



Stakeholder & Public Engagement Plan: A Living Document

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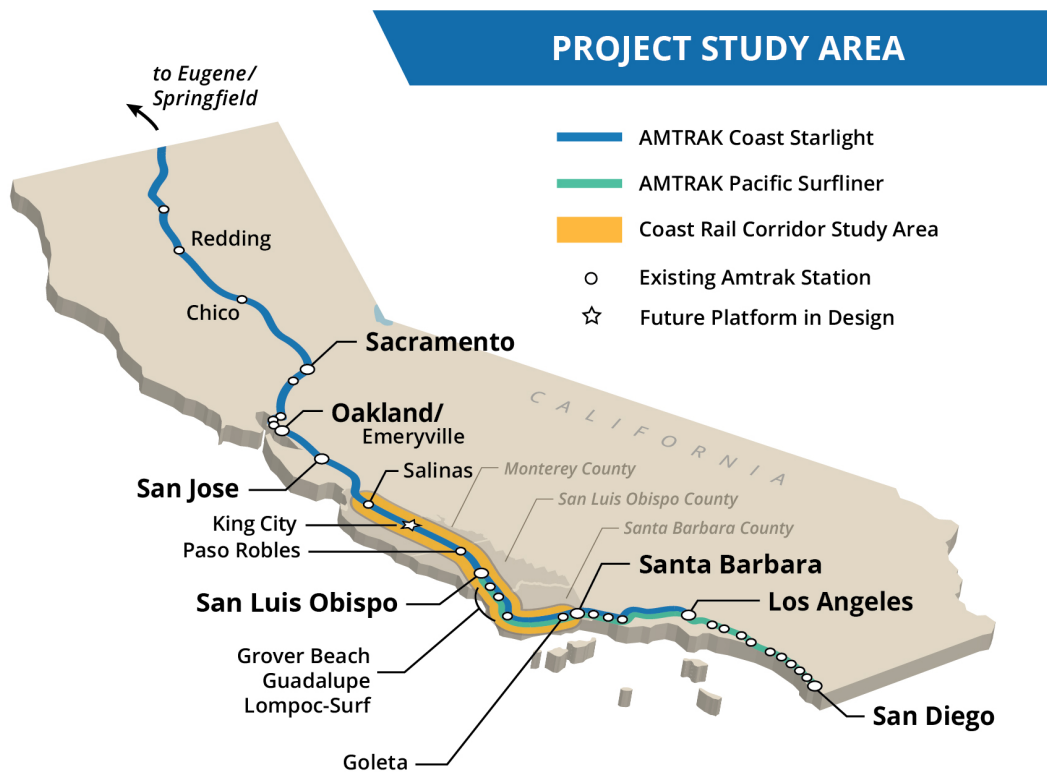
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Study Overview	1
Study Goals.....	2
PARTNER AGENCIES	2
COMMUNICATIONS/ ENGAGEMENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES.....	3
Engagement Goals.....	3
Engagement Objectives	3
COMMUNICATIONS/ENGAGEMENT APPROACH	4
Key Engagement Milestones.....	4
Stakeholder & Public Engagement Plan Components	4
I. IDENTIFICATION OF TARGET AUDIENCES	5
Contact Database	5
II. CREATION OF TOOLS & IMPLEMENTATION TACTICS.....	5
Informational Toolkit	5
<i>Messaging & Study Identity</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Collateral Materials.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Coast Rail Corridor Website.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Social Media & Media</i>	<i>6</i>
Engagement Activities.....	6
<i>Stakeholder Engagement</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Speakers Bureau.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Online Virtual Meetings (Stakeholder & Public)</i>	<i>8</i>
III. MONITORING & DOCUMENTATION	8

INTRODUCTION

Study Overview

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) and [Coast Rail Coordinating Council](#) (CRCC) are conducting an important rail study to plan for the future of rail on the Central Coast. The *Coast Rail Corridor Study* will examine both intercity and commuter rail service options to identify viable plans for future rail travel within the San Luis Obispo (SLO) region and beyond. Today's Amtrak rail service links the SLO region to destinations throughout the state via the [Coast Starlight](#) and to destinations in Southern California via the [Pacific Surfliner](#).



