

Chapter 5 Comments and Coordination

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and appropriate public agencies is an important part of the environmental process. It helps planners determine the necessary scope of environmental documentation and the level of analysis required, and it assists in identifying potential impacts, mitigation measures, and related environmental requirements. Agency consultation and public participation for this project have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including Project Development Team (PDT) meetings, interagency coordination meetings, and an extensive public outreach program. This process, known as scoping, allows public agencies and the general public to learn about the project and to provide suggestions on alternatives and the types of impacts to be evaluated.

This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

5.1 Coordination Plan

When this project was initiated, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) required the development of a Coordination Plan for projects where an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was being prepared. The purpose of the plan was to improve agency and public involvement in the environmental process for transportation projects. The SAFETEA-LU legislation has been replaced with the 2012 passage of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). Many of the requirements in the SAFETEA-LU legislation pertaining to coordination with other agencies have been carried forward into the MAP-21 requirements. A Coordination Plan was prepared by Caltrans in February 2011, updated in March 2012 and again in August 2014 to describe a communication process with participating and cooperating agencies. The following provides an overview of the agency coordination conducted to date.

5.1.1 Notice of Initiation

23 U.S.C. 139 requires Caltrans to notify the Secretary of Transportation of the type of work proposed, including the general location, length and termini of the project, when the environmental review process would begin, and any anticipated federal permits and approvals. This notification was provided via transmittal of the Notice of Intent to the Secretary on October 12, 2007. A revised NOI was published in the *Federal Register* on August 1, 2013, to address the introduction of the two rail alternatives.

5.1.2 Process for Inviting Cooperating/Participating Agencies

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), cooperating agencies are governmental agencies that either have approval authority on part of the project (e.g., issuing a permit) or special expertise with respect to an environmental issue being

evaluated in the EIS (or joint EIS/Environmental Impact Report [EIR]). Under MAP-21, participating agencies can be federal, state, tribal, regional, or local agencies, nongovernmental organizations, or private entities that may have an interest in the project. Being a cooperating or participating agency does not mean that the agency supports a project.

On March 30, 2011, Caltrans sent letters of invitation to 20 agencies to become a participating agency and 5 agencies to become a cooperating agency on the project. Subsequently, on February 13, 2013, one additional agency, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), was invited to become a cooperating agency. A federal agency is assumed to be a participating or cooperating agency unless it formally declines an invitation or it fits into one of the following categories: (1) it has no jurisdiction or authority for the project; (2) it has no expertise or information relevant to the project; or (3) it does not intend to submit comments on the project. Cooperating and participating agencies are shown in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies List

Agency	Contact Person, Title	Accepted Invitation	Declined Invitation	Did not Respond	Agency (yes/no)
Cooperating Agencies (Also Participating Agency)					
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)	Carol Legard Federal Highway Liaison Office of Federal Agency Programs	X			Yes
Federal Bureau of Prisons	Craig F. Meyers Federal Bureau of Prisons Associate General Counsel Real Estate and Environmental Law	X			Yes
U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, Western Pacific Region	Mr. Ruben Cabalbag Assistant ADO Manager, Western Pacific Region Airports Division	X			Yes
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Mark Cohen Regulatory Division, Los Angeles District	X			Yes
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX	Tom Plenys Susan Sturges EPA-Environmental Review Office	X			Yes
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)	David Valenstein Chief Environment and Systems Planning Division	X			Yes

Table 5-1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies List

Agency	Contact Person, Title	Accepted Invitation	Declined Invitation	Did not Respond	Agency (yes/no)
Participating Agencies					
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)	Jonathan Snyder Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Service Office			X	Yes
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Los Angeles Field Office	William Vasquez, CPD Field Office Director			X	Yes
U.S. Department of Commerce	Environmental Review Section			X	Yes
U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Gregor Blackburn, CFM, Branch Chief Floodplain Management and Insurance Branch		X		No
U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Review Section	Environmental Review Section			X	No
Natural Resources Conservation Office	Jae Lee District Conservationist, Lancaster Service Center			X	No
Natural Resources Conservation Office	James Earsom District Conservationist Redlands Service Center			X	No
Natural Resources Conservation Office	Jesse "Rick" Aguayo Victorville Service Center			X	No
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Hector Villalobos Field Manager Ridgecrest Field Office			X	No
BLM	Roxie Trost Field Manager Barstow Field Office			X	No
California Department of Fish and Wildlife ¹ (CDFW) - South Coast Region	Scott Harris	X			Yes
CDFW - Eastern Sierra-Inland Deserts Region	Regional Manager		X		No
Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District (AVAQMD)	Eldon Heaston Executive Director	X			Yes
Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD)	Eldon Heaston Executive Director	X			Yes

