



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Todd Parton, City Manager
DATE: November 2, 2021
SUBJECT: Letter of Support for the Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project

Background and Analysis:

The Riverside County County Transportation Commission (RCTC) has been coordinating with the US Federal Railroad Administration and the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) to develop a passenger rail system that would connect the desert and Inland Empire communities to Los Angeles and Orange County.

This project is known as the “Coachella Valley-San Gorgonio Pass Rail Service” and spans 144 miles. The preferred route extends from Los Angeles Union Station to Coachella and includes stops in Fullerton, Riverside, and Palm Springs. Additional stations need to be planned in Loma Linda, the Pass Area, and Mid Valley Area.



Efforts for this rail project are now in the “Program Environmental Document and Service Development Plan” phase. This is the third of five phases. Thus far feasibility studies and an analysis of alternative routes have been completed. A copy of the rail corridor planning study, the Coachella Valley Intercity Rail Corridor Planning Study – May 2013, is included as Attachment C to this memorandum.

Under the current project phase, the Tier 1/Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report was completed in May 2021 and circulated for public comment. It is expected to be approved by RCTC in early 2022. The executive summary of this report is included as Attachment D to this memorandum. This is a broad-level study that evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the various routing options. It accounts for engineering and environmental constraints as well as having provided an opportunity for public input.

On October 25, 2021, the RCTC Budget and Implementation Committee received a report on the rail corridor project. A copy of the staff report is included in Attachment E to this memorandum and includes information on the project's background, progress, and public comments submitted via the Tier 1 report process.

The next environmental assessment will be the Tier 2/Project-Level Analysis. This will include a more detailed evaluation of specific improvements, including station locations, funding, commencement of construction, and start of service. It is projected that the Tier 2 study will cost \$60,000,000.

RCTC and CalTrans are planning to jointly submit a grant application to the US Federal Railroad Administration to fund a Tier 2 study. Consequently, RCTC is requesting that cities submit letters of support for the project and the grant application. A letter template is included as Attachment B to this memorandum.

Fiscal Impact:

City staff estimates that it cost approximately \$185 to prepare this report.

Recommended Action:

City staff recommends that City Council authorize Mayor Lara to execute the letter of support for the Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project.

Attachments:

- A. Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Service Fact Sheet
- B. Letter of Support Template to the US Federal Railroad Administration
- C. Coachella Valley Intercity Rail Corridor Planning Study – May 2013
- D. Tier 1/Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental May 2021
- E. RCTC Budget and Implementation Committee Meeting Report – October 25, 2021