California High Speed Rail Draft EIR comments

Agua Dulce Town Council meeting

Wednesday November 9th, 2022

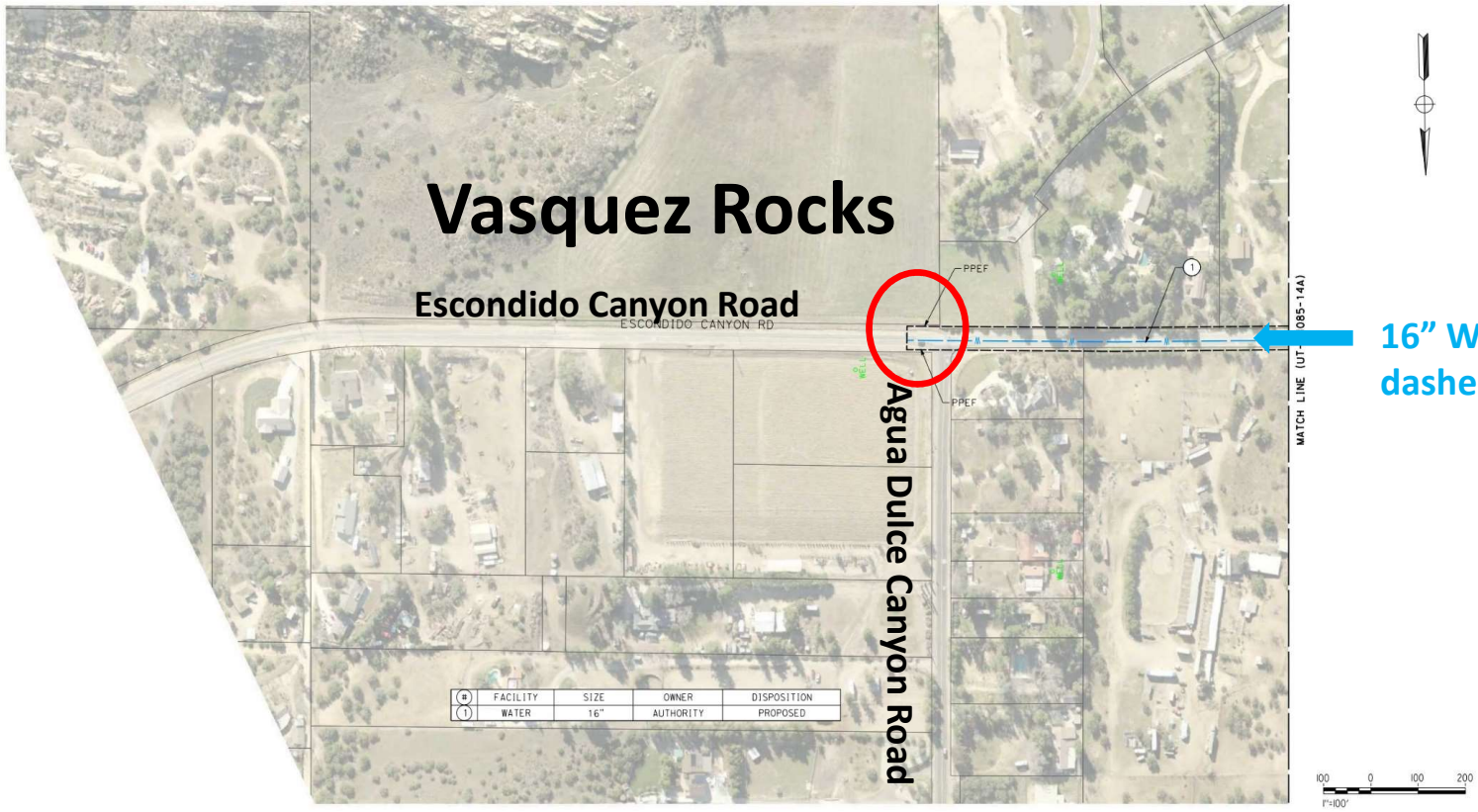
Agenda

- The proposed 16” water main on Escondido/Agua Dulce Canyon
  - LA County Department of Public Works Response
  - AVEK response
  - California HSR response
- Acton Town Council comments on DEIR
  - Local groundwater preservation and protection per the General Plan
  - Electrical infrastructure in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone
  - Availability of the projected municipal water supply needed for construction
  - Impact on storm water runoff on local property owners
- Next steps to consider

