



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of March 17, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 5-I
PREPARED BY: Dylan Stone, Principal Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

Commuter Rail Update

Enclosure: Yes

Action: Information and Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

California High Speed Rail Authority Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan

The Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan was issued February 12, 2020, with an initial 60-day public comment period that was extended an additional 49 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The public comment period was closed effective June 1, 2020.

Subsequently, due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty, the Draft 2020 Business Plan final adoption was extended by the Newsom Administration and legislative leadership to April 15, 2021.

A Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan was issued on February 9, 2021, including an additional 30-day comment period through March 12, 2021.

On March 2, 2021 at 9:00AM a Public Input Meeting was held to receive comments on the Draft Plan. The CHSRA Board is expected to take action at the March 25 scheduled Board Meeting. The Final Business Plan must be submitted to the California State Legislature on April 15, 2021.

The Draft 2020 Business Plan and information about the plan can be found at the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) website: https://hsr.ca.gov/about/business_plans/2020/

The Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan identifies the CHSRA intentions as planning and construction of the state-wide high speed train project advances. Key topics addressed in the plan include:

- **COVID-19 Impacts** – how the pandemic has affected construction and supply, staffing protocol, procurement, schedule, Cap-and-Trade revenues, and transit agencies.

- **Clean Transportation Investment** – how the project helps meet California climate goals, creates improved mobility choice, and impacts economic recovery and revitalization.
- **Project Advancement and Milestones** – how the project meet Federal requirements, the degree of progress made thus far, where work is currently happening, and the status of in development environmental documents for additional segments.
- **Project Funding** – identifying costs of initial segment completion and planned operation, understanding fiscal needs beyond the initial operating segment. This section includes two ancillary studies (KMPG Business Case Assessment Study and Early Train Operator Side-by-Side Study) previously requested by the CHSRA Board Members.
- **Risk Management Assessment** – a discussion on potential risks and risk avoidance/management related to project delivery, funding, litigation, stakeholder support, ridership revenue, emerging technology, and organizational/auditing.
- **Forecasts and Estimates** – projections and assumptions related to level of service, ridership and revenues, environmental benefits, operations costs, project life cycle costs, and a break-even analysis.

A key component of the plan is to expand the initial operating segment to a Merced to Bakersfield system in line with Governor Newsom’s expressed vision for the high-speed train system. This plan continues to align with that vision and much of the short-term data and analysis has gone into justifying the Merced to Bakersfield segment. MCTC has expressed support for this plan to CHSRA through a letter of support (attached) for the contents of this plan being implemented with recognition of the Merced to Bakersfield service with stops at Fresno, Kings/Tulare, and Madera to provide electrified, high-speed rail service to Californians at the earliest possible time.

San Joaquin Joint Power Authority Draft 2021 Business Plan

Each year, San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) must develop and approve an updated Business Plan annually as required by SJJPA’s Interagency Transfer Agreement (ITA) with the State. The annual Business Plan is required to be submitted to the Secretary of CalSTA in draft form by April 1 of each year, and in final form by June 15 of each year to allow Amtrak time to finalize operating cost estimates.

The SJJPA Draft 2021 Business Plan was issued in February for a public review period until March 16, 2021. The plan will be considered for adoption at the March 26, 2021 SJJPA Board Meeting.

The Draft 2021 Business Plan and information about the plan can be found at the SJJPA website: <https://sjjpa.com/business-plan/>.

The 2021 Business Plan is an update of the 2020 Business Plan. To provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive Business Plan possible, updates to ridership and financial figures were provided, along with discussion of the status of current and planned capital projects,

and any new planning initiatives. Additionally, certain sections have been updated to reflect recent changes in service. Key changes will include the following:

COVID-19 Impacts – How the pandemic has impacted intercity rail services throughout the State, including the San Joaquins service, measures taken in response to the pandemic and potential service restoration activities anticipated throughout the 2021/2022 fiscal year.

SJJPA's High-Speed Rail Coordination and Integration – SJJPA, as the interim operator of the initial proposed Merced to Bakersfield segment, discusses the intention to integrate the high-speed train system at its initial norther terminus with the Amtrak San Joaquin's system northward.

8th and 9th Daily Round Trip - As part of SJJPA's 2018 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) award, funding is available to operate 8th and 9th daily round trips and is recommended as part of the Business Plan. The plan proposes changes to how this expansion will affect Bakersfield to Oakland roundtrips by incorporating a connecting service to Sacramento.

Emphasis on Transit Connectivity at Stations – the plan highlights steps to improve station connectivity to disadvantaged communities and outlines a future means-based fare program with local and regional partners.

Butte County Expansion – the plan outlines efforts to plan for future expansion northwards into Butte County. The plan discussed the potential for this expansion to be viable in a mid-term horizon rather than as a long-range goal.

Status of Projects – The plan provides information on the status and schedule of the Stockton Grade project and Madera Station Relocation project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the approved 2020-21 Overall Work Program and Budget.