

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: Interested Public Agencies and
Other Parties

FROM: WILLIAM D. BRONTE
Chief, Division of Rail
California Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 942874, MS 74
Sacramento, California 94274-0001

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement (Program EIR/EIS) for Proposed Improvements to the Rail Corridor Extending from Los Angeles to San Luis Obispo via Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties; References: Division 13, Public Resources Code, Section 21080.4 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and for 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.7 and 1508.22 (NEPA).

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation (Department) is the Lead Agency for the CEQA process for proposed Los Angeles-Ventura County-Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN North) Rail Corridor Improvements. The Department has determined that it would be appropriate to prepare a Program EIR/EIS for improvements to the existing rail corridor at this stage of planning and decision making, which would involve defining and evaluating alternative technologies, corridor modifications, station improvements, and phasing options. Later stages of project development will include project-specific detailed environmental documents to assess the impacts of the alternatives in those segments of the system identified for implementation.

This NOP initiates the CEQA process. Scoping meetings are scheduled as follows:

Date: Monday, January 10, 2011

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Place: Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Metro-Boardroom, One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Place: Camarillo Public Library
4101 Las Posas Road
Camarillo, CA 93010

Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2011
Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Place: Louise Lowry Davis Center, Lu Gilbert Room
1232 De La Vina Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Date: Thursday, January 13, 2011
Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Place: San Luis Obispo City/
County Public Library, Community Room
995 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

The Department has invited the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), an operating administration within the United States Department of Transportation, to serve as Federal Lead Agency for the environmental review. The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of rail passenger and freight operations across the United States, including the safety of any proposed high-speed train system. The FRA, as Federal Lead Agency, is publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* announcing the Agency's intention to initiate the Federal environmental review process for the LOSSAN North Rail Corridor Improvements. The Department expects that the information developed during the CEQA scoping process would also serve as an important component of the scoping process for the Federal environmental review.

In response to this NOP, it is requested to advise the Department of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of Interested Public Agencies (Agency), and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to each Agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Each agency will need to use the Program EIR/EIS prepared by the Department when considering approvals or permits required for the project.

The need for LOSSAN North Rail Corridor Improvements is directly related to the expected growth in population and resulting increases in intercity travel demand in California over the next 20 years and beyond. As a result of this growth in travel demand, there will be increases in travel delays from the growing congestion on California's highways and at airports. In addition, there will be effects on the economy and quality of life from a transportation system that is less and less reliable as travel demand increases and there being deteriorating air quality in and around our metropolitan areas. The intercity highway system and commercial airports serving the intercity travel market are currently operating at or near capacity, and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion in order to meet existing demand and future growth. LOSSAN North Rail Corridor Improvements would provide a vastly improved mode of intercity train travel that would link the Los Angeles, Ventura County, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo major metropolitan areas, interfacing with mass transit, and highways; and

providing added capacity to help meet increases in intercity travel demand in California in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources.

The Department manages and coordinates intercity rail passenger services in California. Within this role are several major activities including analyzing funding requests and recommending State funding for operating assistance and funding for capital improvement projects. For southern California, the Department provides operating funds to Amtrak for intercity passenger services, via the coast rail line, extending from San Diego to San Luis Obispo. For the LOSSAN portion of this corridor (between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo), Amtrak currently operates three daily round-trip trains.

As part of the State's ongoing efforts to improve intercity rail services, the Department contracts with railroads and local agencies to build and improve the rail infrastructure for stations, tracks, signal systems and related rail components. Funding for capital projects has been utilized to increase speeds, replace worn track and structures, add passing sidings and second main track, improving safety and operational efficiencies, and to modernize the rail system. The overall goal is to improve mobility in this congested part of the State by decreasing trips times and improving the rail system in a cost-effective manner.

Alternatives to be evaluated and analyzed in the Program EIR/EIS include: (1) take no action (No-Project or No-Build), (2) improvement of the existing steel-wheel-on-steel-rail train system and stations, and (3) modal alternatives that would include highway and air transportation improvements. Possible environmental impacts include displacement of commercial and residential properties; disproportionate impacts to minority and low-income populations; community and neighborhood disruption; increased noise, vibration, and electro-magnetic interference along rail corridors; traffic impacts associated with stations; effects to historic properties or archaeological sites; impacts to parks and recreation resources; visual quality effects; exposure to seismic and flood hazards; impacts to water and coastal resources, wetlands, and sensitive biological species and habitat; land use compatibility impacts; energy use; air quality; construction impacts; and impacts to public safety.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, responses must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. The Department invites suggestions about the range of alternatives and the potential impacts to be addressed in the Program EIR/EIS. See Attachment A – Program EIR/EIS Schedule for our 2.5-year process.

