

3.14 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

This section discusses the potential growth-inducing effects that could result from the No Build Alternative and Build Alternative.

The analysis considers regional and local population and employment growth trends in evaluating the potential for the alternatives to influence these trends, either directly or indirectly. As population and employment growth are closely linked to land use regulations, please also refer to **Section 3.5, Land Use and Planning**.

Growth inducing effects of the Build Alternative would be most prominent around existing and proposed stations, as these areas would see increases or new passenger ridership, which would have the potential in turn to spur economic activity. As a result, this discussion is focused on the growth issues in areas immediately surrounding the existing and proposed stations (described in **Chapter 2.0, Alternatives**).

3.14.1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Federal

Federal Railroad Administration

Under its Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) states that an EIS should address the number and kinds of available jobs to be affected by an alternative, impacts to local government services and revenue, and impacts on commerce in communities within the immediate study area. In cases where displacement of housing is involved, FRA stipulates an assessment of the availability and adequacy of relocation housing. FRA guidance also suggests analysis of the positive and negative consequences of each alternative on growth in the community and its surrounding metropolitan area, specifically near existing business districts and the immediate study area.

State

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126 states that an EIR shall "...discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment."

Local

Monterey County General Plan

The Monterey County General Plan contains goals and policies related to promoting appropriate and orderly growth and development. This includes growth areas in areas where adequate level of services and facilities exist or can be assured to be concurrent with growth and development. Policies also aim to encourage major industrial and commercial centers to accommodate future rail support facilities and to promote transit-oriented development around existing and future rail stations.¹

City of Salinas General Plan

The City of Salinas General Plan (2002) contains policies aiming to maintain a circulation system that meets the current and future needs of the community, including collaboration with Amtrak to provide commuter rail service. Continued maintenance and expanded use of the City's Intermodal Transportation Center is included as a priority. Implementation of the Build Alternative would potentially increase ridership of the Coast Corridor, thus would allow for expanded usage of the existing Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center, consistent with city policy.

City of Soledad General Plan

The Soledad Downtown Specific Plan (2012) contemplated conceptual plans for a proposed new passenger rail station (identical to the station included here as part of the Build Alternative). In its environmental review of the specific plan as a whole, the city concluded that future placement of a multi-modal train station in Soledad would be consistent with the Coast Daylight Implementation Plan.² Furthermore, a train station would create an environment that attracts tourists and locals throughout the region.³

City of King (King City) General Plan

King City adopted the First Street Corridor Master Plan, in which the city contemplated a number of land use changes, including conceptual plans for a passenger rail station. Accordingly, the city encourages the return of passenger

¹ Monterey County, 2010, p. LU-3, CIRC-11

² City of Soledad, 2012b, p. 4.4-9

³ City of Soledad, 2012a, p. 2-2

service to King City as it would serve as it would benefit the community in terms of economic opportunities as well as reestablishing the historic downtown area.⁴

San Luis Obispo County General Plan

The San Luis Obispo General Plan includes goals and policies encouraging the use of strategic growth principles in development that create a range of housing choices, mixed land uses, preserve open space, and focus development in urban areas. Strategic growth strategies are to be implemented when planning and reviewing new development proposals.⁵

City of El Paso de Robles (Paso Robles) General Plan

The City of El Paso de Robles General Plan contains policies and action items aimed at establishing a safe, balanced, efficient, and multimodal circulation system, focusing on the mobility of people, and preserving the city's character. The expansion of Amtrak rail service is encouraged and included as an Action Item included within a policy to promote regional, interstate, and intra-state rail service.⁶

City of San Luis Obispo General Plan

The San Luis Obispo General Plan supports rail transportation as an energy efficient travel option. General plan policies support the increased availability of rail service for travel within the county, within the state, and among states. Daily train service with departures and arrivals in the morning and evening, connecting San Luis Obispo with points north and south is also encouraged within the general plan.⁷

3.14.2 METHODS OF EVALUATION

This analysis qualitatively assesses the direct and indirect growth potential of the alternatives. The study area for this analysis is mostly focused on areas immediately surrounding existing and proposed station areas, as they are the railroad's "interfaces" where growth effects are most likely to be realized. However, other areas are also assessed. Please also refer to **Section 3.5, Land Use and Planning**, which addresses the potential for community impacts, a closely related consideration.

⁴ City of King, 2013, p. 29, p. 82

⁵ San Luis Obispo County, 2009, 4-4, 4-16

⁶ City of El Paso de Robles, 2011

⁷ City of San Luis Obispo, 2006

Direct growth effects are those caused by any alternative, occurring at the same time and place. Direct growth effects include any permanent jobs directly associated with an alternative as well as any displacement of housing related to the construction and operation of the proposed rail facilities.

Indirect growth effects are considered to be reasonably foreseeable effects caused by the action alternatives, typically occurring later in time or further in distance from the project. These include positive or negative growth in population numbers and/or patterns, positive or negative growth in local or regional economic vitality, and associated alterations in land use patterns that could occur with implementation of the Build Alternative. Removal of existing obstacles to growth would also be considered indirect growth effects. “Removal of obstacles to growth” would include the extension of public services and utilities to a previously undeveloped area, where the provision of such services could have a foreseeable increase in population and/or economic growth.

