



**ADOPTED - 03/10/2023**

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

### **I. Introduction**

The Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority) is taking all necessary steps to ensure transportation equity in all of its activities and services through the preparation of a Public Participation Plan. The Public Participation Plan identifies a multi-faceted approach to reaching diverse populations within the Authority’s proposed project service area. It has been assembled to capture the methods, innovations and measurements of the agency’s commitment to meet and, when possible, exceed the prescribed requirements of Section 601 of the Civil rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). The Public Participation Plan will ensure that there is an established process to solicit and consider public comment regarding future service, project planning, environmental studies and construction. In particular, the plan will ensure that outreach to minority and/or limited English proficient (LEP) populations will occur during each and every public comment period.

Project development to-date has been advanced with outreach guided by the following elements of the Board adopted Sustainability Policy guiding equitable access (December 2018):

- Encourage engagement in planning and decision-making for the project to ensure a meaningful level of participation from disadvantaged communities and low- income communities and households.
- Strive to maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities and low-income communities and households in project planning and design.

The Public Participation Plan reflects these commitments and further builds on work previously completed to support completion of the Project Feasibility Report. The Public Participation Plan ensures there is a process to solicit and consider public comment prior to making significant decisions during project development. It will be updated no later than when the Authority is preparing to launch Valley Link service – but also any time sooner as needed to reflect current best practices and community needs and resources.

### **Project Overview**

The Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority was established on January 1, 2018 through the enactment of Assembly Bill 758 with the mandate to plan and deliver cost-effective and responsive transit connectivity between the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system and the Altamont Commuter Express. The Feasibility Report adopted by the Board in October 2019, identifies a proposed project that is now undergoing environmental review and further project development and design. The Proposed Project is a new 42-mile, 7-station passenger rail project that will connect the existing Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station in Alameda County to the planned Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) North Lathrop Station in San Joaquin County utilizing existing transportation rights-of-way where feasible. Regular service is planned

for throughout the day in both directions with timed connections with both BART and ACE services. Initial Operating Segments are also under consideration – from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station to either the Greenville or Mountain House Station.

The Valley Link Project Feasibility Report (October 2019) identified many communities in the Valley Link Project as “Disadvantaged Communities,” by definition of the California Public Utilities Commission – suffering from a combination of economic, health and environmental burdens. These communities suffer from decades of disinvestment, geographic inequity and poverty, resulting in pockets of concentrated low-income communities lacking adequate access to jobs, healthcare and educational opportunities. The proposed Downtown Tracy, River Islands and North Lathrop stations are all within geographic areas identified as disadvantaged. Areas designated as low-income are also near these stations, as well as the Mountain House station.

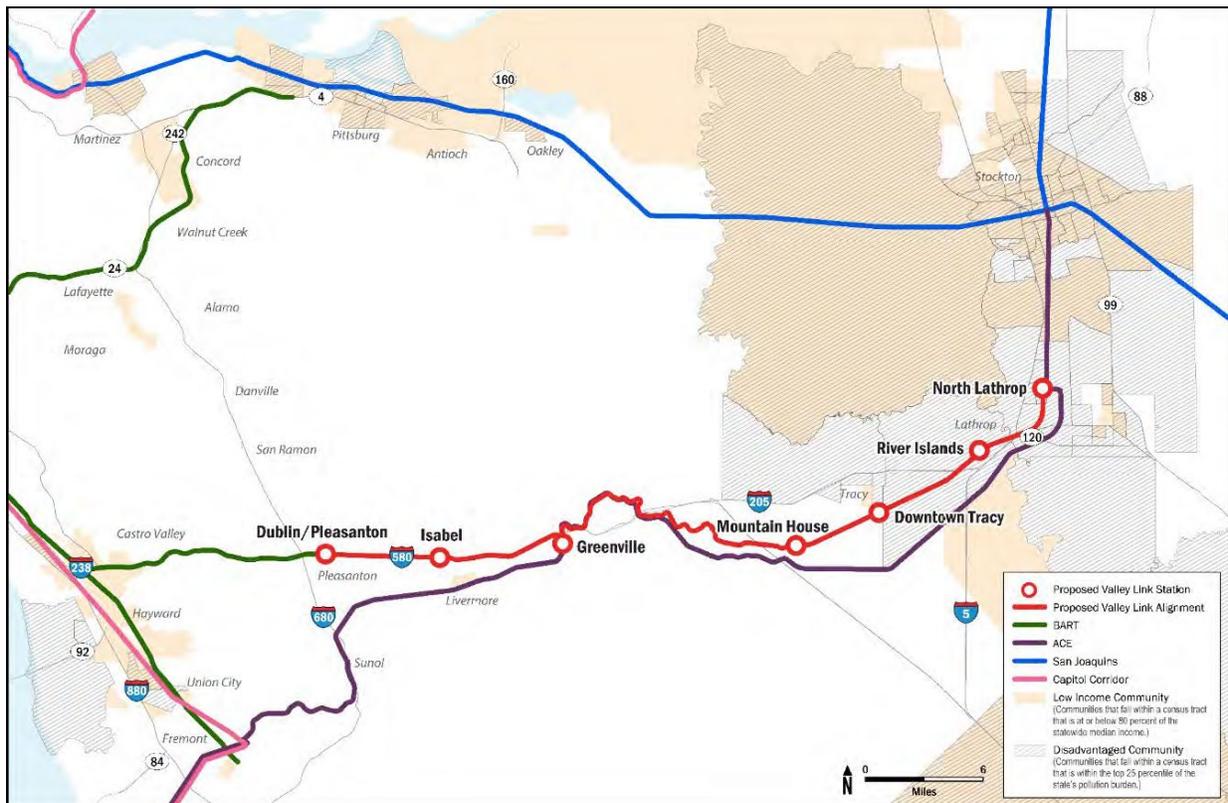


Figure 1 – Disadvantaged and Low-Income Communities

## II. Project Goals & Policy Guidance

The following are the Board adopted goals that are guiding project development:

- Improve connectivity within the Northern California Megaregion: connecting housing, people, and jobs.
- Establish rail connectivity between BART’s rapid transit system and the ACE commuter service.
- Pursue Project implementation that is fast, cost-effective, and responsive to the goals and objectives of the communities it will serve.
- Be a model of sustainability in the design, construction, and operation of the system.

