

# High-Speed Rail Update Review of Actions

SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT UPDATE TO 2026 BUSINESS PLAN

JULY 6, 2026

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- Public Comment at HSR Meeting
- Letter to HSRA
- Coordinated meetings with HSR staff



August 2025 – Proposal to Bypass Merced and head to Gilroy from Madera

# Merced Regional Partners Respond

## Regional Partners

- ▶ County of Merced
- ▶ Merced County Association of Governments
- ▶ City of Merced
  - ▶ Subcommittee on Transportation

## High-Speed Rail Contacts

- ▶ 5 meetings from September 2026 to December 2026
- ▶ CEO
- ▶ Staff Members
- ▶ Board Members



# What Happened to ACE and Amtrak?

Three trains, one station ...




Funding struggles

Amtrak hub moves to Madera

**ACE**  
ALTA MONT CORRIDOR EXPRESS

## ACE Ceres-Merced Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report

SCH #2018012014

April 2021

## MITC Merced Intermodal Track Connection



### Project Overview

#### What is the MITC Project?

The proposed Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project includes a new track connection from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) corridor to the proposed integrated Merced High-Speed Rail (HSR) Station between O and R Streets in downtown Merced. In addition, a new platform will allow for transfers between the San Joaquins passenger rail and HSR. The MITC Project only includes the construction of the track connection; it does not include the construction of the proposed integrated Merced HSR Station.

The proposed MITC Project also includes the following:

- A new aerial guideway that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquins).
- Modification of the approved Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility allowing for San Joaquins trains to access the facility.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is planning to construct the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment. When operational, the San Joaquins intercity service between Merced and Bakersfield will be replaced by HSR service. The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) will terminate the San Joaquins intercity service in Merced, and is expected to be the operating agency for the HSR Early Operating Segment.

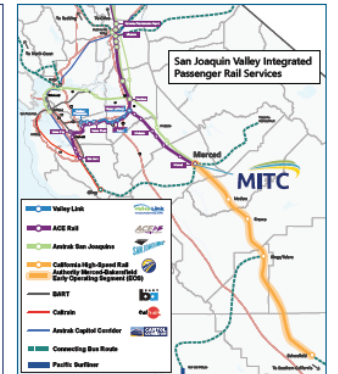
The proposed MITC project is critical for integrating San Joaquins service with the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment.

#### What has been completed to date?




In March 2022, SJJPA completed a Project Study Report Equivalent to identify the project scope, schedule, and estimated cost of the Project. In January 2023, SJJPA published a Notice of Preparation to begin environmental review through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was published in July 2024, followed by a Revised Draft EIR in July 2025.

#### Who is the Lead Agency?

SJJPA is the lead agency under CEQA. If the MITC Project receives federal funding, it is anticipated that the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as necessary.



### MITC Project Objectives

- 
**Create a seamless connection between the San Joaquins and HSR services.** Relocating the San Joaquins from the existing station on 24th Street to the HSR station downtown will allow passengers to transfer between services on a shared platform.
- 
**Enhance the San Joaquins to better serve regional markets.** Integrating the San Joaquins with the HSR system improves connections to the Bay Area, Sacramento, and the northern San Joaquin Valley.
- 
**Reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to improve regional air quality.** Improved intercity passenger rail service provides an alternative to the automobile, reducing GHG emissions.

# PROPOSED HSR STATION RELOCATION

## HWY 99/Mission Av/UPRR



## Letter From the City Council



City Administration (209)-385-6834 [www.cityofmerced.org](http://www.cityofmerced.org)

February 2, 2026

Mr. Thomas Richards  
Board Chair  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

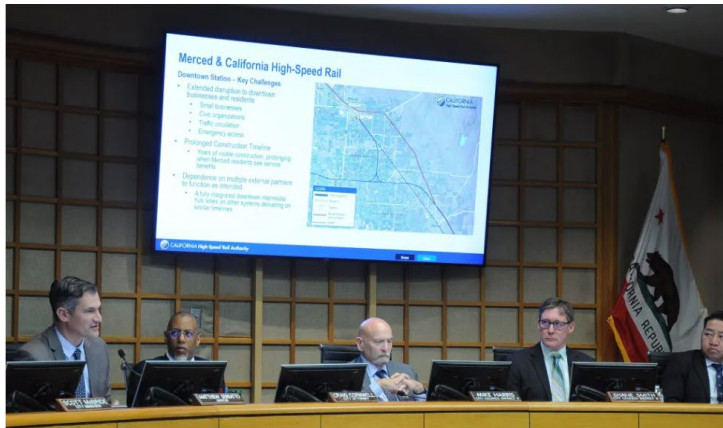
Mr. Ian Choudri  
Chief Executive Officer  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: City of Merced – Conceptual Consideration of Station Relocation

