



San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority

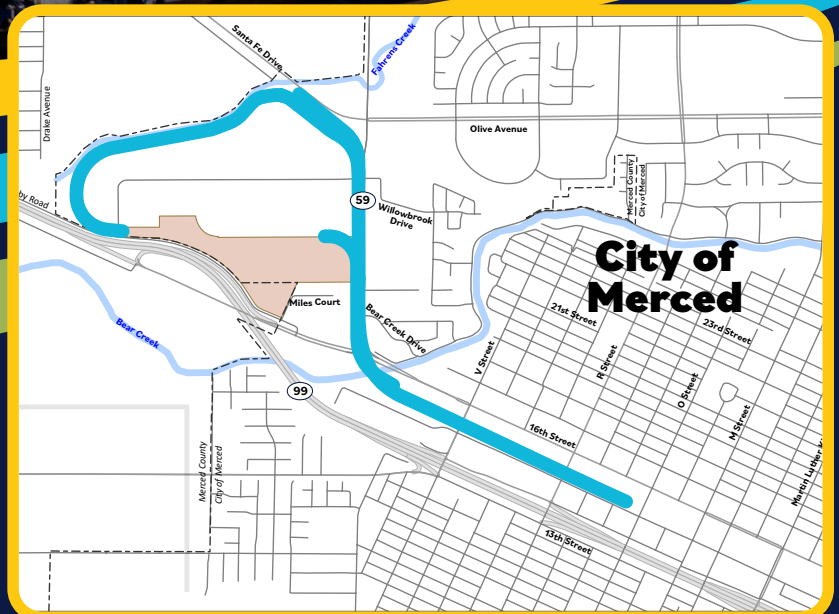


Appendix 1.0-1:

Merced Intermodal Track Connection Scoping Memorandum

July 2024

SCH # 2023010061





Scoping Memorandum

To:	Dan Leavitt, SJJPA
From:	Cathy Paskin and Joey Goldman, Kearns & West
Cc:	David DeRosa, AECOM; Jessica Viramontes and Rich Walter, ICF
Date:	March 17, 2023
Re:	Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - Scoping Summary

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), serving as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project), issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project on January 5, 2023 (Attachment A). The issuance of the NOP initiated an environmental scoping period for the Project from January 5, 2023, to February 19, 2023. This memorandum summarizes the scoping process and issues raised in scoping comments.

Scoping Notification

Agencies, organizations, and individuals directly or indirectly affected by the Project were notified of the preparation of the EIR and how to participate in and attend the in-person scoping meeting. Notification materials announced the dates of the scoping period, the date and time of the scoping meeting, an overview of the Project, and instructions for submitting scoping comments. A summary of the public notification process, the NOP, and the scoping meeting is included below. Attachment A includes the NOP.

Newspaper Notices

A public notice was published in two newspapers, the Merced Sun-Star and the Merced County Times, on January 5, 2023, announcing the start of the scoping comment period and scoping meeting date. The newspaper notice ran again in both newspapers on January 19, 2023, one week before the scoping meeting. Attachment B includes copies of the newspaper notices.

NOP Mailing

A postcard notification regarding the NOP was sent via U.S. Postal Service first-class mail to 1,802 responsible and trustee agencies as well as additional organizations, interested parties, nearby landowners, and nearby current residents. The postcard notifications were mailed on January 9, 2023, approximately two weeks before the scoping meeting. Attachment C includes a copy of the postcard notification used for the NOP mailing. The NOP was also

submitted to the State Clearinghouse and the Merced County Clerk in advance of the January 5, 2023 publication of the NOP.

Email Notifications

On January 13, 2023, an email was distributed to individuals who requested to subscribe to the Project email list, as well as organizations that were identified by SJJPA, the City of Merced, and the consulting team. Attachment D includes a copy of the email notification.

Website Updates

A Project webpage was published at <https://sijpa.com/mitc/>. The webpage includes Project overview information, scoping materials, the NOP, other Project documents, and additional information. During the scoping period, the webpage provided details on how to submit comments, where and when to attend the scoping meeting, and included an online form to submit comments. Attachment E includes a copy of the online form to submit comments. The webpage also continues to provide an option for individuals to subscribe to the Project email list.

Social Media

SJJPA and the City of Merced used their social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) to distribute the NOP and scoping meeting notifications. Attachment F includes copies of the social media posts.

NOP and scoping meeting notices were posted to social media on the following dates:

SJJPA Facebook	SJJPA Twitter	City of Merced Facebook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">January 13, 2023January 16, 2023January 23, 2023January 27, 2023February 8, 2023February 17, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">January 13, 2023January 16, 2023January 23, 2023January 27, 2023February 8, 2023February 17, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">January 21, 2023January 23, 2023January 26, 2023January 27, 2023February 8, 2023

In-Person Scoping Meeting

The scoping meeting for the Project took place at the Merced Senior Community Center (755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340) on January 26, 2023, between 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm. A total of 35 individuals attended the scoping meeting.

Located in the lobby area was a sign-in table, two tables with hard copies of the scoping comment form, two comment boxes, two laptops displaying the online scoping comment form, and a court reporter to transcribe oral scoping comments. Meeting attendees were greeted in the lobby and asked to sign-in (provide a name, address, email, and phone number) and then entered the meeting room.

The meeting was set up as a public open house with informational display tables around the perimeter of the meeting room and a presentation podium and audience seats in the center of the room. The informational display tables addressed the following topics:

Project Overview Displays

- What is the project?
- What are the objectives?

- Who is involved?
- What is the process?

Engineering & Environmental Displays

- What is the process for future acquisition and easement?
- What is an EIR and what impacts are being evaluated?
- Scoping and Commenting
- Right-of-way booklet

Commenting Display

- Your role in the Project (commenting, how to stay involved)

SJJPA staff led a PowerPoint presentation that began at 6:20 pm. The presentation provided an overview of the Project and the CEQA process, with the purpose of informing attendees that SJJPA is evaluating the Project under CEQA and soliciting public comment regarding the type and extent of environmental analyses to be prepared for the Project.

Following the presentation, interested agencies, organizations, and individuals had the opportunity to return to the informational display tables to review maps and process diagrams, and ask questions of staff related to the scope and content of the EIR. Attendees were also invited to submit scoping comments orally via court reporter, in writing using a printed comment form, or in writing using a computer form during the scoping meeting; attendees were also told that scoping comments could be submitted via mail or email through February 19, 2023.

In addition to the Project-specific informational display tables, additional tables were staffed by California High-Speed Rail, the City of Merced, and the Merced County Association of Governments. A Spanish language interpreter was present to assist Spanish-speaking participants and a “kid’s table” included MITC Project coloring pages and crayons. Refreshments were also available.

Attachment G includes the boards displayed at the informational display tables and the scoping meeting presentation.

Summary of Key Issues Raised

Between January 5, 2023, and February 19, 2023, scoping comments were received from public agencies, local organizations, and individuals. The following is a summary of the key issues raised during the scoping period. This summary is not intended to be exhaustive; rather it is intended to highlight major concerns raised in comments about the scope and content of the EIR. Attachment H includes copies of all written comments received via USPS mail, email, the online comment form, and during the in-person scoping meeting.

Project Features and Operations

- Concern about the plan for the existing Amtrak San Joaquins Station on 24th Street to be discontinued as part of the Project.
- Request that parking be shaded with solar panels.
- Concern about the California High-Speed Rail Authority’s plan to close G Street and a suggested underpass to allow traffic to flow.
- Describe the intended route of the 12 San Joaquin round trips referenced in the NOP and clarify whether the additional round trips may be subject to negotiating new agreements with UPRR.

- Concerns about anything that compromises or restricts UPRR's access to current and future customers, including those customers in the industrial park in Merced.
- The EIR should analyze impacts to freight rail operations and capacity and the potential effect to prevent the ability to grade separate existing at-grade rail crossings.
- Recommendation that SJJPA continue working with UPRR to develop a Project that meets UPRR safety and engineering guidelines.

Environmental Analysis

- Concern about the displacement of residents and businesses and whether there are plans to relocate the Senior Center and Boys and Girls Club.
- Concern about growth from the Project (changing "small town" to "big town").
- Concern about potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods including flood risk between Highway 59 and Bear Creek and the potential for railroad berms to impede flood flows.
- Concern about increased noise including from trains and the maintenance facility.
- Concern about increased traffic congestion on Highway 59 and 16th Street.
- Concern about potential impacts to special-status species including the State threatened Swainson's Hawk because the Project would involve noise, groundwork, and movement of workers that could affect nests and has the potential to result in nest abandonment.
- Recommendation that Project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February through mid-September), the Project must not violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes.
- Reminder that Central Valley Flood Protection Board approval is required for all proposed encroachments within a floodway, on adjacent levees, and within any Regulated Stream identified in Title 23, Table 8.1.
- Concerns about graffiti and vandalism.

Alternatives

- Suggestion to move the San Joaquins trains to the Union Pacific line servicing the Turlock and Modesto stations along the Union Pacific line.
- Suggestion to end San Joaquin service at Stockton given ACE service plans for extension of service from Stockton to Merced.
- Passenger rail structures should not be on UP property and the EIR should include alternatives and necessary property outside of UP's ROW as part of those alternatives.

Support for the Project

- Support for the Project as a scalable solution for California's mobility.
- Support that the MITC project is the key link in creating single transportation hub in central Merced bringing together ACE, San Joaquin Service and High-Speed Rail.

Other

- Request to explore the opportunity for educational developmental training for local young adults that might be interested in careers either at the maintenance yard or the transportation system in general.
- Requests to receive Project information.

Attachment A: Notice of Preparation



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

SCOPING PERIOD: THURSDAY JANUARY 5, 2023 – SUNDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2023

DATE: January 5, 2023
TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
FROM: San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project). SJJPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that SJJPA plans to prepare the EIR and to request input on the scope of the environmental analysis to be performed. From public agencies, we are inviting comments on the scope and context of the environmental information relevant to each agency's statutory responsibilities for the Project. SJJPA is also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of what environmental topics the EIR will evaluate and what alternatives are to be evaluated.

A. Scoping Period

The public scoping period will begin on Thursday, January 5, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023. Please send written comments to:

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Your comments may also be sent by email to Information@MITCProject.org. Please include "MITC Project" in the subject line.

B. Scoping Meeting

The scoping meeting for the Project will take place in person at the following location, date, and time:

- Merced Senior Community Center (755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340) – January 26, 2023 (6:00 pm – 8:00 pm)

Visit the Project webpage at <https://sjjpa.com/mitc/> to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting. The scoping meeting will begin with a presentation providing an overview of the Project and the CEQA process. Following the presentation, interested agencies, organizations, and individuals will have the

opportunity to visit informational open house stations and ask questions related to the scope and content of the EIR.

C. Project History

SJJPA manages the Amtrak San Joaquins intercity rail service between Bakersfield and Oakland. SJJPA has been working with the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC), California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), the City of Merced, Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) and the Early Train Operator for the California High-Speed Rail (CAHSR) Project to integrate the San Joaquins and the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) passenger rail services with the HSR service to Merced, as shown on Figure 1. SJRRRC operates ACE commuter rail service between San Jose and Stockton.

To most efficiently integrate the San Joaquins and ACE rail services with the Merced to Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment and future Phase I HSR service, CHSRA, CalSTA, Caltrans, the City of Merced, SJJPA, and SJRRRC are planning for a new integrated station in downtown Merced between O and R Streets that will connect three services:

- **ACE Rail Service:** SJRRRC is in the development process of extending ACE service to Merced between O and R Streets (which would become part of the proposed new integrated station).¹ SJRRRC environmentally cleared the ACE service entering the proposed integrated station in 2021.
- **HSR Service:** The 2012 Record of Decision for the California HSR Merced to Fresno section² approved an HSR station northwest of G Street and 16th Street in Merced. CHSRA, in coordination with SJJPA and the City of Merced, is environmentally reviewing the potential relocation of the station from the currently proposed site at G Street to a proposed new integrated station between O and R Streets.
- **San Joaquins Rail Service:** The Project proposes infrastructure improvements to connect the San Joaquins service to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced. This will result in connecting the San Joaquins rail service to the interim HSR operations (and future Silicon Valley to Central Valley and Phase I HSR service) in downtown Merced by creating a direct link between the BNSF Railway (BNSF) alignment and the integrated Merced station. The Project concept is included in the SJJPA 2022 *Business Plan Update*,³ which was approved by the SJJPA Board of Directors.

The Project includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced, in addition to a new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and HSR. The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated station.

¹ ICF, *ACE Ceres-Merced Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report*, April 2021, https://acerail.com/wp-content/uploads/00a_Ceres-Merced_Draft_Cover-Page_Title-Page_Table-of-Contents.pdf.

² CHSRA, *California High Speed Rail, Merced to Fresno Record of Decision*. September 8, 2012. https://hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/docs/programs/merced-fresno-eir/final_EIR_MerFres_FRA09182012.pdf.

³ SJJPA, *2022 Business Plan Update*, <https://sjjpa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022-SJJPA-Business-Plan-Update.pdf>, Accessed November 22, 2022.

CHSRA is planning to construct the Merced to Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment by 2030 and to extend the HSR service to the Bay Area after 2030 (referred to as Silicon Valley to Central Valley HSR). When the Merced to Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment is operational, the San Joaquins passenger rail service between Merced and Bakersfield would be replaced by the HSR service and the SJJPA would terminate the San Joaquins intercity rail service in Merced. HSR will provide faster, more reliable, and more frequent service than the San Joaquins currently provides between Merced and Bakersfield.

Implementing the Project would allow direct transfers from San Joaquins service to HSR at the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced. The San Joaquins would offer intercity service between the San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area)/Sacramento and northern San Joaquin Valley. The Project would provide a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and HSR for passengers traveling between the Bay Area/Sacramento and Madera/ Fresno/ Kings/ Tulare/ Bakersfield/Southern California (via Thruway bus connection).

Without the Project, passengers would disembark at the existing San Joaquins station at West 24th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way and would have to walk to the HSR station, take the bus, use rideshare or taxis, or use a shuttle between the stations. Additionally, without the Project, the transfer would not be integrated and would be inconvenient for potential riders, resulting in decreased ridership on HSR and the San Joaquins. Without an integrated connection many of the benefits of the HSR Early Operating Segment (and future Phase I HSR service) would not be realized. The Early Train Operator for CHSRA developed the *Central Valley Segment System Management & Operations Interim Financial Plan* in support of the CHSRA business plans.⁴ The report emphasizes the importance of the connections from ACE and San Joaquins to HSR, including:

“In conclusion, interim HSR services between Merced – Bakersfield creates significant value, when connected to the total existing corridor (including ACE, San Joaquins and bus network). The development of an integrated service concept with optimized connections results in improved services and reduction in travel time for the passenger.”⁵

“When comparing the 2029 No Build to the 2029 Build, the total system ridership increase is +121%, or from 3,969,000 to 8,776,000 ridership respectively. This increase is supported by a significant growth in service frequency and connectivity provided by the ACE, San Joaquins and bus services that are designed to complement the High-Speed Rail service between Merced and Bakersfield.”⁶

The *Central Valley Segment System Management & Operations Interim Financial Plan* outlines an integrated service concept evaluated jointly with CHSRA and SJRRP/SJJPA with the goal of maximizing systemwide ridership while balancing operations and maintenance costs. The integrated service concept is for the year 2030 and would achieve 12 San Joaquins round-trip trains per day (and 6 ACE round-trip trains per day) in Merced.⁷

⁴ CHSRA, *Central Valley Segment System Management & Operations Interim Financial Plan*, June 10, 2020, https://hsr-test.hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/docs/about/business_plans/2020_Business_Plan_CV_Segment_System_Mgmt_Operations_Interim_Fin_plan.pdf.

⁵ Ibid. Page 24.

⁶ Ibid. Page 180.

⁷ Ibid.

Before COVID-19, seven San Joaquins round-trip trains per day provided service to Merced. The MITC environmental process will evaluate San Joaquins service to best integrate with HSR and achieve the 2030 integrated service concept (2030 Build with HSR) for at least 12 San Joaquins round-trip trains per day into the proposed new integrated station.

D. Project Location

As shown on Figure 1, the Project is located entirely within Merced County and almost entirely within the city limits of Merced. A small portion of the Project near Ashby Road and Miles Court is outside the city limits of Merced. The new track for the Project would run from the BNSF corridor just north of where it crosses Snelling Highway (State Route [SR] 59) to the north to a station platform at the proposed integrated station located between R and O Streets in downtown Merced to the south.

