NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY & PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
COACHELLA VALLEY–SAN GORGONIO PASS RAIL CORRIDOR SERVICE PROGRAM
JOINT TIER 1/PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
SCH# 2016101017

Date:	June 9, 2022
To:	The Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Other Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals
Lead Agency:	Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC)
Subject:	Notice of Availability of Joint Final Tier 1/Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report: Coachella Valley-San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Program & Public Hearing Notice

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Rail and Mass Transportation, and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), have prepared a Final Tier 1/Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Coachella Valley-San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Program (Program). A Draft EIS/EIR for the Program was prepared and circulated for public review from May 21, 2021 to July 6, 2021 consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15087.

FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC have prepared responses to comments received during the public review period consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088. Generally, the comments sought clarification of the information presented in the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR or were beyond the scope of this programmatic corridor-level analysis. Many of the comments received on the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR identified the same topics and themes that could be considered in a subsequent Tier 2/Project-Level analysis. These general topics and themes included:

- Proposed Station Locations
- Conceptual Nature of Build Alternative Option Components
- Freight Train Volume Assumptions
- Noise Quiet Zones
- Train Trip Frequency and Duration
- Program Implementation, Funding and Timing

- Transportation Connections

- Locomotive Technology

- Environmental Justice

The comments and responses to comments are included in the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Appendix D, including 12 Master Responses that are generally applicable to multiple comments. The comments did not identify new significant impacts or information that warrant recirculation of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR.

The Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR consists of the Draft EIS/EIR, comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIS/EIR and a list of commenters, the responses to comments, a summary of the public outreach activities conducted throughout the preparation of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, and a CEQA Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

This notice has been issued to notify interested parties that the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR has been prepared and is publicly available for review. This notice has additionally been issued pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21092.5 to provide public agencies that commented on the Draft EIS/EIR with a response to such comments at least 10 days before certification of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. RCTC will consider the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR prior to taking action on the Program on **July 13, 2022**.

Program Summary

The Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR considered potential environmental impacts of the No Build Alternative and the three Build Alternative Options broadly within the Program Corridor. The Program's Purpose is to implement a safe, reliable, and convenient intercity passenger rail service in the Program Corridor with the capability to meet the future mobility needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The Program's Need is to address the absence of effective transportation alternatives to personal automobile travel between coastal regions of Southern California (e.g., Los Angeles and Orange Counties) and cities in the Inland Empire (e.g., City of Riverside) and the Coachella Valley (e.g., Cities of Coachella, Indio, Palm Springs); the projected increase in travel demand in the Program Corridor resulting from population and employment growth; and the increasing unreliability of existing transportation systems within the Program Corridor. The Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR identified Build Alternative Option 1 as the Preferred Alternative that best meets the Tier 1/Program Purpose and Need.

The Selected Alternative, Build Alternative Option 1, is a 144-mile long corridor that consists of a Western Section, terminating at Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), and an Eastern Section, terminating in the City of Coachella, the details of which are as follows:

o **Western Section.** Under Build Alternative Option 1, existing rail infrastructure would be used in the Western Section of the Program Corridor, and no additional railroad infrastructure improvements would be required. LAUS would serve as the western terminus, while existing stations in the cities of Fullerton and Riverside would be used to support the proposed passenger rail service. No new stations or improvements to existing stations would be required to accommodate the proposed service within the Western Section of the Program Corridor.

o **Eastern Section.** Under Build Alternative Option 1, potential new infrastructure improvements on the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor could include sidings, additional main line track, wayside signals, drainage, grade-separation structures, and station facilities to accommodate the proposed passenger rail service. As part of the Service Development Plan (SDP) and Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR process, rail operations simulation modeling were conducted to identify potential infrastructure needs. Upon completion of the SDP and the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR process, the specific infrastructure improvements would be determined and refined through coordination and additional consultations with Union Pacific, RCTC, Caltrans, and FRA prior to Tier 2/Project-level analysis. Potential rail infrastructure improvements and station facilities could include:

  o Up to five new stations;

  o A third main line track to augment the existing two-track main line along the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor to Coachella;

  o Various crossovers connecting the existing main line tracks to the new third main line track;

  o A new second Mt. Vernon connector track in Colton;

  o A new siding at Loma Linda to allow passenger trains to meet, reducing delay;

  o A new railroad bridge across the Santa Ana River; and

  o Additional infrastructure components throughout the Program Corridor including, but not limited to, wayside signals, drainage structures, and grade-separation structures.