However, today's landscape of limited rail infrastructure and shared operations for freight and passenger rail with Union Pacific Railroad (UP), makes service infrequent and offers travelers few options. The SLO region anticipates significant growth in the coming years and must begin planning for the future now to create a multi-modal transportation system that includes reliable rail options that link seamlessly to the bus system – providing residents and visitors with travel options for getting to work, school, and recreational activities. The *Coast Rail Corridor Study* is made up of two planning efforts that will identify feasible options that are implementable over time.

1. Intercity Rail & Bus Service Implementation

Purpose: To increase rail service along the Central Coast and create better network connectivity between rail and local/regional bus services. The plan will identify potential options for rail operations, schedules, local transit connectivity, infrastructure and equipment needs, and governance.

2. Commuter Rail Feasibility

Purpose: To evaluate the feasibility of implementing regional commuter rail service between San Luis Obispo, Guadalupe, and Santa Maria with a possible extension to Paso Robles. The commuter rail plan will look at technology and service options, potential ridership, costs, and funding resources.

Both efforts will include a phased plan for implementation to best meet the needs of Central Coast communities in the study area.

Study Goals

The goals for improving intercity and commuter rail are to:

- Enrich passenger experience with more accessible service and more reliable schedules
- Provide more frequent rail service with improved connections to better serve residents and visitors
- Promote social equity, safety, and security
- Stimulate a vibrant economy and foster livable, healthy communities
- Enhance environmental sustainability with diverse travel options
- Preserve and enhance the Central Coast transportation network
- Sustain financial stewardship

PARTNER AGENCIES

As the facilitating agency of the CRCC, SLOCOG is responsible for implementing this study on behalf of the group. The CRCC is a coalition of five regional transportation planning agencies from Ventura to Santa Cruz that work together to improve passenger rail along the coastal route.

CRCC membership includes:

- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)
- Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)
- Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)
- Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC)
- Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC)

Other important partners for the CRCC and this study include:

- LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency
- Caltrans
- Amtrak
- Union Pacific Railroad (UP)

Regional stakeholders and the general public are also critical partners in this study to ensure that future rail plans meet the needs of SLO communities as well as neighboring communities in Santa Barbara and Monterey counties.

COMMUNICATIONS/ENGAGEMENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Finding a rail solution that meets the transportation needs of SLO and neighboring regions will require strategic and proactive collaboration. It will be critical for SLOCOG to create a multilingual and multifaceted communications program that reaches targeted audiences and meets the following goals and objectives.

Engagement Goals

- Create an open and transparent planning process through timely and effective information sharing and engagement activities
- Build understanding, awareness, and support for intercity and commuter rail as a viable travel option within a larger interregional transportation network
- Provide opportunities for effective, valuable public engagement and input throughout the planning process
- Ensure messaging is consistent with local, regional, and statewide planning documents

Engagement Objectives

- Provide diverse engagement activities that reach target audiences in a convenient and safe way to garner participation and seek informed input for the study
- Ensure relevant community organizations, environmental justice groups, Native American tribes, and communities identified as disadvantaged by SB 535 and AB 1550 are engaged for input throughout the planning process and partner with SLOCOG in sharing information
- Use multilingual traditional and online digital engagement strategies and tactics to broaden reach and connect with target audiences
- Engage key local and regional stakeholders as well as the general public
- Foster and maintain lasting relationships with the media, key stakeholder and the general public while promptly addressing concerns as they arise

COMMUNICATIONS/ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Technology and culture have drastically changed the way people seek information and communicate today. Personal smart devices and an evolving culture that communicates through social media and other online media outlets require agencies to use targeted traditional high-touch tactics blended with digital tools to reach the communities within the study area. Accessibility is critical in developing an engagement approach that not only reaches our audiences, but effectively engages to educate and seek informed input.