The 16” Water Main on Escondido Canyon Rd

- Chapter 3.6 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement deals with ‘Public Utilities and Energy’
- https://hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08_P2K_PEPD_RECORD_SET_Addendum_SR14A_E1A_E2A_Rev00_Utility_Relocation_Plans-a11y.pdf
- Utility Relocation Plans Page 68, Drawing UT-C4084-14A
- A 16” Water Main appears in the middle of Escondido Canyon at the intersection of Agua Dulce Canyon Road
- It then continues along Agua Dulce Canyon Road, under the 14 to the point where the tunnel boring machines will enter the hills to bore two 6.63 mile long tunnels East towards Acton
- Purpose is to supply water from AVEK Agency to the CA HSR project

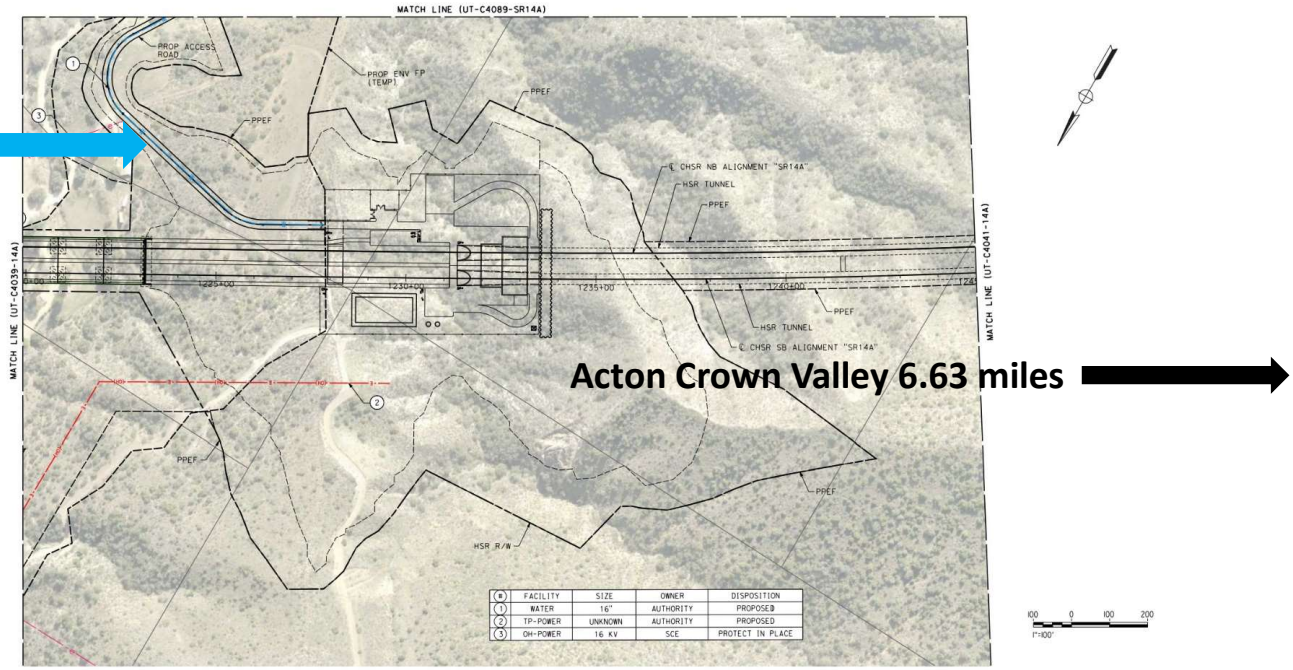
The “magic water main” on Escondido Canyon



The on Escondido Canyon

- Page 69, Drawing UT-C4085-14A, Page 70 UT-C4086-14A, Page 71 UT-C4087-14A, Page 72 UT-C4088-14A, Page 73 UT-C4089-14A and Page 48 UT-C4040-14A