- Support the vision of the California State Rail Plan to connect the Northern California Megaregion to the State rail system. Valley Link supports State transportation goals.

To support the advancement of these goals, the Board further adopted the Sustainability Policy which identifies key objectives and strategies for the promotion of equitable access and community input into project development and design:

**Equitable Access**

- Encourage engagement in planning and decision-making for the project to ensure a meaningful level of participation from disadvantaged communities and low- income communities and households.
- Strive to maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities and low-income communities and households in project planning and design.

**Station Area Planning**

- Work in partnership with communities to identify and incorporate high priority local goals and objectives for individual stations.
- Initiate service at earliest possible date and preserve land and right-of-way to allow for the implementation of phased design and infrastructure in support of Sustainable Community Strategies (SB375).

To achieve these objectives, and promote a key project goal of, “responsiveness to the goals and objectives of the communities it will serve,” staff outlined a work program aimed at effectively reaching out to a variety of stakeholders and incorporating their input into the planning process that included the following key elements:

- Identify a point person in each community to assist with identification of best approach for meaningful outreach.
- Focus on use of non-traditional, creative, grassroots approaches.

This work program also included meetings of a Station Ad Hoc Committee for San Joaquin Stations which was reconvened to review preliminary station layouts and identify a process for developing goals and objectives for community station area planning. In addition, a survey was developed for wide distribution through social media, employer newsletters and email blasts and the project website.

The proposed Valley Link project, as outlined in the Project Feasibility Report responds to Sustainability Policy direction and includes basic station infrastructure identified as needed to operate the system. The Board adopted TOD Policy (December 2019) provides further direction and guidance regarding the station plans to be developed by local jurisdictions prior to completion of final design. These plans, in combination with a requirement to meet corridor-level housing thresholds of 2,200 housing units per station, are intended to facilitate transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly station areas, seamless connections between rail, shuttle buses, and fixed bus service, and promotion of active transportation (bicycling and walking), use of zero emission vehicles, and shared rides. The Authority will work in partnership with local jurisdictions to support station area planning efforts, but these plans are not a part of the proposed project and are the responsibility of each sponsoring jurisdiction.

### III. Community Outreach - Efforts To-Date

All outreach efforts completed to-date have been advanced subject to Board adopted project goals and policy guidance and focused on project development and design of the project. Since March of 2020, the ability to conduct in-person outreach and meetings has been limited due to restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and all efforts have been conducted remotely online. Every effort has been made, however, to ensure the continued advancement of effective outreach to minority and/or limited English proficient (LEP) through this new format.

#### **Project Feasibility Report**

Upon establishment of the Authority in January 2018, an 18-month effort to complete a Project Feasibility Report was initiated and extensive community outreach efforts were launched in parallel. As mandated by Assembly Bill 758, the following are key elements that, at a minimum, were required to be in the report:

- Recommendations for expediting the development of cost-effective and responsive connectivity between the BART and ACE rail systems in the Tri-Valley.
- The identification of a preferred entity or entities to deliver transit connectivity, including the role each entity will play in planning, designing, financing, constructing, operating, maintaining, and the leasing, development of land, facilities or equipment necessary to deliver transit connectivity.
- A funding plan describing any grants, loans, allocations, fund transfers, or awards of local, regional, state, federal, or private funds that are proposed to be made available for achieving transit connectivity.
- A description of any plan to finance the development of transit connectivity, including a description of any revenue source or sources to be pledged for financing, the duration of time to complete the financing, and the estimated total cost of financing.
- A proposed schedule for completion of transit connectivity.
  
- Preliminary design for the project or projects to complete transit connectivity, including the identification of right-of-way, routes, stations, equipment and any other facilities necessary to achieve transit connectivity.

A Draft Feasibility Report was completed on June 12, 2019 and released for public review and comment through July 31, 2019. The Authority received over 140 comments from the public which were responded to in the Final Project Feasibility Report, adopted in October 2019. Following is a summary of outreach efforts conducted throughout the entire 18-month effort which had particular focus on the preliminary design of the system including preliminary location of station facilities and design. All outreach efforts were directed by Board policy and guided by representatives from member agencies including the Ad Hoc Station Committee for San Joaquin Stations, comprised of Board members from the City of Tracy, the Mountain House Services District and the City of Lathrop. These Ad Hoc Committee members, as well as designated points of contact from local jurisdictions, provided insight into when and where station workshops could be most effective. They also identified opportunities for community briefings and non-traditional grassroots approaches to outreach such as pop-up meetings throughout the communities and booths at community events and fairs. These efforts were aimed at meeting the diverse individualized needs of the communities along the 42-mile system.