E. Project Goals and Objectives

The primary objectives of the Project are to create a seamless cross-platform connection between the San Joaquins Intercity Service and the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment and future Phase I HSR service, to increase intercity passenger rail ridership, to reduce vehicle miles traveled, to improve regional air quality, and to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These objectives are outlined below.

- **Integrate and create a seamless connection between the San Joaquins service and the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment and future Phase I HSR service in Merced.** Relocating the San Joaquin's station in Merced would align with the planned HSR station and allow passengers to transfer between services on a shared platform.
- **Enhance San Joaquins service to better serve regional markets.** Integrating the San Joaquins with the HSR system would improve the connection of regional markets between the Bay Area/Sacramento and the northern San Joaquin Valley and increase ridership and service benefits.
- **Reduce traffic congestion, improve regional air quality, and reduce GHG emissions.** The Project would improve intercity passenger rail service between the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento Region, and Bay Area providing a transportation alternative to the automobile that reduces GHG emissions.

F. Project Description

As shown on Figure 1, the Project would extend the San Joaquins intercity passenger rail service from the BNSF corridor to a proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets. The Project would consist of the following:

- New passenger rail connection for the San Joaquins from the BNSF north of SR 59, running along the SR 59 corridor and immediately west of the ACE/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station, including these features:
 - New at-grade track on the west side of SR 59 crossing Cooper Avenue, which would include right-of-way (ROW) procurement, business relocations, and California Public Utility Commission approval and proceeding southward

- New aerial guideway to span 16th Street, Bear Creek, and the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the proposed integrated station
- Shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 59, requiring ROW procurement and new bridge over Bear Creek
- New aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquins) including ROW procurement for columns and aerial easement
- Expansion of the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility to include new and upgraded tracks for San Joaquins trains and joint use of the initial facility for both ACE and San Joaquins trains, as discussed below.

As part of the Project, the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility would need to be expanded to facilitate the termination of the San Joaquins service in Merced. The expansion would include tracks to provide access for San Joaquins trains to move from the elevated Merced Station to the Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility for cleaning and light maintenance.⁸ The expansion would provide space for San Joaquins trains to layover between station arrivals and departures and for staging to re-enter the station. At full buildout, the Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility would be able to store eight trains at any given time.

Parking needs at the integrated station for San Joaquins passengers will be evaluated in collaboration with the City of Merced, CHSRA, and the other modes connecting to the integrated station.

The Project is the critical link between the San Joaquins service and HSR service, allowing the San Joaquin's Intercity Rail and ACE to connect to the future HSR. The Project is a crucial piece to the overall vision of megaregional rail in Northern California.

H. Potential Environmental Effects

SJJPA has initially determined that the following topics will be included for evaluation in the EIR for the Project:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources (including Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils

⁸ The track from the at-grade ACE station to the maintenance facility can't be used by the San Joaquins which must be elevated to cross over the UPRR and serve HSR's elevated station.

- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Safety and Security (including Wildfire)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will consider both temporary construction-period and permanent (operational) impacts. The EIR will also include a cumulative impact analysis of the impacts of the Project in combination with other planned projects, including railway projects, transportation improvements, and land use plans and projects along the Project corridor.

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR.

I. Alternatives

As required by CEQA, the EIR will consider a reasonable range of alternatives in addition to the Project. SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding feasible alternatives for evaluation in the EIR. After consideration of input from project scoping and development of environmental analysis of the Project, SJJPA will consider the need for analysis of additional alternatives. Only alternatives that are feasible, meet most of the Project objectives, and reduce one or more significant environmental impacts of the Project will be analyzed in detail in the Alternatives chapter of the EIR. Alternatives that are infeasible, that do not meet most of the Project objectives, or that do not reduce one of more significant environmental impacts of the Project will be discussed briefly in the EIR as to why they were dismissed from further consideration but will not be analyzed in the EIR as allowed by the requirements of CEQA.

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the potential alternatives that will be considered in the EIR.

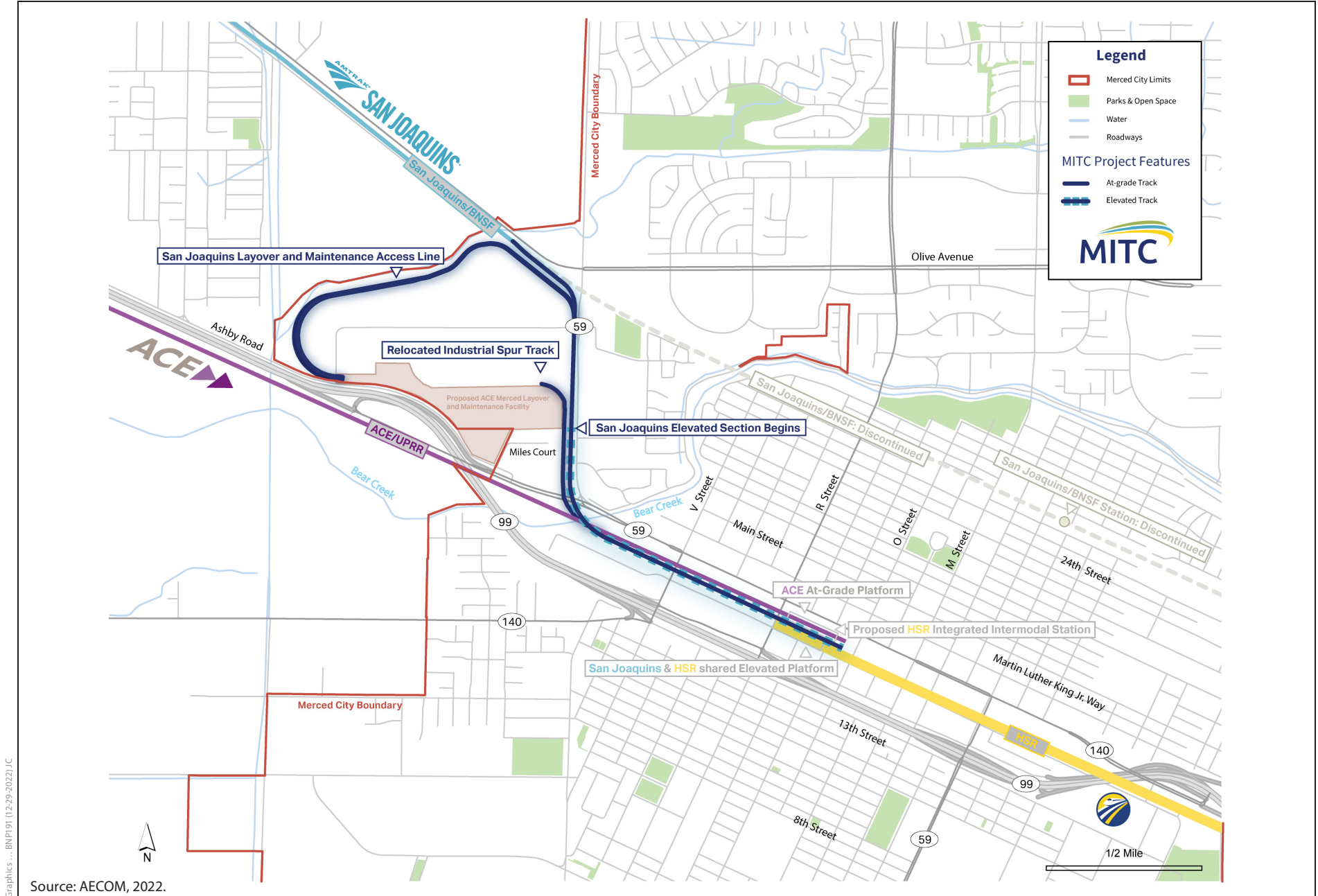


Figure 1
Project Features
Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

Attachment B: Newspaper Notices

Merced County Times, January 5, 2023

LIFE TIMES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 2023

Medical Ministries providing the world with needed supplies

By JOHN M. DERRY,
The Times Publisher

Joyce Eden showed up at a recent Merced Sunrise Rotary meeting with a message which is hard to believe.

She is the director of Medical Ministries International (MMI), an organization based in Fresno that not only serves the Central Valley, but the entire world.

Every year, millions of dollars worth of medical supplies and equipment go to waste because they are outdated, or left over from procedures.

MMI is an organization

which specializes in collecting these medical supplies and gently-used equipment, and sends them to places where these items are scarce. Some supplies, such as a baby scale or blood pressure equipment, are essential. A surprising number of infants die of dehydration in regions where there's a lack of proper equipment to care for them.

Through the generous donations of medical centers, doctors' offices and clinics, and even families who have lost a loved one, the items are collected, sorted, tested and

packaged. They are then selected for donation to clinics or hospitals outside of the United States, with the recipient sharing the cost of shipping. The cost of shipping medical supplies in a 40-foot shipping container costs from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

MMI sends a great deal of these medical supplies to nations in Africa, such as Sierra Leone; however, there was a shipment recently to Mongolia.

MMI is a non-profit organization in which 90 percent of the work is done by volunteers. Its main storage buildings are located in



Joyce Eden of Medical Ministries International.

Fresno. MMI was started 24 years ago and has been growing steadily ever since. They are on the web at: medministries.org

Eden was born and



Volunteers in the sorting room of a Medical Ministries International warehouse in Fresno.

raised on the west coast of Africa and she has firsthand knowledge of the needs in this underdeveloped area of the world.

According to Eden, not

enough people know about Medical Ministries International and she encourages people to Shout Out. "You are all potential ambassadors," she said.

How much does one person really need in this world?

Jim and I have always been frugal.

From the time we started dating—and we created our first budget together—to 35+ years later, it has never been about money or possessions (Although if you look at our library, and you might wonder).

I don't mean to brag, but it's just a fact about us. When we dated, we were planning on living long-term overseas and that kind of prepared us for a life of simplicity and focus. Over the years we have had amazing opportunities to work in a variety of places and we are so thankful for the work we got to do, and the people we got to serve.

We enjoy our adventures of serving overseas and we both work for non-profits.



ROCKING THE BOAT

BY MONIKA GRASLEY

We (almost) own a small home and have everything we need.

Neither one of us was or is career-oriented, and so our decisions on jobs are more based on opportunities, prayer, wise counsel and purpose and mission fit. I

should also say that we do not have children and that makes decisions so different in many ways.

So with that said, I always wonder how much does a person need to feel they have enough.

I know research has shown that most people feel they don't have enough, and yet, when is enough enough?

We live in a world where external possessions are so important, where the keeping up with the Joneses has become the norm, where people go into debt only to be able to show off their treasures.

How many RVs and boats are in long-term storage? How big a house is big enough? How much do we want and then keep in stor-

age facilities?

I wonder how much of our drive to "more" is based on an unrest in our soul, a longing for something more. I wonder if we had deeper relationships that we value, if those things would not seem that important any longer? I wonder if we could learn to share our "toys" with each other if that would reduce the burden of having everything?

A friend of mine has a rich friend who is incredibly generous. He is a person of faith and knows that his identity is not wrapped up in the goods he has, but his relationship with God and others. So, when they go out to the beach to play on his seadocs and a young person admires it, he will allow the youth to use it, and he re-

minds himself and my friend, "It is not mine."

What if we could have that attitude with all our possessions and all our money?

Would it matter less how much a CEO makes? How much stock people have in something? How many toys, or how big a car is? If we had a looser grip on the "mine" and the "bigger and better" would it make our world a better place? Would people become more generous if our attitudes would change to "it's not mine"? I am not talking about distribution of wealth. I am talking about a generous spirit and an open hand and a willingness to share with dignity. It would make our world a better place.

In this new year, let's all consider if we really need the

"thing" or could we use the money more wisely? How about helping a senior with a PGE bill, or a struggling friend with a gift card? What if you could partner with a non-profit and work together on helping people?

35 years into our marriage and it is so easy to impulse buy, to get the latest app or gadget. We are still learning to be good stewards of our resources, still learning on what really matters in life.

I will let you know when we have it down.

Monika Grasley is the director of LifeLine CDC (Community Development Corporation). Contact her by email at: mlgrasley@lifelinecdc.org.



Merced Intermodal Track Connection

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project). SJJPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Project, for which this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being released, includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets, in addition to a new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail (HSR). The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated station. The Project would consist of the following:

- New passenger rail connection for the San Joaquins from the BNSF north of State Route (SR) 99, running along the SR 99 corridor and immediately west of the ACE/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station;
- Shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 99;
- New aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquins); and
- Expansion of the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility to include new and upgraded tracks for San Joaquins trains and joint use of the initial facility for both ACE and San Joaquins trains.

The NOP provides a more detailed description of the Project and can be viewed online at sjjpa.com/mitc.

Scoping Meeting

SJJPA invites you to participate in an in-person scoping meeting, which includes an informational open house, overview of the project, and an opportunity for the public to submit oral and written comments.

Thursday, January 26, 2023

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merced Senior Community Center

755 West 15th Street
Merced, CA 95340

Visit the Project webpage at sjjpa.com/mitc to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting.

Comment Period

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR.

The public scoping period begins on Thursday, January 5, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023.

Comments are accepted at the scoping meeting, by mail, or by email.

By mail: **San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority**
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

By email: information@mitcproject.org
with the subject line "MITC Project"

Questions?

Email information@mitcproject.org or call 209-200-8302.

A Mercedian's prayer: 'We too have our own dream'

I did the invocation at the City Council meeting last week and I was invited by the local MLK team to pray this prayer at the Martin Luther King Jr. event. Because of the weather it got postponed, so here it is:

"Lord, thank you for a new year, thank you for new opportunities, new challenges, new ways of doing things. Thank you for your grace that surrounded us in 2022.

Just like Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream, we too have our own dream.

• We have a dream that



ROCKING THE BOAT

BY MONIKA GRASLEY

this year will be a year of peace, a year where our per-

sonal wars will come to an end, where the wars around the world will cease and we live in shalom.

• We have a dream that we can live in harmony with each other, despite our differences.

• We have a dream that our children will be safe in schools, and able to focus on developing their minds, their characters, and their hearts.

• We have a dream that our young adults will find careers that are fulfilling, where they can use their strengths and giftedness to not only

make a living but also contribute to our community.

• We have a dream that our adults will find a good balance between careers, families and communities and that they share their wisdom and experiences with the younger generation.

• We have a dream that our seniors feel valued for the many contributions they have made, that they are living in safe and stable conditions and have enough money to not have to worry.

• We have a dream that our homeless people not only find shelter, but find com-

munity and purpose for living.

• We have a dream that our City Council will work well together, each using their gifts to make our community a better place.

• We have a dream that our country will unite to be a stable front in a world gone crazy.

• We have a dream that even tonight at this meeting you will be represented well and that the decisions that are being made honor you and help our community.

• We have a dream that our city becomes a city of mercy and justice.

Amen."

Who would have known that the last two weeks would challenge us so much? Who would have thought that we needed to put into action what MLK had preached for so long? To work together, to have a common goal, to bring justice to the oppressed. Merced you have been doing that! We can be proud!

Monika Grasley is the director of LifeLine CDC (Community Development Corporation). Contact her by email at life@lifelinecdc.org.



UC Merced Police Department's officers and staff, along with other UC employees donated water, cleaning supplies, and time to help the residents of Planada recover from the devastating flood.

UC Merced donation drive helps local flooding victims

To help the people of Planada who have been so dramatically affected by the recent floods, the UC Merced Police Department is conducting a drive on campus to gather canned food and other necessary items.

No clothing or furniture is being accepted at this time, but the Police Department is looking for donations of:

- Food, canned/non-perishable
- Disposable plates and utensils

- Bottled water
- Cleaning supplies
- Trash bags
- Toiletries
- Kids' toys (new preferred)

Donations will be accepted each day at the police department on campus through Jan. 20, between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

For large donations, please call the UC Merced Police Department at 209-226-8273 in advance so arrangements can be made to accept the items.

'Give to UC Merced 2022' breaks campus fundraising record

UC Merced's annual month-long fundraising campaign, Give to UC Merced, wrapped up on Dec. 31, 2022, as the most successful in the initiative's history. The effort eclipsed the original goal of \$150,000 to raise \$952,000 in financial support for students, faculty, research, programs, departments and schools throughout the university.

Now in its ninth year — with 2022 marking the third year in a row that the campaign extended through the entire month of December — Give to UC Merced involved all members of the campus community. Once again, students, staff, faculty, parents, alumni and friends were invited to give to areas particularly meaningful to them, ranging from scholarship and fellowship support and programs focused on student health and well-being to specific schools or departments.