The engagement plan will focus on fostering relationships with trusted community stakeholder organizations that have established communications tools, so that they can act as ambassadors to the larger public – to help identify the correct communications medium and share information between their constituents and the project team. Each activity will be monitored for success so that SLOCOG can adjust the plan to fit the needs of the evolving effort.

Lastly, during unprecedented times such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, the health mandate for “social distancing” and quarantines, SLOCOG and its partners will initially lean on virtual and remote engagement methods to reach stakeholders and the general public. As the study moves forward and the situation evolves, SLOCOG will adjust activities accordingly to ensure that each engagement opportunity results in valuable time spent and input received.

While regular and ongoing communications will occur throughout the study’s planning efforts, there are four key milestones that will trigger a proactive communications program to share progress and seek informed input. Throughout these study milestones, the *Coast Rail Corridor Study* team will engage corridor-wide partners, stakeholders, and the general public.

Key Engagement Milestones

- Milestone 1: Gathering Initial Data & Establishing Goals & Objectives
Promote study and gather initial input on draft intercity and commuter rail goals/objectives
- Milestone 2: Identify Service Options
Maintain engagement and gather input on draft rail service options
- Milestone 3: Evaluate Service Options
Share analysis and screening results of draft rail service options, gather input
- Milestone 4: Prepare Implementation Plan Recommendations
Gather final input on intercity and commuter rail implementation plans prior to going to SLOCOG Board of Directors for adoption

Stakeholder & Public Engagement Plan Components

- Identification of target audiences
- Creation of tools and implementation tactics

- Informational Toolkit
- Engagement Activities
- Monitoring and documentation

I. IDENTIFICATION OF TARGET AUDIENCES

Contact Database

Central to the *Stakeholder and Public Engagement Plan* is the identification and maintenance of a contact database that contains a diverse group of regional and local stakeholders, organizations, and project partners who may be interested, impacted, and influential – in addition to potential property owners and/or occupants who reside within the study area. Understanding who we are trying to reach helps us understand how best to reach them. These contacts will not only receive information about the project but will also be asked to partner with the study team to disseminate valuable information. This database will evolve throughout the study and include key contacts from two stakeholder groups that will meet regularly throughout the planning effort.

II. CREATION OF TOOLS & IMPLEMENTATION TACTICS

Informational Toolkit

Messaging & Study Identity

To set this study apart from other corridor planning efforts, SLOCOG has developed a unique brand identity for all communications and tools. The unique identity will include targeted messaging specific to the *Coast Rail Corridor Study* that explains this effort and ultimately how it fits into the larger transportation network for the region and state. Once this is established, a website, collateral materials, and social media/media campaigns will be developed.

Collateral Materials

An informational toolkit will combine clear and concise content with visual aids in an effort to effectively communicate the study and specific components or engagement activities. Information will be distributed electronically as well as in hard copy should in-person meetings occur as health mandates deem appropriate. Some key elements of the toolkit include:

- Project Fact Sheet
- Online Surveys
- Electronic Notices
- Public Virtual Meeting Invitations
- Presentations

Coast Rail Corridor Website

As a main repository of information, SLOCOG has established the coastrailcorridorstudy.com website. This interactive site will provide updated

information, allow the public and key stakeholders to review information and submit input at any time during the planning effort.

Social Media & Media

Using SLOCOG's current Facebook and Twitter accounts, the Team will create and push project informational posts regularly throughout the study. Through a proactive effort, SLOCOG will coordinate with corridor stakeholders to share and tag posts for maximum exposure. Social media advertisements and boosted posts will also be a part of the communications. A regional media list will be established to allow SLOCOG to push media releases out to the larger region at key milestones during planning in an effort to continue building awareness about the study.

Engagement Activities

The plan incorporates targeted stakeholder meetings, briefings, and coordination as well as implementation of larger public forums to share information and seek timely input.

