CHAPTER 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

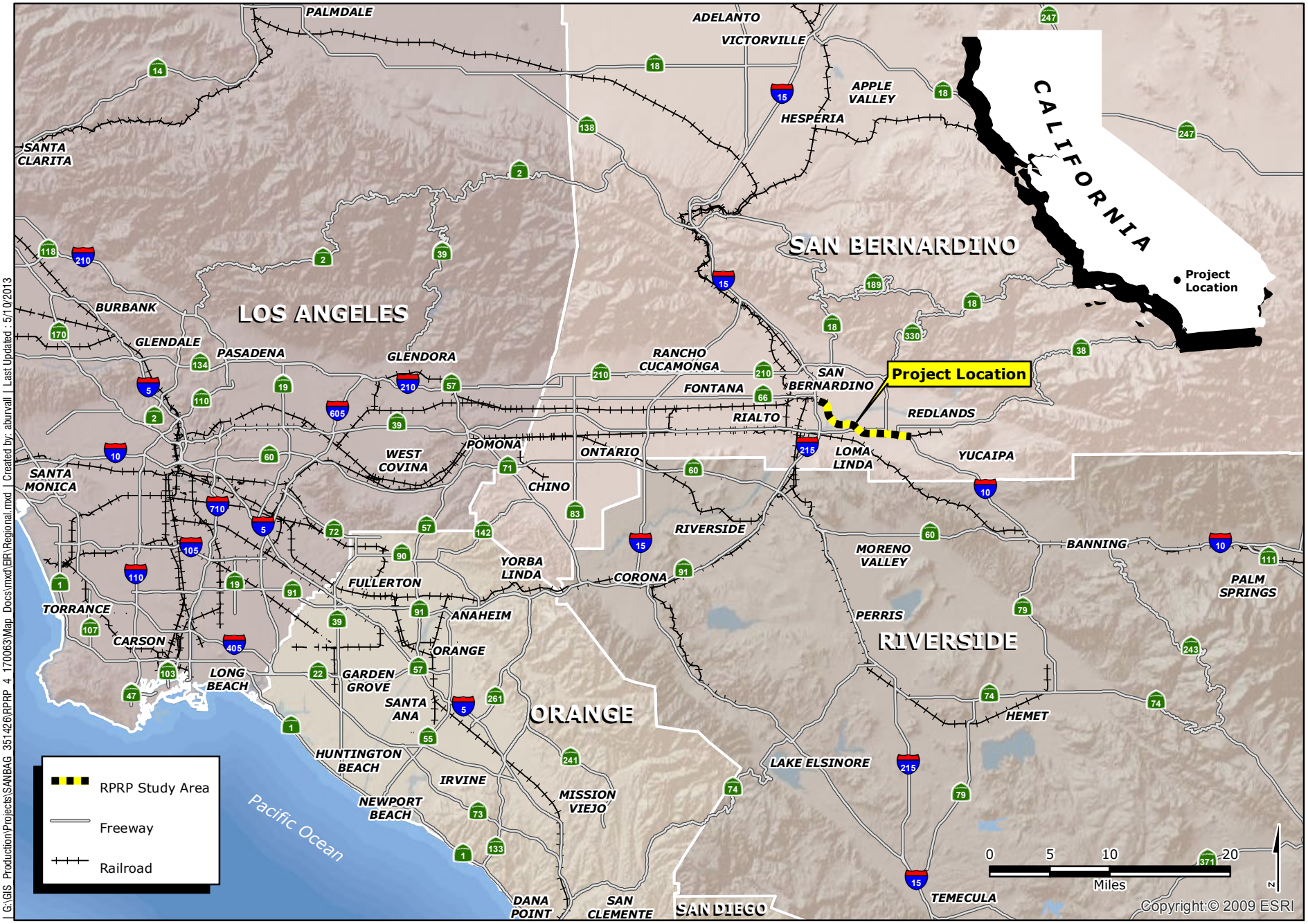
The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Region 9, is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and has prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Redlands Passenger Rail Project (RPRP or Project). This document constitutes a joint EIS/Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared by the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) and FTA (see California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (State California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guidelines), Section 15222 ("Preparation of Joint Documents"); and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 40, Sections 1502.25, 1506.2, and 1506.4 (authority for combining federal and state environmental documents).

SANBAG, acting in its role as the San Bernardino County Transportation Commission, is proposing the RPRP to address the transportation needs of the Redlands Corridor. SANBAG is the lead agency under CEQA and has prepared this EIS/EIR to disclose the potential environmental effects of the Project. Based on the need to prepare an EIS and EIR, FTA and SANBAG have elected to prepare a joint NEPA/CEQA document.