A total of 573 unique donors participated in Give to UC Merced, exceeding the goal of 500.

Gift highlights from this year's Give to UC Merced campaign include the establishment of a new alumni scholarship

endowment as well as significant contributions to the Calvin E. Bright High Impact Student Engagement Fund and the Financial Wellness Center to help advance the work of these vital programs.

Additionally, 12 UC Merced donors issued giving challenges by offering donation matches — ranging from \$250 to \$5,000 — to encourage philanthropic support and help increase overall fundraising totals.

"The generosity of UC Merced's community continues to grow by leaps and bounds with each passing year," said Vice Chancellor and Chief External Relations Officer Ed Klotzbier. "The commitment of our supporters to UC Merced is evident every single day, but shines especially bright in December during Give to UC Merced."

Every dollar raised during Give to UC Merced 2022 will also count toward Boldy Forward, the university's first comprehensive fundraising campaign. Boldy Forward is rapidly approaching the halfway point of its goal to raise \$200 million by 2030.



Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project). SJJPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Project, for which this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being released, includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets, in addition to a new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquin and High-Speed Rail (HSR). The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquin platform; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated station. The Project would consist of the following:

- New passenger rail connection for the San Joaquin from the BNSF north of State Route (SR) 59, running along the SR 59 corridor and immediately west of the ACE/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station;
- Shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 59;
- New aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquin); and
- Expansion of the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility to include new and upgraded tracks for San Joaquin trains and joint use of the initial facility for both ACE and San Joaquin trains.

The NOP provides a more detailed description of the Project and can be viewed online at sjjpa.com/mitc.

Scoping Meeting

SJJPA invites you to participate in an in-person scoping meeting, which includes an informational open house, overview of the project, and an opportunity for the public to submit oral and written comments.

Thursday, January 26, 2023

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merced Senior Community Center

755 West 15th Street
Merced, CA 95340

Visit the Project webpage at sjjpa.com/mitc to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting.

Comment Period

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR.

The public scoping period begins on Thursday, January 5, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023.

Comments are accepted at the scoping meeting, by mail, or by email.

By mail: **San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority**
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

By email: information@mitcproject.org
with the subject line "MITC Project"

Questions?

Email information@mitcproject.org or call 209-200-8302.

Attachment C: NOP Mailing

Postcard notification (side 1)



Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project). SJJPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Project, for which this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being released, includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets, in addition to a new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail (HSR). The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated station. The Project would consist of the following:

- New passenger rail connection for the San Joaquins from the BNSF north of State Route (SR) 59, running along the SR 59 corridor and immediately west of the ACE/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station;
- Shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 59;
- New aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquins); and
- Expansion of the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility to include new and upgraded tracks for San Joaquins trains and joint use of the initial facility for both ACE and San Joaquins trains.

The NOP provides a more detailed description of the Project and can be viewed online at sjjpa.com/mitc.

Scoping Meeting

SJJPA invites you to participate in an in-person scoping meeting, which includes an informational open house, overview of the project, and an opportunity for the public to submit oral and written comments.

Thursday, January 26, 2023, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merced Senior Community Center

755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340

Visit the Project webpage at sjjpa.com/mitc to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting.

Comment Period

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR. The public scoping period begins on Thursday, January 5, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023.

Comments are accepted at the scoping meeting, by mail, or by email.

By mail: **San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority**, Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202

By email: information@mitcproject.org
with the subject line "MITC Project"

Questions?

Email information@mitcproject.org or call 209-200-8302.

Para recibir esta información en español, envíe un correo electrónico a information@mitcproject.org o llame al 209-200-8302.

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority MITC Project

<https://sjjpa.com/mitc> | information@mitcproject.org | 209-200-8302

You are invited
Ud. está invitado



MITC

Merced Intermodal Track Connection

Scoping Meeting

SJJPA invites you to participate in an in-person scoping meeting, which includes an informational open house, overview of the project, and an opportunity for the public to submit oral and written comments.

Thursday, January 26, 2023
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merced Senior Community Center, 755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340

Visit the Project webpage at sjjpa.com/mitc to sign up to receive email reminders for the scoping meeting.

Reunión de Alcance del Proyecto

SJJPA lo invita a participar en una reunión de alcance del proyecto en persona, que incluye una exhibición informativa, una descripción general del proyecto y una oportunidad para que el público envíe comentarios orales y escritos.

Jueves, 26 de enero de 2023
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merced Senior Community Center, 755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340

Visite la página web del Proyecto al sjjpa.com/mitc y regístrese para recibir recordatorios por correo electrónico para la reunión de alcance.

Attachment D: Email Notification



Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), consistent with requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements in the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project (Project). SJJPA will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR. In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. SJJPA filed a Notice of Preparation (NOP), which can be found here: [MITC Project Notice of Preparation](#).

MITC Project

The Project, for which this NOP is being released, includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets, in addition to a new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail (HSR). The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated station. Project features are shown in the figure at the bottom of this email.

Scoping Meeting

SJJPA invites you to participate in an in-person scoping meeting, which includes an informational open house, an overview of the Project, and an opportunity for the public to submit oral and written comments.

MITC Scoping Meeting

LOCATION

755 West 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340

DATE AND TIME

01/26/23 6:30pm-01/26/23 8:00pm

Comment Period

SJJPA is seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the scope of the environmental topics that will be analyzed and alternatives to be considered in the EIR. The public scoping period begins on Thursday, January 5, 2023. Written responses and comments on the scope of the Project will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023.

Comments are accepted at the scoping meeting, by mail, or by email.
By mail: San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202

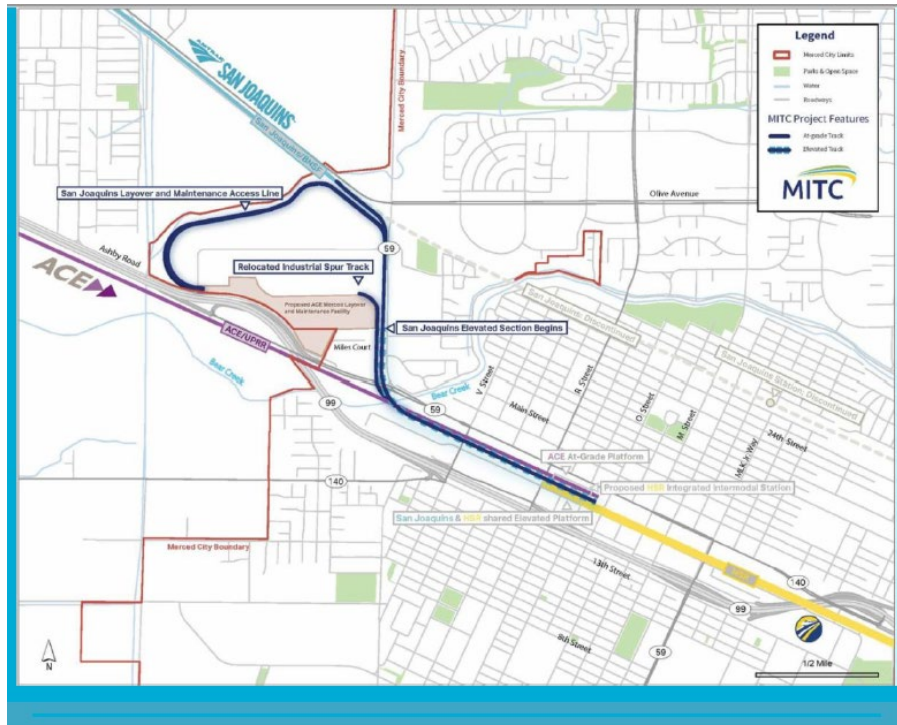
By email: information@mitcproject.org with the subject line "MITC Project"

Please see the attached NOP/Scoping Meeting [postcard](#), which was mailed to addresses near the Project corridor. Feel free to distribute this email to others who may be interested in attending the scoping meeting or receiving updates regarding the Project.

Thank you,

Dan Leavitt

<https://sjjpa.com/mitc/>
information@mitcproject.org
(209) 200-8302



AMTRAKSANJOAQUINS.COM | 1-800-USA-RAIL



Attachment E: Web Comment Form



Notice of Preparation Scoping Comment Form **For use from January 5 to February 19, 2023**

Scoping Comment Form

Available for Public Comment Until February 19, 2023.

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority has published a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the MITC Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

This is a comment form for the MITC Project.

We are looking for your feedback on two things:

- What should be studied in the EIR.
- Feasible alternatives that would meet most of the project objectives and/or avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of the MITC Project.

Please submit your comment using this form by February 19, 2023, at 5 p.m. Alternatively, you may email your comments to Information@MITCProject.org (please include "MITC Project" in the subject line) or mail them to San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, Attn: MITC Project, 949 East Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202.

Public comments submitted for the MITC Project will become part of the public record.

For more information on the MITC Project visit sjjpa.com/mitc

Your Name

Short answer text

Mailing address

Long answer text


Email address

Short answer text

Your comments

Long answer text

Attachment F: Social Media Posts





Amtrak San Joaquins

January 27 at 2:52 PM · 🌐

The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. We hosted a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26.

Couldn't make it? Learn more and submit your comments by 5 pm on Feb. 19:
<https://loom.ly/vWlnE5E>






MITC
Merced Intermodal Track Connection

Scoping Meeting Follow Up

Submit Your Comments by
Sunday, February 19, 2023 at 5pm
Visit [SJVTA.COM/MTIC](https://www.sjvta.com/mtc) for more details

 4

3 shares

Amtrak San Joaquins @SanJoaquins · 45m

The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. We intend to prepare a CEQA environmental impact report.

Learn more on our website: sjjpa.com/mitc #SanJoaquins

The map illustrates the proposed rail alignment for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project. The alignment starts at the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor and runs through the Merced City Limits, connecting to the proposed integrated station. Key features include the San Joaquins Elevated Section, ACE at-grade platform, and the proposed integrated intermodal station. The map also shows existing roads, city limits, and the Merced River. A legend identifies the project features and symbols used on the map.



Amtrak San Joaquins @SanJoaquins · Jan 23

...

Reminder – we are preparing an EIR for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project, and we want to hear from you! Join us for a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center.

Learn more at: sjjpa.com/mitc #SanJoaquins



162



Amtrak San Joaquins @SanJoaquins · Jan 16

...

Interested in transit connections in the City of Merced? We are beginning the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project, and we want to hear from you! Join us for a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center.



184



Amtrak San Joaquins @SanJoaquins · Jan 27

The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. If you missed yesterday's CEQA scoping meeting, you can still submit comments!

Submit yours by 5 pm on 2/19: loom.ly/vWlnE5E



525



City of Merced - Home

5d · 🌐


The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. A CEQA environmental impact report will be prepared. Learn more by visiting: <https://sjjpa.com/mitc>

Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project




12

4 shares



City of Merced - Home
2d · 🌐

Reminder – Learn about the EIR for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project, Project coordinators want to hear from you. Join the CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center. Learn more:




SJJPA.COM

Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority


👍 8

3 comments 3 shares



City of Merced - Home
4d · 🌐

Interested in transit connections in the City of Merced? Learn more about the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project. Project coordinators want to hear from you. Join a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center. Learn more:




SJJPA.COM


Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

👍 21

15 shares



City of Merced - Home
 January 27 at 2:00 PM · 🌐


The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. A CEQA scoping meeting was held on Jan. 26. If you could not attend, learn more and submit your comments by 5 pm on Feb. 19:



SJJPA.COM
Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
 3


3 shares


Amtrak San Joaquins
 54 minutes ago




The Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project will connect the San Joaquins Amtrak corridor to the proposed integrated station in Merced. We intend to prepare a CEQA environmental impact report.

Learn more on our website: <https://sjjpa.com/mitc>.




SJJPA.COM
Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - San ...
 Upcoming Meeting The SJJPA filed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on th...


2 Comment Share


Amtrak San Joaquins
2d · 🌐
⋮

Reminder – we are preparing an EIR for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project, and we want to hear from you! Join us for a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center.

Learn more at: <https://sjjpa.com/mitc> 🌐





MITC
Merced Intermodal Track Connection

CEQA Scoping Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2023 6-8pm
Merced Senior Community Center
Visit SJJPA.COM/MITC for more details


Amtrak San Joaquins
January 16 at 4:17 PM · 🌐
⋮

Interested in transit connections in the City of Merced? We are beginning the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project, and we want to hear from you!

Join us for a CEQA scoping meeting on Jan. 26 at 6 pm at the Merced Senior Community Center. Learn more below!



SJJPA.COM

Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project - San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

Upcoming Meeting The SJJPA filed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on the Merced Integrated Track Connection project (MITC). A link to the NOP can be found (here). A public meeting will be held on January 26th, 2023 from...

👍❤️ 7
1 comment

👍 Like
💬 Comment
➦ Share

Attachment G: MITC Project Scoping Informational Display Table Content and Presentation

Information Display Table Content

We welcome you

Meeting Purpose

Inform you that the lead agency, the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), is evaluating the MITC Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Gather your comments on two things:

- What should be studied in the EIR.
- Feasible alternatives that would:
 - Meet most of the project objectives.
 - Avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of the MITC Project.

Meeting Format

This is an open house meeting. You can:

- Learn about the MITC Project and CEQA process by reviewing information on the boards and talking with staff.
- Listen to a brief presentation at 6:20 p.m.
- Use a project comment laptop or write your comments on a comment form.
- State your comments verbally to a court reporter.

Te damos la bienvenida

Propósito de la reunión

Informarle que la agencia principal, la San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), está evaluando el Proyecto MITC bajo la Ley de Calidad Ambiental de California (CEQA por sus siglas en Inglés).

Queremos **reunir sus comentarios** sobre dos cosas:

- Qué se debe estudiar en el Informe de Impacto Ambiental (EIR por sus siglas en Inglés).
- Alternativas factibles que:
 - Cumplan con la mayoría de los objetivos del proyecto.
 - Evitar o minimizar uno o más impactos ambientales del Proyecto MITC.

El formato de la reunión

Esta es una exhibición informativa. Usted puede:

- Aprenda sobre el Proyecto MITC y el proceso CEQA revisando la información en los tableros y hablando con el personal.
- Escuche una breve presentación a las 6:20 p.m.
- Use una computadora portátil para comentarios o escriba a mano sus comentarios en un formulario de comentarios.
- Exprese sus comentarios verbalmente a un reportero de la corte.

Information at this Meeting

Project Overview

Project map, elements, and objectives

Process

Who is involved, project phases, schedule, right-of-way

Environmental and Engineering

Environmental Impact Report, impacts evaluated, scoping

Your Role

Providing scoping comments, how to stay in touch

Información en esta reunión

Descripción del proyecto

Mapa del proyecto, elementos y objetivos

Proceso

Quién está involucrado, fases del proyecto, cronograma, cambios en el derecho de paso

Ambiental e ingeniería

Informe de Impacto Ambiental, impactos evaluados, alcance

Tu rol

Proporcionar comentarios, cómo mantenerse en contacto

¡La interpretación está disponible! Los materiales están disponibles en español y el personal de habla hispana está disponible para ayudarlo a participar en esta reunión. **Por favor, pregunte por interpretación/ayuda en la mesa de registro.**

What are the MITC Project elements?

The Project includes:

- 1 A new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets.
- 2 A new platform that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail (HSR).
- 3 Construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform. It excludes construction of the proposed HSR integrated intermodal station which will be delivered as separate project.

