

# SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW OF STUDY AREA

The project corridor is comprised primarily of the existing Coast Corridor railroad right of way between the existing Amtrak stations in Salinas and San Luis Obispo. The project corridor is about 130 miles in length and is located within Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. Portions of the corridor traverse several incorporated cities, including Salinas, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, Paso Robles, Atascadero, and San Luis Obispo.

The project corridor includes both the existing railroad right of way as well as substantial “buffer” areas where possible physical improvements may be located.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

The project purpose is to increase the frequency, speed, and reliability of passenger rail while fostering greater passenger connectivity to the proposed California High-Speed Rail System and enhancing safety with minimal disruption to existing and proposed freight rail operations. Implementation of the Build Alternative would help to create an interconnected, multimodal solution allowing for better mobility throughout the Coast Corridor region, providing added capacity in response to increased travel demand between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The Coast Corridor region is faced with transportation challenges associated with anticipated population growth, constrained travel options, aging rail infrastructure, safety issues, and a need for increased travel capacity without impacting air quality and natural resources. These challenges are likely to continue in the future as continued growth in population, employment, and tourism activity is expected to generate increased travel demand.

## STUDIES LEADING TO THE PROGRAM EIS/EIR

Several planning and feasibility studies have identified and proposed improvements for the Coast Corridor. Amtrak completed the *California Passenger Rail System: 20-Year Improvement Plan Technical Report (Amtrak 20-Year Plan)* in March 2001. Caltrans Division of Rail (DOR) coordinated with Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and other transportation agencies to complete the *Coast Corridor Service Development Plan* in May 2013. The UPRR has recommended a series of improvements it asserts are necessary to allow for increased passenger use of the Coast Corridor. The Build Alternative, further described below, was intentionally drawn broadly to encompass all the physical improvements contemplated by the plans and studies above.

## ALTERNATIVES

### No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative represents the continuation of existing rail operations and physical components, and assumes the perpetuation of existing freight and passenger service between Salinas and San Luis Obispo. The only physical improvement expected under the No Build Alternative would be the installation of positive train control (PTC) along the Corridor, which would provide increased safety for freight and passenger trains. This will provide the baseline for analysis of potential improvements. For the purposes of this program EIS/EIR whose purpose and need is limited to potential physical rail system improvements and expansion of passenger rail service, the No Build Alternative includes other planned and programmed rail improvement projects for the Coast Corridor in the vicinity of the Salinas to San Luis Obispo region.

### Build Alternative

The Build Alternative assumes the restoration of “Coast Daylight” passenger service, which would initially consist of 2 trains per day traveling between Salinas and San Luis Obispo, increasing to 4 trains per day by the year 2040. The Build Alternative includes an exhaustive list of potential physical improvements between Salinas and San Luis Obispo, some number of which may be found necessary to accommodate increased Coast Daylight service. The extent of needed physical improvements has not been identified at this time but is expected to be determined outside the context of CEQA/NEPA environmental review. The Build Alternative looks broadly at

each physical improvement contemplated for the area to provide decision-makers additional information in identifying which if any conceptual physical improvements should be carried forward.

Notwithstanding the above considerations, for the purposes of this programmatic review, the Build Alternative has the potential to adversely affect biological resources, existing farmlands, cultural resources, hydrologic resources, localized traffic near stations, land use and community impacts, visual impacts, noise level increase, hazardous material sites, and air quality pollutant emissions during construction. However, this programmatic document includes mitigation strategies to be applied as one or more components of the Build Alternative move forward for design and potential implementation. To the extent these strategies can be translated into project-level mitigation, adverse effects can be reduced or avoided entirely. In addition, the Build Alternative will have beneficial environmental effects, such as economic growth, air quality improvements during operation, and energy consumption improvements during operation.

**Table S-1** below summarizes the comparable effects of the Build Alternative and the No Build Alternative for the Coast Corridor project.

Table S-1 Comparative Effects, Build Alternative versus No Build Alternative

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
<b>Traffic and Travel</b>		
Result in substantial disruption to freight and passenger rail services	Construction of Build Alternative physical components would temporarily disrupt freight and passenger rail traffic. Installation of "island" CTC from MP 202.3 to 229.6 was found to enable on-time performance for existing and proposed future passenger and freight rail.	None expected
Result in substantial traffic increases to local roadways	Project traffic would contribute to traffic impacts near existing and proposed station areas.	None expected
Result in significant delays any existing or new at-grade crossings	Additional train traffic and frequency would result; One new at-grade crossing could be created, which could occur on a public roadway. Improved warning devices would be installed at some existing at-grade crossings, which would result in improved safety at these locations. Some minor additional delays would result occurring from increased train traffic as passing of each Coast Daylight train would take approximately one minute.	None expected
<b>Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>		
Construction of Improvements	Emissions are expected to result from the use of heavy machinery, delivery of construction materials, construction worker vehicle trips, and idling trains resulting from service interruptions.	None expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Rail Operations	11,000 daily VMT reduction projected by 2020, and total of 26,000 daily VMT reduction expected by 2040 in the Central Coast/Monterey Bay region as a whole. Increased efficiency of trains would decrease localized emissions, decrease train idling, reduce required maintenance, and may increase ridership, all reducing emissions and other pollutants.	None expected
New Train Stations	Emissions may result from deceleration, acceleration, and idling at new stops along the route. May be offset by increased ridership.	None expected
<b>Noise and Vibration</b>		
Noise Compatibility	Varies depending on location; considered low for many curve realignments, particularly low for the McKay/Wellsona curve realignment proposed to occur near the Big Sandy Wildlife Area, and others occurring in residential areas. High compatibility in agricultural areas, and moderate at new station areas.	Variable
Vibration Compatibility	Varies depending on location; generally low compatibility for curve realignments (particularly in residential areas), moderate at new passenger stations, and high throughout agricultural portions	Variable

