



ACE Ceres-Merced Extension Project



**Draft Environmental Impact Report
Virtual Open House Meeting**

May 18, 2021 (6:00 – 7:30 PM)



Meeting Format

- **Presentation**, followed by a **Questions and Answers** session
- For the Questions and Answers session, use the “Q&A” button bottom of your screen (Note: questions will not be answered until the Q&A section near the end of the virtual meeting)



Phone only? *Contact Leo Mena at 415-677-7170 to submit questions verbally*

Preguntas o comentarios en español? *Llama a Leo Mena por telefono a 415-677-7170*



Note: Questions asked during this webinar will be considered but are not official comments on the Draft EIR.

Please e-mail, mail, or use the online submission form to submit official comments on the Draft EIR.



Agenda

- I. Welcome, Meeting Goals, and Introductions
- II. Project Overview
- III. Environmental Review Process/ Results
- IV. Questions and Answers/ How to Comment on the Draft EIR



Welcome, Meeting Goals, and Introductions

Welcome, Meeting Goals, and Introductions



Welcome, Meeting Goals, and Introductions

Project Team

San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission



Dan Leavitt

Manager of Regional Initiatives



Kevin Sheridan

Director of Capital Projects



David Ripperda

Senior Planner

Consultant Team



Daniel Krause

Project Manager, AECOM



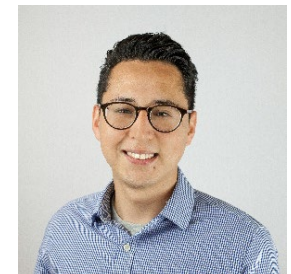
Daniel Hartman

Project Engineer, AECOM



Rich Walter

CEQA Lead
Project Director, ICF



Leo Mena

CEQA Lead
Project Manager, ICF



Project Background





Project Background: ACE Today

Normal Service Pattern (Pre-COVID 19)

- Four (4) Weekday Roundtrips
 - Four (4) Westbound AM Trains run from Stockton to San Jose
 - Four (4) Eastbound PM Trains run from San Jose to Stockton



Temporarily Reduced Service

- Due to reduced demand from the COVID 19 crisis, service was temporarily reduced to two (2) roundtrips each weekday
- The number of train cars has also been reduced



Project Background: Valley Rail Program



- Valley Rail Program includes expansion of both ACE and the San Joaquins Services
- Valley Rail is funded by the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and other state funding sources.



Project Background: Valley Rail Program (ACE Components)

Existing and Proposed ACE Rail Network



The ACE portion of Valley Rail Program includes:

- Extensions from Stockton to Sacramento/Natomas (Approved Project in Final Design and Permitting Phase)
- Extension from Lathrop to Ceres (Approved Project in Final Design and Permitting Phase)
- **Extension from Ceres to Merced (Environmental Clearance Phase)**



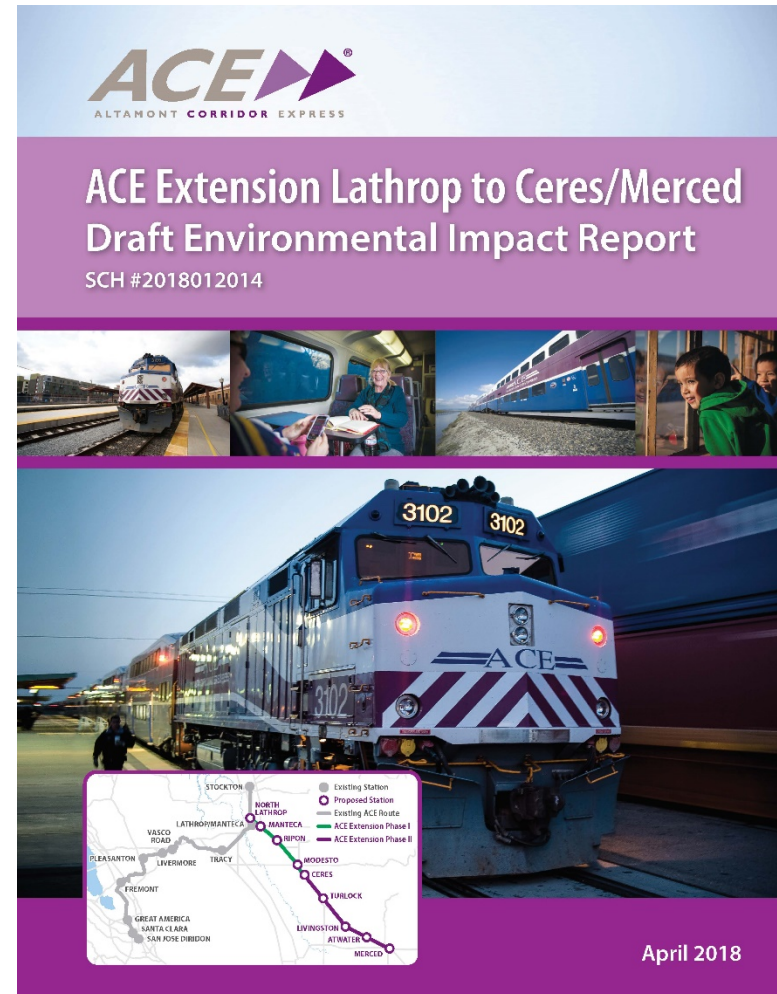
Project Overview

Project Overview



Project Overview: Building on Previous Work

- In 2018, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission completed an EIR for the ACE Extension from Lathrop to Ceres and to Merced.
 - Analyzed Phase I of the extension of ACE from North Lathrop to Ceres at a “project-level” detail
 - Analyzed Phase II of the extension of ACE from Ceres to Merced at a “programmatic level” of detail (Proposed Project);
- **The current Project is now conducting an EIR at the “project-level” of detail to complete the environmental clearance process for the Ceres-Merced Extension.**



