

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
Valley Link Rail Project

SCOPING PERIOD: SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 – OCTOBER 15, 2018

DATE: September 13, 2018
TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
FROM: Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority) intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), consistent with requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements included in the Valley Link Rail Project. The Authority will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that the Authority plans to prepare the EIR and to request input on the scope of the environmental analysis to be performed and the alternatives to be considered. From public agencies, we are inviting comments on the scope and context of the environmental information that is germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities with regard to the proposed project. We are also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of the environmental document.

A. Scoping Period

Written responses and comments on the scope of the Valley Link Rail Project will be accepted until 5:00 PM on Monday, October 15, 2018. Please send written comments to:

Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority
Attn: Valley Link Rail Project
1362 Rutan Court, Suite 100
Livermore, CA 94551

Your comments may also be sent by email to info@valleylinkrail.com. Please include "Valley Link Project" in the subject heading.

Public scoping meetings are scheduled at the time and date listed below.

B. Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings will be held for the project at the following locations:

Tuesday, October 2nd from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Open House
Robert Livermore Community Center - 4444 East Livermore Avenue, Livermore, CA

Wednesday, October 3rd from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Open House
Tracy City Hall Lobby - 333 Civic Center Plaza, Tracy, CA

The scoping meetings will provide an opportunity for the lead agency to provide further details on the project and to give interested agencies, organizations, and individuals an opportunity to comment on the scope and content of the EIR.

C. Project History

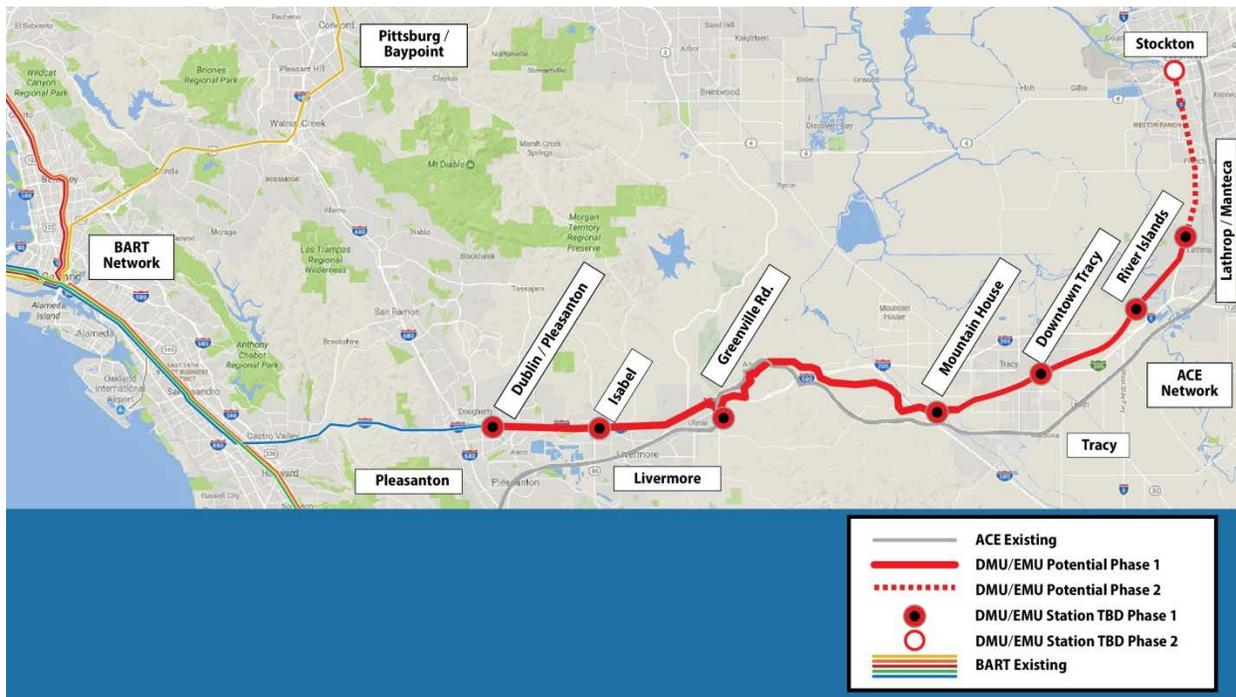
In the Bay Area and surrounding Northern California megaregion, the greatest daily commute flow is between the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area, with an average of more than 82,000 daily trips recorded in 2016. This number is projected to continue to increase as the Bay Area produces six jobs for every one new housing unit; cities in the Northern San Joaquin Valley such as Manteca, Livermore, Tracy, and Stockton continue to grow; and traffic over the already-congested Altamont Pass increases by a projected 60 percent between 2013 and 2040.

To address this issue, the Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority was formed through California State Assembly Bill 758 in October of 2017. With a governing board made up of representatives from fifteen cities, counties, and agencies in the region, the Authority was empowered by the State Legislature to plan, design, procure, and construct facilities to achieve “transit connectivity” between the Tri Valley and San Joaquin Valley through the Valley Link project.

