



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) will serve as the Lead Agency, consistent with Section 15020 and 15021 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the proposed **Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station** project (“project”). The Pajaro-Watsonville Station was included in TAMC’s 2006 CEQA Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and project approval, which was subsequently amended in 2013. TAMC is requesting your input on the scope and content of the environmental issues and alternatives to be evaluated in the SEIR. Responsible agencies may need to use the SEIR to be prepared by TAMC when considering permits or other approvals for the project, and trustee agencies should plan to review and comment on the SEIR with respect to trust resources within their jurisdiction.

PROJECT LOCATION: The project would be located in the unincorporated community of Pajaro in Monterey County, within or near the Watsonville Junction (see attached figure). The City of Watsonville in Santa Cruz County is just northwest of the site across the Pajaro River and the project site is approximately 1.5 miles from downtown Watsonville. Much of the project area is currently owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and is considered a light industrial land use area. The project area lies within a predominantly agricultural region, with nearby urban development in the city of Watsonville to the north.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: This NOP is available for public review and comment pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15082(b). The 35-day public comment period, during which time TAMC will receive comments on the NOP for the SEIR, begins November 1, 2024 and ends on December 6, 2024 at 5:00 PM. Comments should be sent to the address provided at the end of this notice.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: TAMC has been planning the extension of rail service to Monterey County for over twenty five years through the Monterey County Rail Extension Project. The Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station project is Phase 2 of that larger program. Initial transit service at the Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station would be provided by Caltrain, Amtrak Coast Starlight, Monterey-Salinas Transit, and Santa Cruz Metro. The goal of the Monterey County Rail Extension Project with the long-range “Vision Service,” as described in the 2023 California State Rail Plan and the TAMC Monterey Bay Network Integration Study, is to build out the regional and intercity rail network to connect Monterey County to Santa Cruz County and other rail services within the statewide rail network. A future passenger rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Line provided by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission would use the Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station. Additionally, the planned “Round the Bay” service would extend service around the Monterey Bay area and through the Monterey Branch Line.

The project aims to achieve several key objectives:

1. Improve regional mobility by providing a direct connection to the state's passenger rail network;
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality by encouraging a shift from private vehicle use to public transit;
3. Increase transit ridership by offering convenient, efficient, and integrated transportation services;
4. Enhance transportation equity by improving access for disadvantaged communities to employment, education, and healthcare centers in Silicon Valley, San Jose, and the greater San Francisco Bay Area;

5. Support local and regional planning efforts for sustainable, transit-oriented development; and
6. Create a multimodal transportation center that seamlessly integrates various transit modes, including intercity rail, local and regional bus services, and active transportation options.

The Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station is designed to be a major transit hub serving Monterey and Santa Cruz County residents, providing access to multiple transportation modes. The station would serve as a key component of TAMC's larger Monterey County Rail Extension project, which aims to extend passenger rail service from Gilroy to Salinas to provide viable alternative transportation options for commuters, visitors, and residents traveling from Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties to the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. At the start of service, the station would be served by:

1. Two or more daily round trips on Caltrain between Salinas and San Francisco;
2. One daily round trip on Amtrak's Coast Starlight;
3. Local and regional bus connections provided by Monterey-Salinas Transit and Santa Cruz Metro;
4. Future potential for expanded regional rail service between Santa Cruz and Monterey; and
5. Service from a train coming from San Luis Obispo.

The multimodal nature of the station would be further enhanced by its strategic location at the junction of the UP Coast Mainline tracks, which run north-south, and the Santa Cruz Branch Line, which extends west toward Santa Cruz. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission is advancing their Zero Emission Passenger Rail Transit project on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, which will include the Coastal Rail Trail and Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, and both the rail service and trail are anticipated to connect to the Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station in the future. The proposed station would be constructed within UP right-of-way at the Watsonville Junction and would include the following station amenities:

- A passenger rail loading platform;
- Platform shelters, lighting, landscaping, furniture and fixtures, ticket vending machines, and information displays;
- Bus, shuttle, and van loading and unloading berths with shelters and information displays
- Bicycle facilities and bicycle access to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail and Coastal Rail Trail;
- Sidewalks and pedestrian access to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail and Coastal Rail Trail;
- Parking spaces, including accessible and electric vehicle charging stalls; and
- Improved access via a new signalized intersection at Salinas Road and Lewis Road.

