



Project Executive Summary

Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study

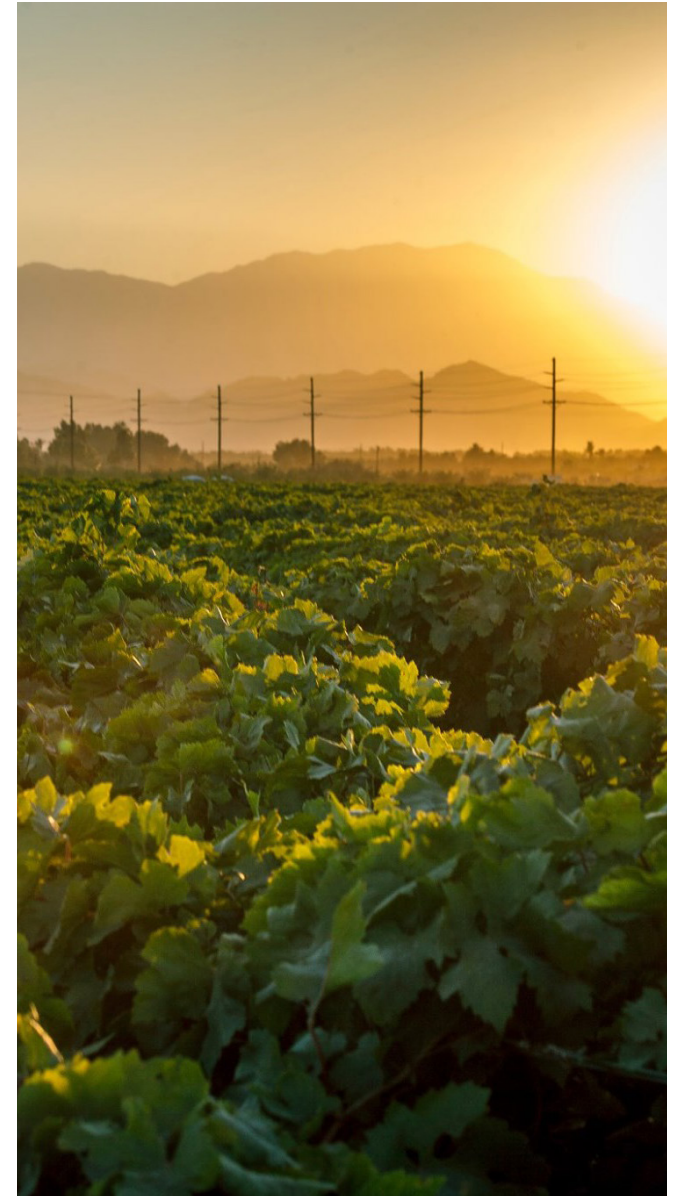
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Abbreviations and Aronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CalEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
City	City of Coachella
CV	Coachella Valley
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RCTC	Riverside County Transportation Commission
ROW	Right-of-Way
SDP	Service Development Plan
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TIMS	Transportation Injury Mapping System
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development



1. Study Purpose and Goals

Purpose

The Coachella Rail Station Feasibility Study sets a vision and creates a detailed implementation plan for a multimodal rail station in the Coachella’s historic downtown, Pueblo Viejo. The station will serve as the eastern terminus of a new passenger rail service, known as Coachella Valley Rail (CV Rail), that will introduce safe, reliable, and convenient intercity passenger rail service between the Coachella Valley and Los Angeles Union Station. This new rail service will provide travelers with a reliable and affordable alternative to driving.

The City of Coachella has been planning for a more walkable, livable community in the downtown area for several years, as reflected in the City’s Pueblo Viejo District Plan (2010), the La Plaza East Transit Oriented Development Study (2015),

and the General Plan 2035, which was adopted in 2015. The existing railroad is central to the history of the City, which was founded around a rail depot that facilitated export of agricultural goods.

This study was funded and managed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) with Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2021 grant funding from the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development, and was intended to assist in the identification of the City’s preferred station site. The final selection of the preferred alternative and final station locations will be determined in the National Environmental Policy Act/California Environmental Quality Act (NEPA/CEQA) CV Rail Tier II/Project Environmental Document, which is being led by the

Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) under the oversight of the Federal Railroad Administration and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Rail. While this feasibility study will be incorporated into the CV Rail environmental process, the study itself does not commit the City to the approval or construction of any particular station location.

The study evaluated three potential station sites and recommends the City’s preferred rail station location, including a layover facility and a mobility hub. Preliminary engineering plans, architectural drawings, and connectivity plans were developed for the preferred station site, as well as transit-oriented community plans and economic development strategies for the surrounding area.

Goals

The study envisions what a new rail station could mean for the Coachella community: an alternative to congested highways, access for non-drivers, economic development, and a rail station as a new community focal point. Project leaders, a Technical Advisory Committee, and community engagement established the following goals for what the new station should accomplish:

- Provide more multimodal transportation choices.
- Improve quality of life.
- Increase equitable accessibility.
- Reduce driving and emissions.
- Foster economic development.
- Promote sustainable design.

A Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Vision Statement was developed with stakeholder and community input that reflects the City’s intent to develop its downtown in tandem with the proposed rail station.



Vision Statement:

The City of Coachella will capitalize on the return of passenger rail service to strengthen and accelerate progress toward a vibrant, inviting, comfortable, and culturally rich downtown that supports transit-oriented housing and commercial development, provides an attractive and amenity-rich public realm, facilitates ready access to essential goods and services, and connects seamlessly to adjoining neighborhoods.

2. Existing Conditions

The study area spans approximately four and a half miles along the existing railroad parallel to Grapefruit Boulevard from the northern city limit at Avenue 48 to the southern city limit south of Avenue 54.

Rail Corridor

The railroad corridor is owned and operated by Union Pacific Railroad (UP). It is a continuous double-track railroad with one spur on its western side and a universal crossover between the two tracks between 9th Street and Bagdad Avenue. There is one at-grade crossing at Avenue 54, while all other crossings within the city are grade-separated overpasses at Dillon Road, Avenue 50, and 52nd Avenue.

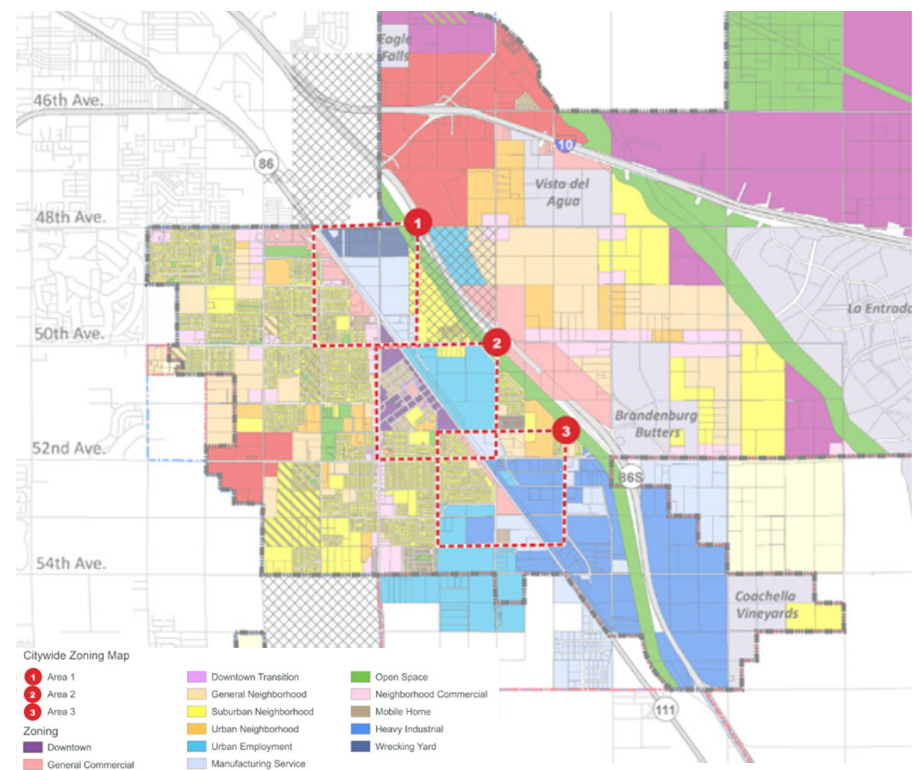
In 2018, there was an average of 42 freight trains per day in this corridor; however, this number can vary depending on changing economic conditions. Additionally, Amtrak's Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle passenger train, which runs between Los Angeles and New Orleans, operates three round trips per week through the corridor.



Land Use

The City's General Plan defines future land use patterns, which generally correlate with four 1-mile-square blocks of land on both sides of the Corridor. Land uses along the Corridor vary considerably. Agricultural land is common to the east, while the west side includes shopping centers with adjacent residential neighborhoods, the historic downtown area of Pueblo Viejo, and additional residential districts further south. North of the city boundary, the landscape transitions into a mix of city and Tribal lands.

Areas with a continuous street grid, small block structure, and higher planned development intensities, particularly near the historic downtown and the envisioned "Downtown Expansion" zone, offer greater potential for strong pedestrian connectivity. South of these districts, land uses shift to a combination of residential neighborhoods, industrial areas, and vacant parcels on both sides of the Corridor.



Circulation

Transit

SunLine Transit Agency is the main mass transit provider in the area and operates the SunBus fixed route transit service and SunDial a door-to-door paratransit service. The City of Coachella is served by three SunBus fixed routes (1EV, 6, and 8) all of which connect at the Coachella Transit Hub on the southeast corner of 4th Street and Cesar Chavez Street.

Active Transportation

The bicycle network in Coachella consists of dedicated bike lanes and shared bicycle and vehicle facilities. There is a Class I bike path along the east side of Grapefruit Boulevard, from Avenue 50 to 9th Street. There are other Class II bike lanes in the city and some streets with sharrow markings for bicyclists to share the road with vehicles. Most of the roads in the city are industrial and agricultural with limited paved shoulders for bicyclists.

