



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Dallas to Houston High-Speed Rail Project

Frequently Asked Questions

1) How many trains will run in a given day?

As currently proposed, Texas Central (TCRR) plans to operate the system from 5:30 am to 11:30 pm each day, with the last train leaving the far station 90 minutes before, at 10pm. Trains would be leaving the terminals for a 16.5-hour operating period, with the first trains leaving at the beginning of that period and the last train leaving at the end of that period. For the initial service (opening day) a train would leave each terminal station every 30 minutes, meaning 34 northbound trains and 34 southbound trains. In a given day this totals 68 trains running along the tracks.

2) Why doesn't the train go to downtown Houston?

TCRR initially proposed two station options in downtown Houston. However, the two downtown options were eliminated due to the potential significant environmental impacts they created, including impacts to the National Historic District Heights Boulevard Esplanade, the U.S. Healthworks Hospital, and Houston and Texas Central Railroad archaeology site, and the high cost to mitigate those impacts. More information about the consideration of a downtown Houston station option is contained in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Dallas to Houston High-Speed Rail Project Alignment Alternatives Analysis Report (November 2015), available on (FRA's) website at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L17203>.

3) How can the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) be complete when no one was allowed on my land to complete surveys?

FRA assessed the environmental impacts of the Build Alternatives using publicly available data, previously published documentation and fieldwork where access was granted or available through public rights-of-way. Surveys have been conducted for the following resources: waters of the U.S., federally listed species, cultural resources, noise and vibration, aesthetics and scenic and hazardous materials. Additional survey work may be conducted as access to property is granted. Property access is not necessary to conduct the analysis for other resource areas (i.e., Air Quality, Land Use, etc.)

4) Will there be sound walls to mitigate noise impacts on nearby communities?

The results of the noise impact assessment in the Draft EIS suggest that the use of sound barriers for mitigation would be limited because noise impacts would be scattered geographically. Where sound barriers are not feasible or desirable, building sound insulation may be a better choice for reducing indoor noise. The Draft EIS does not identify locations for sound barriers or building sound insulation as part of the preliminary engineering. Additional noise assessments will be completed as part of the final design of the Project. This further analysis and TCRR's coordination with affected landowners, will inform the need for and/or location of sound walls. Should sound barriers be determined to be appropriate, TCRR will consider input from the public and local jurisdictions regarding the aesthetic style of the barrier.

5) How far does vibration caused by the train travel from the track and will it impact sensitive facilities like nearby hospitals or schools?

The Draft EIS included modelling of vibration impacts based on actual operational conditions of the Shinkansen train in Japan and existing soil conditions within the corridor. Based on this effort, severe vibration impacts would not extend beyond 275 feet from the track. The analysis indicated there would be no operational vibration impacts on resources like hospitals or schools.



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6) How will noise or vibration affect my livestock?

For noise from passing high-speed rail (HSR) trains on animals, the FRA noise exposure criterion limit is a Sound Exposure Level of 100 dBA. For the HSR trains operating at the maximum speed of 205 mph, this limit would only be exceeded within 15 feet from the HSR tracks. No livestock would be this close to the tracks. Where the HSR tracks would be at-grade, this level of noise would be limited to the area within the fenced right-of-way. In most places where the track is on viaduct (raised track) the height of the track would exceed the minimum distance to impact livestock. Where the track is on embankment and there would be a wildlife or livestock crossing enclosed in a culvert, noise levels would be reduced by shielding either below the viaduct or within the culvert. Therefore, no noise impacts to wildlife or livestock would be expected.

7) How do you know if there are threatened or endangered species on my property?

FRA completed a habitat modeling assessment that uses data from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The model evaluates soil type, vegetation cover, eco-regions and more to identify areas of high potential for the federally listed species to live. FRA focused their species surveys on these modeled areas and accessed them through public right-of-way or where access to private property was granted. The Draft EIS documents the first year of surveys during which no threatened or endangered species within the surveyed areas were found.

8) What happens if you find a threatened or endangered species on my property?

FRA is conducting surveys for threatened or endangered species in consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Survey areas are currently limited to public right-of-way and where access to private property has been granted. If federally listed species are located within the footprint of the Project and would be adversely impacted, the relocation of the impacted species will be coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

9) How will I move my livestock across my property?

Where the track is on viaduct (raised track), adequate vertical clearance should allow for the movement of wildlife or livestock underneath the track. Where the track is on an embankment, wildlife crossings such as tunnels will be incorporated to allow for movement and could potentially accommodate livestock.

10) Will the construction of this project cause upstream or downstream flooding?

