

## 8 Public and Agency Outreach

This chapter documents the public and agency outreach conducted during preparation of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation for the Program in accordance with NEPA; CEQ regulations implementing NEPA; FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts; 23 USC Section 139; and CEQA. RCTC began the public engagement process early in 2014 to ensure stakeholder feedback was incorporated into the scope of the environmental document, as well as analysis required to identify potential effects and determine appropriate mitigation strategies.

During the outreach process, the lead agencies, which include FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC, engaged the public (i.e., citizens, elected officials, and key stakeholders), as well as local, state, tribal, and federal agencies during the early stages of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation.

This chapter provides a summary of the outreach efforts, which included a variety of formal and informal outreach methods, such as public meetings, key stakeholder and community group briefings, project development team and agency coordination meetings, advertisements, email blasts, mailings, pamphlet distribution, website updates, and social media engagement. This chapter provides additional detail on the overall public involvement process and the aforementioned outreach activities beginning with the formal scoping period and additional outreach conducted throughout preparation of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR environmental process.

### 8.1 Environmental Justice Outreach

In the development and implementation of the public involvement efforts for the Program, EJ issues and affected communities were identified. According to California Government Code Section 65040.12(e), EJ is described as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, requires consideration of whether a proposed action would disproportionately affect minority or low-income groups (59 FR 7629 [1994]). Additionally, EO 12898 requires federal agencies to ensure public participation from communities with substantial minority or low-income populations. Each federal agency has developed a strategy to address EJ with CEQ responsible for oversight and coordination. The EJ evaluation for the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR follows the appropriate guidance and methodologies to examine the potential effects on minority and low-income groups (e.g., CEQ's EJ Guidelines under NEPA [December 1997], and the USDOT's Final Order 5610.2(a) on EJ [April 1997 and updated May 2012]).

An EJ evaluation was prepared for the Program to identify and address potential disproportionate effects on EJ populations and to ensure that EJ populations were included in public outreach efforts throughout the life of the Program (during and after the NEPA process).

FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC were also responsible for complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that “no person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Recipients of federal aid must certify non-discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

The EJ evaluation in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR identified low-income and minority populations in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area. These EJ communities identified within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area were included in the public outreach process to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in review of the Program. As a general rule, the following principles were adopted to support involvement of EJ communities in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area:

- Documents, notices, and meetings were made concise, understandable, and readily accessible to the public
- Informational materials were made available through a variety of outlets
- All public events were scheduled at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Various community leaders and groups were contacted to increase public participation of constituent communities

### 8.1.1 Limited English Proficiency Outreach

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are considered limited English proficient. Limited English proficient populations are protected by federal laws concerning language access rights, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and EO 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency* (signed on August 11, 2000). EO 13166 states that limited English proficient people should have meaningful access to federally conducted and funded programs and activities. EO 13166 requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so limited English proficient persons can have meaningful access to them.

Steps were taken by FRA, RCTC, and Caltrans to provide meaningful access to those limited English proficient individuals expected to be most regularly encountered by providing, as necessary, translation services at public meetings and meeting notifications and materials advertised in English and Spanish.

## 8.1.2 Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

Public meetings were held in locations that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act to assure that disabled or elderly stakeholders had convenient access to meetings. Sign language interpreters were available upon request at formal public meetings and other meetings, as advertised in meeting notification materials. Public notices announcing public meetings provided additional instructions for requesting other special accommodations. Additionally, this document complies with Section 508 requirements (29 USC Section 794 (d)), which requires federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

## 8.2 Section 106 Consultation

FRA determined its federal action to provide financial assistance for the development of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR is an “undertaking,” as defined in Section 106 of the NHPA, and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800); however, this planning effort does not have the potential to affect historic properties. In making this determination, FRA has no further obligations under Section 106 with respect to this undertaking (i.e., Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR). The approach followed for Section 106 consultation is discussed below and in Section 3.13, Cultural Resources.