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
<b>Energy</b>		
Construction Energy Consumption	Energy required for manufacturing of materials, construction activities, travel of construction workers, and from traffic delays/detours resulting from construction activities.	Unknown
Operations Energy Consumption	Increasing service would increase train-related energy consumption, increased ridership would likely reduce energy consumption by decreasing automobile VMT (VMT expected to decrease by 26,000 daily miles by 2040). Increased train efficiency associated with the improvements would reduce required maintenance, reduce friction, reduce time spent idling, and increase train speeds	Unknown
<b>Land Use and Planning, Communities and Neighborhoods, Property and Environmental Justice</b>		
Land Use Compatibility and Property	High near proposed station areas and within the existing right-of-way. Low through Los Padres National Forest and components requiring land outside of the existing right-of-way.	High
Communities and Neighborhoods	High in most areas along alignment, low where few curve realignments/siding extensions require land in residential use.	High

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Environmental Justice	Up to 137 EJ census blocks (for race and poverty) crossed by rail alignment and facilities. Impacts vary depending on improvement.	None expected
<b>Aesthetics and Visual Resources</b>		
Construction	Visual impacts to passing motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and rail passengers will occur resulting from construction equipment, light and glare from nighttime work, and newly disturbed land cover. Will be more significant where construction occurs outside of existing ROW.	None expected
Operation	Medium to high generally where new stations are proposed and curve realignments/siding extensions would occur; low where upgrades to the existing alignment would occur, and where siding extensions and new powered switches are proposed.	None expected
<b>Agricultural and Forest Resources</b>		
Acres of Permanent Impacts to Prime Farmland	Up to 91	None expected
Acres of Temporary Impacts to Prime Farmland	Up to 290	None expected
Acres of Permanent Impacts to Forest Lands	Up to 12	None expected
Acres of Temporary Impacts to Forest Lands	Up to 20	None expected
Convert Williamson Act Contract land to nonagricultural use	Likely to occur in Monterey County	None expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
<b>Public Utilities and Services</b>		
Utility Usage	Construction-related uses are expected be low; however, water will be required as part of standard construction best practices. Operation of new stations, signal upgrades, and new powered switches would require some electricity and water and wastewater services (stations), but not expected to be significant.	None expected
Public Services	Some temporary access disruptions associated with construction expected. No impacts associated with operation expected as the improvements are not expected to encourage substantial population growth.	None Expected
<b>Utility Conflicts:</b>		
Transmission Line Impacts	Up to 0.25 miles of operation-related conflicts, up to 1 mile of construction-related conflicts, and 3 transmission line crossings	None expected
Natural Gas Pipeline Impacts	Up to 2.5 miles of operation-related conflicts, up to 1 mile of construction-related conflicts, and 6 pipeline crossings	None Expected
Water Transmission Lines	Nacimiento Water Project pipeline would likely be impacted to some degree from Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo	None Expected
Telecommunications	Fiber-optic transmission lines would likely be impacted to some degree from Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo	None Expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
<b>Hazardous Materials and Wastes</b>		
Corridor-Wide Hazardous Materials and Wastes	Construction activities may encounter contaminated soil containing pesticide or herbicide residue, aerially deposited lead, or other soil or groundwater contaminants. If demolition of existing facilities or structures occurs, construction activities may encounter asbestos or lead-based paint materials	Unknown
Number of "Active Status" Hazardous Sites	Up to 4; one near location for upgrades to the existing alignment section #1 and three near the King City siding extension	Unknown
<b>Cultural and Paleontological Resources</b>		
Number of Known Archaeological Sites	Up to 27	Unknown
Paleontological Sensitivity	Generally low, high in San Luis Obispo County from the proposed Cuesta second main track into San Luis Obispo	Unknown
Number of Recorded Historical Structures	Up to 55	Unknown
<b>Geology and Soils</b>		
Expected Likelihood of Surface Fault Rupture	Varies depending on location, highest near Santa Margarita	Unknown
Expected Likelihood of Ground Shaking	Varies depending on location, highest near Salinas	Unknown

