

## NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

# Valley Link

**PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2, 2020 – THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 2021**

**DATE:** December 2, 2020  
**TO:** Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Other Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Tri-Valley - San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority  
**SUBJECT:** Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Valley Link Project (SCH #2018092027)

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the Tri-Valley - San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority), acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the Valley Link Project (Proposed Project).

### A. Project Description

The Authority proposes to establish new passenger rail service along a 42-mile corridor between the existing Dublin/Pleasanton Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Station and the approved Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) North Lathrop Station, which is included in the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project.

### Project Alignment, Stations, and Maintenance Facilities

#### Alignment Segments

##### Tri-Valley Segment

In the Tri-Valley, the Proposed Project would operate in the median of Interstate (I-)580 from the existing Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station to Greenville Road. Near Greenville Road, the alignment would transition from the median of I-580 to the Alameda County Transportation Corridor right-of-way via an elevated viaduct. The existing I-580 median would be widened throughout this segment as necessary to accommodate the Proposed Project while maintaining existing freeway lane and interchange ramp configurations, including all existing express lane facilities.

##### Altamont Segment

Across the Altamont Pass, the Proposed Project would operate within the Alameda County Transportation Corridor right-of-way between the proposed Greenville Station and the Alameda County/San Joaquin County line, and then continue east along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Owens-Illinois Industrial Lead to approximately 0.5 mile east of the Delta-Mendota Canal. The Proposed Project includes a single track and a double-track variant for the portion along the Owens-Illinois Industrial Lead.

### **Tracy to Lathrop Segment**

In the Tracy to Lathrop segment, the Proposed Project would operate within the existing UPRR Owens-Illinois Industrial Lead and Tracy Subdivision. The Proposed Project includes a single track and a double-track variant for the portion along the Owens-Illinois Industrial lead and the Tracy Subdivision.

### **Stations**

The Proposed Project includes seven stations. All stations would include passenger amenities such as platform shelters, benches, lighting, security cameras, signage, ticketing machines, bicycle storage facilities, landscaping, and emergency call boxes. Electric car charging stations and photovoltaic panels to offset electricity requirements are identified at specific stations. . All stations, except for the Dublin/Pleasanton Station would include new parking and areas for passenger drop off and pick up and bus bays.

#### **Dublin/Pleasanton Station**

The Dublin/Pleasanton Station would be constructed in the median of I-580 north of and adjacent to the existing Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station. The Proposed Project does not include the construction of additional parking at this station.

#### **Isabel Station**

The Isabel Station would be constructed within the I-580 median and on a 24-acre site currently owned by BART along East Airway Boulevard south of I 580 and east of the Isabel Avenue I-580 overcrossing in Livermore. Access and roadway improvements would be provided in connection with the proposed parking. Surface parking is proposed to meet 2025 demand and a potential parking garage is proposed to meet 2040 demand.

#### **Greenville Station**

The Greenville Station would be constructed on a 12-acre site on the north side of I-580 between I-580 and Altamont Pass Road, and along a portion of the Alameda County Transportation Corridor right-of-way south of I-580 in Livermore. The Greenville Station would also include the construction of improvements necessary to accommodate transfers to and from ACE trains, including a new ACE passenger platform along the existing UPRR tracks. Surface parking is proposed to meet 2025 and 2040 demand.

#### **Mountain House Station**

The Mountain House Station would be constructed southwest of I-580 on a 12.5-acre site south of Via Nicolo Road and east of Patterson Pass Road for 2025. Areas on an adjacent 2.25-acre site would be designated for future surface parking expansion to meet 2040 parking demand. Access to the station would be provided from a new driveway along Via Nicolo Road south of the existing UPRR tracks near the entrance to the Musco Family Olive Company.

#### **Downtown Tracy Station**

The Downtown Tracy Station would be constructed at the existing Tracy Transit Center at 50 East Sixth Street in downtown Tracy on an 8.7-acre site. The existing transit center operates as a hub for local,

commuter, and long-distance bus services provided by Tracy's TRACER bus service, the San Joaquin Regional Transit District, and Greyhound Lines. Surface parking is proposed to meet 2025 demand and a potential parking garage is proposed to meet 2040 demand.