### 8.2.1 National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106

FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC are using a tiered NEPA process (e.g., Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR) to complete the environmental review of the Program, pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1508.28 (titled “Tiering”) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (titled “Program EIR”) and Section 15170 (titled “Joint EIS/EIR”). Tiering is a staged environmental review process applied to complex transportation projects. The Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR and the concurrent preparation of the SDP, are the first steps in this tiered environmental review process. After the completion of the SDP, the proposed broader Program scope defining necessary infrastructure improvements will be known.

Once funding is secured for further work, the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR and SDP would be followed by Tier 2/Project-level analysis for site-specific infrastructure improvements and station facilities. This would be considered the second tier of environmental evaluation because it is based on the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR that outlined the broad Program scope. This future Tier 2/Project-level analysis would closely align with the future preliminary engineering process and analyze site-specific direct and indirect Project-level impacts, in addition to any required permits, consultations, or approvals needed for construction. If any Tier 2/Project-level analysis is sponsored by a federal agency, it would be subject to all relevant federal environmental laws and regulations, and the Tier 2/Project-level environmental documents would be led by the sponsoring federal agency.

Construction of the proposed rail infrastructure or station facility would not commence until after environmental clearance is completed at the Tier 2/Project level.

Similarly, the Section 106 implementing regulations allow agencies to use a phased process to comply with Section 106 in coordination with NEPA, per 36 CFR Part 800.8(c)(1)(ii). Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR Part 800) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that are listed or meet the eligibility criteria for listing in the NRHP. The Section 106 process has a specific public involvement component. In particular, Section 106 regulations require that the lead federal agency (FRA), in consultation with the SHPO, identify appropriate points for seeking public input and notification of the proposed actions associated with the Program. The regulations require that the federal agency seek and consider the views of the SHPO and the public in a manner that reflects the nature and complexity of the Program and its effects on historic properties.

At this time, FRA is funding the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR planning phase only and has determined the planning effort does not have the potential to affect historic properties. However, to inform this planning effort and facilitate potential future Section 106 reviews under Tier 2/Project-level analysis, FRA initiated consultation under 36 CFR Part 800.3 and conducted a preliminary identification of historic properties that included background research/data obtained from records search and other sources, such as historical maps; it does not include data collected through archaeological or built environment surveys, nor does it include resource evaluations. The study completed in support of the Tier1/Program EIS/EIR incorporates pertinent information received through consultation on historic properties, including information regarding federal, state, and local agencies and tribes consulted and their responses, if any. The following agencies/jurisdictions requested to be consulting parties, pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA (Section 3.13, Cultural Resources, of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR):

- SHPO
- City of Desert Springs
- City of Indio

## 8.2.2 Tribal Consultation

### Federal Government-to-Government Section 106 Tribal Consultation

As part of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR scoping process, FRA identified potential consulting parties for Section 106, which included federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies, and federally and state-recognized Native American tribes that have cultural and traditional affiliation within or near the Eastern Section of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Cultural Study Area.

On October 15, 2019, FRA sent invitation letters to consult with federally recognized tribes regarding the Program. On November 5, 2019, an email follow-up was sent by HDR (on behalf of FRA) to those mailing recipients whose letters were returned undeliverable. On November 22 and 26, 2019, additional email follow-ups were sent to all federally recognized tribes who had not yet responded to the invitation to consult. On December 20, 2019, a final follow-up email was sent to all federally recognized tribes who had not yet responded, using the original October 15, 2019, letter as an attachment. For any Native American tribe where an email was either unavailable or undeliverable, a follow-up phone call was made and voice mail messages were left regarding the Program. The following responses have been received:

- The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians of the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation requested government-to-government consultation, contact of their office to schedule a meeting, area of potential effects shape files (via email), and copies of cultural resource documentation generated.
- The La Posta Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the La Posta Reservation did not request to be a consulting party but provided a recommendation (via email) that if there is ground disturbance, a native monitor should be on site because “the native people traveled along that way so there may [be] artifacts in the area.”
- The Morongo Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians Tribal Heritage Preservation Officer has verbally discussed participating in Section 106 consultation with FRA.
- The Pala Band of Mission Indians responded that the Program is not within the boundaries of the recognized Pala Indian Reservation and beyond the boundaries of the territory that the Pala Band of Mission Indians considers its Traditional Use Area.
- The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians responded that they do not elect to be a consulting party on this Tier 1/Program and will wait for Tier 2/Project-level notifications.
- The Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians requested government-to-government consultation, scheduling conference calls, scheduling in-person consultation meetings, the presence of a

Soboba Native American Monitor during all ground-disturbing activities (including archaeological surveys and testing), that procedures regarding repatriation of cultural items are followed, the appropriate treatment and disposition of human remains, coordination with County Coroner's Office, and non-disclosure of reburial locations. The Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians Tribal Heritage Preservation Officer also submitted a letter notifying FRA of a potentially eligible Traditional Cultural Property for the NRHP and CRHR.

A webinar for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians of the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation was held on February 13, 2020. A webinar for the Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians was held on February 11, 2020. All Section 106 correspondence received to date is located in Appendix H of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR.

### Section 106 Consultation with State-Recognized Tribes

In response to FRA's invitations to consult, the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation replied on January 16, 2020, with a requested to consult under Section 106. The tribe requested a meeting with FRA. On January 23, 2020, HDR reached out to Chairman Andrew Salas on behalf of FRA to discuss setting up a meeting. After their discussion, Chairman Salas noted that there was no need to meet at this time to further discuss the Program; however, the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation requested to be involved and informed of related Tier 2/Project-level notifications moving forward.

### 8.2.3 Assembly Bill 52 Tribal Consultation

In 2014, California governor Jerry Brown signed AB 52, establishing an additional requirement under CEQA for consultation with Native American tribes regarding TCRs. AB 52 requires that the CEQA lead agency notify any interested Native American tribes of a proposed project only if those tribes have requested to be notified regarding the CEQA lead agency's projects. The CEQA lead agency must consult in good faith with participating California Native American tribes prior to the release of the EIR. If a project has the potential to affect a TCR, the CEQA document must discuss whether there is a significant impact on a TCR and whether there are feasible alternatives or mitigation to avoid or substantially lessen impacts on the TCR. Consultation is finished when one of the following applies: the parties agree to avoid or mitigate significant impacts on TCRs or the CEQA lead agency, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

RCTC notified two Native American tribes regarding the Program. RCTC's consultation efforts under AB 52 are described as follows:

- **Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians Kizh Nation:** On October 19, 2016, during the scoping phase of the Program, RCTC submitted an invitation to consult under AB 52 to the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation. On October 30, 2016, the Gabrielino Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation replied that they have concerns for cultural resources within ancestral territory that fall within the Program, and they would like to consult with RCTC. On August 29, 2019, RCTC sent further information to the tribe, including an updated Program description and background research conducted regarding known archaeological resources within the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Cultural Study Area. Since the Western Section of the Program, located largely within the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation ancestral territory, did not propose any ground-disturbing activities, RCTC asked that the Native American tribe reconfirm their request to consult under AB 52 for the Program. On September 30, 2019, RCTC followed up with the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation via email, asking that the Native American tribe confirm their intentions to consult on the Program prior to October 4, 2019. No response has been received from the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation for AB 52 consultation.
- **San Manuel Band of Mission Indians:** On August 29, 2019, RCTC submitted an invitation to consult under AB 52 to the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians replied on September 11, 2019, that while the majority of the Program exists outside of Serrano ancestral territory, the tribe did have concerns regarding the portion of the Program from Colton to Beaumont and Banning within the Eastern Section of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Cultural Study Area. The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians noted that there are at least two Sacred Lands Files within or adjacent to the Eastern Section of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Cultural Study Area in the Loma Linda/Redlands/Colton area that are of concern to the Native American tribe; the tribe requested further information to assess their level of involvement with the Program. On September 30, 2019, the tribe was sent a copy of the *Cultural, Historic, and Tribal Resources Technical Memorandum* (Appendix H of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR) prepared for the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR service-level evaluation for review. With the additional information, the Native American tribe noted that they did not have concerns with the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, and the Native American tribe will wait until Tier 2/Project-level notifications to discuss specific activities that may impact resources of concern to the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

RCTC has completed AB 52 Tribal consultation for the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation. Additional AB 52 Tribal consultation will be conducted as part of Tier 2/Project-level analysis.

