PALM DESERT RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Kimley»Horn
Expect More. Experience Better.

PERKINS EASTMAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study wouldn't be possible without the hard work and support of the following teams and people:

City of Palm Desert

Karina Quintanilla - Mayor
Jan Harnik – Mayor Pro Tem
Eric Ceja – Director of Economic Development/Public Affairs
Vanessa Mager – Business and Community Outreach Coordinator

Project Team

Kimley-Horn
Perkins Eastman
Kosmont

Community Stakeholders

Riverside County Regional Rail Commission
California State University San Berandino
The Berger Partnership and Acrisure Arena
Local Homeowner Associations
The City of Palm Desert
Local Transit Service Operators

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Table of Contents

1. Introduction, Background and Purpose 1
   - 1.1. Introduction 1
   - 1.2. Background and Project Purpose 2
   - 1.3. Purpose of Report 2
2. Literature Review 3
   - 2.1. Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project (Tier 1 EIR and Project Factsheet) 3
   - 2.2. City of Palm Desert Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) (May 2021) 3
   - 2.3. Palm Desert General Plan 4
   - 2.4. California State University, San Bernardino – Palm Desert Campus Master Plan 4
   - 2.5. Current Planning Efforts 4
   - 2.6. Future Planning Efforts 5
3. Existing Condition Analysis 6
   - 3.1. Current Rail Service and Existing Rail Plan 6
   - 3.2. Location Context 8
   - 3.3. Existing Land Uses 9
   - 3.4. Zoning 11
   - 3.5. Roadway Volumes 12
   - 3.6. Existing Transit Facilities and Ridership 13
   - 3.7. Ridership Estimates 16
4. Community Meetings and Stakeholder Engagement Summary 17
   - 4.1. Consulted Interest Holders 19
5. Prioritization of Project Implementation 20
   - 5.1. Site Preparation 20
   - 5.2. Site Circulation and Parking 20
   - 5.3. Station Facilities 20
   - 5.4. Rail Platforms and Vertical Circulation 21
   - 5.5. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Improvements 21
6. Station Site Selection and Feasibility Analysis 22
   - 6.1. Station Site Design Considerations 22
   - 6.2. Station Location Preliminary Selection and Screening 23
   - 6.3. The Palm Desert Transit Hub Vision 33
   - 6.4. CEQA Preliminary Environmental Study 41
   - 6.5. Cost Estimate 44
7. Potential Funding Sources 46
   - 7.1. Grant Funding Sources 46
   - 7.2. Value Capture and Other Financing Mechanisms 47
   - 7.3. Funding Partners 48
8. Conclusion and Next Steps 50

Appendix A: Station Ridership Density Methodology and Results A1

Letters of Support L1

List of Figures

Figure 1: Proposed Service within the California Rail Plan 6
Figure 2: RCTC Rail Study Map 7
Figure 3: Local Context Map 8
Figure 4: Existing Land Uses in Project Area 9
Figure 5: Unbuilt Land Ownership along Project Corridor.....10
Figure 6: Zoning in Project Area 11
Figure 7: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Volumes in Project Area.....12
Figure 8: Existing SunLine Transit Routes and Stops in Palm Desert 14
Figure 9: Transit Boardings in FY 22.....15
Figure 10: Identified Station Sites 24
Figure 11: Station Platform and Track Design Assumptions 28
Figure 12: Anticipated profile for Gerald Ford Drive 30
Figure 13: Cook Street Site Evaluation Map 31
Figure 14: Palm Desert Transit Hub Visioning Sketch.....33
Figure 15: Palm Desert Transit Facility Conceptual Site Plan.....34
Figure 17: Palm Desert Transit Facility Rendering.....35
Figure 16: Palm Desert Transit Facility Conceptual Site Plan #2...35
Figure 18: Palm Desert Transit Facility Rendering #2.....35
Figure 19: Example of Envisioned Programs for the Palm Desert Rail Station.....38

List of Tables

Table 1: SunLine Ridership Figures (Fiscal Year 2022) 13
Table 2: Station Ridership Estimates (2028) 16
Table 3: Key Themes from the Public Meetings 18
Table 4: Station Site Assessment, July 2023 Open House.....25
Table 5: Palm Desert CEQA Site Evaluation.....42

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Nestled in the vibrant heart of California's Coachella Valley, Palm Desert shines as a regional hub among eight municipalities. Here, opportunities converge, beckoning residents, students, and tourists to experience Palm Desert firsthand.

Situated just 120 miles east of Los Angeles and a mere 15 miles from Palm Springs, this dynamic city serves as the educational center for communities from San Bernadino to Imperial Counties. With two esteemed university campuses and a thriving community college within close proximity to the proposed rail station site, Palm Desert proudly nurtures a culture of learning, particularly among those from underserved communities.

But Palm Desert offers more than just academic prowess. Its vibrant tapestry of recreational, shopping, and entertainment amenities, set against the backdrop of a uniquely beautiful desert landscape, provides an unparalleled quality of life for residents and visitors. The City has the largest workforce in the Coachella Valley and is home to many cultural activities and world-class events. This premier resort destination thrives as a safe and sustainable community, drawing inquisitive minds and innovative employers alike.

With a stable population of approximately 53,000 year-round residents, an additional 32,000 seasonal dwellers add to the vibrancy of our community each year. Yet, it's the influx of visitors that truly sets the Coachella Valley apart from our neighboring communities. Welcoming a staggering 14.1 million tourists annually, the Valley is a tourist hotspot, and Palm Desert is in the middle of the action. Among these visitors, 50% are from the Los Angeles area, many for only a day trip or weekend getaway, a perfect audience for regular rail service between our two regions.

Palm Desert prides itself on a robust transportation network, boasting dedicated bike lanes, golf cart infrastructure, and SunLine Transit bus services, all complemented by well-maintained roads. Yet, despite these amenities, access to the city remains largely reliant on Interstate 10 and Palm Springs International Airport, which welcomed 3.2 million passengers in 2023, alongside limited Amtrak passenger rail service. While neighboring Palm Springs is a stop on Amtrak routes to Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Chicago, trains are only scheduled for overnight stops. The absence of regular commuter passenger rail service underscores a crucial gap in connectivity. Introducing such a service would not only enhance transportation capacity but also offer a sustainable, accessible option for local commuters, regional students, and visitors alike, facilitating seamless journeys to the heart of the Coachella Valley, Palm Desert.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT PURPOSE

Residents of Palm Desert, and the Coachella Valley as a whole, have long expressed a desire for inter-city rail service. This would provide residents and tourists the option to travel to destinations such as the Inland Empire or Greater Los Angeles area without using I-10. The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) have also expressed their support for daily intercity passenger rail service in the Coachella Valley in various existing plans.

As the population and tourism to Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley increases, a rail station would create multiple benefits for the region. These include decreasing the overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) of the region, lowering carbon emissions, increasing the mobility of non-drivers or those without vehicles, and serving as an alternative transportation method to events, such as concerts and sporting events at the Acrisure Arena and the Coachella Arts & Music Festival. This study analyzes the existing and future market for a passenger rail station in Palm Desert, the candidate locations for a station, and the existing and future connectivity to the site. This study aligns with the previous RCTC Coachella Valley/San Gorgonio Rail Study adopted in 2022. This report describes the available land in Palm Desert that could house the station and the process used to identify one locally preferred station location for new rail service near Cook Street and Gerald Ford Drive.

SunLine currently provides limited weekday commuter service through the San Gorgonio pass to San Bernardino that draws tens of thousands of riders per year. The proposed rail service will broaden and enhance that connection to draw more types of users, trip purposes with faster, more reliable, and farther reaching service.

This study expands on the Coachella Valley/San Gorgonio Rail Study by identifying the ideal sites for the rail station and includes a conceptual, or “blue-sky,” envisioning of connections between the proposed station and the existing transportation network in Palm Desert. This includes a Multimodal Transport Hub to support all travel modes throughout Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley, with potential connections to bus transit, bicycle travel, pedestrian travel, shuttle buses, ride hailing services, and a pedestrian bridge across I-10. With input from local officials and residents of Palm Desert, the City of Palm Desert Rail Station Feasibility Study represents the collective vision for rail service in the City.

1.3. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is the culmination of all the previous efforts conducted for the Palm Desert Rail Station Feasibility Study compiled in one document. It includes the following components:

- **Review of Existing Conditions**
- **Relevant Literature Review**
- **Summary of Community Engagement Efforts**
- **Development of the Site Selection Criteria and Subsequent Evaluation**
- **Initial Cost Estimates**
- **Implementation Plan**
- **Potential Funding Mechanisms.**

This report will also recommend next steps that the City and its partners should take in beginning design and construction of a new station and securing passenger service.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study incorporates regional and local planning efforts that relate to the potential station location near Cook Street and Gerald Ford Drive. These efforts range from long-range regional planning to local specific plans. The following literature review sections summarize some of the planning documents that were evaluated for any improvements to the Monterey Avenue and Cook Street corridors, as well as any areas that complement or conflict with the rail service. They include a variety of land use and transportation planning projects that can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Palm Desert's existing and future transportation conditions to the Monterey Avenue and Cook Street Corridors. There is already a significant number of transit oriented, development-supportive land uses in the potential station area that could directly serve and be served by station operations including 4,056 hotel rooms, 5,766 units of multifamily housing, and over 6 million square feet of built retail space. The plans that were reviewed support the continued creation of transit-oriented development opportunities in the station area.

2.1. RIVERSIDE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (RCTC) COACHELLA VALLEY – SAN GORGONIO PASS RAIL CORRIDOR SERVICE PROJECT (TIER 1 EIR AND PROJECT FACTSHEET)

The San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project serves the many communities of the Coachella Valley with daily intercity passenger rail service between Indio in the Coachella Valley through San Gorgonio Pass to Los Angeles Union Station and assists with coordination of all public transportation services within Riverside County. The San Gorgonio Pass Rail Corridor Service Project addresses the first phase of initial service development planning and alternative analysis to identify potential routes in the Coachella Valley – San Gorgonio Pass Corridor. The regional intercity passenger rail service will provide customers in these communities with an alternate mode of travel that will link them to the Coachella Valley and the Pass Area. This plan provides an overarching vision and strategic guidance for buildable alternatives for daily intercity rail service for the Coachella Valley. The goal is to ensure an easement of congestion on local roads and freeways, and provide new economic opportunity, mobility, and quality of life.

2.2. CITY OF PALM DESERT LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN (LRSP) (MAY 2021)

The City of Palm Desert Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) outlines a series of systemic infrastructure improvements and policy enhancements to improve roadway safety and reduce vehicle collisions in the City of Palm Desert. The plan analyzes all reported crashes that occurred in Palm Desert from 2015 to 2019 and identifies intersections and roadway segments with a high risk for collisions. The plan then proposes improvements for the near-, middle-, and long-term, as well as opportunities to apply for funding programs such as the Highway Safety Improvement Plan (HSIP).

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

2.3. PALM DESERT GENERAL PLAN

The Palm Desert General Plan is a document designed to guide the growth and development of Palm Desert. The document provides goals and policies which will assist the City in achieving its economic and community development objectives. The General Plan describes the City's goals and strategies related to transportation in the mobility element. The plan envisions an interconnected multimodal transportation system consisting of automobiles, public transit, golf carts, bicycling, and walking. The element focuses on providing a balanced transportation system that serves all modes of travel safely and efficiently.

2.4. CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO – PALM DESERT CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

The California State University San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus (CSUSB PDC) Master Plan represents a vision of the opportunities in which the intellectual and creative pursuits of the University and the surrounding community could support and advance the CSUSB education mission. The goal is to ensure that there is transportation and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity to access the campus and its facilities.

2.5. CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

A review of several additional planning documents was completed to make sure previous efforts were built upon. The following is a list of the documents that were reviewed:

- California State Rail Plan
- Better Connected Indio: Indio Multi-Modal Feasibility Study
- SunLine Transit Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) FY23-25
- SunLine Transit Agency Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan
- Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) Active Transportation Plan (ATP)
- RCTC Next Generation Rail Study
- Riverside County Long Range Transportation Plan (2016)
- Cotino Project Site (Disney Master – Planned Community in Rancho Mirage)
- CV Link Coachella Valley Active Transportation Route
- CV Link Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Transportation Plan

2.6. FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS

The literature review conducted for this study included 18 development plans ranging from new residential developments to hotels and commercial projects. These are described in more detail in the literature review memorandum. The potential impact and benefits of these developments continue to support the preferred station location as they will provide additional housing and services in the station service area, while not overburdening the transportation infrastructure needed for station access and community mobility.

An economic analysis of proposed station operations and activity suggest that 14,000 square feet of additional convenience and quick service food and beverage, 100 additional hotel rooms near the station site, and 100 more units of workforce housing will be needed to take full advantage of the station's potential and would generate approximately $500,000 per year in 2023 dollars which could in turn provide much of the needed support for station operations and maintenance.

3. EXISTING CONDITION ANALYSIS

3.1. CURRENT RAIL SERVICE AND EXISTING RAIL PLAN

The Coachella Valley is currently served by Amtrak rail service at the Palm Springs Station. This station is served by the Texas Eagle and Sunset Limited services, which run as a combined train on this portion of the route, three times per week in each direction. In FY 2022, the Texas Eagle Service served 253,491 riders and the Sunset Limited served 73,904 riders along the entire route. The Palm Springs Amtrak Station and the roads that access it carried 2,294 riders in FY 2022 on these Amtrak services. However, the Palm Springs Amtrak station faces issues with inclement weather, such as heavy winds and blowing sand, which can affect operations. Indian Canyon Road is also vulnerable to closures and service disruptions due to sand intrusion and flooding during both rain and wind events. These issues have led to lengthy station closures in 2021 and 2023 and make the Palm Springs station a less reliable location for passenger rail service to continue Amtrak service. A station with Amtrak service in Palm Desert would better serve the region, as it is less likely to face inclement weather, is central to Coachella Valley population centers, and has better access to wider valley communities.

Additional passenger rail service between the Coachella Valley and Los Angeles is part of the California Rail Plan. The Plan proposed operations between the Coachella Valley and Los Angeles by 2040 with hourly service to San Bernardino and Riverside.

Figure 1: Proposed Service within the California Rail Plan

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

RCTC has studied rail operations in more detail through their rail study and Tier 1 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and has identified a route that parallels I-10 through Coachella Valley to Colton, Interstate 215 (I-215) and State Route 91 (SR-91) to Fullerton, and Interstate 5 (I-5) to Los Angeles Union Station. The plan proposes to use the existing rail stations in Palm Springs, Riverside, Fullerton, and Los Angeles. It also suggests potential new stations in the Coachella, Indio, Palm Desert (Mid-Valley), Beaumont, Pass Area, and Loma Linda areas. **Figure 2** shows the proposed service and potential stations as outlined in the RCTC rail study.

