



City of Barstow
220 East Mountain View Street, Suite A,
Barstow California 92311-2839

NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) FOR DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF A PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Date: February 15, 2024
To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Organizations, and Individuals
From: City of Barstow Community Development Department
Subject: **City of Barstow General Plan Update and Barstow International Gateway Specific Plan Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)**

Purpose:

The City of Barstow (City), as the lead agency, is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the comprehensive update to the City of Barstow General Plan (GPU) and the Barstow International Gateway (BIG) Specific Plan project proposed by the BNSF Railway Company (BNSF). Because a General Plan Amendment and pre-zoning and annexation of the unincorporated portion of the Project area located in the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), which will be done as part of the GPU process, are required to accommodate BIG's proposed development, both the GPU and the BIG projects will be evaluated in the same EIR. The GPU and BIG Specific Plan projects are collectively referred to as the "Project." The EIR will evaluate the GPU at a programmatic level since it is a planning document and individual development projects under the GPU are currently unknown. The EIR will evaluate BIG at a project level to allow for both entitlement and development.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to provide responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and other interested parties with information describing the Project and its potential environmental effects.

Project Location:

The City of Barstow and its Sphere of Influence (SOI) are in western San Bernardino County and are surrounded entirely by unincorporated San Bernardino County. Interstate 15 (I-15) bisects the City of Barstow in a southwest-northeast direction, while Interstate 40 (I-40) bisects the City in an east-west direction. State Route 247 (SR-247), which runs in a north-south direction, terminates as it intersects I-15. Figure 1, *Regional Location*, and Figure 2, *General Plan Area Aerial*, show the City and SOI in its regional and local contexts. The Project is generally within the 1984 Barstow USGS quadrangle map and can be found generally with global positioning satellite coordinates of 34° 53' 44.8728" North and 117° 1' 2.2116" West.



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The BIG Specific Plan area is in the City’s western portion and is generally bound by the Mojave River on the north, Main Street on the south, Lenwood Road on the east, and Hinkley Road on the west. BIG also proposes various offsite improvements, as described below. Most of BIG (approximately two-thirds) is within unincorporated County lands but within the City’s SOI, while the remaining approximately one-third is within Barstow City limits. Figure 2 shows BIG in a local context.

Project Summary:

The City of Barstow last updated its General Plan in 2015, with a short planning horizon that only extended to 2020. The GPU will provide the long-term planning blueprint for the improvements needed to accommodate the City’s growing population over a 25-year planning horizon (2023 to 2048). The GPU includes a proposed annexation of unincorporated County lands immediately west of the City. The Project also includes the BIG Specific Plan, and the various offsite improvements needed for its implementation. The BIG Specific Plan proposes an integrated rail facility and onsite transload warehouse center at the City’s western extent (see Figures 2 and 3). BIG would allow for direct transfer of containers from ships at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to trains for transport through the Alameda Corridor onto the BNSF mainline to BIG. BIG proposes a transload warehouse center where the vast majority of the containers would be processed within an onsite “closed loop” operation between BNSF rail operations and transload warehouse users. The BIG Specific Plan would also establish site-specific zoning regulations and development standards for the Specific Plan area.

Project Description:

General Plan Update

The Project includes a comprehensive update of the City’s General Plan to refine current goals and policies to reflect the City’s new vision, opportunities, and obligations; refine and expand circulation and infrastructure plans to align with the City’s updated vision and land use plan; and expand opportunities for economic growth, prosperity, and community health.

In 2020, the City initiated updates to the current General Plan to bring the City into compliance with state law and address the topics of safety, environmental justice, and housing. The Environmental Justice and Safety Elements were updated in 2021, and the Housing Element update is entering the final stages of state certification, with an expected completion date in 2024. As part of the GPU, the City will make updates to these elements, as needed, to ensure consistency with the GPU and other supporting plans.

During the 25-year planning horizon of the General Plan Update, the Plan Area could potentially result in a growth of 6,920 dwelling units, 21,321 residents, 14,054,400 square feet of non-residential uses, and 13,481 jobs by 2048, as shown in **Table 1, General Plan Update Buildout**.



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TABLE 1. GENERAL PLAN UPDATE BUILDOUT

Statistic	City of Barstow	BIG	Balance of SOI	Total
Dwelling Units				
Existing (2023) ¹	8,549	34	3,504	12,087
Future (2048)	15,469	34	3,504	19,007
Projected Growth	6,920	0	0	6,920
Population				
Existing (2023) ¹	24,569	91	10,548	35,208
Future (2048)	45,890	91	10,548	56,529
Projected Growth	21,321	0	0	21,321
Non-Residential Square Feet				
Existing (2023) ¹	11,382,700	0	N/A	11,382,700
Future (2048)	16,437,100	9,000,000	N/A	25,437,100
Projected Growth	5,054,400	9,000,000	N/A	14,054,400
Employment				
Existing (2023) ¹	13,564	0	937	14,501
Future (2048)	18,250	8,795	937	27,982
Projected Growth	4,686	8,795	0	13,481
Note: BIG = Barstow International Gateway; SOI = Sphere of Influence				
¹ PlaceWorks and the City of Barstow.				

Barstow International Gateway (BIG) Specific Plan

The BIG Specific Plan consists of a rail yard a transload warehouse center, and a private utility (i.e., a solar farm). The rail yard would include a block swap yard, an intermodal facility (IMF), and ancillary rail areas (container yard, chassis storage, and maintenance of way). To serve the proposed rail yard and transload warehouse center, BIG proposes approximately 600 acres of various offsite rail and non-rail improvements (e.g., lead track extensions, drainage, utilities, and roadways). Figure 3, *BIG Conceptual Site Plan*, shows the locations of the proposed BIG Specific Plan uses. Figure 4, *BIG Offsite Rail Improvements*, shows the locations of the proposed BIG offsite rail improvements. As shown in Figure 4, a small portion of BIG’s offsite rail improvements would extend beyond the City’s Sphere of Influence. The total BIG project site is approximately 5,000 acres. Final acreages will be determined based on site survey. Like other rail yards, BIG would operate 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.