## 8.3 Outreach Prior to Scoping

RCTC began public outreach for the Program in 2014, prior to the formal initiation of the NEPA/CEQA process. The early outreach included multiple Technical Advisory Committee meetings, public outreach meetings, and individual meetings with elected officials within the Coachella Valley. These early outreach activities are summarized in Table 8-1.



Table 8-1. Summary of Pre-NEPA/CEQA Public Outreach

Meeting Date	Location	Number of Attendees	Meeting Topic
<b>Technical Advisory Committee Meetings</b>			
November 19, 2014	In-person and via webcast at SCAG offices in Riverside, Los Angeles and Orange Counties; Coachella Valley Association of Governments offices; conference call option also provided	31	Project introduction and overview, study vision, understanding of partners, FRA process, public outreach plan, travel market
February 25, 2015	In-person and via webcast at SCAG offices in Riverside, Los Angeles and Orange Counties; Coachella Valley Association of Governments offices; conference call option also provided	37	Study status update, Draft Purpose and Need, concept alternatives, public meeting update
November 4, 2015	In-person and via webcast at SCAG offices in Riverside, Los Angeles and Orange Counties; Coachella Valley Association of Governments offices; conference call option also provided	28	Route alternatives studied, evaluation process, coarse level and fine level screening criteria and results, discussion of preferred alternative and No Build Alternative
May 4, 2021	Virtually via Zoom meeting	43	SDP and Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR overview and status.

Meeting Date	Location	Number of Attendees	Meeting Topic
<b>Public Outreach Meetings</b>			
February 23, 2015	Banning City Hall	22	Project overview; sought feedback about rail-service expansion and Draft Purpose and Need
February 26, 2015	Coachella Valley Association of Governments, Palm Desert	75 in-person attendees 56 webcast attendees 98 additional webcast views after the meeting	Project overview; sought feedback about rail-service expansion and Draft Purpose and Need
<b>Online Survey (Southern California Region)</b>			
March–July 2015	Online survey	262 responses	Travel patterns, public transit usage, travel barriers, and traffic congestion
<b>Elected Officials Briefings (Riverside County)</b>			
February–March 2015	One-on-one briefings with Riverside County Elected Officials	20 participants	Project overview; sought feedback about rail-service expansion and Draft Purpose and Need

Notes:

EIR=environmental impact report; EIS=environmental impact statement; FRA=Federal Railroad Administration; SCAG=Southern California Association of Governments; SDP=Service Development Plan

## 8.4 Public and Agency Scoping

The scoping process undertaken for the Program was performed in accordance with NEPA; CEQ regulations implementing NEPA; FRA’s Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts; 23 USC Section 139; and CEQA.

During the scoping process, the lead agencies engaged the public (i.e., citizens, elected officials, and key stakeholders), as well as local, state, and federal agencies during the early stages of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. The NEPA/CEQA scoping process provides government agencies, public and private organizations, and the general public the opportunity to identify environmental issues and alternatives for consideration in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. The scoping process and results are an initial step in the NEPA/CEQA process.

Information developed by the lead agencies, as well as comments received from the public and other stakeholders during the scoping process were used to:

- Refine the Purpose and Need for the Program;
- Provide input on alignments or alternatives that should be considered in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR; and
- Identify potential environmental effects of the Program to be addressed in the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR.

