4 Environmental Justice

4.1 Introduction

U.S. EPA defines EJ as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of age, sex, disability, race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (U.S. EPA 2020). This chapter provides an evaluation of the No Build Alternative and Build Alternative Options in relation to EJ populations within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area. Further, this chapter establishes the framework for conducting public outreach within the EJ populations potentially affected by implementation of the Build Alternative Options.

4.2 Regulatory Framework

In accordance with NEPA (42 USC Section 4321 et seq.), CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1501-1508), FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545, May 26, 1999), and CEQA, FRA identified EJ communities within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area and evaluated the potential effects on those communities as a result of implementing the Build Alternative Options.

Federal

Executive Order 12898

EO 12898, Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, was issued by President Clinton on February 4, 1994. It requires each federal agency "to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations" (59 FR 7629, February 16, 1994). In a memorandum to agency department heads that accompanied the EO, President Clinton specifically recognized the importance of NEPA procedures for identifying and addressing EJ concerns. The memorandum states, "each federal agency shall analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic, and social effects, of federal actions including effects on minority and low-income communities, when such analysis is required by NEPA." The memorandum also calls out the importance of NEPA's public participation process, by directing each federal agency to "provide opportunities for community input in the NEPA process" and "identify potential effects and

mitigation measures in consultation with affected communities, and improve the accessibility of meetings, crucial documents, and notices" (The White House 1994).

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

EJ is partially based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, one of the laws integrated into the procedures of NEPA. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, and protects classes of people from being denied the benefits of, or being excluded from participation in, any program or activity receiving federal assistance (Title VI, 42 USC Section 2000[d]). NEPA requires federal agencies to serve as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations and ensure that all Americans have "safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings" (42 USC Section 4331(b)(2)).

United States Department of Transportation Order 5610.2(a)

On May 2, 2012, USDOT issued Order 5610.2(a), Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, which updates USDOT Order 5610.2 and describes how USDOT operating administrations comply with EO 12898. The update reaffirms USDOT's commitment to EJ's following guiding principles:

- To avoid, minimize, and mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

The order also directs federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of agency actions to promote the principles of EJ in all USDOT programs, policies, and activities. It requires that EJ principles be fully considered throughout planning and decision-making processes using the "principles of NEPA; Title VI; the Uniform Act, as amended; the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991; and other USDOT statutes, regulations, and guidance that address or affect infrastructure planning and decision making; social, economic, or environmental matters; public health; and public involvement."

USDOT Order 5610.2(a) defines a disproportionately high and adverse effect as one that would meet either characteristic below:

- The effect would be predominantly borne by a minority and/or low-income population.
- The effect suffered by the minority and/or low-income population would be appreciably more severe than the effect suffered by the non-minority and/or non-low-income population.

Meaningful involvement means that (1) potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that would affect their environment and/or health; (2) the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; (3) the concerns of all participants involved will be considered in the decision making process; and (4) the decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

State

CEQA

An EJ analysis is required by federal law but is not explicitly required by the state of California. CEQA focuses on whether a project would have a significant impact on the physical environment. Although specific provisions of CEQA require consideration of how the environmental impacts of a project would affect certain communities (e.g., through consideration of the physical division of an established community and the assessment of cumulative impacts of a project), CEQA does not directly address EJ.

4.3 Methods for Evaluating Environmental Effects

This analysis identifies EJ populations within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area that coincide with potential environmental effects identified as a result of implementation of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. Because this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR represents a high-level of analysis for all resources, identifying potential disproportionate effects on EJ populations was not possible. However, this analysis presents identified benefits to EJ populations and those EJ areas that are most susceptible to having multiple resource areas affected because of implementation of the Build Alternative Options.

The methodology for conducting the review and evaluation of minority and low-income populations is in accordance with federal regulations and guidelines, including Title VI, EO 12898, USDOT Order 5610.2(a), and CEQ's EJ guidance titled *Environmental Justice: Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997b).

Population and demographic data; including race, ethnicity, and income; are reported through the ACS, an ongoing U.S Census Bureau survey that samples a percentage of the population every year. GIS mapping was used to identify where EJ populations are located relative to the Build Alternative Options per threshold criteria established for identifying a minority or low-income population. For the purpose of this Tier 1/Program service-level evaluation, a minority individual is defined as any person who identified their race as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Black—or their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino (independent of race)—in response to the ACS.

The number of individuals identified as minority individuals was then compared with the total population to calculate the minority percentage for each census block group in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area. The percentage of the population that is low income was calculated based on the percentage of the population in each census block group that reported income below the poverty level in response to the ACS (U.S. Census Bureau 2016b).

Each census block group was then reviewed to determine whether it contained an EJ population per the following threshold criteria established for identifying minority and low-income populations:

1. Minority or low-income percentage of the population in the census block group is greater than 50 percent
2. Minority or low-income percentage of the population in the census block group is at least 10 percentage points higher than the minority or low-income percentage of the general population in the corresponding county

Because EJ effects are location-specific, EJ effects cannot be fully described until specific Project design details (e.g., construction footprint, road crossings, station locations) and resulting site-specific effects (e.g., related to land acquisition and displacement, noise and vibration, air quality) are known. Consequently, potential effects on EJ populations can only be described qualitatively consistent with a Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR.

Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area

The Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area for the EJ evaluation includes all census block groups that occur within the Program Corridor.