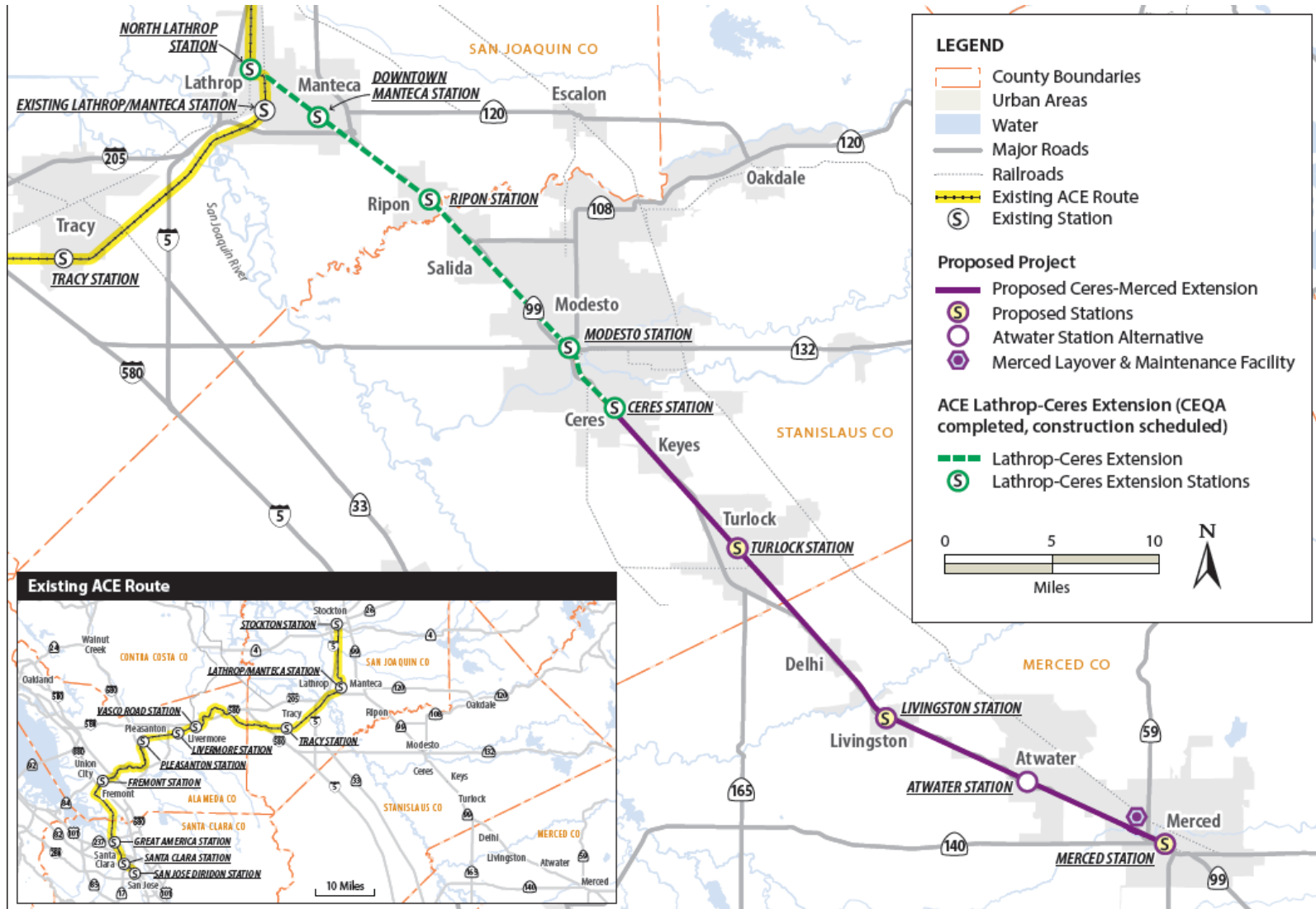


Project Overview: Public Scoping

- SJRRC released a Notice of Preparation on May 28, 2020
- SJRRC received scoping comments from May 28, 2020 to July 7, 2020
- SJRRC held three virtual scoping meetings (Webinars)
 - June 25, 2020 (3:00 pm – 4:30 pm) – 33 participants
 - June 25, 2020 (6:30 pm – 8:00 pm) – 15 participants
 - June 30, 2020 (6:30 pm – 8:00 pm) – 11 participants