Dear Honorable Board Chair Richards and Mr. Choudri:

On behalf of the City of Merced, thank you for your continued engagement with our region

# Robust Meetings, Strategic Outreach



## We weren't through!

- ▶ 2 Council meetings in January 2026
- ▶ 5 Additional meetings with HSR in January to June 2026
- ▶ High-Speed Rail Lobby Day
  - ▶ 7 meetings with Legislators and Governor's Office Staff

# HSR – 2026 DRAFT Business Plan

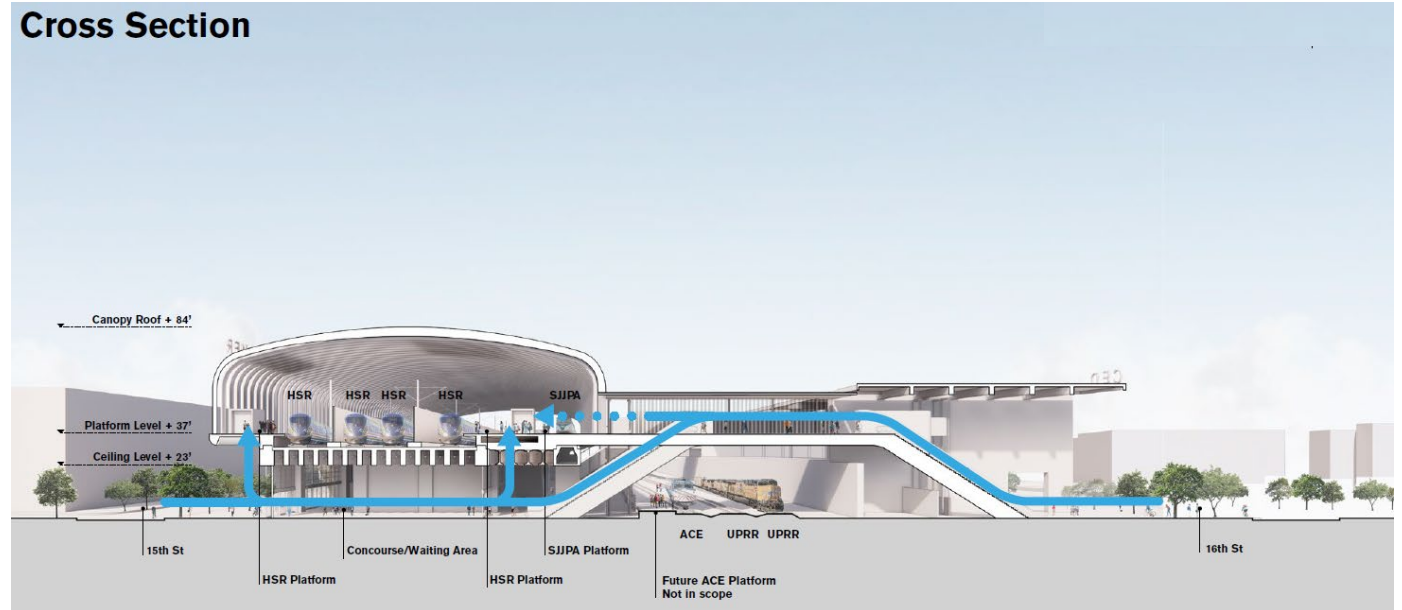


- ▶ Business Plan issued on February 28, 2026
- ▶ Public comment period ended April 29, 2026
- ▶ HSR Board heard testimony on April 29, 2026
- ▶ Draft Letter of Comment from the City to HSRA.
- ▶ Adopted June 1, 2026



# CITY'S LETTER OF COMMENT – KEY POINTS

- ▶ **2026 Business Plan**
- ▶ Station Relocation
- ▶ Downsized Station
- ▶ Updates to SB 198
- ▶ Tax Increment Financing
- ▶ HSR Land Use Control
- ▶ Encroachment Permit Process
- ▶ Shared Benefit Costs



FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

## City Council Direction

- Approved Letter of Comment to the HSRA & Technical Document
- Authorized the City Manager to submit the letter to the HSRA

Mr. Thomas Richards  
Board Chair  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Ian Choudri  
Chief Executive Officer  
California High Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: City of Merced – 2026 DRAFT Business Plan

Dear Honorable Board Chair Richards and Mr. Choudri:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2026 California High-Speed Rail Draft Business Plan and the Capitol Cost Basis Estimate Report, which provides background for the information presented in the Business Plan. While the DRAFT business plan offers little detail regarding a station in Merced, there are several key areas within the technical document where we seek clarification. While we appreciate the continued effort to refine project delivery and manage costs, several recent design changes raise concerns regarding long-term system performance, capacity, and regional equity.