Data Sources

Demographic data from 2012–2016 ACS 5-year estimates were obtained at the county and census block group level (U.S. Census Bureau 2016b).

Related Resources

This evaluation incorporates data and evaluation from related resources to contribute to the assessment of EJ. These related resources are identified in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Related Resource Inputs for Environmental Justice Assessment

Resource	Input for EJ Assessment
Transportation (Section 3.3)	Existing and proposed transportation infrastructure and service characteristics identified potential effects on EJ populations.
Visual Quality and Aesthetics (Section 3.4)	Areas where built elements of the Build Alternative Options would introduce long-term visual changes were identified.
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases (Section 3.5)	Areas where air quality emissions may change or increase as a result of construction or operation of the Build Alternative Options were identified.
Noise and Vibration (Section 3.6)	Areas where noise and vibration thresholds may be exceeded by construction or operation of the Build Alternative Options were identified.
Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 3.11)	Hazardous waste and contaminated material sites that have the potential to be affected by construction or operation of the Build Alternative Options were identified.
Socioeconomics and Communities Affected (Section 3.16)	Demographics data and community profiles were assessed.

Notes:
EJ=environmental justice

4.4 Affected Environment

The percentage of the population that is minority or that has income levels below the poverty threshold are summarized by county in Table 4-2. The minority percentage of the population is highest in Los Angeles County (70.8 percent), followed by San Bernardino County (67.0 percent), Riverside County (60.1 percent), and Orange County (55.3 percent). The percentage of the population with income below poverty ranges from 12.5 percent in Orange County to 19.1 percent in San Bernardino County.

Table 4-2. Minority Population and Population below Poverty by County

County	Total Population	Percent Minority	Percent Below Poverty
Los Angeles	10,057,155	70.8	17.8
Orange	3,132,211	55.3	12.5
Riverside	2,323,892	60.1	16.5
San Bernardino	2,106,754	67.0	19.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2016b

Build Alternative Option 1 (Coachella Terminus)

The minority population percentages for the census block groups included in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area are shown on Figure 4-1. As depicted on Figure 4-1, the minority population percentage is generally higher in the Western Section compared with the Eastern Section and exceeds 50 percent at many locations throughout the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area. The minority population percentage is highest (exceeding 75 percent) in census block groups within the Western Section of the Program Corridor between Los Angeles and Fullerton and in the vicinity of the Cities of Corona and Colton. Within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor, the minority population percentage is highest in census block groups in the vicinity of the Cities of Indio and Coachella.

The locations of EJ populations, as determined by the threshold criteria of greater than 50 percent minority, are shown on Figure 4-2. Because all four counties crossed by the Build Alternative Options have minority populations greater than 50 percent, application of the second threshold criteria (minority population of the census block group greater than 10 percent higher than the general population in the corresponding county) did not yield inclusion of additional census block groups for designation of EJ populations.

The percentage of the population in census block groups with incomes below poverty level (i.e., low income) is shown on Figure 4-3. Figure 4-4 shows the location of EJ populations as determined by the threshold criteria for identifying low-income populations (i.e., greater than 50 percent of the population has income levels below poverty or the percentage of the population with incomes below poverty exceeds the percentage in the corresponding county by greater than 10 percent). Based on this criteria, low-income populations are located throughout the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area but are most notable in the Western Section between Los Angeles and Bell and between Corona and Loma Linda; and in Eastern Section in the vicinity of the Cities of Calimesa, Banning, Indio, and Coachella.

Figure 4-1. Percentage of Minority Population within Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area Census Block Groups

