Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report
Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Project

Scoping Period: September 13, 2019 – October 14, 2019

DATE: September 13, 2019

TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

FROM: San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) and San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA)

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that SJRRC and SJJPA intend to jointly prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consistent with requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed improvements included in the Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Project (Project). SJRRC will serve as the lead agency under CEQA for the EIR.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that SJRRC and SJJPA plan to prepare the EIR and to request input on the scope of the environmental analysis to be performed and the alternatives to be considered. SJRRC invites comments on the scope and context of the environmental information from all relevant public agencies that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities with regard to the Project. We are also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of the environmental document.

A. Scoping Period

Written responses and comments on the scope of the Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Project will be accepted until 6:00 PM on Monday, October 14, 2019.

Comments may be sent via email to ace.sacramentoextension@gmail.com, or via mail to:

San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
Attn: Valley Rail Sacramento Extension NOP
949 E. Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Please include "Valley Rail Sacramento Extension NOP" in the subject heading for emailed comments. Public scoping meetings are scheduled for the times and dates listed below.

B. Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings will be held for the Project at the following locations:

Date:	Monday September 30, 2019 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location:	Hutchins Street Square Community Center, Thomas Theatre Gallery 125 South Hutchins Street Lodi, CA 95240
Date:	Tuesday October 1, 2019 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location:	Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center 450 West El Camino Avenue Sacramento, CA 95833
Date:	Wednesday October 2, 2019 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location:	Coloma Community Center, Grass Valley Room 4623 T Street Sacramento, CA 95819

The scoping meetings will provide an opportunity for the lead agency (SJRRC) to provide further details on the Project and to give interested agencies, organizations, and individuals an opportunity to comment on the scope and content of the EIR.

C. Project History

SJJPA, which manages the Amtrak San Joaquins passenger rail service, and SJRRC, which owns and operates the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) passenger rail service, are jointly undertaking the planning, design, and environmental review of the Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Project, a proposed passenger rail service from Stockton to Sacramento with further connections south of Stockton to San Jose, Ceres (at the proposed Ceres Station included in the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced project), and Bakersfield.[1] As further described below, this service would include the construction of a new passenger rail station in Lodi, and five new stations in Sacramento ("Elk Grove" – along Cosumnes River Boulevard; City College; Midtown; Old North Sacramento; and Natomas/Sacramento Airport). In addition, the Project includes the construction of a maintenance and layover facility adjacent to the proposed Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station. Increased service to Sacramento is a core element of the SJJPA 2019 Business Plan and the SJRRC 2019/2020 Work Program and Budget.

D. Project Location

As shown in the attached Project Location Map, the Project spans San Joaquin and Sacramento Counties. Project improvements would expand existing passenger rail service to new markets, and increase frequency of service between Stockton and Natomas. The proposed rail alignment would be located entirely within existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)-owned

[1] On August 2, 2018, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission Board certified the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and approved the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced project. Operation of Phase I of the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced project (which includes the Ceres Station) is anticipated to begin between 2020 and 2023.

right-of-way (ROW) along the Sacramento and Fresno Subdivisions.[2] However, the Project would also include the construction of new passenger rail stations in Lodi, and five stations in Sacramento ("Elk Grove", City College, Midtown, Old North Sacramento, and Natomas/Sacramento Airport), as well as a maintenance and layover facility; all proposed for construction adjacent to UPRR ROW on ROW to be acquired for the project.

Project Location Map

See attached.

E. Project Objectives

The primary objectives of the Project are to expand passenger rail service to new markets, increase frequency of service, increase passenger rail ridership and reduce travel time between the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento area; augment transit capacity and provide transit connections; alleviate traffic congestion, improve regional air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; and to support local and regional land use development plans and policies.

F. Project Description

The Project includes the implementation of new passenger rail service from the existing Stockton Downtown/ACE Station in Stockton, north to the North Natomas area of Sacramento. The Project includes the addition of both Amtrak San Joaquins trains and ACE trains along the Sacramento and Fresno Subdivisions serving the six proposed stations (further described below).

The Project includes the potential implementation of two new roundtrip San Joaquins operating on the Sacramento, Fresno, and BNSF Stockton Subdivisions. One roundtrip would operate between the proposed Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station and the existing Fresno Amtrak Station, and one round trip would operate between the proposed Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station and the existing Bakersfield Amtrak Station.

