STAFF REPORT
2/26/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gabriel Perez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study Update and Station Evaluation Results

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council receive and file the Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study Update and provide feedback.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Coachella and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) submitted a joint application to Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Regional Early Action Planning 2.0 (REAP 2.0) program for the Rail Station Feasibility Study and Integrated Land Use and Transit Network. The project includes conducting a transit station feasibility study and visioning plan to support the proposed Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Tier II environmental work that would be undertaken by RCTC. On June 13, 2023, SCAG awarded the City of Coachella and RCTC $2,005,000 for the Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study and Integrated Land Use and Transit Network REAP Application.

Coachella rail station feasibility planning efforts commenced in September of 2024 with RCTC and the consultant team led by HDR and subconsultant partners consisting of Sargent Town planning, Inc., Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc, AMMA Transit Planning, and Michael Baker International. The scope of the study includes site selection for a passenger rail station, land use and transportation planning for the selected site, and an economic analysis.

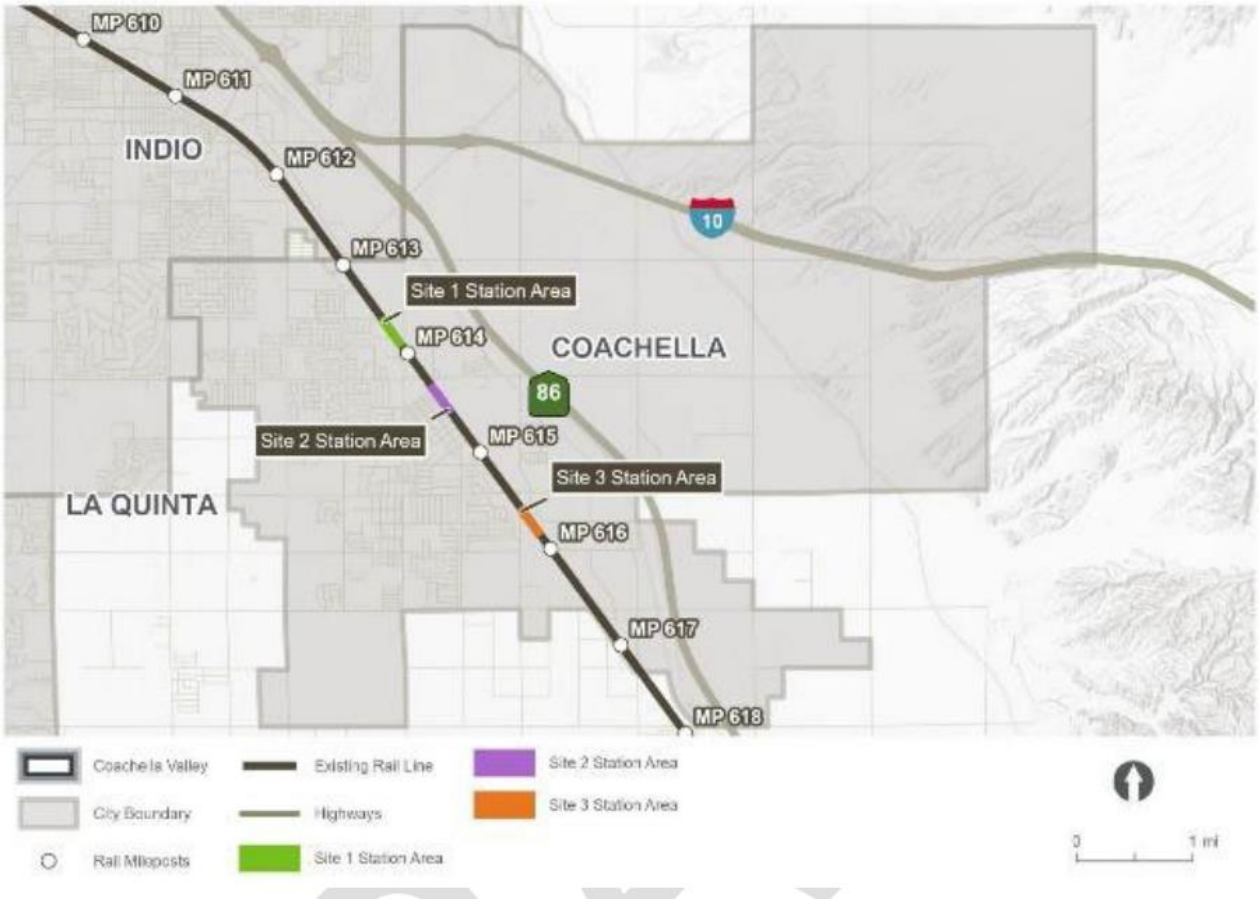
A technical advisory committee (TAC) was established of local stakeholders and meets quarterly help guide planning and community outreach for the study. The first step in the rail station study is to evaluate the viability of possible Coachella rails station sites. The update to the Planning Commission is intended to discuss the evaluation findings for identification of the preferred site The study does not guarantee the Coachella rail station location for the rail service, but will serve to inform RCTC and responsible agencies about the feasibility of the station in Coachella as environmental review and planning for the rail service continues.

DISCUSSION:

The TAC has met on two occasions since the study commencement to discuss outreach, study goals, and preliminary feedback on the sites to be evaluated. The first community workshop for the study was held on Thursday evening, November 21, 2025 at the Coachella library to obtain community feedback on three potential sites for the rail station as follows:

- **Site 1 (Gateway Center)** generally located North of the Grapefruit Boulevard/Cesar Chavez Street intersection.
- **Site 2 (Pueblo Viejo)** generally located in the Pueblo Viejo or Downtown area between Avenue 50 and Avenue 52.
- **Site 3 (Tyler Street)** generally located South of Avenue 52 near the intersection of Grapefruit Boulevard and Tyler Street.

Figure 1. Potential Station Sites



The following categories were identified as rail station evaluation criteria to assess the three rail stion sites:

- Rail engineering feasibility
- Station element feasibility

- Land Use/development compatibility
- Environmental constraints
- Accessibility/ connectivity
- Equity and environmental justice
- Ridership potential
- Costs

Conceptual drawings were developed for the site evaluation that includes a station building (minimum 500 sq. ft.), parking (22 parking spaces), bus bays (2 bay minimum), and pick-up/drop-off facilities (space of 8 vehicles) at each station site. The study also assumes access across the railroad tracks to platforms on each side of the tracks would be provided by a pedestrian bridge. The Coachella Valley Rail Service Development Plan identifies the Coachella rail station building would be a Category 3 Caretaker Station that serves between 20,000 and 100,000 annual passengers and is a station type that is not regularly staffed. A layover site is also required as Coachella would serve as the end of the line for the proposed rail service.

Site 2 in Pueblo Viejo was identified as the station site in the Site Evaluation Technical Memorandum (Attachment 1) that scored highest based on the evaluation criteria, has the least engineering constraints and presents the most benefits. Pueblo Viejo is also the location of the original Southern Pacific Railroad combination type 23, 1-story depot built in 1903 for passenger and freight services, but demolished in the 1970s. The next phase of the rail station feasibility study will include development of station area plans and preliminary station design plans.

Evaluation Results Summary

Category	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Rail engineering feasibility	◑	●	○
Station element feasibility	◑	●	●
Land use/development compatibility	◑	●	○
Environmental constraints	◑	◑	○
Accessibility/connectivity	◑	●	◑
Equity and Environmental Justice	◑	◑	◑
Ridership potential	○	●	○
Costs	◑	○	◑

Attachments:

1. Site Evaluation Technical Memorandum (Draft)
2. Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study Update slide deck