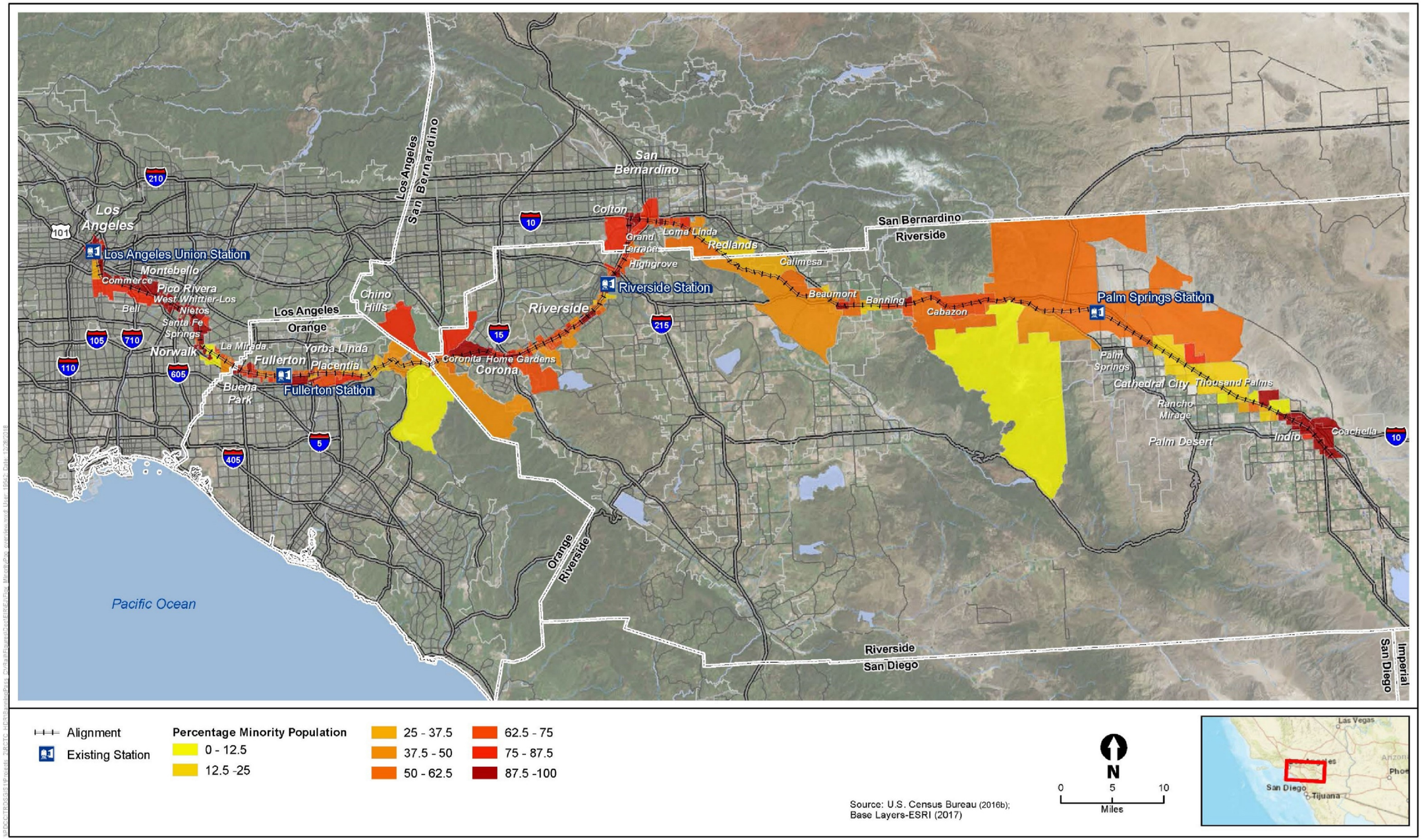

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Figure 4-2. Environmental Justice Population within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area per Minority Threshold

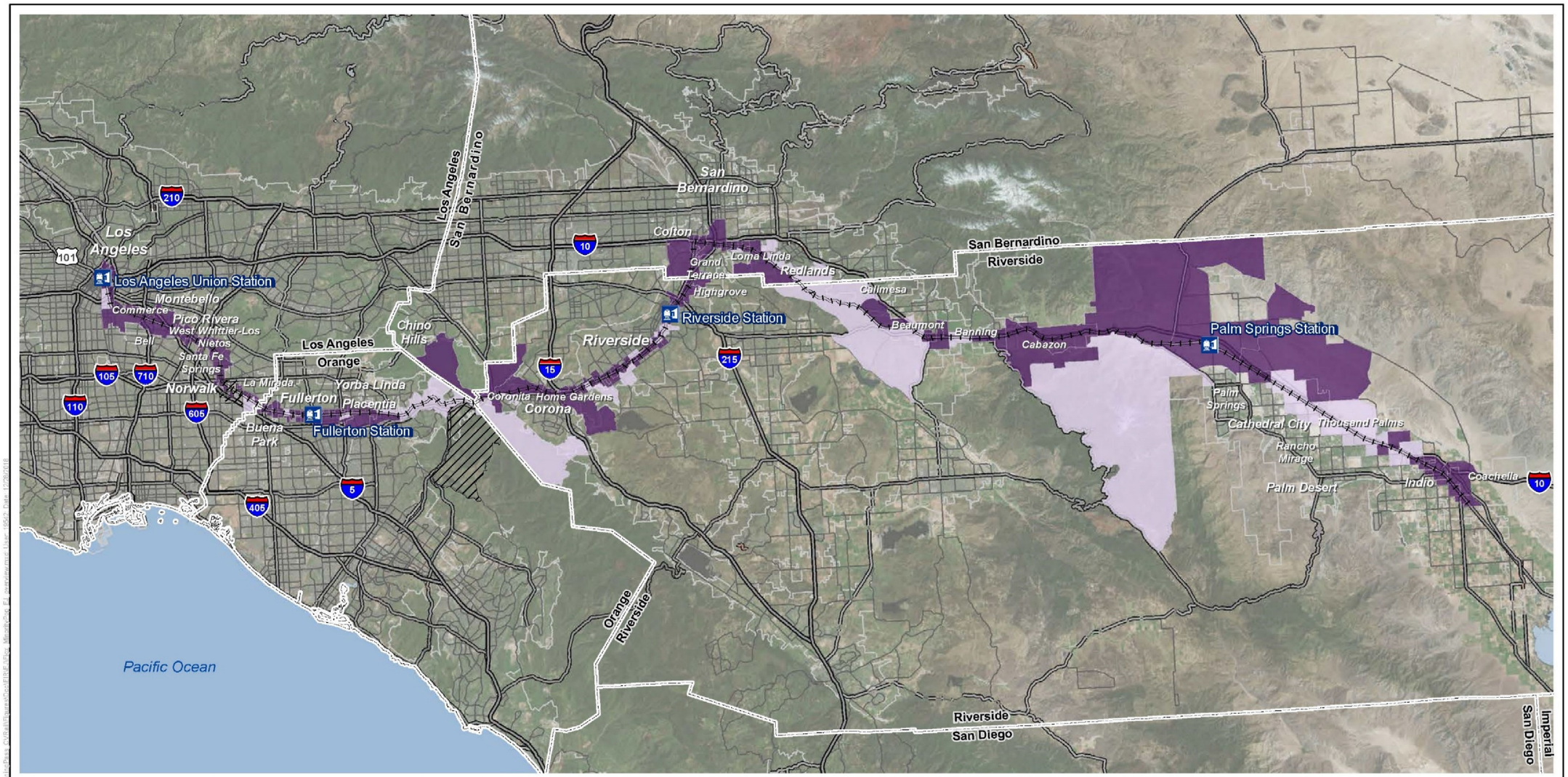

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Figure 4-3. Percentage of Low-Income Population within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area Census Block Groups