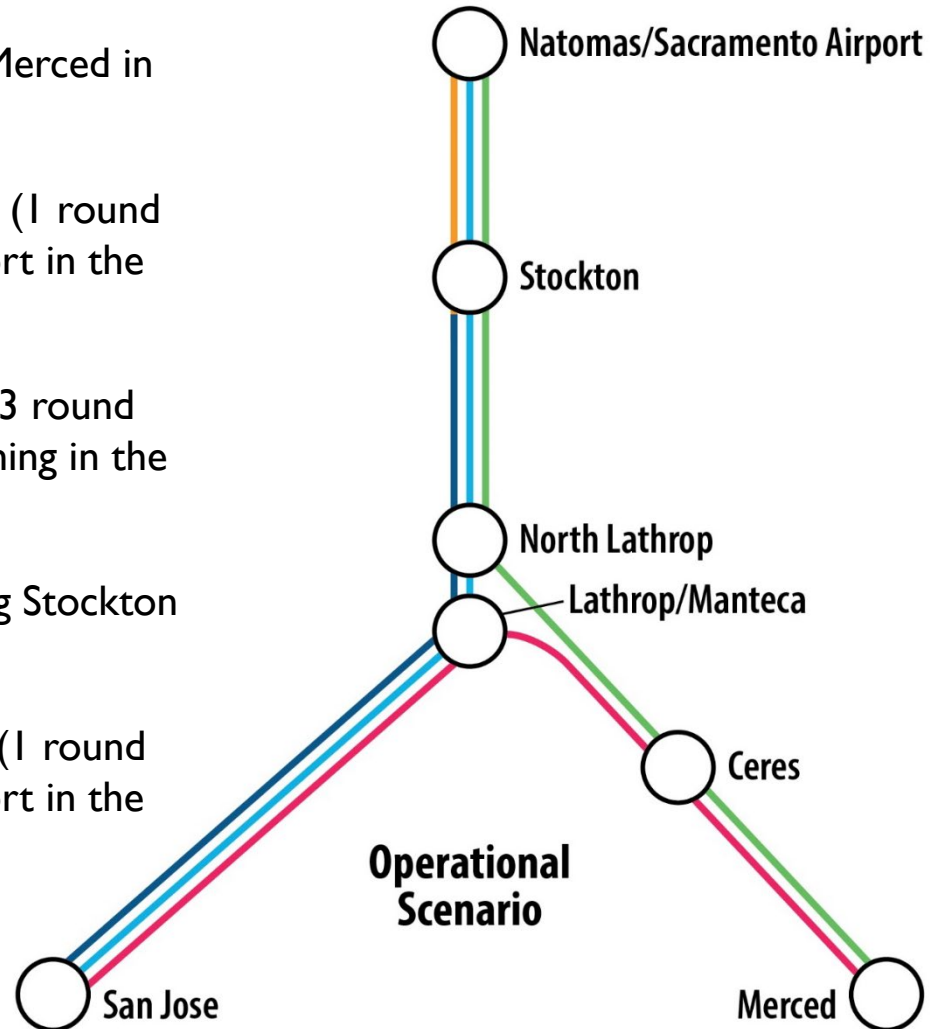
Project Overview: Project Location





Project Overview: Service Plan with the Extension to Sacramento, Ceres, and Merced

- Merced-San Jose (1 round trip; leaving Merced in the AM & returning in the PM)
- Natomas/Sacramento Airport-Stockton (1 round trip; leaving Natomas/Sacramento Airport in the AM & returning in the PM)
- Merced-Natomas/Sacramento Airport (3 round trips; leaving Merced in the AM & returning in the PM)
- Stockton-San Jose (2 round trips; leaving Stockton in the AM & returning in the PM)
- Natomas/Sacramento Airport-San Jose (1 round trip; leaving Natomas/Sacramento Airport in the AM & returning in the PM)





Project Overview: Project Benefits

Project Benefits



Enhanced commuter and intercity passenger rail and transit **access and connectivity** in the San Joaquin Valley



Additional passenger rail service to areas with no service or very limited service



Support of **transit-oriented development** near proposed station locations



Opportunity to connect with the **future high-speed rail** in Merced



Creation of new transportation **alternatives to automobile use**, which would alleviate traffic on congestion roads and highways in the region



Increased **air quality** and the **reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**



Long-term **health benefits** for ACE riders and residents and employees along the ACE corridor as a result of reduced emissions



Promotion of local and regional land use and transportation planning **sustainability goals and initiatives**