### 8.4.1 Notice of Intent, Notice of Preparation, and Public Information Materials

FRA published an NOI to prepare an EIS for the Program in the FR on October 11, 2016 (FR 81 (196), 70257-70260). The NOI serves as the official legal notice that a federal agency is commencing preparation of an EIS. As described in the NOI, the formal scoping period ended on November 10, 2016.

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15082 (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), RCTC issued an NOP on October 6, 2016 (State Clearinghouse Number 2016101017). The NOP summarized the Program, provided information on RCTC’s intention to prepare a joint Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, and requested comments from interested parties. The formal scoping period for the NOP ended on November 10, 2016, instead of November 5, 2016 (as indicated in the scoping meeting notices and scoping meeting materials), to coincide with the dates in the NOI published in the FR.

The NOI and NOP provided background information on the Program, presented draft Program purpose and objectives, addressed the alternatives development process, and provided an initial list of environmental resources to be analyzed. The NOI and NOP also announced the public scoping meetings (Section 8.4.3) and invited local, state, and federal agencies; the public; and other interested parties to submit scoping comments.

## 8.4.2 Agency and Public Outreach

A number of agencies were contacted on release of the NOI and NOP. Table 8-2 identifies the agencies that responded to the NOI and NOP.

**Table 8-2. Agency Points of Contact**

Agency	Point of Contact	Title
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 8	Mark Roberts	Office Chief, Intergovernmental Review, Community, and Regional Planning
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	Leslie MacNair	Regional Manager
City of Coachella	Steven Hernandez	Mayor
City of Indio	Mariano Aguirre	Director of Housing and Development
City of Palm Desert	Ryan Stendell	Director of Community Development
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)	Elizabeth Carvajal	Senior Manager, Transportation Planning
National Park Service	Jill Jensen	Cultural Resource Specialist
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)	Ping Chang	Acting Manager, Compliance and Performance Monitoring
South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)	Jillian Wong	Planning and Rules Manager
Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA/Metrolink)	Ron Mathieu	Senior Public Project Specialist
United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), Region IX	Clifton Meek	Environmental Review Section

Agency	Point of Contact	Title
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Kennon Corey	Assistant Field Supervisor

Along with the agencies, members of the public, including citizens, elected officials, and other key stakeholders (i.e., community associations, local institutions, and Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR-adjacent property owners), participated in the NEPA and CEQA scoping process. Consultation with these parties continued throughout the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR environmental process at various milestones. In addition to the publication of the NOI and NOP, a range of outreach methods and activities outlined below were implemented to engage the members of the public.

### Website

The NOI/NOP, press release, and information related to public scoping meeting locations and times were made available to the public on RCTC's website for the Program:

<https://www.rctc.org/projects/coachella-valley-san-gorgonio-pass-corridor-rail-corridor-service-project/>.

### Social Media

On October 7, October 10, and October 11, 2016, RCTC's Twitter and Facebook accounts included posts with information for the public scoping meeting dates and times and a link to the Program website (Appendix A of this Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR). RCTC has approximately 900 Twitter followers and 8,000 Facebook followers. Posts were made to inform the public on how to submit comments. A link to the Program fact sheet was made available via RCTC's Facebook account. RCTC's Facebook and Twitter accounts can be found at [www.facebook.com/cvrailproject](http://www.facebook.com/cvrailproject) and @therctc, respectively. RCTC also established a separate Program-specific Facebook account that has approximately 694 followers. RCTC posted public scoping meeting dates and times, as well as boosted the posts to reach a wider audience in areas surrounding the public scoping meeting locations. The Coachella Valley Rail Program Facebook account can be found at [www.facebook.com/cvrailproject](http://www.facebook.com/cvrailproject).

### Mailing List

In addition to the release of the NOP and NOI, notifications were sent via email and postal mail to approximately 570 persons on the public outreach distribution list. As identified in the Agency and Public Coordination Plan, the distribution list was developed by taking into account early outreach efforts, such as the Technical Advisory Committee meetings, public outreach meetings, and stakeholders within the Coachella Valley area and along the Program Corridor. The distribution list included elected officials, stakeholders, community groups, and members of the public with an

interest in the Program. The distribution list was updated and expanded as needed throughout the duration of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, with updated versions provided to the team at periodic intervals. An additional 23 certified mailings containing the NOP were sent to federal, state, and local agencies and organizations with an interest in the Program. Notifications also included a description of the Program, the NEPA/CEQA process, and instructions for submitting public comments or requesting special accommodations.