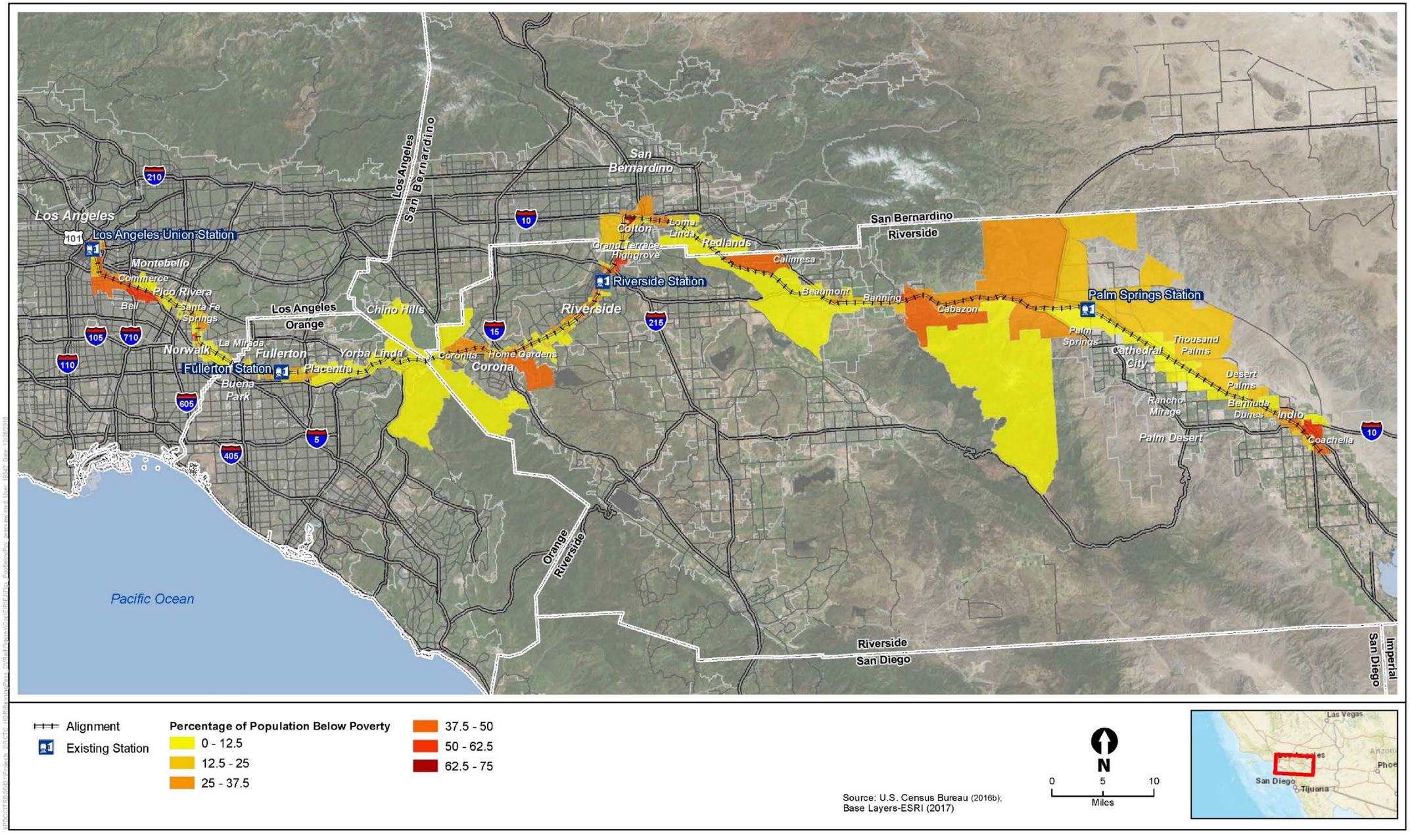

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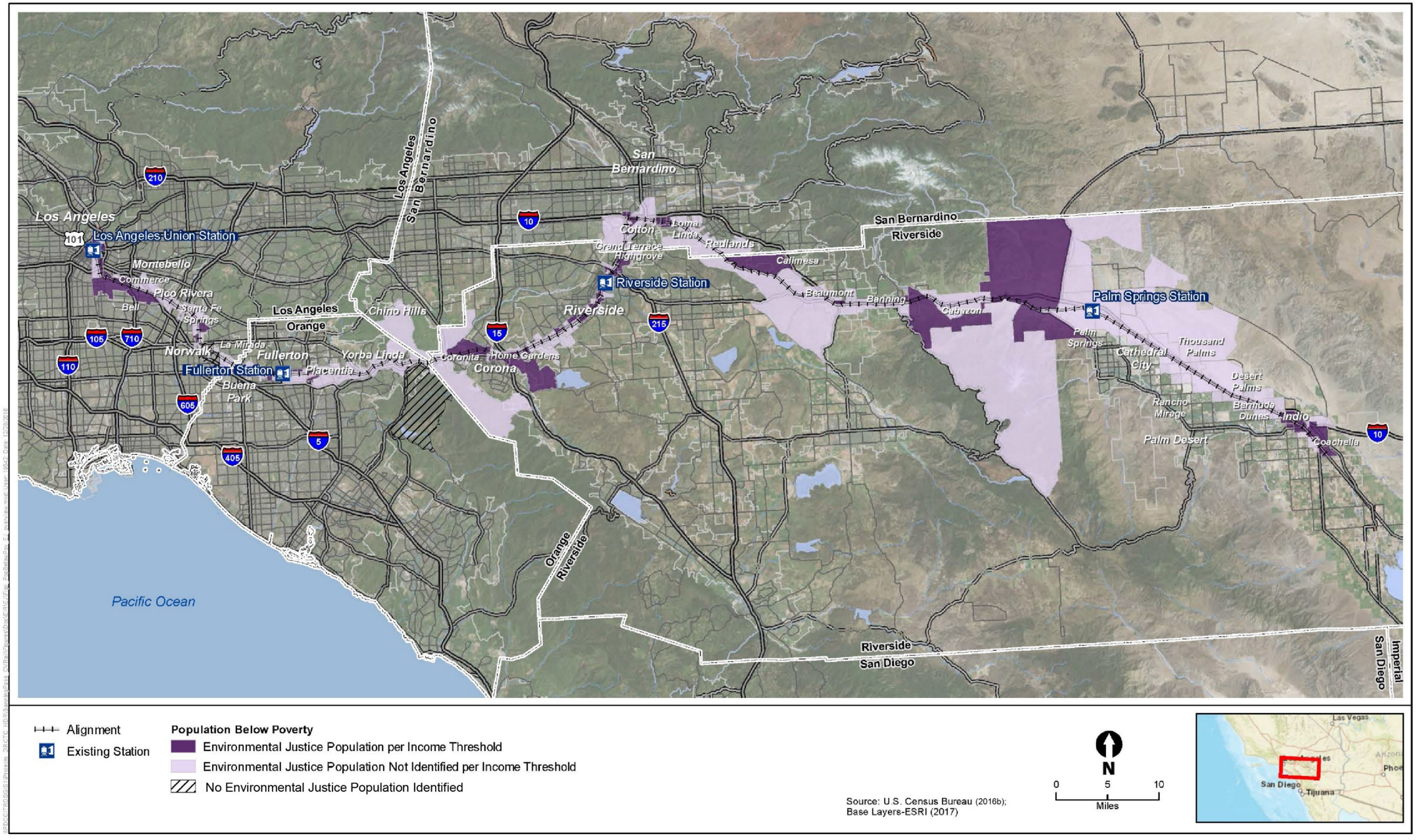
Figure 4-4. Environmental Justice Populations within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area per Income Threshold



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Build Alternative Option 2 (Indio Terminus)

Existing EJ population data and information within Build Alternative Option 2 is the same as Build Alternative Option 1.

Build Alternative Option 3 (Indio Terminus with Limited Third Track)

Existing EJ population data and information within Build Alternative Option 3 is the same as Build Alternative Option 1.

4.5 Environmental Consequences

Overview

It is anticipated that implementation of the Program would have an overall positive effect on the communities within the Program Corridor in terms of generating construction jobs, increasing the potential for new employment and housing opportunities around station areas, reducing congestion on highways, and improving regional air quality and connectivity.

Effects associated with implementation of the Program can be broadly classified into construction and operational effects. Long-term or permanent effects and short-term or temporary effects on EJ populations would be anticipated as a result of constructing any of the Build Alternative Options. Generally, impacts on EJ populations would occur during construction when land acquisitions, traffic detours, construction noise and vibration, and air quality impacts would adversely affect people living and working in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area.

Effects would also result from operation of any of the Build Alternative Options. Permanent changes to the roadway network, particularly in the vicinity of proposed stations, could have long-term effects on circulation and access near stations, while passenger rail operation could also cause localized increases in pollutant concentrations near stations and commuter parking