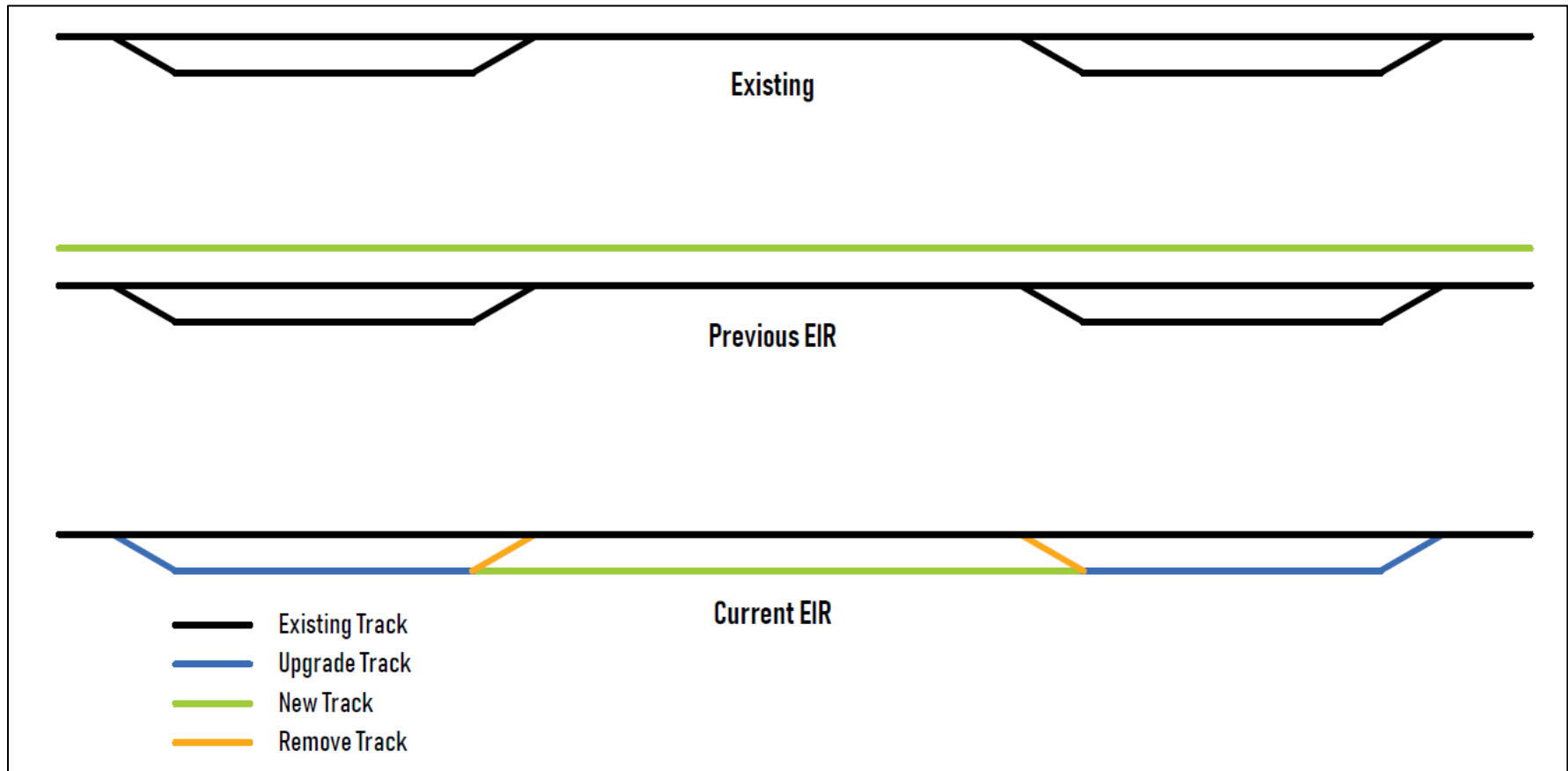
Project Elements



Project Elements: Track Improvements

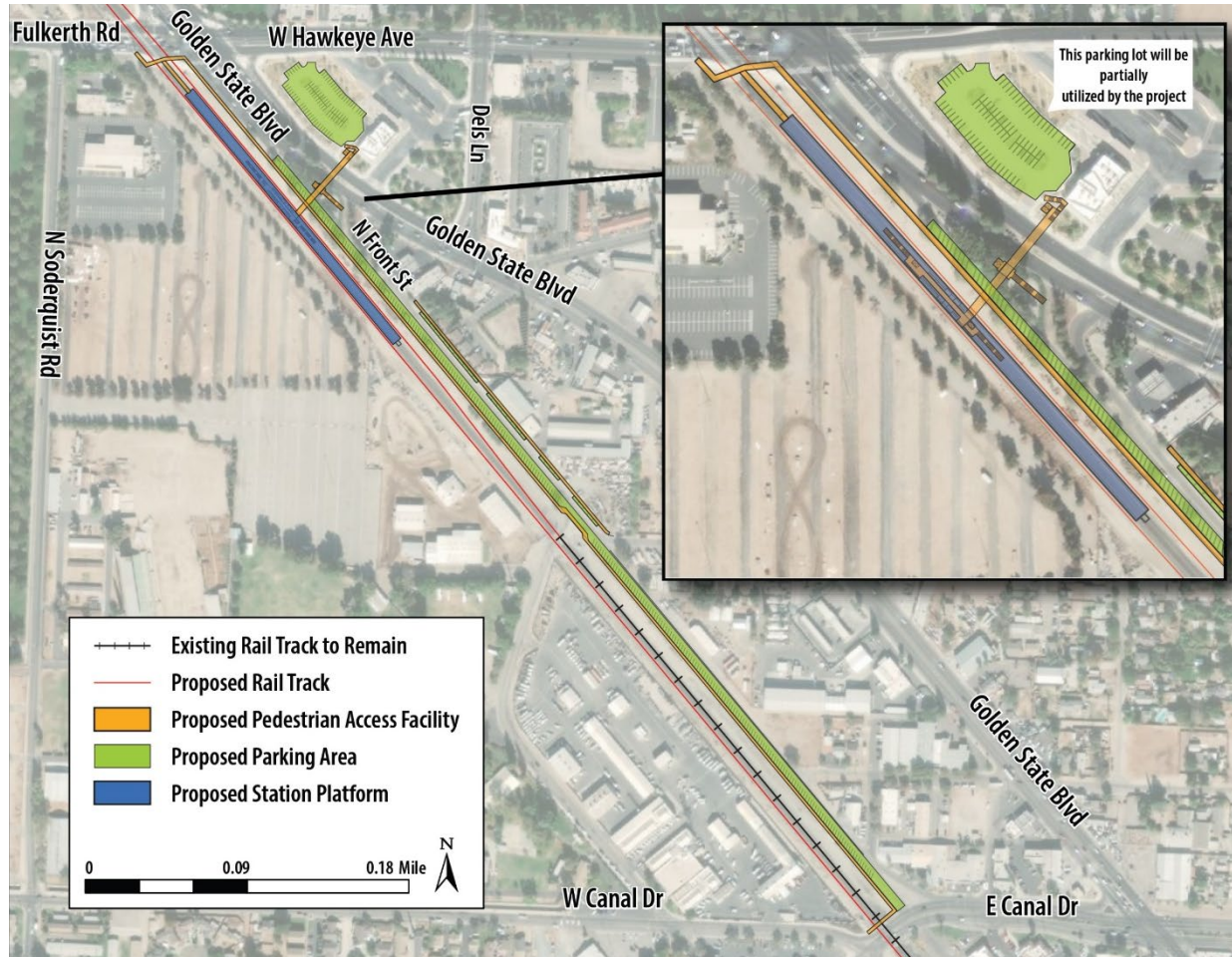
Track Improvements Include:

- Upgrading existing siding tracks
- Build additional to track to create more sections of double-track





