

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
AND PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD FOR THE
SOUTH BAY CONNECT PROJECT**

Date: June 29, 2020

To: Governor’s Office of Planning and Research/State Clearinghouse Unit,
Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

From: Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Lead Agency: Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
300 Lakeside Drive, 14th Floor East
Oakland, CA 94612

Contact: Shirley Qian, Senior Planner
(510) 874-7491
shirleyq@capitolcorridor.org

Project Title: Capitol Corridor South Bay Connect

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15082(a) and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting

INTRODUCTION

Notice is hereby given that the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA), as California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency, will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the South Bay Connect project (Project) and will hold a public scoping meeting to receive comments on the scope of the EIR, as detailed below. This Notice of Preparation (NOP)/Notice of Public Scoping Meeting (Notice) is also available online at www.southbayconnect.com.

CCJPA, as the project proponent and CEQA Lead Agency for the Project, has determined that an EIR must be prepared for the Project prior to making any final decision regarding whether to approve the Project, in accordance with CEQA. The EIR will cover environmental topics as defined in CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G. The purpose of the project-specific EIR will be to assess potential physical environmental effects of the proposed Project, to identify ways to minimize or avoid significant effects, and to describe and analyze alternatives to the proposed Project. CCJPA has issued this Notice to Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, federal agencies, transportation planning agencies, agencies with transportation facilities that may be affected, and other interested parties. Responsible Agencies are those public agencies that have a role in approving or carrying out the proposed Project.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND SCOPING

A 45-day public scoping comment period will **begin on June 29** and **end on August 13 2020**. During this scoping comment period, CCJPA encourages you to learn more about and provide your input into the scope of the project and environmental review. Meaningful public engagement throughout the South Bay Connect planning process is vital so that project solutions serve our regional needs.

Online Public Scoping Meeting

For your convenience, and to allow participation in a safe environment while social distancing, an online public scoping meeting will be available at www.southbayconnect.com during the project's 45-day public scoping comment period. Visit the online meeting anytime between June 29 and August 13, 2020 to review information and submit comments.

The online public scoping meeting is American with Disabilities Act or ADA accessible, and can be viewed in desired language through use of Google translate.

A telephone town hall is scheduled on **July 15 at 6 p.m.** To meet and interact directly with the Project Team, call **(833) 380-0651**. Additional team interaction will occur on the Online Meeting through a live chat feature. To engage directly with the Project Team through chat, visit the website on **July 15 at 12 p.m.** and click the Chat Box.

Public Comment Submittal

We value your input and look forward to hearing from you. For your convenience, we have a number of ways for you to provide comments at any time during the 45-day comment period ending at 5 pm on August 13, 2020. Comments can be submitted in the following ways:

- Direct Mail:
Public Outreach
2379 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95833
- Email: info@southbayconnect.com
- Website and Online Virtual Meeting comment submittal: www.southbayconnect.com
- Telephone: (510) 244-3667

For the deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired, (TDD) users may contact the California Relay Service TTY and/or Voice Line at 1-800-735-2929, or 711.

If you are an authorized representative of a Responsible Agency or a Trustee Agency, the CCJPA needs to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed Project. Your agency will need to use the EIR when considering whether to permit or otherwise approve the Project. Comments received from State of California agencies should address: 1) whether the agency will be a Responsible Agency or a Trustee Agency for the Project; and 2) if the agency is a Responsible Agency, the significant

environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures which the Responsible Agency will need to have explored in the analysis. We will also need the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the contact person for your agency.

PROJECT LOCATION AND OVERVIEW

The proposed Project is located in Alameda County between the Capitol Corridor Oakland Coliseum Station to the north and Newark Junction to the south (see **Figure 1**). Currently, CCJPA operates Capitol Corridor passenger rail service along the Niles Subdivision (owned by Union Pacific Railroad) between Oakland and Fremont/Newark. South Bay Connect is a key element in CCJPA's 2014 Vision Plan Update and 2016 Vision Implementation Plan, both of which call for relocating Capitol Corridor service between Oakland and Newark to the Coast Subdivision to provide a shorter and more direct route from Oakland to San Jose. Improvements to the rail network and operations between Oakland and San Jose are also important components of the 2018 California State Rail Plan, which calls for re-routing passenger rail service from the Niles Subdivision to the Coast Subdivision and re-routing freight operations from the Coast Subdivision to the Niles Subdivision to facilitate faster travel times by 2022.

The proposed Project would significantly reduce rail travel time (up to 13 minutes in travel time savings) between Oakland and San Jose, facilitating more auto-competitive travel times for intercity passenger rail trips within the Capitol Corridor service area. In addition, South Bay Connect would facilitate improved connections to Transbay bus or shuttle services for Capitol Corridor passengers whose destinations are on the San Francisco Peninsula.

