



Coachella Valley San Geronimo Pass Rail Corridor Study Tier 2 Environmental Impact Report and Conceptual Engineering Development Report State Rail Assistance Program Project Concept Descriptions

Riverside County Transportation Commission
Lead Agency: Riverside County Transportation
Commission

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January 4, 2019

Mr. Brian Annis
Secretary
California State Transportation Agency
951 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Coachella Valley San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Study Tier 2 Environmental Impact Report and Conceptual Engineering Development Report Project Concept Package

Dear Mr. Annis:

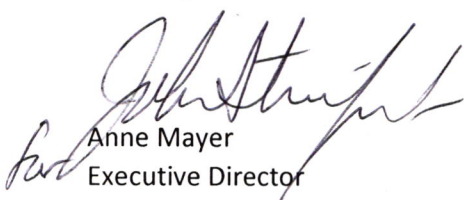
The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) appreciates the funding opportunity provided by CalSTA through the State Rail Assistance program and is pleased to submit the attached project concept for the Coachella Valley San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Study Tier 2 Environmental Impact Report (EIS/R) and Preliminary Engineering Development Report, at a 10% design level.

In close cooperation with Caltrans and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), RCTC has been actively engaged in the development of a Tier 1 EIS/R and Service Development Plan (SDP) for the Coachella Valley San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor. Production of the program level EIS/R and SDP is intended as the first step in leading to a better understanding regarding the feasibility for the provision of daily round trip passenger rail service between Los Angeles and the underserved Coachella Valley. This Tier 1 work has been funded entirely to date by the FRA and RCTC and as such, funding of a Tier 2 and a conceptual engineering exercise via the SRA program will provide the State with an excellent return on its SRA dollars.

In applying for SRA funds to perform a Tier 2 level analysis along with preliminary engineering at a 10% design level, RCTC is seeking to build on the body of work currently being performed. This will provide the State as well as RCTC with a more thorough understanding of the project and the infrastructure that would be necessary to bring daily round trip passenger rail service for this **State Rail Plan 2018 identified** "emerging corridor" to fruition. This goal is therefore entirely consistent with the goals and objectives contained in the 2018 State Rail Plan.

Thank you for considering our project for this exciting opportunity and we look forward to the telephone interview in which we can further discuss the merits of our project. In the meanwhile, should you or your staff have any questions regarding our application, please contact RCTC Rail Manager Sheldon Peterson at (951) 787-7141 or via email at Speterson@RCTC.org.

Sincerely,


Anne Mayer
Executive Director



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Project Overview

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), California Department of Transportation Division of Rail & Mass Transportation (Caltrans), and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) are in the process of developing and completing a Programmatic Tier I Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR) and Service Development Plan (SDP) for passenger rail service between Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) in Los Angeles, California and the City of Coachella in Southern California’s Coachella Valley.

This corridor, which connects the Los Angeles metropolitan area with the Coachella Valley through the San Gorgonio Pass, currently has no daily intercity passenger rail service. The proposed implementation of intercity passenger rail service, including the planning and construction of rail infrastructure improvements required to establish the service, are collectively known as the Coachella Valley-San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project. This corridor is identified in the 2018 California State Rail Plan as an “emerging corridor”.

Based on the environmental analysis conducted in the Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR and the site specific infrastructure improvements identified in the SDP, a Tier 2 project level California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (Tier 2 EIR) will be required to advance the project forward, together with conceptual engineering at a 10% level to define the “footprint” for a project-level environmental analysis.

The Tier 2 EIR is the next essential phase in the overall project development process leading toward implementation of rail service in this corridor. The Alternatives Analysis was completed in 2016 and the Tier 1 EIS/EIR and SDP are slated for completion in 2019, so the stage is set for the Tier 2 EIR and conceptual engineering exercise to be conducted as the next step in the project development process. The primary benefit of this particular phase will be to develop a more defined understanding of the project infrastructure components and their estimated costs, and to evaluate their environmental impacts. Achieving these objectives will facilitate programming of funds for the needed capital investments, and lay the groundwork for final design of the improvements.



The purpose of this application is to define the Tier 2 EIR scope of work for the project, identify the benefit of performing the analysis, and request the necessary SRA funding in order to implement it. The requested funding is as follows:

DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
Conceptual Engineering	\$5,261,500
Tier 2 EIR	\$2,000,000
TOTAL	\$7,261,500

Project Description

The Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR, along with the concurrent preparation of the SDP, is the first step in the tiered environmental review process. This process is currently fully funded and on-going, with completion scheduled by the end of this year. Consistent with its “emerging corridor” status in the 2018 California State Rail Plan, funding of the Tier 2 EIR work will further advance the understanding of the corridor and with conceptual engineering to the level needed for project-level analysis, provide reliable information on infrastructure needs and costs to construct the project. As such, this scope of work includes a defined conceptual engineering process as well as an analysis of any required permits, consultations, or additional approvals needed for construction.