Shared ACE and San Joaquins Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility

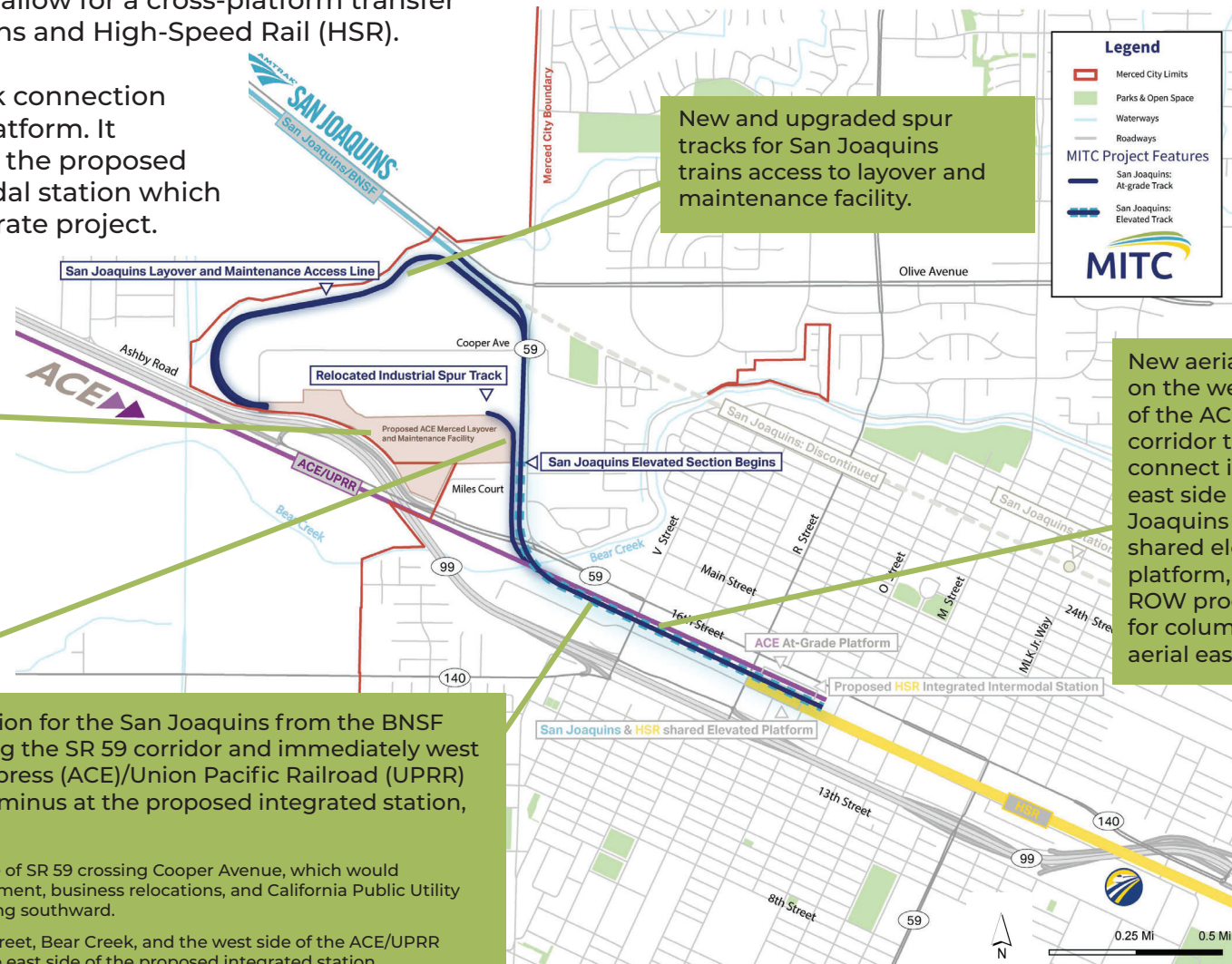
Shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 59, requiring ROW procurement and new bridge over Bear Creek

New passenger rail connection for the San Joaquins from the BNSF north of SR 59, running along the SR 59 corridor and immediately west of the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE)/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station, including these features:

- New at-grade track on the west side of SR 59 crossing Cooper Avenue, which would include right-of-way (ROW) procurement, business relocations, and California Public Utility Commission approval and proceeding southward.
- New aerial guideway to span 16th Street, Bear Creek, and the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the proposed integrated station.

New and upgraded spur tracks for San Joaquins trains access to layover and maintenance facility.

New aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the San Joaquins and HSR shared elevated platform, including ROW procurement for columns and aerial easement.



What are the objectives of the MITC Project?

The primary objectives of the Project are to:



Integrate and create a seamless connection between the San Joaquins service and the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment and future Phase I HSR service in Merced. Relocating the San Joaquins station in Merced from the existing location in the northern part of the city to meet the planned HSR station would allow passengers to transfer between services on a shared platform.



Enhance the San Joaquins service to better serve regional markets. Integrating the San Joaquins with the HSR system would improve the connection of regional markets between the Bay Area/Sacramento and the northern San Joaquin Valley and increase ridership and service benefits.



Reduce traffic congestion, improve regional air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Project would improve intercity passenger rail service between the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento Region, and Bay Area, providing a transportation alternative to the automobile that reduces GHG emissions.



What is the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment?

- The California High-Speed Rail Authority is planning to construct the Merced to Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment by 2030 and to extend the HSR service to the Bay Area after 2030 (referred to as Silicon Valley to Central Valley HSR).
- When the Merced to Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment is operational, the San Joaquins passenger rail service between Merced and Bakersfield would be replaced by the HSR service and the SJJPA would terminate the San Joaquins intercity rail service in Merced.
- HSR will provide faster, more reliable, and more frequent service than the San Joaquins currently provides between Merced and Bakersfield.

Who is involved?

Many agencies and transit operators are collaborating to implement the MITC Project, including:

CEQA Lead Agency



San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority

San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority

Manages the San Joaquin rail service.

Expected to be the Operating Agency for the California High-Speed Rail Authority's Merced-Bakersfield Early Operating Segment.

Partner Agencies



CALIFORNIA
High-Speed Rail Authority

California High-Speed
Rail Authority

Leading improvements at the Merced Intermodal Hub.

Operating Agency for long-term high-speed rail service between Merced and Bakersfield past the EOS phase.

Responsible for implementation of high-speed rail in California.



California State
Transportation Agency

Supporting the expansion of passenger rail in the state.



California Department of
Transportation

Providing funding for the MITC Project.



Merced County
Association of Governments

Responsible for including the project in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Member agency of SJJPA.



City of Merced

Close partner driving the location of the station and working on revitalization of the station area; project almost entirely within the City of Merced.

Assisting in coordination with property owners.

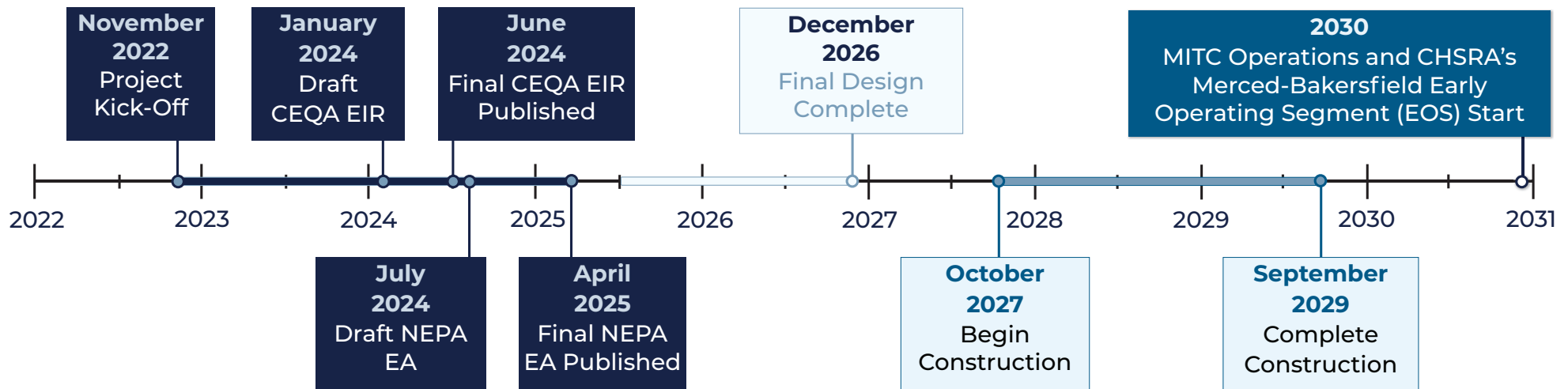
What is the process for completing the MITC Project?

The MITC Project includes three project phases: environmental, design, and construction.

We are currently in the environmental phase. Environmental clearance is needed to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and various local, regional, state, and federal regulations.

The environmental phase includes:

- 1 Preparing draft and final environmental documents.
- 2 Providing an opportunity for public review and comment on draft environmental documents.
- 3 Identifying significant environmental impacts and methods to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.



Funding will need to be secured for the construction of this project to maintain this schedule.

What is an Environmental Impact Report?

- Required by CEQA for projects that may have significant environmental impacts.
- Identifies potential physical environmental impacts of a project.
- Informs the public and public agency decision-makers prior to deciding whether to approve a project.
- Recommends ways to reduce significant environmental impacts.
- Considers feasible alternatives that would
 - (a) Meet most of the project objectives and
 - (b) Avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of a project.



What environmental impacts are being evaluated in the EIR?

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources (including Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Safety and Security (including Wildfire)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

How does scoping work?

SJJPA has published a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to solicit input from agencies, organizations, and the public on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). This means the scoping period has begun.

Here's what you need to know:

The scoping period lasts 45 days:

From January 5 to February 19, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

During scoping, we are looking for your feedback on two things:

- What should be studied in the EIR.
- Feasible alternatives that would
 - (a) Meet most of the project objectives and
 - (b) Avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of a project.

After the scoping period, we will:

- Organize your scoping comments and consider them.
- Evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the Project.
- Prepare and publish the Draft Environmental Impact Report.
- Provide a public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Report.
- Organize and respond to public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report.
- Prepare and publish the Final Environmental Impact Report.
- Consider certification of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and Project approval.

Your role in the MITC Project

Provide scoping comments!

The MITC Project scoping period lasts 45 days:
Jan. 5 to Feb. 19, 2023, at 5 p.m.

You can provide comments during this period by:

- Writing your comments on a public comment laptop or by hand on a comment form at today's meeting
- Stating your comments verbally to a court reporter at today's meeting
- Sharing your comments after today's meeting

@ **Email:**
Information@MITCProject.org
Please include "MITC Project" in the subject line.

✉ **Mail:**
San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

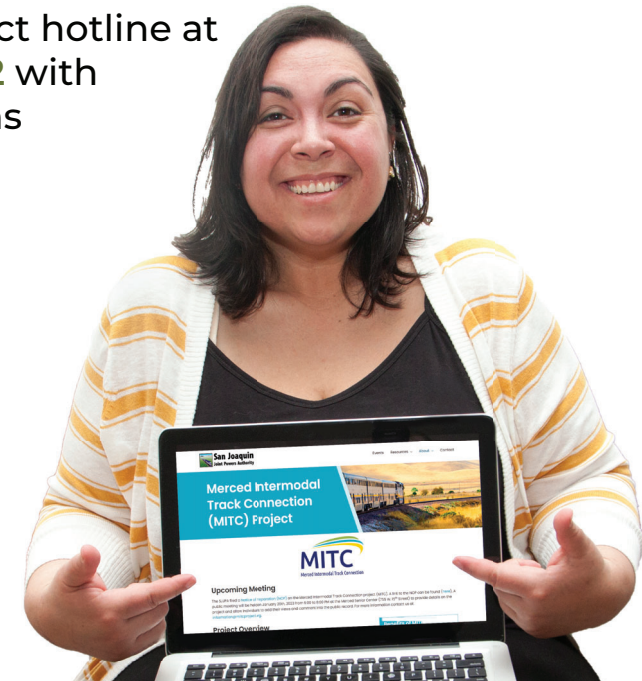
We hope you'll join us at upcoming community events and meetings to learn more about the project and share your input.

Stay in touch!

Thank you for participating in the MITC Project public scoping meeting!

To stay connected beyond the scoping period, receive updates, and learn about future opportunities to participate, you can:

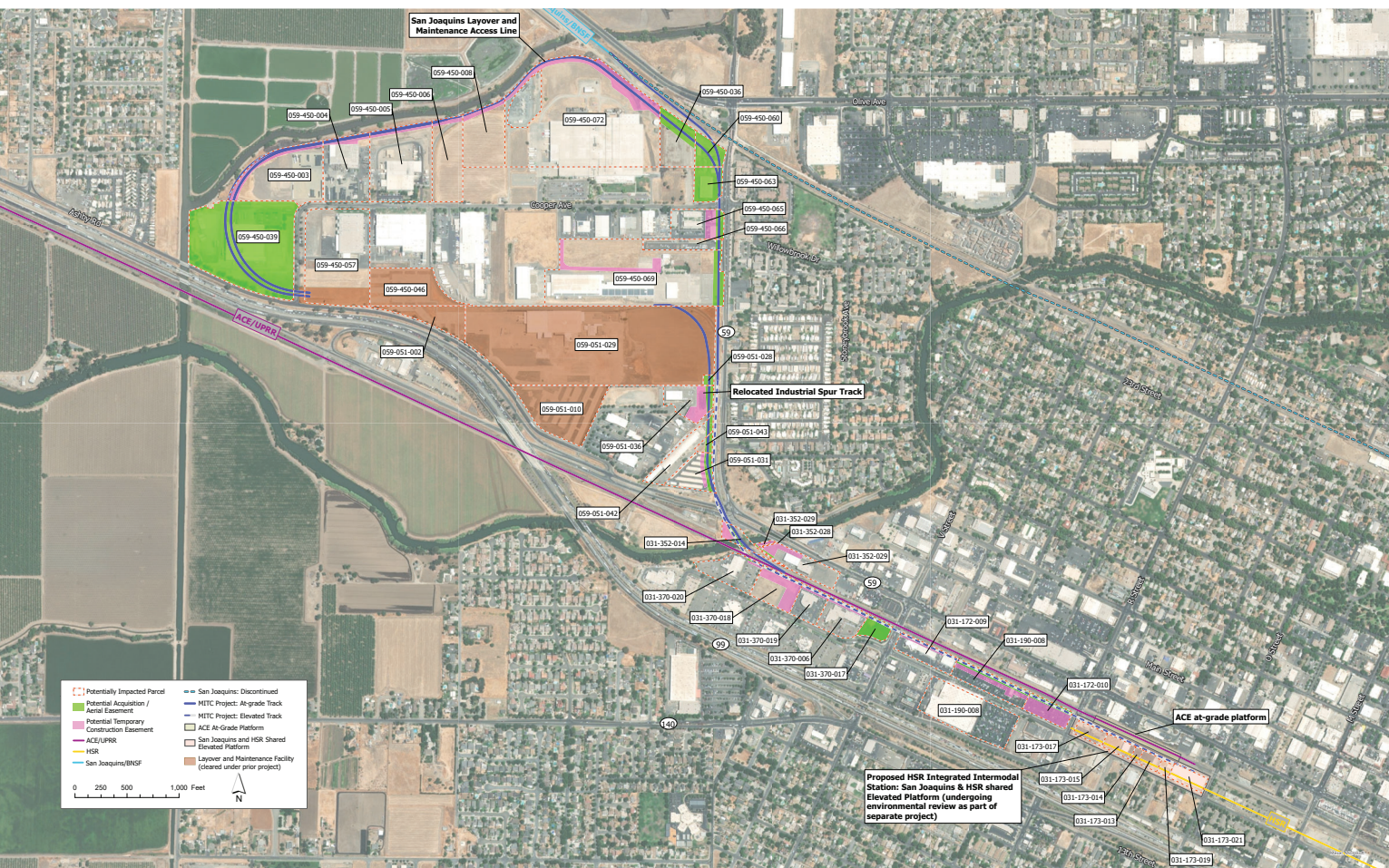
- Visit the Project webpage at sjjpa.com/mitc
- Sign up to join the email list for project updates
- Email the Project team at information@mitcproject.org
- Call the Project hotline at **209-200-8302** with your questions



What is the process for right-of-way needs?

The location of the MITC Project among businesses and residential properties means that some right-of-way changes, such as acquisitions and easements, may be required in the future.

The process for right-of-way changes would begin during the project design phase.



What kinds of right-of-way changes may be needed?

- Temporary construction easement:** A legal agreement that allows one party to use the other party's land for construction related purposes such as staging, access, or construction activities.
- Aerial easement:** An agreement where a property owner would retain the land itself, but another entity, like SJJPA, would have access to the area above the land.
- Partial acquisition:** A portion of the property is needed for the project.
- Full acquisition:** The entire property is needed for the project.

¿Cuáles son los elementos del proyecto de MITC?

El proyecto incluye lo siguiente:

- 1 Una nueva conexión de vías desde el corredor del Ferrocarril Burlington Northern y Santa Fe (BNSF) hasta la estación integrada propuesta en el centro de Merced entre las calles R y O.
- 2 Una plataforma nueva que permitirá una transferencia multiplataforma entre San Joaquins y los ferrocarriles de alta velocidad (HSR).
- 3 La construcción de la conexión entre las vías y la plataforma de San Joaquins. Excluye la construcción de la estación

Instalación compartida de parada y mantenimiento para ACE y San Joaquins de Merced.

