NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT/FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Stockton Diamond Grade Separation Project

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC), in coordination with the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), announces the availability of the Final Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Stockton Diamond Grade Separation Project (Project). The Final EA/FONSI has been prepared and is being made available on the Project website (stocktondiamond.com) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Printed and/or electronic copies of the Final EA/FONSI will be available at CHSRA's Headquarters at 770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1, Sacramento, CA 95814, and SJRRC's office at 949 E. Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being or have been carried out by the State of California pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated July 23, 2019, and executed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the State of California. Under that MOU, the Authority is the project's lead agency under NEPA. Prior to the MOU, the FRA was the federal lead agency. SJRRC, the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) commuter rail service owner-operator, is the project sponsor and joint lead agency under NEPA.

A. Project Description and Location

The Stockton Diamond Grade Separation Project (Project) is a critical passenger and freight mobility project that would construct a grade separation of the Burlington North Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway (BNSF) and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) rail lines at the Stockton Diamond rail intersection located just south of Downtown Stockton near South Aurora Street and East Scotts Avenue in the City of Stockton in San Joaquin County, California. The area of impacts studied in the EA is bounded by Robert J. Cabral Station to the north; the UP Stockton Yard to the south, located approximately at East Fourth Street; South Pilgrim Street to the east; and South Grant Street to the west.

The Project would construct a grade separation of the BNSF and UP rail lines to reduce rail congestion and allow passenger and freight rail traffic to flow uninterrupted through the crossing. Currently, the BNSF Stockton Subdivision and the UP Fresno Subdivision consist of two main tracks each, and they intersect each other at a level, at-grade crossing known as the Stockton Diamond. This rail intersection is the busiest at-grade railway junction in California. The at-grade crossing experiences substantial congestion and delays service for people and freight throughout the Central Valley—and for freight on the broader national network. The current, at-grade configuration of the tracks results in critical delays to passenger and freight trains in the area, including those serving the Port of Stockton. Train congestion also causes vehicle delays at

roadway-rail crossings and creates potential motor vehicle, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian conflicts.

The current ACE and Amtrak San Joaquins intercity passenger rail services are constrained by the Stockton Diamond Interlock at-grade crossing, which can reduce reliability and on-time performance for both passenger and freight rail service. The grade separation would help improve the operational performance for SJRRC and the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (the agency responsible for managing the Amtrak San Joaquins intercity passenger rail service), as they provide service between the Central Valley, Sacramento, and San Francisco Bay Area. Transit in San Joaquin County is also important to the region and includes a system of bus rapid transit, intercity and interregional bus transit services, ACE commuter rail service, and San Joaquins intercity rail service.

The reduction in rail congestion, with the implementation of this Project, would reduce delays for passenger and freight rail providers, improve freight mobility and reduce travel times for motor vehicle, bicyclist, and pedestrian traffic. It also would reduce locomotive and automobile idling and air emissions.

The Project's public benefits would extend to motorists, pedestrians, rail passengers, freight shippers, and residents throughout the region. Additional benefits would include reduced fuel consumption, lower freight rail transportation costs, and improved travel times and reliability.

B. Environmental Consequences

The Final EA provides an assessment of whether the Project would have: (1) no effect, (2) no adverse effect, (3) an adverse effect, or (4) a beneficial effect on environmental resources. Further description of each type of effect used in the NEPA analysis is provided below:

- **No Effect:** The alternative would not alter the environmental status quo.
- **No Adverse Effect:** The alternative would result in an effect to the environmental resource; however, the effect would not be adverse, and no mitigation is proposed.
- **Adverse Effect:** The alternative would negatively affect the environmental resource value or quality as it currently exists prior to the Project. Adverse effects are qualified as negligible, moderate, or substantial.
- **Beneficial Effect:** The alternative would improve the resource area or quality as it exists prior to implementation.

As described and explained in the Final EA, the Project would result in an overall beneficial effect on long-term air quality, traffic and transportation, and visual quality and aesthetics in the Project Study Area.

The Project would not result in adverse effects on any resource evaluated in the Final EA, after incorporation of Best Management Practices (BMP) and application of Mitigation Measures (MM.)