The Project is located within the eastern portion of the San Bernardino Valley, within the southwestern corner of the County of San Bernardino, California (see Figure 1-1, Regional Location Map). The Project would consist of the construction of transit infrastructure and operation of passenger rail service between E Street in the City of San Bernardino and the University of Redlands in the City of Redlands. Passenger rail service would be facilitated via five station stops at E Street; Tippecanoe Avenue (or Waterman Avenue); New York Street; Orange Street (Downtown Redlands); and University Street (University of Redlands). SANBAG proposes the replacement of the existing rail line, reconstruction of existing bridge structures, construction of new stations and a train layover facility, and auxiliary improvements such as parking, drainage infrastructure, grade crossings, and pedestrian access as part of the Project.

1.2 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIS/EIR

This EIS/EIR is comprised of ten chapters with supporting appendices. The purpose and need of the Project is outlined in this chapter (Chapter 1). The alternatives and design options considered in the environmental analysis along with those rejected from further environmental analysis are discussed in Chapter 2, *Alternatives Considered*. Chapter 3 provides an environmental analysis of the environmental issue areas. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the cumulative effects that could result from the Project in conjunction with other reasonably foreseeable projects. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the other statutory considerations pursuant to CEQA and NEPA. Chapter 6 outlines the public and agency outreach efforts by SANBAG and FTA, and Chapters 7 through 10 include the references, list of preparers, acronyms and abbreviations, and an index.



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Regional Location Map

Figure 1-1

FTA/SANBAG | Redlands Passenger Rail Project | EIS/EIR

1.3 INTENDED USES OF THE EIS/EIR

This EIS/EIR is an informational document intended to inform agencies and the public of potential significant environmental effects associated with the Project, describe and evaluate reasonable build alternatives and design options, and propose mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce the Project's significant effects.

This EIS/EIR will be used by SANBAG, as the lead agency under CEQA, and by FTA, as the lead agency under NEPA, when making decisions regarding approval of the Project and its implementation. Also, CEQA responsible and trustee agencies (e.g., local jurisdictions and state agencies) will need to utilize this document as part of their respective approvals. The information in this EIS/EIR may also be used by other agencies when deciding whether to grant the permits or approvals necessary to construct or operate portions of the Project.

1.4 NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Estimated Population and Employment Growth

The need for the Project is multifaceted and in response to growing travel demand as evidenced in the current population and employment forecasts that estimate significant growth in southwestern San Bernardino County from now through 2035. The Redlands Corridor is projected to serve as a critical transit linkage for large population, activity, and employment centers situated along the corridor. From now to 2035, employment growth within San Bernardino and Redlands is projected to increase by 22 percent. Over that same period, population growth will increase by 12 percent in San Bernardino and 14 percent in Redlands. In San Bernardino, much of this growth is projected to occur around existing activity centers including, the San Bernardino Transit Center, the Tippecanoe Strategic Area, and the Southeast Industrial Strategic Area. In Redlands, this projected growth would occur at activities centers within the East Valley Corridor, Downtown Redlands, and the University of Redlands. Future employment and population growth will likely result in increased travel demand along the corridor. The Project is needed to accommodate current and future travel demand.

Existing Transportation Options/Modes and Travel Times

This anticipated growth will further affect existing transit travel speeds and reliability as a result of continued decline in the performance of the regional transportation system. Currently, travel times for existing bus transit service routes range between 45 to 60 minutes between Redlands and San Bernardino, depending on the bus route used. Due to existing roadway congestion along these routes, the current on-time performance for transit bus service averages approximately 70%. The Project is needed to improve mobility options for the traveling public and reduce travel delays. The operation of passenger rail service along a dedicated transit route would improve transit reliability and on-time performance when compared to existing transit service, which operates in mixed-flow traffic. Implementation of the Project would reduce transit travel times along the nine-mile Redlands Corridor to approximately 17 minutes, thereby substantially reducing existing transit travel times.

Among the many challenges facing the San Bernardino region is the continued growth in travel demand that for many years has outpaced the region's capacity to expand transportation facilities. The region's major highways have limited expansion potential, due in large part to constrained rights-of-way and the cost of right-of-way acquisition. However, the region's highways are heavily relied upon by commuters to access major employment centers west of

the Redlands Corridor in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. For example, Interstate 10 (I-10) the main east-west travel thoroughfare through the Redlands Corridor, has a limited number of access points from major arterial streets. Physical features within the Redlands Corridor constrain the expansion potential for the transportation network. The physical geography of the Redlands Corridor, which is bisected by numerous waterways including the Santa Ana River, has resulted in a discontinuous street network. Given the constraints of the existing transportation network, the Project is needed to provide a mobility alternative to travel on congested roadways and to improve connections to the regional multimodal transportation system.