## Station Workshops

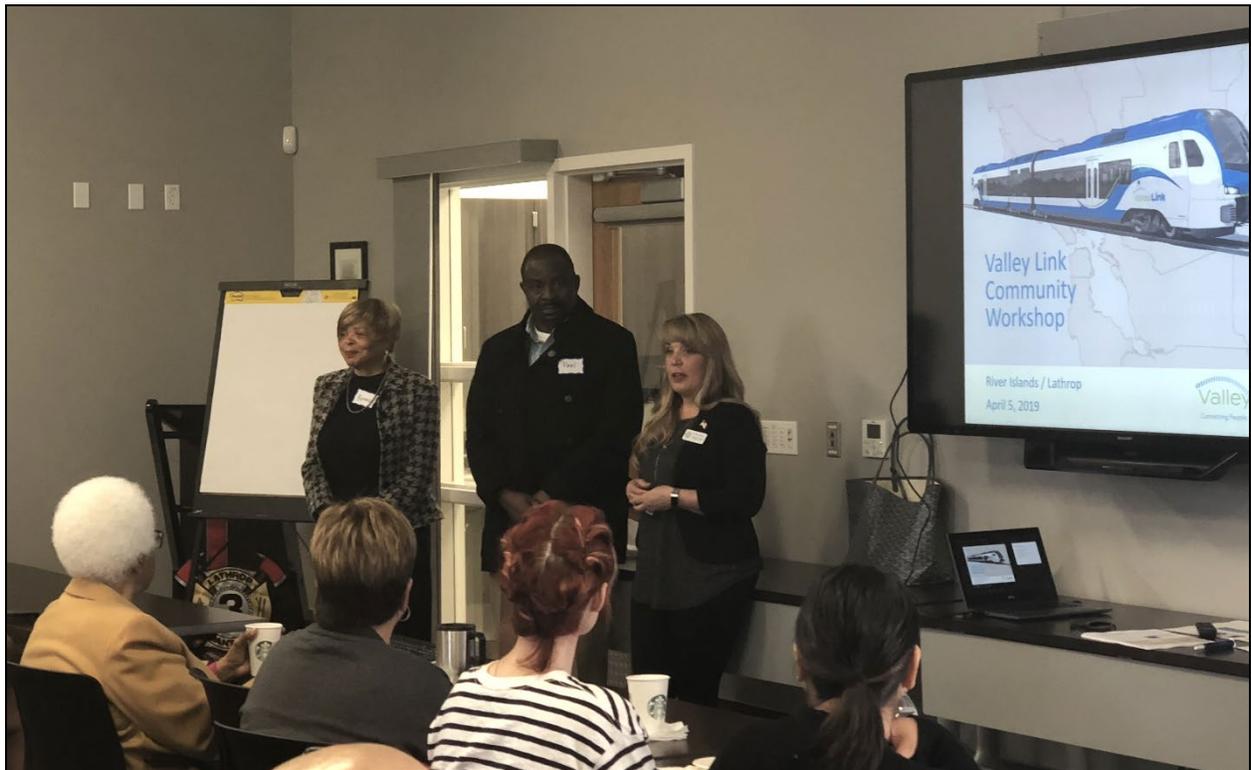


Station area workshops were held in the Lathrop, Tracy, Mountain House and Livermore communities at various days of the week and times. These workshops were used to collect input on priorities for various design aspects of the stations and the immediately surrounding areas. Topics included station architecture and amenities, modes and routes of access, and adjacent land-use opportunities. Project staff and consultants provided an update on project planning and provided opportunities to ask questions and make comments on the project. A project fact sheet was available in both English and Spanish at these meetings and at least one bilingual staff member was present to provide Spanish interpretation if requested. Following are the dates of these meetings:

Workshop	Date	Disadvantaged Community
Mountain House Workshop	February 16, 2019	X
Tracy Open House and Workshop	February 23, 2019	X
Livermore Workshop	March 13, 2019	
Lathrop/River Islands/Manteca Workshop	April 6, 2019	X



Board Chair Scott Haggerty speaks at a Community Workshop



Directors (from left) Bernice King Tingle, Paul Akinjo and Veronica Vargas at River Islands Workshop on April 6, 2019

## Pop-Up Meetings and Community Briefings



Throughout the Spring of 2019, Authority staff and consultants, conducted over twenty pop-up meetings and community briefings – responding to opportunities in large part suggested by local jurisdictions, to reach project stakeholders at community events, farmers markets, transportation hubs and everyday congregate points such as a popular Hispanic market in the Tri-Valley. Pop-ups were held at the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station during the evening commute, an ACE station, and an informal park/ride lot in the Altamont Pass. Informational booths were set up and staffed at the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade Festival in Dublin, the Lathrop Fair

and Farmer’s Markets in Tracy and in the Tri-Valley. There was also a booth at the Las Positas Community College Club Day. In addition, there were briefings and presentations made on request to Chambers of Commerce, Realtor Associations, the Downtown Merchants group in Tracy and business associations such as Innovation Tri-Valley and the San Joaquin Partnership. A partial list of these activities is identified below:

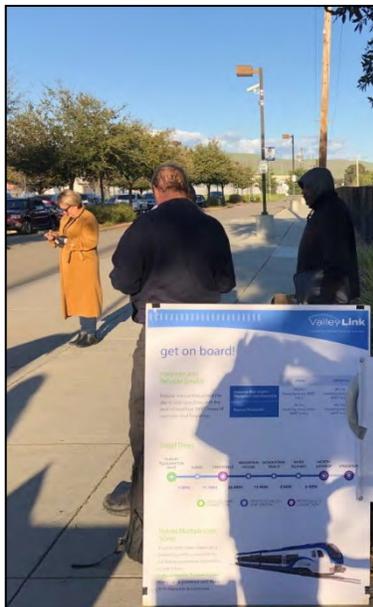
Event	Date	Disadvantaged Community
Mountain House Workshop	February 16, 2019	
El Concilio Coalition Meeting	February 22, 2019	X
Tracy Winter Farmer's Market	February 23, 2019	X
Tracy Open House and Workshop	February 23, 2019	X
CenTen Merchants Meeting	February 27, 2019	X
ACE Park and Ride Lot Pop-up (Vasco Road)	March 12, 2019	
Las Positas College Club Day	March 13, 2019	
Central Valley Association of Realtors (Lathrop Coffee)	March 13, 2019	X
ReMax Manteca Sales Meeting	March 13, 2019	X
St. Patrick's Day Festival – Day 1	March 16, 2019	
St. Patrick's Day Festival – Day 2	March 17, 2019	
Grantline (informal) Park and Ride Lot – Pop Up	March 19, 2019	
Livermore Farmers' Market	March 24, 2019	
BART Station Pop-Up (Dublin-Pleasanton)	March 26, 2019	
San Joaquin Partnership Meeting	March 28, 2019	X
BART Station Pop-Up (Dublin-Pleasanton)	April 2, 2019	
Dublin Farmers' Market	April 4, 2019	
Lathrop/River Islands Workshop	April 6, 2019	X
Contreras Market Pop-Up	June 1, 2019	