While the Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR analysis will broadly identify areas where there is potential for the project to create environmental impacts, the Tier 2 EIR scope of work shall be more localized and focused on project specific infrastructure such as track and station areas in order to further define the effects of the project on the environment. The Tier 2 EIR shall also examine the development of mitigation measures and designs that will avoid or minimize effects.

Build Alternative Alignment Location for Tier 2 Study

In order to better understand the scope of the Tier 2 EIR, it is first necessary to understand the identified Build Alternative Alignment for Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR. This alignment occurs primarily within existing railroad right-of-ways (ROWs) for a corridor distance of 144 miles and is owned, operated and maintained by two host railroads along with a short section of track required to access LAUS which is owned by Metro.

- The Western Section of the corridor consists of a 68 mile segment within Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties, along the existing BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision corridor between LAUS and the city of Colton. BNSF's San Bernardino Subdivision is between Colton and control point (CP) Soto (the interlocking milepost 144.4 in Los Angeles), a distance of approximately 63 miles.
- The Eastern Section consists of a 76 mile segment within San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, along the existing Union Pacific (UP) Yuma Subdivision corridor between the cities of Colton and Coachella.
- Metro's River Subdivision, operated by Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), is on the far western end of the corridor between CP Soto and LAUS, a distance of approximately five miles.

The following describes the potential infrastructure improvements on the Build Alternative alignment:

Western Section

Existing rail infrastructure would be used in the Western Section, and no additional railroad infrastructure improvements would be required along this section of the corridor due to sufficient existing capacity and track rights. LAUS would serve as the western terminus, and existing stations in the cities of Fullerton and Riverside would serve as station stops for the proposed service. No new stations or improvements to existing stations would be required to accommodate the proposed service.

Eastern Section

At this time, other than the Amtrak Sunset Limited which operates three times per week in each direction, there is no daily passenger rail activity in this section of the corridor. Rail operations simulation modeling is being conducted (as part of the currently funded and in-process SDP) in order to identify potential infrastructure needs (including number of stations), along with the entire program of improvements necessary to implement daily passenger rail service.

This element of the SDP is occurring in consultation with UP, RCTC, Caltrans, and FRA. The Tier 1 Program EIS/ EIR along with the SDP output will form the basis of the Tier 2 EIR Scope of Work and the subsequent project level analysis. It should also be noted that this work has been funded by the FRA with RCTC supplying the local match to the FRA grant, and that RCTC provided the entire funding for the preceding Alternatives Analysis. For that reason, RCTC considers the Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR and SDP work as "in-kind local match" to the Tier 2 EIR project and SRA application. This will be further addressed in the project budget and funding sections of this application.

Potential new infrastructure improvements on the Eastern Section could include sidings, additional mainline track, wayside signals, drainage, grade separation structures, and stations to accommodate the proposed service. The Eastern Section would use the existing station in the city of Palm Springs. Additionally, up to five new potential stations could be constructed within the City of Loma Linda, the Pass Area (serving the cities of Beaumont, Banning, and Cabazon), the Mid Valley (serving the cities of Cathedral City, Thousand Palms, the Agua Caliente Casino area, and Rancho Mirage), and the cities of Indio and/or Coachella as the eastern terminus.

The final scope of the infrastructure improvements to be evaluated in the Tier 2 EIR will be consistent with the recommendations from the SDP.

Project Benefits and Expected Outcomes

This section addresses the issues of service integration, mobility and environmental goals and objectives at a national, statewide, regional/corridor level so as to better understand the needs of a constituency which has very limited access to intercity rail service.

National

With respect to national service integration, the Southwest Multi-State Rail Planning Study was a 2014 rail planning effort led by FRA. The study is part of a larger national effort to develop high-performance interstate passenger rail networks through a common preliminary technical vision and strategic planning at the multi-state and mega-regional level. The study focused on Arizona, California, and Nevada, and parts of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico, and identified key corridors for future planning. Those recommendations are carried forward with phased implementation steps the State of California can take to invest in those services.

Funding of the Tier 2 EIR for the Coachella Valley – San Geronio Pass Rail Corridor is an integral first step towards advancing a more thorough understanding of the infrastructure necessary to implement service between Los Angeles and Phoenix, Arizona consistent with the recommendations identified in the Southwest Multi-State Rail Planning Study.

Statewide

At the statewide level, Caltrans is charged with planning and maintaining the State’s transportation system and is also responsible for developing the State Rail Plan.

The 2018 California State Rail Plan is a strategic planning document that identifies a long-term vision and goals to guide incremental planning and funding decisions that support development of an integrated state network. This plan identifies a framework for partnerships to leverage the state’s investment in High Speed Rail (HSR) and intercity passenger rail corridors with regional and local investments in commuter rail systems and public transit to deliver projects that when tied together, can deliver benefits across a broad spectrum of constituents.

