



# STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## OVERVIEW

### WHAT IS THE STOCKTON DIAMOND PROJECT?

Two Class I railroads currently intersect at-grade within the City of Stockton at what is called the Stockton Diamond. This rail intersection is the busiest, most congested at-grade rail crossing in California. The proposed project will grade separate the railway tracks of the BNSF Railway (BNSF) Stockton Subdivision and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) Fresno Subdivision to create uninterrupted flow of rail traffic at the Diamond.

### WHERE IS THE STOCKTON DIAMOND LOCATED?

The Stockton Diamond rail intersection is located just south of Downtown Stockton near Aurora Street South and East Scotts Avenue, or about four blocks south of State Highway 4 (Crosstown Freeway) in San Joaquin County, California.

### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STOCKTON DIAMOND PROJECT?

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) is the lead agency for the proposed project and the managing agency for the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA). SJRRRC owns and operates the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE®) commuter rail service between San Jose and Stockton. SJJPA is responsible for managing the San Joaquins intercity passenger rail service (also known as “Amtrak® San Joaquins”) between the Bay Area/Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield. Both passenger rail services operate on UP’s tracks through the Stockton Diamond and the San Joaquins utilizes BNSF’s tracks through the Stockton Diamond



### WHO IS SJRRRC COORDINATING WITH ON THE STOCKTON DIAMOND PROJECT?

SJRRRC is coordinating with BNSF and UP as the owners and operators of the rail corridors to identify feasible project concepts. SJRRRC is also collaborating with a larger partner agency group to share information and drive decisions to move the proposed project forward. These agencies include the City of Stockton, County of San Joaquin, San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

## PURPOSE/NEED

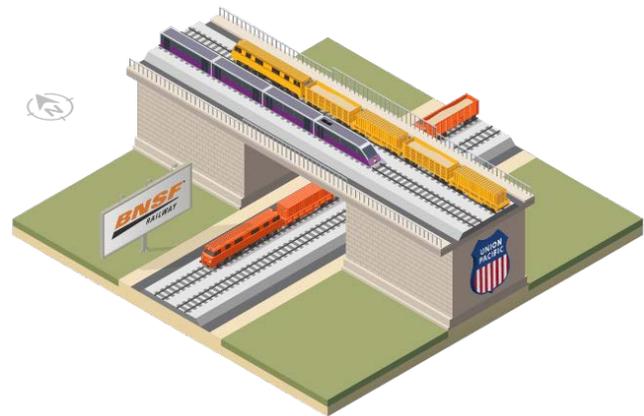
### WHY IS THE STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT NEEDED?

The at-grade rail crossing causes operational inefficiencies as both freight and passenger trains often must slow or wait for the crossing to be clear before moving through. This rail congestion impacts frequency, reliability and the movement of goods and people throughout the Central Valley and across the national freight network. It also causes local travel delays and back-ups as motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians must wait for the trains to clear at several rail crossings within the project area before safely crossing the tracks. Currently, the passenger services that travel through the Stockton Diamond (ACE and San Joaquins), have limited service and existing congestion at the Stockton Diamond severely impacts their potential for future expansion.



### WHAT RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES ARE INCLUDED WITH THE STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT?

**Flyover Alignment & Rail Connections:** The proposed project will grade separate the BNSF Stockton Subdivision (BNSF owned tracks) and UP Fresno Subdivision (UP owned tracks) by elevating UP's tracks on a flyover structure 30 feet above the BNSF tracks. To minimize impacts to rail operations within the Stockton Diamond area, the flyover is proposed to shift slightly east of where the current rail intersection is located today. Visit the website to see more detail about the proposed track alignment, their location within the rail yard, their relation to surrounding streets (over and underpasses) and direct link to the Port of Stockton.



**Local Road Crossings:** The revised alignment, modified rail connections, and construction of the flyover will impact several existing at-grade track crossings of east-west streets in the City of Stockton, including:

- Main Street
- Market Street
- Lafayette Street
- Church Street
- Hazelton Avenue
- East Scotts Avenue
- Charter Way

In conjunction with the City of Stockton, SJRRC and the railroads are evaluating the need for potential closures and grade separations at select crossings. Final determination of any road closures and improvements needed will occur through a combination of technical/environmental analysis, engineering feasibility, stakeholder and public input. Visit the project website to learn more about potential local road impacts.