The East Valley segment of CV Link, which provides a dedicated route for pedestrians, bicyclists, and low-speed electric vehicles along the Whitewater River Stormwater Channel, runs 16 miles starting at Washington Street in La Quinta and ending at Airport Blvd in Coachella.

Vehicles

State Route (SR) 86 and SR 111, both running northwest to southeast through the city, provide connectivity to neighboring cities and Interstate 10. Arterials are oriented north-south and east-west to create a grid. Unlike the rest of the city, the local street grid in Pueblo Viejo, located west of the railroad between Avenue 50 and Bagdad Avenue, is oriented such that streets are either perpendicular or parallel to the railroad, underscoring the importance of the railroad to the history of the city.

Community

Coachella's population is relatively young with about 45 percent of the population under 30 years old, more than the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario metro area and California as a whole (American Community Survey 2024). The city is overwhelmingly Hispanic or Latino (98 percent). Spanish is the dominant language, spoken by over 80 percent of residents, while fewer than 20 percent speak only English. Employment is spread across major industries, with the largest sectors being arts/entertainment/food services, education/health/social assistance, and retail. The median household income is \$52,466, and educational attainment skews toward high school completion, with relatively low rates of bachelor's and graduate degrees.



3. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community members and key stakeholders contributed significantly to the study’s process and outcomes through in-person and virtual meetings, pop-up events and online surveys.

Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was convened for this study, including representatives from the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, Coachella Valley Water District, SunLine Transit Agency, Coachella Valley Unified School District, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, community-based organizations (including Alianza, TODEC, and Inland Congregations United) and major landowners. This diverse group of stakeholders met at regular intervals at key study milestones, providing local context and guidance and helping to spread the word to their networks and constituencies. A total of five TAC meetings were held virtually during the course of the study.

Community Engagement

Coachella community members provided invaluable input in shaping the proposed rail station’s location, design, connectivity, and surrounding uses, through community workshops, online engagement, and pop-up events.



Community Workshops

Four community workshops were held at the Coachella’s downtown library between November 2024 and October 2025. Each workshop featured a series of boards and displays showcasing study information, and interactive activities designed to elicit feedback on recommendations and design strategies. Two of the workshops featured formal presentations, while the others were held in an open house format where participants could come at any time, review study information, and ask questions. Spanish translations were provided for all materials, and Spanish speakers and interpreters were on site.



Online Engagement

The City of Coachella created a dedicated website for the rail station feasibility study, which serves as a clearinghouse for project information. E-blasts and social media postings announced upcoming workshops and events. Following each community workshop, online surveys were posted to the project website and promoted via email and social media, soliciting input via the same types of questions and interactive activities available at the in-person workshops. These surveys helped bring the workshop content to a wider audience.



Pop-Up Events

Study team members attended nine community events during the study process, setting up kiosks at local festivals such as Coachella’s Independence Day event, Los Muertos Block Party, and Fiestas Azules. Team members showcased study information, distributed flyers, and talked with participants about their wishes and needs for a future rail station. These events helped bring the study closer to community members who would not otherwise attend dedicated public meetings.



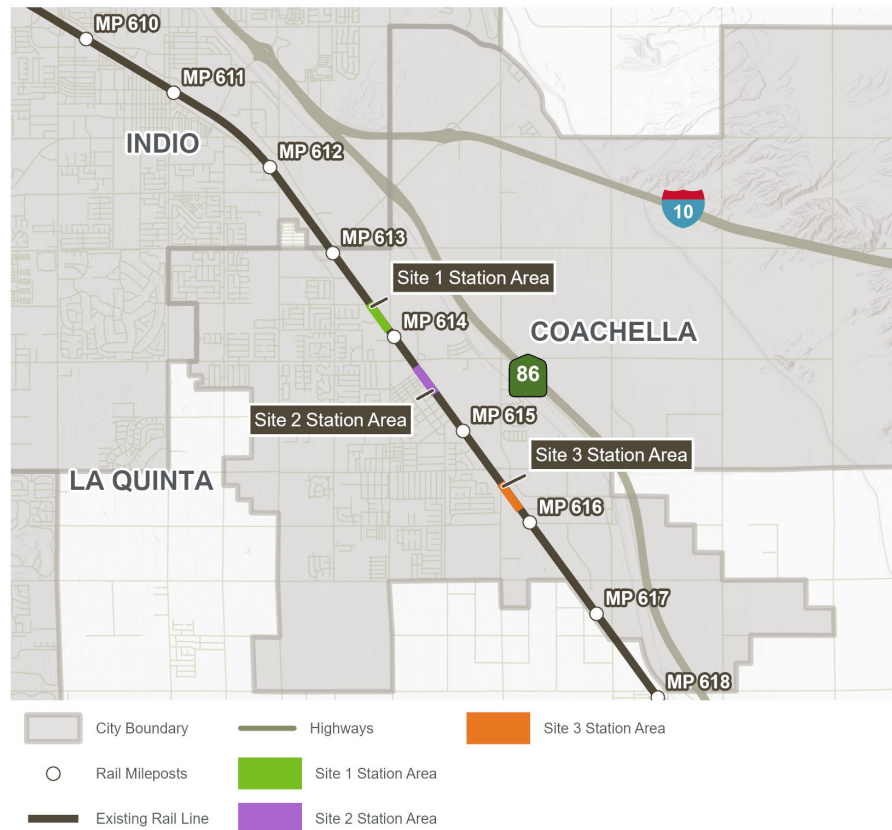
4. Site Evaluation

Site Identification

An initial review of the project corridor identified three potential station sites:

- Site 1: Gateway Center
- Site 2: Pueblo Viejo
- Site 3: Tyler Street

Additional site options north of Gateway Center and near Bagdad Avenue south of Pueblo Viejo were evaluated but geometric constraints were too limiting, so those sites were not carried forward.



The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provided input on what the rail station role should be, potential goals of the station and its effects on the surrounding area, and their preliminary thoughts on the three proposed sites. The TAC generally agreed that:

- The station should serve as town center, promoting economic development and city pride.
- The station should increase accessibility for low-income communities.
- The station should promote better environmental health for the community.
- The station should promote more regional connectivity to other CV communities.

Operational Requirements

The site chosen must be able to fit certain operational requirements set forth by the CV Rail project, which include requirements around platforms, station access, and other space needs. Each site considered was confirmed to be able to accommodate the following minimum required elements:

- Platform length of 700 feet.
- Platform widths of 20 feet for side platforms and 30 feet for center platforms.
- Platform edges available for each main track.
- Parking for 32 vehicles.
- Bus bays for two buses.
- Self-service ticketing area.
- Pedestrian bridge to provide grade-separated passenger access to each platform.



Site Scoring

For each site, conceptual station footprints and track alignments were developed based on applicable design criteria and the site constraints, and high-level station access plans were developed. These formed the basis for evaluating and comparing the costs and benefits of the alternative sites. Evaluation criteria were identified in coordination with the City, RCTC, and the TAC, and each site was scored against each criterion.

The criteria included project-specific requirements for rail and station operations, environmental constraints, local area and community impacts, and costs. Within each criteria category there were specific criteria factors that were measured and assigned a score. Each category was thoroughly assessed based on existing conditions in the surrounding areas, initial test-fit designs for each station site, and ridership and cost estimates. The results of the evaluation are shown in the table below.

Preferred Site

Site 2 in Pueblo Viejo received the best overall score. While a rail station would benefit the community at any location, Site 2 stood out. Site 2 would support the City's existing downtown area in Pueblo Viejo while also facilitating economic development on the east side of the railroad. Existing uses and future development provide a market to attract ridership. This site presents fewest engineering constraints the most potential benefits including good accessibility and supportive land uses, making it the most viable option for economic growth.

Summary Scoring Matrix

CATEGORY	SITE 1 RATING	SITE 2 RATING	SITE 3 RATING
Rail Engineering Feasibility			
Station Element Feasibility			
Land Use/Development Compatibility			
Environmental Constraints			
Accessibility/Connectivity			
Equity and Environmental Justice			
Ridership Potential			
Costs			
Overall			

Better
 Slightly Better
 Neutral
 Slightly worse
 Worse

5. Station Area Plan

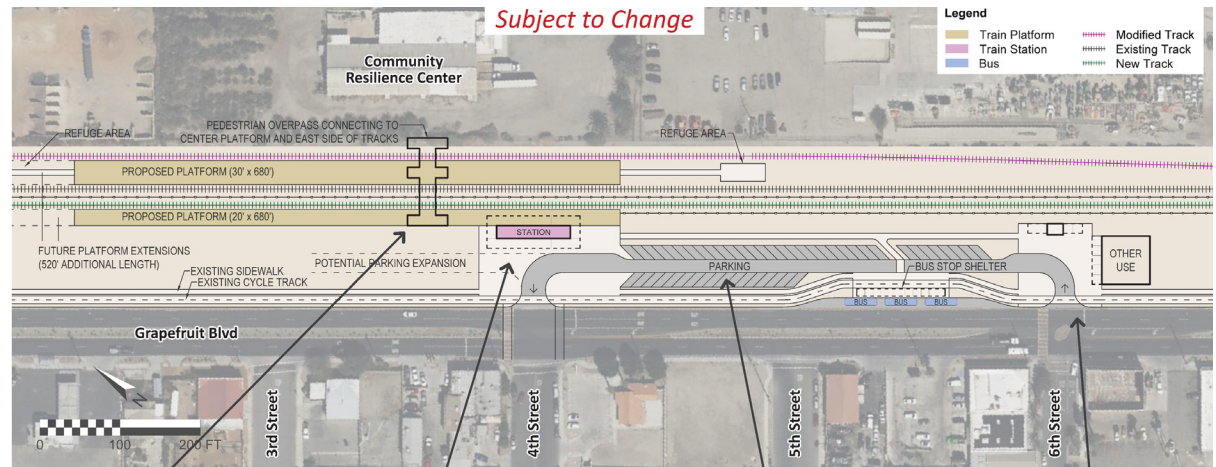
The Station Area Plan outlines a long-range strategy to revitalize and expand the City of Coachella’s historic downtown, Pueblo Viejo, and to guide the transformation of adjacent areas like the Downtown expansion area east of the railroad into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use environment. While future passenger rail service is an important catalyst, the plan recognizes that community development and downtown revitalization can progress independently of the rail service timeline.