Table 5-1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies List

Agency	Contact Person, Title	Accepted Invitation	Declined Invitation	Did not Respond	Agency (yes/no)
California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)	Rosa Munoz, PE Utilities Engineer	X			Yes
California Air Resources Board (ARB)	Jonathan Taylor - Chief Transportation Planning Branch		X		No
California Energy Commission (CEC)	Media and Public Communications Office			X	No
California Department of Conservation	Division of Land and Resource Protection			X	No
California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	Jay Cass Lahontan Region-Victorville Branch Office	X			Yes
California RWQCB	Los Angeles RWQCB 401 Water Quality Certification and WDR Program	X			Yes
Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)	Dave Singleton Program Analyst			X	No
California Highway Patrol (CHP)	Officer Eric Phipps	X			Yes
Planning Department, City of Palmdale	Asoka Herath Planning Director City of Palmdale			X	No
Planning Department, City of Lancaster	Brian S. Ludicke Planning Director City of Lancaster			X	No
Traffic Division/GIS Section, City of Palmdale	Mike Behen Senior Transportation Planner/GIS Coordinator			X	No
City of Palmdale, Parks, Recreation and Special Events Office	Keri Brady Parks and Recreation Manager			X	No
Public Works Department, City of Lancaster	Nicole Rizzo Management Analyst Public Works Department City of Lancaster			X	No
Town of Apple Valley	Kenneth J. Henderson Assistant Town Manager, Economic and Community Development			X	No
Town of Apple Valley	Ralph Wright Parks and Recreation Manager	X			Yes

Table 5-1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies List

Agency	Contact Person, Title	Accepted Invitation	Declined Invitation	Did not Respond	Agency (yes/no)
City of Adelanto	Public Works Engineering Department Nathan Coapstick Engineering Project Coordinator			X	No
City of Adelanto	Parks Department Superintendent, Nan Moore			X	No
City of Victorville	Bill Webb, AICP Planning Department			X	No
City of Victorville	Brian Gengler Assistant City Engineer	X			Yes
City of Victorville	Maria Martinez Parks and Facilities, Parks Yard			X	No
City of Victorville	Parks and Facilities Attn: Facilities	X			Yes
City of Hesperia	Mike Podegracz City Manager	X			Yes
City of Barstow	Richard Rowe City Manager			X	No
County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works	Chief, Transportation Planning Brendon Biggs			X	No
County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works	Deputy Director for Transportation Mazin Kasey	X			Yes
Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), Airports and Facilities Planning Division	Eileen Schoetzow Airport/Facilities Planner	X			Yes
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)	Hal Messinger, Environmental Planning and Assessment	X			Yes
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning	Jon Sanabria Acting Director of Planning Anthony Curzi Regional Planning Assistant II for Project	X			Yes
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works	Hank Fung, PE Federal Programs Section-Programs Development Division			X	No
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works	Toan Duong, AICP Land Development Division			X	No

Table 5-1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies List

Agency	Contact Person, Title	Accepted Invitation	Declined Invitation	Did not Respond	Agency (yes/no)
SCRRA—Metrolink	Laurene Lopez Community Relations/ Environmental Review Administrator	X			Yes
Palmdale School District	Mat Havens Facilities Manager			X	No
Palmdale School District	Al Tsai Maintenance and Operations Administrator	X			Yes
Metro	Teresa Fong Transportation Planner- San Fernando Valley/ North County Area Team			X	No
Desert Mountains Conservancy	Paul Edelman Chief of Natural Resources and Planning			X	No
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)	Ryan Kuo Senior Regional Planner Transportation Planning	X			Yes
San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG)	Deborah Robinson Barmack	X			Yes
Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation	Russ Guiney Director	X			Yes
¹ Effective January 1, 2013, the California Department of Fish and Game changed its name to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.					

Coordination Meeting

A coordination meeting was held at the Caltrans District 7 office in downtown Los Angeles on March 30, 2011, for those agencies that had accepted the invitation to be a participating or cooperating agency.

The purpose of the meeting was to update the attendees on the progress of the project; gain input on the project Purpose and Need and range of alternatives; and discuss a number of issues/concerns related to the project, such as the crossings at Little Rock Wash, Big Rock Wash, and the Mojave River; encroachment upon Palmdale airport, Southern California Logistics Airport (SCLA), and Federal Bureau of Prisons property; and potential impacts to Rockview Park. In addition, the meeting provided an opportunity to identify the permits and approvals needed for project implementation. The permits and approvals needed, as well as the status of these permits, is summarized in Tables S-2 and 2-3.

A copy of the invitation letter has been included in Appendix K, Key Correspondence, provided in Volume 2.

5.2 Scoping Process

The scoping process started with widespread notice to government agencies via publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI)/Notice of Preparation (NOP) announcing the start of work on an EIR/EIS. The NOI was published in the *Federal Register* on September 24, 2010, in accordance with NEPA. The NOP was filed with the State Clearinghouse on September 28, 2010, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The State Clearinghouse posts the NOP on its Web site and distributes it to State agencies. A copy of the NOP is provided in Appendix H in Volume 2. Comments on the NOI/NOP were received from eight agencies and included comments on a variety of environmental issues. Table 5-2 provides a summary of the issues raised in the responses to the NOP.