### I LIVE NEAR THE STOCKTON DIAMOND, HOW WILL THIS PROJECT IMPACT MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

The project will impact multiple east-west local track crossings as a result of the proposed track alignment shift and rail operational improvements. SJRRC, the City of Stockton, and the railroads are currently coordinating on proposed modifications at each crossing that would enhance safety and mobility and may also include crossing closures at key locations. Should road closures occur, motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians affected by potential road modifications will be diverted to adjacent crossings. Elevating the railroad tracks will change visual and noise conditions in and near the existing railroad corridors. The project team will evaluate potential noise and visual impacts and other potential environmental impacts and identify potential mitigation measures to minimize impacts as part of the environmental analysis. The Stockton Diamond Grade Separation Project will improve the air quality of the neighborhood by reducing pollutants caused by train and automobile idling.

## BENEFITS

### WHAT BENEFITS WILL THE GRADE SEPARATION PROVIDE?

By reducing train conflicts at the crossing and resulting congestion, rail service reliability and operational efficiency will improve. The proposed project will also enhance safety and improve access and mobility across the tracks for City of Stockton residents, businesses and visitors.

The grade separation will improve efficiency, reduce delays and emissions caused by automobile traffic congestion, and freight and passenger train idling at several track crossings near the Stockton Diamond. This will result in improved air quality, decreased fuel consumption, increased goods movement throughput and train velocity, creating cost savings for transportation.



The proposed project is a critical element in SJRRC’s vision to expand intercity and commuter rail service between the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento, and the Bay Area. Allowing trains to move unrestricted through the proposed Stockton Diamond Grade Separation will create the opportunity for future passenger service expansion for ACE and San Joaquins. The improvements support on-time performance and travel options to connect affordable housing, jobs, school, recreation and families.

**I DON'T RIDE PASSENGER RAIL, SO HOW WILL THE STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT BENEFIT ME?**

Providing Northern California residents and visitors with an integrated transportation network that offers multiple travel options is important to the region’s current and future mobility. The proposed rail operational improvements result in other local and regional benefits such as economic stability, cleaner air, and safer track crossings. In addition to benefitting passenger rail, the project greatly benefits goods movement (for both the UPRR and BNSF national freight networks) and provides increased connectivity to the Port of Stockton.

**FUNDING**

**HOW MUCH WILL THE STOCKTON DIAMOND PROJECT GRADE SEPARATION COST AND HOW WILL IT BE FUNDED?**

The proposed project is currently estimated to cost approximately \$237 million (in 2020 dollars). Potential project costs will be confirmed through the design process being undertaken by SJRRC for the project.

Funding is anticipated to come from a variety of state, federal, and local sources. SJRRC is currently working to secure funding from the state and federal government to complete the project. The project was awarded \$100 million in Trade Corridor Enhancement Program funding through California’s Senate Bill (SB) 1 and a \$20 million Federal grant from the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program. SJRRC will use SB 132 and Interregional Transportation Improvement Program funding that is already secured to match other project funds.

**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**WHAT PHASE OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT ARE YOU IN?**

The Stockton Diamond Grade Separation Project is currently in planning and environmental analysis phase which is being implemented by SJRRC and their partners. The Proposed project must go through an environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the CEQA lead Agency, SJRRC, in partnership with the California High-Speed Rail Authority as the NEPA lead, officially launched the environmental process on August 19, 2020 with a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) / Environmental Assessment (EA).

**WHAT DO CEQA AND NEPA MEAN?**

CEQA is a California statute that was passed in 1970 shortly after the U.S. federal government passed NEPA. Both Acts institute policies of environmental protection. The purpose of CEQA/NEPA is to disclose to the public the significant environmental effects of a proposed discretionary project through the preparation of an EIR/EA.

**WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE EIR/EA?**

The EIR/EA will assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. A wide variety of resource areas will be studied during the environmental review to identify potential impacts. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate any potential adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated in the EIR/EA.

During this environmental assessment phase, there will also be multiple points for public engagement, such as during the Public Scoping Period after the Notice of Preparation is issued and the Public Comment Period after the Draft EIR/EA is released. All public engagement opportunities will be promoted to the public through electronic and printed materials, including website, e-blasts, social media, mailers, and publication advertisements.



## CONSTRUCTION

### WHEN WILL THE PROPOSED STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT BE CONSTRUCTED AND WHAT IS THE OVERARCHING PLANNING SCHEDULE?

If the Final EIR/EA is approved and adopted by the SJRRC Board, the proposed project would not be expected to be constructed until spring/summer 2023. Construction would potentially take three years to complete.

The current phase of planning began in early 2020 and will extend through summer 2021 when the Final EIR/EA is expected to be approved. Final design, utility relocations, and right-of-way activities are slated to take approximately two years and be complete by late spring 2023.



### IF THE PROPOSED STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT GETS APPROVED, WILL PASSENGER AND FREIGHT RAIL SERVICE BE AFFECTED DURING CONSTRUCTION?

