



U.S. Department
of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Date: October 22, 2021

Victoria Rutson
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423
Vicki.Rutson@stb.gov

**Re: Brightline West Cajon Pass High-Speed Rail Project
San Bernardino County, California
Invitation to Participate in the Environmental Review Process**

Dear Victoria Rutson:

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Brightline West Cajon Pass High-Speed Rail Project (Cajon Pass Project). DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC (dba "Brightline West") proposes to construct and operate a 49-mile high-speed train system between Victor Valley, California and Rancho Cucamonga, California. The Project would be constructed primarily within the I-15 highway right-of-way (ROW).

FRA is preparing the EA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et. seq.*) (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), FRA's Environmental Procedures (23 CFR Part 771), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 USC 306108), Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. 303 and 23 U.S.C. 138), and related environmental laws. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in the environmental review process as a Cooperating Agency.

Project Description

The Cajon Pass Project consists of a grade separated high-speed passenger train that would operate service between Victor Valley and Rancho Cucamonga, California. The Project includes a 49-mile rail alignment that will be constructed primarily within the I-15 ROW with sections running in the median or adjacent to the highway and on an existing transportation corridor for the last mile. The Project includes three stations in: Victor Valley; Hesperia; and Rancho Cucamonga.¹ The draft Project Description and Purpose and Need Statement appended to this letter provides additional details regarding Project elements. (Attachment A).

¹ The Victor Valley station was previously evaluated in the 2011 *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the DesertXpress High-Speed Passenger Train Project*, and the subsequent Reevaluation of the 2011 FEIS and ROD, completed in September 2020. The Rancho Cucamonga station would be collocated with the existing Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink Station.

Agency Involvement

FRA is the lead Federal agency for the Cajon Pass Project. Consistent with FRA's Environmental Procedures, the agency is identifying potential cooperating and participating Federal and non-Federal agencies that may have an interest in the Cajon Pass Project and inviting those agencies to participate in the environmental review process. A Cooperating Agency is generally any Federal agency, other than a lead agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A Participating Agency generally includes any Federal or non-Federal agency that may have an interest in the Project. This designation does not imply that an agency either supports the Project or has any jurisdiction over or any special expertise with respect to evaluation of the project.

Your agency has been identified as potentially having an interest in the Project due to the proposed introduction of approximately 49 miles of new high-speed rail infrastructure and STB's previous involvement with the Apple Valley, CA to Las Vegas, NV XpressWest High-Speed Train Project. This letter invites your agency to participate in the environmental review process as a Cooperating Agency. FRA suggests that your agency's role as a participating agency could include the following:

- Providing comments, responses, studies, or methodologies on those areas within your jurisdiction
- Addressing environmental issues of concern to your agency
- Identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the Proposed Action's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts
- Participating in coordination meetings, study team meetings, and joint field reviews as appropriate and to the extent agency resources allow
- Reviewing and commenting on environmental documentation

FRA requests that you respond to this invitation in writing to either accept or decline your agency's participation by November 22, 2021. If your agency accepts this invitation, please also confirm in writing your intention to designate FRA as the lead Federal agency, and identify the appropriate agency point of contact to receive project-related communications. FRA intends to schedule a kick-off interagency meeting on following receipt of this invitation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We look forward to receiving your response and working cooperatively with you to advance the Cajon Pass Project. If you are not the point of contact for your agency, please provide FRA with the appropriate contact.

Additional information will be forthcoming. If you have questions regarding this invitation, please contact Matthew Mielke, Environmental Protection Specialist via email at Matthew.Mielke@dot.gov or via phone at (202) 536-8157.

Sincerely,

AMANDA
ELIZABETH
CIAMPOLILLO

Digitally signed by
AMANDA ELIZABETH
CIAMPOLILLO
Date: 2021.10.22
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Amanda E. Ciampolillo
Acting Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration

cc: Matthew Mielke, FRA
Deborah Suciu-Smith, FRA

Attachments:

A: Project Description
B: Project Overview Mapping