Cambio del ramal ACE/UPRR que accede a la zona industrial al norte de la SR 59, requiriendo la adquisición de un ROW y el puente nuevo sobre Bear Creek.

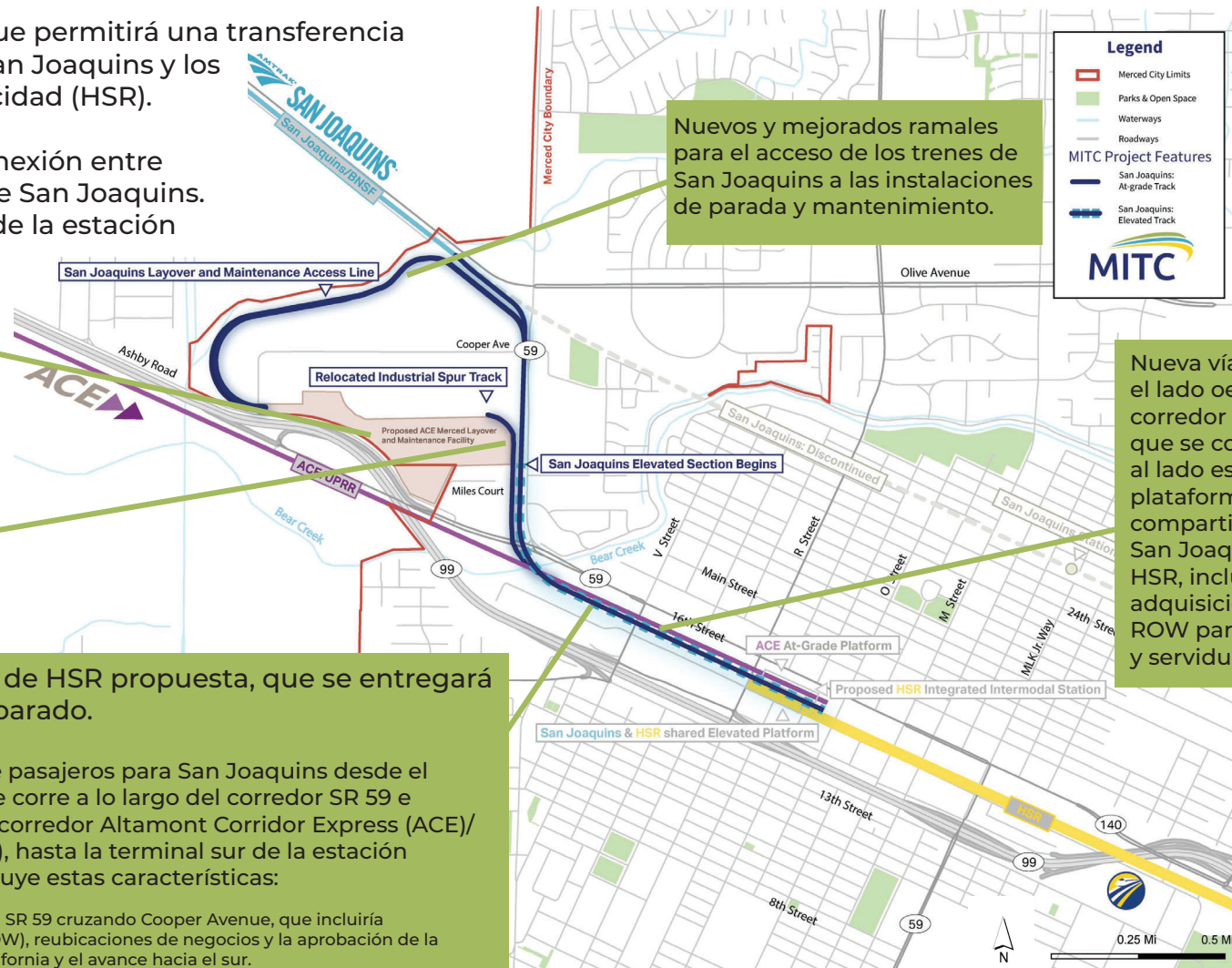
intermodal integrada de HSR propuesta, que se entregará como un proyecto separado.

Nueva conexión ferroviaria de pasajeros para San Joaquins desde el BNSF al norte de la SR 59, que corre a lo largo del corredor SR 59 e inmediatamente al oeste del corredor Altamont Corridor Express (ACE)/ Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), hasta la terminal sur de la estación integrada propuesta, que incluye estas características:

- Nueva vía a nivel en el lado oeste de la SR 59 cruzando Cooper Avenue, que incluiría adquisiciones de derecho de paso (ROW), reubicaciones de negocios y la aprobación de la Comisión de Servicios Públicos de California y el avance hacia el sur.
- Nueva vía aérea para abarcar 16th Street, Bear Creek y el lado oeste del corredor ACE/UPRR, que se conectaría al lado este de la estación integrada propuesta.

Nuevos y mejorados ramales para el acceso de los trenes de San Joaquins a las instalaciones de parada y mantenimiento.

Nueva vía aérea en el lado oeste del corredor ACE/UPRR que se conectaría al lado este de las plataformas elevadas compartidas de San Joaquins y HSR, incluida la adquisición de un ROW para columnas y servidumbre aérea.



¿Cuáles son los objetivos del proyecto de MITC?

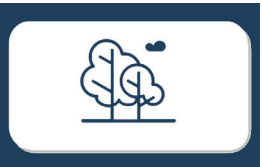
Los objetivos principales del proyecto son los siguientes:



Integrar y crear una conexión fluida entre el servicio de San Joaquins y el segmento operativo temprano de ferrocarriles de alta velocidad (HSR) de Merced-Bakersfield y el futuro servicio de fase I de HSR en Merced. La reubicación de la estación de San Joaquins en Merced desde la ubicación existente en la parte norte de la ciudad para cumplir con la estación planificada de HSR permitiría a los pasajeros realizar transferencias entre servicios en una plataforma compartida.



Mejorar el servicio San Joaquins para prestar un mejor servicio a los mercados regionales. La integración de San Joaquins con el sistema de HSR mejoraría la conexión de los mercados regionales entre el Área de la Bahía/Sacramento y el norte del Valle de San Joaquín, y aumentaría los beneficios de pasajeros y servicios.



Reducir la congestión del tráfico, mejorar la calidad del aire regional y reducir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero (GEI). El proyecto mejoraría el servicio ferroviario interurbano de pasajeros entre el Valle de San Joaquín, la región de Sacramento y el Área de la Bahía, lo que proporcionaría una alternativa de transporte al automóvil que reduce las emisiones de GEI.



¿Qué es el segmento operativo temprano de HSR de Merced-Bakersfield?

- La Autoridad de Ferrocarriles de Alta Velocidad de California planea construir el segmento operativo temprano de HSR de Merced a Bakersfield para 2030 y extender el servicio de HSR al Área de la Bahía después de 2030 (conocido como HSR de Silicon Valley a Central Valley).
- Cuando el segmento operativo temprano de HSR de Merced a Bakersfield esté funcionando, el servicio ferroviario de pasajeros de San Joaquins entre Merced y Bakersfield sería reemplazado por el servicio de HSR, y la Autoridad de Poderes Conjuntos de San Joaquín (SJJPA) finalizaría el servicio ferroviario interurbano de San Joaquins en Merced.
- Los HSR proporcionarán un servicio más rápido, más confiable y más frecuente de lo que San Joaquins ofrece actualmente entre Merced y Bakersfield.

¿Quiénes participan?

Muchas agencias y operadores de tránsito están colaborando para implementar el proyecto de Conexión Intermodal de Vías de Merced (MITC), incluidos los siguientes:

**Agencia principal
de la Ley de
Calidad Ambiental
de California
(CEQA)**



San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority

Autoridad de Poderes
Conjuntos de San Joaquín
(SJJPA)

Gestiona el servicio ferroviario de San Joaquins.

Se espera que sea la agencia operativa para el segmento operativo temprano de Merced-Bakersfield de la Autoridad de Ferrocarriles de Alta Velocidad de California.

**Agencias
asociadas**



CALIFORNIA
High-Speed Rail Authority

Autoridad de
Ferrocarriles de Alta
Velocidad de California

A cargo de las mejoras en el Centro Intermodal de Merced.

Agencia operativa para el servicio de ferrocarriles de alta velocidad a largo plazo entre Merced y Bakersfield más allá de la fase del segmento operativo temprano (EOS).

Responsable de la implementación del ferrocarril de alta velocidad en California.



Agencia de Transporte
del Estado de California

Apoya la expansión del ferrocarril de pasajeros en el estado.



Departamento de
Transporte de California

Proporciona fondos para el proyecto de MITC.



Asociación de Gobiernos
del condado de Merced

Es responsable de incluir el proyecto en el Plan Regional de Transporte.

Agencia miembro de la SJJPA.



Ciudad de Merced

Es una agencia socia cercana que conduce la ubicación de la estación y trabaja en la revitalización del área de la estación. El proyecto se realiza casi en su totalidad dentro de la ciudad de Merced.

Ayuda en la coordinación con los propietarios.

¿Cuál es el proceso para completar el proyecto de MITC?

El proyecto de Conexión Intermodal de Vías de Merced (MITC) incluye tres fases: medioambiente, diseño y construcción.

Actualmente estamos en la fase ambiental. Se necesita autorización ambiental para cumplir con la Ley de Calidad Ambiental de California (CEQA), la Ley Nacional de Política Ambiental (NEPA) y varias regulaciones locales, regionales, estatales y federales.

La fase ambiental incluye lo siguiente:

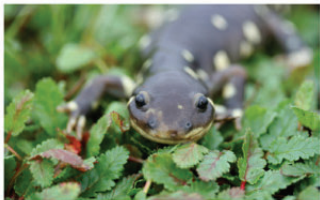
- 1 Preparar proyectos y documentos ambientales finales.
- 2 Proporcionar una oportunidad para la revisión y los comentarios públicos sobre proyectos de documentos ambientales.
- 3 Identificar impactos y métodos ambientales significativos para evitar o mitigar esos impactos, si es posible.



Se deberá asegurar la financiación para la construcción de este proyecto para mantener este cronograma.

¿Qué es un informe de impacto ambiental?

- Es requerido por la Ley de Calidad Ambiental de California (CEQA) para proyectos que pueden tener impactos ambientales significativos.
- Identifica los posibles impactos ambientales físicos de un proyecto.
- Informa al público y a los responsables de la toma de decisiones de las agencias públicas antes de decidir si aprueban un proyecto.
- Recomienda formas de reducir los impactos ambientales significativos.
- Considera alternativas viables que
 - (a) cumplan la mayoría de los objetivos del proyecto y
 - (b) eviten o minimicen uno o más impactos ambientales de un proyecto.



¿Qué impactos ambientales se están evaluando en el informe de impacto ambiental (EIR)?

- Estética
- Recursos agrícolas
- Calidad del aire
- Recursos biológicos
- Recursos culturales (incluidos los recursos culturales tribales)
- Energía
- Geología y suelos
- Emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero
- Peligros y materiales peligrosos
- Hidrología y calidad del agua
- Uso y planificación del suelo
- Ruido y vibración
- Población y vivienda
- Servicios públicos
- Recreación
- Seguridad (incluidos los incendios forestales)
- Transporte
- Servicios públicos y sistemas de servicio

La SJJPA publicó un aviso de preparación (NOP) para solicitar información a las agencias, las organizaciones y al público sobre el alcance y el contenido de la información ambiental que debe incluirse en el borrador del informe de impacto ambiental (EIR). Esto significa que el periodo de determinación de alcance comenzó.

Esto es lo que necesita saber:

El periodo de determinación de alcance dura 45 días:
Del 5 de enero al 19 de febrero de 2023 a las 5:00 p. m.

Durante la determinación de alcance, estamos buscando sus comentarios sobre las siguientes dos cuestiones:

- Qué debe estudiarse en el EIR.
- Alternativas factibles que
 - (a) cumplan la mayoría de los objetivos del proyecto y
 - (b) eviten o minimicen uno o más impactos ambientales de un proyecto.

Después del periodo de determinación de alcance, haremos lo siguiente:

- Organizar sus comentarios de determinación de alcance y considerarlos.
- Evaluar los posibles impactos ambientales del proyecto.
- Preparar y publicar el borrador del informe de impacto ambiental.
- Proporcionar un periodo de comentarios públicos sobre el borrador del informe de impacto ambiental.
- Organizar y responder a los comentarios públicos sobre el borrador del informe de impacto ambiental.
- Preparar y publicar el informe de impacto ambiental final.
- Considerar la certificación del borrador del informe de impacto ambiental y la aprobación del proyecto.

Su papel en el proyecto de MITC

¡Proporcionar comentarios del alcance!

El periodo de determinación de alcance del proyecto de Conexión Intermodal de Vías de Merced (MITC) dura 45 días:

Del 5 de enero al 19 de febrero de 2023, a las 5:00 p. m.

Puede realizar comentarios durante este periodo de la siguiente manera:

- Escribir sus comentarios en una computadora portátil para comentarios públicos, o a mano en un formulario de comentarios en la reunión de hoy.
- Proporcionar sus comentarios oralmente a un reportero de la corte en la reunión de hoy.
- Compartir sus comentarios después de la reunión de hoy.



Correo electrónico:

Information@MITCProject.org

Incluya "Proyecto de MITC" en el asunto.



Correo postal:

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Esperamos que se una a nosotros en los próximos eventos y reuniones de la comunidad para aprender más sobre el proyecto y compartir su opinión.

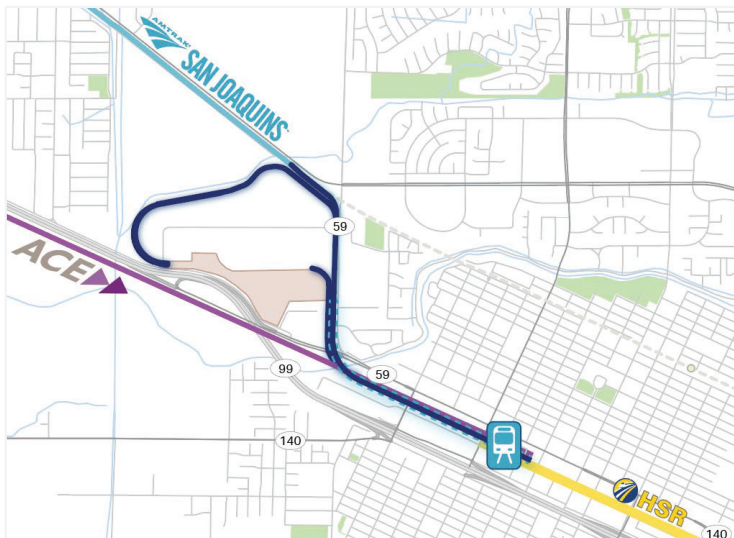
¡Manténgase en contacto!

¡Gracias por participar en la reunión pública de determinación de alcance del proyecto de MITC!

Para mantenerse conectado después del periodo de determinación de alcance, recibir actualizaciones y conocer las oportunidades futuras para participar, puede hacer lo siguiente:

- Visitar la página web del proyecto en sjjpa.com/mitc.
- Registrarse para unirse a la lista de correo electrónico para actualizaciones del proyecto.
- Enviar un correo electrónico al equipo del proyecto a information@mitcproject.org.
- Llamar a la línea directa del proyecto a **209-200-8302** y realizar sus preguntas.