### **River Islands Station**

The River Islands Station would be constructed on an 18-acre site along the Tracy Subdivision in the vicinity of the River Islands at Lathrop master-planned community and would include new access connections north of and south of the proposed station. Surface parking is proposed to meet 2025 and 2040 demand.

### **North Lathrop Station**

The North Lathrop Station would be constructed at the same site as the ACE North Lathrop station included in the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced project. The 30-acre site is presently vacant federal land that is part of the U.S. Department of Defense Sharpe Army Depot which is no longer in use. The North Lathrop Station would be a transfer station between Valley Link and ACE. Surface parking is proposed to meet 2025 and 2040 demand. Of the 30-acre site, 10 acres would be required for the initial 2025 parking demand and 20 acres would be required for the expansion of parking in 2040.

## **Operations and Maintenance Facility**

### **Tracy Operation and Maintenance Facility (OMF)**

To support train layovers, storage, maintenance, and operations associated with the Proposed Project, a new OMF would be constructed on an approximately 200-acre City of Tracy-owned property along West Schulte Road just west of the Owens-Brockway Glass Container plant. All vehicle storage and maintenance activities would take place at the proposed Tracy OMF. Access to the Tracy OMF would be from West Schulte Road.

## **Initial Operating Segments**

Full implementation of the Proposed Project would be subject to available funding and design considerations. As such, two initial operating segments (IOSs) are also under consideration: one for the establishment of initial service between the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station and the proposed Greenville Station; and one for service between the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station and the proposed Mountain House Station. The Proposed Project has been designed to accommodate implementation one or both of the potential IOSs.

If an IOS is implemented that only includes service between the Dublin/Pleasanton Station and the Greenville Station, an Interim OMF would be constructed on a 5-acre portion of the Alameda County-owned right-of-way along Altamont Pass Road approximately 2,250 feet east of Dyer Road.

## **Vehicles**

The Authority is considering the following four train technology variants in the EIR: Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU), Hybrid Battery Multiple Unit (HBMU), Battery-Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU), and diesel locomotive haul.

### **DMU**

A DMU is a passenger rail vehicle that is self-propelled by on-board diesel engines. These diesel engines generate electricity which powers electric motors that drive the vehicle. The DMU train technology is a proven technology in widespread use worldwide and in a number of locations in the U.S. (including eBART in Contra Costa County). DMUs used for Valley Link would meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Tier 4 requirements, which would have lower criteria pollutant emissions than lower-tier equipment. The DMU variant could utilize traditional ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD) or use renewable diesel fuel.

### **HBMU**

The HBMU train technology includes on-board diesel engines as well as on-board batteries for electrical power. The diesel engines can generate electricity for the electric motors directly or can charge on board batteries that can also power the electric motors. HBMU model concepts often incorporate regenerative braking (like that in hybrid cars) to charge the electric batteries. Some HBMU concepts are designed to only use the electric batteries in close proximity to stations or depots; others are designed to use batteries more widely and then use diesel engines when under load (such as when climbing). It is currently unknown whether this HBMU technology could meet the performance criteria for the project site. If the performance criteria could be met by hybrid technology, the Authority could either procure vehicles utilizing this technology or if DMUs were procured initially, the Authority could transition to this technology as it evolves.

### **BEMU**

Full BEMUs is a technology that solely uses on-board batteries for electrical power. This technology is currently in use for streetcar and light rail passenger services in the U.S. There are no known BEMUs in regular rail passenger service on the U.S. rail system at present. However, they are being developed for possible deployment in the next few years. It is currently unknown whether the BEMU technology could meet the performance criteria for the Proposed Project. If the performance criteria could be met by the BEMU technology, the Authority could procure vehicles utilizing this technology; or if DMUs or HBMUs were procured initially, the Authority could transition to this technology as it evolves.