Please send responses and direct any comments or questions regarding this project to Lea Simpson, Corridor Manager, California Department of Transportation, Division of Rail, at the address shown above.

Date: December 20, 2010

Signature: 
WILLIAM D. BRONTE
Chief, Division of Rail

Attachment A: Working Products/Key Deliverables

Product/Key Deliverable	Delivery Date	Notes
Purpose and Need (P&N) and Range of Alternatives, including "No Action" alternative	August 2010	Need FRA's approval
Prepare supporting technical studies to a Program level of evaluation and complete Admin Draft Program EIR/EIS.	April 2011	
Circulate DPEIR/EIS according to FRA and CT guidelines	Jan 2012	90 days circulation
Address comments on DPEIR/EIS and incorporate comments into a Final PEIR/EIS	Jan 2013	Twelve months
Develop ROD	Feb 2013	One month
File ROD with Federal Register and NOD with SCH	Mar 2013	30 days circulation
		33 months total

6.4.2 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Figure 6-4 provides a map showing the relative locations of rail improvement projects within Santa Barbara County and the proposed timelines for their implementation. Table 6-9 provides a summary of Santa Barbara County projects, their timelines, and their estimated costs.

**Table 6-9
 Santa Barbara County Projects**

Project Number	Project Name / Project Type	Current Timeline	Estimated Project Cost
SB-01	MP 276 Track Realignment and Highway 1 Overpass Replacement	Vision	\$62M
SB-02	Guadalupe Siding Extension and Island CTC	Near-Term	\$20M
SB-03	Waldorf Siding Extension and Island CTC	Near-Term	\$12M
SB-04	Devon to Tangair Curve Realignment	Vision	\$196M
SB-05	Tangair Siding Extension and Island CTC	Near-Term	\$12M
SB-06	Santa Barbara County Curve Realignment Projects	Vision	\$677M
SB-07	Narlon, Honda, Concepcion – Island CTC	Near-Term	\$30M
SB-08	Capitan Siding Extension and Island CTC	Near-Term	\$10M
SB-09	Goleta Service Track Extension	Near-Term	\$10M
SB-10	Sandyland Siding*	Near-Term	\$15M
SB-11	Ortega Siding*	Near-Term	\$20M
SB-12	Carpinteria Siding	Near-Term	\$10M
	Estimated Total - Santa Barbara County Projects		\$1.1B

* Depending on which siding project was selected to be completed as an Immediate project: Ortega or Carpinteria. The Immediate siding need is shown on the Santa Barbara County Map as “SB-Ventura Siding.”

MP 276 Track Realignment and Highway 1 Overpass Replacement (SB-01 – Vision): This track realignment project, located 4 miles south of Guadalupe, would relocate 1.80 miles of main track between MP 275.2 to 277 to reduce the curvature. Two existing curves would be reduced to two degrees maximum, allowing maximum train speeds to increase from 45 to 79 mph with the possibility of future speeds up to 90 mph. The cost of this project, \$62M, also includes the replacement of the Highway 1 overpass at MP 276.13, which would be required as part of the track realignment.

Guadalupe Siding Extension and Island CTC (SB-02 – Near-Term): This project, located at Guadalupe, would extend the existing Guadalupe siding to Waldorf Siding, and would install new power-operated Number 24 turnouts and control points. The estimated cost for this project is \$20M.

**Figure 6-4
Santa Barbara County Projects**



Legend:

- Amtrak Intercity Rail Services
- Amtrak Thruway Connecting Bus Service
- Metrolink Commuter Rail
- Santa Barbara-Ventura Intercountry Commuter Service (Under Study)

Recommended Project Implementation Timeline:

- 2006
- 2015
- 2025

Waldorf Siding Extension and Island CTC (SB-03 – Near-Term): This infrastructure improvement project, located 30 miles south of San Luis Obispo and approximately four miles south of Guadalupe, would extend the current Waldorf siding one mile southward to MP 278.60, for a total siding length of 9,315'. New power-operated Number 24 turnouts would be installed at each end, as would CTC. This siding extension would be necessary to provide additional capacity and operational reliability for both passenger and freight traffic at an estimated cost of \$12M. The current timetable calls for the southbound *Pacific Surfliner*, train #798, to pass the northbound Coast Starlight, train #14, in this vicinity. The hand-thrown switches cause significant delays and the upgrade to an island CTC signaling system is needed.