16” Main water line along service road from Agua Dulce Canyon



Project water consumption incl. construction

- The tunnel boring operation require 1 acre feet 325,851 gallons of water each (652,000 gallons) per day while boring each 28’ diameter tunnel (Page 3.6-78 of the Draft EIR)
- Water is used for increasing the water content of soil to optimize tunneling and compaction for dust control, preparing concrete, re-seeding disturbed areas and during boring for cooling the TBMs, for maintenance and cleaning of the excavated sections of the tunnel, operation of conveyor belts and hoppers, dust control and vehicles/engine wash down, operation of tunnel excavation-area workshops and potable water for construction workers (3.6-77 and 3.6-78)
- The tunnel boring machines bore approximately 650’ per day (65%)
- 6.63 miles Agua Dulce to Acton is 35,000 feet or about 54 days of boring
- 54 days of boring = at least 35,208,000 million gallons or 108 acre feet
- Refined SR14A route requires 928 acre feet (302m gallons) from AVEK while **SR14A** route requires 1,266 acre feet (412.5m gallons) – Table 3.6-21

Tunnel Boring Machine water consumption

- The tunnel boring machines (TBMs) require 55,000–105,000 gallons of water each (110,000-210,000 gallons) per day while boring each 28’ diameter tunnel (per 3.6-14)
- The tunnel boring machines bore approximately 650’ per day (65%)
- 6.63 miles to Acton is 35,000 feet or about 54 days of boring
- 54 days of boring = 5.94 million gallons
- There is nothing in the Draft EIR for the High Speed Rail that indicates the connection point for the 16” main on Escondido Canyon but maps indicate that CA HSR is not responsible for constructing it prior to the point of connection at Escondido/Agua Dulce Canyon Road

Public Record Request (PRR)

- Public Records Request seeks “copies of the plans and a description of the proposed water main that LA County Department of Public Works appears to have proposed to satisfy this connection point to the 16" water main included in the California High Speed Rail utility plans including draft topographic plans and a description of proposed water source(s), sufficient for the point of connection to existing and/or planned municipal water infrastructure in the communities of Acton and/or Agua Dulce can be understood pursuant to the requirements of CEQA Section 15151.”
- Submitted to DPW on 10/11/22 (#5338), CA HSR on 10/18/22 (22-196) and AVEK on 11/7/22

Dept. of Public Works response to PRR

- Requested an extension to respond on 10/20/22
- Replied on 11/3/22
- After a thorough and diligent search, we failed to find any records that satisfy your request. Please see remarks for further information
  - The County has not proposed a 16” water main at the connection point or any point you identify
  - Nonetheless, attached are the documents the County provided to the State of California in connection to their request for existing water infrastructure per emails from the State
    - 81 maps of the Antelope Valley District 40 waterworks system between Avenue H and Avenue O in Palmdale and Lancaster (District 40 doesn’t even cover Acton/Agua Dulce!)

AVEK response to PRR

- Responded promptly on 11/8/22 (the day after the PRR was submitted)
- “AVEK has not proposed the construction of the referenced line and has no plans to design or construct new water lines in the Acton or Agua Dulce communities. The water line you referenced is shown to both originate and terminate outside of the AVEK service area.”

CA HSR response to PRR

- Requested an extension to respond on 10/28/22
- As of 11/9/22 no response has been received

ATC comments – local groundwater protection

- DEIR identifies the Los Angeles County General Plan as being relevant to the public utility issues addressed in the draft
- Identifies the Public Services and Facilities Element of the Gen. Plan
  - HSR will rely on local water retailers (AVEK) and/or local groundwater resources for constructing the tunnels beneath Acton and Agua Dulce
- Ignores Conservation and Natural Resources Element of the Gen. Plan
  - Goal C/NR 6 (Protected and usable local groundwater resources) when the majority rely on local groundwater for their drinking supplies
  - Policy C/NR 5.6 (Minimize point and non-point source water pollution) is applicable since the boring machines will use recycled non-potable water and pierce groundwater channels and can potentially contaminate the supply
- Using local groundwater resources in Acton and Agua Dulce to operate the TBM machines will conflict with Goal C/NR 6 and Policy COS 2.7
- CA HSR has conflated storm water with wastewater with respect to treatment

