CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

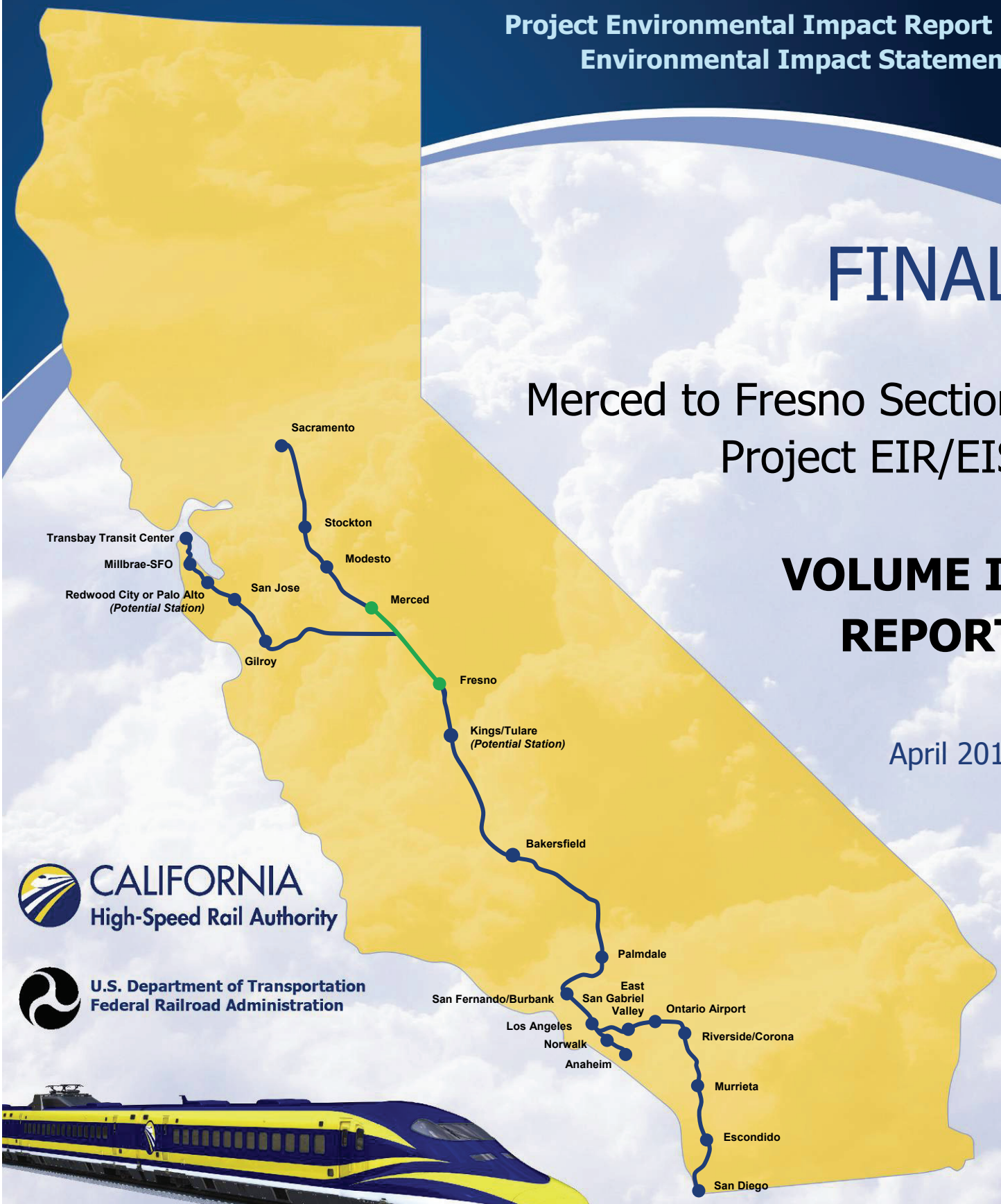
Project Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement

FINAL

Merced to Fresno Section Project EIR/EIS

VOLUME I: REPORT

April 2012



CALIFORNIA
High-Speed Rail Authority

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

FINAL
California High-Speed Train Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement
and
Final Section 4(f) Statement
and
Draft General Conformity Determination

Merced to Fresno Section

VOLUME I:
REPORT

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California High-Speed Train: Merced to Fresno Section

Final Project Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement

and

Final Section 4(f) Statement

and

Draft General Conformity Determination

Pursuant to:
California Environmental Quality Act, P.R.C. 21000 et seq.; State of California CEQA Guidelines, California Administrative Code, 15000 et seq.; and National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332 et seq.)
40 C.F.R. Part 1500 and 64 Fed. Reg. 28545

Prepared by the
California High-Speed Rail Authority
and the
Federal Railroad Administration

With Cooperating Agencies:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Bureau of Reclamation

Thomas Fellenz

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Date: April 10, 2012

Joseph C. Szabo

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Abstract: This document considers, describes and summarizes the environmental impacts of the Merced to Fresno Section High-Speed Train (HST) Project, an approximately 80-mile portion of a larger HST system which is intended to connect to sections traveling west to San Francisco, south to Los Angeles and later, north to Sacramento. The project is designed as a steel-wheel-on-steel-railway completely grade separated from other modes. The need for this project is directly related to the population growth and increased intercity travel demand over the next 20 years and beyond and the increased travel delays and congestion that would result on California's highways and airports. Additionally, the Merced, Madera, and Fresno Counties have limited connectivity with the state's larger urban metropolitan areas. Four alternatives are considered in this Final EIR/EIS, the No Project Alternative and the three HST alternatives: the UPRR/SR 99, BNSF, and the Hybrid alternatives. Each contains one station in Merced and one in Fresno. The HST in this section has the ability to travel up to 220 mph along the alignment. The Hybrid Alternative has been identified by the FRA and the Authority as the Preferred Alternative. Potential environmental impacts of the alternatives include displacement of commercial, residential and agricultural properties; community and neighborhood disruption; increase in noise; increase in traffic at each of the stations; impacts on historic and archaeological sites; impacts on parks and recreational resources; visual impacts; impacts on sensitive biological resources and wetlands; and use of energy. Mitigation measures are described to address impacts identified in the Final Project EIR/EIS.

This California High-Speed Train (HST) Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) is being made available to the public in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Visit the California High-Speed Rail Authority Web Site (www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov), where you can:

- View and download the Final EIR/EIS.
- Request a CD-ROM of the Final EIR/EIS.
- Locate a library near you to review a hardcopy of the Final EIR/EIS.

Printed copies have been placed in the main public libraries in the following cities and communities: Merced, Chowchilla, Madera, Fresno, Atwater, Le Grand, and Los Banos.