Devon to Tangair Curve Realignments (SB-04 – Vision): This major curve realignment project, located 14 miles south of Guadalupe, would relocate 12.10 miles of main line track between MP 279.80 to MP 296.80, to reduce track curvature. The project constructs 8.90 miles of new main track and 2.00 miles of retaining walls. The 24 existing curves would either be eliminated or reduced to three degrees maximum curvature each. This infrastructure improvement project would reduce trip times by allowing maximum train speeds to increase from 50 to 79 mph, with the possibility of future speeds up to 90 mph. The estimated cost for this project is \$196M.

Tangair Siding Extension and Island CTC (SB-05 – Near-Term): This project, located 18 miles south of Guadalupe, is an approximate .85 mile extension northward of the existing Tangair siding for a total siding length of 10,790'. In addition to installing CTC at this location, a new power-operated Number 24 turnout would be installed at each end of the siding and the curve at MP 293.5 would be reduced from five degrees to two degrees. This siding extension would provide additional capacity and operational reliability for both freight and passenger traffic at a cost of \$12M, and could be constructed within the existing right-of-way, facilitating the permitting process for this project.

Santa Barbara County Curve Realignment Projects (SB-06 – Vision): When the railroad was built along the coast in the 19th century, railroad builders followed the contours of the land to minimize earthmoving and tunnelling operations. This created many miles of curve along what is today the *Pacific Surfliner* Corridor. Straightening these curves would significantly reduce run times (trains can attain a higher speed) and would reduce maintenance costs (lessening the wear and maintenance required by tracks). For the purposes of the Strategic Plan, the individual projects below are combined as the Santa Barbara County Curve Realignment Projects. The estimated total cost for all the individual projects summarized as SB-6 is \$677M.

- **Surf to Arguello Curve Realignments (SB-06A):** This project, 67 miles north of Santa Barbara, would relocate 6.30 miles of main line track between MP 297.90 to MP 311.40. The geometry of the existing 16 curves would either be eliminated or reduced to two degrees maximum, allowing for maximum train speeds to increase from 60 mph to 79 mph, with the possibility of future speeds up to 90 mph.
- **Sudden to Concepcion Curve Realignments (SB-06B):** This project would realign 3.50 miles of main line track between Sudden and Concepcion, 50 miles north of Santa Barbara, from MP 315.00 to MP 319.80, to reduce track curvature. This project would realign or eliminate 14 existing curves. The project would construct 3.50 miles of new main track and retaining walls. The curvature of six existing curves would be reduced to 1 degree, 30 minutes maximum each and eight existing curves would be eliminated. A new 900-foot concrete trestle would be constructed over Jalama Creek. This infrastructure improvement project would reduce trip times by allowing for maximum train speeds to increase from 60 mph to 79 mph, with the possibility of future speeds up to 90 mph.
- **Concepcion to Gato Curve Realignments (SB-06C):** This project would realign 3.50 miles of main line track between MP 315.00 to MP 319.80. Of the 14 existing curves, eight would

be eliminated and the remaining six would be reduced to 1 degree, 30 minutes maximum. Included in this project would be a new 900-foot concrete trestle at Jalama Creek. This infrastructure improvement project would allow for maximum train speeds to increase from 60 mph to 79 mph, with the possibility of future speeds up to 90 mph.

- **San Augustine to Sacate Curve Realignments (SB-06D):** This project, 35 miles north of Santa Barbara, would realign seven existing curves between MP 328.20 to MP 332.90 to a maximum of 1 degree, 30 minutes each, allowing for maximum train speeds to increase from 65 mph to 79mph, with the possibility of future train speeds up to 90 mph.
- **Gaviota to Tajiguas Curve Realignments (SB-06E):** This project, located 30 miles north of Santa Barbara, would realign four existing curves between MP 335.10 and 341.00 to a maximum 1 minute 30 degree curvature each. The project would require construction of 1.50 miles of retaining wall and the re-construction of 1.76 miles of rail. This project would allow for maximum train speeds to increase from 79 mph to a possible 90 mph.
- **Tajiguas to Ellwood Curve Realignments (SB-06F):** This major curve realignment project, located 13 miles north of Santa Barbara, would realign eleven curves, totalling 4.70 miles of main line track, between Tajiguas and Ellwood, from MP 341.40 to MP 354.40, to reduce track curvature. The project would construct 3.20 miles of new main track and 3.00 miles of retaining walls. The curvature of eight existing curves would be reduced to two degrees maximum. The infrastructure improvement project would reduce trip times by allowing maximum train speeds to increase from 65 to 79 mph, with the possibility of future train speeds up to 90 mph.