The Project also includes an extension of existing ACE service to the proposed Natomas Station. One existing ACE train would originate at the proposed Natomas Station in the morning and operate to the Stockton Downtown/ACE Station. Once at the Stockton Downtown/ACE Station, the train would operate in the same manner as the existing ACE service to the San Jose Diridon Station. In the afternoon, one existing ACE train would depart the San Jose Diridon Station and operate to the Stockton Downtown/ACE Station (as is current), then continue north to terminate at the proposed Natomas Station where it would layover overnight.

The Project also includes service from the proposed Natomas Station to the Ceres ACE Station included in the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced project. This service would provide three ACE trips that would originate at the Ceres Station in the morning, travel to the Natomas Station, and layover during the day. One of the trains would make a mid-day round trip south to

[2] A *subdivision* is a portion of railroad or railway that operates under a single timetable (authority for train movement in the area).

the Stockton Downtown/ACE Station and back. In the afternoon the three ACE trains would return to the Ceres Station.

Improvements necessary for implementation of the Project will be analyzed at a project level of detail in the EIR based on preliminary engineering. Project improvements (including stations, track improvements, and a maintenance and layover facility) are summarized below:

- Stations
  - Lodi Station
    - There are two proposed alternatives for the Lodi Station. Both alternatives would include a new passenger platform, pedestrian bridge access, surface parking, a bus drop-off/pick-up area, and new station track.
    - Lodi Station Alternative 1 would be constructed along the south side of State Route 12 (SR 12) just east of the existing UPRR at-grade crossing.
    - Lodi Station Alternative 2 would be constructed along the north side of West Harney Lane just east of the UPRR at-grade crossing.
  - Elk Grove Station (located in South Sacramento)
    - The Elk Grove Station would be constructed along Cosumnes River Boulevard west of the existing Sacramento Regional Transit (Sac RT) Franklin Station. There are two proposed platform variants for this station, as well as two proposed access variants for this station, for a total of four different station layout variants. Each of the four variants would include new passenger platforms, pedestrian bridge access, surface parking, bus drop-off/pick-up areas, station tracks, and access to the station via a new frontage road just south of Cosumnes Boulevard.
    - The two passenger platform variants include one variant that would be located immediately south of the Cosumnes River Boulevard viaduct; and one variant that would be located approximately 50 feet south of the Cosumnes River Boulevard viaduct.
    - The two station access variants include one variant that would provide access via the Franklin Station access intersection on Cosumnes River Boulevard; and one variant that would provide access via a new intersection on Cosumnes River Boulevard west of the existing light rail station access intersection.
  - City College Station
    - The City College Station would be constructed adjacent to and east of the existing Sac RT City College Station in Sacramento. The station would include a new passenger platform and new station tracks that would allow for platform-to-platform transfers with light rail trains. No new parking is proposed for the City College Station.

- Midtown Station
  - The Midtown Station would be constructed along the existing UPRR tracks between P Street and S Street in Sacramento. This station would include a new passenger platform and two expanded at-grade crossings at P Street and Q Street (to accommodate an additional track). No new parking is proposed for the Midtown Station.
  - Additional improvements proposed for this station include enhanced passenger shelters, enhanced bike and pedestrian infrastructure, improved public areas, fencing upgrades, improvements to pedestrian crossings in the vicinity of the station and a bicycle/pedestrian path in UPRR ROW from the station north to C Street.
- Old North Sacramento Station
  - The Old North Sacramento Station would be constructed on a site near the northwest corner of the Acoma Street/El Monte Avenue intersection. This station would include a new passenger platform, pedestrian tunnel access for the parking lot, surface parking, bus drop-off/pick-up area, and station track.
- Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station
  - The Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station would be constructed along Elkhorn Boulevard in North Natomas. There are two station alternatives and an interim station under consideration for the Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station. All station alternatives would include a new passenger platform, bus drop-off/pick-up area, station track, and surface parking, as well as a 12- to 14-minute shuttle connection to and from the Sacramento International Airport.
  - The first alternative for this station would be located along the east side of Blacktop Road just south of West Elkhorn Boulevard. Access would be provided via a ramp connection along Blacktop Road to the new Elkhorn Boulevard grade separation included as part of one of the alternatives for a maintenance and layover facility (described below).
  - The second alternative for this station would be located south of West Elkhorn Boulevard and west of Levee Road. Access would be provided via a new intersection with West Elkhorn Boulevard.
  - Based on availability of funding and the possibility of phased construction of the Natomas Maintenance and Layover Facility (described below) an interim Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station could be constructed. The interim station would be located on a parcel south of Cement Way. Access to the station would be provided from West Elkhorn Boulevard via Blacktop Road and Cement Way. The interim station would include a passenger platform, bus drop-off/pick-up area, station track and an additional storage track, and parking.