Table 5-2 High Desert Corridor Notice of Preparation Agency Comment Summary

Topic Category	# of Comments
General	
Existing Environment	1
Environmental Document	3
Purpose and Need	
General	4
Alternatives	
General	4
No-Build	1
Design Features	9
TSM/TDM	2
Rail	3
Transit	1
Toll	1
Human Environment	
Traffic	2
Community Growth	3
Historical/Archaeological	2
Native Americans	3
Physical Environment	
Air Quality	3
Flooding	3
Water and Wetlands	3
Biological Environment	
Wildlife/Habitat	2
Mitigation	2
Permits	1
Total	53

5.2.1 Mailings

Letters were sent to federal, State, regional, and local government agencies on September 20, 2010, inviting them to an agency scoping meeting, which was held on September 27, 2010, in Adelanto.

5.2.2 Public Noticing

Because of the large scale of this project, geographic information system (GIS) mapping was used to identify the parcels and property owners within a 0.5-mile buffer around the proposed alignment (Figure 2-2).

From this information, a contact list was generated and 25,040 scoping postcards were prepared and sent out to notify the public about the upcoming scoping meetings. The postcards were sent out in 2 separate mailings on September 14 and 16, 2010.

Public meeting notices were also sent to the public libraries listed in Table 5-3 in the communities where the meetings were to be held:

Table 5-3 Public Libraries Scoping Meeting Notices

Apple Valley, Newton T. Bass Branch 14901 Dale Evans Parkway Apple Valley, CA 92307-3061	Lancaster Regional Library 601 West Lancaster Boulevard Lancaster, CA 93534-3398
Palmdale City Library 700 East Palmdale Boulevard Palmdale, CA 93550	Victorville City Library 15011 Circle Drive Victorville, CA 92395

The notices, in both English and Spanish, were posted at the library kiosks and could easily be viewed by the public. Scoping notices were also published in local newspapers, as shown in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Newspapers with Scoping Notices

<i>Apple Valley News</i> September 24, 2010	<i>Antelope Valley Press</i> September 23 & 26, 2010
<i>Daily Press</i> September 19 & 23, 2010	<i>Mountaineer Progress</i> September 23, 2010
<i>The Sun</i> (San Bernardino) September 22 & 26, 2010	<i>La Opinion</i> (Spanish) September 20 & 26, 2010

In addition, letters were sent to the appropriate local, State, and federal agencies and elected officials notifying them of the formal initiation of studies.

5.2.3 Scoping Meetings

Public Scoping Meetings

Four public scoping meetings were held at the locations shown in Table 5-5. The purpose of the meetings was to provide the public with information on the project and alternatives, answer any questions, and gather comments from anyone who had input.

Table 5-5 Public Scoping Meetings

September 27, 2010, 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Larry Chimbole Cultural Center 38350 N. Sierra Highway Palmdale, CA 93550	September 28, 2010, 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Lancaster City Hall Emergency Operations Center 44933 Fern Avenue Lancaster, CA 93534
September 29, 2010, 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Town of Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department, Development Services – Conference Center 14955 Dale Evans Parkway Apple Valley, CA 92307	September 30, 2010, 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. City of Victorville Conference Room D 14343 Civic Drive Victorville, CA 92393

The public scoping meetings were attended by at least 369 people (some people may not have signed in). Based on the sign-in sheets, attendance at each meeting was as follows:

- September 27 – 96 people
- September 28 – 44 people
- September 29 – 142 people
- September 30 – 87 people

The meetings were held in an open house type forum. A Spanish interpreter was present at each of the meetings, and all information handed out at the meetings was provided in English and Spanish.

A total of 543 comments were received from 206 people either verbally at the meetings or via letters, e-mails, or comment cards. Table 5-6 provides a summary of the issues that were raised.

Agency Scoping Meeting

An Agency Scoping Meeting was held on September 27, 2010, at the City of Adelanto Parks and Recreation Center (11555 Cortez Avenue). The purpose of the meeting was to explain the project and alternatives to agencies, answer any questions they might have, and gather comments from anyone who had input.

In addition to staff from Caltrans District 7, District 8, and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), three representatives from the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works and the City of Palmdale Planning Department attended the meeting.