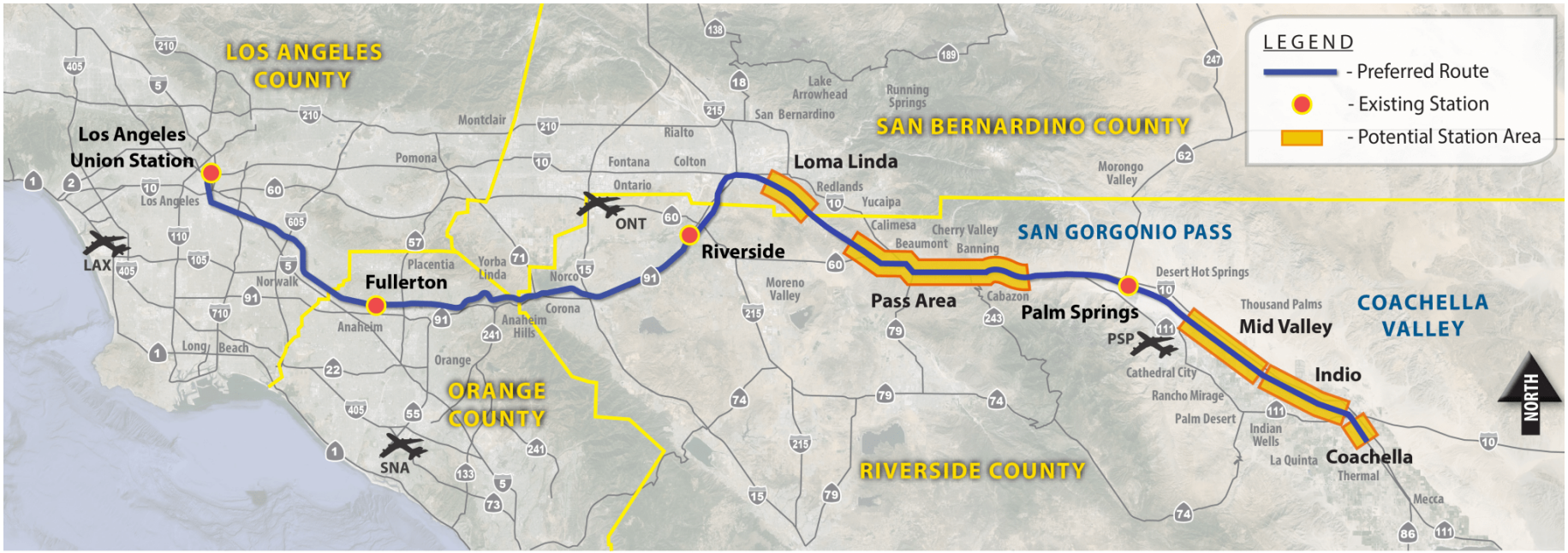


Figure 2: RCTC Rail Study Map

All funds have been secured toward a Tier 2 EIR, which will study specific stations and detailed engineering concepts along the rail corridor. The proposed service will be two daily roundtrips between Los Angeles and Coachella with an approximate trip time of 3 hours and 15 minutes. There may be additional tracks installed at selected locations to enhance train travel speeds, minimize delays, and maintain safety. The RCTC plan calls for service within 10 years, dependent upon funding.

3.2. LOCATION CONTEXT

The City of Palm Desert is located approximately 120 miles east of Los Angeles and approximately 150 miles west of Yuma, Arizona. The existing rail line is situated parallel to the I-10 freeway and is located along the northern boundary of the City of Palm Desert.

The potential stations analyzed in this study included six sites with sufficient open space to house the station along the rail line in the City of Palm Desert. Ultimately, the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive location located near CSUSB PDC and Acrisure Arena was selected as the most suitable locally preferred location. Acrisure Arena had just under 1 million visitors in 2023. CSUSB PDC currently has about 2,200 students enrolled; however, the campus master plan projects an enrollment of 8,000 by 2035. Residential growth will also be seen within a 2.5-mile radius, with an additional 6,221 units under construction. The City of Palm Desert is also in process of building two parks in the area, one 20-acre community park and one regional park, all within one mile of the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive station location.

This increase in enrollment, along with increased events at the arena, would provide additional potential ridership for a rail station in Palm Desert. **Figure 3** shows the local context of the project.

Figure 3: Local Context Map

3.3. EXISTING LAND USES

Data from the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) 2021 Land Use Model was used to explore the existing land uses in the project area. There are several vacant parcels along the existing rail line near both the Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive and Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive sites; however, the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive site has more vacant land that fronts an access road, whereas the vacant land at Monterey Avenue/ Dinah Shore Drive is further from an access road. **Figure 4** on the following page shows the existing land uses in the project area.

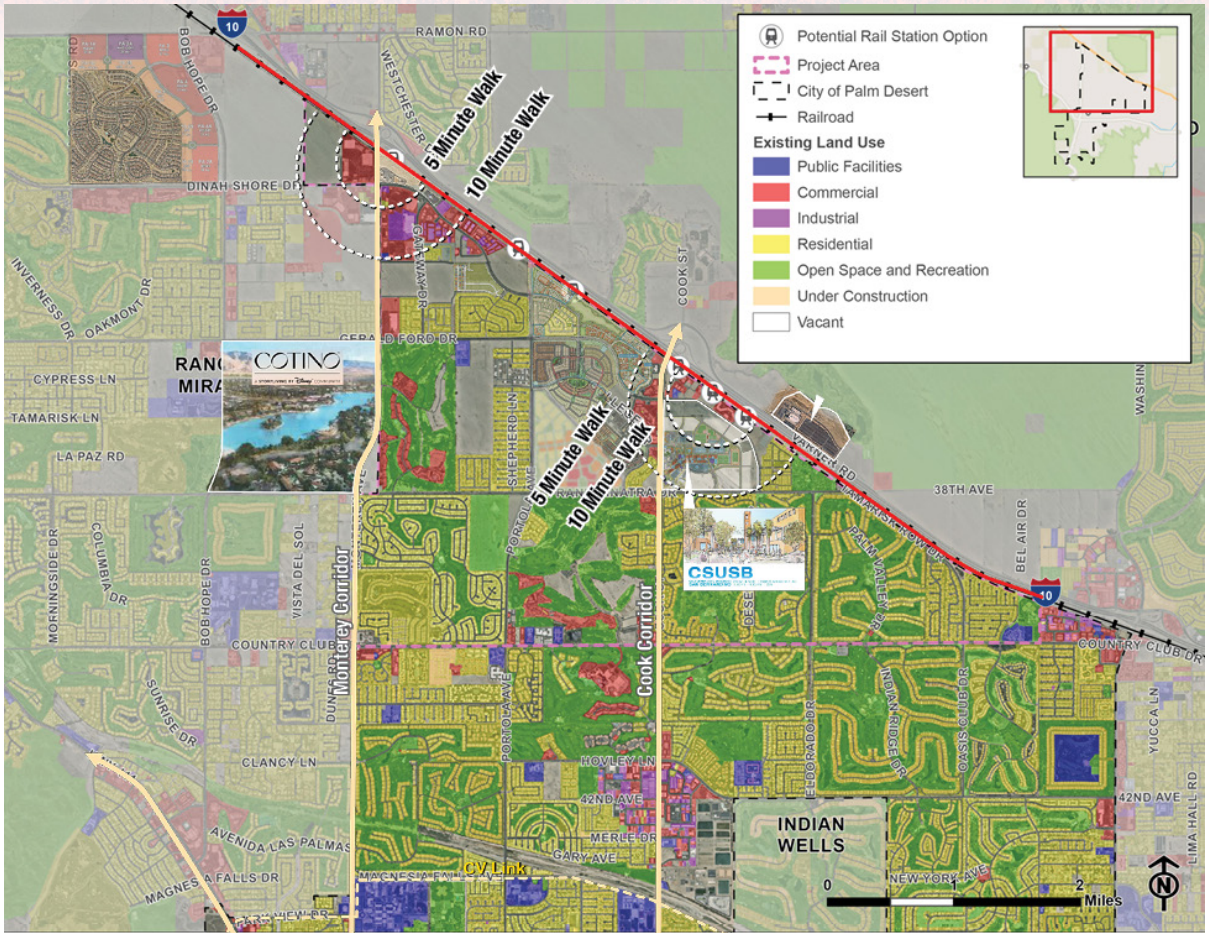


Figure 4: Existing Land Uses in Project Area

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

The existing Amtrak station at Palm Springs occupies approximately four acres of land. As shown by **Figure 5**, assuming the Palm Desert station will need to be at least as large as the Palm Springs station, there are no sites east of the Eldorado Drive area that could accommodate a sufficiently large station.

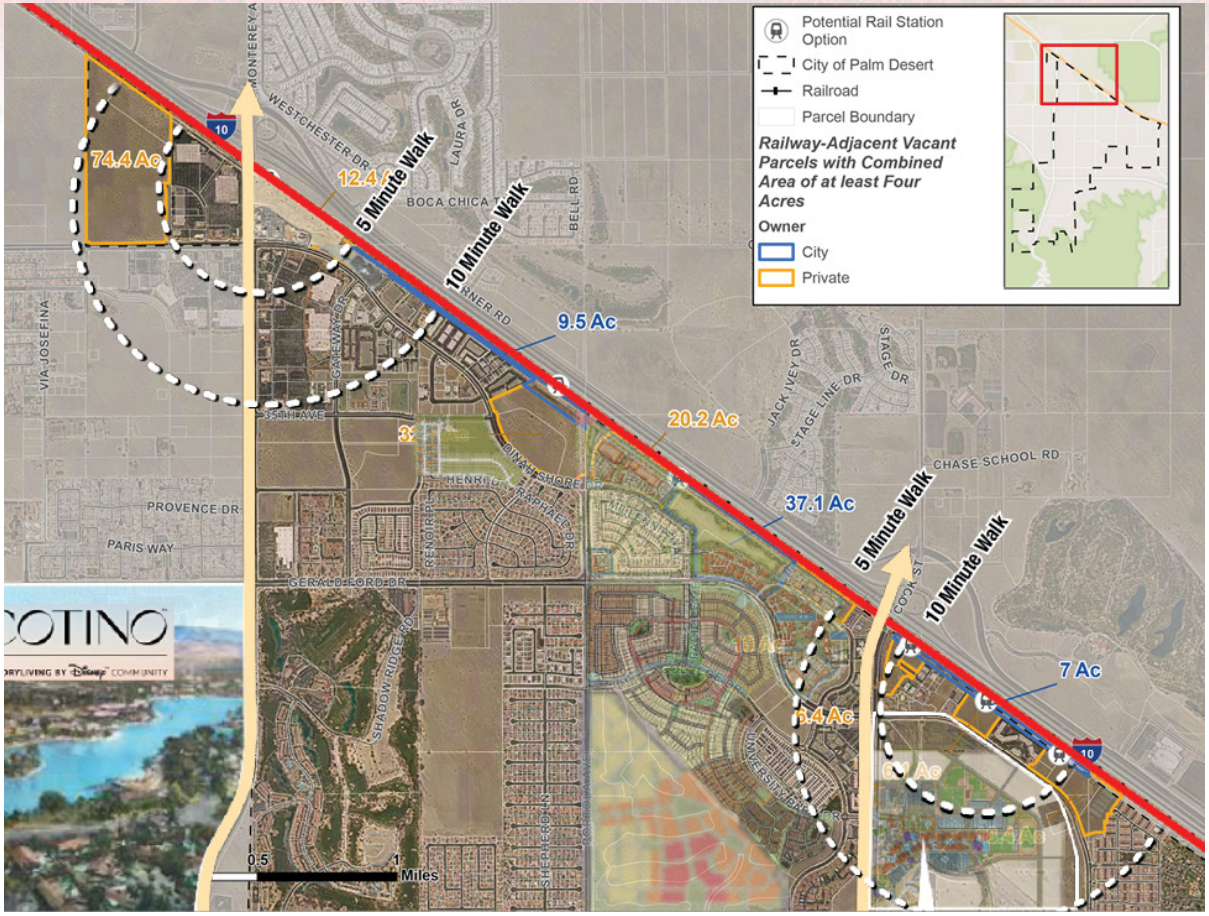


Figure 5: Unbuilt Land Ownership along Project Corridor

3.4. ZONING

Zoning data was obtained from the City of Palm Desert's **Interactive Zoning Map** to explore the current zoning scheme in the project area. The parcels near the Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive site are zoned primarily for commercial use with some service industry. The parcels near the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive site are zoned for commercial, service industry and residential use. **Figure 6** below shows the current zoning for the project areas.

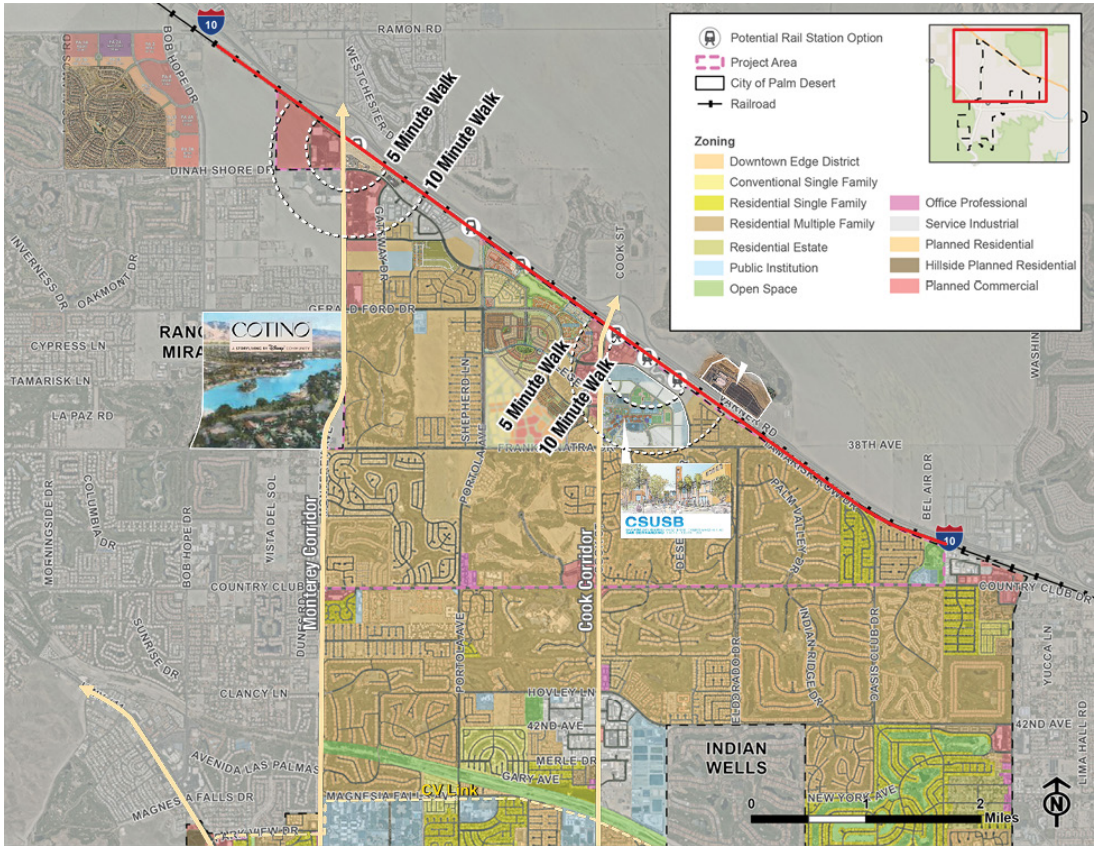


Figure 6: Zoning in Project Area

3.5. ROADWAY VOLUMES

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes for 2022 were obtained for the project area from the Replica platform (gathered from anonymized cell phone data) and verified with AADT figures gathered in March 2022 for other projects in Palm Desert. Monterey Avenue has the highest AADT figures in the project area, with particularly high volumes south of the I-10 freeway, near the Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive site. Cook Street also has high volumes, particularly south of the I-10 freeway. The Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive intersection is one of the busiest intersections in the project area, while the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive intersection has significantly less volume. **Figure 7** shows the AADT volumes in the project area. This data will inform the traffic analysis that will be performed later in the feasibility study.