- Natomas Maintenance and Layover Facility
    - The Natomas Maintenance and Layover Facility would be located in the same vicinity as the proposed Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station alternatives. There are two alternatives for the Natomas Maintenance and Layover Facility. Both alternatives would include multiple yard tracks, would be fully fenced, and would include a train wash and maintenance building. The alternatives are integral with the Natomas/Sacramento Airport Station alternatives described above.
    - One of the alternatives would be located west of the UPRR track and east of Levee Road, on both sides of Elkhorn Boulevard. Under this alternative, a grade separation of Elkhorn Boulevard would be constructed which would start just west of 6th Street and end just west of Levee Road.
    - The second alternative would be located south of Elkhorn Boulevard, west of Levee Road and east of the Natomas development.
- Rail infrastructure
    - Track curve reconstruction would occur at four locations:
        - Between East March Lane and East Swain Road
        - North of North New Hope Road
        - South of Desmond Road
        - North of the North Elk Grove Station
    - Upgrades to existing passing siding track would occur at six locations:
        - Hammer Lane Siding upgrade - between East Swain Road and Bear Creek in Stockton
        - Thornton Siding upgrade and extension - between West Kile Road and Barber Road through Thornton
        - Phillips Siding upgrade and extension - between just north of Lambert Road and just north of Core Road south of Elk Grove
        - Pollock Siding upgrade - between Meadowview Road and Florin Road in Sacramento
        - South Sacramento Siding upgrade - in the vicinity of City College
        - Del Paso Siding Upgrade and Extension - between Del Paso Boulevard and just north of Barros Drive in North Sacramento.
            - This upgrade and extension also includes expansion of the existing at-grade crossing at the bike/ped path just north of the proposed Old North Sacramento Station platform, expansion of the existing at-grade crossing at El Camino Avenue, and a new bridge. On each end of the bridge, existing flood gates will be modified to accommodate the additional track.

- New passing siding tracks at two locations:
    - Lodi Siding - from just south of the Lodi Station alternatives and extending north for 18,500 feet. Based on Lodi Station Alternative 1, this siding includes the expansion of the existing at-grade crossings at Highway 12, and at Sargent Road to accommodate another track parallel to the existing at-grade crossings. Based on Lodi Station Alternative 2, this siding includes the expansion of the existing at-grade crossings at West Harney Lane, at Devries Road, at Kingdon Road, at Highway 12, and at Sargent Road to accommodate another track parallel to the existing at-grade crossings.
    - North Elk Grove Siding – between Sims Road and the North Elk Grove Station. This siding includes the expansion of the existing at-grade crossings at Sims Road to accommodate another track parallel to the existing at-grade crossings.
- New crossover track in one location, just south of the proposed City College Station and north of 26th Avenue.

G. Potential Environmental Effects

The lead agency has initially determined that the following topics will be included for evaluation in the EIR: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise and Vibration, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. The EIR will consider both temporary construction-period and permanent impacts. The EIR will also include a cumulative impact analysis of the impacts of the project in combination with other planned railway projects, transportation improvements, and land use plans and projects in the various cities along the project corridor. SJRRC and SJJPA are seeking comments from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding the environmental effects and potential alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR.

H. Alternatives

As required by CEQA, the EIR will consider a reasonable range of alternatives in addition to the Project. At a minimum, the EIR will also consider a No Build Alternative.

SJRRC and SJJPA are 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, SJRRC and SJJPA will consider the need for analysis of additional alternatives. Only alternatives that are feasible, meet the project objectives, and reduce one or more significant environmental impacts of the Project will be analyzed in detail. Alternatives that are infeasible, that do not meet the project objectives, or that do not reduce one of more significant environmental impacts of the Project will be discussed in the EIR but will not be analyzed in detail as allowed by the requirements of CEQA.