## Newspaper Advertisements and Press Releases

RCTC advertised the public scoping meetings and comment period in the following newspapers:

- The Press-Enterprise published on October 6, 2016 – circulation in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties
- Los Angeles Times published on October 6, 2016 – circulation in Southern California
- The Desert Sun published on October 6, 2016 – circulation in Coachella Valley
- La Opinion (Spanish) published on October 6, 2016 – circulation in Southern California
- El Informador del Valle (Spanish) published on October 6, 2016 – circulation in Coachella Valley
- La Prensa (Spanish) published on October 7, 2016 – circulation in Riverside, San Bernardino and East Los Angeles Counties
- Excelsior (Spanish) published on October 7, 2016 – circulation in Orange County
- La Prensa Hispana (Spanish) published on October 7, 2016 – circulation in Coachella Valley, eastern portion of Riverside County, eastern portion of San Bernardino County, and Imperial County

The advertisements invited the public to attend the public scoping meetings, provided information regarding the meeting times and places, the meeting format, the 30-day public scoping period, the publication of the NOI and NOP, Program website address, and instructions for submitting public comments or requesting special accommodations.

Additionally, RCTC issued an electronic press release on October 11, 2016 inviting the public to attend the public scoping meeting, providing meeting times and places, information regarding the public scoping period, and instructions for submitting public comments or requesting special accommodations. SCAG and the City of Indio also posted the press release on their respective websites. The NOP and an associated press release were also made available to the public on RCTC's website for the Program: [www.rctc.org/coachella](http://www.rctc.org/coachella).

### 8.4.3 Public Scoping Meetings

During the NOI/NOP comment period, FRA and RCTC conducted three public scoping meetings as summarized in Table 8-3.

**Table 8-3. Public Scoping Meetings**

Meeting Date	Location	Time	Number of Attendees
October 12, 2016	Springbrook Clubhouse at Reid Park 1101 North Orange Street Riverside, California 92501	5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	8
October 13, 2016	Indio Senior Center 45700 Aladdin Street Indio, California 92201	5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	17
October 17, 2016	Metro Headquarters 1 Gateway Plaza Los Angeles California 90012	5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	14

The public scoping meetings helped to notify stakeholders about the public comment period for the CEQA NOP (October 6, 2016 through November 10, 2016) and the NEPA NOI (October 11, 2016 through November 10, 2016). The primary goals for the public scoping meetings were to:

- Educate the public on the need for the Program;
- Share the history of the Program and how the Program has evolved;
- Outline the Program benefits;
- Highlight the Program elements;
- Present the Program timeline;
- Explain next steps; and
- Gather public comments per the requirements of CEQA and NEPA.

The public scoping meetings provided the public and government agencies the opportunity to receive information on the NEPA/CEQA process, the Program, and how to provide comments. Approximately 39 persons total attended the public scoping meetings in Los Angeles, Indio, and Riverside, including representatives from local and state agencies, organizations, and private citizens.

Copies of the NOI and NOP were available at the sign-in tables. To ensure that the multilingual needs of the community were met, the Program fact sheet was available in Spanish. In addition, team staff members were available to interpret the presentation in Spanish. Program fact sheets and comment cards were provided as handouts at the public scoping meetings.

Prior to and after the presentation, attendees were encouraged to visit the various stations, view the display boards, meet with the team, ask questions, and provide comments. Robert Yates, Multimodal Services Director for RCTC, gave the presentation with assistance from J.D. Douglas, project manager for HDR. Lyle Leitelt was also in attendance to represent FRA and answered questions from stakeholders.