### **Consideration of Station Relocation**

While communication between the Authority and the City has increased, the substance and transparency of that communication remains insufficient. The City has been engaged in discussions with the Authority since the better part of last year regarding the potential relocation of the downtown station to southeast Merced. We have, however, received very limited detail about the specific site under consideration. Yet the technical document accompanying the Authority's Draft Business Plan appears to provide confirmation of a "new station at Mission Avenue." (p. 46, Table 17.) Elsewhere the relocation of Merced's station out of our downtown is presented as a "key design and optimization update" that has already been decided. (p. 51 ("New station and location near E. Mission Ave south of downtown Merced[.]").) That position would seem to counter existing state law. It is also concerning that such critical information is conveyed through publicly released documents rather than through direct engagement with the City. This approach undermines the assertion that the City will have a meaningful seat at the table in key decision-making processes, particularly when those decisions appear to be made without prior consultation and a public comment letter becomes the first opportunity for input.

# Other Factors to Consider



- ▶ M2M Engineering
- ▶ General Plan Update/Downtown Plan
- ▶ Potential Annexation
- ▶ Facilities, Infrastructure, & Improvements
- ▶ Funding & Agreements
- ▶ Timing of Funding
  - ▶ Mission Ave & Hwy 59
  - ▶ Downtown Merced

# New Station Unknowns

## Merced Station Options: Efficient Delivery of High-Speed Rail



California is committed to delivering a financially responsible system that brings real benefits to communities. A southern Merced station concept represents a practical, forward-looking solution that ensures Merced receives the benefits of high-speed rail service while minimizing disruption and supporting long-term regional growth.

### Why Southern Merced? Certainty for Merced

A southern Merced station would offer the best and fastest path to deliver high-speed rail service to Merced without relying on multiple additional outside infrastructure projects and timelines. Benefits to this approach include:

- Greater delivery certainty
- Reduced project risk
- Financially responsible approach
- Faster path to service

### Supports Future Growth

A southern Merced station would offer development and infrastructure advantages including:

- Supporting planned expansion
- Preserving downtown activity
- Creating flexibility for future transit connections

### Protects Downtown Merced

A downtown station would require years of major construction activity in the city core, negatively impacting businesses, traffic, and community facilities. A southern Merced station would support future development while protecting downtown from:

- 5 years of construction disruption (Phase 1 Merced – Madera)
- 2 – 5 years of construction disruption (Phase 2 Merced – Sacramento)
- ACE extension construction disruption (duration unknown)
- Amtrak connection construction (duration unknown)
- Traffic and emergency access impacts
- Business and facility displacement

Deliberative



Rendering of a southern Merced station concept

### Regional Connectivity

A southern Merced station concept creates opportunities for strong regional connections, including:

- UC Merced
- Local and regional transit
- Easy access to State Routes 99, 140, and 59 via Campus Parkway and East Mission Avenue
- Future airport transportation options

The station also strengthens Merced's role as a university-centered regional hub by improving access to UC Merced, California's fastest-growing UC campus.

### Travel Times from Southern Merced Station Concept

Destination	Approximate Distance	Estimated Drive Time
Merced Regional Airport	~6 miles	~12 minutes
UC Merced	~10 miles	~14-18 minutes
Downtown Merced	~5 miles	8 minutes

### Southern Merced vs. Downtown

#### Southern Merced Station Concept

- ✓ Clear, fundable delivery path
- ✓ Avoids years of downtown construction
- ✓ Protects businesses and community facilities
- ✓ Supports planned growth
- ✓ Stronger connection to UC Merced

#### Downtown Station Challenges

- ⚠ Extended downtown disruption
- ⚠ Negative impacts to businesses and facilities
- ⚠ Traffic and emergency access concerns
- ⚠ Delivery uncertainty
- ⚠ Dependence on multiple outside agency funding uncertainties

### A Proven Global Approach

Locating high-speed rail stations outside downtown areas is a common practice around the world to reduce costs, simplify construction, and minimize community impacts.

**Spain:** Guadalajara's high-speed rail station was built outside the historic city center to avoid major disruption and simplify construction.

**France:** Stations serving Avignon and Aix-en-Provence are located outside downtown areas to avoid costly and disruptive urban construction.

**Germany:** Edge-of-city station locations have been used to preserve existing infrastructure and limit construction impacts.

Deliberative

Design/Platform/Building

Land Area

Capacity for solar power

Capacity for data center

# Next Steps ... Direction from Council

## **Coordinate outreach with Senior Management Analyst/PIO**

- ▶ Media briefings
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Engage Merced
- ▶ Op Eds
- ▶ Council briefings

## **Coordinate with High-Speed Rail**

- ▶ Community briefing on:
  - ▶ Land area
  - ▶ Design of station and platform
  - ▶ Solar power generation
  - ▶ Data centers

COUNCIL CONSIDERATION -

QUESTIONS?