With respect to this framework, Chapter 2 of the 2018 California State Rail Plan focuses on the existing system while also speaking to the issue of “emerging corridors”. Specifically, the Coachella Valley-San Geronio Pass Rail Corridor is identified as an emerging corridor.

It is this consistency with the 2018 California State Rail Plan that RCTC is seeking to leverage the implementation of a Tier 2 EIR and conceptual engineering exercise. The coordinated planning effort currently being undertaken by the FRA, Caltrans and RCTC would be directly leveraged by funding further study. The Tier 2 EIR effort is intended to build on the Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR and SDP effort in order to develop a better understanding of the infrastructure needs, costs and other necessary elements required to implement passenger rail service on a daily basis within this corridor. In that the FRA and RCTC have committed project funding for the Alternatives Analysis, Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR and SDP processes, State funding of the Tier 2 effort provides the State with an excellent return on its planning dollars already spent.

Regional/Corridor

At the corridor level, there are many different aspects to the provision of daily passenger rail service and transit service integration in general that should be addressed. It should be noted that the Cal EnviroScreen process identifies the corridor as passing through numerous areas containing disadvantaged populations as well as tribal lands. Further examination of the corridor is an important step towards understanding the needs of these populations as well as mitigating the effects of congestion and air quality on them.

The Purpose and Need Statement for the Tier 1 Program EIS/EIR effort specifically describes these needs and it describes that the project purpose is to implement a safe, reliable, affordable and convenient intercity passenger rail service in the corridor that will have the capability to meet the future mobility needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The Tier 2 EIR effort would build on this purpose by furthering the project understanding. This then allows the project to continue to work towards meeting the overall objectives as follows:

1. Provides travelers between the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley with a public transportation service that offers more convenient and competitive trip times, better station access, and more frequency than currently available public transportation services
2. Provides travelers between the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley with an alternative to driving that offers reliable travel schedules
3. Provides travelers between the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley with an affordable transportation service



4. Serves a range of trip purposes traveling between the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley, including business, social, medical, leisure, and recreational trips
5. Improves regional travel opportunities between the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley for transit dependent people
6. Serves the expected population growth in the Los Angeles Basin and the Coachella Valley
7. Does not preclude, by choice of alignment or technology, a possible future corridor expansion between the Coachella Valley and Phoenix

In conclusion, the benefit of funding a Tier 2 EIR and conceptual engineering effort is consistent across many plans at all levels of government having authority and interest in the provision of passenger rail service. Furthermore, it will continue to build on planning and analysis that has been funded and performed without the use of state resources making a case for an excellent return to the state for its planning dollars. The funding for this project is further outlined in the following section.

Project Funding Request

TIER II CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT PROJECT COST ESTIMATE & FUNDING REQUEST	
CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING NTE 10%	
Track	\$1,233,000
Grade Crossings	\$270,000
Culverts	\$37,500
Bridges	\$562,500
Signals & Communications	\$487,500
Stations	\$1,875,000
Geotechnical Studies	\$200,000
Surveying & Mapping	\$125,000
Project Management	\$471,000
SUBTOTAL CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING	\$5,261,500
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT	
Project Initiation, AB-52	\$100,000
Draft & Final Project Description	\$75,000
Technical Studies	\$1,140,000
Draft EIR	\$425,000
Screencheck/Response to Comment	\$50,000
Final EIR	\$125,000
Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting	\$20,000
CEQA Findings of Fact	\$25,000
Meetings and Hearings	\$20,000
Printing	\$20,000
SUBTOTAL EIR	\$2,000,000
TOTAL TIER 2 PROJECT COST	\$7,261,500



Project Schedule

PROJECT SCHEDULE	2019	2020												2021				
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Record of Decision Tier 1 EIS/R	◆																	
FRA Approval of Tier 1 Service Development Plan		◆																
Notice of Tier 2 EIR Preparation and technical studies																		
Conceptual Engineering																		
Draft EIR Open for Public Review																		
Draft Final EIR Open for Public Review																		
RCTC Board Approval of Final EIR																		◆

Project Cash Flow

PROJECT CASH FLOW	
2020	Jan \$ 365,000
	Feb \$ 730,000
	Mar \$ 730,000
	Apr \$ 730,000
	May \$ 730,000
	Jun \$ 730,000
	Jul \$ 730,000
	Aug \$ 730,000
	Sep \$ 500,000
	Oct \$ 400,000
	Nov \$ 300,000
	Dec \$ 200,000
2021	Jan \$ 200,000
	Feb \$ 100,000
	Mar \$ 50,000
	Apr \$ 36,500

Total: \$7,261,500



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