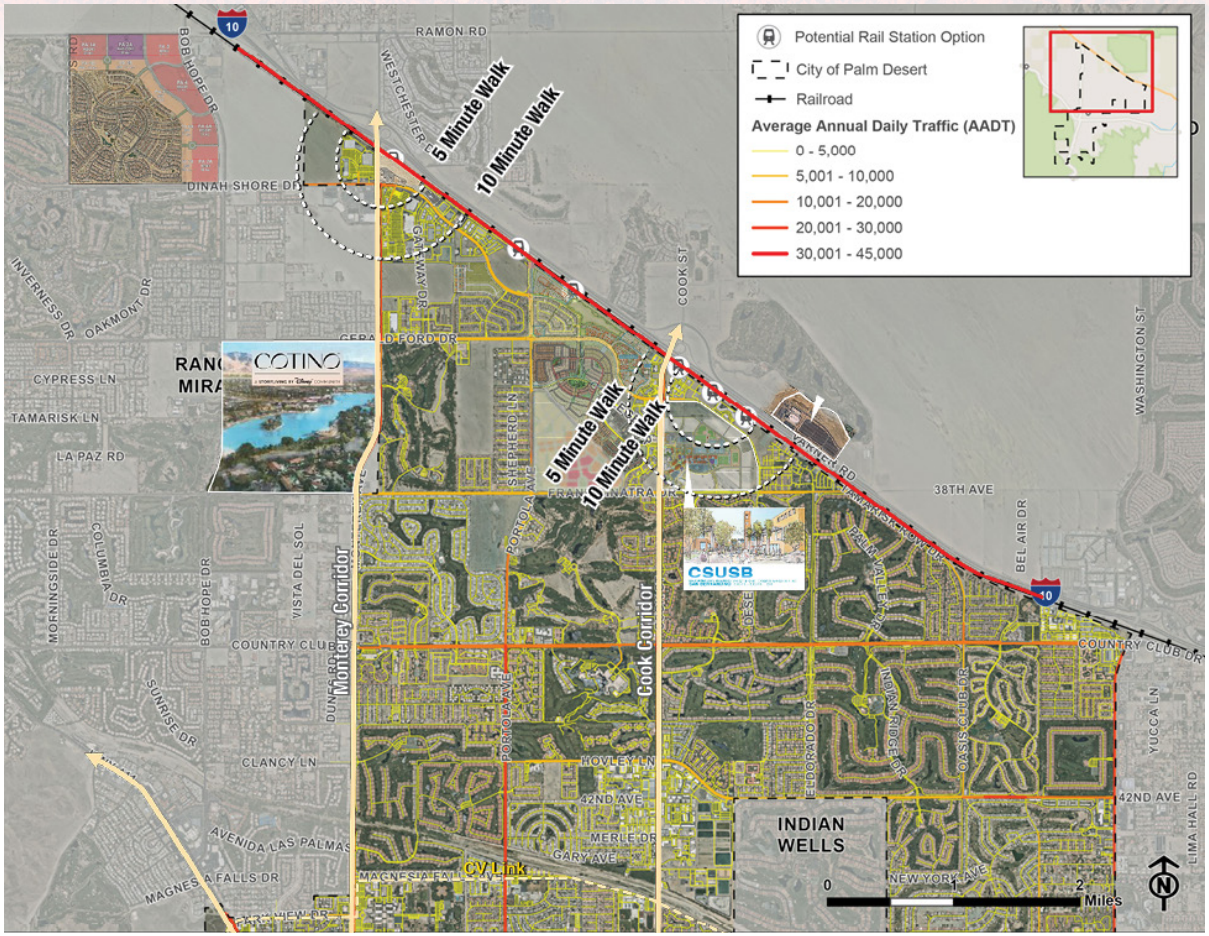


Figure 7: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Volumes in Project Area

3.6. EXISTING TRANSIT FACILITIES AND RIDERSHIP

SunLine Transit is the agency that provides transit service for the Coachella Valley. Data from SunLine was obtained to examine the current state of transit service in the City. Palm Desert is currently served by SunLine Transit routes 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10. Routes 1-7 are local routes, while Route 10 is the Commuter Link line that connects Indio, Palm Desert and other Coachella Valley communities with San Bernardino and the Metrolink rail system. Route 10 provides service similar to that of the proposed rail service and demonstrates that there is existing demand for transit connections to the Inland Empire and connecting rail services to Los Angeles and Orange County.

There is connectivity with Route 4 at the Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive site. This connects Palm Springs International Airport with the Shops at Palm Desert—with stops serving Downtown Palm Springs, Desert Highland Gateway Estates, Desert Park Estates, Thousand Palms, Monterey Marketplace Shopping Center, and Rancho Mirage, and College of the Desert.

Table 1: SunLine Ridership Figures (Fiscal Year 2022)

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

There is connectivity with Routes 5 and 10 near the Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive site. Route 5 runs from Desert Hot Springs to Desert Crossing Shopping Center in Palm Desert with stops serving CSUSB PDC and University of California Riverside-Palm Desert (UC-Riverside PD). **Figure 8** shows the current transit service and stops in Palm Desert. The proposed rail station would provide an opportunity to form a new transit hub that SunLine can use to coordinate local services and provide a nexus for campus, station, resident, and commercial transportation uses with high potential for new transit-oriented development.

The ridership figures from Fiscal Year 2022 for the routes in Palm Desert are shown in **Table 1**. Route 1 has the highest yearly ridership, followed by Route 4, and Route 6.

Figure 8: Existing SunLine Transit Routes and Stops in Palm Desert

Route	1	4	5	6	7	10
Passengers	898,073	188,347	12,676	78,443	64,168	19,948

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Boardings in FY 2022 at each bus stop in Palm Desert are shown in **Figure 9**. The stops near CSUSB PDC had a total of 5,203 boardings. The stop with the highest ridership was at Town Center Way and Hahn Road, with a total of 81,892 boardings. This stop includes service on the Amtrak Thruway bus to Fullerton Station, which has the potential for inclusion in the proposed rail station. Providing a seamless connection between Amtrak Thruway Service and the proposed rail service would improve the ease of transfer for thousands of riders per year. The terminus stop of the Route 7 service at Washington Street and Harris Lane had 14,934 boardings. There is also the potential to extend this service to the proposed rail station.

Figure 9: Transit Boardings in FY 22

3.7. RIDERSHIP ESTIMATES

Based on figures from the origin-destination analysis of the Existing Conditions Report, projections for future daily ridership figures in 2028 were created for the Palm Desert rail station, as well as additional stations that may be constructed as part of new rail service from Los Angeles to the Coachella Valley. These estimates assume that the rail service would capture 0.5% of the trips between Palm Desert and the other station areas. **Table 2** below shows the ridership from each rail station and the percentage of all trips that the service is projected to capture. This is intended to be a conservative estimate that does not take into account some of the additional draws such as events at Acrisure Arena, more connectivity between CSUSB campuses, and increases in capture due to future service enhancements. This shows that regional transit use over the San Gorgonio pass could increase by ten times the current ridership on SunLine Commuter Link, largely attributable to the ability to by-pass congestion and the increased reach of a single seat ride.*

Table 2: Station Ridership Estimates (2028)

Station	Number of All Trips (Origin and Destination)	Percent of Trips Captured by Rail Service	Daily Ridership Estimates
Coachella	13,371	0.50%	67
Indio	51,014	0.50%	255
Loma Linda	164	0.50%	1
Riverside	2,257	0.50%	11
Fullerton	46	0.50%	1
Los Angeles	1,416	0.50%	7
		Total Daily Ridership Estimate (2028)	350

**Additional ridership analysis located in the appendix.*

4. COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The City and project team held two public meetings to gather input on a preferred station location for the RCTC Mid Valley Station. Topics discussed included information about the future Transit Hub's design principles, context, fit, adjacencies, and site constraints. Meetings also collected information about who a new passenger rail station could benefit—from residents to visitors.

Materials related to each public open house was also posted on the City's website "engagepalmdesert.com." A sample of Online comments are shown below, as well as key themes from the public meetings in **Table 3**:

- ***"I think this project would be great for residents and visitors alike. It will help attract younger folks to the desert and minimize traffic."***
- ***"Ideal for both tourism and commuting; I am among the remote workers who moved to the valley from LA in 2020. I regularly travel back, and I would love to have rail as an option for the commute."***
- ***"We need this and have needed it for at least 30 years. Our Valley needs to join the 21st Century. Less air pollution and A win for all."***
- ***"A must for future growth and combatting climate change."***

Table 3: Key Themes from the Public Meetings

	Topics	Key Themes
July 2023 In Person Open House	• Overall project timeframe, the planned route, and role of RCTC in selecting a station in the Mid-Valley Region • City of Palm Desert station location options (six options shown) • Station selection design principles (see Chapter 5) • Prototypical characteristics of a desired station facility or "Transit Hub" including examples of non-motorized facilities, parking access and passenger amenity • Considerations of local service connections and supporting transportation modes, such as micro mobility, cycle routes, shuttles etc. • Review of conceptual station location nearby existing and proposed development • Recommendation at the Open House One to move forward three Cook Street sites	• Support for the Cook Street Corridor locations, interest in leveraging a partnership with the CSUSB planned campus expansion • Interest and support for station locations that are accessible to the Acrisure Arena • Support for complementary non-motorized access improvements and connecting into a future CV Link • Support for station locations with good regional access, and proximity to existing City commercial areas • Support for the "Transit Hub" concept and provision of adequate passenger amenities – shaded waiting areas • Interest and support for the provision of parking supply; questions on how much parking and type of parking • Strong support for the rail line generally
November 2023 In person Open House	• Site selection results: two of the Cook Street sites (C1 and C2) accommodate a future RCTC station • Conceptual site plans for the Cook Street sites highlighting potential facility programs and elements including station facility, parking structures and transit-oriented development • A Vision for the Valley: key best practices and design ideas to make the passenger rail station a new gateway to the valley • Community programming opportunities • Next Steps	• Interest and support for rail station in the Cook Street vicinity both in online comments, at the City's Engage Page, and from Open House participants. Many comments included a desire to see the line completed quickly; "desperately needed" to mitigate traffic • Interest and support for rail station for remote work and commuters to LA and to support those who cannot or do not wish to drive. • Concern about stormwater at Cook Street Site due to the impacts of recent flooding • An individual voiced concern about crime; discussion of activated site design to mitigate • Interest in improving Coachella Valley connectedness, seeking future rail coordination with local transit service, and first/last mile options • Interest and support for a staffed passenger facility and access to parking

4.1. CONSULTED INTEREST HOLDERS

During this project, the project team and City of Palm Desert met with the following:

1. **Riverside County Regional Rail Commission:** Several meetings were held to understand RCTC project goals, high level design constraints for platform access, operations, and site assumptions in support of conceptual site plans.
2. **California State University San Bernadino.** Discussion of proposed rail station locations and discussion of opportunities to coordinate planning with the future campus expansion. The University issued a letter of support for the Cook Street sites.
3. **The Berger Partnership and Acrisure Arena:** Discussion of proposed rail station locations. Exploration and discussion of partnership opportunities associated with the Transit Hub vision, initial exploration of existing and projected demand for event-related parking, and desired access improvements. There was support for a Palm Desert passenger rail facility at the Cook Street locations.
4. **Local Homeowner Associations:** Discussion of site boundaries, ownership, and potential impacts at Cook Street, and all potential station site locations. General support for locations that is not adjacent to residential development. Portola and Monterey Avenue site locations were not preferred.
5. **The City of Palm Desert** conducted meetings with other select property owners who might be impacted by changes at all potential host locations, including the site C1 property owner.
6. **Local Transit Service Operators** – SunLine and Greyhound: Discussion about preferred site programs, design constraints, and operations requirements. Discussion of several scenarios for bus facility lay out, access, and lay over space.

5. PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Palm Desert Transit Hub's development should be strategically prioritized, aligning with the initiation schedules of services from the collective cities, regions, and RCTC. The foundational premise is that the site will serve as a multimodal hub catering to local and regional needs, even before the commencement of rail services. It will initially support basic functionalities for buses, shuttles, and parking, with provisions for expansion in anticipation of rail services. Should the City decide to commence site enhancements ahead of rail operations, the following prioritization framework is proposed:

5.1. SITE PREPARATION

The initial step involves executing preliminary site work and establishing the City's stormwater management system. Early construction efforts will focus on rough grading, soil stabilization, and the installation of essential site utilities, including sewer, stormwater management systems, water, power, and communication infrastructure such as fiber optics.

5.2. SITE CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Development of site access and internal circulation routes to support the transit services initially provided. This encompasses constructing roundabouts at station entry points on Gerald Ford Drive, facilitating ingress to parking spaces, and arranging drop-off/pick-up lanes. The infrastructure would also extend to bikeways and facilities; multi-use paths; associated utilities encompassing site and path lighting, solar installations, charging stations; and sidewalks.

The development of parking facilities can be scaled to align with passenger volume and potential shared use by Acrisure Arena and/or CSUSB. A surface parking lot can be provisioned initially with structured parking planned to coincide with rail service. The full buildout of anticipated structured parking needs would be required to be built at once if a single garage is proposed.

The construction of bus access points and passenger zones may proceed simultaneously or be deferred based on the anticipated services. Initially, regional and local bus services could share the designated passenger pick-up/drop-off areas. With the increase in bus service coinciding with the start of rail operations, dedicated bus loops and stops could be established.

5.3. STATION FACILITIES

The station facilities and supporting amenities could be introduced prior to or simultaneously with the introduction of rail service. The facilities would include the Station Building, incorporating air-conditioned waiting areas, ticketing and information services, restrooms, concessions, and back of house. The facilities would be developed to accommodate RCTC, SunLine, and the City of Palm Desert. Together with the station building, the bike station, and vehicle rental service kiosks would be built along with exterior waiting areas, shade structures, and landscaping.

5.4. RAIL PLATFORMS AND VERTICAL CIRCULATION

Predicated on the development of the RCTC rail services, this phase would see the construction of rail platforms, shelters, passenger amenities, pedestrian overcrossing, elevators, and stairs, supported by necessary services, including signage and wayfinding, and utilities such as lighting, power, and water.