Station Area Components

The station is envisioned as a multimodal, shaded, pedestrian-oriented gateway that strengthens east-west connections across the railroad. The station area includes platforms, shaded pedestrian and bicycle paths, a landscaped parking grove, bus bays, microtransit pick-up zones, and an ADA-compliant pedestrian/bicycle bridge spanning the tracks. The design emphasizes shade, visibility, safety, and integration with surrounding businesses and public spaces. Streets such as 4th and 6th will function as primary gateways, with widened sidewalks, protected bike lanes, wayfinding, and active ground-floor uses supporting foot traffic and public life.

Pueblo Viejo builds on its historic structure of compact blocks, civic institutions, public art, and existing streetscape improvements to support infill, adaptive reuse, mixed-use buildings, and public realm enhancements that create an “outdoor room” environment. The Downtown expansion area, currently agricultural and industrial, is planned as a complete mixed-use neighborhood with walkable blocks, a hierarchy street types, parks and plazas, urban employment uses, multifamily housing, and strong pedestrian access to the future station and CV Link.



Bridge over Tracks

Station Terminates 4th St

Parking Grove

Terminating 6th St



Mobility Network

The station is envisioned to fully integrate a multimodal system, strengthening connections across the planning area and supporting future TOD. The station design includes multimodal mobility connections to existing and future mobility networks in the area. Other components include:

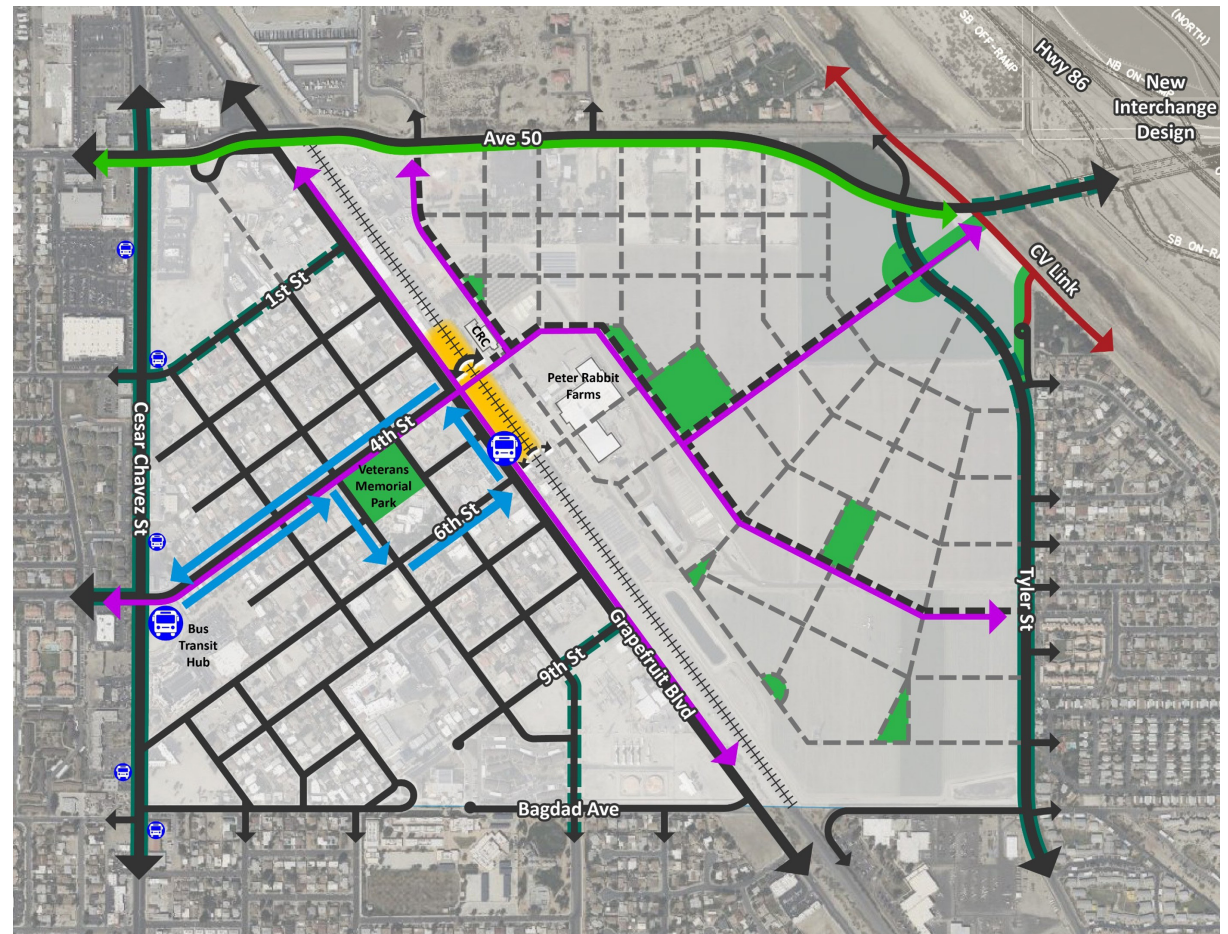
Complete Streets: Key streets such as 4th Street and 6th Street will feature wide sidewalks, bulb-outs, shade structures, protected bike lanes, and angled parking to improve safety and pedestrian activity.

