ACEforward

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published in the Federal Register on November 30, 2018, a notice to advise the public that FRA is rescinding the Notice of Intent (NOI) for the ACEforward Program. The project sponsor has determined that the original scope for the ACEforward Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is no longer consistent with regional planning efforts for improved rail service throughout the corridor.

Below is archived web content regarding this project.

Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS)

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) is launching an effort to improve and expand the existing Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) rail service between Stockton and San Jose, California, as well as extension of the rail service to Modesto and Merced, California. The ACEforward program will strive to reduce travel time by at least 10 percent, and increase reliability of the existing ACE rail service. In the near term, ACEforward aims to increase existing service from 4 daily round trips to a proposed 6 daily round trips, extend to Modesto in Stanislaus County, implement safety and grade crossings improvements, and add track in key locations. ACEforward is also planning longer-term improvements to increase service to at least 10 daily round trips, provide weekend service, and extend to Merced. As of June 6, 2013, project leadership and funding for the Altamont Corridor has been transferred from the California High-Speed Rail Authority to the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission.

Additional information about the project can be found at http://www.acerail.com/About/Public-Projects/ACEforward.

Environmental Review Process

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) will jointly prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the ACEforward Program in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The SJRRC released a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for ACEforward, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), on May 31, 2017. The EIR analyzed and the EIS will analyze proposed improvement and expansion of existing rail service between Stockton and San Jose, California, as well as extension of the rail service to Modesto and Merced, California. SJRRC is using a tiered process for the environmental review in the EIR. Under this approach, the Program evaluates the environmental impacts of improvements at a conceptual level, while the Project analysis provides a more detailed evaluation of the impacts resulting from site-specific project components. After considering the comments received on the Draft EIR, coordination with stakeholders, and the environmental analysis, the SJRRC will select a preferred alternative for the Project and possibly the Program. The Final EIR will be completed in late 2017. The EIS for ACEforward will be focused on the near-term improvements (or Project).

FRA has responsibility for overseeing the safety of railroad operations and may need to take certain regulatory action prior to operation of the new or expanded service. In addition, FRA is authorized to provide federal funding for intercity passenger rail capital investments and may provide financial assistance for the program in the future. FRA will serve as the federal lead agency for the preparation of the EIS. SJRRC will serve as the state lead agency for the preparation of the EIR.

Under CEQA a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was released on June 24, 2013. The full NOP can be reviewed HERE. FRA published a Notice of Intent to produce an EIS in the Federal Register on September 18, 2013. Scoping meetings were held in July 2013. The scoping process is complete and refinement of the project alternatives ongoing.

Permitting Dashboard

The U.S. Permitting Dashboard is an online tool for Federal agencies, project sponsors, and interested members of the public to track the Federal government's environmental review and authorization processes for large or complex infrastructure projects. The Dashboard is part of a government-wide effort to improve coordination, transparency, and accountability. A link to this project's page on the Dashboard is below.

- Permitting Dashboard Link