Scoping Meeting for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection (MITC) Project EIR

January 26, 2023

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Presentation at 6:20 PM

Dan Leavitt

Manager of Regional Initiatives

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

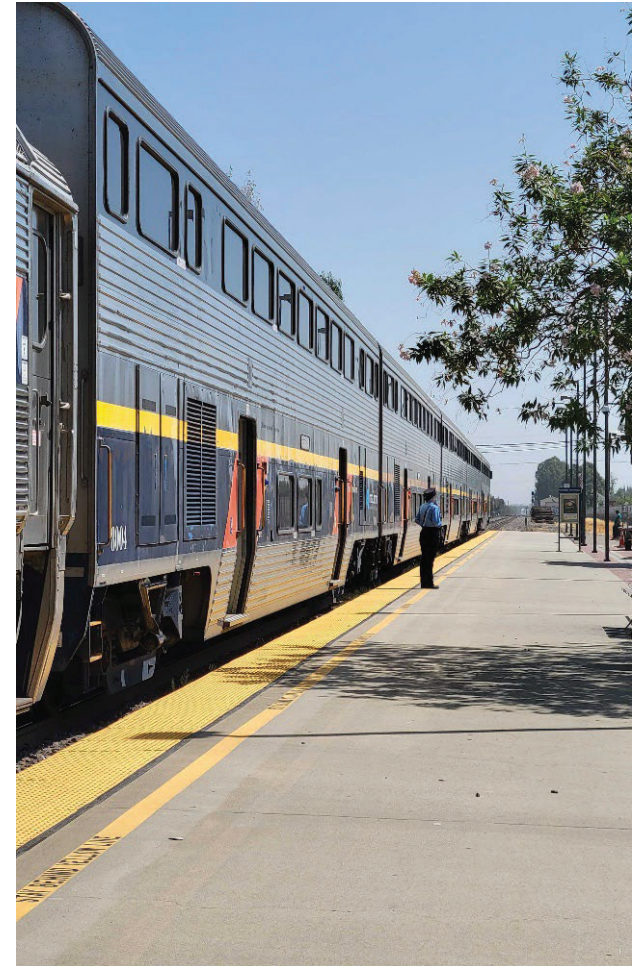


- Meeting Format
- Meeting Purpose
- Project Overview
- Environmental Review Process
- Project Schedule
- Open House Stations

- Brief **presentation** followed by an **open house**
- Any questions asked during this open house will be considered, but are not official scoping comments
- To submit official scoping comments, please:
 - Type or handwrite on a comment form today
 - Verbally speak to a court reporter today
 - Send written comments to:
San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202
 - Send an email to Information@MITCProject.org and include “MITC Project” in the subject line

The purpose of this meeting is to:

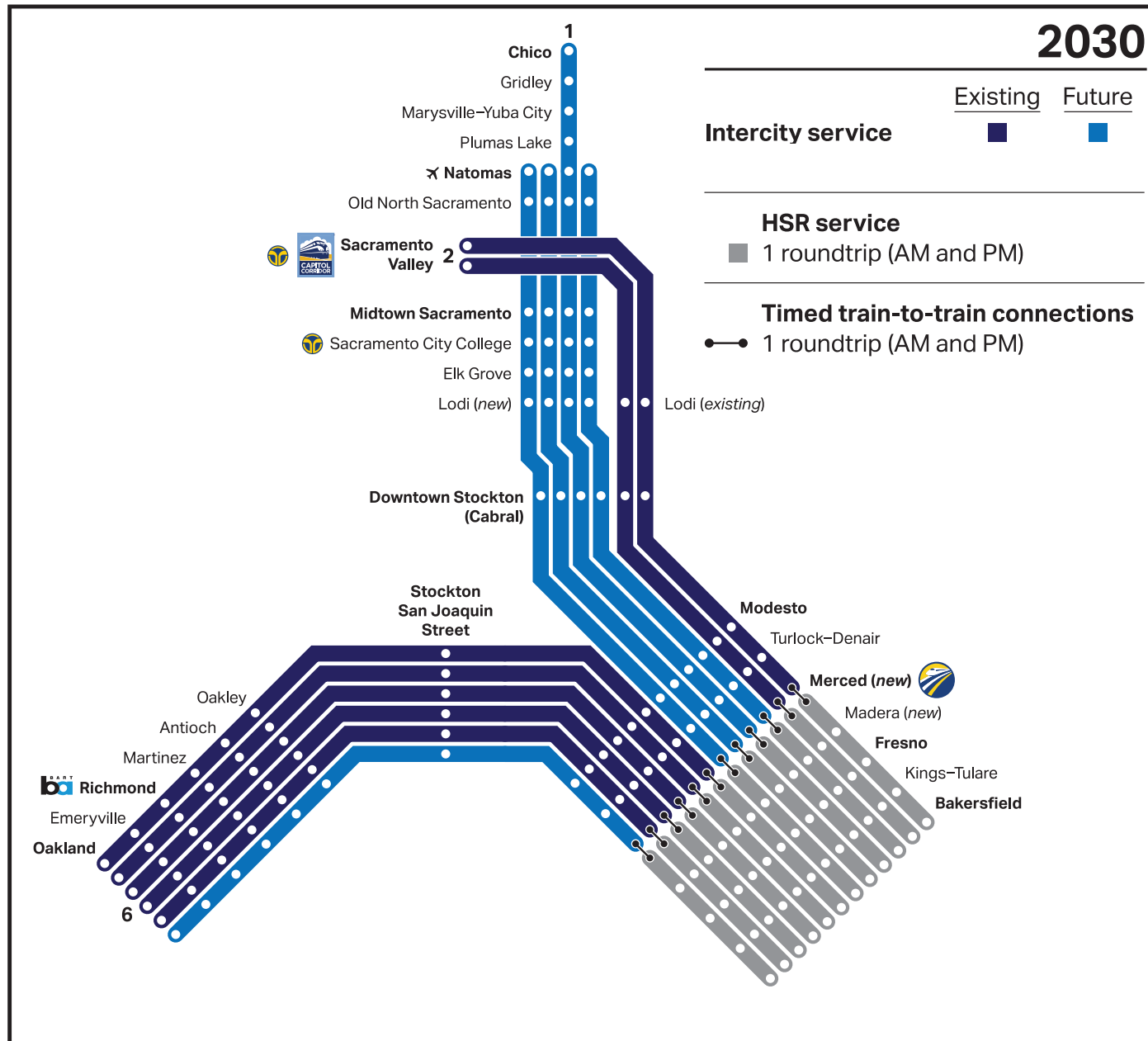
- Inform you that the CEQA lead agency, the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, is evaluating the MITC Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Solicit public comment regarding the type and extent of environmental analyses to be done for the MITC Project



San Joaquins Network



Valley Rail Expansion Planning Vision for San Joaquins Route



Connectivity to HSR Early Operating Segment (EOS)



The MITC Project includes:

- A new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets.
- A new platform, that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail (HSR).
- Construction of the track connection and the San Joaquins platform. It excludes construction of the proposed HSR integrated intermodal station which will be delivered as a separate project.

The new integrated station in downtown Merced will connect three services:



Project Objectives



Integrate and create a seamless connection between the San Joaquins service and the Merced-Bakersfield HSR Early Operating Segment and future Phase I HSR service in Merced.

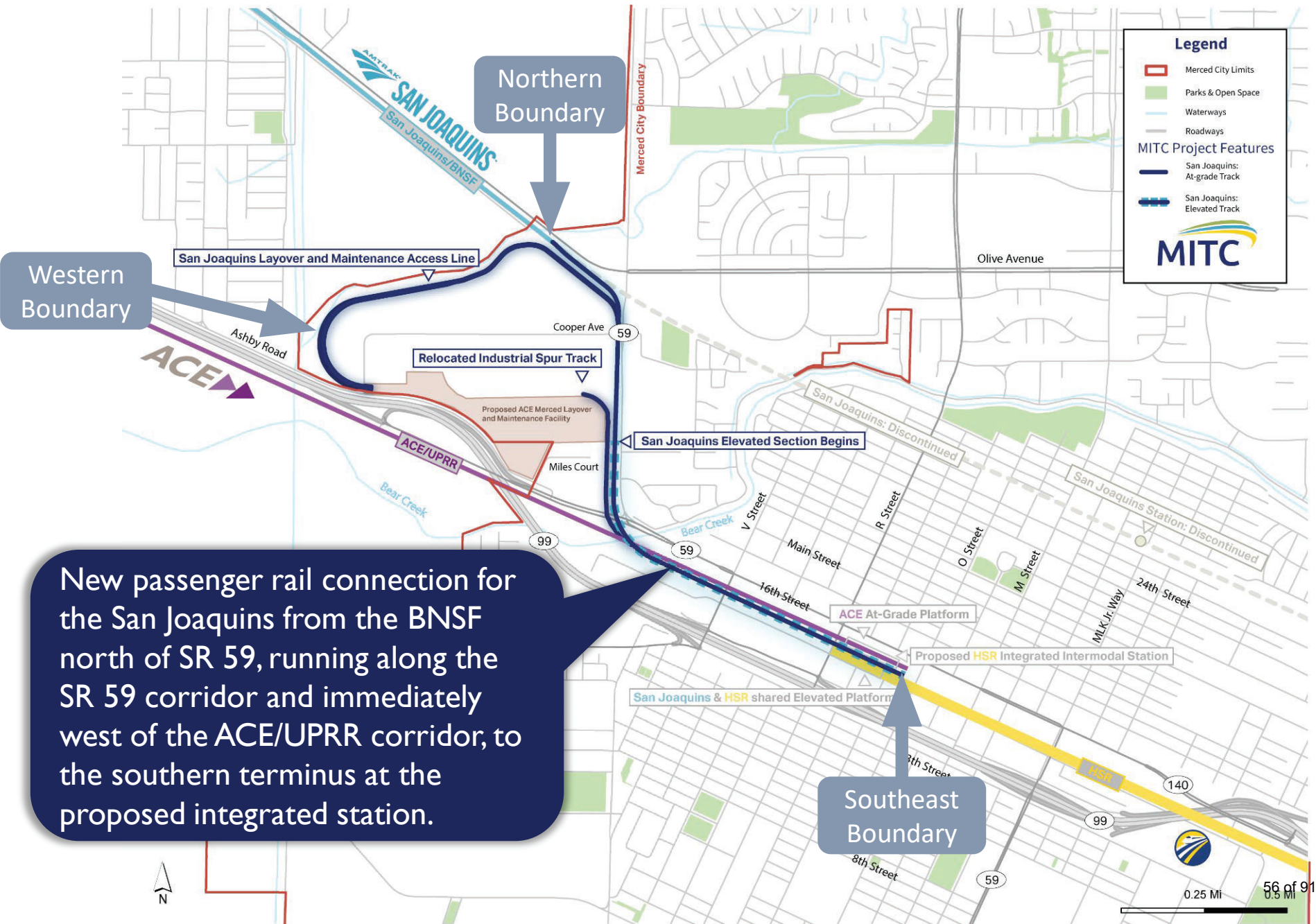


Enhance the San Joaquins service to better serve regional markets.

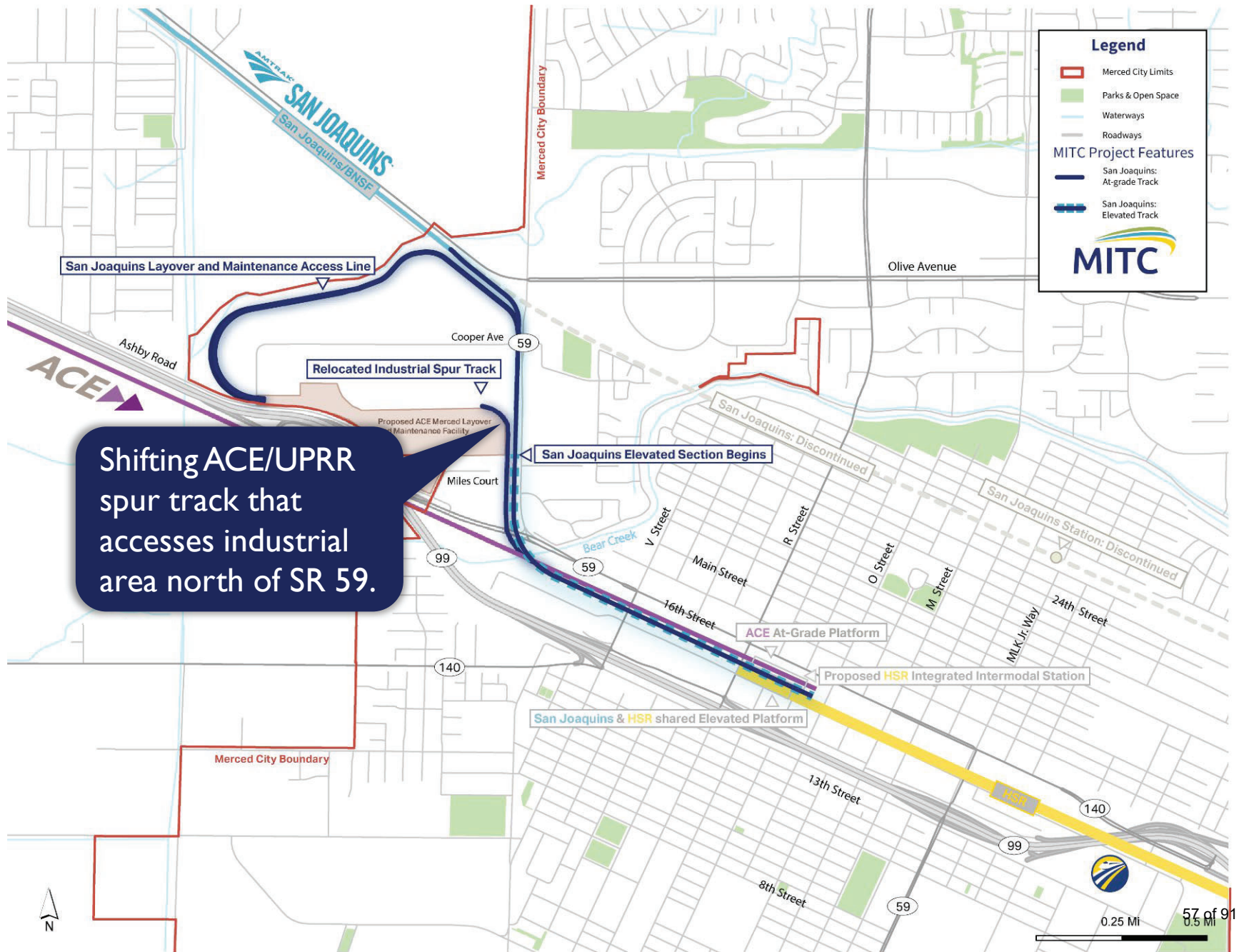


Reduce traffic congestion, improve regional air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

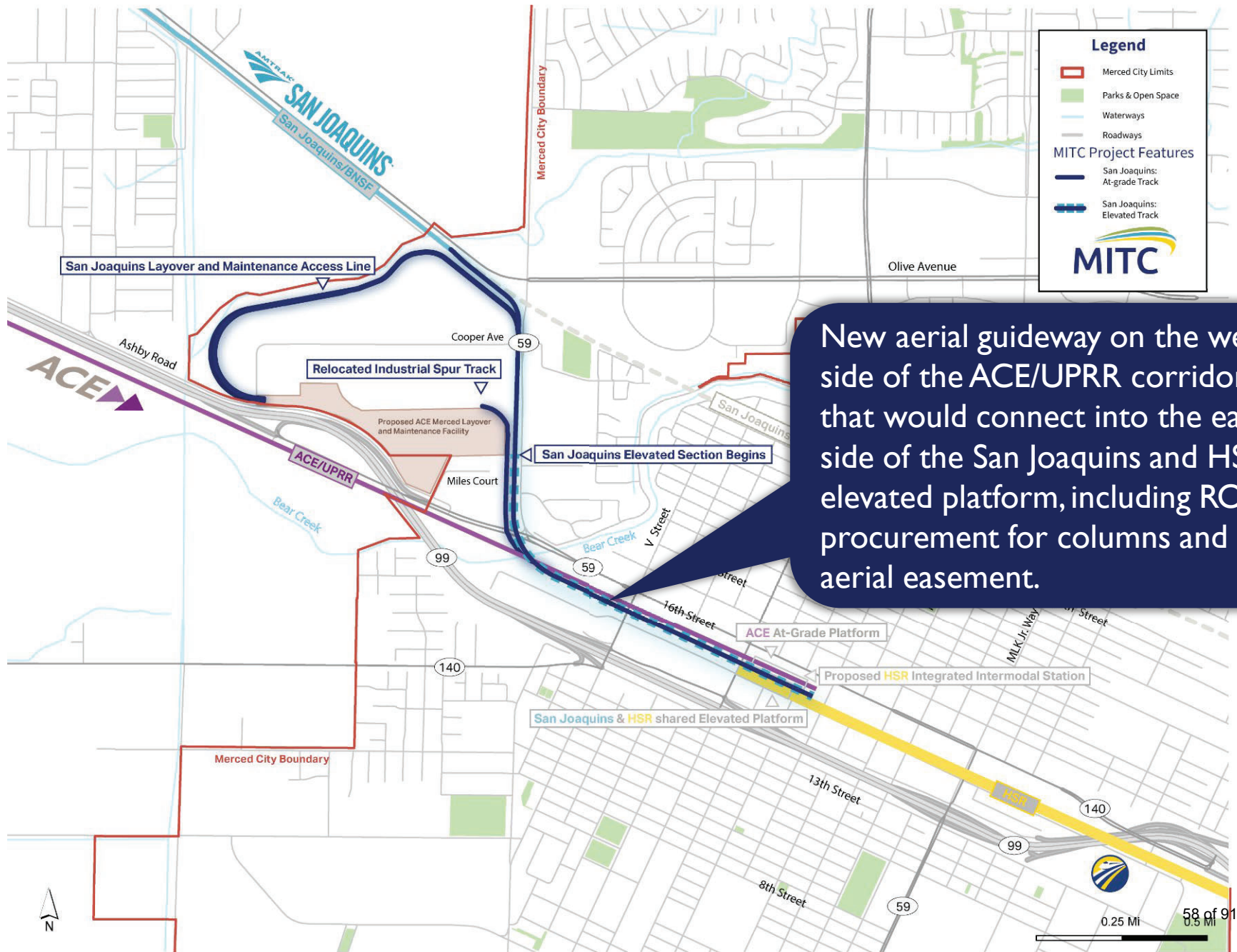
Project Overview: Project Features



Project Overview: Project Features



Project Overview: Project Features



Project Overview: Project Features



New and upgraded spur tracks for San Joaquins trains access to layover and maintenance facility.