Attendees were also encouraged to submit comments by mail: electronically to the Program email address or as written comments submitted at the meeting. Several attendees submitted written comments at the public scoping meeting using forms made available.

#### 8.4.4 Agency and Public Scoping Comments

Federal, state, and local agencies; private and public organizations; and the general public provided written comments during the public scoping period. The comment period for the NOP and NOI ended November 10, 2016. In total, 36 submissions were received: 13 from federal, state, and local agencies; 23 from individuals of the public and other organizations, and 1 from a railroad stakeholder. Eight comments offered general support for the Program, of which five comments requested that the Program be expedited to allow for alternative modes of transportation in the Coachella Valley. One comment was supportive of the Program because it could reduce carbon emissions and bring safety benefits to the Coachella Valley during festival season. These comments are incorporated into the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. The total number of scoping comment submissions are summarized in Table 8-4.

**Table 8-4. Total Number of Public Scoping Comment Submissions**

Number Received	Source
<b>13</b>	<b><i>Agency Submissions</i></b>
1	Public comment cards from agencies
12	Letters and emails from agencies
<b>23</b>	<b><i>Public Submissions</i></b>
17	Emails submitted via <a href="mailto:CoachellaValleyRail@ArellanoAssociates.com">CoachellaValleyRail@ArellanoAssociates.com</a>
3	Letters mailed to FRA and RCTC



Number Received	Source
3	Coachella Valley Rail Project comment forms
1	<b><i>Railroad Stakeholder Submissions</i></b>
1	Letters from railroad stakeholders

Notes:

FRA=Federal Railroad Administration; RCTC=Riverside County Transportation Commission

Comments submitted during the public scoping process were taken into consideration by FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC throughout the development of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, including the public and agency involvement process, Purpose and Need statement, alternatives development, and environmental resources evaluation. Comments generally focused on the following topics:

- Program termini
- Station locations and station area development
- Service frequency
- Program alignments and alternatives
- Transit network connectivity
- Public engagement opportunities
- Property acquisition/ROW
- Mitigation of environmental impacts
- Freight interference

## 8.5 Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR

### 8.5.1 Outreach, Involvement, and Communications

Public outreach during the development of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR includes the following methods:

- **Website** – The Program website includes an overview, Public Involvement Information, and when available, related studies and resources, including an electronic version of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR. The website was updated with information on the Program alternatives, environmental review, and current and previous Program documentation and provided a link to allow people to sign up for the mailing list and submit comments electronically.
- **Mailing List** – RCTC developed an electronic and traditional mailing list of elected officials, public agency contacts, property owners adjacent to the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Study Area, stakeholders, and community groups, and members of the public with an interest in the Program. The mailing list was used to distribute meeting announcements and information about the Program. Where email addresses were available, announcements including Program information and public involvement opportunities were distributed electronically.
- **Local Government and Stakeholder Briefings** – Upon request or at key milestones, the lead agencies briefed local government entities and stakeholders to provide information, answer questions, and receive feedback.
- **Social Media Messaging** – RCTC's Twitter and Facebook accounts will include posts with information for the public meeting dates and times and a link to the Program website approaching the release of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR for public review. Posts will also be made to inform the public on how to submit comments on the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR.

### 8.5.2 Agency Meetings and Consultation

A Technical Advisory Committee was convened consisting of technical staff representatives from the lead and participating agencies and other stakeholders. There have been seven Technical Advisory Committee meetings conducted since 2015, focused on specific technical topics, such as rail operations, conceptual alternatives development, NEPA/CEQA requirements, historic properties and Section 106, water resources, potential mitigation strategies, and advance permitting requirements.

## 8.6 Publication and Review of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR

### 8.6.1 Notification and Circulation of the Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR

The NOA of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR will be published in the FR on May 21, 2021. The Notice of Completion (NOC) for the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR will be filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk's Office, Orange County Clerk's Office, San Bernardino County Clerk's Office, Riverside County Clerk's Office, State Clearinghouse, and sent to the mailing list. The NOC will also be distributed via an email blast, RCTC's Home Page, and the following newspapers:

- The Desert Sun
- The Press-Enterprise
- Los Angeles Times
- Excelsior (Spanish)
- El Informador del Valle (Spanish)

Copies of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR, including the NOC, will be mailed to each of the NEPA participating agencies (which also included responsible agencies as defined by CEQA). The public review period for the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR extends for 45 days from May 21, 2021 to July 6, 2021.