lots, as traffic would be concentrated in those areas. Operation of the Build Alternative Options, including the proposed stations, has the potential to result in displacement and relocation of residences, businesses, and/or community facilities; disruptions to community cohesion; and community effects related to changes in the overall character of a community due to secondary effects related to, for example, traffic, noise and vibration, ambient air quality, or aesthetic changes.

At the conceptual level, the Build Alternative Options are unlikely to result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income communities. As part of Tier 2/Project-level analysis, a more detailed and refined study will be completed to document the presence of

low-income and minority communities and then to evaluate if there would be disproportionately high and adverse site-specific effects on those communities.

Based on the analysis in this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, traffic, visual quality, air quality, noise and vibration, and socioeconomic effects were considered at the conceptual level to assess potential impacts on EJ communities. Impacts on these resources have the potential to disproportionately effect EJ communities depending on site-specific considerations and would be analyzed further in a Tier 2/Project-level analysis.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative, as described in Chapter 2, Program Alternatives, is used as the baseline for comparison. The No Build Alternative would not implement the Program associated with this service-level evaluation and would not meet the Purpose and Need of the Program. Counties and cities in the Program Corridor would continue to grow, which would increase regional transportation demand; therefore, the No Build Alternative assumes completion of those reasonably foreseeable transportation, development, and infrastructure projects that are already in progress; are programmed; or are included in the fiscally constrained RTP.