3.14.3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties have experienced gradual population, housing, and employment growth over the past several decades. Local agricultural and tourism industries are leading employment sectors in these counties.

The Build Alternative proposes new passenger stations in the City of Soledad and King City and increased passenger rail activity at existing train stations in Salinas, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo. The stations are the only direct “interfaces” between the rail system and people and thus comprise the most realistic engines of growth. Therefore, this analysis focuses primarily on the station areas and their surrounding communities.

City of Salinas

According to the 2010 US Census, Salinas had a population of 150,498. The Salinas General Plan Final Program EIR (2002) projects the population at the time of buildout of the General Plan (between 2030 – 2040) to be approximately 213,063 living in 58,056 housing units, which is an increase of 49 and 48 percent, respectively, over existing conditions. Based on development assumptions and historic growth rates, it is projected that by 2020, approximately 184,000 people will reside in 50,100 dwelling units and that 90,300 employment opportunities will exist in the planning area.⁸

⁸ City of Salinas, 2002b, Population and Housing

City of Soledad

According to the 2010 US Census, Soledad had a population of 25,738. A year earlier, the City's 2009 Housing Element Update projected the population to increase to 33,760 by 2020. The Soledad General Plan EIR build-out scenario determined there is potential for the city to grow to 57,000 people by the year 2040.⁹ The city further projects a total of 22,000 jobs and 14,000 dwelling units by 2040.¹⁰ A substantial complement of projected growth is associated with the city's Downtown Specific Plan, adopted in 2012. Existing development of the downtown area includes 437 housing units and 1,722 residents. Buildout of the Downtown Specific Plan is expected to yield 570 housing units and 1,828 people by the year 2032.¹¹

City of King

According to the 2010 US Decennial Census, King City had a population of 12,874. King City anticipates the total population to increase to 24,726 people by 2035.¹² According to the First Street Master Plan, King City is growing at 4 percent per year, and is looking to add an additional 800 homes to the downtown area. Growth would encourage an increase manufacturing and service industries. A multi-modal transit center is also anticipated to spur commercial and retail developments on the First Street Corridor.¹³

City of El Paso de Robles

According to the 2010 US Census, the City of Paso Robles population was 29,793 people. The Paso Robles Land Use Element population planning threshold for future development was 44,000 persons.¹⁴ This number includes existing dwelling units plus all proposed maximum number of potential dwelling units authorized by the Land Use Element (with a 2.7 persons per household occupancy rate). Areas for housing growth have been identified in both the east and west sides of the city. The

⁹ City of Soledad, 2005b, p. IV-4

¹⁰ City of Soledad, 2005b, p. 5.11-5

¹¹ City of Soledad, 2012b, p. 2-62-13

¹² City of King City, 2013, First Street Corridor Master Plan. Pg32

¹³ King City, 2013, p. 21

¹⁴ City of El Paso de Robles, 2012, p. LU-1

west region includes the city's historic core and the existing transit center station. As of December 2010, capacity for over 6,000 new units was identified for the areas.¹⁵

City of San Luis Obispo

According to the 2010 US Census, the City of San Luis Obispo population was 45,115 people. During workdays, the city's population increases to an estimated 70,000 persons, accounting for the largest concentration of jobs in the County. From 1992-2010 the rate of housing production in San Luis Obispo slightly exceeded the rate of population growth. Between 1990 and 2008, the city added about 2,700 residents, an increase of about seven percent. During the same period, the city's housing stock grew by about 1,400 units, and increase of about eight percent.¹⁶ The San Luis Obispo Land Use Element anticipates a population of 56,750 people by 2029.¹⁷

3.14.4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative represents the continuation of existing operations and physical components, and assumes the perpetuation of existing freight and passenger service. The only proposed physical improvement would be the implementation of PTC along the corridor, including modification to signaling and communications equipment. These PTC related changes are not expected to result in any growth related impacts because they would neither directly nor indirectly lead to any substantial increases in jobs, housing, or other growth-related factors at existing or proposed station areas or other locations along the rail corridor.

According to the SDP, freight rail operations are likely to increase from 2 daily freight trains today to 4 daily trains in 2020 into 2040. Though not contemplated directly in the SDP, the proposed Phillips 66 Company Rail Spur Extension Project (pending approval by the County of San Luis Obispo), would, if constructed, allow for 5 weekly oil trains that would travel the entirety of the existing Salinas to San Luis Obispo rail corridor.

¹⁵ City of El Paso de Robles, 2011b,

¹⁶ City of San Luis Obispo, 2010, Housing Element

¹⁷ City of San Luis Obispo, 2010, pp. 1-23

Implementation of these projects could occur regardless of whether or not any of the proposed physical improvements comprising the Build Alternative are ultimately constructed.