Transit Connectivity: The existing Coachella Transit Hub at 4th & Cesar Chavez can provide additional bus service linking the rail station, surrounding neighborhoods, and nearby cities in coordination with SunLine Transit Agency. None of the current routes reach the station today, but it is anticipated that one or more routes will be extended to serve the station in future.

Active Transportation: Integration with CV Link, the regional 40-mile multimodal pathway, positions the area for walking, cycling, and low-speed electric mobility. Access to CV Link from Downtown will expand recreational and mobility options.

Parking Strategy: Angled and “bulb-in” parking throughout Pueblo Viejo expands supply while supporting redevelopment and business activity. A parking grove provides shaded, heat-resilient vehicle storage near the station.

The combined network supports a walk-first, transit-supported environment that reduces car dependence.



Current Plans

The Vision Plan builds on extensive policy groundwork already in place:

Pueblo Viejo Revitalization Plan (2010)

Promotes mixed-use TOD, public realm enhancements, pedestrian amenities, historic character, and streetscape improvements—many elements directly echoed in the Station Area Plan.



General Plan (2014)

The General plan designates Pueblo Viejo as the Downtown Center, allowing dense mixed-use development, while the area east of Downtown East designated Urban Employment, supporting light industrial, office, and mixed-use residential development. The Station Area Plan is meant to spur and guide the preparation of new and updated development and design standards for both public realm improvements (streets, trails, parks, and other shared open spaces) and private development in line with existing General Plan designations.

Zoning Ordinance

Implements Downtown, Downtown Transition, and Urban Neighborhood zones encouraging pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, active frontages, and high-quality architectural design.

Opportunities and Challenges

Future rail service can elevate Coachella’s regional visibility and help anchor downtown reinvestment, and Pueblo Viejo is full of opportunities. The station site’s central location within the city places public amenities and services close to all residents. The current number of vacant/underutilized parcels will enable infill housing and affordable redevelopment. Pueblo Viejo’s existing wide streets can accommodate future complete streets with wider sidewalks, shade, and biking, which all contribute to a more connected and walkable transit-oriented development scheme.

There are some challenges to face, including uncertain market demand for office and light industrial uses. However, the community has identified a desire for more public-facing uses such as coffee shops, restaurants, retail, and cultural programming in public spaces.

TOD Vision

The TOD Vision outlines a cohesive, long-range strategy to transform the area into a vibrant, inclusive, walkable, and transit-supportive district. The Vision is to create a safe, shaded, pedestrian-first environment that can connect Pueblo Viejo with the station and the future development of Downtown East, ultimately forming a seamless, mixed-use district with a unified block structure that mirrors Coachella’s historic 19th-century layout. To achieve this vision, the Station Area Plan includes a toolkit for refining land use, public realm, site plan design, and building design within the Station Area.

Leveraging civic and cultural assets will help strengthen community identity, and the station’s design can complement this by reinforcing Coachella’s brand and enhancing visibility for the city. Success does not depend on rail service alone. With its strong cultural identity, central location, and redevelopment potential, the area can evolve into a cohesive TOD environment through coordinated public and private investment.

6. Station Design

Station Site Design Assumptions and Principles

The conceptual station design developed for this study is based on several design criteria derived from the CV Rail Service Development Plan, previous input from UP, and input from RCTC. Station design principles were developed with input from community engagement events, the TAC, and City staff. The key design principles included:

- **Safety:** Visibility, lighting.
- **Sustainability/Climate Adaptation:** Solar panels, shade trees and structures.
- **Accessibility:** Connecting across the tracks, using ramps and elevators for universal access.
- **Unique, Iconic Look:** Circular ramps, colorful tiles and decorative fencing.

Two additional considerations for the conceptual design of the station are related to construction costs (including both ramps and elevators would raise costs) and ongoing maintenance costs of the elevators, required bathrooms, and required ticket vending machines.

Concept Design

The final concept design of the station took inspiration from the rich culture of Coachella. The design incorporated the principles and considerations above and was an iterative process with input from the community, the TAC, and City staff.

Optimizing the design of Pueblo Viejo station location as it relates to the current urban fabric required making trade offs between rail infrastructure and community connectivity. Aligning the platform and pedestrian crossing with downtown Coachella's main commercial corridor, 6th St, was the first choice from a mobility

perspective; however, it would have required costly rail crossover relocations. By shifting the crossing slightly to the north, these conflicts were avoided while still including 6th Street as the southern gateway to the station area.