Project Elements: Turlock Station



Improvements

- Station Platform
- Pedestrian Access
- Transit Access
- Surface Parking



Project Elements: Turlock Station

BEFORE



AFTER





Project Elements: Livingston Station



Improvements

- Station Platform
- Pedestrian Access
- Transit Access
- Surface Parking



Project Elements: Livingston Station

BEFORE



AFTER





Project Elements: Merced Station



Improvements

- Station Platform
- Pedestrian Access
- Transit Access
- Surface Parking



Project Elements: Merced Station

BEFORE

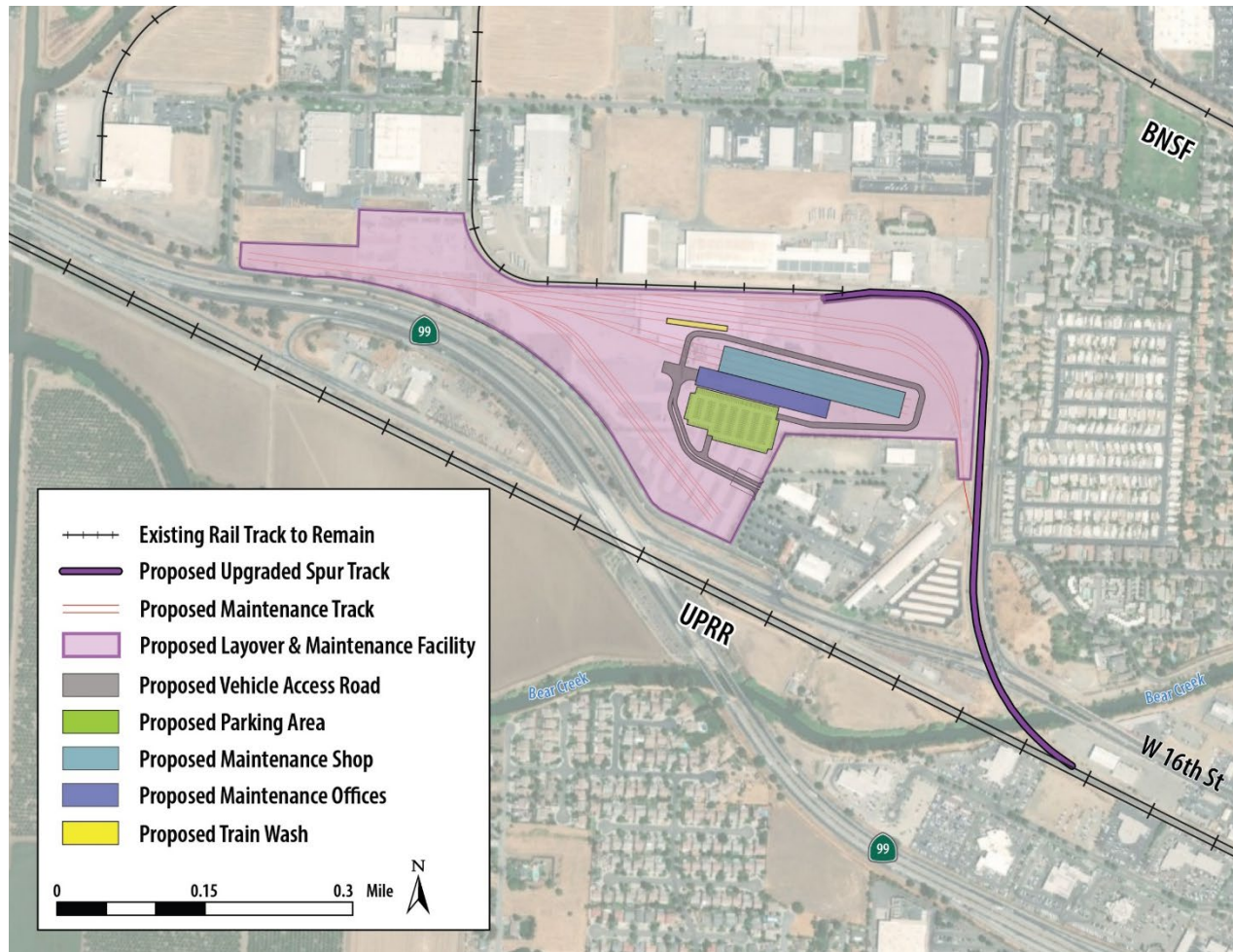


AFTER





Project Elements: Merced Layover & Maintenance Facility



Improvements

- Lead Track
- Storage Tracks
- Maintenance Building
- Employee Parking
- Train Wash Facility



Project Elements: Merced Layover & Maintenance Facility

BEFORE



AFTER



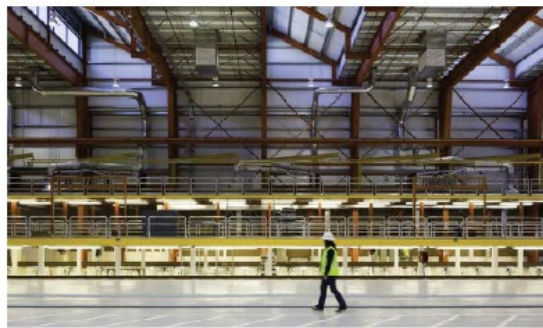


Project Elements: Example of a Maintenance Facility

Outside Views of the Existing ACE Maintenance Facility in Stockton



Inside the Existing ACE Maintenance Facility in Stockton



- The Merced Layover and Maintenance Facility would provide for both maintenance of trains and layover track for trains between service runs.
- For reference, photos of the existing ACE Maintenance Facility located in Stockton are presented to the left.