5.5. TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) IMPROVEMENTS

TOD Improvements could be prioritized based on the timing of the collective cities, regions, and RCTC services are scheduled to begin. The base assumption is rough utility stub outs and services to the TOD sites would be constructed during the site preparation phase and each site would be developed by their respective developers.

This structured approach allows the Palm Desert Transit Hub to evolve in phases, integrating with future transportation services while catering to immediate and future mobility demands.

6. STATION SITE SELECTION AND FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

6.1. STATION SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Palm Desert occupies a strategic position in the heart of the Coachella Valley, located at the midpoint of the RCTC's "Mid Valley" station geography. It is equidistant, about 15 miles, from both the existing Palm Springs Station and the future Indio/Coachella terminus station. The City envisions a new RCTC station location and facility design that leverages this centrality, facilitating valley accessibility for residents and visitors alike, and creating a new, convenient gateway for its many destinations.

The site locations describe connections with vital regional transportation routes; are adjacent to land uses such as employment, education, healthcare, culture, and leisure; and are accessible to a wide range of amenities. All sites benefit from excellent access notably the Cook Street multimodal corridor connecting I-10 with State Route 111 (SR-111)—the main north-south transit route and retail corridor serving the Coachella Valley.

The site considerations aim to:

- Establish the best site that will serve all residents and accommodate other transportation modes, including SunLine Transit Agency
- Identify and test a preliminary design on the selected site, suitable for intercity passenger rail service
- Demonstrate how an accessible station would function

Design goals for the future station location are:

Community Serving. The station location should provide equitable access for all communities in the Coachella Valley, local and regional visitors, and vulnerable populations.

Accessible. A future station location should have excellent site access for vehicles, buses, and pedestrians. It should be proximate to major streets, Coachella Valley assets, and key destinations.

Intuitive Arrival. The future station should be highly visible with a functional site configuration.

Connected. A future station should enable future connections to local transit service providers and support a range of transportation alternatives.

Supports Economic Development. The selected station location should facilitate partnerships with other Valley stakeholders and be attractive to uses that can complement a future station.

Future Flexibility. The site location should provide adequate space for an appropriately scaled facility and the ability to expand in the future.

6.2. STATION LOCATION PRELIMINARY SELECTION AND SCREENING

The project team identified site areas suitable for a future RCTC Mid-Valley Station. All preliminary station locations exhibit the following attributes:

- Location adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Right-of-Way (ROW) that will support 1000' long platforms
- Available undeveloped parcels along the ROW boundary edge of sufficient size to enable adequate site circulation, parking, and facilities (+/- 4 acres)
- Adjacency to existing or planned commercial, retail, and transit supportive land uses (e.g., services, educational, hospitality, medical, leisure, recreational facilities, etic.)
- Excellent access to regional street networks and access to nearby local transit service

The team focused on the locations with direct access to north-south multimodal corridors connecting I-10 with SR-111, supporting regional connectivity. Multimodal corridors assessed:

- **Monterey Avenue**, a north-south corridor with direct I-10 access with auto-oriented commercial, retail, and shopping near the station area
- **Portola Avenue**, a street with a planned I-10 freeway connection adjacent to hospitality and residential areas and a new city park
- **Cook Street** corridor, an area with existing entertainment, retail and residential uses, and a planned expansion of the CSUSB Palm Desert, and UCR PD campus. Cook Street is also designated for a future micro-mobility network and planned "complete street" roadway improvements

The pre-screened identified sites are shown in **Figure 10**. This screening was presented in a City of Palm Desert Public Open House in July 2023. The screening focused on topics related to improved connectivity for riders, mobility and access, site challenges, and future development opportunities. The site assessment process from the July 2023 open house shown in **Table 4** resulted in the three Cook Street sites ranking the highest.

Qualitative assessment and key questions included:

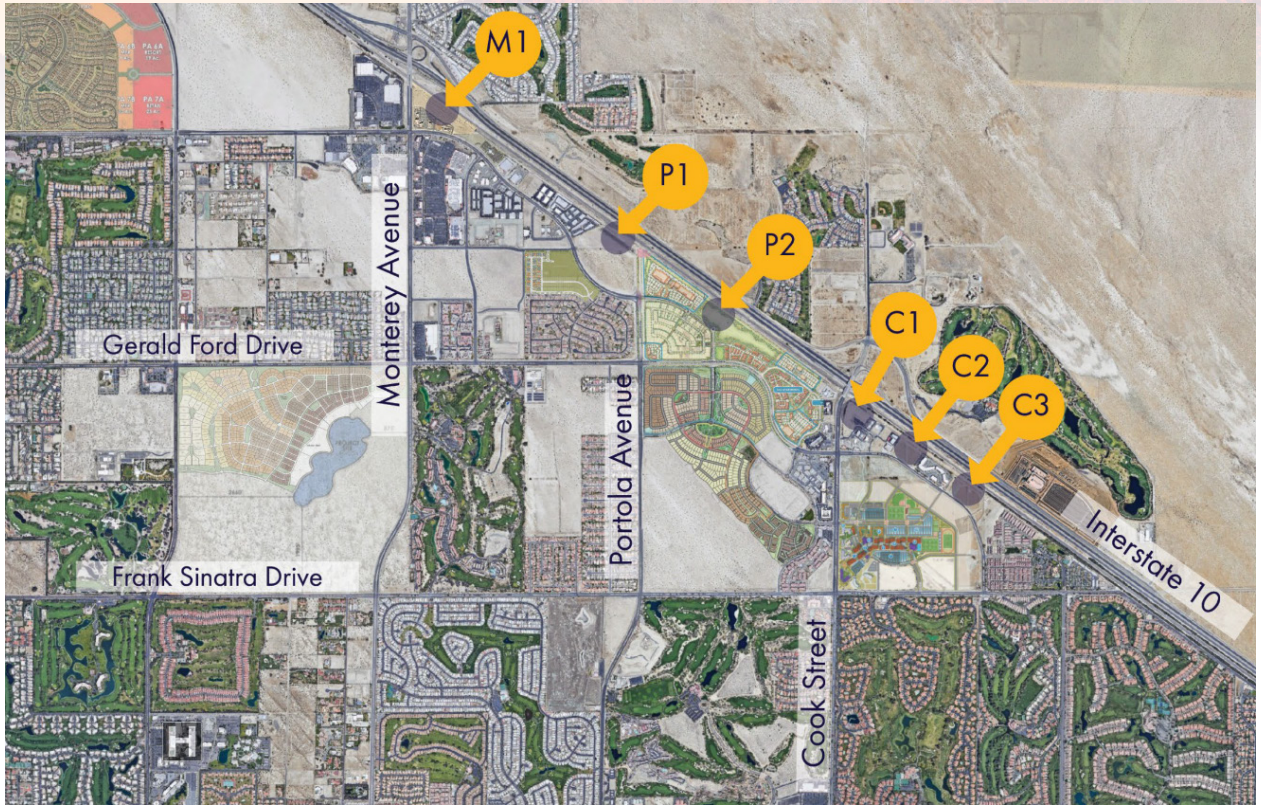
Rider Experience: Does the station option enable direct and safe connections to I-10 and the local/regional street network? Does it connect to bikeways, cart paths, and pedestrian infrastructure? Does the site present an opportunity for reducing reliance on personal vehicles? Is its location visible and prominent?

Mobility and Access: Does the option improve on traffic and other modes' circulation and management needs (access to parking, station, or entertainment activities)?

Challenges: Is the project consistent with the City's vision and land use goals? Do adjacent land uses support a station location? Is there construction, geometric, or technical feasibility challenges? Do specific spatial or other constraints preclude a station? Is there infrastructure to support it?

Future Investment: Is the location favorable for development? What partnership opportunities are available? Does the station location fit into the City's or stakeholder's identified goals and priorities?

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study



Site Area	Site Number
Monterey Avenue	M1
Portola Avenue	P1 or P2
Cook Street	C1 or C2 or C3

Figure 10: Identified Station Sites

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Table 4: Station Site Assessment, July 2023 Open House

Station Site Locations		Rider Experience	Mobility and Access	Challenges	Future Investment	Advance?
Monterey Ave	M1	Limited visibility into proposed site, adjacent development is less walkable.	Monterey Ave is a higher traffic volume, auto-oriented corridor connecting to the I-10. The intersection of Monterey Ave and Dinah Shore Dr has the third highest number of collisions in the City. Micro-mobility connections are challenging along Monterey due to the higher traffic volumes and speeds.	Site is space constrained for passenger drop off and arrival via car. Less connected for local bus service.	Redevelopment of adjacent parcels to transit-oriented uses requires collaboration of adjacent private landowners.	No
Portola Avenue	P1	Site has good connections to south and central Palm Desert. Adjacent to planned developments to the south and east.	Portola connects a series of residential neighborhoods. It has separated bike facilities and lower traffic volumes. Site is adjacent to a future Portola freeway over crossing and exit for site access. Portola is a lower intensity roadway which could allow for micro-mobility network connections.	Adjacent to residential development; transit uses may be incongruous.	Potential for new Portola Avenue I-10 crossing. Low TOD opportunity. Located within lower scale residential neighborhood.	No
	P2	Limited quick access to the site due to reliance on smaller secondary roads. Station site is located within a planned city park.		Requires use of land planned for city park/open space. Site is adjacent to residential uses which could be sensitive to station noise.	Limited opportunity for denser housing. Potential opportunity to coordinate with future public park to create a “park station”.	No

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Station Site Locations		Rider Experience	Mobility and Access	Challenges	Future Investment	Advance?
Cook Street	C1	Adjacent to retail, good visibility from Cook Street and I-10	Cook Street is identified in the General Plan as a "multimodal corridor." Cook Street is transitioning to become an important connector across the city, connecting the University area, the resorts along Cook Street, and downtown Palm Desert via Fred Waring and Highway 111.	Challenged vehicle circulation and entry approach. Location is further from core of CSUSB campus and Arisure Arena. Cook Street bridge structure over tracks poses constraints onto rail alignment and platform positioning.	Redevelopment of adjacent parcels to transit oriented uses requires collaboration of adjacent private landowners.	Yes
	C2	Well connected to proposed CSUSB Palm Desert Campus expansion. Visibility from freeway.		Location is further from Acrisure Arena. More constrained site development between two already developed sites.	High TOD opportunity. Supports General Plan goal to facilitate the development of a university-oriented neighborhood and "town center"	Yes
	C3	Well connected to proposed CSUSB Palm Desert Campus expansion. Visibility from freeway. Potential for future bridge crossing to the north side of I-10 with a connection to Acrisure Arena.		Access to Acrisure Arena is contingent on a future bridge crossing over the 1-10.	High TOD opportunity. Supports General Plan goal to facilitate the development of a university-oriented neighborhood and "town center." Closest location to Acrisure Arena with potential for coordination of on/off site shared parking and future connection crossing I-10 to the arena.	Yes

Due to various challenges, the city decided to not move forward with sites M1, P1, and P2. Though they are vacant, M1 is adjacent to the highest collision intersection in the city, making micro mobility and transit options limited and challenging. Meanwhile, P1 and P2 sit along Portola Ave., a lower volume residential street and a future planned park area, making a popular station area incongruous with surrounding uses.

Transit Facility Design Assumptions

To assess suitability of the station sites moving forward (C1, C2, and C3), the project team established high-level assumptions including platform criteria, transit facility requirements, parking, bus accommodations, and transit-oriented development objectives. Critical siting parameters for the rail platform and station structures were developed in coordination with RCTC.

The assumptions led to preliminary concept plans for sites C2 and C3. Preliminary concept plans were shared in a second Public Open House in November 2023. Building from comments on C2 and C3 and further study of the assumptions below, a preferred conceptual site plan was developed and is shown in **Section 5.3**.

Siting Constraints

Future rail platforms and stations must meet RCTC technical requirements and its forthcoming station design criteria. All facilities sited within the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way (ROW) are subject to UPRR approval. RCTC is coordinating directly with UPRR to clarify these constraints. Final platform and track configurations remain unresolved at this time and will evolve during subsequent phases of this project led by RCTC.

Design assumptions, listed below in **Figure 11**, build from the RCTC San Gorgonio Passenger Rail Corridor Service Program Tier 1 EIS/EIR, and incorporate accessibility, fire and life safety standards, and Amtrak passenger facility design standards[1].

- **Trackway:** The RCTC San Gorgonio Pass Project will provide three mainline tracks vs the two currently located in the UPRR ROW. UPRR's ROW is 150 feet wide, and with the addition of the new mainline, additional ROW will be required at the station platform locations to accommodate two platforms and the required access roads etc. For purposes of the facility concept development and station siting, the team assumed the north mainline track will relocate to accommodate the 3rd mainline track while the south mainline track will be modified to accommodate a new center passenger platform.
- **Operations:** Operating passenger rail services within a UPRR freight corridor presents constraints due to the different operational, safety, and infrastructure requirements of freight service. To preserve operational flexibility for both freight and passenger operator's platforms allow for RCTC trains operating on any of the main line tracks in either direction to arrive at the platform. Both a center and side platform configuration have been considered.
- **Crossings:** UPPR does not allow at grade crossings of the mainline track. All passenger access to the center platform will require a grade-separated crossing to access the platform including elevators, and bridge connection. A side platform can be accessed at-grade, passengers may board and alight into the station building directly. ***While either an undercrossing or overcrossing is acceptable, an overcrossing is the assumed alternative for this study.***
- **Clearances and Protections:** UPRR requires a clearance envelope of 23'-4" above top of rail, 5'-6" from center line of track to the edge of platform and 12'-4" inches from the centerline of track to any permanent structure.

[1]AMTRAK Station and Development Guidelines, January 2022, v.4

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

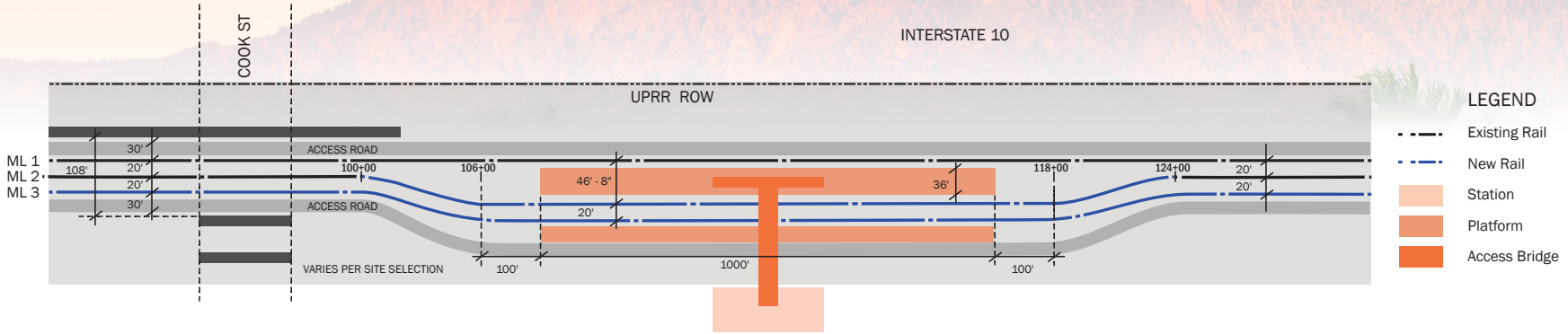


Figure 11: Station Platform and Track Design Assumptions

Platform Assumptions:

- (1) 36-foot-wide center platform serving passengers in both directions located between the two northerly mainline tracks
- (1) 20' wide side platform served outside of the third mainline track
- A pedestrian bridge spans the two most southerly tracks providing platform access and egress to the center platform
- Platform length: 1,000-foot platforms accommodate up to 10 cars
- Providing shade and mitigating wind are important for passenger comfort and have been included as a design assumption for the platform. A 36-foot-wide center platform allows up to 16 feet of shelter width. Maximizing the canopy width will address low sun angles

Additional site constraints:

- The City of Palm Desert owns and manages an open storm drainage channel that extends along the boundary between the UPRR ROW and the Cook Street station sites. The open storm drainage channel may preclude an underpass or below grade platform connections due to flood mitigation and conflicts with the channel construction and management
- Stormwater management will include an on-site stormwater retention area on the C3 site
- High voltage power transmission lines run along the south edge of the ROW within city-owned property at the north end of the C- sites. Further study will be required to assess the cost and feasibility to underground the power lines to accommodate the pedestrian overcrossing to the platform. Design assumptions assume undergrounding to avoid interference
- All sites are susceptible to high winds and blowing sand. Mitigating sand accumulation is a consideration for building and passenger amenity siting
- Heat and sun require mitigation with large outdoor shade canopies at all outdoor passenger waiting areas and pedestrian walkways.