Table 5-6 Public Comments by Topic

Topic Category	# of Comments
General	
Construction Schedule	2
Request for More Project Information	22
Website	8
Funding	11
EIR/EIS Process	11
Existing Environment	18
Environmental Consequences	16
Purpose and Need	
General	8
Alternatives	
General	30
Design Features	65
Modes – Transit	8
Modes – Rail	14
Modes – Highway	8
Modes – Trucks	14
Modes	17
Tolls	15
Human Environment	
Traffic Study	7
System Linkage	18
Transportation, Travel Patterns Accessibility and Highway/Traffic Safety	27
Traffic Congestion	13
Traffic Capacity	12
Neighborhoods and Community Cohesion	33
Relocation	26
Economic Consequences	14
Community Facilities and Public Services	14
Environmental Justice	1
Land Use	22
Agriculture	2
Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Use	2
Economic Vitality	18
Historic Resources	13
View Shed	3
Light Disturbance	4
Physical Environment	
Noise	8
Air Quality	8
Groundwater Resources	6
Flooding	10
Biological Environment	
Natural – Wildlife	8
Mitigation	7
Grand Total Scoping Written/Oral Comments Received	543

5.3 Consultation and Coordination with Public Agencies

5.3.1 Resource and Regulatory Agencies

Numerous early coordination meetings occurred between Caltrans and resource agencies such as USFWS, CDFW, and USACE. In general, the purpose of these meetings was to provide agency personnel with the latest project design information, proposed approaches to survey protocol, impact analysis, and to evaluate potential mitigation measure potential. The input from agencies was also helpful with regard to all of these topics, especially design criteria, survey protocol, and impact analysis.

On October 19, 2010, Caltrans (Paul Caron and Jeff Johnson) met with CDFW (Jamie Jackson, Eric Weiss, and Scot Harris) to present project alignment and discuss survey needs. Caltrans and CDFW (formerly California Department of Fish and Game) also met in June 2011 and February 2012 to discuss changes to the alignment and potential impacts to special-status species. In March 2013, Caltrans personnel (Paul Caron and Jeff Johnson) met with CDFW (Jamie Jackson) and USFWS (Ray Bransfield) in the USFWS Ventura Office to specifically discuss survey needs, impact analysis, and potential mitigation measures for the desert tortoise and southwestern willow flycatcher. An additional meeting occurred with CDFW (Becky Jones) in April 2013 to further discuss desert tortoise survey needs, impact analysis, design criteria, and mitigation measures. Numerous telephone conversations occurred between Caltrans (Jeff Johnson) and CDFW (Jamie Jackson) during 2011-2013 to discuss project alignment shifts, survey results, and to request input on culvert design with regard to wildlife crossing.

5.3.2 Intergovernmental Consultation for Air Quality

Intergovernmental coordination through the SCAG Transportation Conformity Working Group (TCWG) began in May 2011 regarding Clean Air Act (CAA) conformity requirements. The agencies involved included SCAG, Caltrans, EPA, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), MDAQMD, South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), and ARB.

A summary of methods and assumptions applied in the quantitative analysis for this project was submitted and concurred with by the TCWG in June 2011. Subsequently, Caltrans coordinated with EPA for consultation and concurrence on key input parameters and strategy for the quantitative analysis. A quantitative analysis was prepared per the EPA Guidance for quantitative hot-spot analysis and submitted to the TCWG in March 2014 for review and concurrence. Comments were provided by EPA and the TCWG, and a revised quantitative hot-spot analysis was submitted to the TCWG in May 2014. The TCWG provided concurrence on the quantitative hot-spot analysis in June 2014.

5.3.3 Native American Heritage Commission and Associated Cultural Resources Consultation

Caltrans cultural resources staff contacted the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) regarding the area west of 100th Street East on March 23, 2011, and the area

east of 100th Street East on November 1, 2013; responses were received from the commission on March 25, 2011, and November 7, 2013. These indicated that no sites within or adjacent to the Area of Potential Effects (APE) have been designated as sacred lands, according to a search of the Sacred Lands File. The NAHC also provided a list of Native American groups and individuals who might have knowledge of cultural resources in the project area. The parties listed on the NAHC contact list were all contacted by certified letter on July 30 or September 25, 2007. The letters were followed by e-mails and/or telephone calls to each individual to ensure that the contacts received the original letter and had a chance to respond in time. Caltrans consulted the NAHC again in early 2014 regarding the expanded project footprint; no sacred lands or new groups/individuals were identified in the area.

The Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR) was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 4, 2014, for their review and concurrence. The SHPO is required to respond with comments or their concurrence with Caltrans' determination within 30 calendar days (on or before October 3, 2014). Their response will be included in the Final EIR/EIS.

Once the SHPO has concurred with the HPSR, Caltrans will prepare and submit the Finding of Effect (FOE) on historic properties and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that would contain the measures to minimize effects to historic properties. The FOE and MOA will be prepared before the Final EIR/EIS is certified. It should be noted that SHPO has no timeline in finalizing the FOE and MOA.

5.3.4 Bureau of Land Management

A small portion of the project (the rail connection to the XpressWest station) crosses into BLM land. Caltrans cultural staff have attempted to contact BLM cultural staff by phone several times during July and August 2014 without success. The intent of the contact is to notify them of our proposed activities and discuss any known resources or other issues that may be of concern.