Atwater Station Alternative



Improvements

- Station Platform
- Pedestrian Access
- Transit Access
- Surface Parking

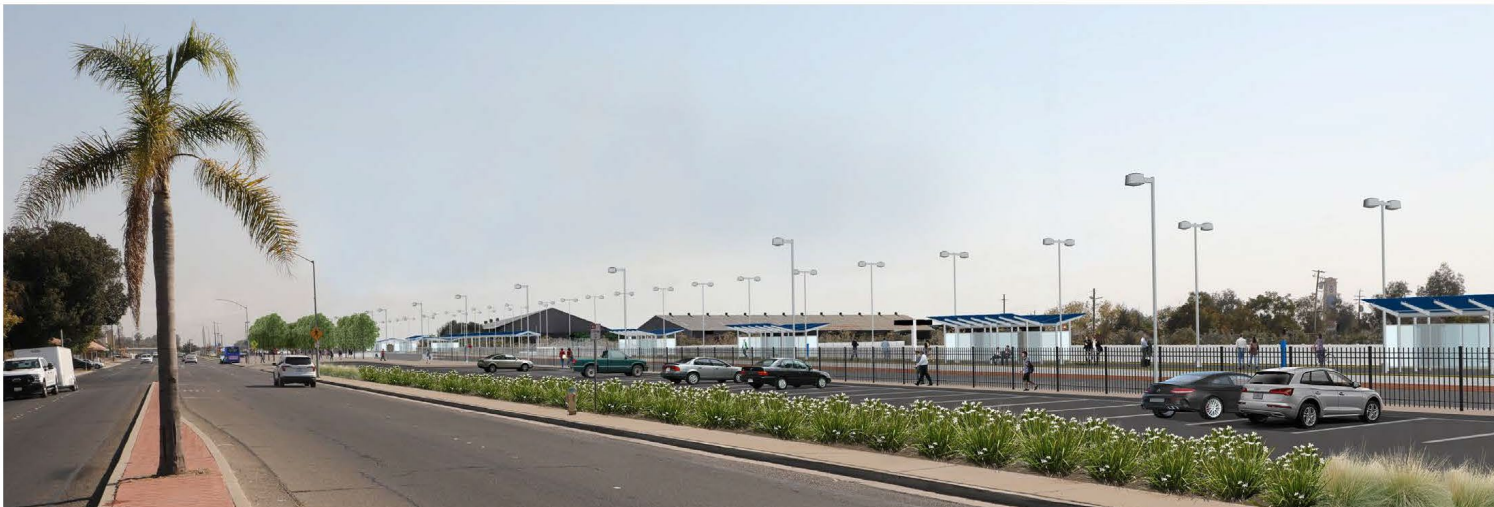


Atwater Station Alternative

BEFORE



AFTER





Environmental Review Process/ Results



Draft EIR Resource Areas Analyzed



■ The Draft EIR analyzes and considers impacts to the following resource areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Safety and Security (including Wildfire)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems



Less than Significant or Beneficial Impacts

Beneficial

- Air Quality
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Transportation (VMT)



Less than Significant

- Noise (Operations)
- Population and Housing
- Public Services



Less than Significant with Mitigation

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality (construction impacts and operation of emergency generator)
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Vibration
- Recreation
- Safety and Security
- Transportation (construction)
- Utilities and Service Systems (Construction)





Significant and Unavoidable (Agricultural Resources)

Impact AG-1 and Impact C-AG-1. Permanent Conversion of Important Farmland, including Cumulative Impact

- Permanent Impacts within UPRR ROW: 1.0 acres.
 - Located within an active railroad ROW but aerial imagery identified potentially active agricultural production.
- Merced Layover & Maintenance Facility: 11.1 acres (Farmland of Local Importance).
 - Located in an area with existing industrial uses
 - Merced General Plan identifies the area as having an Industrial land use designation
 - Hay production and does not appear to be irrigated





Significant and Unavoidable (Agricultural Resources)

Impact AG-1 and Impact C-AG-1. Permanent Conversion of Important Farmland, including Cumulative Impact

- Mitigation includes:
 - AG-1.1: Avoid Important Farmlands and Restore Important Farmlands used for temporary staging areas
 - AG-1.2: Conserve Important Farmlands (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance)

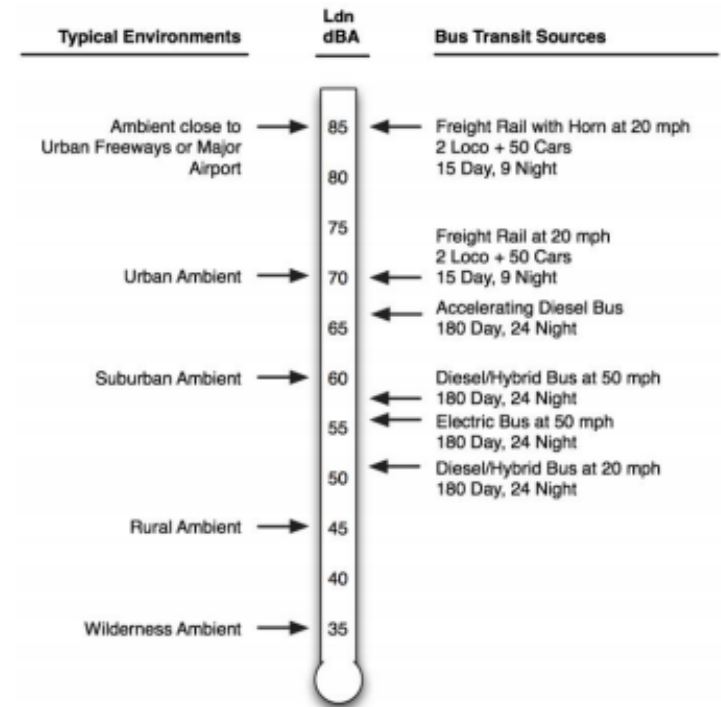




Significant and Unavoidable (Construction Noise)

Impact NOI-I and Impact C-NOI-I. Temporary Construction Noise Impacts, Cumulative Impact

- Temporary impact (would be limited to construction time period)
- Impact limited to residences within 135 to 270 feet from construction site
- Duration of construction:
 - Trackwork – few days to a week
 - Stations – 10 to 14 months
 - Merced Layover & Maintenance Facility – 24 months
- Mitigation includes:
 - NOI-I.1: Implement a noise control plan





Alternatives Considered

1. No Project Alternative
2. Atwater Station Alternative
3. Merced Station Alternative
4. Merced Layover Facility Alternative