Shared ACE and San Joaquins Merced Layover and Maintenance facility.

SJJPA is the lead agency for this Project, and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consistent with CEQA.

In addition, at a later time, the Project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.



The Draft EIR will:

- Identify significant environmental impacts (if any)
- Analyze potential environmental effects and identify ways to avoid or mitigate them
- Evaluate reasonable alternatives that could avoid or reduce environmental impacts
- Develop detailed mitigation (ways to reduce or avoid environmental impacts) if needed
- Provide opportunity for public review and comment
- Disclose to decision makers the impacts, mitigation, and public comments

Environmental Review Process: Potential Environmental Effects



The EIR will consider impacts to the following **resource areas**:

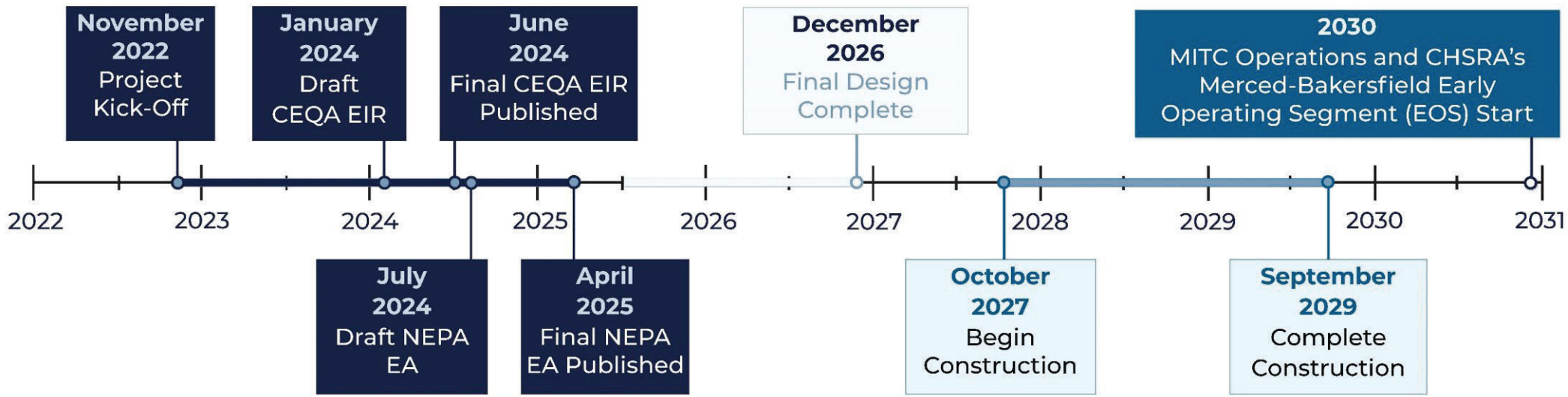
- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources (including Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Safety and Security (including Wildfire)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

Environmental Review Process: Scoping

- Scoping is the first step in the EIR process.
- SJJPA is seeking comments on **two** things:
 1. What should be studied in the EIR
 2. Feasible alternatives that would:
 - a. *Meet most of the project objectives; and*
 - b. *Avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of the Project*



Project Schedule



Funding will need to be secured for the construction of this project to maintain this schedule.

Please visit the **open house stations** throughout the room this evening to learn more and ask questions of staff:

- SJJPA & MITC
 - Project Overview
 - Process
 - Environmental and Engineering
 - Your Role
- California High-Speed Rail Authority
- City of Merced
- Merced County Association of Governments

Your input is important to us!

You can submit Scoping Comments through February 19th, 2023 at 5:00 PM

Comment Today

Write your comments on a public comment laptop or by hand on a comment form.

State your comments verbally to a court reporter.

Comment Later

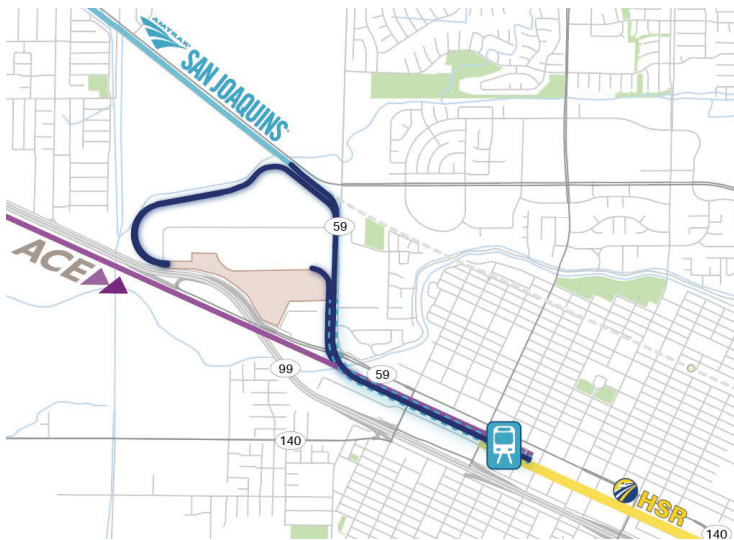
Mail:

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Email:

Information@MITCProject.org

Please include "MITC Project" in the subject heading



Thank You



For more information, please scan the QR code or use the link below to visit the Project webpage at <https://sjjpa.com/mitc/>.

Attachment H: Scoping Comments

10 January 2023

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Submitted via email to Information@MITCProject.org.

Re: Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project Notice of Preparation (SCH #2023010061)

Dear SJJPA,

I am writing this letter to respond to the NOP for the proposed Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project. After reviewing the document, I would like to provide some input on the information presented and the Project as proposed.

Previously, the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority completed a CEQA document and issued a Notice of Determination (SCH #2020109008) for the Madera Station Relocation Project which was intended to serve as a connection point between the *San Joaquins* and high-speed rail services. However, Madera is south of Merced and as detailed in C. Project History of this NOP, the SJJPA *2022 Business Plan* Update now indicates that San Joaquins services would be ended at Merced due to likely no longer being competitive with high-speed rail.

However, maps provided with materials for the proposed Valley Rail project show that only two stations would remain on the *San Joaquins* route between Merced and Stockton and both of the communities where the stations are currently located would be provided a station along the route of the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) extension to Merced. Based on simple measurements on a maps, the existing Modesto and Turlock/Denair stations are approximately 5.75 and 3.5 miles respectively from the Union Pacific Fresno Subdivision tracks where the ACE stations would be located. Additionally, the proposed stations would be more centrally located in the communities as compared to the existing stations.

Given these factors, it seems prudent to include a study alternative that analyzes a complete cessation of *San Joaquins* service south of Stockton on the BNSF Stockton Subdivision as there does not appear to be a strong argument to continue it once the ACE extension to Merced is complete. There would remain a connection to Oakland and Sacramento (or the new end point after planned extensions north) either directly on ACE or by transferring to a *San Joaquins* train running from Stockton or Thruway bus service. Alternatively, if there is hesitation at the potential of truncating service all the way to Stockton, then *San Joaquins* trains south of Stockton can be able to continue to offer a one seat ride from Merced to Oakland or Sacramento (or beyond) by being relocated to the Fresno Subdivision together with ACE service. (If so desired, there is also the option of operating them as express trains making fewer stops between Merced and Stockton as compared to ACE.)

Thank you for receiving these comments. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out for clarification.

Sincerely,

Marven E. Norman

CC: San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission

Marven E. Norman
PO Box 1147
San Bernardino, CA 92402

M Newman <dynoskip@yahoo.com>
To: information@mitcproject.org

Tue, Jan 17, 2023 at 11:03 AM

Hi,

I was just reading about the transit station project in Merced (MITC). What is the plan for the existing "discontinued" Amtrak San Joaquin Station (BNSF track) on 24th St.?

A lot of work was recently done there, adding another platform on the other side of the track as well as improvements to the intersection with the road. I see the logic of the MITC plan but not the logic of the recent work if only to be discontinued. Also thinking of the ways this might impact the neighborhood of the current station.

Curious,
Mary

mary newman <dynoskip@yahoo.com>
To: Merced Integrated Track Connector <information@mitcproject.org>

Thu, Jan 19, 2023 at 2:42 PM

Hi and thanks for the response. Yes, I and surrounding neighbors, would like to know what the plan is for the 24th St. Station. If you could submit that as a question it would be appreciated. Thanks, Mary

[Quoted text hidden]

Jerry Perezchica <jerry.perezchica@marinelifestudies.org>
To: information@mitcproject.org

Thu, Jan 26, 2023 at 3:25 PM

Please commence with the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project. This is a scalable solution for California's mobility.

Best regards,

--

Jerry Perezchica | Board of Directors, Chair

MARINE LIFE STUDIES



www.MarineLifeStudies.org
P.O. Box 163
Moss Landing, CA. 95039

Marine Life Studies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Peggy <reachpeggy@gmail.com>
To: information@mitcproject.org

Thu, Jan 26, 2023 at 5:08 PM

Hi,
I was wondering if the future discontinuing of the San Joaquins line from Merced to Bakersfield means that it will be discontinued for passenger service or if it will be abandoned for all rail use once the HSR service begins. Can you please clarify this for me?

Thanks so much,

Peggy Hsu
Merced resident

MERCED INTERMODAL TRACK CONNECTION (MITC) PROJECT

PUBLIC MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023

5:30 - 8:00 P.M.

REPORTED BY KRISTI GARCIA, CSR NO. 9111

1 The hearing was taken at 755 West 15th Street,
2 Merced, CA 95340, on Thursday, commencing at 5:30 PM in
3 the above-entitled matter pursuant to all of the
4 provisions of law pertaining to the taking and use of
5 depositions before Kristi Garcia, CSR, with offices at
6 Fresno, California.

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1 7th of February, 2023, 5:30 PM

2 ---oOo---

3 MR. TRESSLER: Eric Tressler, T-R-E-S-S-L-E-R.

4 I thought they did good job and excellent,
5 excellent program. And can't wait to ride the trains.

6 MR. SCOBLE: Bob Scoble, S-C-O-B-L-E.

7 Well, again, I appreciate these sessions. They
8 have been very, very informative. And I got all of the
9 questions I had answered, which were kind of limited.

10 But I do have an interesting thought. With the
11 growth of the service yard is there a process to look
12 for providing educational developmental training for our
13 young adults here in town that might be interested in
14 careers in the system, either at the maintenance yard or
15 anywhere, in fact, on the transportation system?

16 I know I had a lot of folks that worked with me
17 that also work for BART as technicians. That should be
18 a good educational opportunity -- it would be good -- it
19 would be good to know if there is a process to link up
20 with educational systems here for developmental
21 opportunities for residents here.

22 MS. SCOBLE: Pat Scoble. My concerns are about
23 the displacement of residents and businesses, the Senior
24 Center, the Boys and Girls Club. And then the problems
25 that might come with future growth. Not that the

1 agencies can do anything about that, but it is a concern
2 for the residents that live here and how that will
3 change our small town versus big town.

4 MS. MCELWAIN: Kathleen McElwain,
5 M-C-E-L-W-A-I-N. It was a very good presentation. And
6 I'm happy to hear what's going on. I'm hoping that they
7 can build a new Senior Center before they take this one
8 down because I come every day for yoga almost. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. LARSON: I'm John Larson. And my comment is
11 for the parking that's not underneath the transfer
12 station. The open parking needs to be shaded.
13 100 degrees plus here or whatever -- inclement weather,
14 it should be shaded. And that could be the solar
15 panels. I like the project. Great project.

16 MS. OSBORN: I was concerned about was graffiti.
17 Linda Osborn. I'm worried about this area. They showed
18 us a picture. And I could just see graffiti.

19 We have a small business in town. And we had a
20 mural on our building. You know, that's kind of why it
21 was kind of at home -- you know, it kind of was close to
22 home with that.

23 I came down and played pinochle down here with my
24 dad. I hope we don't lose focus and forget to build
25 another Senior Center.

1 MR. ROBERTS: Grey, G-R-E-Y, Roberts.

2 And I now understand how the High-Speed Rail rises
3 when it gets into Merced. And I was concerned with it
4 going under 99 and then getting up over G Street. Okay.
5 And I was right. Because what they were talking about
6 doing is closing G Street. Okay. Now, G Street is a
7 four-lane widely traveled road that goes clear out north
8 to -- clear to South Avenue. So there's a ton of
9 traffic on it. So if you close it, you are going to be
10 in for a political firestorm. And I told them that.
11 Because they are going to go: You've got to be kidding
12 me? Because then it moves into this other road, which
13 is that way.

14 Anyway -- and it's just -- it's not something
15 that's going to sell with the community. So they are
16 going to have to figure out what to do; either go under
17 the railroad -- the existing -- the at grade railroad
18 Stockton crosses G Street. So they are going to have to
19 go under it to not have it closed, which is not a bad
20 idea. Because I don't know what else is going to be
21 taken out there. Because there's businesses on both
22 sides of the street after you cross the railroad here.
23 And, you know, you could, basically, go under the
24 railroad and have it not be closed. Okay.

25 And G Street, they built an underpass at the other

1 railroad which is the Burlington-Northern. And it was a
2 big enough deal that they built an underpass for
3 G Street under the Burlington-Northern Railroad.
4 Because, otherwise, if there was trains, you couldn't
5 get an ambulance from one end of the town to the other
6 because it was -- they block it. So now if you block
7 G Street you've sort of defeated the purpose, to say the
8 least. Does that make sense?

9 They went to the trouble of going under the other
10 railroad and then they block it here. It's not a
11 winner. That's my opinion. But I think it's -- you
12 know, I just don't think it will fly with the community
13 and the political people. They are going to go oh, no,
14 we're not going to do that. So High-Speed Rail is going
15 to have to figure out what they need to do to circumvent
16 closing G Street. They didn't offer to do it. I just
17 told them this is a loser. Anyway, it is. I did learn
18 something which is helpful.

19
20 * * * * *

1 STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
2) ss
3 COUNTY OF FRESNO)

4 I, KRISTI GARCIA, a Certified Shorthand
5 Reporter of the State of California having offices
6 located at Fresno, California, do hereby certify;

7 THAT the foregoing hearing was reported in
8 shorthand by me at the time and place above stated and
9 thereafter transcribed under my direction and control.

10 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not interested in the
11 outcome of said action, nor connected with, nor related
12 to any of the parties in said hearing nor to their
13 respective counsel.

14 DATED: 7th of February, 2023

15
16 
17
18 KRISTI GARCIA, C.S.R. No. 9111

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Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project
Scoping Comment Form – January 2023



Name: Catie Mang

Organization: Resident

Mailing address: 2685 Stonybrook Ave., Merced CA

Email address: 12catie@gmail.com

Comments:

① Concerned about increasing flood risk for neighborhood between HWY 59 & Bear Creek. Neighborhoods east of R along Bear Creek was fine worse flooding was along HWY 59 & 16th St. Berm acts like dam hemming water in. Dooming the area I live (Stonybrook) if hemmed in on 3 sides all 4 sides (3 railroads and Bear creek). HWY 59 & Cooper ~~cutting~~ flooded.

② Noise - trains and maintenance facility disturb sleep.