#### Repository Locations

Requests for hard copies of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR with technical appendices may be sent to:

Riverside County Transportation Commission

Sheldon Peterson, Rail Manager

P.O. Box 12008

Riverside, California 92502-2208

or via email to [cvrail@rctc.org](mailto:cvrail@rctc.org)

Hard copies of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Executive Summary and CD copies of the entire Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR with accompanying technical appendices will also be available for public view at the following locations (subject to library location hours and COVID-19 procedures):

<p>Los Angeles Union Station/Metro Library and Archive One Gateway Plaza 15th Floor Los Angeles, California 90012</p> <p>(Hard copy of the Draft EIS/EIR and appendices available in English and hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Fullerton Public Library 353 W Commonwealth Avenue Fullerton, California 92832</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Arlington Library 9556 Magnolia Avenue Riverside, California 92503</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>
<p>Riverside County Transportation Commission 4080 Lemon Street Riverside, California 92501</p> <p>(Hard copy of the Draft EIS/EIR and appendices available in English and hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Colton Public Library 656 N 9th Street Colton, California 92324</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Loma Linda Branch Library 25581 Barton Road Loma Linda, California 92354</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>
<p>A.K. Smiley Public Library 125 W. Vine Street Redlands, California 92373</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Beaumont Library 125 E. Eighth Street Beaumont, California 92223</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Banning Public Library 21 W. Nicolet Street Banning, California 92220</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>
<p>Palm Springs Public Library 300 S. Sunrise Way Palm Springs, California 92262</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Riverside County Indio Branch Library 200 Civic Center Mall Indio, California 92201</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>	<p>Riverside County Coachella Branch Library 1500 6th Street Coachella, California 92236</p> <p>(Hard copy of Executive Summary available in English and Spanish)</p>

In addition, the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR will be available for review on RCTC's website (<http://rctc.org/projects/coachella-valley-san-gorgonio-pass-corridor-rail-corridor-service-project/>) and FRA's website (<https://railroads.dot.gov/environment/environmental-reviews/coachella-valley-san-gorgonio-pass-corridor-investment-plan>), beginning May 21, 2021.

## 8.6.2 Providing Comments on the Tier 1/Program Draft EIS/EIR

Written comments on the content of the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR should be submitted no later than July 6, 2021. The document can be viewed at the websites noted above and <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FRA-2021-0048>. Comments can be shared directly with FRA by visiting the regulations.gov link (above) or by searching regulations.gov for Docket Number (FRA-2021-0048). All electronic comments should be submitted via regulations.gov.

Written comments should be sent via U.S. mail to:

Federal Railroad Administration  
Amanda Ciampolillo, Environmental Protection Specialist  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Comments should include “Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Program – Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR Comments” in the subject line and the name of a contact person in your organization, if applicable.

## 8.6.3 Public Information Meetings and Hearings

The purpose of the public hearings is to explain the Program and the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR evaluation. FRA, Caltrans, and RCTC have scheduled two public hearings as an important component of the NEPA and CEQA process. The virtual public hearings for the Program are scheduled as follows:

June 22, 2021, 06:00 p.m.

June 26, 2021, 09:00 a.m.

The format of the public hearing will consist of a Program overview. Following presentation of the Program, meeting attendees will be able to virtually participate and are encouraged to provide questions and comments on the Program. Comments on the Draft Tier 1/Program EIS/EIR from the public during the public hearing may be submitted virtually via court reporter. Spanish language translators will be present during the public hearings. People requesting Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations or additional translator services are encouraged to contact RCTC at (909) 627-2974 at least 72 hours in advance of the meetings.

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