Narlon, Honda, Concepcion – Island CTC (SB-07 – Near-Term): This project would upgrade three sidings in Northern Santa Barbara County to CTC. At each siding:

- Narlon – MP 289.90,
- Honda – MP 304.60, and
- Concepcion – MP 322.00.

New power-operated No. 24 turnouts and control points would be installed, and the track and ties on each siding would be replaced. This project is estimated to cost \$30M.

Capitan Siding Extension and Island CTC (SB-08 – Near-Term): This project would extend the existing siding at Capitan, MP 346.50, to 9,000 feet. New power-operated Number 24 turnouts and control points would be installed, and the track and ties on this siding would be replaced. This project is estimated to cost \$10M.

Goleta Service Track Extension (SB-09 – Near-Term): This project would extend the existing service track at Goleta Station, add a new power-operated Number 20 turnout at the current stub end, and relocate the existing train wash. This project is estimated to cost \$10M.

Sandyland Siding (SB-10 – Vision): This project would add a new 11,000-foot siding from MP 373.25 to MP 378.10, north of the existing Carpinteria station, and would incorporate the Carpinteria siding (**SB-12**) built earlier. It would involve widening two pre-stressed concrete box bridges, one 36' and the other 65'. There are two road crossings within the siding, and it is bordered by a salt marsh that is managed by the University of California, Santa Barbara. Much of the siding would be hidden in the cut from Highway 101, minimizing visual impacts. Benefits of this project would be increased capacity, reduced trip times, and improved operational reliability. The siding would feature power-operated Number 24 turnouts and control points. The cost of this project is estimated to be \$15M.

Ortega Siding (SB-11 – Near-Term): The south end of Ortega siding has been removed and the remaining portion is now used as a stub track for maintenance equipment. This project would

reconstruct and lengthen this siding to 9,240 feet. Power-operated Number 24 turnouts would be installed and control points. Benefits of the project, estimated at \$20M, would be increased capacity and operational efficiency for all trains operating north of Los Angeles. The siding could be constructed within the existing right-of-way, facilitating the permitting process.

Carpinteria Siding (SB-12 – Near-Term): This project would construct a new siding at the Carpinteria Station. The siding would be 2,640-feet-long, and would include Number 24 power-operated turnouts, as well as a new passenger platform to facilitate use of both tracks. The estimated cost of this project is \$10M.

6.4.3 VENTURA COUNTY

Figure 6-5 provides a map showing the relative location of rail improvement projects in Ventura County and the proposed timelines for their implementation. Table 6-10 provides a summary of Ventura County projects, their timelines, and their estimated costs.

**Table 6-10
Ventura County Projects**

Project Number	Project Name / Project Type	Current Timeline	Estimated Project Cost
V-01	Rincon Siding	Vision	\$10M
V-02	Seacliff Siding North	Near-Term	\$18M
V-03	Seacliff Curves Realignment	Near-Term	\$10M
V-04	Santa Clara River Curve Realignment	Near-Term	\$6M
V-05	Montalvo Curve Realignment	Near-Term	\$2M
V-06	Oxnard North Platform	Vision	\$8-\$15M ²⁵
V-07	Leesdale Siding Extension*	Immediate	\$15M
V-08	Oxnard-Camarillo Second Main Track	Vision	\$15M
V-09	North Camarillo Crossover	Vision	\$1M
V-10	CP West Camarillo Curve Realignment	Near-Term	\$5M
V-11	Camarillo Station Pedestrian Crossing*	Immediate	\$1M
V-12	CP Las Posas to MP 423 Second Main Track	Vision	\$51M
V-13	Simi Valley to CP Strathearn Second Main Track	Vision	\$42M
V-14	Strathearn Siding Curve Realignment	Near-Term	\$1M
V-15	Los Angeles Avenue Grade Separation	Vision	\$93M
V-16	CP Davis to Simi Valley Station Second Main Track	Vision	\$36M
	Estimated Total - Ventura County Projects		\$314-321M

* Project categorized from “Near-Term” based on capacity modeling, to “Immediate” based on local financial commitment.

²⁵ The estimated project cost is provided as a range. Costs would depend on whether an above-grade or below-grade pedestrian crossing was selected.