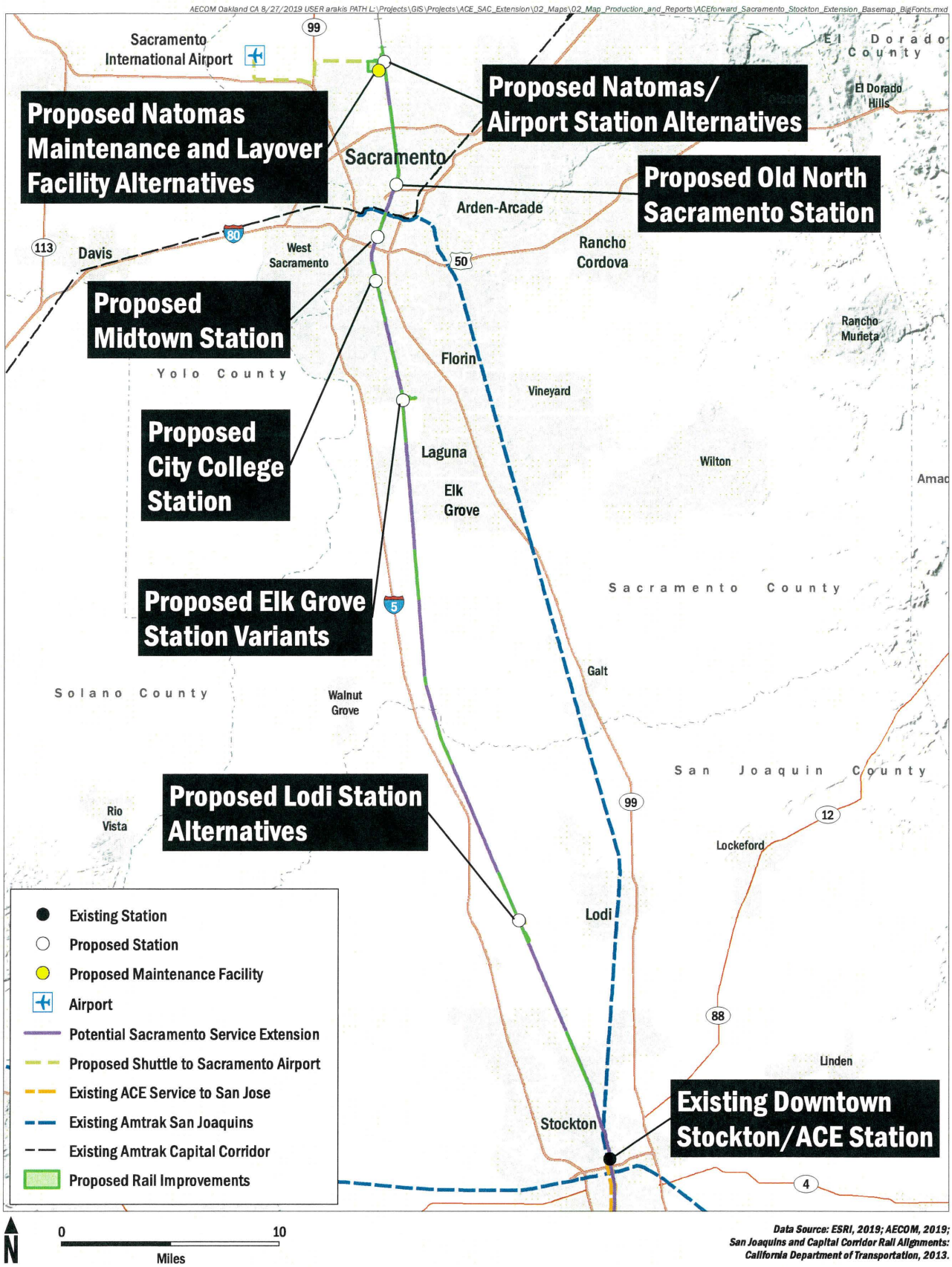
I. Environmental Review Process

Following completion of the 30-day NOP public review period, SJRRC and SJJPA will incorporate relevant information into the Draft EIR, including results of public scoping and technical studies. The Draft EIR will be circulated for public review and comment for a 45-day public review period.

SJRRC and SJJPA requests that any potential Responsible or Trustee Agency responding to this notice do so in a manner consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b). All parties that have submitted their names and email or mailing addresses will be notified as part of this CEQA review process.

A copy of the NOP can be found on the active applications website at https://acerail.com/valley_rail/.

If you wish to be placed on the mailing list or need additional information, please submit your request to ace.sacramentoextension@gmail.com.



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Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Project
Project Location Map