5.3.5 Agency Coordination on Parks and Recreation Facilities

Extensive coordination has occurred (via phone, e-mail, and in-person meetings) between Caltrans and the following agencies regarding the existing and planned parks and recreation facilities and wildlife refuges in the vicinity of the project. Agency personnel were made aware of the project alternatives and given an opportunity to provide input on potential impacts and avoidance/minimization measures:

- City of Palmdale Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Victorville Community Services Department
- Town of Apple Valley Parks Department
- City of Adelanto Parks and Facilities Department
- County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation
- County of San Bernardino Department of Park and Recreation

Coordination has also occurred with the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) regarding the land ownership, designated function, and purpose of the parcel south of the Rockview Nature Park in Victorville. The City of Victorville Community Services Department was also consulted, including a field meeting at Rockview Nature Park, regarding the indirect and proximity impacts to Rockview Nature Park, and the parking compensation/enhancement for Rockview Nature Park, as well as the property for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grants (Section 6(f)(3) of 16 U.S.C. §4601-4). It is anticipated that after the public review period, Victorville's Community Services Department will concur that the project would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes of the park as a recreation facility.

In addition, coordination with the City of Victorville's Community Services Department has been ongoing regarding the Westwinds Golf Course. It is anticipated that after the public review period they will concur that the project would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes of the golf course as a recreation facility. This agency has been informed of Caltrans' intent to make a *de minimis* finding regarding impacts to this golf course.

5.3.6 Los Angeles World Airports

Extensive conversations have taken place over the years between the Caltrans Project Manager and Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) representatives regarding the need to acquire property at the Palmdale Regional Airport, many of which even preceded publication of the Notice of Intent for this project. These conversations resulted in the signing of a Cooperative Agreement (District Agreement No. 07-4542) on April 13, 2003, which outlined the conditions under which LAWA would transfer land to the State for purposes of building a new freeway.

More recently, LAWA attended the Coordination Plan meeting on March 30, 2011, to gain an understanding of the scope of the project. Subsequent conversations have occurred as the project footprint has been refined and the potential need to acquire additional land became apparent. On October 8, 2013, a meeting was held at the LAWA offices at Los Angeles International Airport to further discuss this need. The conversation centered around the rail wye connection to the Palmdale Transportation Center, potential impacts resulting from the shifted highway alignment, and the need to obtain additional approval for the potential new alignment.

On March 5, 2014, LAWA submitted a letter to Caltrans containing "5% Conceptual Approval" for the HDC Project. This provided conceptual approval for the revised alignment and identified many conditions that must be met and steps that must occur before any development can take place on the property.

5.3.7 Federal Aviation Administration

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was invited to be a cooperating agency and accepted that role in a letter dated April 25, 2011, in which they also identified several areas of concern that the project team should be aware. On September 9, 2013, an FAA representative attended a meeting at Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale,

which also included representatives from the military, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and several aerospace companies. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss issues related to potential encroachment onto Air Force Plant 42 and the requirements for avoiding encroachment into the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ). FAA was invited to attend a follow-up meeting at Air Force Plant 42 in December 2013, but they were unable to attend.

The FAA submitted a letter to Metro dated May 15, 2014, in which they reiterated the concerns expressed in their previous letter and requested that efforts be made for additional coordination with their agency. Both Metro and Caltrans provided written responses to FAA. The Caltrans' letter, dated July 2, 2014, provided a summary of activities that have occurred to address the concerns expressed in FAA's original (April 25, 2011) letter. As a follow-up, an in-person meeting was held at FAA's office in Lawndale, California, to discuss these issues.

5.3.8 California High-Speed Rail Authority, Metrolink, and City of Palmdale

Caltrans and Metro staff members have met numerous times with representatives from the California High-Speed Rail Authority, Metrolink, and the City of Palmdale to discuss the design compatibility of a potential HDC rail component with the California High-Speed Rail (HSR), Metrolink, and the Palmdale Transportation Center. These meetings were intended to facilitate integration of these four elements into a seamless and interconnected rail network.

5.3.9 XpressWest

Caltrans and Metro staff have met numerous times with representatives from XpressWest to discuss compatibility of a potential HDC rail component with the XpressWest system. These meetings were intended to facilitate integration of these elements into a seamless and interconnected rail network.

5.3.10 Federal Railroad Administration

Because of the addition of rail to the project scope, Caltrans sent a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on February 13, 2013, formally requesting that they accept cooperating agency status. FRA formally accepted the invitation on March 7, 2013. Caltrans and Metro staff have had several conversations with FRA staff regarding adding a rail component into the HDC. They were held on the following dates: October 16, 2012; June 4, 2013; December 10, 2013; March 5, 2014; March 26, 2014; and May 13, 2014. The discussions have focused on ensuring compatibility with the proposed California HSR and XpressWest systems, projected rail ridership, and the rail noise study, including protocols and integrating it into the standard Caltrans highway noise study. Technical studies (noise and traffic) have been provided for their review and comment.