ATC comments – electrical infrastructure

- Acton and Agua Dulce are located in an area designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ)
- Policy P/SF 6.6 of the Gen. Plan requires undergrounding of utilities
- CA HSR DEIR only commits to underground *relocated* utilities and not *newly constructed* utilities
  - New construction of above ground utilities in a VHFHSZ is a risk to the communities
  - PSPS events leave the HSR service susceptible to prolonged power outages
- The DEIR makes no indication as to whether the existing local electrical substations are sufficient to meet the projected construction and operational electrical loads incl. during Flexalerts

ATC comments – available municipal water

- Page 36-18 asserts that water supply estimates are compared to water supply forecasts from Urban Water Management Plans ("UWMP"s). However, no UWMP has ever been prepared for the communities of Acton and Agua Dulce
- CHSRA lacks the information it requires to accurately assess water supply estimates for approximately half of all the route alternatives including SR14A and Refined SR14A
- Table 3.6-10 states that, on average, the Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency ("AVEK") serves an average annual water demand of 47.6 million gallons/ day and 56,400 acre feet per year from the State Water Project.
- For the last several years, AVEK has only received 7,242 acre feet per year, which is only 5% of its allocation from the State Water Project
- Table 3.6-21 asserts that AVEK receives 46,750 acre feet under "Single Dry Year" circumstances and 74,350 acre-feet under "Multiple Dry Year" circumstances. This makes no sense in light of AVEK's actual SWP allocations.

ATC comments – District 37 water supply

- Page 36-30 states that Los Angeles County Waterworks District 37 (which is the local waterworks district in Acton and soon to be Eastern Agua Dulce that serves less than half of Acton and Agua Dulce residents) is supplied by the Metropolitan Water District and is 473 square miles in area and has an annual average water demand of 659,000 acre feet
- Waterworks District 37 obtains its water from AVEK and from local municipal water wells in the Agua Dulce Acton Groundwater basin. It currently serves an area that is less than 50 square miles and its annual water demand is approximately 2,000 acre feet
- Water demand is overstated by a factor of 329 times!
- Maps UT-C4024-14A and UT-C4066-14A to UT-C4068-14A of the “Utility Relocation Plan” indicate that the water line serving the Acton tunnel construction site will originate in downtown Acton using a connection to the existing District 37 Waterworks infrastructure served by local wells

ATC comments – storm water runoff

- Page 36-51 states asserts “Generally, storm drain systems are more prominent in developed urban areas. In rural areas, roadside ditches, irrigation canals, and natural drainages convey stormwater runoff.”
- Local stormwater is typically sediment laden because the area is surrounded by mountains and most roads are dirt, thus rainwater runoff picks up and carries sediment down the hillsides to the Santa Clara River
- Local drainage paths are not irrigation canals or roadside ditches however there are some manmade concrete swales that can cause issues for downhill property owners as they carry sediment free runoff
- The Project must not alter any storm water runoff patterns/characteristics

ATC comments – CEQA/NEPA conclusions

- NEPA and CEQA significance conclusions assert that the Project will “avoid, minimize, reduce, or compensate for all impacts on utilities and energy” (page 3.6-91) and that “Public utilities and energy impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level under CEQA with the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this section”.
  - There are insufficient water supplies to perform the construction
  - Use of non-potable recycled water will likely result in groundwater contamination
  - The extent to which the Agua Dulce/Acton groundwater supply will be relied upon and local private and municipal wells impacted is not addressed
  - The impact on the local and regional electrical utilities is improperly assessed
  - The stormwater treatment facilities cannot be used to treat wastewater and the runoff mitigation measures are inappropriate for rural areas

Next steps

- Discuss whether the Council should submit two DEIR comment letters to the CA HSR prior to the December 1st deadline:
  - To the HSR DEIR comment address noting the absence of sufficient information to establish the source of water that will supply the proposed 16” water main at Escondido Canyon/Agua Dulce Canyon Road thereby rendering the DEIR deficient under CEQA 15151
  - Approaching Acton Town Council to add the Agua Dulce Town Council to the comment letter that is being drafted for submission prior to the December 1st deadline