Vertical Circulation and Connectivity Assumptions

A pedestrian overcrossing to the center platform vs an undercrossing for the reasons cited above form the basis of the conceptual design. To meet accessibility requirements to the platform, both ramps and elevators were considered. The UPRR height clearances above top of rail to the underside of the pedestrian overcrossing is 23'-4" with a total vertical distance of ~ 30' from the station level. The preferred solution is installing elevators over ramps for the above grade crossing. This preference is based on several factors, including space constraints, the impact on the platform's usability, and the overall efficiency of passenger movement. Long ramps, extending over 400 feet on either side of the bridge, were considered impractical for several reasons:

- **Space Constraints:** The platform space is limited, and long ramps would significantly encroach upon areas intended for passengers and amenities—such as seating areas, information boards, and other facilities
- **Passenger Experience:** The use of long ramps would adversely affect the travel time for passengers, making it more time-consuming and physically taxing to access the train platform. This could be especially challenging for those with mobility issues or those carrying luggage, potentially making the station less accessible to a portion of the public

Given these considerations, elevators are seen as the preferred solution to provide an accessible route to the center platform. Elevators would occupy less space, have minimal impact on the platform's functional areas, and offer a quicker, more efficient way for all passengers, including those with disabilities, to access the platform. This aligns with the goal of making public transportation systems accessible to everyone, following principles of universal design and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

It is proposed that the pedestrian bridge provide direct connections to both the parking structure and the station building to minimize walking distances and reduce the potential need to go up and down multiple times between destinations. This shared use of elevators can also enhance convenience for commuter passengers by providing a seamless transition between parking, the station, and train services.

Ancillary Uses and Structures

The site selection processes considered both the potential and ease for on-site transit-oriented development at the Cook Street sites to enhance site functionality and convenience. Various scenarios were evaluated for buildings, public space, parking, access routes, and use mix. The City of Palm Desert Zoning and Land Use policies will determine the type, scale, and volume of permitted development.

Local Transit Service

This study assumes a maximum coach/bus length of 45-feet and no future articulated buses (this would require larger turning radii and maneuvering space). Straight curbs are preferred over sawtooth bus geometries. No fueling or charging infrastructure needs are anticipated in the current program. A dedicated bus loop and dedicated curb space should be included to avoid conflicts with vehicular traffic.

Local Road Access

Gerald Ford Drive is the primary access point to the station site via Cook Street, which in turn provides access to other Palm Desert neighborhoods and I-10, or Frank Sinatra Drive. Traffic analysis has shown that there is sufficient roadway capacity on Cook Street and the I-10 interchange to support new development and station activity. Gerald Ford Drive will need to be expanded to allow 2 travel lanes in both directions with appropriate turn lanes and intersection control at major campus entrances, the station entrance, and for the proposed new fire station. The station design concept and cost estimates assume construction of a roundabout at the station entrance. **Figure 12** shows the anticipated profile for Gerald Ford Drive that will support a multimodal friendly neighborhood access route.

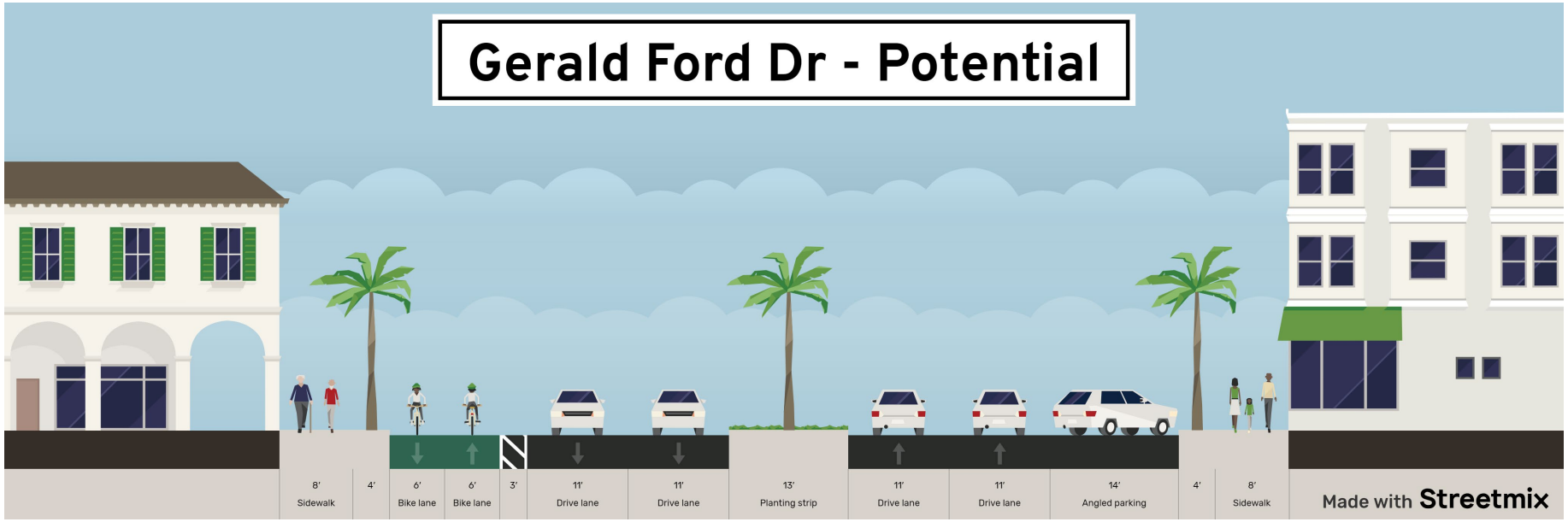


Figure 12: Anticipated profile for Gerald Ford Drive

Other Physical Design Constraints

The City of Palm Desert owns and manages an open storm drainage channel that abuts the UPRR ROW to the south. It is assumed that the open storm drainage channel may preclude an underpass or below grade platform connections due to flood mitigation and conflicts with the channel construction and management. The City of Palm Desert is also exploring approaches to mitigate stormwater—especially in the Cook Street corridor. Options for stormwater management may include a new stormwater retention area on the C3 site. The design of this area is outside the scope of this study. High-powered transmission lines line the south edge of the ROW within city-owned property. Further study will be required to assess the cost and feasibility to underground elevated power lines. This feasibility study assumes power lines are underground to avoid interference with a bridge overcrossing to the platforms.

Selecting the Preferred Site Location

The project team applied the design assumptions to the three Cook Street Sites to understand the potential for each site to host the station facility. Findings are summarized below and shown in **Figure 13**.

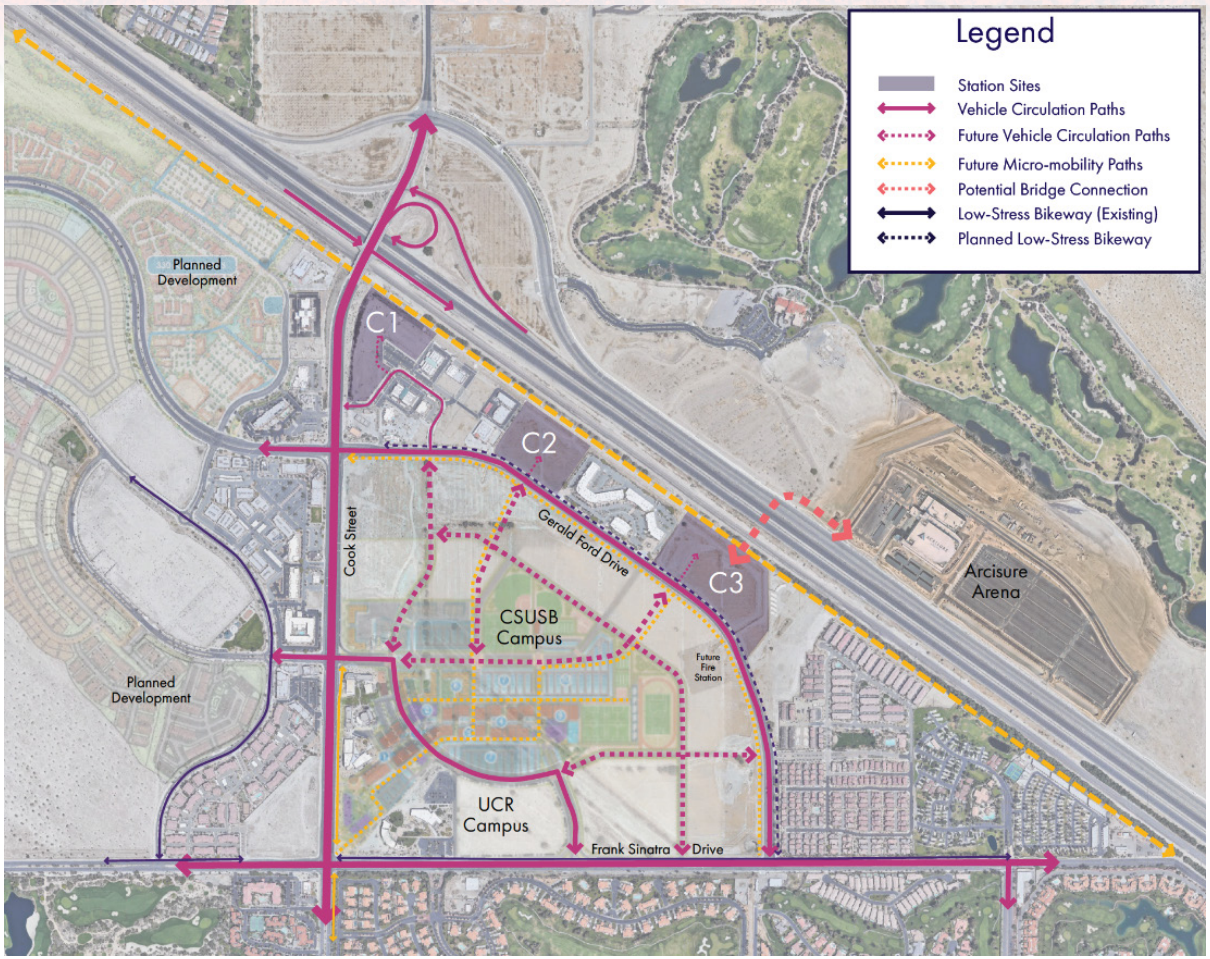


Figure 13: Cook Street Site Evaluation Map

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Cook Street evaluation findings:

Both C2 and C3 have the technical ability to host the rail platform and ancillary station structure.

C1: While the site is of sufficient size and strategically located near Cook Street, it faces significant challenges. Access to the site from Gerald Ford Drive and the CSUSB campus is indirect, which complicates access to the site for vehicles and buses and creates circulation challenges. The site is constrained from the Cook Street overcrossing bridge abutments and columns that restrict where a rail turnout can begin for the start of the platform. The site visibility from both Cook Street and the I-10 freeway is also negatively impacted due to the overcrossing ramp structures.

C2: While smallest in size, C2 provides adequate area for a transit facility and offers good connections to the CSUSB campus planned expansion, and good site visibility. A drawback is a planned development on the site at of the time of this report's publication which may eliminate it as a viable option.

C3: This is the largest site and offers more area than C1/C2. C3 meets all design assumptions and offers flexibility for a variety of complementary programs/development. The C3 site is directly accessible from the CSUSB campus expansion and may offer a "Gateway" opportunity to welcome visitors to the campus. The site has high TOD opportunity and potential to coordinate for on or-off-site parking for Arena. There is potential for future bridge crossing to north side of I-10 and connection to Acrisure Arena. There is also potential to coordinate for on or-off-site parking for Arena. This location supports the City of Palm Desert's General Plan goal to facilitate the development of a university-oriented neighborhood. A stormwater mitigation study is currently underway.

C3 is the preferred location. This site offers not only flexibility for a future station platform but has the potential to support broader city goals and leverages the potential expansion of the CSUSB campus and access to Acrisure Arena. The City is in discussions with the property owner to purchase the parcel.

6.3. THE PALM DESERT TRANSIT HUB VISION

Palm Desert's vision for a future RCTC station is to create a "transit hub" serving the Coachella Valley and provide options for all Coachella Valley residents and visitors integrated travel options to connect where they work, learn, live, shop, and play. The vision for the Transit-Hub is to create a safe, vibrant, and accessible station area providing users access to community-oriented services and affordable housing, together with compatible off-peak secondary uses to create resource-efficient, high-quality, and environmentally healthy developments that maximize the social and economic vitality of the region.

The conceptual Transit Hub design will serve RCTC rail passengers and future Amtrak passengers as well. The design accommodates local bus and shuttle transfers, facilitates park and ride uses, transfers between micro-mobility options, and connects to the City's bike network extending to CV Link. The site can also be developed incrementally, and in coordination with its adjacent landowners – UCR and CSUSB.

