



EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT
AND NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
DOWNTOWN SAN RAFAEL TO LARKSPUR EXTENSION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROJECT SPONSORS

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (Federal Lead Agency), Sonoma-Marin Area Regional Transit District (Project Sponsor).

PROJECT SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and 23 CFR part 771, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) District has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Downtown San Rafael to Larkspur Extension project in the Cities of San Rafael and Larkspur, California. The EA analyzes the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of two project alternatives: 1) the No Action Alternative; and 2) the Downtown San Rafael to Larkspur Extension Alternative (Proposed Action).

The Proposed Action would construct and operate 2.1 miles of passenger rail service from the SMART Downtown San Rafael Station (currently under construction) to the proposed SMART Larkspur Station, which is part of the Proposed Action. The Downtown San Rafael Station is to serve as the southern terminus of the locally-funded SMART project Initial Operating Segment (IOS), which runs approximately 43 miles from Airport Boulevard just north of Santa Rosa to Downtown San Rafael. The IOS began construction in 2012, and it is expected to be operational in 2016. The Proposed Action would extend passenger rail service southward from the locally-funded SMART project IOS terminus at Downtown San Rafael to Larkspur.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS AND PRINCIPAL PROJECT COMPONENTS

The Proposed Action would use the existing Northwestern Pacific (NWP) Railroad rail corridor, which has been acquired by SMART. The NWP Railroad historically provided freight and limited passenger rail service from Marin County to points northward. The stretch of the rail corridor proposed for use under the Proposed Action still is in place, but it has been non-operational for several decades. The right-of-way (ROW) remains intact and thus would require only limited improvements to be converted from its existing condition as an inactive freight railway to use as an active passenger railway. Proposed improvements and principal project components include the following:

Trackwork. Trackwork would include installing ballast, ties, rail, and other track material. All existing and inoperable NWP Railroad trackwork would be re-laid as part of the Proposed Action.

Trestle Bridges. Three wooden trestles are in place along the Proposed Action alignment. These trestles were installed as part of the former NWP Railroad operation and have been out of use for several decades.

West Francisco Boulevard Partial Realignment. As currently configured, the existing rail alignment crosses West Francisco Boulevard at grade immediately south of the San Rafael Creek crossing. As part of the Proposed Action, the existing locations of West Francisco Boulevard and the railroad alignment would be “flipped” between the San Rafael Creek crossing and Rice Drive. Doing this would eliminate two at-grade crossings at West Francisco Boulevard and Irwin Drive, providing more efficient and safe rail operations, and also would lessen disruptions to local traffic during train movement through the area.

At-Grade Road Crossings. The existing alignment between the Downtown San Rafael Station and Larkspur includes six public at-grade roadway crossings. From north to south, these are: 1) Third Street; 2) Second Street; 3) West Francisco Boulevard; 4) Irwin Street; 5) Rice Drive; and 6) Andersen Drive. Two of these crossings would be eliminated with the aforementioned “flip” of West Francisco Boulevard between Second Street and Rice Drive. Vehicular traffic at the remaining at-grade crossings would be controlled by bells, flashing beacons, and gates. Roadway surfaces at each crossing would be upgraded.

Cal Park Hill Tunnel. The Cal Park Hill Tunnel was originally constructed to facilitate NWP Railroad operations but was closed for several decades following the cessation of rail operations in the area. The tunnel was reopened and rehabilitated in 2010 to accommodate a multi-use pathway and future SMART rail service. With the exception of track installation, the tunnel essentially is ready for rail operations and would require minimal improvements to be prepared for that purpose.

Larkspur Station. The proposed Larkspur Station would have boarding platforms that would extend the full length of the passenger boarding area, permitting level boarding to accessible cars of all trains stopping at the station.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The EA evaluates potential impacts to air quality, biological resources, cultural and paleontological resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use, noise and vibration, safety and security, socioeconomics and environmental justice, traffic and transportation, and visual resources. The EA also includes mitigation for potential adverse effects associated with the Proposed Action. SMART and FTA have also undertaken consultation requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act regarding the potential impacts to historic properties as a result of undertaking the alternatives. Consultation has also been initiated under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act regarding potential effects to threatened and endangered species and their habitats and also the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act concerning potential effects to Essential Fish Habitat.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

A public review period will begin after the publication of the Notice of Availability on December 19, 2014. **The close of the public review period has been extended to February 5, 2015.**

WHERE TO GET THE EA

Information on the project, as well as the EA, is posted on the project website at <http://www2.sonomamarintrain.org/index.php/docs/eir/>. You can request a paper copy or CD of the EA from the following:

Hamid Shamsapour
Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) District
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954
Telephone: (707) 285-8180 FAX: (707) 794-3037
Email: hshamsapour@sonomamarintrain.org

Copies of the EA are also available for viewing at the following locations:

Location	Address	Hours
SMART District Office 707-794-3330	5401 Old Redwood Highway Petaluma, CA 94954	Monday thru Friday: 8-5 Saturday, Sunday: CLOSED

Location	Address	Hours
San Rafael Public Library Downtown Branch 415-485-3323	1100 E Street San Rafael, CA, 94901	Monday: 1-8 Tuesday thru Thursday: 10-8 Friday and Saturday :10-5 Sunday: 1-5
Larkspur Public Library 415-927-5005	400 Magnolia Avenue Larkspur, CA 94939	Monday, Tuesday: 10-9 Wednesday, Thursday: 10-7 Friday, Saturday: 10-5 Sunday: CLOSED
Petaluma Regional Library 707-763-9801	100 Fairgrounds Drive Petaluma, CA 94952	Monday: CLOSED Tuesday: 10-6 Wednesday 10-8 Thursday, Friday: 10-6 Saturday: 10-4 Sunday CLOSED
Central Santa Rosa Library 707-545-0831	211 E Street Santa Rosa, CA 95404	Monday: CLOSED Tuesday: 10-6 Wednesday 10-8 Thursday, Friday: 10-6 Saturday: 10-4 Sunday: 2-6

HOW TO COMMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Interested agencies, organizations, and members of the public can submit written, emailed, phoned, or faxed comments during the public review period to the attention of:

Hamid Shamsapour
 Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) District
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 Petaluma, CA 94954
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