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Liquefaction Potential	Varies depending on location, highest throughout San Luis Obispo County	Unknown
Expected Likelihood of Landslides	Varies depending on location, highest near Bradley and between Templeton and Santa Margarita	Unknown
Soil Shrink-Swell Potential	Varies depending on location, highest near Salinas, Soledad, San Lucas, Bradley, and near the existing alignment in San Luis Obispo	Unknown
Soil Corrosivity	Varies depending on location, Steel highest throughout Monterey County, concrete highest near existing alignments 2-5 and Cuesta grade.	Unknown
Soil Erosion Potential	Varies depending on location, highest near existing alignments 2-5 and Cuesta grade.	Unknown
Oil and Gas Fields	Three crossed; two occur at upgrades to the existing alignment near San Lucas, and one by the Templeton/Henry curve realignments	Unknown
<b>Hydrology and Water Resources</b>		
Linear feet of permanent impact to water resources	Up to 2,264	Unknown
Permanent acres within a 100-year floodplain	Up to 29	Unknown
Number of surface water crossings	Up to 117	Unknown
Erosion Potential	Generally low, moderate potential near Bradley (Bradley siding and Getty/Bradley curve realignments occur near steep slopes)	Unknown

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Potential Groundwater Impacts	Low	Unknown
<b>Biological Resources and Wetlands</b>		
Wetlands Affected	<p>Varies by location; construction activities at the McKay/Wellsona curve realignment and the Wellsona new siding account for the majority of impacts to wetlands.</p> <p>Few permanent impacts are expected, and the majority are also expected to occur at McKay/Wellsona improvement areas</p>	None Expected
Non Wetland Jurisdictional Waters Affected	<p>Construction activities associated with the Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignment and the Cuesta second main track are expected to impact the most non-wetland jurisdictional waters (almost 6,000 linear feet each).</p> <p>Permanent impacts are also expected to occur at these improvement locations, and at a few other realignments/siding extensions, including the Getty/Bradley curve realignment</p>	None Expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Critical Habitat Areas Affected	<p>California red-legged frog and south-coast California Steelhead habitats would be affected during construction associated with the Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignment and the Cuesta second mainline.</p> <p>Permanent impacts to California red-legged frog habitat would occur near the Cuesta second main track.</p> <p>South-coast steelhead and Vernal pool fairy shrimp habitat may also be permanently impacted by the Bradley siding extension and the Wellsona new siding.</p>	None expected
Sensitive Vegetation Communities Affected	Temporary and permanent impacts are expected associated with improvements occurring outside of the existing railroad right-of-way (new sidings/siding extensions, curve realignments, and the second main track).	None Expected
Special Status Species Affected	Several plant and animal special-status species would be impacted at improvements occurring outside of the existing railroad right-of-way (new sidings/siding extensions, curve realignments, and the second main track).	None Expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
<b>Section 4(f) and 6(f)</b>		
Section 4(f) Resources Affected	Varies by location, generally low given the proximity of 4(f) resources to the existing railway and adjacent highways and roadways. A portion of the McKay/Wellsona curve realignment may require the acquisition of lands within Big Sandy Wildlife Area which could result in a permanent use of a Section 4(f) property	None expected
Section 6 (f) Resources Affected	None identified	None expected
Class I Areas Affected	Class I areas identified are at a distance from the train tracks and no significant air quality/visual degradation is expected	None expected
<b>Growth Inducement</b>		
Permanent and Temporary Employment Opportunities	Potential for growth inducement related to temporary employment dependent upon size and complexity of Build Alternative carried forward. Additional service would require some permanent employees to operate stations and service trains; however, no railroad maintenance facilities are located between Salinas and San Luis Obispo; little to no growth is expected in either Monterey or San Luis Obispo station areas	None expected

Environmental Topic	Build Alternative	No Build Alternative
Residential Property	Adverse growth-related effects limited to acquisition and permanent conversion of residential areas into transportation uses. Few residential takes are expected. May occur with the Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignment; however, this area is not densely populated, growth related impacts would be low	None expected
New Station Areas	New passenger stations and increased service may increase economic activity resulting in population growth and development; receiving cities have endorsed stations as engines of economic revitalization in their respective communities.	None expected

Source: Circlepoint, 2014.

## **AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

This Draft Program EIS/EIR will define program-level strategies to minimize potential impacts resulting from the project. The discussion will include design and construction practices that would avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts if employed as project-level plans are advanced in subsequent stages. These strategies range from minimal to extensive activities dependent upon the individual features of the project and the resulting impacts relative to the package of improvements ultimately chosen.

## **COORDINATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND OTHER AGENCIES**

This Draft EIS/EIR has been prepared with extensive public and agency involvement, which is summarized in **Chapter 5.0, Comments and Coordination**.

## **NEXT STEPS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS**

It has yet to be determined what physical improvements are needed for proposed expansion of passenger rail service (so that existing freight and passenger service would not be unduly affected). Once physical improvements are selected, review under pertinent NEPA and CEQA requirements of such proposed improvements would occur.

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