The proposed Project would facilitate the separation of passenger rail service and freight operations in southern Alameda County, improving operations for both uses of rail and supporting the economic vitality of the Northern California megaregion. Improvements to the rail infrastructure may be warranted and included in the proposed Project to accommodate the transition of freight service to the Niles and Oakland Subdivisions and passenger rail service to the Coast Subdivision. The proposed Project also includes a new passenger rail station at the Ardenwood Park-and-Ride and potentially one additional passenger rail station along the Coast Subdivision to serve southern Alameda County passengers that would no longer have access to Capitol Corridor service at existing stations in Hayward and Fremont along the Niles Subdivision. The proposed Project does not include any increase in the number of daily Capitol Corridor trains or frequency of service to San Jose.

OBJECTIVES

The **purpose** of South Bay Connect is to create a more direct passenger rail route and significantly reduce rail travel time between Oakland and San Jose, facilitating more auto-competitive travel times for intercity passenger rail trips throughout the Northern California Megaregion. South Bay Connect will create new connections to Transbay transit services and destinations on the San Francisco Peninsula. A further objective is to facilitate the separation of passenger rail service and freight rail operations in southern Alameda County, improving operations for both and supporting the economic vitality of the Northern California megaregion.

The **need** for the proposed Project is to:

- **Reduce passenger rail travel time** between Oakland and San Jose and throughout the larger megaregion to increase ridership on transit, ease congestion on the Bay Area's stressed roadways, and reduce lengthy auto commutes.
- **Diversify and enhance rail network integration** by reducing duplicative capital investments and differentiating Capitol Corridor's intercity rail service from commuter rail and other transit services, including BART's extension to San Jose.
- **Support economic vitality** by permitting enhanced rail movement and the preservation of freight rail capacity in the Northern California market through the reduction of conflicts between freight rail operations and passenger rail service.
- **Improve service between megaregional markets** by enhancing connections between high demand destinations, overcoming existing geographic service gaps between job centers and affordable housing on the San Francisco Peninsula and the Capitol Corridor route.
- **Promote environmental sustainability** by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Key components of the proposed South Bay Connect Project include:

- Relocation of Capitol Corridor passenger rail operations to the Coast Subdivision and the facilitate the relocation of freight rail operations to the Niles and Oakland Subdivisions between Oakland and Fremont/Newark to create operational improvements for both services;
- Upgrades to the Coast Subdivision to Federal Rail Administration Class 5 track standards to accommodate passenger rail service;
- Improvements on the Niles and Oakland Subdivisions, including connections between the two lines at Industrial and Shinn to allow for more efficient freight movements; and
- Construction of a new passenger rail station at the existing Ardenwood Park & Ride that connects rail service with express buses, private shuttles, and the surrounding bicycle and pedestrian network.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND REQUIRED APPROVALS

CCJPA recognizes that the proposed Project may have a significant effect on the environment and that an EIR is the appropriate document for compliance with CEQA. As part of the preparation of the EIR, a CEQA Initial Study will be prepared to focus the analysis and identify those resources that will require more expansive analysis; the Initial Study will include an initial assessment of all environmental topic areas as defined in CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G as shown below. The EIR will expand upon the analyses performed in the Initial Study to meet CEQA regulatory requirements and will identify practicable mitigation measures to reduce any potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level, as necessary.

Environmental Resources to be Included in CEQA Analysis include:

- Aesthetics
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Public Services
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Recreation

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology/Soils
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Wildfire

Field studies and/or quantitative analysis are proposed at this time in the following environmental topics, since potential significant adverse impacts or project benefits may result from implementation of the proposed Project:

- Emissions (Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas) Analysis: The EIR will include an analysis of the Project construction and operational air quality and greenhouse gas emissions using the latest emissions models.
- Biological Resource Analysis: The EIR will include an analysis of the biological resources at and around the site and the potential impact of the proposed Project on these resources.
- Cultural Resource Analysis: The EIR will include an assessment of the cultural significance of archaeological and historic architectural resources within the Project study area, the impact of modification or removal of these resources, and measures that could reduce any impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- Noise and Vibration Analysis: The EIR will include an analysis of the noise and vibration impacts to nearby sensitive receptors that may result from the change in rail operations along the Coast, Niles, and Oakland Subdivisions.
- Transportation Analysis: The EIR will include a detailed analysis of the potential transportation impacts and feasible mitigations to minimize impacts to automobile, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel. The analysis is proposed to include study of both intersection operations and vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Visual Impact Assessment: The EIR will include an assessment of the impacts of new infrastructure, including new station(s) on the visual and aesthetic character of the nearby project areas, as well as the impacts on the viewshed from those areas.
- Hazardous Materials Assessment: The EIR will include an Initial Site Assessment of the locations within which ground disturbances would occur and there would be the potential for impacts from hazardous and contaminated wastes and materials on the proposed Project.
- Community Impact Analysis: The EIR will include an assessment of the impacts of the Project on the residences, workers, and visitors within southern Alameda County and the facilities and public resources in their communities.