5.3.11 Hydromodification Working Group

Caltrans initiated and coordinated a Hydromodification Working Group early in the project development process. The Working Group provided advice to the HDC PDT

on ways to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential project impacts due to changes in the flow of water that could result from this project. The group focused on issues involving water quality and drainage patterns, sensitive species, and wildlife crossings, as well as wetlands and regulatory issues related to waters of the U.S.

The first coordination meeting occurred on August 16, 2011, and included representatives from EPA, USFWS, USACE, CDFW, two RWQCBs, several Caltrans functional units, and a consultant representative. This meeting laid the foundation for future activities/discussions of the Working Group. A general overview of the project was provided, and the range of issues to be addressed was established. Subsequently, several field trips were conducted to further evaluate the project area. In addition, numerous e-mails were exchanged in an effort to exchange information and provide discussion amongst the group members.

On April 12, 2012, members of the project team met with a representative from the Lahontan RWQCB to discuss the Mojave River crossing. At this meeting, Caltrans proposed, and the RWQCB agreed, that the river crossing was a unique feature along the corridor and should be treated differently than other drainages. Whereas other drainages along the corridor were classified as Risk Level 1 (low risk) when considering potential impacts, it was agreed that the Mojave River would be designated as Risk Level 2 (moderate risk) in recognition of its significance and its sensitivity to disturbances and sedimentation.

Caltrans coordinated with the Department of Conservation (DOC) concerning matters related to farmland conservation programs in the state, important farmland easement ratios, and recommendations on measures to minimize or mitigate impacts. DOC staff provided information regarding the conservation easement development process, guidance on mitigation ratios, and a sample of recently approved conservation easement measures. In addition, the Antelope Valley Conservancy (i.e., land trust) provided information about agricultural conservation easements. Caltrans also contacted the San Bernardino County Farm Bureau, San Bernardino County Agricultural Commissioner, BLM, SCAG, and California Cattle Association concerning matters related to grazing allotments in San Bernardino County. In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Caltrans evaluated farmland conversion impacts on agricultural land and resources through completion of Form NRCS-CPA-106.

5.4 Public Participation

Metro and Caltrans have implemented a comprehensive outreach program to support the HDC Project that engaged key stakeholders and provided the general public with opportunities for involvement during the project development process. Due to the large and expansive project study area, the public involvement program included traditional and innovative communication strategies and tools to ensure stakeholders along the 63-mile-long corridor were informed and engaged in the project process.

A total of 138 project update meetings, focus groups, webinars, events, and elected official and stakeholder briefings have taken place after the official public scoping meetings held by Caltrans initiated the environmental studies in late 2010. To support these meetings, a project database, including approximately 2,200 records, was compiled, refined, and maintained. A host of collateral materials was also developed and distributed at all meetings, including topical fact sheets and frequently asked questions.

Notification

A good cross section of the residential communities, businesses, and interested agencies was engaged in the study process and remains active participants in the project process moving forward. Notification efforts for public meetings have included a broad array of communication tools and techniques, including:

- Local newspapers and online advertisements
- Bilingual direct mail
- E-mail invitations
- Project partner coordination
- Web site postings and links
- E-newsletters
- E-mails to constituent mailing lists
- Facebook and Twitter postings to share meeting invitations

General Summary of Input

Throughout the development process, stakeholder comments and concerns have been received, answered, and documented in a timely manner. Comments and questions were received primarily via the project helpline, e-mail, interactive map, community meetings, and briefings. Common concerns that were raised and categorized throughout the outreach efforts include:

Interest in:

- Integration of land use and zoning policies throughout the planning process
- Pedestrian and public safety
- Local residential and business benefits; not just mitigation strategies, but also enhancement of the corridor
- Ensuring public input is reflected in the study and decision-making process
- Access to increased transportation networks
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and potential funding mechanisms

Concern about:

- Development of an equitable mitigation program that addresses construction and operational impacts
- Right-of-way (ROW) impacts
- Toll road fees and the impact to local residents
- Potential impacts to local roads and traffic circulation

- Maintaining rural character in rural communities
- Adequate infrastructure for communities seeking growth
- Impacts of light pollution
- Noise impacts and soundwall criteria
- Visual impacts and light pollution to current scenery
- Unsafe street conditions (i.e., lack of pedestrian sidewalks along US 395)

Support for:

- Bike route option – more defined connections from the highway to local destinations (i.e., train stations)
- Continued access to equestrian paths
- Increased transportation infrastructure
- Increased separation of “local” and “regional” traffic

5.4.1 Social Media

Throughout the outreach process, the HDC developed a high level of stakeholder interest in the project, including a significant social media following of approximately 350 Facebook fans and 280 Twitter followers (accessible through <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/travel/projects/details.php?id=11> and <http://www.metro.net/projects/high-desert-corridor/>). Given the large project area, social media was instrumental for the project team to deliver timely information and gather valuable feedback. Caltrans and Metro also maintained project Web sites throughout the study process, providing a true set of public portals for stakeholders to review project information and provide comments. The project Web sites and social media sites provided stakeholders with useful information regarding the HDC’s project background, status, environmental process, alternatives, and variations. Innovative outreach tools were also developed for the program, including the geo-social interactive map, allowing users to navigate the project map dynamically to find useful information and also to post geo-coded comments.