However, an increase in traffic and VMT is expected under the No Build Alternative because more cars would be on the roadways compared with what would occur with implementation of the Program. With an increase in rail service and increases in cars on the roadways, all populations, including minority and low-income populations, within the Program Corridor would not experience the regional access, mobility, and economic benefits provided through access to enhanced passenger rail services.

Under the No Build Alternative, the enhanced passenger rail system would not be constructed or operated. Therefore, effects on and benefits experienced by EJ populations from construction and operation associated with implementation of the Program would not occur.

Build Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3

Environmental Justice Population Effects

CONSTRUCTION

Western Section. No construction activities would be required to implement the Build Alternative Options within the Western Section of the Program Corridor because the existing railroad ROW and station areas from LAUS to Colton would be used to increase passenger rail service by two daily round-trip intercity passenger trains. Impacts on EJ communities are not anticipated from construction of the Build Alternative Options in the Western Section.

Eastern Section. Construction activities required for rail infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidings, additional main line track, wayside signals, drainage, and grade-separation structures) and station facilities would result in short-term increases traffic, air quality emissions, and noise levels in and around the construction site. Traffic, air quality emissions, and noise would be generated from the use of equipment to conduct vegetation clearing, grading, and excavation; transport of materials and waste; and construction vehicles entering and exiting the construction site. The traffic, air quality emissions, and noise that would be generated would vary depending on the length of the construction period, specific construction activity (e.g., grading, paving, and pile driving), types of equipment, and number of personnel, as follows:

- **Traffic.** Potential construction effects on transportation include lane or road closures and traffic detours that may temporarily disrupt vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit circulation patterns near construction sites and cause vehicle delay during the construction period. Construction traffic-related delays would also result in increased response times for law enforcement, fire, and emergency services.
- **Visual quality.** While the presence of construction materials, equipment, on-site workers, and vehicle detours during construction would result in visual changes to communities adjacent to the railroad ROW, these activities would not permanently obstruct views of the landscape, change the visual character, or result in degradation of visual quality within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor.
- **Air quality.** Emissions from construction equipment have the potential to cause elevated concentrations of air within or adjacent to the construction site. Design specifics and locations of the rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities are not known at this time; the air quality emissions that would be generated and potential sensitive receptors that would be affected during specific construction activities cannot be quantified at the Tier 1/Program-level.
- **Noise and vibration.** Noise generated from construction activities under any of the Build Alternative Options may exceed FTA and local daytime and nighttime noise standards at nearby noise sensitive receptors, depending on the locations of specific rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities relative to the noise sensitive receptors. Design specifics and locations of the rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities are not known at this time; the noise levels that would be generated and potential sensitive receptors that would be affected during specific construction activities cannot be quantified at the Tier 1/Program-level.

- **Socioeconomics.** Socioeconomic and community effects are expected to be both positive and negative. In terms of negative socioeconomic and community effects, land acquisition for the Build Alternative Options could result in property tax revenue losses for local jurisdictions if residential or business properties are removed from the property tax assessment roll. Community effects would include disruptions to local communities and may require displacements or relocations of residences and businesses. Construction of the rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities that would occur under any of the Build Alternative Options would result in several socioeconomic and community benefits, including the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs.

Based on a conceptual-level analysis, disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ communities as a result of construction of the Build Alternative Options in the Eastern Section are unlikely.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, visual quality effects on EJ populations would be negligible within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, traffic effects on EJ populations would be moderate within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, air quality, noise, and socioeconomic effects on EJ populations would be substantial within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered substantial when compared with

the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have reduced effects due to a slightly smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and substantial when compared with the No Build Alternative.

Although construction of the Build Alternative Options in the Eastern Section would result in potential impacts on EJ communities, these impacts are not anticipated to be predominantly borne by a minority or low-income population, as all populations adjacent to construction areas would be exposed to the same level of effects. In addition, potential effects from the Build Alternative Options would be short term, occurring at a location only while construction work is in progress. Construction activities would comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations, and BMPs would be implemented to minimize emissions and construction effects on all sensitive receptors, which include EJ populations within the area. Socioeconomic benefits would also be generated for all populations, including EJ populations in the form of expanded job and economic opportunities during construction activities.

OPERATION

Western Section. During operation, passenger train frequencies proposed as part of the Program would consist of the addition of two daily, round-trip intercity diesel-powered passenger trains operating the entire length of the Program Corridor between Los Angeles and Coachella. Operational activities are anticipated to be limited to maintenance of culverts, bridges, embankments, and station areas. Operation of the Tier 1/Program within the Western Section would result in the following potential effects:

- **Traffic.** Implementation of the Program would not result in noticeable effects associated with rail operation traffic. During operation of the Program, local streets around each existing rail station would likely be affected due to additional auto traffic that could be generated by patrons accessing and departing from each station, which would affect access in and around the station. However, implementation of the Program is expected to reduce regional auto trips and VMT due to a shift from auto travel to rail travel.
- **Visual quality.** Operation of the Build Alternative Options in the Western Section would not result in effects on existing visual resources, as the additional train trips would travel within an existing railroad ROW.