The project would also include analysis of track improvements along the UP Coast Line to provide a separate station track, to allow for a straight/tangent station platform as per UP design criteria, and would meet additional UP design criteria as required.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES: As required by CEQA, TAMC will consider multiple project alternatives, which must be potentially feasible and meet most of the project objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening significant environmental impacts of the project. As part of this scoping process, TAMC is soliciting input from agencies and the public on alternatives that should be considered for evaluation within the alternatives section of the SEIR. Comments regarding alternatives should include a clear narrative and graphic description to the extent possible. Comments on this subject will be most helpful if they include the author's thoughts regarding how well they might meet the project objectives (described above) and reduce environmental impacts.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The SEIR will address the potential physical environmental effects of the project for each of the environmental topics outlined in the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G. The SEIR will also address the cumulative impacts resulting from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

As of the date of this NOP and based on currently available information, it is anticipated that the project may have potentially significant impacts in connection with Aesthetics/Visual Resources, Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology/Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Noise, and Population and Housing. As part of this scoping process, TAMC is soliciting input from agencies and the public on the potential environmental effects that should be considered for evaluation within the SEIR.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: Pursuant to the public participation goals of CEQA, as set forth in particular in Public Resources Code Section 21083.9(a), TAMC, in its role as Lead Agency, will hold a public scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for the public and representatives of public agencies to address the scope of the SEIR. The scoping meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 20, 2024, at the following time and location:

Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Pajaro Middle School, Multipurpose Room
250 Salinas Road
Pajaro, California 95076

In addition to the official CEQA scoping meeting, TAMC will also be holding an additional online open house meeting throughout the Scoping Period from November 1, 2024 through December 6, 2024 to provide members of the community and other interested parties an opportunity to learn more about the project and to provide scoping comments. The information shared and feedback solicited will be similar to that of the scoping meeting. Please visit bit.ly/PajaroStation for a web link to the online open house meeting.

COMMENTING ON THE SCOPE OF THE SEIR. TAMC welcomes agency and public input regarding environmental factors potentially affected (listed above) and project alternatives to be considered for evaluation. All written comments will be considered and must be submitted by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 6, 2024, to TAMC via one of the following methods:

Email:

PajaroStation@publicinput.com

Please include "Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station Project" in the subject heading

Phone:

855-925-2801, Project Code: 7342

Project Webpage:

Via the comment form at bit.ly/PajaroStation, or scan the QR code and go to the comment form.

Mail:

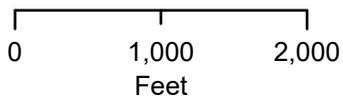
TAMC

Attn: Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station Project

55-B Plaza Circle

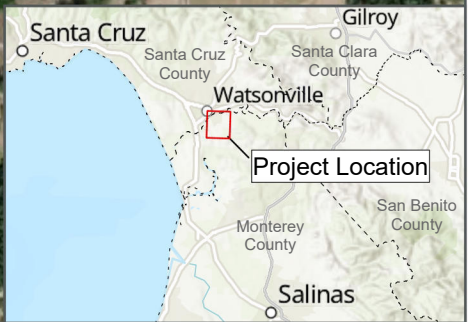
Salinas, CA 93901





- Railroad
- Pajaro River
- Area of Potential Station Improvement Options
- Potential Platform Location Options

DISCLAIMER : Map information was compiled from the best available sources. No warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness.



PROJECT LOCATION MAP