During final design, additional hydrology studies will be conducted throughout the study area to inform the engineering. The final design of the Project will take into account existing water flow and be designed to maintain, if not improve it through coordination with the local water management district.

11) Can the electricity grid support the project?

ERCOT regulates about 75 percent of the electric grid for the State of Texas and is currently adding capacity to respond to the population growth and energy needs of the state. FRA conducted analyses that compared ERCOT's current and future capacity to the overall electrical need of the Project. The daily power consumption of the Project would present 0.26 percent of the added capacity.

12) If the project requires new electrical lines, who decides where they go?

Any changes to the overhead electrical lines, including pole adjustments, relocations, or new connections, would be coordinated by the utility owner. These changes would require additional environmental analyses that would be completed by the utility owner.



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13) Will the project require the abandonment or closure of any oil or gas wells?

FRA identified underground oil and gas lines that may need to be relocated or protected. FRA also identified surface wells within the footprint of the Project that would be abandoned and closed.

14) Will any public roads be permanently closed by the project?

The train will cross either over or under existing roadways. The construction of the Project may result in changes to existing roadways in order for those roads to cross under or over the track, but no public roads will be closed.

15) How will access on public roadways change/be managed during construction?

Lanes on public roads could be temporarily closed during construction, but a certain level of service (or number of lanes) would be required to remain open. If a road is shut down, it would be temporary and a detour would be identified with appropriate signage.

16) What is the timeline/process for TCRR to purchase or acquire property for the project?

The timeline and process for property acquisition is not part of the environmental review of the Project. If TCRR obtains federal financial assistance for the Project, such as a federal loan, TCRR will be required to comply with the Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) for any acquisition of property.

17) What impact will this project have on agricultural lands?

Farmland within the 10-county Study Area constitutes approximately three percent of the total acres of all farms in the State of Texas. While the Project will convert agricultural lands to a transportation use, the analysis indicates that agricultural capacity is available within the study area, as well as the State of Texas. Adverse impacts to overall food production would not occur.

18) What safeguards are in place to ensure that cars and trains will not collide?

The system does not allow for the operation of any other type of trains on its track. Cars will not cross over the tracks. Freight trains cannot operate on the tracks. The HSR system will have a dedicated northbound lane and a dedicated southbound lane, which means that no two trains can be on the same track heading towards one another.

19) How will this project impact hunters/hunting?

The Project is not expected to result in a change hunting regulations within the 10 county Study Area.

20) What other permits or permissions does TCRR need before they can begin construction and operation of the system?

In addition to the Record of Decision, FRA will also need to publish a Final Rule on TCRR's Rule of Particular Applicability application related to the safety of the system. TCRR cannot operate the system until FRA has published the Final Rule. Additionally, prior to construction the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will need to issue permits for 404 and 408 crossings. Also, several local counties and cities, as well as TxDOT, will require TCRR to obtain permits for roadway modifications.

21) What role does the public have in determining the alignment of the Project?

TCRR is a private entity that proposed the project and initial corridors. FRA evaluated those corridors and sought public input on them during the public scoping meetings held in late 2014. TCRR and FRA considered that input in selecting a corridor, identifying alignment alternatives within the corridor, and narrowing the alternatives down to the six build alternatives studied in the Draft EIS. The public also has an opportunity now to provide comments on the alignments in the Draft EIS, including the preferred alternative. FRA will consider all comments received during the public comment period before making a final preferred alternative selection in the Record of Decision.



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22) How do I comment on the Draft EIS?

There are several ways to comment on the Draft EIS. Comments can be sent through FRA's website:

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0700>; via email: DallasHoustonHSR@urs.com; mail: Attn: Kevin Wright, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE MS-20, Washington, D.C. 20590; and in person at a public hearing. FRA will host 10 public hearings and can accept hand written or typed comments as well as comments dictated to the court reporters at the meetings.

23) What will be my next opportunity to learn about and comment on the Project?

FRA is hosting 10 public hearings for the Project:

- January 29 – Dallas and Navarro Counties
- January 30 – Ellis and Leon Counties
- January 31 – Limestone and Freestone Counties
- February 5 – Madison and Harris Counties
- February 6 – Grimes and Waller Counties

24) What are the next steps FRA will take on the project?

FRA will record and organize all of the comments received on the Draft EIS as part of the development of the Final EIS. They will also evaluate any engineering refinements and complete additional surveys in support of the Final EIS. The Final EIS will include updates to the resources discussed in the Draft EIS and will also contain a formal response for each comment and a summary of all Draft EIS comments. The Final EIS will be published for public review.

After the Final EIS, FRA will make a determination on the Rule of Particular Applicability and issue a Record of Decision.