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The block swap yard would allow for the transfer of blocks of intermodal rail cars between trains.¹ The IMF would facilitate the transfer of containers between rail cars and the onsite transload warehouse center via zero-emission electric hostlers.² This is different than the operations at a typical IMF where the primary purpose is to transfer containers from heavy trucks to rail cars, and vice versa. At the BIG IMF, only a small percentage of containers would arrive at/depart via heavy trucks. The vast majority of containers would arrive at/depart from the IMF via train.

The transload warehouse center consists of approximately nine million square feet of transload warehouses that would primarily be dedicated to processing the contents of 20-foot and 40-foot international containers into 53-foot domestic containers for placement from and back onto the rail line. Importantly, the transload warehouse center would primarily serve containers processed at or destined for the BIG IMF.

BIG also proposes a solar farm, which would function as a private utility and generate a source of clean energy to supplement the Specific Plan's onsite demand. Areas within the Mojave River would remain ungraded.

Additionally, to serve the proposed rail yard and transload warehouse center, BIG proposes various offsite improvements, which are outside the Specific Plan area. BIG proposes rail improvements (i.e., lead tracks) that extend east and west of the Specific Plan area shown on Figure 3 and Figure 4. Additionally, BIG proposes various offsite non-rail improvements that include ancillary and related stormwater drainage, utilities, and circulation/roadway improvements, which will be identified in the Draft EIR.

Additional information regarding the GPU can be found on the City's website: <https://www.barstowca.org/departments/community-development-department/planning/general-plan-update>, and information about the BIG project can be found on the BNSF website: <https://bnsfbig.com/>.

¹ A block is defined as rail cars of a similar type moving to a similar destination that are already connected and can be combined with other blocks to the same destinations to produce more efficient train movements.

² Electric hostlers are vehicles used for moving trailers and containers short distances within freight terminals, warehouses, and rail yards.



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NOP Public Comment Period:

This NOP is being circulated for a 40-day public review/comment period beginning on **Thursday, February 15, 2024, and concluding on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.** Comments on this NOP should be submitted to the City of Barstow, Community Development Department at the earliest possible date, but no later than the **March 26, 2024,** deadline. Comments must be submitted in writing, or via email, to:

Genesis Crank, Planning and Community Development Administrator
City of Barstow, Community Development Department
220 E. Mountain view Street, Suite A
Barstow, CA 92311
760-255-5152
generalplan@barstowca.org

Public Scoping Meeting:

A public scoping meeting will be conducted to provide the public with the opportunity to learn more about the Project and to provide an additional opportunity to provide written public comment on the NOP. The scoping meeting will be an open house format and include presentation of Project information and environmental issues to be analyzed in the EIR. At the scoping meeting, interested agencies, organizations, and members of the public may present written comments concerning the environmental issues that should be included in the EIR. The written comments provided during the meeting will assist the City in scoping the potential environmental effects of the Project to be addressed by the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held in-person:

Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 6:00 PM

Cora Harper Fitness Center
841 Barstow Road,
Barstow, CA 92311



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Environmental Impacts:

The City has determined that the implementation of the Project may have a significant effect on the environment and an EIR will be required. The EIR will evaluate the potential for Project to cause direct and indirect and short- and long-term impacts, as well as cumulative impacts. Mitigation will be proposed for those impacts that are determined to be significant, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program will be developed as required by State CEQA Guidelines. The EIR will evaluate the following topics as described in State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G:

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

Cortese List Notice: Pursuant to Public Resources Code 21092.6(a), there are 31 open and inactive hazardous sites within the General Plan Area that are listed on environmental databases, as determined by the regulatory agency database search compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5 (California Department of Toxic Substances Control list of various hazardous sites).

Type of EIR:

The EIR will analyze the GPU at a program level pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Use of a program EIR allows analysis consistent with the high-level nature of the General Plan. The EIR will analyze BIG at a project level pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15161 to allow for both entitlement and development.

Use of the EIR:

Concerning the GPU, projects implemented after adoption of the Project will be examined considering the EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. In addition, the State CEQA Guidelines currently provide for streamlining through Section 15183 (Projects Consistent with a Community Plan or Zoning), Section 15183.3 (Streamlining for Infill Projects), and other streamlining provisions. The City intends to promote streamlining for future development through certification of the EIR. Later development may have to conduct site-specific environmental analysis; however, the cumulative analysis will be addressed in the EIR and GP policies and implementation strategy.



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Concerning BIG, the EIR will analyze and disclose the environmental impacts associated with BIG's implementation and all discretionary actions associated with BIG in compliance with CEQA. BIG's proposed improvements within the BIG Specific Plan area will be processed in accordance with the BIG Specific Plan and those outside the BIG Specific Plan area in accordance with the applicable zoning regulations and development standards in effect at the time an application is submitted. This EIR is intended to provide BIG with environmental clearance under CEQA. All future discretionary actions would be examined in light of the EIR to determine whether any further environmental clearance is required.

This transmittal constitutes the official NOP for the EIR and serves as a request for environmental information that you or your organization believe should be included or addressed in the EIR document. Please be sure to address the scope and content of environmental information or issues that may relate to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection to the Project.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this NOP, please email generalplan@barstowca.org.

Attachments:

Figure 1 Regional Location

Figure 2 General Plan Area Aerial

Figure 3 BIG Conceptual Site Plan

Figure 4 BIG Offsite Rail Improvements