The No Build Alternative may result in regional job growth related to increased freight activity, but such growth would likely be negligible insofar as freight trains traversing the Salinas to San Luis Obispo corridor typically have start and endpoints outside this corridor.

Build Alternative

An adverse, direct growth effect would occur if the anticipated growth associated with the Build Alternative would exceed growth projections at local and/or regional levels. An adverse indirect growth effect would occur if the Build Alternative would involve the removal of obstacles to growth, result in negative growth associated with local and/or regional economic vitality, and/or substantial positive or negative growth in population numbers or patterns.

Construction-Period Effects

Direct Impacts

Implementation of the Build Alternative would result in temporary employment opportunities associated with designing and constructing one or more of the proposed improvements. Possible job opportunities include contractor, engineer, management professional, and city planning-related positions. The anticipated degree of such growth is likely correlated with the size and complexity of the Build Alternative improvement(s) carried forward into design, construction, and environmental mitigation. Moreover, except for direct construction positions, many of the above-noted job opportunities could be fulfilled outside the Salinas to San Luis Obispo corridor area.

Some of the curve realignments included in the Build Alternative would require the temporary/permanent acquisition and/or conversion of various lands. These activities could have growth-related effects residential lands are involved. Conversion of residential lands to a transportation use could have a negative effect on growth.

The Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignment was identified as having the potential to result in the acquisition of residential property if this particular improvement is selected to move forward. In the event that the improvement cannot be designed to avoid take of residential properties, minor growth-related effects could occur. Consequently, such effects would be considerable for affected property owners. However, any potential acquisition would require compliance with numerous

federal and state property acquisition regulations. Nevertheless, the area of the Henry/Santa Margarita curve realignment is not densely populated and growth-related impacts would thus be low.

Indirect Impacts

Construction of the Build Alternative, in essence, is a direct project activity. Construction activities associated with the proposed improvements would not occur indirectly; therefore, there would be no indirect construction growth-related effects.

Operational Effects

Direct Impacts

Direct operational impacts of the Build Alternative are effects that would be directly caused by implementation of proposed project improvements over the long-term.

The Build Alternative proposes reinstitution of the *Coast Daylight* passenger rail service. The additional service would require several permanent jobs to operate and service trains as well as to manage proposed new and existing stations.

No train service facility is located in the Salinas to San Luis Obispo portion of the Coast Corridor, so the potential would be minimal for operations or service jobs to be created between Salinas and San Luis Obispo. The closest maintenance area is in Los Angeles County. Potential new stations could introduce employment opportunities in Soledad and King City. Given the anticipated train schedule (2 daily trains initially increasing to 4 daily trains by 2040), there is little likelihood of substantial direct station-related employment resulting.

In all, the passenger rail aspect of the Build Alternative would result in little direct employment-related growth in the Monterey and San Luis Obispo County areas.

The anticipated direct growth effects around the existing and proposed station areas might best be characterized as beneficial or at least community-desired effects. Both Soledad and King City have made the proposed stations centerpieces of adopted downtown revitalization strategies. Additionally, the Cities of Salinas, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo have supported intermodal transportation development to meet the current and future needs of the community. Therefore, the Build Alternative proposed improvements are consistent with city goals to increase rail service and expand usage of transportation facilities.

Indirect Impacts

Implementation of the Build Alternative would result in indirect growth-related effects, particularly in areas surrounding the new proposed stations in Soledad and King City, as well as in Salinas, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo.

The City of Soledad set forth goals to revitalize its downtown in its 2012 Downtown Specific Plan. The Specific Plan identifies a proposed passenger rail station site and also encourages opportunities for economic development to spur economic vitality in Soledad. Similarly, King City's First Street Corridor Master Plan includes conceptual plans for a proposed passenger rail station.

New passenger stations and increased service (Coast Starlight) throughout the corridor would attract additional passengers and potentially attract related development in and around all station areas. As a result, the Build Alternative could indirectly result in increased economic activity around both existing and proposed new station areas. Such increased activity in these areas may indirectly influence population growth, development patterns, and tourism in the nearby area.

3.14.5 AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION, AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The individual improvements comprising the Build Alternative should be designed to minimize direct and indirect adverse growth related effects along the Corridor. As noted above, the extent of adverse growth-related effects would be limited to any required acquisition and permanent conversion of residential lands into transportation uses. As components of the Build Alternative move forward into design, avoidance/or minimization of such acquisitions should be an important consideration.

The following strategy has been identified at this preliminary stage to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate any potentially significant impacts.

MIN-GR-1. New station development will be coordinated early in project-level reviews with local jurisdictions. This will ensure that land use plans and controls can be revised and implemented in conjunction with any new station development.

3.14.6 SUBSEQUENT ANALYSIS

Prior to implementing components of the Build Alternative, site specific evaluation should be conducted for the need for property acquisition, including the potential for displacement of homes or businesses or substantial conflict with locally adopted land use policies. Any homes or businesses with the potential for displacement

could be studied through a relocation impact analysis. Additional environmental assessment and design development to determine alignment options during future studies will ensure a more precise evaluation of site-specific impacts and mitigation effectiveness.