5.4.2 Public Information Meetings/Open Houses

In addition to the legally required scoping and public hearing meetings required as part of CEQA and NEPA, four rounds of public information meetings/open houses were also held during preparation of the environmental documents. For each round, four meetings were held, two in Los Angeles County and two in San Bernardino County, with at least one meeting streamed live via the Internet. The community meetings were spread out geographically to make it convenient for stakeholders to participate along the linear project study area.

The meetings were formatted with an open house session followed by a project presentation and concluding with question and answers. During the open house session, display boards, including the project’s Purpose and Need, project alternatives and variations under consideration, maps, development process, project schedule, contacts, and next steps were placed throughout the room for attendees to view and ask questions from the project team. For those who participated online, a video was played during the open house session to explain the boards. Handouts were available

at the meetings, including the project fact sheets and maps. These were distributed in English during the first round and later in Spanish and Korean.

Approximately 1,390 people attended or participated online throughout the four rounds of meetings, and 90 comment cards were submitted (it was explained that these were informal comments and not part of the formal public hearing process). To review meeting details related to the dates and locations, please see Appendix X: HDC Meeting Record.

Round 1 (April 11 – April 14, 2011)

The purpose of the first round of project meetings was to introduce partner agencies and provide a project review, an overview on the environmental process, and a summary of findings from the scoping meetings held by Caltrans in September 2010.

More than 330 stakeholders participated in the Round 1 meetings, with 13 written, verbal, or online comments received. Stakeholders attending the community meetings were generally supportive of the HDC Project and encouraged Caltrans and Metro to move forward with the project schedule and initiate construction. Stakeholders discussed the need for employment opportunities and safer transportation routes to facilitate mobility for residents, businesses, and visitors. Meeting attendees expressed their concerns regarding the ROW requirements and future construction impacts. Other issues raised included hydrology, traffic, earthquake faults in the area, project schedule, and plans for tolling on the project.

At the Town of Apple Valley meeting, stakeholders expressed opposition to Variation C, which would result in significant impacts to privately owned property. Stakeholders suggested Caltrans and Metro analyze transportation needs to ensure the HDC Project meets future demands and includes various transportation modes, including high-speed train service and bike lanes.

Round 2 (January 24 – February 1, 2012)

The purpose of the Round 2 project meetings was to review the refined project alternatives and variations, specifically the removal of Variation C in Apple Valley. The meetings also updated stakeholders on the status of the ongoing project development process and next steps. The new HDC Geo-Social Interactive Map was introduced as a demonstration outreach tool that allowed stakeholders the opportunity to easily view the alternatives; zoom in and out of areas of interest; learn valuable information on alignments, variations, cities, and counties; and leave geo-coded comments.

A total of 340 stakeholders participated in the Round 2 meetings and provided valuable input on the project, with nearly 59 written, verbal, or online comments submitted. Similar to Round 1, stakeholders were generally supportive of the project and appreciated the removal of Variation C from further consideration. Stakeholders also voiced their appreciation for the project update meetings and were interested in learning how soon the project could move into the final phases, including construction.

Stakeholders were generally concerned about the potential impacts the HDC would have on north-south freeways and arterials, especially if the HDC is tolled. There was a perception that truckers may bypass the HDC to avoid tolling fees and would use local streets. Tolling questions and concerns included boundaries and the potential for a resident discount. Other comments/concerns included local economic impacts and cumulative impacts, including air quality, noise, hydrology, glare, and visual impacts related to potential green energy technologies, especially near educational and correctional facilities.

Round 3 (December 5 – December 11, 2012)

The purpose of the Round 3 project update meetings was to provide a project update and introduce new project components, including the incorporation of a rail and bike component, as well as green energy technology. In addition, stakeholders were informed of the new project schedule, modified purpose and need statement, and next steps.

A total of 334 stakeholders participated and provided valuable input on the project, with nearly 60 written, verbal, or online comments received. Stakeholders attending the community meetings were generally supportive of the HDC Project and encouraged bike route options and valuable connections to local destinations, including train stations. General concerns included potential impacts on local streets from motorists avoiding toll road portions of the HDC, visual impacts and light pollution to current scenery, and current unsafe street conditions (i.e., lack of pedestrian sidewalks along US 395).