Key elements to be considered for a successful station area include (see **Figure 14**):

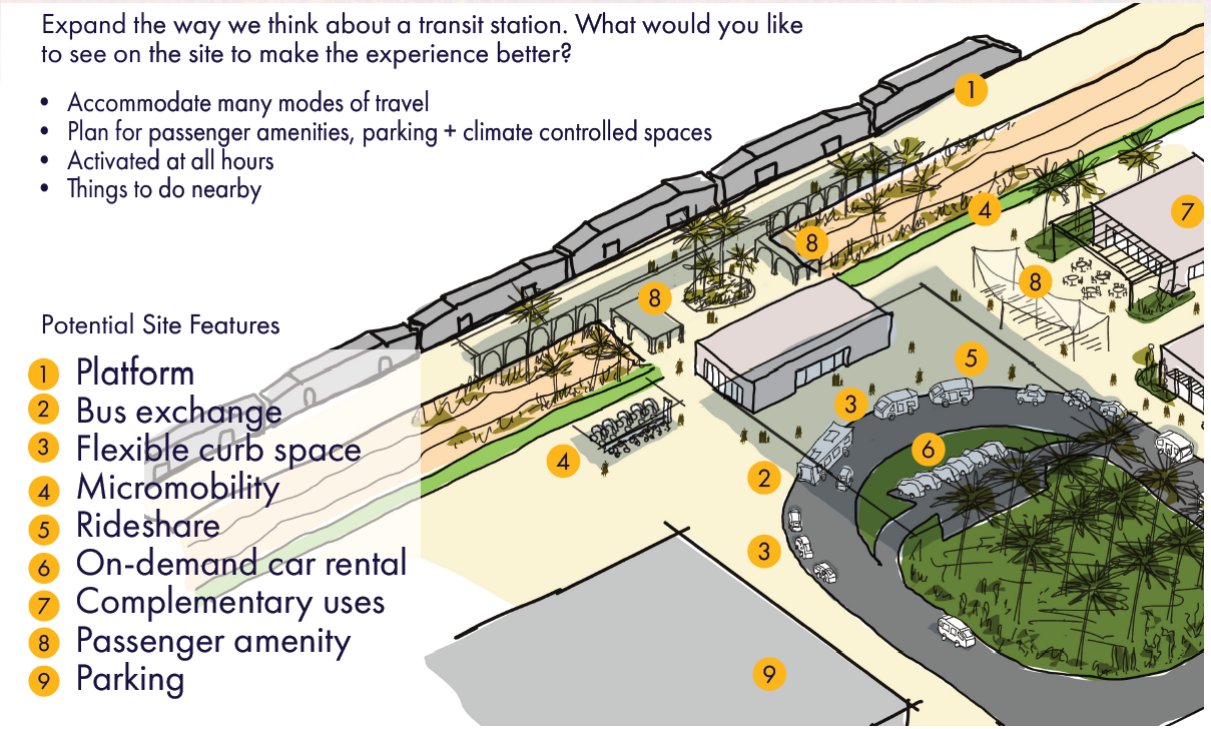


Figure 14: Palm Desert Transit Hub Visioning Sketch

Transit Facility Program

Building from the vision above and meeting the design assumptions listed in **section 5.2.**, a conceptual site plan and station renderings (**Figures 14**, **15**, **16**, and **17**) illustrates the transit facility's core components and includes opportunities for a future final build out scenario. Core components shown on the site plan are:

1. Center and Side Rail Platforms
2. Dedicated Local and Regional Bus Pick Up and Drop Off
3. Passenger Amenity Spaces and Shade Covered Outdoor Waiting Area and Pedestrian Circulation
4. Station Services/TOD Development Opportunities
5. Structured Parking
6. On-Site Stormwater Retention Basin
7. Multimodal Connections to CSUSB Campus

Cycling, rideshare, transit, shuttles, private buses, event mobility, micro-mobility, car share, and pedestrian access are accommodated in the transit hub concept.

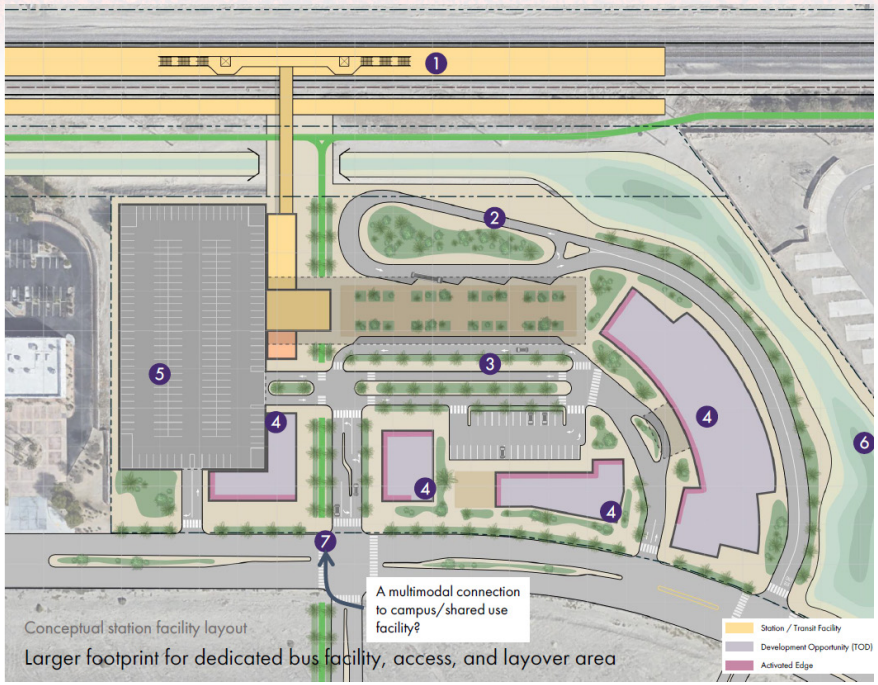


Figure 15: Palm Desert Transit Facility Conceptual Site Plan

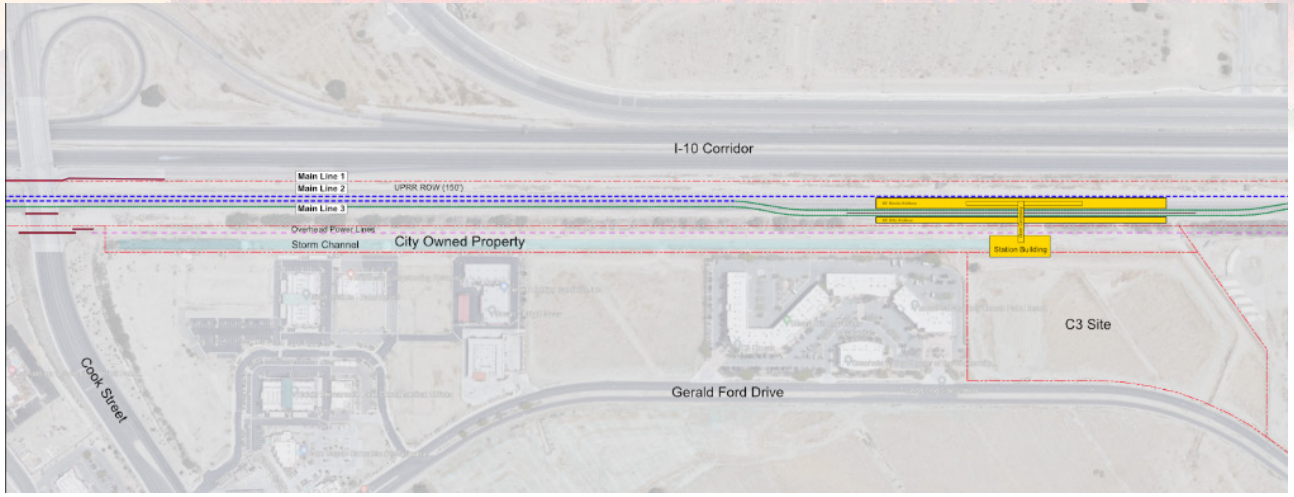


Figure 16: Palm Desert Transit Facility Conceptual Site Plan #2

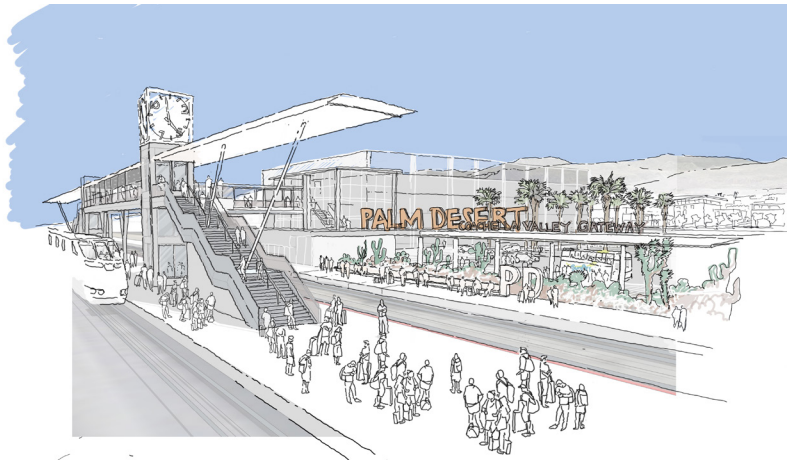


Figure 17: Palm Desert Transit Facility Rendering

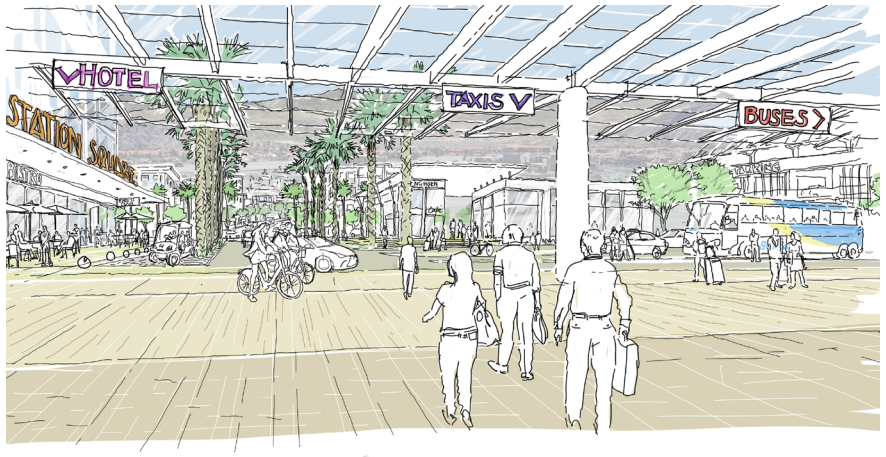


Figure 18: Palm Desert Transit Facility Rendering #2

Identifying Opportunities

■ Create a destination through placemaking:

Passengers will alight from the train and platform into an activated station building and welcoming "station square". The concept illustrated above focuses on the arrival experience that accentuates relaxed easy access into "the heart of the Coachella Valley". The station will be designed to host quality, hospitality-conscious visitors and residents. The building will encompass ticketing functions, wayfinding, and passenger amenity space (e.g., concierge/visitor center, bathrooms, waiting areas, etc). Plantings serve a useful passenger comfort function by providing shading and visual interest. Future designs should consider strategically incorporating plantings to provide shade for walking and waiting areas as well as reduce heat island effects of paved areas. Water elements and passive evaporative cooling should also be incorporated. Native plants will be selected to support local biomes and flora/fauna. Preliminary concepts for the station facility are described as follows:

- Generous conditioned space for waiting, ticketing, and support spaces
- Integrated retail and passenger amenities (e.g. concierge (security), bathrooms, coffee kiosk, etc.)
- Ancillary administrative spaces are included as components of the station building
- A shaded porte cochere, drop off area, and landscaped plaza area support passenger comfort for those leaving and arriving at the station
- Comfortable outdoor waiting space incorporated into the station site
- Flexible curb space will facilitate the transfer to multiple transportation modes
- At least 200 feet to facilitate transportation network companies (TNC) and shuttle drop offs as well as passenger vehicle drop offs

■ Explore Opportunities for Transit Oriented and Joint Development:

Land uses on the site should support/compliment transit and visitor-serving usage. This might include walkable convenience retail, food and beverage, and other activities that contribute to create an active environment. Land uses may also be oriented to pre- or post-event visitors and can make the area a destination for evening event goers at the nearby arena. A hotel, and on-site hospitality functions, may have some potential to encourage rail service passengers to stay overnight and be able to visit the valley car-free. The project team explored the opportunity for leasable square footage to be incorporated into the station building or into the ground-floor of the parking garage.

The anticipated growth of the CSUSB campus is certain to be augmented by the arrival of rail service, and offer greater and more convenient access for students throughout the region. Additionally, the "town square" with complementary uses identified above broadens the campus offering for both students and faculty.

■ Planning for Regional Bus Service:

SunLine does not operate on Gerald Ford Drive; however, growth may enable future direct services or interchanges at the proposed transit facility. SunLine's Number 10 Bus Line is a commuter service with a stop at CSUSB and along I-10. In the future, SunLine service could complement both the new passenger rail commuters and the expanded campus, including reoriented routes.

There is an opportunity to include a bus layover at the station facility, as well as a future driver breakroom. In the case of mechanical breakdowns or bus exchanges, a parking zone for disabled buses should be considered if space allows.

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Based on meetings with SunLine, the draft concept plan assumes a 45-foot coach/bus maximum length and no future articulated buses (which would require larger turning radii and maneuvering space). Straight curbs are slightly preferred over sawtooth bus geometries. Future fleets may include hydrogen or electric operation, but no fueling or charging infrastructure needs are anticipated. A dedicated bus loop and dedicated curb space is shown to avoid conflicts and delays with private vehicular traffic.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Further discussions with SunLine will ensure the new station site fits into the future SunLine network and creates those first/last mile connections with the surrounding Coachella Valley.

Beyond Traditional Transit Operations:

The Palm Desert Station facility could offer opportunities for partnerships with regional institutions, event operators, and destinations. For example, the transit facility can serve as a connection point for rail passengers to resorts, local casinos, event spaces such as Acrisure, annual festivals, sports events, local and regional tour operators, and others.

The site design can support passengers arriving on foot, by car, transit, micro-mobility, or other means. Programs envisioned for the future station are listed below, and shown in **Figure 19**.

- Bus exchange to local transit providers (SunLine)
- Flexible curb space for rideshare such as TNCs, Drop Off/Pick Ups, Taxis
- Shuttles and private buses (ex: events)
- Micro-mobility and rental/share programs (ex: E-bike, golf cart parking or rental)
- On-demand car rental parking and pick up/drop off
- Passenger amenity spaces such as protected waiting areas
- Complementary site uses such as convenience, retail, or eateries.
- Parking for long-term and short-term users

Facilitating these connections would require planning for appropriate curb space for peak passenger loads meeting arriving trains. Exploring partnerships to mode-shift visitors to rail travel can help facilitate a reduction in VMT for visitors and residents of the Coachella Valley. Private operators may own and maintain their own vehicle fleets or sub-contract at specific times for special events.

Figure 19: Example of Envisioned Programs for the Palm Desert Rail Station

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to coordinate with SunLine on future service network expansion to serve a future transit facility
- Explore options to connect existing commuter services with on-site parking and other mobility connections
- Plan future micro-mobility networks (golf cart paths, bike lanes, etc) into the buildout of the transit facility
- Explore opportunities for partnerships with shared parking, shuttles, and intermodal transfer to leverage public and private investment with institutions, neighbors, key valley destinations, and stakeholders

■ Park-and-Ride Facilities

Parking can be phased to expand as service increases. Commuter and short-term parking will become more desirable as rail service increases in frequency. Lower frequency train schedules are less attractive for commuter riders, but would be appropriate for CSUSB students, day trips, weekend trips, leisure trips, or longer periods of time.

At full rail service in the future, a structured parking garage is assumed on the site to allow for shaded and protected parking and to free up adjacent land for transit supportive/complementary uses and facilitate the establishment of a new "town center." A parking garage serving riders is also assumed in the final configuration.

