



Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the MST SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting

DATE: August 13, 2020

TO: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Monterey-Salinas Transit (Lead Agency)
19 Upper Ragsdale, Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940

Re: **Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for MST's SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project**

Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project (project). The project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below.

MST is soliciting input from responsible, trustee and permitting agencies, including local and State agencies via the State Office of Planning and Research (State Clearinghouse). This notice and opportunity for input and early consultation is also extended to members of the public, local organizations, and any other interested parties as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the project's EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The EIR will serve as the environmental document for responsible and trustee agencies when considering any discretionary approvals or permits related to the proposed project. This notice has been prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082.

As a result of federal funding sources, the project will also be subject to environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 30-day Notice of Preparation (NOP) review period. The comment period closes at 5:00 pm on **September 14, 2020**. Please send your written/typed comments (including a name and contact information) to **Michelle Overmeyer, Director of Planning and Innovation**, at the physical address or email address shown below. Public agencies providing comments are requested to include a contact person for the agency.

Lead Agency Contact

Michelle Overmeyer, Director of Planning and Innovation

Monterey-Salinas Transit

19 Upper Ragsdale, Suite 200

Monterey, CA 93940

Email: movermeyer@mst.org

Project Location

The project would consist of approximately 6 linear miles of roadway surface dedicated for express busway service (bus rapid transit). The route for the SURF! busway project would begin at MST's Marina Transit Exchange at Reservation Road and De Forest Road (northern terminus), and end at Contra Costa Street in Sand City (southern terminus).

The alignment of the busway would be primarily within the Transportation Agency for Monterey County's (TAMC's) Monterey Branch Line rail corridor, generally located west of Highway 1 between Beach Range Road and the Monterey Peninsula Recreation Trail. Public roadways would be used for the SURF! line at both ends of the route. Given the length of the facility and its alignment, the project would be located in the cities of Marina, Seaside, and Sand City, running parallel to Highway 1 next to Fort Ord Dunes State Park. See **Figure 1** for general project location.

Existing Environmental Conditions

The TAMC right-of-way along the Monterey Branch Line consists of a 100-foot-wide corridor that is currently closed to the public. This corridor contains dormant rail lines for the former Southern Pacific Railroad, including the railroad bed surface and aging facilities and utilities. The corridor is heavily disturbed by the rail lines and regular practice of weed control; however, it is also wide enough to support certain plant and animal communities associated with the protected dune habitats located within Fort Ord Dunes State Park. With close proximity to Highway 1, there is a high level of ambient roadway noise.

Project Purpose

Key project objectives include reducing inter-regional commute traffic on Highway 1, expanding the region's alternative transportation options, improving overall mobility for residents and visitors, reducing mobile source and greenhouse gas emissions, and providing connectivity to commercial, education medical land uses, as well as regional bicycle and pedestrian trail systems.

Project Description Summary

The project consists of the following primary components:

- A bus-only entry into the TAMC right-of-way at Del Monte Boulevard and Palm Avenue in the City of Marina. This element requires upgraded intersection traffic and safety controls, as well as bicycle and pedestrian path improvements along Del Monte Boulevard.

- Two lanes (one in each direction) of dedicated busway road surface within the TAMC Monterey Branch Line right-of-way. Work within the TAMC right-of-way to construct the bus lanes will require grading, drainage improvements, retaining walls, fencing, recreation trail connections, utility relocations and other necessary improvements to create a safe, dedicated busway.
- A new transit station (5th Street Station) located on MST property near 5th Street east of Highway 1. The station would include bus bays, public parking, drop off area and other amenities.
- A new roundabout in the public right of way at California Avenue and Highway 1 southbound ramp in Sand City to better accommodate buses re-entering the public right of way.
- A stop/station at Playa Avenue in Sand City where SURF! riders would connect to the existing bus network. This segment of the route would utilize California Avenue for an interim period, and ultimately use the TAMC rail-right-of way all the way to Contra Costa Street in Sand City (southern terminus). The Del Monte Boulevard/Playa Avenue and California Avenue/Playa Avenue intersections would include signalization and synchronization to improve traffic operations at this location.

See **Figures 2A and 2B** for project area and area of potential effect.

Probable Environmental Effects

MST will be preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) that evaluates potential environmental impact areas consistent with CEQA Statutes and Guidelines. An initial study is not required to determine that an EIR will be prepared, and as such, an initial study was not prepared for the proposed project. The EIR will discuss potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, including potential construction and operational effects. MST has identified several environmental areas where impacts are most likely to occur. These impact areas include:

- Aesthetics (including visual appearance from Highway 1 and public vantage points)
- Air Quality (including potential beneficial effects)
- Biological Resources (including sensitive habitats and protected species)
- Cultural, Tribal and Historic Resources
- Energy Demands
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (including potential beneficial effects)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning (including consistency with local land use and coastal policies)
- Noise and Vibration (from construction and bus vehicles)
- Public Services and Recreation

- Transportation, Mobility and Circulation (including an analysis of vehicle miles travelled)
- Utilities and Service Systems (including system relocations)

The EIR will also evaluate a range of feasible alternatives to the project, as well as other required discussions including: (a) any significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments to resources; (c) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project; (d) effects found not to be significant; and (e) cumulative impacts.

A digital copy of this NOP and additional detail about the project can be viewed at <https://mst.org/about-mst/planning-development/>.

Public Scoping Meeting

MST will hold a public scoping meeting on the project in conformance with Public Resources Code §§ 21080.4(b) and 21083.9. Due to COVID-19 public safety concerns, this meeting will take place via video conference call. Members of the public and public agencies are invited to attend and provide comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held **Thursday, August 27, 2020 at 5:00 pm**. The link to the meeting is provided below:

Zoom meeting access:

<https://zoom.us/j/99276452875?pwd=ZUNUemZTbnAxZlJGd1ZcVBkYjlzQT09>

Meeting ID 992 7645 2875

Passcode 352593

ALL INTERESTED PARTIES ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE SCOPE OF THE EIR TO ASSIST MST TO IDENTIFY KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED.

For additional information, please contact Michelle Overmeyer, Director of Planning and Innovation, at (831) 264-5877.

Lead Agency Signature

Date:

Signature:

Title:

Director of Planning and Innovation

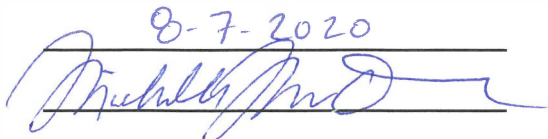
8-7-2020




Figure 1: General Project Location
MST SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project



Source: Kimley Horn, 2020

- Project Area
- City Limits



Figure 2A: Project Limits/Area of Effect
MST SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project



Source: Kimley Horn, 2020

- Project Area
- Project Area Contra Costa to Playa



Figure 2B: Project Limits/Area of Effect
MST SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project