Lathrop Workshop in April 2019



Community briefings and commuter outreach pop-up events were held throughout the project area.





Pop-up at Las Positas College Club Day on March 13, 2019

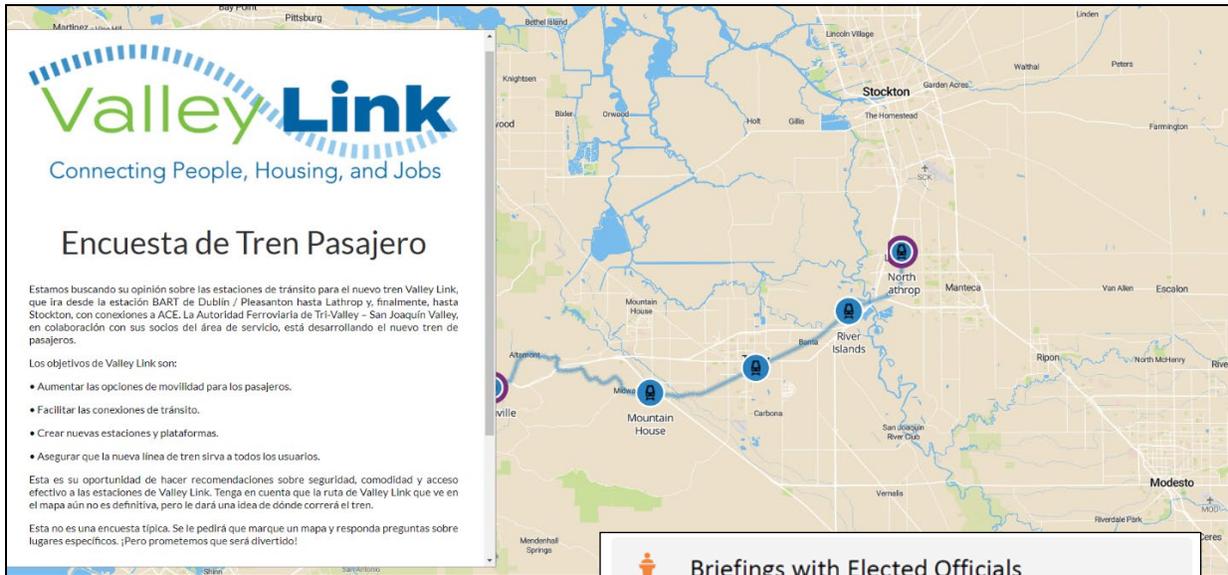
### **Bilingual Community Survey**

An online survey, launched on February 12, 2019, was available in both English and Spanish and kept open through June, 2019. This map-based survey allowed participants to geo-locate their responses and could be accessed from a QR code on an informational handout. The public was encouraged to complete the survey at outreach events, on the project website, and through email blasts and social media sites. The survey provided an opportunity for members of the community to provide input on their own time from any location without having to work around the schedule of an event.

The survey allowed the public to provide input on stations and station area amenities. This preference-setting survey gathered a broad range of feedback from self-selected participants representing a variety of community sources. The online survey instrument includes text, maps, and images. Results of the survey were presented to the Board and included in outreach analyses for the Final Project Feasibility Report.

The survey questions specifically addressed:

- Current home and work locations
- Commute mode
- Commute travel time
- Likelihood and frequency of riding the future Valley Link
- Trip purpose for riding Valley Link
- Which station the respondent would use
- How the respondent would access the station
- Desired station amenities, with pictures (parking, bicycle, “people,” and aesthetic amenities)
- Commute choice goals and barriers to riding Valley Link
- Demographics
- Open answer opportunity to provide any additional information desired

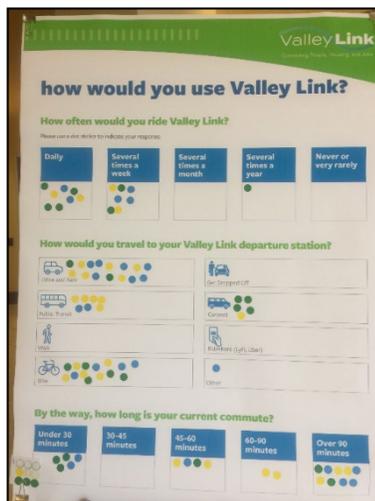


## Outreach Results

The multi-targeted outreach approach of “meeting people where they are,” when layered onto traditional channels of communication such as the project website, social media postings and press releases, resulted in over 2,000 points of contact and in the distribution of nearly 3,500 Project Fact Sheets throughout the development of the Project Feasibility Report. This approach expanded outreach to segments of the community who would not typically participate in more traditional formats and allowed project staff to receive input from a broader cross-section of the community.



The Commuter Rail Survey sought user input on transit stations for the Valley Link rail corridor.