- Further study is required to confirm phased parking quantities, types, and arrangement in coordination with RCTC passenger ridership estimates and potential site users
- Identify opportunities for shared off-site parking for Acrisure Arena, or with CSUSB. These alternative parking uses can leverage investments and improve the return on investment (ROI) for built parking infrastructure

■ Opportunities for Connections and Improvements to the Street Network:

A new Class-I bikeway assumed along the rail alignment will complement the Coachella Valley's network of E-vehicle (ex: Golf Cart) and multimodal pathways (Ex: Coachella Valley Link).

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Coordinate multimodal connections to the south to adjacent developments and the CSUSB campus core
- Consider opportunities to tie into valley networks more broadly (i.e. such as along the Cook Street corridor).

■ Public Improvements:

Gerald Ford Drive is the key access road that will provide access to the station site. Today Gerald Ford Drive has two lanes heading westbound and one lane heading eastbound. With the changes proposed for the CSUSB campus expansion, and a potential transit hub, this street could be redesigned to included landscape buffers, wide sidewalks, and incorporate traffic calming features to facilitate walking, biking, and micro-mobility network safety to support a walkable "town center." Gerald Ford Drive's character (e.g., width, pathways, mobility networks, pedestrian safety) can be considered to strengthen walkability and connectivity between the transit hub location and adjacent development and complementary uses.

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Lane quantities and level of service (LOS) analysis should be confirmed especially as planning for the CSUSB campus and adjacent development gets confirmed to support future traffic volumes
- Additional pedestrian amenities or dedicated infrastructure for bikes and micro-mobility networks can be included in any future roadway redesign
- Consider roundabout or traffic circle options for new intersections along Gerald Ford Drive. Similar circles have been incorporated on roadways elsewhere within the City of Palm Desert (e.g., Dinah Shore Drive and Pacific Avenue) and provided requisite traffic calming and moderated speeds to facilitate safe vehicular travel of all modes
- Use public realm improvements to include placemaking opportunities (e.g., traffic circles, prominent urban corners, and view corridors) that can be incorporated into future design thinking to establish "a sense of place" for the new station area and "town center".
- If traffic circles are incorporated into a future Gerald Ford Drive design, coordinate with planned vehicular circulation needs (e.g., Buses, shuttles, emergency vehicle, etc. turning radii) and available site area for station site development areas.

■ Future Gateway Bridge:

A future connection opportunity includes a bridge connection across I-10 to Acrisure Arena. This connection is envisioned as a pedestrian/micro-mobility network connector that could facilitate pedestrian access all the way up to small scale shuttle vehicles.

This connection dramatically shortens the distance on the local road network between the station and the arena from about 2.5 miles via Cook Street to approximately 0.5 miles.

The connection also supports reducing auto traffic associated with large events and could facilitate the utilization of on-site station parking during off-peak times for use by arena event goers. Solving for a connection to the arena may also provide additional revenue streams to the city through parking fees or additional tax receipts from local businesses.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to explore with Caltrans and RCTC an opportunity for a future connection to Acrisure Arena.
- Continued outreach with Acrisure Arena for future transportation integration
- Lastly, future provisioning of an I-10 bridge crossing should be considered with future planning and opportunities for grant funding

■ Partnerships:

Ongoing coordination with CSUSB / UCR campus planning can ensure the long-term campus vision is coordinated with any proposed transit hub planning.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Continue discussions with local property owners and institutions (ex: CSUSB) to synergize site planning, uses, and development opportunities.
- New streets transportation linkages from the transit facility and through the campus should be coordinated with future campus planning.
- Coordinate with the planned fire station and street design along Gerald Ford Dr.

6.4. CEQA PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

The next steps in the RCTC San Gorgonio Pass Project will be a Tier 2 EIR/EIS review. During this phase, a detailed assessment description of the selected project site will be developed—including location, background, objectives, and technical details. This phase also often includes necessary permits and approvals.

During environmental review, the project will focus on potential impacts and unique issues not covered (or were only covered generally) in the now complete Tier 1 analysis. During Tier 2, the project will identify and assess the "footprint" of potential station sites. As necessary, mitigation measures will address the new or more severe impacts identified.

Topics within the EIR are comprised of areas such as:

- **Air Quality and Climate Change:** Analysis of emissions resulting from construction and operation, including greenhouse gas emissions and their contribution to climate change, as well as conformity with state and federal air quality standards, appear to be within state guidelines with a net benefit from supporting multimodal alternatives to driving private vehicles
- **Water Resources:** Analysis of the project's impact on local water supply, quality, and hydrology, including stormwater management and potential flood risks indicates the site can support potential storm water management best management practices (BMP). A further study is being conducted by the City of Palm Desert assessing this
- **Biological Resources:** Evaluation of impacts on local wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems, especially considering the Coachella Valley's diverse desert ecology. This includes potential effects on endangered species and sensitive habitats. Initial assessment showed no adverse impacts
- **Cultural and Historical Resources:** Consideration of impacts on archaeological sites, historic buildings, and cultural landscapes, ensuring compliance with relevant preservation laws, revealed no adverse impacts
- **Socioeconomic Impacts and Environmental Justice:** Analysis of how the project affects local economies, property values, and particularly, the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across different socioeconomic groups; ensuring equitable outcomes showed a positive impact
- **Transportation and Traffic:** Evaluation of the project's impact on local and regional transportation networks, including traffic congestion, changes in traffic patterns, and integration with existing transportation modes showed no significant adverse impacts
- **Noise and Vibration:** Assessment of noise and vibration impacts on nearby communities from construction activities and the operation of trains, including potential mitigation measures were not assessed
- **Land Use and Planning:** An initial assessment of how the C3 project site project aligns with existing land use plans and zoning ordinances showed no adverse impacts with community benefits, including promoting sustainable land uses
- **Visual and Aesthetic Resources:** Assessment of the project's visual impact on the surrounding landscape and urban environment, including views and community character, indicate a positive impact
- **Public Health and Safety:** Examination of how the project affects local communities' health and safety, including emergency services accessibility, showed no adverse impacts.

A preliminary screening of both site locations, C2 and C3, showed significant environmental impacts beyond the typical are not projected.

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

An area that will require further resolution in the next phase of work is assessment of cultural resources. The sites are located beyond the scope of the most recent maps conducted for the City of Palm Desert General Plan[2]. Consultation and coordination with local tribal entities will also be conducted during Tier 2 studies.

Table 5: Palm Desert CEQA Site Evaluation

	Site Prominence	C1	C2	C3
Visual Resources/ Aesthetics	Visibility from Street	✕ Poor	★ Excellent	★ Excellent
	From I-10	EB – Obscured	EB – Good	EB – good
		WB - good	WB - good	WB - good
	From Cook	obscured by ramp	poor	poor
	From Gerald Ford	obscured by development	good	good
	Direct Connection to Primary Travel Corridors	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**
Traffic and Transportation	Vehicular and Transit Access	– Fair	★ Excellent	✔ Good
	Distance from Arterial	Cook Street .38 mi	Cook Street .28 mi	Cook Street .55 mi
		Gerald Ford .18 mi	Gerald Ford 0 mi	Gerald Ford 0 mi
	Transit Connections	Cook Street .38 mi	Cook Street .28 mi	Cook Street .55 mi
	Number of turns in / out of property	Cook St: 5	Cook St: 2	Cook St: 2
		Gerald Ford 3	Gerald Ford 1	Gerald Ford 1
	Connection to CSUSB Palm Desert Campus	Indirect	Direct	Direct
	Vehicular Connection - Acrisure Arena	Cook Street 1. 70 mi	Cook Street 1.96 mi	Cook Street 2.24 mi
	Pedestrian and Bicycle Access	✔ Good	✔ Good	✔ Good

[2] https://www.palmdesert.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/34535/638373010609730000 p. 90

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

	Site Prominence	C1	C2	C3
Traffic and Transportation *(continued)*	Bicycle & Golf Cart Network	Direct to Cook, indirect to Gerald Ford	Indirect to Cook, direct to Gerald Ford	Direct to Cook, indirect to Gerald Ford
	CV Link	from Cook,	from Cook,	N/A
	CSUSB Palm Desert Campus Connection	Not aligned	Alignment with primary axis	Alignment with primary axis
	Acrisure Arena	Cook Street 1.70mi Ped Bridge .90 mi	Cook Street 1.96 mi Ped Bridge .61 mi	Cook Street 2.24 mi Ped Bridge .29 mi
	Site Suitability	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**
Socioeconomic Impact	Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Potential	✔ Good	✔ Good	✔ Good
	Buildable Area	7.1 acres	4.6 acres	8.2 acres
	Mixed Use Viability	Good	Fair	Fair
	Shopping,hospitality, recreation, services, employment and arts and culture.	Good	Fair	Fair
	Parcel Acquisition / Joint Dev Opportunity	– Fair	✕ Poor	✔ Good
	Parcel Availability	Existing Development Plans	Existing Development Plans	N/A
	Parcel Cost	$$$	$$	$$$
	Highest and Best Use	No	Yes	Yes
	Joint Development Opportunity	Yes	N/A	N/A
	Potential Infrastructure Costs	High	Fair	Fair
	Trackwork, geometry constraints	High	Low	Low

	Site Prominence	C1	C2	C3
Socioeconomic Impact *(Continued)*	Bridge Abutments / RR ROW	High	Low	Low
	Utilities	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Controlled intersections	2	1	1
	Land Use Compatibility	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**
Land Use and Planning	Site Adjacencies	✔ Good	✔ Good	✔ Good
	Town Center Neighborhoods	Good	Fair	Fair
	Employment District	Good	Good	Good
	Public Facility / Institutional District	Good	Good	Good
	CSUSB Interface	Fair	Good	Good
	Environmental Consequences	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**
Environmental Impacts		✔ Good	✔ Good	✔ Good
	Air Quality (Sand Mitigation)	Good	Fair	Fair
	Storm Water Management	Good	Good	Good
	Noise	Good	Good	Fair
	Biological resources	Good	Good	Good

6.5. COST ESTIMATE

Construction of a rail station suitable for the estimated level of traffic and the resort gateway architecture that is needed to provide the visitor experience expected of the Coachella Valley is a significant investment for a local community. The City of Palm Desert plans to partner with state and federal agencies as well as other local agencies and private-sector partners to share the cost of station development, operations, and maintenance so local taxpayers aren't bearing the full burden of this important part of the regional transportation infrastructure. **Section 7** describes some of the funding opportunities that the City is exploring to share station costs.

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

The cost estimates presented here are Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) or planning level costs with an accuracy range of -25% to +80%. This estimate uses ballpark costing based on professional opinion using limited available conceptual information and the costs to construct similar stations elsewhere in California. Actual construction costs may vary significantly from this estimate depending upon the timing of construction, volatility of material costs, design elements that are chosen as part of the architectural process, etc.

The ultimate station concept can be built in phases which will allow the cost to be spread over a longer period of time with some station elements being needed as soon as train service starts, while others will be needed later as station ridership and multimodal connections increase. For example, the parking structure is one of the most expensive parts of the station construction and likely won't be needed until rail ridership reaches a certain threshold or other shared uses create enough demand that a surface lot can no longer provide the needed capacity.

The new Multimodal Transit HUB on a 10-acre site include:

- Site access and circulation, utilities, and station buildings
- Two train platforms including a pedestrian overcrossing spanning UPRR ROW with stairs and elevators
- Sitework including passenger plazas, dedicated bus loop, lighting, and landscape
- Project also includes TOD site opportunities

Total construction costs for the ultimate station design are expected to be around $190 million in 2023 dollars. This includes $13.5 million to build the internal roads and landscaping, $63 million for the ultimate parking structure (assumed 3-levels), $32 million for the platform, access bridge, and passenger plaza, and $13 million for station buildings and signage. An additional $40 million will be needed for design, engineering, and contracting services, and $30 million for contingency costs to account for unexpected challenges or delays.

The cost estimate uses the following assumptions:

1. Cost estimate based on year of construction of 2026
2. Construction management and construction administration costs are not included
3. Agency review fees and permit fees are not included.
4. Railroad and track work costs by others
5. Phased construction, multiple contractor, or mobilization costs are not included.

In addition to station development, Gerald Ford Drive is currently incomplete and will need to be widened to accommodate 2 lanes in each direction with appropriate turning and intersection control. Similarly, the City will seek partnerships with public and private entities to assist with construction costs. The roadway improvements are expected to cost approximately $41M, including a roundabout at the station entrance.

7. POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

This section identifies funding programs available for agencies in California from Federal, State, and regional sources and how they can be implemented for transportation infrastructure. Competitive funding resources are available to assist in the development and implementation of rail infrastructure in the City of Palm Desert. The following is a high-level introduction into some of the main funding programs and grants the City of Palm Desert can apply.

7.1. GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

Infrastructure and Jobs Act

The Infrastructure and Jobs Act is a federal investment for transportation and infrastructure. The investment allocates funds for intermodal transportation system to enhance the nation's rail network. This investment is to rebuild the nation's water, road, transit, and broadband systems, grow our economy, and create good-paying jobs. Funding opportunities for infrastructure include:

- Roads, bridges, and major projects
- Passenger and freight rail
- Highway and pedestrian safety
- Public transit
- Broadband
- Ports and waterways
- Airports
- Water infrastructure
- Power and grid reliability and resiliency
- Resiliency, including funding for coastal resiliency, ecosystem restoration, and weatherization
- Clean school buses and ferries
- Electric vehicle charging
- Addressing legacy pollution by cleaning up Brownfield and Superfund sites and reclaiming abandoned mines
- Western water infrastructure

The Infrastructure and Jobs Act offers opportunities for local governments and communities to secure competitive federal grants and improve infrastructure. Additional information regarding this program at the federal level can be found online at: **https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/legislative-mandates/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-bil-infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act-iija**

California's Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)

Grants from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to fund transformative capital improvements that will modernize California's intercity, commuter, and urban rail; bus; and ferry transit systems to significantly reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, vehicle miles traveled, and congestion.

Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program

A comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program that will help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and create a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation.

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements

This program funds a wide range of projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail to enhance multimodal connections. This program invests in railroad infrastructure projects that improve safety, support economic growth, develop jobs, increase capacity and supply chain resilience, apply innovative technology, climate change, and equity.

Mega Grant for Grade Separations

This program supports large, complex projects that are difficult to fund by other means and likely to generate national or regional economic, mobility, or safety benefits.

7.2. VALUE CAPTURE AND OTHER FINANCING MECHANISMS

Transportation infrastructure has historically proven to be a catalyst for economic development in the immediate environs of station areas, as well as further throughout the local communities. This circumstance presents the City with an opportunity to utilize available "value capture" funding and financing tools to capture the value of that future economic development and create funding for those infrastructure costs, including initial capital expenditures and maintenance costs, as well as potential funding for related community benefits and amenities.

A funding and financing strategy that includes financing districts, monetization of public agency owned assets (e.g., new parking facilities in the station area), grants, and other complementary sources may be well-suited to capture value from new development to fund the targeted infrastructure, as well as related transit-oriented first-/last-mile infrastructure improvements, and even affordable housing in the station area.

