involvement and agency coordination.
- States and reaffirms the Project's purpose and need.
- Identifies the alternatives considered in the EIS Documents.
- Summarizes the alternatives previously considered in the alternatives analysis process and not carried forward for study in the Draft EIS.
- Identifies the Selected Alternative.
- Identifies the Environmentally Preferable Alternative.
- Summarizes environmental benefits and adverse effects.
- Summarizes the comments received on the Final EIS.
- Discusses the measures to avoid and minimize environmental harm and requires a monitoring and enforcement program for all mitigation measures.
- Presents the FRA Decision, determinations, and findings on the proposed Project and identifies and discusses the factors that were balanced by FRA in making its decision.
- [Record of Decision \(ROD\)](#)
- [ROD Appendices](#)
- [Final Air Quality Conformity Determination](#)

FRA completed the Final project-level Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIR/EIS) for the Merced–Fresno High-Speed Rail (HSR) Project. FRA is the lead Federal agency for this Final EIR/EIS and has prepared it jointly with the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The [Final EIR/EIS](#) presents the Project's purpose and need, and does the following:

- Identifies all reasonable alternatives including track alignments, stations, and heavy maintenance facilities as well as the no action alternative;



- Describes the affected environment, analyzes the potential environmental impacts of all the reasonable alternatives and the no action alternative; and
- Identifies appropriate mitigation measures to minimize the potential environmental impacts and identifies the preferred alternative.

Additional information about the HSR system may be found in the [California High-Speed Rail Program EIR/EIS](#) and the [Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS](#), both of which informed the environmental analysis contained in the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS.

The Merced to Fresno section of the 800-mile system is approximately 65 miles long. The alignment alternatives parallel Highway 99 through the northern stretch of the San Joaquin Valley. The station sites are in the City of Merced, where they will connect with the Merced to Sacramento section, and in Fresno, where they will connect with the Fresno to Bakersfield section. In addition, a heavy maintenance facility for assembly, testing, and commissioning of trains, train inspection and service, and train overhaul may be constructed in the Merced to Fresno Section.

FRA and the Authority began the Merced to Fresno EIR/EIS in October 2009 by publishing a [Notice of Intent](#) in the *Federal Register*. The [Draft EIR/EIS](#) was issued in August 2011 for public review. Comments were accepted until October 13, 2011. FRA and the Authority held three public hearings in the Project area to solicit public comment. Responses to substantive public comments on the Draft EIR/EIS are included in the Final EIR/EIS in Appendix IV. FRA published a [Notice of Availability](#) for the Final EIR/EIS in the Federal Register on April 20, 2012.

The Final EIR/EIS identifies the Hybrid alternative as the Agencies' Preferred Alternative with the Downtown Merced and Mariposa Street Fresno station alternatives. While the potential impacts are analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS, identification of the preferred connection between the Merced to Fresno and San Jose to Merced section or "wye" is deferred. Similarly, no preferred alternative for the Heavy Maintenance Facility is identified at this time.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a cooperating agency on this Draft EIR/EIS. The Corps is the agency responsible for issuing permits for discharge of dredged or fill material within Waters of the U. S. [Merced to Fresno U.S. Army Corps 404 Notice, Attachment](#).

The highlights of the Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS, explain the alternatives under consideration, provide a summary of key findings, and next steps in the environmental process and project implementation. More information is available on the Authority's web page for the [Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS](#).

- [Draft General Conformity Determination](#)

The Draft General Conformity Determination is open for public comment. Public comments should be provided to FRA by May 29, 2012

- [Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS](#)
- [Merced to Fresno Draft EIR/EIS](#)



Locations where Final EIR/EIS Documents are available for public review:

- The Authority's offices at 770 L Street, Suite 800, Sacramento, CA
- Fresno County Public Library, Central Branch, 2420 Mariposa Street, Fresno, CA 93721
- Madera County Library, 121 North G Street, Madera, CA 93637
- Chowchilla Branch Library (Merced County Library), 300 Kings Avenue, Chowchilla, CA 93610
- Merced Community Senior Center, 755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340
- Merced County Library, 2100 O Street, Merced, CA 95340
- Galilee Missionary Baptist Church, 22941 Fairmead Boulevard, Chowchilla, CA 93610
- Le Grand Branch Library, 12949 Le Grand Road, Le Grand, CA 95333
- Lao Family Community Center (Executive Summary in Hmong), 855 W 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340-5801
- Madera Ranchos Branch Library, 37167 Avenue 12, Suite 4C, Madera, CA 95636
- Merced County Los Manos Branch Library, 1312 South Seventh Street, Los Banos, CA 93635
- Atwater Branch Library, 1600 Third Street, Atwater, CA 95301-3607



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Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS

Documents for download:

The files are in Adobe Acrobat PDF Format which is available for download at no cost on the Internet. *(Note: many of these files are very large and could take up to several minutes to download).* Copies of the Merced to Fresno Final EIS/EIS are also available on CD-ROM upon request by calling (916) 414-1582. More information is available on the Authority's Webpage for the [Merced to Fresno Final EIR/EIS](#).

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Merced to Fresno Draft EIR/EIS

Documents for download

The Draft EIR/EIS presents the Project's purpose and need, identifies all reasonable alternatives including track alignments, stations, and heavy maintenance facilities as well as the no action alternative, describes the affected environment, analyzes the potential environmental impacts of all the reasonable alternatives and the no action alternative, and identifies appropriate mitigation measures to minimize the potential environmental impacts [\[Merced to Fresno FRA Federal Register Notice\]](#) [\[FRNotice Merced to Fresno Comment Extension\]](#).

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Draft General Conformity Determination

Pursuant to the Clean Air Act Section 176(c) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's implementing regulations (40 C.F.R Part 93, subpart B), FRA is also publishing a [Draft Conformity Determination](#) for public review and comment. The intent of the Clean Air Act's General Conformity requirement is to prevent the air quality impacts of a proposed federal project from causing or contributing to new violations of the air quality standards, exacerbate existing violations, or interfering with the purpose of the applicable implementation plan.

This draft general conformity determination documents FRA's finding that the Merced to Fresno Project complies with the General Conformity rule and that it conforms to the purposes of the area's approved State Implementation Plan and is consistent with all applicable requirements. The conformity determination was made based on the project design feature and mitigation measures that were described in the Final EIR/EIS. Conformity is demonstrated herein as follows:

- The operation of the Project would result in a reduction of regional emissions of all applicable air pollutants and would not cause a localized exceedance of an air quality standard; and
- While emissions generated during the construction of the Project would exceed General Conformity thresholds for two pollutants, these emission increases would be off-set through a Voluntary Emission Reduction Agreement (VERA) with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD).

Public comments on the Draft General Conformity Determination should be provided to FRA by May 29, 2012. Public comments may be submitted to:

Mr. David Valenstein, Chief
Environment and Systems Planning Division
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., MS-20
Washington, DC 20590