Round 4 (July 15 – July 22, 2013)

The purpose of the Round 4 public meetings was to discuss the potential rail connections to the Palmdale Transportation Center in Palmdale and XpressWest connection in Victorville. The project team also discussed the multipurpose features of the HDC currently under study, including the rail, bikeway, and green energy technology components. Stakeholders were also informed of the modified project schedule, modified purpose and need statement, and next steps.

A total of 390 stakeholders participated and provided valuable input on the project, with nearly 59 written, verbal, or online comments received. Stakeholders attending the community meetings were generally supportive of the HDC Project and encouraged Caltrans and Metro to move forward with the project schedule and study. Specific comments of note included the importance of integration of land use and zoning policies throughout the planning process, pedestrian and public safety, and local residential and business benefits. Comments regarding PPPs and potential funding mechanisms were also presented. Concerns generally focused on identifying an equitable mitigation program that addresses a variety of potential project impacts, including construction, operational, ROW, traffic circulation, visual, and noise. Stakeholders were interested not only in mitigation strategies, but also enhancements and amenities for the project corridor and access to other transportation networks.

5.4.3 Focus Groups

Four HDC focus groups were held to ensure the community had the opportunity to understand the physical project variations. The first focus group was held on February 17, 2012, specifically hosted for the Victorville neighborhood that resides and has businesses near Variation E. During the meeting, the project team provided a project overview and the need to study an additional variation to avoid potential impacts to existing land uses such as the SCLA and the federal prison.

In addition, three variation workshops were held July 24, 26, and 30, 2014, to explore and discuss the issues related to each physical variation area. These focus group meetings were organized by:

1. Variation A and the HSR connection to the Palmdale Transportation Center
2. Variations D and B
3. Variation E and HSR connection to the XpressWest station

During these focus group sessions, stakeholders were presented with aerial maps and cross sections that helped demonstrate some of the physical alignments and configurations that are being evaluated in the environmental document and encourage a dialogue to improve project understanding and specifically how the project relates to their respective residence or business. The focus groups were held in the vicinity of each variation to help maximize participation.

5.4.4 Webinars

Two HDC webinars were conducted at key project milestones as a cost-effective way to update interested stakeholders on specific components of the project. The first webinar was held November 4, 2011. The purpose of the webinar was to discuss the status of the HDC study, as well as describe the functional differences of the alternatives and the physical variations. Online viewers had the opportunity to post questions for Caltrans and Metro staff to respond live. The broadcast attracted more than 166 live views.

The second HDC webinar was held February 26, 2014. A total of 120 participants joined the live webinar, which provided information regarding the HDC Rail Alternatives Analysis and offered the community an opportunity to learn more about the connections to the Palmdale Transportation Center in Palmdale and the XpressWest station in Victorville. During the webinar, participants shared comments and asked questions.

5.4.5 Local Government and Elected Officials' Briefings

A total of 33 local government and elected officials' briefings have been conducted throughout development of the Draft EIR/EIS. Briefings for elected officials were typically held prior to each round of Project Update Meetings/Open Houses to ensure the elected offices were aware of the latest project information and had an opportunity to view project materials that were to be subsequently presented to their

constituents. Separate elected officials' briefings were held in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties to encourage participation and focus the discussion.

In a separate effort, Caltrans and Metro conducted city/county staff working meetings and City Council briefings to ensure the local jurisdictions were properly informed of the project status and technical issues, as well as the anticipated schedule of the Draft EIR/EIS release and scheduled outreach activities.

5.4.6 Agency Partner Meetings

Seven agency project partner meetings were conducted throughout development of the Draft EIR/EIS. The partner meeting participants were limited to the corridor cities, counties, and agencies including:

- HDC Joint Powers Authority
- SANBAG
- SCAG
- Metro
- Caltrans

Project partner meetings were held on a quarterly basis to discuss opportunities, constraints, and project updates, including findings of the various analyses. These meetings provided high-level project collaboration and cooperation among the project partners.

5.4.7 Stakeholder and Interest Group Briefings

Throughout the project study process, Metro and Caltrans met with 40 stakeholders and interest groups to ensure the local community was well informed about the HDC Project and to allow one-on-one dialogue. Stakeholders and interest groups included town councils, service clubs, school districts, and other interested parties requesting briefings.

5.4.8 Events

To increase project awareness and maximize exposure to a wide stakeholder audience, Caltrans and Metro participated in 16 local events. These public events were extremely effective in helping the project reach audiences that otherwise would not be captured through traditional methods of outreach. The HDC Project team has made presentations at business events such as Mobility 21 and The High Desert Opportunity Conference and participated in festivals targeting the general public, including the Los Angeles County Air Show and the Poppy Seed Festival.

5.4.9 Media Briefings

To promote project transparency and encourage media coverage, three media briefings were hosted at key project milestones. This helped clarify project issues with reporters and provided useful project education that resulted in a higher level of accuracy in reporting on the HDC. Because of the large study area, media coverage has been viewed as an important communication tool by Caltrans and Metro.

This page intentionally left blank.