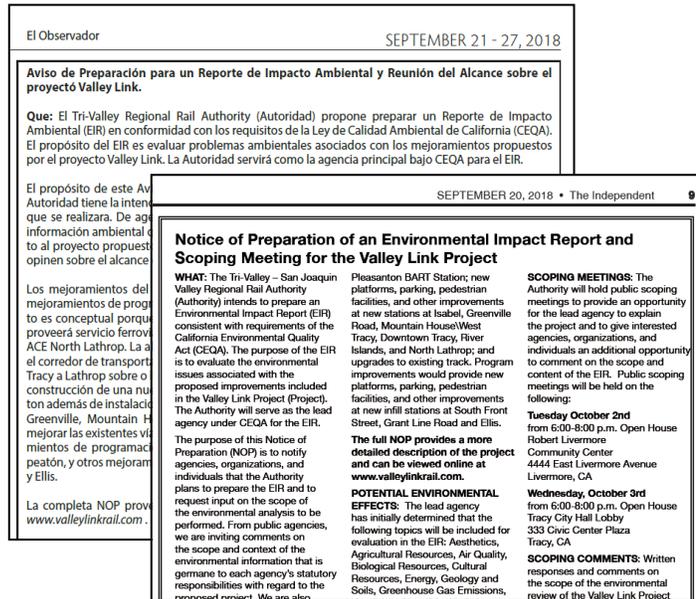


## Environmental / CEQA

The Authority is currently in the process of preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), consistent with all requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the EIR is to evaluate all environmental issues that may be associated with Valley Link Rail Project improvements. Following is a summary of all public outreach and issuance of public notices to-date.

### Notice of Preparation of an EIR and Scoping Meetings

The Authority published a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Valley Link Project on September 13, 2018 and the public scoping period was open until October 15, 2018. Public scoping meetings were held on October 2, 2018 in Livermore at the Robert Livermore Community Center and in Tracy at the Tracy City Hall on October 3, 2018. The release of the NOP was publicized in the Livermore Independent, Pleasanton Weekly, Tri-Valley Herald, Tracy Press, Manteca Bulletin, Stockton Record, and El Observador newspapers immediately following the release of the NOP. Newspaper postings included a summary of the project and the NOP, information on the two upcoming scoping meetings, and information on how to provide comments. The NOP, scoping meetings, and instructions on how to provide comments were also posted to the project website at [www.valleynlinkrail.com](http://www.valleynlinkrail.com); sent out in an email blast to a list of 446 stakeholders; and mailed to 160 public agencies, nearby jurisdictions, tribes, local organizations, and other stakeholders. Included in the email and mailing contact list were cities and counties containing disadvantaged communities as defined by Senate Bill 535. Staff bilingual in Spanish and English were present at both scoping meetings, and the NOP was translated to Spanish and published in the El Observador newspaper.

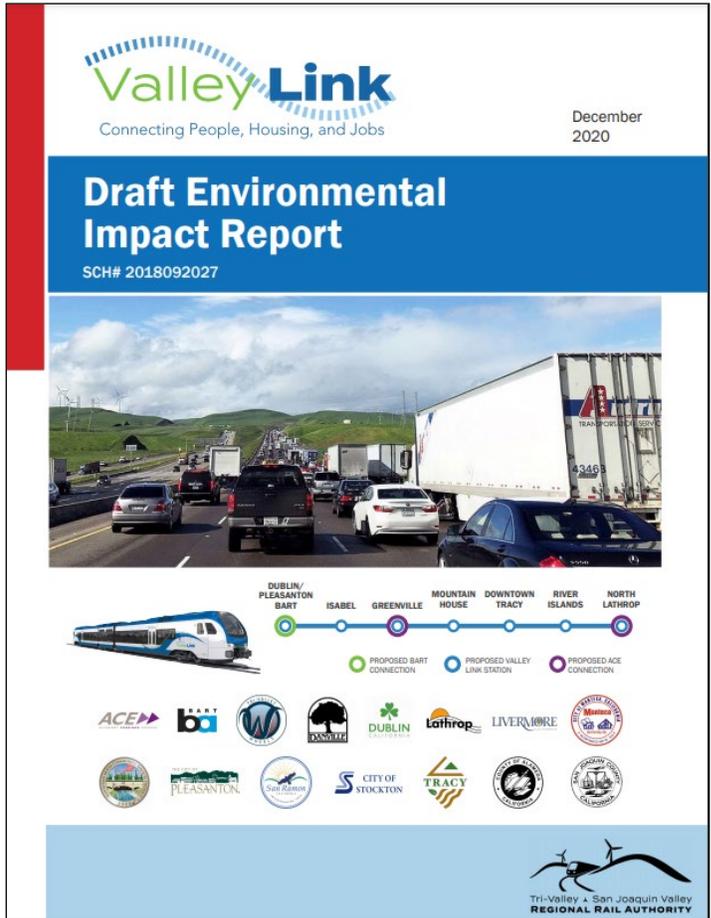


The Authority published a Notice of Preparation for the Valley Link Project in September 2018.



**Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft EIR**

The Authority, acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prepared a Draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the Valley Link Project (Proposed Project) and issued an NOA December 2, 2020. Written comments on the Draft EIR were accepted from December 2, 2020 through January 21, 2021 by either mail or the email addresses posted in the NOA. The release of the NOA was publicized in the Livermore Independent, Pleasanton Weekly, Tri-Valley Herald, Tracy Press, Manteca Bulletin, Stockton Record, and El Observador newspapers immediately following the release of the NOA. Newspaper postings included information on the three planned Online Open House Meetings, and information on how to provide comments. The NOA, notice of meetings, and instructions on how to provide comments were also posted to the project website at [www.valleylinkrail.com](http://www.valleylinkrail.com); sent out in an email blast to project stakeholders; and mailed to 160 public agencies, nearby jurisdictions, tribes, local organizations, and other stakeholders. It was also sent by mail to all property owners listed in the DEIR, Appendix C – Preliminary Right-of Way Requirements.