The Stockton Diamond project concepts being carried forward will place the future tracks on a new alignment, which will minimize impacts to existing rail operations and services during construction. Construction phasing will strive to limit track closure durations and implement those closures in a manner that will minimize disruptions.

## FREIGHT VS. PASSENGER RAIL

### WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAIN OPERATIONS?

While both services operate on UP’s and BNSF’s tracks, hours of operation, frequency, train size, speed and weight vary tremendously between passenger and freight. While freight trains operate throughout the day and night, passenger service operates on a defined schedule. Freight trains can be up to a mile in length or longer with one or more locomotives, include various railcar equipment and cargo types which cause them to travel at slower speeds. ACE and San Joaquins passenger trains usually consist of one locomotive with four to ten coaches for passengers which allow them to operate at higher speeds.

### WHAT TRAINS OPERATE THROUGH THE STOCKTON DIAMOND GRADE SEPARATION TODAY?

Both UP and BNSF travel through the Stockton Diamond along with two passenger services which operate on UP’s tracks. Passenger trains include regularly scheduled ACE commuter service, operating between Stockton and San Jose (four daily roundtrips on weekdays and two roundtrips on Saturdays before COVID-19), and San Joaquins intercity service operating between the Bay Area, Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield (seven daily roundtrips before COVID-19). Freight train frequency and hours of operation vary based on market demands.

## MISC.

### HOW IS CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL INVOLVED?

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is developing an intercity rail network within California, inclusive of the Central Valley. ACE and San Joaquins services will provide important connectivity to the future high-speed rail (HSR) service and will directly connect with HSR at a multi-modal station in Merced. SJRRC is working in cooperation with the CHSRA, under delegation by the Federal Railroad Administration on the Stockton Diamond project. SJRRC is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, while CHSRA is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency.



**COVID-19 HAS RESULTED IN LESS COMMUTER NEEDS, WHY DO WE NEED THIS RAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT?**

Although SJRRC, San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), and other transit agencies across the country are experiencing diminished ridership due to COVID-19, there is still a need to plan and build for future passenger and freight mobility and capacity as Northern California’s population continues to grow. As an essential travel option between affordable housing and employment centers within the Central Valley, Sacramento, and Bay Area, ACE carried 1.5 million passengers and the Amtrak San Joaquins carried over 1 million passengers in 2019. SJRRC understands the need to stay nimble in these unprecedented times, while also preparing for a healthy future, through improvements like those provided by the proposed project.

**RAIL TRACKS OFTEN BRING A LOT OF SAFETY CONCERNS AND CRIME TO THE AREA. WILL THERE BE PLANS TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS?**

The project’s design features, including safety and security, will be developed in coordination with the railroads and City of Stockton, in accordance with their respective requirements. The project has some key roads that have proposed grade separations and there are many grant programs available specifically for improving safety and local roadways for the grade separations. We will apply for those grants as applicable, but it will be a continuing process until we get to construction.

**PARTICIPATION/CONTACT**

**I AM AN INTERESTED STAKEHOLDER WHO WANTS TO GET INVOLVED SO HOW CAN I DO THAT?**

Community engagement and input is a key element to the project’s planning effort. Therefore, we have formed a diverse Stakeholder Working Group to act as liaisons to the larger community and general public by working closely with SJRRC to identify and address project-related potential sensitivities and issues. The insights, suggestions and support from our committed and active Stakeholder Working Group participants will be critical to the project’s development process over the next year. If you would like to represent your organization on the SWG, please send email to [info@stocktondiamond.com](mailto:info@stocktondiamond.com) requesting participation.

**HOW CAN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATE IN THE PLANNING EFFORT?**

During this time of social distancing, we will provide multiple convenient and safe ways for public engagement throughout the proposed project’s development. You can:

- 1) Submit a question or comment through the Contact Us page at [stocktondiamond.com](http://stocktondiamond.com)
- 2) Leave a voicemail on the project’s informational hotline at (209) 235-0133
- 3) Send an email to [info@stocktondiamond.com](mailto:info@stocktondiamond.com)
- 4) Submit a formal letter to:
  - c/o Public Outreach
  - 2379 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200
  - Sacramento, CA 95833

During the proposed project’s environmental phase, there will be multiple points for public engagement, including during the Public Scoping Period after the Notice of Preparation is issued and the Public Comment Period after the Draft EIR/EA is released.

**HOW CAN I STAY INFORMED?**

You can stay informed by visiting [stocktondiamond.com](http://stocktondiamond.com) and subscribing for electronic updates on the Contact Us page. For questions or additional information, please call the project informational hotline at (209) 235-0133 or email [info@stocktondiamond.com](mailto:info@stocktondiamond.com).