D. Project Location

As shown in the Project Location Map, the project spans Alameda and San Joaquin Counties. Project improvements would provide rail service from the existing Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station to the approved ACE North Lathrop Station. The alignment would be located within the I-580 freeway median through Dublin, Pleasanton, and Livermore; follow the Alameda County Transportation Corridor (formerly the Southern Pacific line) over the Altamont Hills; and then follow along existing rail lines through Tracy to Lathrop and Stockton.

Project Location Map



E. Project Goals

The goals of the project as adopted by the Authority on July 25, 2018 are below:

- Rail connectivity between the Bay Area Rapid Transit District's rapid transit system and the Altamont Corridor Express commuter service in the Tri-Valley.
- Project implementation that is fast, cost-effective and responsive to the goals and objectives of the communities it will serve.
- Improved connectivity within the Bay Area Megaregion: connection people, jobs and housing.
- Supports the vision of the California State Rail Plan to connect the Northern California Megaregion to the State rail system.

The project contains both Phase I and Phase II improvements. The Phase I improvements will be analyzed at a project level of detail based on preliminary engineering and Phase II improvements are analyzed at a programmatic, more conceptual level of detail because only conceptual engineering has been completed at this time.¹

¹ CEQA permits the use of a tiered process for environmental review. The first tier is a program-level analysis of an entire program of improvements which comprehensively reviews the environmental impacts of a program as a whole at a broad conceptual level of analysis including cumulative impacts. The second tier is a project-level analysis conducted for specific improvements that are sufficiently designed to allow for a detailed analysis and the identification and disclosure of project-level environmental impacts. Improvements that are analyzed at a program level of review would subsequently be reviewed at the project level before they can be approved at a project level and constructed.

Overview of Phase I Improvements

Phase I improvements that are part of the project consist of the following:

- Construction of a new connecting platform at the existing Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station
- New platforms, parking, pedestrian facilities, and other improvements at new stations at Isabel, Greenville Road, Mountain House\West Tracy, Downtown Tracy, River Islands, and North Lathrop
- Rail infrastructure
 - New rail alignment within the I-580 freeway median through Dublin, Pleasanton, and Livermore;
 - Restoration of rail in Alameda County Transportation Corridor (formerly the Southern Pacific line) over the Altamont Hills;
 - Upgrades of existing track and/or new rail alignments in or along existing rail ROW from west of Tracy to Lathrop.

Overview of Phase II Improvements

Phase II improvements that are part of the project consist of the following:

- New platforms, parking, pedestrian facilities, and other improvements at new infill stations at South Front Street, Grant Line Road and Ellis
- Rail infrastructure
 - Upgrades of existing track and/or new rail alignments in or along existing rail ROW from Lathrop to Stockton.

F. Potential Environmental Effects

The lead agency has initially determined that the following topics will be included for evaluation in the EIR: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise and Vibration, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Safety and Security, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. The EIR will consider both temporary construction-period and permanent impacts. The EIR will also include a cumulative impact analysis of the impacts of the project in combination with other planned railway projects, transportation improvements, and land use plans and projects in the various cities along the project corridor.

The Authority is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the environmental effects and potential alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR.

G. Alternatives

As required by CEQA, the EIR will consider a reasonable range of alternatives in addition to the proposed project. At a minimum, the following alternatives will be considered in the EIR:

1. No build

2. Build – Project level
 - a. Technology alternatives
 - 1) Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU)
 - 2) Diesel/Electric Hybrid Multiple Unit
 - 3) Locomotive Haul for Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)
 - b. Station alternatives
 - 1) Greenville Station – North or south of I-580
 - 2) West Tracy/Mountain House – West of I-580 or East of I-580
 - c. Alignment alternatives
 - 1) UPRR right-of-way (ROW) from West Tracy to Lathrop
 - 2) Alignment alternative to UPRR ROW from West Tracy to Lathrop
3. Build – Program level
 - a. Infill Station Alternatives
 - 1) South Front
 - 2) Ellis Historical
 - 3) Grant Line Road
 - b. Alignment alternatives
 - 1) UPRR right-of-way (ROW) from Lathrop to Stockton
 - 2) Alignment alternative to UPRR ROW from Lathrop to Stockton

The Authority is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding feasible alternatives for evaluation in the EIR. After consideration of input from project scoping and development of environmental analysis of the proposed project, the Authority will consider the need for analysis of additional alternatives. Only alternatives that are feasible, meet the project purpose and need, and reduce one or more significant environmental impacts of the proposed project will be analyzed in detail. Alternatives that are infeasible, that do not meet the project purpose and need, or that do not reduce one of more significant environmental impacts of the proposed project will be discussed in the EIR but will not be analyzed in detailed as allowed by the requirements of CEQA.