The Project is anticipated to require the following approvals:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife – California Endangered Species Act compliance
- California State Water Resources Control Board - Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act Water Discharge Requirement (WDR) & Clean Water Act Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) - General Construction Stormwater Permit Waste Discharge Requirements
- San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission - Consistency Determination

- San Francisco Bay Area Air Quality Control Board – Clean Air Act compliance
- Alameda County local permits

If, during further project development and CEQA analysis, it is determined that approvals or permits from Federal agencies are required, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the corresponding Section 106 compliance would be required. Analysis, as required under NEPA, could occur concurrent to or following the CEQA EIR process.

INFORMATION

Documents relating to the Project are available for review online at www.southbayconnect.com.

Shirley Qian, Senior Planner
Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Attachments: Figure 1, Project Location and Overview Map

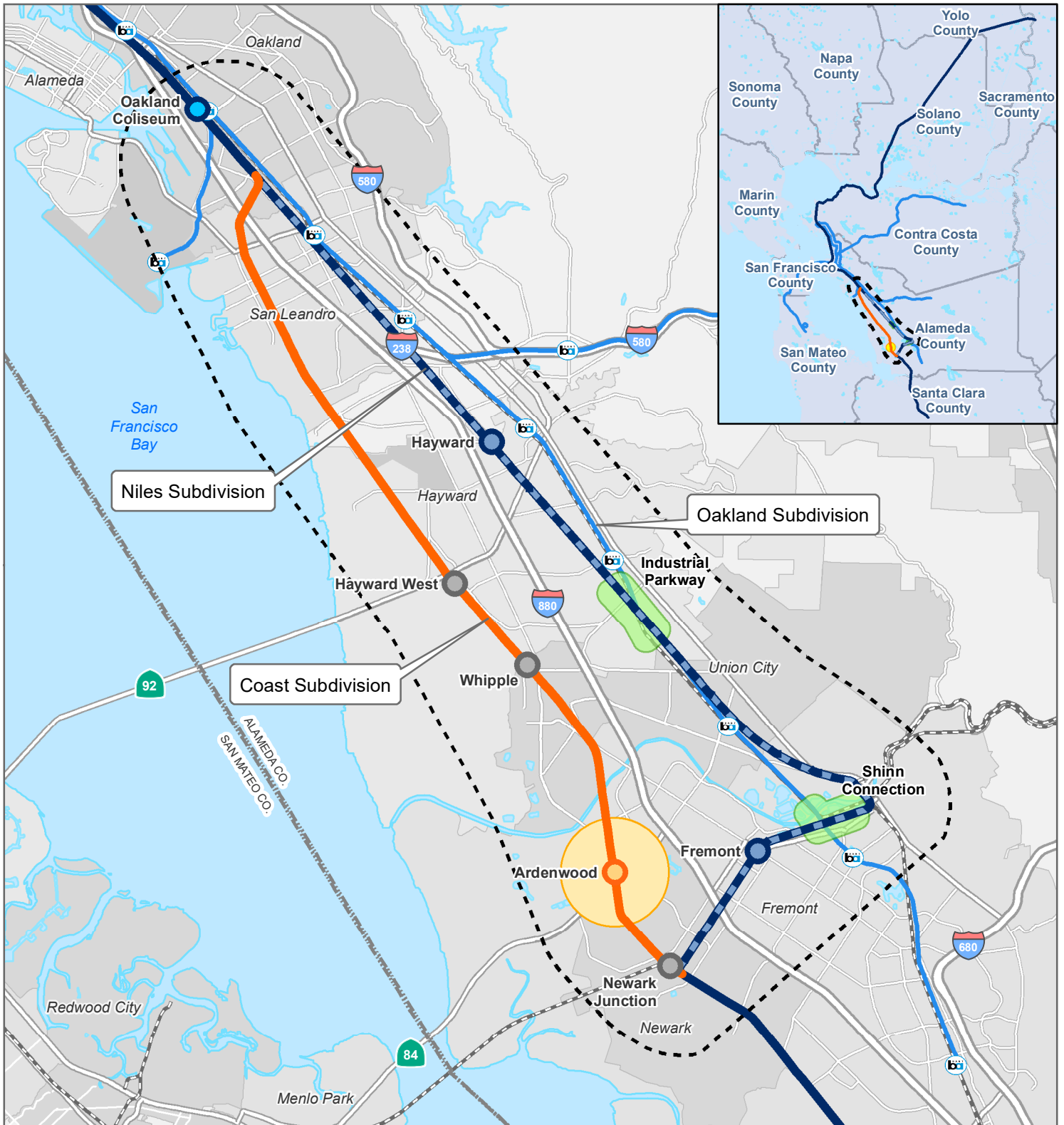


FIGURE 1: PROJECT LOCATION AND OVERVIEW MAP

- Proposed New Station and Potential Station Area
- Potential Station Considered and Eliminated
- Existing Station
- Station where CC Service to be Discontinued
- BART Station
- Railroad
- Proposed Capitol Corridor (CC) Service
- Existing CC Service
- CC Service to be Discontinued
- Study Area
- UP Improvement Area



DATA SOURCES: Caltrans, Alameda County, San Mateo County, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
 MAP CREATED BY HDR IN MAY 2020