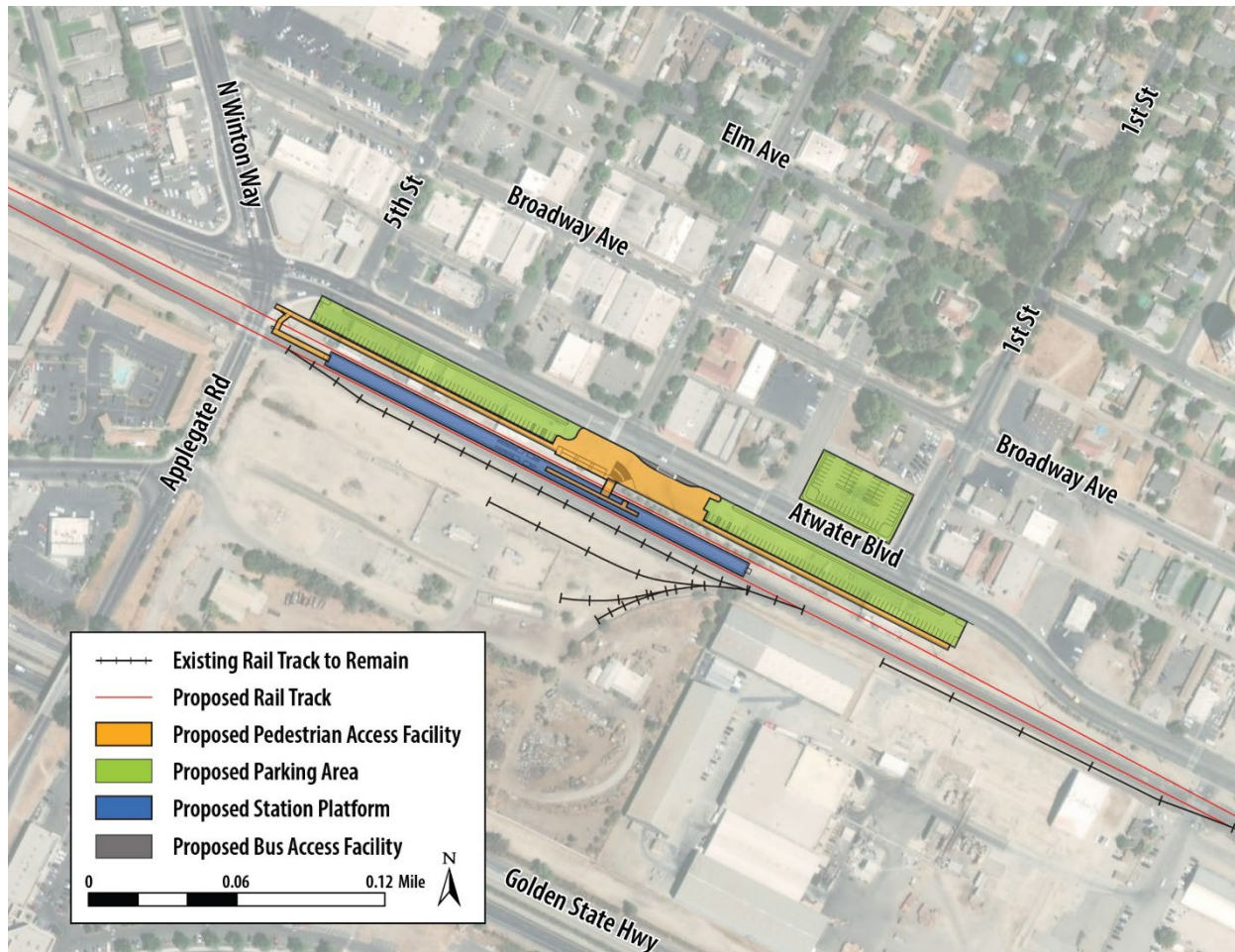


No Project Alternative vs. Proposed Project

Criteria	No Project Alternative	Proposed Project
Construction Impacts	Less construction impacts	More construction impacts
Environmental Benefits (Air Quality, GHG, Energy, VMT, support of TOD)	Less operational benefits	More operational benefits

Note: Section 15126.6(e) of the CEQA Guidelines requires the analysis of a No Project Alternative. The No Project Alternative analysis must discuss the existing conditions as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved.

Atwater Station Alternative



Improvements

- Station Platform
- Pedestrian Access
- Transit Access
- Surface Parking



Atwater Station Alternative vs. Livingston Station

Criteria	Livingston Station	Atwater Station Alternative
Environmental Impacts	No substantial difference	No substantial difference
Parking Accessibility	One contiguous lot; no need to cross roadway	Approximately one third of parking spaces are located across Atwater Boulevard from the station, requiring passengers to cross Atwater Boulevard to access the station
Number of Parcels Needed	1 parcel	10 parcels
Demolition/ Business Impacts	1 buildings	4 buildings
Station Spacing	Merced to Livingston = 14 miles Livingston to Turlock = 11 miles Better freight operations	Merced to Atwater = 7 miles Atwater to Turlock = 18 miles More freight bottlenecks
Cost	\$21,126,387	\$27,558,046

Merced Station Alternative



Notes:

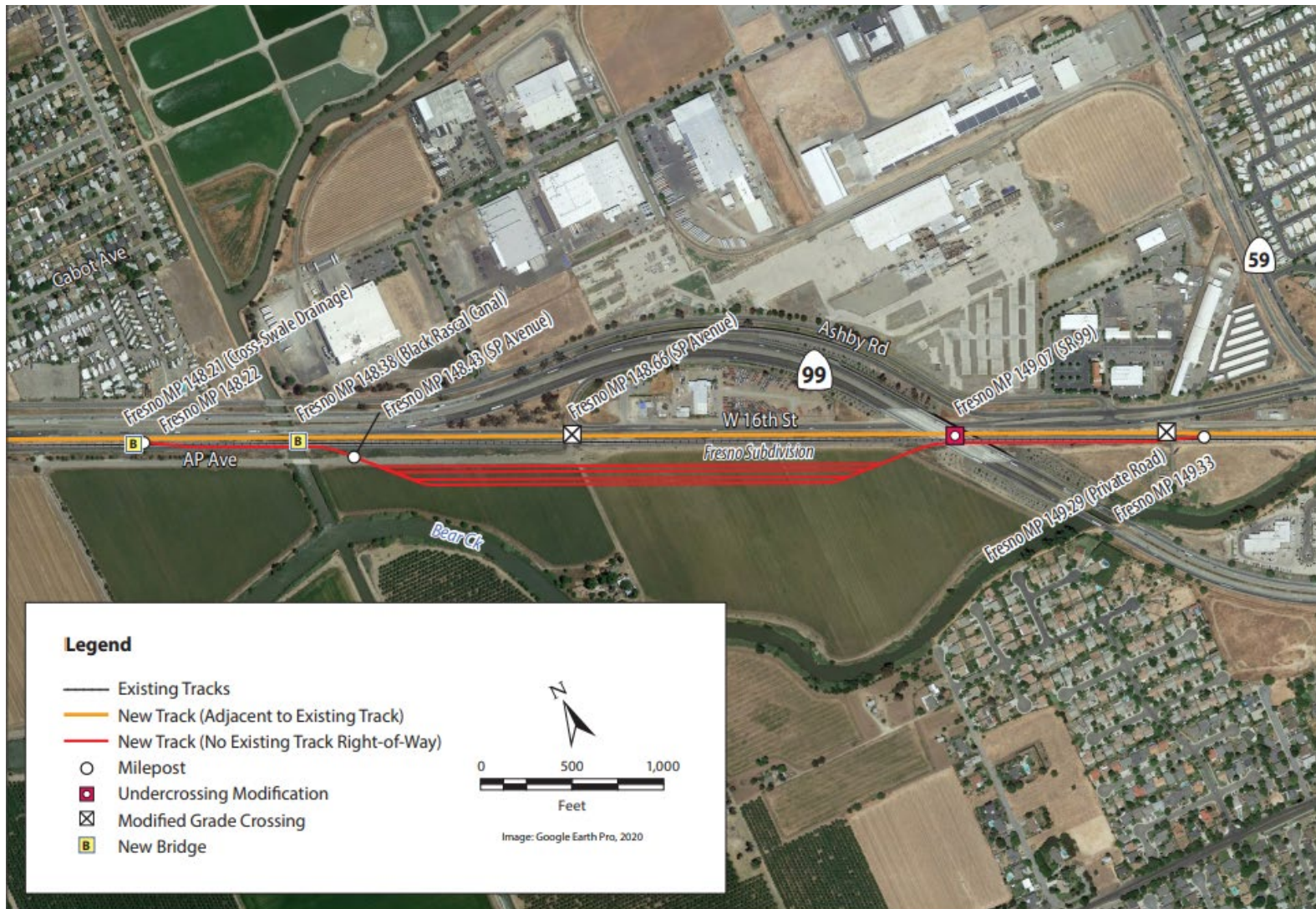
- Analyzed in Prior EIR
- Adjacent to currently adopted HSR Merced Station
- The City of Merced prefers the ACE and HSR Stations near the Merced Transit Station.



Merced Station Alternative vs. Merced Station

Criteria	Merced Station	Merced Station Alternative
Land Use and Planning	Greater consistency with City of Merced's long-term planning, including greater potential for TOD	Less consistency with City of Merced's long-term planning
Noise (Construction)	More impacts	Less impacts (further away from residences)
Air Quality and GHG Emissions (Construction emissions)	Less impact: less trackwork construction is required	Greater impact: more trackwork construction is required
Air Quality and GHG Emissions (Operational emissions)	The reductions in emissions and VMT depends on the location of the HSR Merced Station. If CHSRA decides to move the HSR Merced Station to the City of Merced's preferred location, then the proposed Merced Station would have higher ridership, greater VMT reductions, and greater reductions in criteria pollutants and GHG emissions.	

Merced Layover Facility Alternative



Note: Analyzed in Prior EIR



Merced Layover Facility Alternative

Criteria	Merced Layover & Maintenance Facility	Merced Layover Facility Alternative
Agricultural Resources – Permanent Impacts	Less impact: 0 acre (Prime Farmland) 11.1 acres (Farmland of Local Importance)	Greater impact: 15.1 acres (Prime Farmland) 0.3 acre (Farmland of Local Importance)
Land Use and Planning	Less impact: Industrial use in area with primarily industrial uses	Greater impact: Industrial use in area with primarily agricultural uses
Aesthetics	Less impact: Industrial view in an industrial area	Greater impact: Industrial view in an agricultural (open space visual character) area
Noise (Construction)	More impacts	Less impacts (further away from residences)



Environmental Review Process: Key Project Milestones and Timeline





Environmental Review Process: Comments on the Draft EIR

Your input is important to us!

Submit Comments on the Draft EIR – through 5:00 pm on June 7, 2021

Mail:

San Joaquin Regional Rail
Commission
Attn: Dan Leavitt,
Manager of Regional
Initiatives
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Email:

MercedExtComments
@acerail.com

Please include “ACE
Ceres-Merced
Extension Project” in
the subject heading

Webpage:

Provide comment in the
submission form at the
bottom of the Project
webpage at
[www.acerail.com/merced
-extension-eir/](http://www.acerail.com/merced-extension-eir/)

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Questions and Answers



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Preguntas o comentarios en español? *Llama a Leo Mena por telefono a 415-677-7170*

*Submit Draft EIR Comments – through 5:00 pm on **June 7, 2021***

By e-mail: MercedExtComments@acerail.com

By Mail: San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission, Attn: Dan Leavitt, Manager of Regional Initiatives, 949 East Channel Street, Stockton, CA 95202

Project Webpage Submission Form: bottom of the Project webpage at www.acerail.com/merced-extension-eir/

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**Standing By for Additional Questions
(until 7:30pm)**

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Thank You

Thank you!