The Project is identified as a critical transportation need for the region and represents a critical first step in the implementation of transportation solutions as identified in the following planning documents prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG):

- Federally Approved Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), 2013;
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), 2009;
- Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG), 2008; and
- Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), 2012 (see Redlands Rail on pages 98 and 310 of the RTP Project List).

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

In 1989, San Bernardino County voters approved Measure I to ensure that needed transportation projects were implemented countywide through 2010. In 1992, SANBAG purchased a freight rail corridor that extends from San Bernardino to Redlands from the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad (AT&SF), predecessor to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) with a vision to implement future passenger rail service in the Redlands Corridor. In 2001, SCAG initiated a visioning process, known as the Compass Blueprint Program, resulting in a regional strategy to accommodate projected growth in Southern California. As part of this visioning process, SANBAG prepared various planning studies and reports to explore the feasibility of establishing passenger rail service between the City of San Bernardino and the City of Redlands, while identifying transportation alternatives, potential rail station locations, and multi-modal transit development opportunities along the Redlands Corridor. The Project would implement SANBAG's vision for the Redlands Corridor in accordance with the previous actions and planning studies that provide the basis for passenger rail service along the railroad corridor including:

- Voter approval of Measure I, November 1989
- Purchase of the Redlands Subdivision right-of-way from the AT&SF Railroad in 1992 from downtown San Bernardino to the vicinity of the University of Redlands
- Redlands Passenger Rail Feasibility Report, August 2003
- Measure I Reauthorization by Voters, 2004
- SANBAG Draft Redlands Passenger Rail Station Area Plans, January 2007
- Redlands Subdivision Study of Operating Alternatives and Infrastructure Requirements, October 2007

- Measure I 2010–2040 Strategic Plan, April 2009
- Long Range Transit Plan, Interim Project Report, 2009
- SANBAG Draft Definition of Alternatives Report, October 2009
- Redlands Passenger Rail Project Final Report, November 2011
- 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Final Program EIR, April 2012

The construction and operation of new passenger rail service from San Bernardino to Redlands is identified as a key project in the *Measure I 2010–2040 Strategic Plan*. The RPRP would address the transportation needs of the Redlands Corridor as identified in SANBAG's *Measure I Strategic Plan* and SCAG's *2012-2035 RTP/SCS*, which also identifies the Project as a means to address regional travel patterns within a delineated High Quality Transit Area. SANBAG has also worked to identify and evaluate potential transit investments in the Redlands Corridor to integrate the planned extension of Metrolink services from the San Bernardino Depot to the Downtown San Bernardino and the Omnitrans Bus Facility (see Downtown San Bernardino Passenger Rail Project under Section 3.1.3, Documents Incorporated by Reference).

The overall purpose of the Project is to provide a cost-effective, alternative travel option for communities located along the Redlands Corridor in a way that maintains freight service and improves transit mobility, travel times, and corridor safety while minimizing adverse environmental impacts. The Project would provide travelers and commuters with a new mobility option within a dedicated right-of-way (ROW) that would be capable of achieving shorter travel times than automobiles while facilitating the continuation of existing freight service along the rail corridor consistent with SANBAG's purchase agreement with the BNSF Railroad. Through implementation of the Project, SANBAG would provide new passenger rail service through the communities of Redlands, Loma Linda, and San Bernardino.

The Project would assist SANBAG and the State of California in meeting the air pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets as mandated under Assembly Bill (AB) 32, known as the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, and, Senate Bill (SB) 375, known as the California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. These two laws establish the basis for both SCAG and SANBAG to accommodate regional growth through increased access to alternative modes of transit for local communities.

1.6 PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

These Project goals and objectives are integral to SANBAG's selection and consideration of alternatives as described further in Chapter 2 of this EIS/EIR. SANBAG's goals and objectives for the Project are outlined below:

- Implement new local transit service consistent with the Measure I Strategic Plan and the RTP to reduce travel time between residential areas, employment centers, and major activity centers;
- Develop necessary rail infrastructure to facilitate passenger service between the cities of San Bernardino and Redlands and maximize opportunities to accommodate track built-out in the future;

- Implement a transit project capable of helping to achieve regional and state goals to reduce greenhouse gases while supporting opportunities for future compact development as required under AB 32 and SB 375;
- Maximize opportunities for revitalization of the Redlands Corridor by linking transit service along the railroad corridor to intermodal hubs, such as the Omnitrans Bus Facility in the City of San Bernardino and Transit Villages planned by the City of Redlands and University of Redlands;
- Implement safety improvements that will benefit both existing freight and proposed passenger operations per Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) safety guidelines and SANBAG's purchase agreement with BNSF; and
- Utilize the existing railroad corridor and right of way to the extent feasible, thereby minimizing potential impacts to sensitive resources, as well as minimizing potential adverse effects to the surrounding communities.