### **Diesel Locomotive Haul**

The Diesel Locomotive Haul variant would employ trainsets with (non-powered) passenger cars pulled or pushed by a diesel-electric locomotive, similar to conventional commuter rail operations such as ACE and Amtrak. Under this variant, operation of the Proposed Project would use engines that meet or exceed Tier 4 emissions standards. Tier 4 locomotives are compliant with the latest U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emissions standards to reduce particulate matter and nitrogen oxide emissions compared to older locomotives. Similar to the DMU variant and the HBMU variant, the Diesel Locomotive Haul variant could utilize ULSD or renewable diesel fuel for their diesel engines.

## **B. Project Location**

Figure 1 below shows the location of the Proposed Project. Figure 2 below shows the location of the Greenville Station IOS.

Figure 1. Proposed Valley Link Project

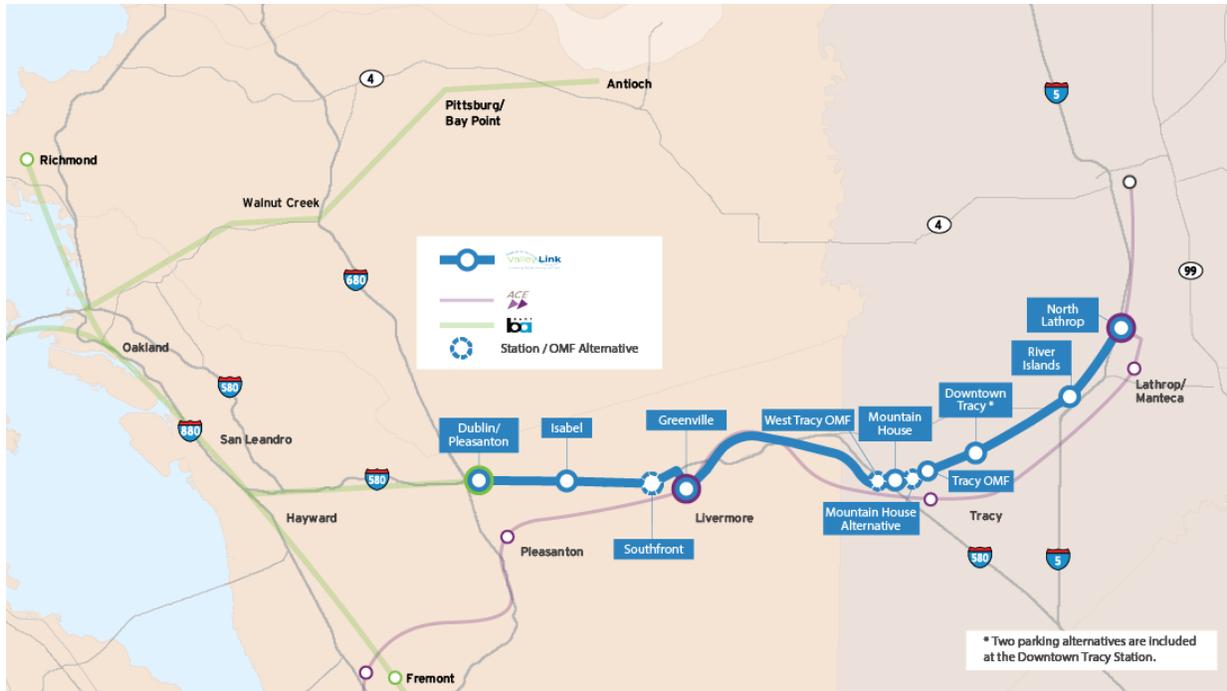


Figure 2. Greenville Station IOS



## C. Alternatives

During preparation of the EIR, the Authority also considered and evaluated alternatives to the Proposed Project:

- **Alternatives Analyzed at the Same Level of Detail as Proposed Project:** These alternatives include the Southfront Road Station Alternative (including a potential IOS to Southfront), the Stone Cut Alignment Alternative, the Mountain House Station Alternative (including a potential IOS to the Mountain House Station Alternative), the West Tracy OMF Alternative, and Downtown Tracy Parking Alternatives 1 and 2.
- **Alternatives Analyzed at a Lesser Level of Detail:** These alternatives include: the No Project Alternative; the Bus/BRT Alternative with Managed Lanes; and the Electric Multiple Unit/Overhead Catenary System (EMU/OCS) Alternative.
- **Alternatives Considered but Withdrawn:** The Authority also considered other alternatives, including operating technologies, modal alternatives, and alternative alignment and station alternatives that were not carried forward for analysis in the EIR. A description of these alternatives, the screening process, and why they were dismissed from further analysis is included in the EIR.