**Draft EIR – Online Open House Meetings**

The Authority held three online open house meetings to provide information about the Draft EIR and respond to general questions about the DEIR analysis. Under restrictions enacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these meetings could not be held in person. A presentation summarizing the project and the DEIR was provided instead at these online meetings and staff was available to answer questions. While staff was available to answer questions of a general nature at this meeting; the public was asked to submit all formal comments on the DEIR in writing.

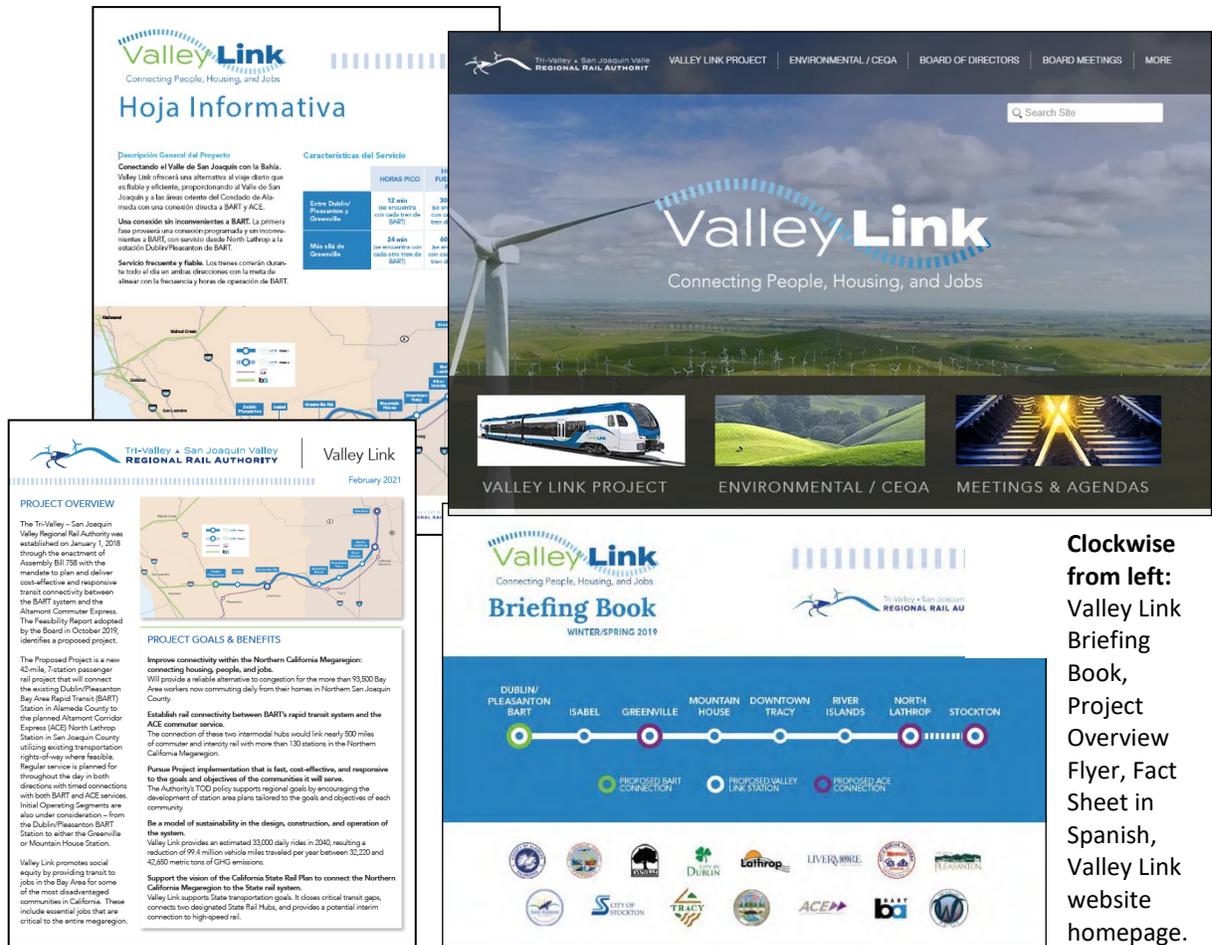


The three Online Open House Meetings were held on the dates and times listed below:

- Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020, from 9 am to 10:30 am.
- Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020 from 11:30 am to 1pm.
- Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020 from 5 to 6:30 pm.

## Ongoing Public Participation

In addition to targeted public participation in support of the Project Feasibility Report and advancement of the Environmental Impact Report, other efforts have been conducted on an ongoing basis to provide the public with project information and updates. These efforts have included the preparation of both written and electronic materials as well as regularly scheduled meetings of the Authority's Board and individual briefings of policymakers and stakeholder interests. Access to project materials and information about project Board meetings are provided on the project website and through email blasts to all individuals on the project email mailing list.



Clockwise from left: Valley Link Briefing Book, Project Overview Flyer, Fact Sheet in Spanish, Valley Link website homepage.

## Outreach Materials

Access to project information materials is provided through the project website. This has included a Project Briefing Book with vital project information concisely outlined for project stakeholders and policymakers. Project fact sheets have also been prepared in both English and Spanish languages and these materials have been updated regularly as the project has advanced. In addition to the website, project updates have also been provided by email to the project mailing list. This email distribution list has been maintained since project inception and includes all who sign up through the website as well as at community outreach meetings and events.