This location also optimized the dual purpose of the pedestrian bridge as a connection to the Community Resilience Center. In downtown Coachella, the train tracks act as a barrier within the city. A pedestrian crossing over the tracks could serve as more than just a way to access the rail platforms — it could connect the two sides. The overcrossing is intended to operate as a 24/7 pathway to provide connectivity even when trains are not operating, with the option to close off gateways to the platforms themselves during the night for security purposes.



7. Economic Development

Market Area Analysis

Population growth in the City of Coachella has outpaced that of the surrounding Coachella Valley and Riverside County over the last four decades, increasing over 350% between 1980 and 2020. This expansion, along with an average household size of over 3 people, indicates substantial latent demand for additional housing.

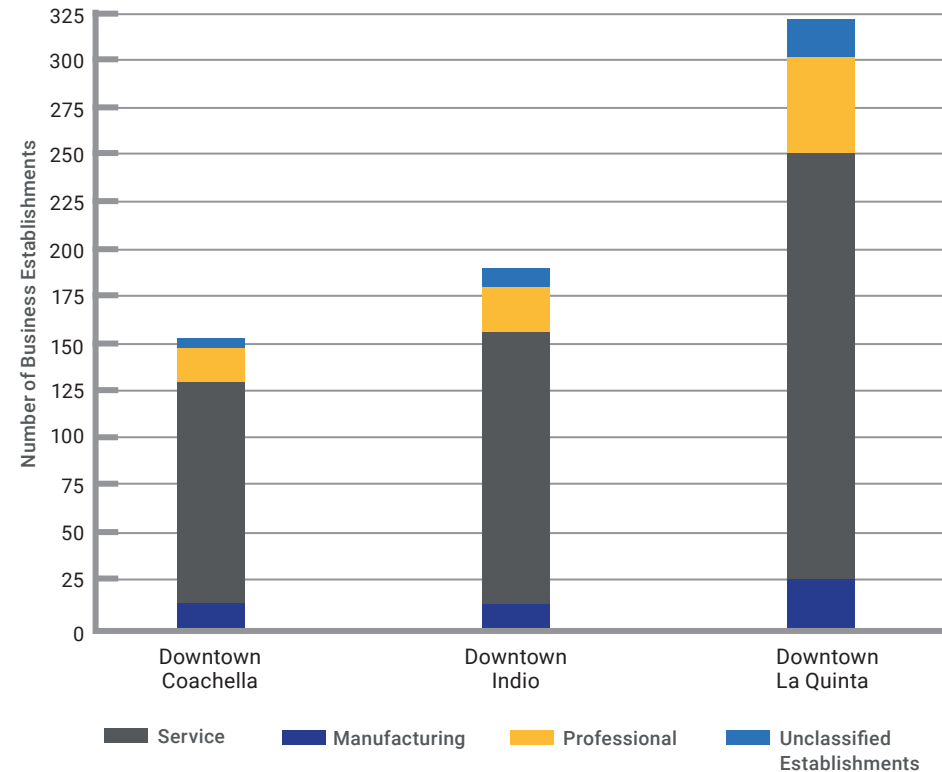
Employment trends also reinforce future demand for mixed-use development. While agriculture remains a major employer in Coachella, long-term projections show growth shifting toward industrial, office, and hospitality sectors. These patterns create notable demand for new commercial real estate, with retail and office growth more modest but still supportive of small-scale additions. The market area’s overall trajectory reflects gradual diversification from agriculture toward a mix of industrial, service, and hospitality employment.

Comparable and Competitive Environment

The comparative real estate analysis shows that Coachella remains one of the most affordable housing markets in the region, with significantly lower home prices and rents than the broader Coachella Valley and Riverside County. Commercial markets present a more challenging picture. Retail, office, and industrial submarkets across the Coachella Valley are experiencing rising vacancies and slowing rent growth, reflecting post-pandemic adjustments and broader economic cooling.

When comparing Coachella to other downtown areas like Indio and La Quinta, all three are service sector focused. Downtown Coachella has a higher share of agriculture- and extraction-related businesses. Business density and diversity matter, with a strong mix of retail, service, and office uses providing the best mix for development.

Downtown development priorities should focus on façade improvement grants and a downtown business incentive program. Placemaking and events programming can activate downtown spaces and attract more visitors, supporting local businesses.



Economic Development Strategy Goals and Priorities

The economic development priorities emphasize both near-term and long-term strategies to align market realities with Coachella’s transit-oriented vision. In the near term, the focus is on leveraging Coachella’s affordability, strengthening downtown’s role as the city’s civic heart, and improving conditions for infill development. This includes reducing regulatory barriers around parking minimums near major transit stations, supporting small-scale residential projects, and encouraging activation of Downtown through retail, service, and cultural amenities. Improving the feasibility of mixed-use development will also require targeted public investment, such as infrastructure upgrades, grants, incentives, or partnerships that can help close existing financial gaps.