## D. Potential Environmental Impacts

The Proposed Project would result in overall regional benefits in terms of reducing regional traffic and vehicle miles traveled, improving regional transportation connections, improving operational air quality overall, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and reducing energy use.

The Proposed Project would result in the following significant and unavoidable impacts, even after implementation of mitigation: permanent conversion of important farmland; contribution to cumulatively significant air quality health risks related to particulate matter in the Tri-Valley; construction impacts relative to localized ambient air quality in the San Joaquin Valley; operational impacts to special-status species and wildlife movement associated with operation of the Greenville Station, Mountain House Station, and West Tracy OMF Alternative; land use inconsistency and potential inducement of localized unplanned growth in the immediate vicinity of the Greenville and Mountain House Stations; and construction and operational noise at certain locations.

The Proposed Project would result in less-than-significant impacts (including less than significant impacts with mitigation) on other resource areas: aesthetics (construction and operation); agricultural resources (construction); air quality (construction and operation, other than contributions to cumulative impacts); biological resources (construction and operation, other than operational impacts on special-status species and wildlife movement at the Greenville Station, Mountain House Station, and West Tracy OMF Alternative); cultural resources (construction and operation); energy (construction and operation); geology and soils (construction and operation); greenhouse gas emissions (construction and operation); hazards and hazardous materials (construction and operation); hydrology and water quality (construction and operation); land use and planning (construction and operation, other than the Greenville and Mountain House Stations); vibration (construction and operation); population and housing (construction and operation, other than the Greenville and Mountain House Stations) recreation (construction and operation);

safety and security (construction and operation); transportation (construction and operation); and utilities and service systems (construction and operation).

Several facilities associated with the Proposed Project are located on sites included on a hazardous materials/contaminated sites list (Cortese list) compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

## E. Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Report

The Draft EIR is available on the Authority's website at this location:

<https://www.valleylinkrail.com/environmental-ceqa>

Because of current COVID-19 social distancing requirements, including the order from Alameda County to adhere to social distancing requirements, a printed copy of the Draft EIR is available for public viewing by appointment only at the Tri-Valley San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority office at 1362 Rutan Court, Suite 100, in Livermore California. Email or call the information request number to arrange an appointment.

- Information Line: For more information, please email [info@valleylinkrail.com](mailto:info@valleylinkrail.com) or call the information request line at (925) 455-7591 and leave a message.

## F. Online Open House Meetings

The Authority will hold three online open house meetings to provide information about the Draft EIR and respond to general questions about the EIR analysis. A presentation summarizing the project and the EIR will be provided and staff will be available to answer questions. While staff will be available to answer questions of a general nature at this meeting; all formal comments on the EIR must be submitted in writing for consideration by the authority (see below).

Information about how to join the online open house meetings will be provided on the Authority's website at this location: <https://www.valleylinkrail.com/environmental-ceqa>

The three online open house meetings will be held on the following dates and times:

- Saturday, December 12, 2020, from 9:00 am to 10:30 am.
- Wednesday, December 16, 2020 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.
- Thursday, December 17, 2020 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm.

## G. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report

The public review period will be from December 2, 2020 to January 21, 2021. Comments on this Draft EIR must be received by the Authority no later than 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the Draft EIR public review period, and can be submitted by any of the following methods:

- **Mail:** Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority  
Attn: Valley Link Draft EIR  
1362 Rutan Court #100  
Livermore, CA 94551
- **Email:** [drafteircomments@valleylinkrail.com](mailto:drafteircomments@valleylinkrail.com)