## Authority Board Meetings

The 15-member Authority Board of Directors is comprised of representatives from the cities of Dublin, Lathrop, Livermore, Manteca, Pleasanton, Stockton, Tracy, Danville, San Ramon, and the Mountain House Community Services District; the counties of Alameda and San Joaquin; and the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA), San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC). Prior to restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these meetings were held regularly in-person on the second Wednesday of each month – alternating locations between the Cities of Tracy and Livermore and the public was given an opportunity to provide verbal or written comment on each item at the meeting. In May of 2020, these regularly scheduled meetings were switched to an online format using a meeting platform that allows for both Board members and members of the public to provide input and comments on items under consideration by the Board. Meeting agendas are posted on the Valley Link website a minimum of 72 hours in advance and also sent to all individuals on the Valley Link mailing list.



**Top:** Virtual Authority Board of Directors meeting.  
**Above and below:** Pre- pandemic in-person Board of Directors meetings.



#### IV. Community Outreach – Future Efforts

As the Valley Link project is further advanced, the Authority will continue to support Board adopted project goals aimed at achieving equitable access. The Authority will encourage public participation at every decision opportunity. This will include targeted outreach to minority populations and those with limited English proficiency (LEP) when soliciting feedback on project development and decisions regarding future service and fare decisions, using the Language Assistance Plan. To ensure the effectiveness of this outreach, guiding principles and design guidance will be followed to ensure that meaningful and effective public participation may occur. A menu of public participation strategies has been identified and at critical project junctures, these strategies will be closely reviewed and, with continued guidance from local jurisdictions, a tailored approach will be selected from a menu of options described below to meet the individualized needs of each community. Additional ongoing strategies will also be used to promote and enhance outreach to low income, minority and LEP populations.

##### **Guiding Principles and Design Strategies**

To provide meaningful opportunities for the public, including low income, minority and limited English proficient populations, to be involved in Valley Link decisions, all outreach will be based on the following principles and design strategies. These factors will guide the Authority in choosing public participation strategies that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of low income, minority and LEP populations.

##### **Community Partnerships**

The Authority will work with community partners and stakeholders to identify the most effective methods to support participation within a particular area or cultural group.

##### **Target Population Needs**

The engagement process will accommodate participation in a variety of ways and be adjusted as needed. The methods will be tailored to match local and cultural preferences as much as possible, and all feedback received will be given careful and respectful consideration.

##### **Clear, Focused and Understandable**

Participation methods will have a clear purpose and use for the input, and will be described in language that is easy to understand. The Authority will strive to use videos, pictures, the use of real-life examples, art, pictograms and other digital tools that may be available whenever possible to explain harder to decipher technical details and increase public awareness and understanding.

##### **Authentic and Meaningful**

The Authority will support public participation as a dynamic and meaningful activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels of the organization. All feedback received will be given careful and respectful consideration.

##### **Translation and Interpretive Services**

Public hearing meeting notices will be produced and distributed according to the language translation thresholds in the Language Assistance Plan. These notices will advise that participants can request interpreter services 48 hours in advance of the meeting and, if needed, the Authority will provide at least one qualified interpreter at these meetings who is fluent in the requested language.

### **Public Participation Methods**

The Authority will be successful in reaching out to low income, minority and LEP populations by using a variety of methods to provide information, invite participation and seek input. The following menu of methods will be used when selecting effective public participation activities.

### **Printed Materials Produced by Authority**

Outreach information can be publicized in print materials produced by the Authority such as fact sheets, flyers and posters. If all information cannot be translated, notices could offer translated tags, describing where to obtain translation/interpretations.

### **Printed Materials Produced by Other Organizations**

Coordinating with community partners can be cost-effective and can help partner organizations provide information that is of interest to the groups they represent. Information can be publicized in local and regional community newsletters, church bulletins, flyers and other publications including local social service providers.

### **Authority Website**

The Valley Link website, [www.valleylinkrail.com](http://www.valleylinkrail.com), is a communications tool that provides substantial information about the Valley Link project including policies and plans. It also provides information about past and present meetings. Important studies and environmental documents are also posted. The Authority's website offers translation into Spanish. The Authority also uses social networking applications such as Facebook and Twitter and links to these sites are posted on the website too.

### **Webcast Meetings**

Webcast meetings and public participation methods to allow remote viewing and participation can provide access in lieu of in person meetings. Informational materials and videos can be posted online for advance review. Webcast meetings may include opportunities for web participants to ask questions or make comments through email or other web-based applications. Valley Link meetings have been in this format due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and consideration may be given to continuing to provide online access to meetings once restrictions are lifted and in-person meetings resume.

### **Postcards and Letters Distributed by Mail**

Participation methods can be publicized by letter or postcards distributed by mail. While it is costly to contact all interested persons by mail (regardless of their communications preference), it can be the most effective method for reaching a specific geographic area or population group. For example, sending a postcard in a targeted language to promote a participation activity may be an effective and cost-efficient manner to reach members of a specific community who may be directly impacted by a specific activity.

### **Media Targeted to Ethnic Communities**

Participation opportunities can be publicized through radio, television and newspapers that serve both English speaking and language-specific audiences, including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. Some local news or radio shows and local publications, such as free neighborhood weekly papers, are considered to be good sources of information and events in the immediate area. The Authority can tailor its message to the appropriate audience and remind participants that they can contact the Authority to receive information in their preferred language.

### **Coordination with Community Events**

In cooperation with community organizations, the Authority can continue its current practice of hosting information tables that provide materials about the Valley Link project and outreach methods at community events and activities. These events can range in scale from large city-wide events to localized activities. This outreach can be conducted in locations where people already gather, for instance, at community events such as fairs, festivals and farmer's markets.

### **Coordination with Other Agencies**

The Authority may develop partnerships with agencies that regularly communicate with local residents. The Authority could identify agencies in the project area by considering who serves the population and where they convene. The following types of agencies may be considered to reach low income, minority and LEP populations: faith based, geographic-specific such as tenant associations, neighborhood and community, education, social services, recreation, environmental, political, youth- and senior oriented organizations.