- **Air quality.** The Program would be beneficial in reducing localized effects in some cases and have adverse effects in other cases. Operation of any of the Build Alternative Options would generally result in a long-term net benefit to air quality by reducing emissions of criteria pollutants, air toxics, and GHG through a reduction in VMT and vehicle emissions. However, localized air quality emissions from Program operation would have the potential to expose nearby population to increased air quality pollutants.
- **Noise and vibration.** When compared with existing ambient noise levels along the Western Section of the Program Corridor, operation of the enhanced passenger rail system under the Build Alternative Options is not anticipated to result in changes associated with operational noise from passenger rail trains or the continuation of operational activities at existing rail stations.
- **Socioeconomics.** The additional passenger rail services that would occur under the Build Alternative Options within the Western Section of the Program Corridor would result in several socioeconomic and community benefits: the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs; permanent increases in sales tax revenues within the counties and cities where the Build Alternative Options would operate; and improved regional mobility and connectivity.

Based on a conceptual-level analysis, disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ communities as a result of operation of the Build Alternative Options in the Western Section are unlikely.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, visual quality, noise, and socioeconomic effects on EJ populations would be negligible within the Western Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Options 2 and 3 would have the same magnitude of effect and be considered negligible when compared with the No Build Alternative. Socioeconomic benefits would also be generated for all populations, including EJ populations in the form of expanded job and economic opportunities and improved regional accessibility and mobility.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, traffic effects on EJ populations would be moderate within the Western Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Options 2 and 3 would have the same magnitude of effect and be considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, air quality effects on EJ populations would be substantial within the Western Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Options 2 and 3 would have the

same magnitude of effect and be considered substantial when compared with the No Build Alternative.

Although operation of the Build Alternative Options would result in potential effects on EJ communities, these impacts are not anticipated to be predominantly borne by EJ populations. In addition, the Build Alternative Options would benefit EJ communities within the Program Corridor by reducing traffic and VMTs due to the anticipated shift from auto travel to rail travel.

Eastern Section. During operation, passenger train frequencies proposed as part of the Program would consist of the addition of two daily, round-trip intercity diesel-powered passenger trains operating the entire length of the Program Corridor between Los Angeles and Coachella. Operational activities are anticipated to be limited to maintenance of culverts, bridges, embankments, and station areas. Operation of the Tier 1/Program within the Eastern Section would result in the following potential effects:

- **Traffic.** Implementation of the Program would not result in noticeable effects associated with rail operation traffic. During operation of the Program, local streets around proposed rail stations would likely be affected due to additional auto traffic that could be generated by patrons accessing and departing from each station, which would affect access in and around the station. It is possible that the addition of auto trips to the existing roadway network could result in effects on local roadways that would require mitigation. While operation of the Program within the Eastern Section would add auto trips to local street network, the Build Alternative Options are anticipated to shift auto trips to intercity rail passenger trips, thereby reducing vehicle trips and VMT on the regional highways.
- **Visual quality.** Permanent visual changes (physical elements) that could result from implementation of the Program would include the presence of new railroad track, bridges, grade crossing, train stations, parking facilities, noise walls, open cuts, cut-and-fill areas, retaining walls, removed vegetation, and night lighting. Because rail infrastructure improvements would be located along the existing railroad ROW, the rail infrastructure improvements would generally not represent a change in visual character from existing conditions. However, effects would occur if the improvements would remove structures or landscaping or introduce visual elements that are out-of-scale or otherwise visually incompatible with the existing visual character. This would most likely occur if substantial ROW widening was necessary at grade separations or stations and associated parking areas.

- **Air quality.** Operation of the Program within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor would increase passenger train trips and associated locomotive emissions. Passenger rail operation would also cause localized increases in air quality pollutant concentrations near stations and commuter parking lots, as additional traffic would be added in those areas. However, operation of the Program is anticipated to contribute to the region's long-term attainment of air quality goals by reducing VMT, which, in turn, would reduce air quality emissions.
- **Noise and vibration.** Operation of the enhanced passenger rail system within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under the Build Alternative Options is not be anticipated to result in changes associated with operational noise from passenger rail trains. However, it is currently unknown if operation of the enhanced passenger rail system would require rail infrastructure improvements that would change the existing noise environment (e.g., the provision of grade separations, bridges, or sidings). In addition, operation of new rail station facilities would also result in new sources of mobile (e.g., vehicles accessing the station) and stationary noise (e.g., building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems and truck deliveries [if there are commercial uses included as part of the station facility]), which may result in exceedances of FTA or local standards on adjacent sensitive noise receptors. Design specifics and locations of the rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities are not known at this time; therefore, the operational noise that would be generated and potential sensitive receptors that would be affected during operational activities cannot be quantified at the Tier 1/Program-level evaluation.
- **Socioeconomics.** Socioeconomic and community effects are expected to be both negative and positive. In terms of negative socioeconomic and community effects, land acquisition for the Build Alternative Options could result in property tax revenue losses for local jurisdictions if residential or business properties are removed from the property tax assessment roll. Community effects would include disruptions to local communities and may require displacements or relocations of residences and businesses. However, the additional passenger rail services that would occur under any of the Build Alternative Options within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor would result in several socioeconomic and community benefits: the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs; permanent increases in sales tax revenues within the counties and cities where the Build Alternative Options would operate; and improved regional mobility and connectivity. In addition, new station facilities could encourage redevelopment in the surrounding area and the potential for transit-oriented development. These additional developments would provide additional employment opportunities and new housing opportunities to address the projected employment and population growth within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor.