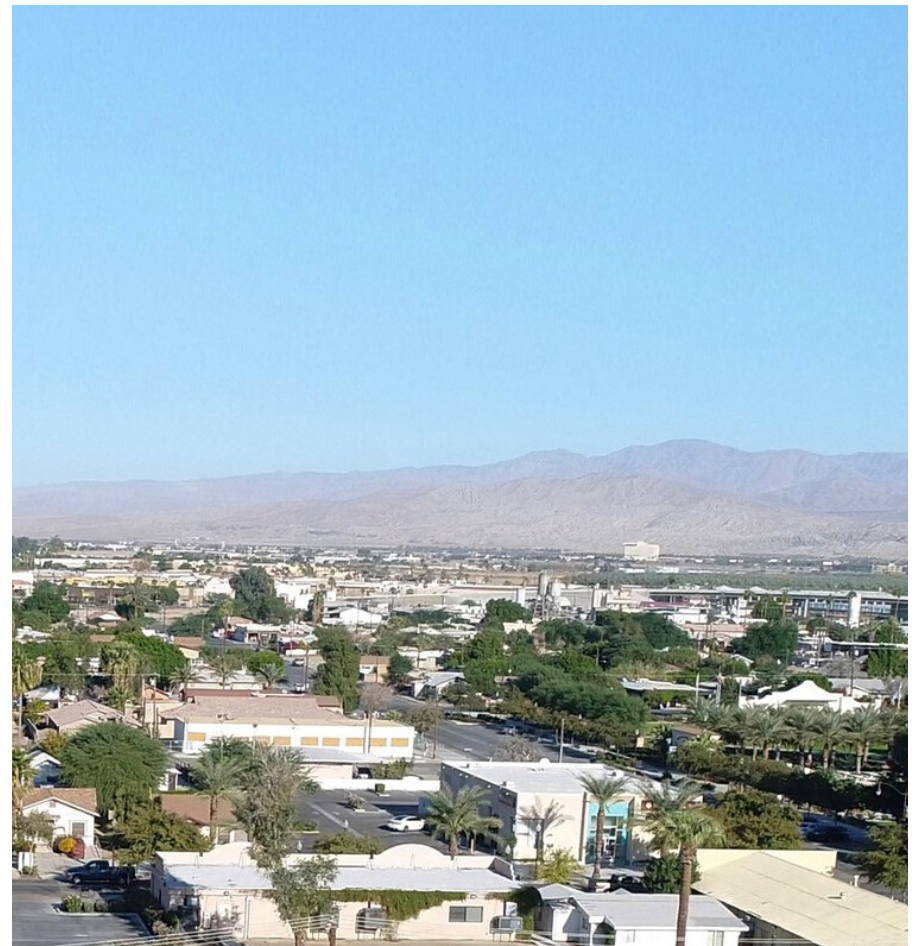
Long-term priorities center on preparing the city to capture growth associated with the future rail station. The strategic goal is to position Downtown as a mixed-income, mixed-use, walkable district that can absorb more housing and a meaningful share of commercial demand over the next two decades. Additional priorities include capitalizing on industrial and hospitality growth, supporting new business formation, expanding employment opportunities, and using transit access to enhance regional connectivity. This incremental, market-guided strategy seeks to ensure that TOD implementation aligns with actual economic conditions while still advancing Coachella’s long-term vision for a vibrant, transit-supported downtown.



8. Maintenance Facility

The CV Rail service requires an overnight layover facility for train storage at the east end of the corridor. A preferred site location was identified east of the railroad and south of Avenue 52 and Industrial Way. This site will be further reviewed and analyzed within the CV Rail Tier II/Project Environmental Document.

The conceptual layover facility design developed for this study is based on several design criteria derived from the previous Service Development Plan, previous input from UP, and input from RCTC. This facility would provide tracks on which to store trains and to provide cleaning, servicing, repair, and light maintenance. The facility is also anticipated to accommodate train crews going on and off duty.



9. Implementation and Next Steps

The next step in progressing the station project is for RCTC to complete its corridor-wide station location study to confirm site selection and then environmentally clear the proposed site. Once the station site is confirmed, the City can proceed with final design, funding and then constructing the station with coordination and oversight from RCTC. While full construction of the station must be coordinated with other corridor improvements for the broader CV Rail Program, constructing select elements, such as the pedestrian bridge or additional parking for Pueblo Viejo, may provide immediate benefits even before passenger rail service.

The City can begin implementing the recommendations of the Station Area Plan for land use policy and public realm improvements in advance of station construction. Policy changes take years to manifest in the built environment, and the recommendations can make the station area a more walkable, transit-oriented, and economically vibrant place even before the station is constructed. The City can adopt the Station Area Plan as part of the General Plan to provide concrete policy guidance for future development. This would require a general plan consistency analysis, environmental review in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, and a zoning ordinance text amendment. In addition to making land use policy changes, the City could also pursue a "Prohousing Designation" from the California Department of Housing and Community Development to get credit for its efforts and increase the funding competitiveness of the station and other projects for a variety of state programs.