③ Traffic Congestion - HWY 59 & 16th already a nightmare. ~~Another~~ ~~is~~

CENTRAL VALLEY FLOOD PROTECTION BOARD

3310 El Camino Ave., Ste. 170
SACRAMENTO, CA 95821
(916) 574-0609 FAX: (916) 574-0682



27 January 2023

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Subject: Comments on the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

Dear Sir/Madame,

The Central Valley Flood Protection Board (Board) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project (proposed project). The DEIR will be prepared to disclose and address potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. The proposed project is located in Merced County and involves create a connection between the San Joaquin's Intercity Service and the Merced-Bakersfield High Speed Rail Early Operating Segment and future Phase I High Speed Rail service.

Responsibility of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board

The Board is the State's regulatory agency responsible for ensuring appropriate standards are met for the construction, maintenance, and operation of the flood control system that protects life, property, and habitat in California's Central Valley. The Board serves as the State coordinator between local flood management agencies and the federal government, with the goal of providing the highest level of flood protection possible to California's Central Valley.

The Board operates under authorities as described in California Water Code (Water Code), which requires the Board to oversee future modifications or additions to facilities of the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC). In addition, pursuant to assurances provided to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) by the Board on behalf of the State, the USACE Operation and Maintenance Manuals, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33, § 208.10, and United States Code, Title 33, § 408, the Board is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the SPFC facilities. The USACE requires the Board to serve as the lead non-Federal sponsor for projects to improve or alter facilities of the SPFC pursuant to Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33, § 408. The State's objectives include fulfilling the USACE's expectations pursuant to the assurances provided to the USACE.

Encroachment Permit

Per California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Waters, Division 1 (Title 23), Section 6, approval by the Board is required for all proposed work or uses, including the alteration of levees within any area for which there is an Adopted Plan of Flood Control within the Board's jurisdiction. In addition, Board approval is required for all proposed encroachments within a floodway, on adjacent levees, and within any Regulated Stream identified in Title 23, Table 8.1. Specifically, Board jurisdiction includes the levee section, the waterward area between project levees, a minimum 10-foot-wide strip adjacent to the landward levee toe, the area within 30 feet from the top of bank(s) of Regulated Streams, and inside Board's Designated Floodways. Activities outside of these limits which could adversely affect Federal-State flood control facilities, as determined by Board staff, are also under the Board's jurisdiction. Permits may also be required for existing unpermitted encroachments or where it is necessary to establish the conditions normally imposed by permitting, including where responsibility for the encroachment has not been clearly established or ownership or uses have been changed. This proposed project is located within the Board's permitting authority, thereby requiring an encroachment permit.

Federal permits, including USACE Section 404 and Section 10 regulatory permits and Section 408 Permission, in conjunction with a Board permit, may be required for the proposed project. In addition to federal permits, state and local agency permits, certification, or approvals may also be required. State approvals may include, but are not limited to, California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Lake and Streamed Alteration Agreement and Regional Water Quality Control Board's Section 401 Water Quality Certification. The Applicant must obtain all authorizations that the proposed project may require.

Flood Impacts Analysis

Pursuant to Section 15 of Title 23, the Board may deny an encroachment permit if the proposed project could:

- Jeopardize directly or indirectly the physical integrity of levees or other works;
- Obstruct, divert, redirect, or raise the surface level of design floods or flows, or the lesser flows for which protection is provided;
- Cause significant adverse changes in water velocity or flow regimen;
- Impair the inspection of floodways or project works;
- Interfere with the maintenance of floodways or project works;
- Interfere with the ability to engage in flood fighting, patrolling, or other flood emergency activities;
- Increase the damaging effects of flood flows;
- Be injurious to, or interfere with, the successful execution, functioning, or operation of any adopted plan of flood control; or
- Adversely affect the State Plan of Flood Control, as defined in the California Water Code.

Page 2 of 2

As a responsible agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Board will need to have adequate information in order to evaluate whether to issue a permit at a future date. Accordingly, please be prepared to provide specific analyses to determine if the proposed project could result in any potential impacts listed above. This includes direct impacts to facilities under construction, as well as indirect impacts from the project to surrounding facilities. This encompasses any proposed work that contemplates modifications to a SPFC Facility, Lower San Joaquin Levee District Facility, or operation of any adopted plan of flood control or the hydrology of the water ways including: increases or decreases in water surface elevation due to construction activities and encroachments; any work including dewatering and vibrations from both pile driving and heavy machinery that may destabilize the SPFC levees; and potential levee damage resulting from heavy machinery construction activities and associated haul routes. It is therefore recommended that the environmental document include a specific flood facility impacts analysis section.

Closing

The potential risks to public safety, including increased flood risks, need to be considered when developing proposed projects that seek to modify flood control works or the hydrology of the water ways. Board staff is available to discuss any questions you have regarding the above comments. Please contact Gregory Hendricks at (916) 480-5388, or via email at Gregory.Hendricks@CVFlood.ca.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



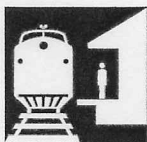
Andrea Buckley
Environmental Services and Land Management Branch Chief

ec: Office of Planning and Research
State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
information@MITCProjct.org

Steven Lamb
Central Valley Flood Protection Board
steven.lamb@cvflood.ca.gov

Greg Hendricks
Central Valley Flood Protection Board
Gregory.Hendricks@cvflood.ca.gov

**RailPAC**Rail Passenger Association
of California and NevadaP.O. Box 22344
San Francisco CA 94122www.railpac.orgSan Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

February 14, 2023

Re: "MITC Project" Environmental Impact Report Merced Intermodal Track Connection

Dear Sirs,

I am writing on behalf members of the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) living, working and traveling in the San Joaquin Valley and the state of California. RailPAC is an all-volunteer statewide organization that advocates for the improvement of commuter and intercity passenger rail service. RailPAC is a strong advocate for an expanded public transportation network linking the San Joaquin Valley to all of California. Most specifically our members support efforts to improve connectivity between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail Interim Operating Segment.

RailPAC strongly supports the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission's (SJRRRC) proposed Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project (MITC). By integrating and creating a seamless connection between the San Joaquins and High-Speed Rail, this investment will dramatically increase San Joaquin Valley and California statewide connectivity and ridership (+121%). The MITC project is the key link in creating single transportation hub in central Merced bringing together ACE, San Joaquin Service and High-Speed Rail. The MITC connection will also improve regional Merced area transportation by facilitating transfers between local transit, the rail mode, taxis, rideshare and local destination shuttle services at one central terminal.

The synergy of this hub will positively impact land-use (transit oriented development) and dramatically increase travel options for residents who chose or cannot drive for economic or medical reasons. The MITC hub will also facilitate the shift travelers from Single Occupant Vehicles thereby reducing VMT and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The expansion of the ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility as a result of expanded San Joaquin Service will increase the economic activity in the city of Merced.

In summary, The Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada strongly supports the Merced Intermodal Track Connect. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Steve Roberts, President Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada

Scoping Comment Form

Available for Public Comment Until February 19, 2023.

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority has published a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the MITC Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

This is a comment form for the MITC Project.

We are looking for your feedback on two things:

- What should be studied in the EIR.
- Feasible alternatives that would meet most of the project objectives and/or avoid or minimize one or more environmental impacts of the MITC Project.

Please submit your comment using this form by February 19, 2023, at 5 p.m. Alternatively, you may email your comments to Information@MITCProject.org (please include “MITC Project” in the subject line) or mail them to San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, Attn: MITC Project, 949 East Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202.

Public comments submitted for the MITC Project will become part of the public record.

For more information on the MITC Project visit sjjpa.com/mitc

Your Name

Devin Cortinas

Mailing address

1201 Devonwood Dr #105

Email address

dchance059@gmail.com

Your comments

I've been studying maps of the HSR and intermodal track projects, and noticed that Amtrak would start service at the proposed Merced station on the UP line and then only serve the Turlock-Denair and Modesto stations along the BNSF line before coming back west to cross the same UP line. Wouldn't it make more sense to just move the San Joaquins trains to that part of the UP line in addition to ACE? I see several advantages to doing so instead of connecting UP to BNSF just to make those two existing stops:

1. The Amtrak trains would stop at the new ACE stations which would be right in the middle of Turlock and Modesto, rather than the far eastern outskirts of the cities, before reconnecting to the BNSF to make the Stockton stop and continue as normal. Stopping in the middle of cities is supposed to be one of the advantages of taking trains over airplanes. Plus, SJJPA would save money by not operating the two redundant stations. (Something else to consider: if this is done, a Manteca stop might be popular for SJ trains, and a station is already being built there for ACE.)
2. Mutual aid could be provided between the two services in case of mechanical failures or other unforeseen events. For example, an Amtrak train could couple to a disabled ACE train or pick up its passengers and make the normally ACE-only stops for those passengers if no other ACE train would arrive soon, but the Amtrak train is right behind it. Metrolink and the Surfliner do this sometimes.
3. Since this segment of the UP mostly runs right next to Highway 99, it has far less grade crossings than the BNSF equivalent, meaning less chances for vehicle or pedestrian strikes, especially since most of the roads that the BNSF crosses do not have much room between the tracks and Santa Fe Drive.
4. Travel times could be reduced because the SJ trains would not be gradually going farther and farther east just to swing back west into Stockton. Additionally, as you might already know, the section of the UP between Atwater and Livingston is set to be double tracked in order to greatly reduce potential delays for freight and other ACE trains.

A more direct route through the valley and its cities on the UP line seems like it would be more beneficial than raising the speed limit to 90 on a small segment of the BNSF line, especially since a raised speed limit would not matter if you're going 0 on a siding anyways due to freight trains being given priority. Since freight interference would likely happen on either line, the more direct UP route seems like it would have greater benefits than building a new track next to Highway 59 in order to keep the existing route. In fact, the money that would be spent building the intermodal tracks, upgrading the BNSF tracks in order to raise the speed limit, and to continue to operate the existing Turlock-Denair and Modesto stations, might be better spent on double-tracking another segment of the UP line to further reduce freight interference for both ACE and Amtrak.



BUILDING AMERICA®

February 19th, 2023

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Attn: MITC Project
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

RE: Union Pacific Railroad Comments on San Joaquin Joint Power's Authority Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project

To Whom It May Concern:

Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPRR) submits these comments in response to the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority's (SJPPA) Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report for the Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project (Project).

UPRR owns and operates a common carrier freight railroad network in the western two thirds of the United States, including the State of California. Specifically, UPRR owns and operates rail mainlines connecting the San Francisco Bay Area to Sacramento and points east and north, and to Los Angeles and points east and southeast. UPRR is the largest rail carrier in California in terms of both mileage and train operations. UPRR also has a multitude of public private partnerships across the state, including active and planned projects with various state agencies and passenger rail partners. UPRR's network in California is vital to the economic health of the state and the nation as a whole, and its rail service to California customers is crucial to the current and future success and growth of those customers.

UPRR requires the Project not compromise or restrict the safety or efficiency of the UPRR system, including UPRR's ability to serve current and future customers during the planning, construction and operation of the Project.

With these general principles as context, UPRR offers these specific comments:

- UPRR would like to understand the intended route of the 12 San Joaquin round-trips referenced in the NOP, and point out the additional round-trips may be subject to negotiating new agreements with UPRR.
- UPRR finds unacceptable anything that compromises or restricts UPRR's access to

current and future customers, including those customers in the industrial park in Merced. In the specific case of the industrial park, this would include, but not be limited to; shifting the industrial spur(s) and passenger trains traversing the industrial spurs. UPRR will likely comment negatively on proposals that appear to have adverse impacts on commercial opportunities.

- Any passenger rail structures must not be on UP property and the EIR should include alternatives and necessary property outside of UPRR's right-of-way to accommodate those alternatives.
- As referenced within Section "H" of the NOP document, the term "Transportation" should include harms to commercial freight traffic, current freight rail customers, potential future freight rail customers, current and future freight rail capacity, freight rail efficiency and impact on future ability grade separate roads that cross rail lines. State and federal policies encourage the elimination of railroad grade crossings for the benefit of safety and the efficient movement of trains and vehicular traffic. The design of the Project and its proximity to the UPRR right of way may permanently prevent roads that currently cross the freight tracks at grade from being grade-separated in the future. UPRR requests that an analysis be completed to determine the extent of these potential impacts and that the results be formally communicated to the respective roadway authorities who might be impacted and to UPRR.

Considering the potentially serious and detrimental impacts to UPRR facilities, operations, and to current and future customer access, UPRR encourages SJJPA to continue working with UPRR to develop a Project that meets UPRR safety and engineering guidelines and addresses the concerns identified in this letter or that have yet to be identified. SJJPA must provide solutions to overcome the impacts to UPRR noted above and any others UPRR identifies as the design of the Project is developed in more detail.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Jeff Sheldon
General Director Network Development

cc: Mark Bristol, Union Pacific
Peggy Harris, Union Pacific
Adrian Guerrero, Union Pacific



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710
(559) 243-4005
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



February 17, 2023

Dan Leavitt
San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, California 95202

**Subject: Merced Intermodal Track Connection Project (Project)
Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report
State Clearinghouse No. 2023010061**

Dear Dan Leavitt:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a NOP from the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority for the above-referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (*Id.*, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

Dan Leavitt
 San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
 February 17, 2023
 Page 2

agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code will be required.

Nesting Birds: CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs and nests include, sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

Objective: The Project includes a new track connection from the BNSF corridor to the proposed integrated station in downtown Merced between R and O Streets, in addition to a new platform that will allow for a cross-platform transfer between the San Joaquin and High-Speed Rail (HSR). The Project only includes the construction of the track connection and the San Joaquin platforms; it does not include the construction of the rest of the integrated stations. The Project would consist of the following: new passenger rail connection for the San Joaquin from BNSF north of State Route (SR) 59, running along the SR 59 corridor and immediately west of the ACE/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor, to the southern terminus at the proposed integrated station; shifting ACE/UPRR spur track that accesses industrial area north of SR 59; new aerial guideway on the west side of the ACE/UPRR corridor that would connect into the east side of the HSR platform (which would be shared with the San Joaquin); and expansion of the approved ACE Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility to include new and upgraded tracks for San Joaquin trains and joint use of the initial facility for both ACE and the San Joaquin trains.

Location: The Project site located entirely within Merced County and almost entirely within the city limits of Merced. A small portion of the Project near Ashby Road and Miles Court is outside the city limits of Merced.

Dan Leavitt
San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
February 17, 2023
Page 3

Timeframe: Unspecified.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the EIR for this Project.

The EIR that will be prepared will determine the likely environmental impacts associated with the Project. CDFW is concerned regarding potential impacts to special-status species from the ground disturbance development activities, including but not limited to, the State threatened Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*).

Swainson's Hawk (SWHA)

SWHA exhibit high nest-site fidelity year after year in the San Joaquin Valley (CDFW 2016). The Project as proposed will involve noise, groundwork, and movement of workers that could affect nests and has the potential to result in nest abandonment, significantly impacting local nesting SWHA. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for SWHA, potential significant impacts that may result from Project activities include nest abandonment, and reduced nesting success (loss or reduced health or vigor of eggs or young) from loss of foraging habitat.

CDFW recommends that survey-level protocols follow the survey methods developed by the Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC 2000) for SWHA. In addition, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 0.5-mile be delineated around active nests until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. If take could occur as a result of Project implementation, acquisition of a State ITP would be warranted.

Nesting birds

CDFW encourages that Project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February through mid-September), the Project proponent is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced above.

To evaluate Project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability

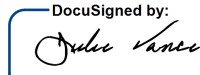
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that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival.

Lake and Stream Alteration: The Project site is adjacent to Bear Creek and Fahrens Creek/Black Rascal Creek. Therefore, the Project may be subject to notification under Fish and Game Code Section 1602. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires the Project proponent to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake; or (c) deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream, or lake. "Any river, stream, or lake" includes those that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial in nature. If a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSA Agreement) is needed, CDFW is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance of an LSA Agreement. For additional information on notification requirements, please contact our staff in the LSA Program at (559) 243-4593, or by electronic mail at R4LSA@wildlife.gov.

CDFW is available to meet with you ahead of draft EIR preparation to discuss potential impacts and possible mitigation measures for some or all of the resources that may be analyzed in the EIR. If you have any questions, please contact Jim Vang, Environmental Scientist, at the address provided on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 580-3203, or by electronic mail at Jim.Vang@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

FA83F09FE08945A...
Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager

cc: State Clearinghouse
state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

CDFW LSA/1600; R4LSA@wildlife.ca.gov

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LITERATURE CITED

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2016. Five Year Status Review for Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). California Department of Fish and Wildlife. April 11, 2016.

Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC). 2000. Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley. Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, May 31, 2000.