Based on a conceptual-level analysis, disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ communities as a result of operation of the Build Alternative Options in the Eastern Section are unlikely.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, visual quality and noise effects on EJ populations would be moderate within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and moderate when compared with the No Build Alternative.

When compared with the No Build Alternative, traffic, air quality, and socioeconomic effects on EJ populations would be substantial within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor under Build Alternative Option 1. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1, Build Alternative Option 2 would have slightly reduced effects due to a shorter route alignment and reduced station options. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar and considered substantial when compared with the No Build Alternative. When compared with Build Alternative Option 1 or 2, Build Alternative Option 3 may have slightly reduced effects due to a smaller footprint associated with a shorter route alignment, reduced station options, and reduced third track rail infrastructure. However, the magnitude of effects would be similar for Build Alternative Option 3 and considered substantial when compared with the No Build Alternative.

Although operation of the Build Alternative Options in the Eastern Section would result in potential impacts on EJ communities, these impacts are not anticipated to be predominantly borne by EJ populations. In addition, the Build Alternative Options would benefit EJ populations within the Program Corridor in the form of expanded job and economic opportunities and improved regional accessibility and mobility.

4.6 Outreach to Environmental Justice Communities

As summarized in Chapter 7, Public and Agency Outreach, public outreach was initiated and conducted during the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR process and would continue in a Tier 2/Project-level analysis. Opportunities for public involvement have been made available throughout the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR environmental process. Additional opportunities for public involved would be available during a Tier 2/Project-level environmental review process to ensure EJ populations have

access to information on Tier 2/Project efforts and an opportunity to provide input about community-based concerns.

As part of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR environmental process, steps were taken by FRA, RCTC, and Caltrans to provide meaningful access to those limited English proficiency individuals expected to be most regularly encountered by providing, as necessary, translation services at public meetings and meeting notifications and materials advertised in English and Spanish. Three public scoping meetings were held at three locations (Indio, Riverside, and Los Angeles) during the NOI/NOP comment period to educate the public on the purposed and need for the Program, share the history of the Program, outline the Program benefits, highlight the Program elements, explain next steps, and gather public comments per the requirements of CEQA and NEPA. To ensure that the multilingual needs of the community were met, the Program fact sheet was available in Spanish. In addition, team staff members were available to interpret the presentation in Spanish. Program fact sheets and comment cards were provided as handouts at the public scoping meetings.

During the circulation of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, the Notice of Availability (NOA) will be distributed and posted on local, state, and federal websites, through various email lists, and published in multiple English and Spanish newspapers within the Program Corridor. The public will be invited to review the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR and provide feedback and comments that would be taken into consideration as part of the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR process.

Additionally, a community profile discussing cohesion and community facilities, including additional focus on the communities with stations, would be developed during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis. A demographic analysis at a smaller geography with Tier 2/Project-level analysis will also need to be conducted to better understand which populations would be affected and which populations would benefit from construction and operation. The demographic analysis would also focus on EJ populations to help determine if these populations would be adversely affected by construction and operation. The EJ analysis would review all elements of the environment to determine if there would be adverse effects resulting in disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations and review the mitigation and potential community benefits and enhancements associated with the Program.

4.7 Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Strategies

Based on the conceptual-level analysis conducted for this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, disproportionately high and adverse effects on low-income or minority populations from the implementation of the Build Alternative Options are not anticipated in the Western Section. Therefore, no mitigation is anticipated at this time.

Implementation of the Build Alternative Options would likely result in impacts on EJ communities within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor; however, there is insufficient detail at the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR to conclude whether the Build Alternative Options would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ populations.

In a Tier 2/Project-level analysis, site-specific detail (e.g., location and footprint of stations) will be known. Mitigation measures to avoid impacts on EJ populations will be developed and considered to the extent feasible. Impacts that cannot be avoided will be addressed through mitigation measures developed in the Tier 2/Project-level analysis. A Tier 2/Project-level analysis may also identify additional populations, impacts, and considerations that are relevant to the consideration of effects in the Western and Eastern Sections of the Build Alternative Options.

Avoiding or minimizing the community-related effects would involve working closely with local governments and planning agencies in the refinement and development of specific projects during the Tier 2/Project-level analysis. Since EO 12898 requires federal agencies to ensure effective public participation and access to information, a more detailed and comprehensive outreach effort to potentially affected minority and/or low-income populations would need to be completed and documented at the Tier 2/Project-level. This detailed and comprehensive outreach effort to potentially affected minority or low-income populations would help identify issues of importance that may not otherwise be apparent.

Specific EJ outreach efforts that could take place as part of the Tier 2/Project-level environmental review process include provision of meeting notices to EJ interest groups, targeted noticing and translation services in communities with high levels of limited English proficiency, and targeted noticing at community facilities or through community organizations that serve low-income and minority populations. This outreach effort would identify potentially disproportionate effects on minority and low-income populations and develop ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the effects at a Tier 2/Project-level analysis.

The Tier 2/Project-level analysis will also consider beneficial impacts on EJ populations, building on the benefits identified in this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. These include the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs; permanent increases in sales tax revenues within the counties and cities where the Build Alternative Options would operate; and improved regional mobility and connectivity for all populations, including EJ populations.

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