Under Build Alternative Option 1, the proposed passenger rail services within the Eastern Section of the Program Corridor would use the existing station in the city of Palm Springs. Additionally, up to five new potential stations could be constructed in the following areas: 1) Loma Linda/Redlands Area (serving the cities of Loma Linda and Redlands), 2) the Pass Area (serving the communities of Beaumont, Banning, and Cabazon), 3) the Mid-Valley Area (serving the communities of Cathedral City, Thousand Palms, the Agua Caliente Casino area, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Desert), 4) the city of Indio, and 5) the city of Coachella as the eastern terminus of the Program Corridor.

The analysis of traffic, engineering, cost, and environmental considerations indicated that Build Alternative Option 1 would have notable advantages over Build Alternative Options 1 and 2. The selected alternative

identifies the general (corridor) alignment for Program improvements. The Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR service-level evaluation does not clear potential future station facilities or rail infrastructure improvements for construction. Completion of Tier 2/Project-level environmental review would be required prior to implementation of site-specific infrastructure improvements, including station locations.

Locations Where the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR is Available for Public Review

The Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR can be found online in PDF format at the following locations:

- RCTC's website: www.rctc.org/cvrail

- FRA's website: https://railroads.dot.gov/environment/environmental-reviews/coachella-valley-san-gorgonio-pass-corridor-investment-plan

Printed and/or electronic copies of the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR have been placed at the following locations and can be viewed during hours the facilities are open (open days/hours may be reduced for compliance with COVID-19 public health and safety directives):

Los Angeles Union Station/Metro Library and Archive One Gateway Plaza, 15th Floor Los Angeles, California 90012	Fullerton Public Library 353 W Commonwealth Avenue Fullerton, California 92832	Arlington Library 9556 Magnolia Avenue Riverside, California 92503
Riverside County Transportation Commission 4080 Lemon Street Riverside, California 92501	Colton Public Library 656 N 9th Street Colton, California 92324	Loma Linda Branch Library 25581 Barton Road Loma Linda, California 92354
A.K. Smiley Public Library 125 W. Vine Street Redlands, California 92373	Beaumont Library 125 E. Eighth Street Beaumont, California 92223	Banning Public Library 21 W. Nicolet Street Banning, California 92220
Palm Springs Public Library 300 S. Sunrise Way Palm Springs, California 92262	Riverside County Indio Branch Library 200 Civic Center Mall Indio, California 92201	Riverside County Coachella Branch Library 1500 6th Street Coachella, California 92236

The primary purpose of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR is to provide an overview of the Tier 1/Program process, identify the alternatives considered by the agencies, and provide substantive responses to those comments received during the public comment period (May 21, 2021 to July 6, 2021).The Final

Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR contains the Tier 1/Program FEIS/EIR (Part 1), the Tier 1 Record of Decision (Part 2), and the following Tier 1/Program FEIS/EIR appendices:

- **Appendix A:** Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR and Appendices

- **Appendix B:** Public Outreach Summary Report

- **Appendix C:** Copies of all correspondence (including letters and emails) received from Federal, State, and local agencies, Native American Tribes, and the public during the Tier 1/Program DEIS/EIR public and agency comment period.

- **Appendix D:** Response to Comments on the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR provided in a comments and responses matrix.

- **Appendix E:** CEQA Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Public Hearing

RCTC's Board of Commissioners is scheduled to consider certification of the Final Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR during the regularly scheduled Board meeting on July 13, 2022. The meeting will be held at the following location, date, and time:

<div align="center">

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

9:30 a.m.

Board Room – First Floor

County of Riverside Administrative Center

4080 Lemon Street

Riverside, CA 92501

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Special Accommodations. Should you require special accommodations at the meeting, such as for the hearing impaired or an English translator, please contract the Clerk of the Board at (951) 787-7141. Assistance is provided free of charge. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to the meeting time will assist staff in assuring reasonable arrangements can be made to provide assistance at the meeting.