### **Regular Meetings of Civic and Community Organizations**

The Authority can provide updates on its policies, projects, strategies and methods by participating periodically in scheduled meetings of local civic and community organizations. These gatherings provide an opportunity to make a presentation and answer questions. Depending on the meeting format, the Authority may also be able to solicit public input at these meetings.

### **Community Meetings**

There are a variety of meeting formats that can be tailored to achieve public participation goals. Some meetings are designed to share information and answer questions. Others are designed to engage the public in providing input, establishing priorities and helping to achieve consensus on a specific recommendation. It is important to create an agenda that works to achieve the Authority's goals but is relevant to and not overwhelming for the public. For all meetings, the venue should be a facility that is fully accessible for persons with disabilities and, preferably, is served by public transit. The venue should be a location that is familiar and comfortable for the target audience. A convenient meeting time is important to low income, minority and LEP survey participants. Public participation methods can be scheduled at varying times of day and on different days of the week.

### **Open Houses**

This format provides opportunities for participants to receive information at their own pace by visiting a series of information stations that may include tabletop displays, maps, photographs, visualizations and other tools. Individual questions are responded to by staff and technical experts. Some open houses include a short educational presentation and comment period at a designated time. Participants are often given comment cards so they can provide written comments. Staff may be assigned to take verbal comments and transcribe them to provide a written record.

### **Workshops**

Workshops feature an educational presentation designed to orient participants to the issue being discussed. Workshops often include break-out or discussion groups, where participants have the opportunity to discuss topics in small groups. Participants can share their feedback orally during the small group discussion and in writing on comment cards. Workshops include the use of tools

that promote interaction and include: electronic or show-of-hands polling, mapping exercises, discussion questions, priority setting methods and other techniques to promote dialogue and discussion.

### **Large Group Discussion**

These meetings are usually focused on a specific topic and feature an informational presentation followed by a comment period. The comment period can be formal or informal depending on the number of participants and the meeting venue. Individual comments are often limited to 2-3 minutes, especially when there are a large number of people wanting to comment. This format can also include some interactive techniques suitable for a large group such as electronic or show of hands polling or short questionnaires or surveys.

### **Focus Groups**

The Authority can host discussion groups with small, targeted groups of participants. Focus groups can provide in-depth information about projects, plans or issues that may impact a specific group or community. These groups can be both formal and informal and can be conducted in a specific language.

### **Special Events**

The Authority can develop special events to announce, highlight or kick-off its outreach about a policy, program, project or activity. Events can be region-wide or focus on a specific station or geographic area. Along with providing information and/or collecting input, the events should include something interactive and/or entertaining to attract participation.

### **Walking Tours and On-Site Meetings**

The Authority can host walking tours and on-site meetings specific to locations that interest the public, in order to highlight an initiative, project or facility. Walking tours can be primarily educational and the Authority may ask participants to complete a survey or questionnaire during or after the tour. Walking tours may be helpful in collecting community opinion on issues such as station improvements. The Authority can work with community partners to host language specific meetings if warranted.

### **Pop-Up Events**

Informal “pop-up” events provide an opportunity to show up at various locations in the project area to present information and seek input from people who may not ordinarily make time to attend a more formal meeting. This may include setting up an informational table at key transit stations and park/rides, in the quad at community college locations, at local sporting events and at ethnic markets.

### **Key Person Interviews**

Authority staff and Directors could meet individually with community leaders and stakeholders to exchange information and gain early insight into upcoming outreach and engagement methods. This could specifically target and include low income, minority and LEP populations. Interviewees would be asked the same set of questions to allow the Authority to compare responses and identify key themes and issues. The Authority may contact interviewees throughout the span of a project or activity to keep them engaged in the public participation process.

## **Surveys**

The Authority may conduct surveys in print, by telephone and online to collect public opinion on specific topics or issues. The Authority could also consider strategies for letting people know that surveys are available in multiple languages, so as to increase the response rate from low income, minority and LEP populations.

## **Telephone Information and Comment Line**

Access to Language Line Services (LLS), which is an over-the-phone language interpretation service may be implemented. The Service would allow staff to call the LLS number when a stakeholder is unable to speak English. The professionally trained and tested LLS interpreters listen to the customer, analyze the message and accurately convey its original meaning to the Authority staff member, then respond to the customer in his/her own language. The LLS offers interpretation in 170 languages

## **Ongoing Public Participation Methods**

The Authority will continue to promote and enhance the use of its ongoing public participation methods to reach out to low income, minority and LEP population through the following ongoing methods.

- Authority website ([www.valleylinkrail.com](http://www.valleylinkrail.com))
- Valley Link Facebook page
- Valley Link communications via Twitter
- Regular communications with media
- Authority Board meetings
- Key person interviews
- Partnerships with community-based organizations
- Communication with elected officials
- Press briefings and news releases
- Regular emails to community members – on mailing list
- Participation in community fairs and festivals
- Language interpreters at public meetings when needed
- Written language assistance services

## **V. Conclusion**

The Authority's Public Participation plan will ensure that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age or any other protected category described by state or federal law be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any of the Authority's programs or activities. The Plan has been assembled to capture the methods, innovations and measurements representative of the Authority's commitment to meet and exceed the prescribed requirements as a recipient of public investment, Title VI regulations, and on behalf of LEP, low-income and minority communities. At this point in the development of Valley Link, the Authority has not determined the precise mode of travel to be operated, its frequency, specific geographic locations to be served, or on-board or station/terminal amenities. Once such decisions are made, the Authority will adopt more specific public participation procedures to ensure adequate opportunities for public input in service and fare decisions. The Plan will be updated no later than when the Authority is preparing to launch Valley Link service – but any time sooner as needed to reflect current best practices and community needs and resources.