The Project would not result in adverse effects with mitigation on the following resources evaluated in the Final EA: Land Use and Planning, Relocations and Real Property Acquisitions, Noise and Ground-borne Vibration, and Biological Resources.

Of the 15 resource categories analyzed in the Final EA, four would not result in adverse effects

with MM applied: Land Use and Planning, Relocations and Real Property Acquisitions, Noise and Ground-borne Vibration, and Biological Resources. For the remaining 11 resource categories, none would have an adverse effect with incorporation of BMP.

C. Public Review Period

The Draft EA and an NOA were distributed to local agencies, regional agencies, and utility providers affected by the Project on March 28, 2022. The NOA for the Draft EA was also posted with the San Joaquin County Clerk on March 28, 2022. Bilingual newspaper advertisements announcing the availability of the Draft EA for public review were published in the Stockton Record, published on March 28, 2022, and in the Latino Times April 2022 edition along with the Notice of Availability (NOA). SJRRC posted the EA to a Project website at the start of the 30-day public and agency review, which extended through April 27, 2022. In addition to posting the electronic version of the Draft EA on the SJRRC website, printed copies of the Draft EA and electronic copies of the associated technical reports included in the appendices were available for review at the following locations during hours the facilities are open (open days/hours may be reduced for compliance with coronavirus public health and safety directives):

- 345 N. El Dorado Street, Stockton, CA 95202 (City of Stockton Community Development Office)
- 555 E Weber Avenue, Stockton, CA 95202-2804 (San Joaquin Council of Governments)
- 605 N. El Dorado Street, Stockton, CA 95202-1907 (Cesar Chavez Central Library)
- 502 W. Benjamin Holt Drive, Stockton, CA 95207 (Margaret K. Troke Branch Library)
- 2324 Pock Lane, Stockton, CA 95205-7821 (Maya Angelou Branch Library)
- 1760 E Sonora Street, Stockton, CA 95205 (Stribley Micro Library)
- 2370 E Main Street, Stockton, CA 95205 (Fair Oaks Branch Library)
- 1453 W. French Camp Road, Stockton, CA 95206 (Weston Ranch Branch Library)
- 5758 Lorraine Avenue, Stockton, CA 95210 (Arnold Rue Micro Library)
- 734 Houston Avenue, Stockton, CA 95206 (Van Buskirk Micro Library)

Printed copies of the Draft EA and electronic copies of the associated appendices were also available for review during business hours at CHSRA's Headquarters at 770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1, Sacramento, CA 95814, and SJRRC's office at 949 E. Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202. The public was also able to request a copy of the Draft EA and associated appendices by calling (209) 235-0133 or emailing info@StocktonDiamond.com.

Comments on the Draft EA were solicited from the public and stakeholders during the 30-day public review period for the Draft EA, which occurred from March 28 to April 27, 2022. Comments received during the 30-day public comment period on the Draft EA contained the following general comment themes:

- Support of, and interest in, the Project;
- Project effects to the community related to aesthetics, parcel acquisitions, remnant parcels, and relocations of businesses;

- Concerns regarding the temporary and permanent relocation of transient populations that currently exist near the Mormon Slough;
- Requests for specific community and/or stakeholder outreach, with special consideration for environmental justice populations;
- Questions regarding the process for incorporating the proposed interior noise and vibration abatement at the 12 residential properties which will experience severe noise impacts as a result of the Project; and
- Project effects to existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities related to temporary and permanent road closures.

All comments received on the Draft EA during the 30-day public review period and/or at the open house have been documented, and formal responses to these comments have been provided in the Final EA. No comments resulted in revisions to the EA or Selected Alternative.

D. Selected Alternative

The Selected Alternative for the Project is Alternative 2. Alternative 2 best meets the purpose and need of the Project. The Selected Alternative reduces freight congestion, while minimizing impacts to the environment and surrounding community. Therefore, CHSRA, as lead agency under NEPA, with the Project sponsor, SJRRC, have identified Alternative 2 as the Selected Alternative.