Stakeholder Engagement

Due to existing circumstances, SLOCOG will initially focus on virtual engagement activities that may evolve into in-person forums as health mandates allow. Stakeholder engagement includes development of two key working groups that will meet regularly throughout the study effort.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), is made up of agency partners within the *Coast Rail Corridor Study* who will come together at key milestones to receive project updates and provide valuable input into study elements that will guide the development of feasible rail solutions for San Luis Obispo County residents and visitors.

The TAC will meet up to four times and includes invitations for participation to the following agencies:

- California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA)
- Caltrain
- Caltrans District 5
- Caltrans Division of Rail and Mass Transportation (DRMT)
- Cities of Grover Beach, King, Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Maria
- Coast Rail Coordinating Council (CRCC)
- Guadalupe Transit
- LOMPOC Transit
- LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency
- Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST)
- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)
- Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)
- Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD)
- Santa Maria Valley Railroad (SMVRR)

- SLO Regional Rideshare
- SLO Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)
- SLO Transit
- Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC)
- Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)

The Community Working Group (CWG) consists of community-based organizations, businesses, and residential and civic associations who will meet at key milestones to share information. Their role as community ambassadors will be to help disseminate project information and share community feedback with the Project Team for consideration in the development of feasible rail solutions that meet the communities' needs.

The CWG will meet up to three times and include invitations for participation to the following organizations/associations:

CWG Current Representatives include:

- Atascadero Chamber of Commerce
- Atascadero State Hospital
- BikeSLO County
- California Polytechnic State University
- City of SLO Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST)
- Coalition of Labor Agriculture & Business of San Luis Obispo County (COLAB)
- Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)
- Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC)
- Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECOSLO)
- Friends of 40 Prado
- Healthy Communities Working Group
- Home Builders Association of the Central Coast
- Hourglass Project/REACH
- Land Conservancy of SLO County
- San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce
- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)
- Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition
- Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)
- Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce
- SLO Bike Coalition
- SLO County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)
- SLO County Commission on Aging
- SLO Railroad Museum
- SLO Regional Rideshare
- South County Chambers of Commerce
- U.S. Representative Salud Carbajal's Office

- Visit SLOCal

Also invited to participate include:

- Community Foundation
- County Real Property Services
- Cuesta College
- Downtown SLO
- Go831 Smart Commute Rideshare Program
- Healthy Eating Active Living SLO (HEALSLO)
- IQMS
- Latino Outreach Council
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- Paso Robles Chamber of Commerce
- San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLO RTA)
- SLO Farm Bureau
- The Nature Conservancy

Speakers Bureau

In addition to facilitating stakeholder group meetings, SLOCOG will proactively reach out to stakeholder organizations in the corridor who wish to receive a brief presentation or ask questions. This Speakers Bureau will be conducted virtually for safety reasons and so that we can tailor each effort to the organization and their key audience using various tools for sharing information.

Online Virtual Meetings (Stakeholder & Public)

To reach target audiences in a meaningful and effective way that is convenient and socially-distanced, SLOCOG will use virtual tools to engage. Stakeholder meetings will be held using Webex Events while using interactive elements such as polling and discussion.

The general public will be invited to participate in the study using the website as the main repository of information and incorporating an additional interactive Public Meeting page that navigates the audiences through key information. This meeting will be developed in Spanish and English and will be ADA accessible. To reach those who may not have access to technology, SLOCOG may call upon tools such as Telephone Town Halls or other means for reaching audiences within the corridor.

III. MONITORING & DOCUMENTATION

Accurate and ongoing measurement of communication and engagement activities will provide the opportunity to flex the *Stakeholder and Public Engagement Plan* as needed to meet identified activity goals. Any digital tools created will include analytics for

measuring results and effectiveness, and any promotional campaigns implemented will be tracked for targeted reach and attendance.

In addition to ongoing measurement, summary documents of comments and input received will be maintained and shared with the Team for consideration as draft rail plans are developed. At the conclusion of the study, a final summary report of the entire communications program efforts will be developed to capture all activities, deliverables, engagement results, and input documentation.