Consulting team member Kosmont Companies has prepared a Value Capture Feasibility Analysis that estimates approximately $22 million to $94 million in present-value funding capacity from a financing district such as an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD), not including potential complementary funding available from monetization of public assets and grants. The financing district would represent the sustainable, ongoing revenue stream that could directly support initial infrastructure capital expenditures, as well as maintenance of the infrastructure.

Part of the overall financing strategy would then be to leverage the capacity of financing districts to increase scoring and priority for other complementary funding, such as state transportation, transit-oriented development, housing, climate resilience grants, and federal transportation and economic development grants, on an opportunistic basis. While the financing district would make the City more competitive for such grants, the grants would also in turn improve the financial viability of the financing district, solving initial cash flow needs while the funding capacity of the financing district builds up.

Analysis considered a range of financing district boundary scenarios (i.e., smaller boundaries focused on the immediate environs of the station area versus larger boundaries encapsulating opportunity sites farther from the station), district durations (i.e., 30 years, 45 years), and very importantly, taxing entity partnership scenarios. While a City-only

financing district strategy can achieve favorable "return on investment" for the City (e.g., evaluated to be $0.5 to $3.1 million in annual net fiscal revenues), a broader partnership including the County of Riverside, for example, would further improve financial feasibility and funding capacity.

Subject to confirmation of other components of rail station feasibility and eventual station site selection, implementation of such a financing strategy would require a series of public meetings and hearings for approval, pursuant to state law.

7.3. FUNDING PARTNERS

Due to the significant local and regional benefits of transportation infrastructure, as well as the significant cost associated with such improvements, the funding plan for these projects typically involves myriad partners from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Based on the consulting team's similar experience in other communities across the state, county, and internationally, the coalition of funding partners could include, but not be limited to, the following types of organizations:

Local Public Agencies

- Local city (City of Palm Desert)
- Local county (County of Riverside)
- Local transportation authority(ies) (e.g., Riverside County Transportation Commission, SunLine Transit Agency)
- Local association of governments (e.g., Coachella Valley Association of Governments)

Local Private Sector and Non-Profit Partners

- Local landowners and real estate developers
- Local businesses and visitor destinations (e.g., Acrisure Arena, local hotels, etc.)
- Affordable housing developers and related partners (e.g., Lift to Rise)
- Potential private sector infrastructure developers
- Local educational institutions (e.g., California State University San Bernardino, University of California Riverside, College of the Desert, California Indian Nations College)
- Local medical institutions (e.g., Kaiser Permanente)
- Philanthropic individuals and organizations

Potential State Grant / Loan Sources

- State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)
- Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)
- Strategic Growth Council (SGC)
- California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (IBank)

Potential Federal Grant Sources

- U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

The form of funding partnership typically varies highly by partner and circumstance, but could include frameworks such as participation in local financing districts (EIFDs, Community Facilities Districts, Tourism Business Improvement Districts), one-time monetary contributions, ongoing allocations of recurring revenues (e.g., sales taxes, transient occupancy taxes, fees), contributions of land, low-cost and/or conduit financing, loan guarantees, support in applications and related pursuit of third-party funding (e.g., grant writing, letters of support), and other means.

8. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The existing conditions and public opinion support the addition of a rail station in Palm Desert. As this study progresses into future planning, design, and implementation phases, stakeholder engagement will remain a critical component of the process. Key stakeholders include the City of Palm Desert, CSU San Bernardino, Acrisure Arena, Local Homeowners Associations, SunLine Transit, Greyhound, Amtrak, Metrolink, Union Pacific, and residents of Palm Desert. Additional key stakeholders may be consulted as this project progresses. Further feasibility analysis will be conducted to finalize a location and layout of the station. This may be supported through accompanying projects to improve roads, transit service, and parking at or near the station. In addition, incentives to attract transit-oriented development should be considered to create a greater number of destinations in proximity to the rail station.

All funding avenues for the station, and by extension for transit operators, should be considered and scrutinized. This includes, but is not limited to, the local and regional tax base, grants, and value capture. Preliminary engineering and final design plans will also need to be prepared and obtain environmental clearance. Negotiations will also need to be conducted with Union Pacific for construction within the right-of-way, and an operating agreement will need to be developed with rail service providers such as Metrolink and Amtrak.

A rail station in Palm Desert will create significant benefits to the City and Coachella Valley region by reducing overall VMT and air pollution, providing an alternative long-distance travel option for non-drivers, and creating opportunities for transit-oriented development and walkable communities. The station will also benefit visitors to Palm Desert and the region through a potential direct connection to the Acrisure Arena, and by providing better access to Palm Desert's universities, local events, and festivals. While this study represents the collective vision for rail service in the City of Palm Desert, further study and design will refine the proposed improvements in this document. Subsequent phases will ensure the successful implementation of a rail station with regular passenger service to Palm Desert.

APPENDIX A: STATION RIDERSHIP DENSITY METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Appendix A: Station Ridership Density Methodology and Results

Introduction:

An analysis was conducted to determine the ridership potential along the existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor in the central Coachella Valley. This analysis determined which sections of the rail corridor could potentially serve the most residents, workers and visitors based on nearby land uses.

Methodology:

The methodology evaluated the number of residents, jobs, and special uses or activities with a half-mile and three-mile radius of proposed station locations along the corridor. Data was sourced from the US Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data, and existing land uses and was examined at the census block level. In order to determine the service potential of each of these census blocks, the following data were obtained for inclusion in the analysis.

- Population of Census Blocks (from 2020 US Decennial Census)
- Location of Employment and Number Employed (from 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data)
- Additional "Special Activities" such as Large Gathering Sites (includes Casinos, Theatres/Concert Venues, and Universities/Trade Schools)

The information regarding any "special activities" that occur in each block was added based on capacity information obtained from local universities, casinos, and concert venues. A heatmap of the total residents, jobs, and special activities was then generated using the Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW) method in GIS (See Figure 1).

The analysis was conducted at half mile intervals along the rail line resulting in 15 total sites. The GIS system counted the number of residents, jobs, and special activity seats that were within 3 miles of each site. It then counted the same information within a half mile of each site. Residents, jobs, and special uses within ½ a mile of the site were weighted at double those that are further out to reflect the increase in potential attraction to the station site.

The points representing the station locations were then ranked from 1-15, with 1 being the segment with the highest number of weighted residents, jobs, and visitors, and 15 being the one with the least, with color coding assigned to each (see Figure 1).

Results:

The potential station sites ranged from 38,222 weighted residents, jobs, and visitors up to 77,086 weighted residents, jobs, and visitors. The locally preferred site location selected as part of the Palm Desert Rail Station Feasibility Study is located at the number 1-ranked site.

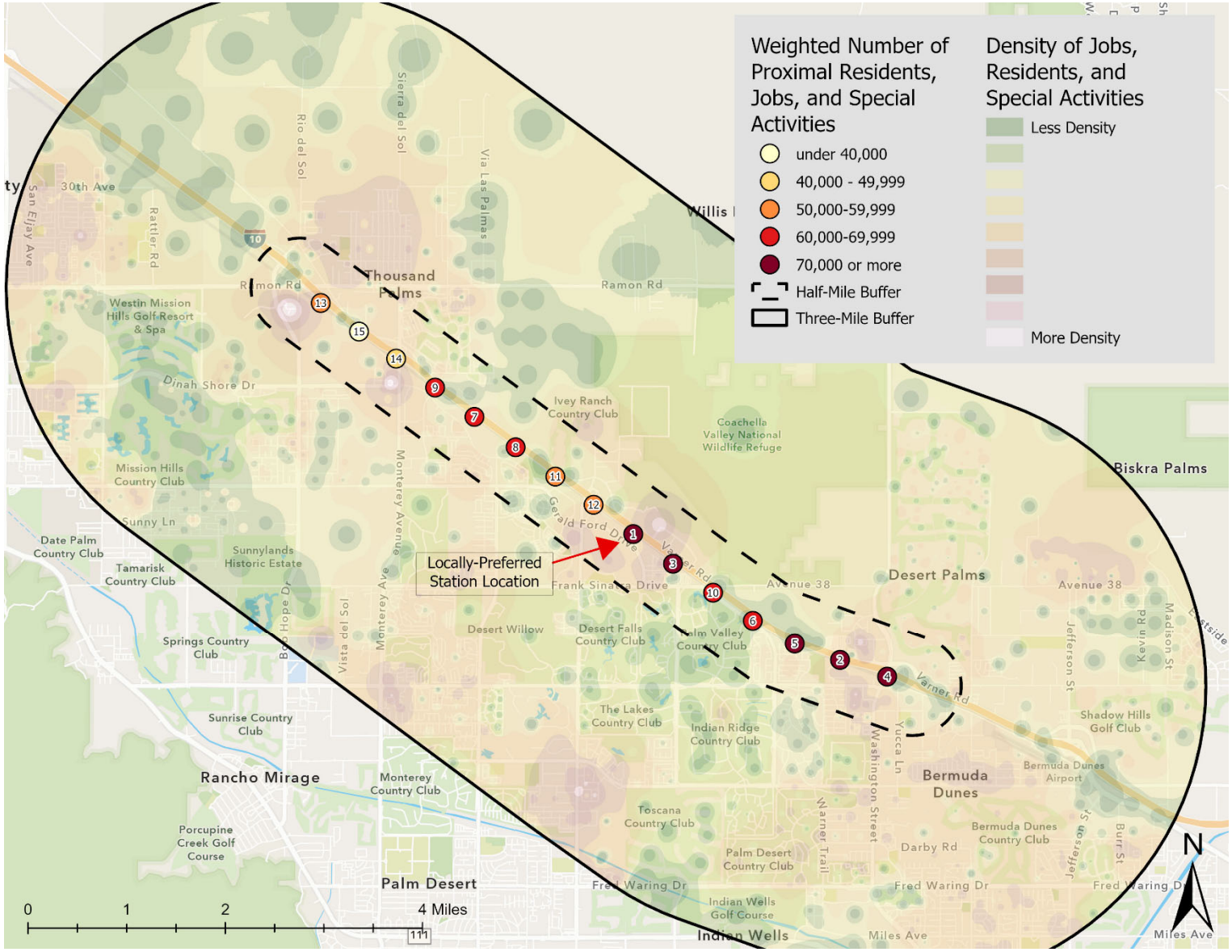


Figure 1: Ridership Potential from Pedestrians and Transit Users Along Rail Corridor in Palm Desert, California

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

ACRISURE® ARENA

January 8, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

John Page
SVP Acrisure Arena/Coachella Valley Firebirds

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0047
(916) 319-2047
FAX (916) 319-2147

DISTRICT OFFICE
41608 INDIAN TRAIL, SUITE D1
RANCHO MIRAGE, CA 92270
(760) 346-6342
FAX (760) 346-6506

Assemblymember.Wallis@assembly.ca.gov
https://ad47.asmrc.org/

Assembly
California Legislature

GREG WALLIS
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FORTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
VICE CHAIR: ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
JOBS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE ECONOMY
TRANSPORTATION
UTILITIES AND ENERGY

SELECT COMMITTEES
CALIFORNIA'S LITHIUM ECONOMY
LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS

March 15, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Palm Desert as the Mid-Valley Station Placement- Support

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission:

As the Assemblymember of the 47th Assembly District, which covers Palm Desert, I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at Assemblymember.Wallis@assembly.ca.gov or at 760-346-6342.

Sincerely,

GREG WALLIS
Assemblymember, 47th District

H.N. AND FRANCES C.
BERGER FOUNDATION

February 14, 2024

Anne Mayer, Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street
Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission:

I am writing in support of the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to strongly consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Very truly yours,

Michael B. Rover
VP/General Counsel

P.O. BOX 13390
PALM DESERT, CA 92255-3390
OFFICE (760) 341-5293
FAX (760) 341-3518

February 16th, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

Greg Rubino
GM/COO – Classic Club and Bellatrix Restaurant

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
Office of the President

December 18, 2023

Ann Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC)
County of Riverside Administrative Center
4080 Lemon Street, Third Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Palm Desert Rail Feasibility Study

Dear Mrs. Mayer,

I am writing on behalf of California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) to express our enthusiastic support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to evaluate the suitability of a rail station as the location for the 'Mid Valley' station within the Riverside County Transportation Commission's (RCTC) proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project, aimed at connecting Los Angeles with the Coachella Valley.

The City has identified Gerald Ford Drive, near Cook Street, as its preferred site for the rail station, conveniently situated near our Palm Desert Campus. The proposed rail station and the associated rail service would be pivotal in establishing a crucial link to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions for our campus community. This strategic placement of the rail station aligns with the goals outlined in the University's Palm Desert Master Plan, particularly considering our expanding enrollment and development of our campus.

Furthermore, the envisioned rail service promises to stimulate economic growth and development within the immediate vicinity of our campus. It holds significant potential to curtail the volume of vehicle miles traveled and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, thereby offering a more sustainable transportation alternative for our community.

For these compelling reasons, CSUSB lends its full support to the City's endeavor to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study for a rail station in Palm Desert. We respectfully request RCTC to consider the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station within the City of Palm Desert.

Sincerely,

Tomás D. Morales
President

909.537.5002 • fax: 909.537.5901 • www.csusb.edu/president
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

INDIAN WELLS
CALIFORNIA

February 26, 2024

Ms. Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Support for Palm Desert Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express the City of Indian Wells' support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a rail station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider the City of Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

Greg Sanders, Mayor
City of Indian Wells

La Quinta
CALIFORNIA

February 26, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our strong support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a Mid-Valley station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

The proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to bring more highly trained individuals from outside the Valley, which has been a challenge for our region for decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the Mid-Valley station.

Sincerely,

Jon McMillen
La Quinta City Manager

February 21, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

Alisa Williams

Alisa Williams

CEO
Palm Desert Area Chamber of Commerce

72559 Hwy 111, Palm Desert, CA 92260
760-346-6111 pdacc.org

THE LIVING DESERT
ZOO | GARDENS

2-15-24

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

Allen Monroe
President/CEO

47900 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert, CA 92260
LivingDesert.org | (760) 346-5694 | (760) 568-9685 fax

February 26, 2024

Anne Mayer
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St, Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Mid-Valley Station Placement

Dear Riverside County Transportation Commission,

I am writing to express our wholehearted support for the City of Palm Desert's initiative to be the location for a 'Mid Valley' station as part of the proposed Coachella Valley Rail Project. The identified site for the proposed rail station, Gerald Ford Drive near Cook Street, holds particular significance for our local community. This location is ideally situated near our two regional university campuses and the new Acrisure Arena. This station will be pivotal in establishing a crucial link for students and our burgeoning entertainment industry.

In addition to providing enhanced accessibility to the Coachella Valley and Southern California regions, the proposed rail service has the potential to be a catalyst for economic activity. It represents a transformative opportunity to build greater interconnectedness to communities across Southern California, spurring investment in our region and helping to prevent 'brain drain,' which has been a challenge for our region for many decades.

The positive impact of the rail corridor project extends beyond convenience and accessibility; it offers a sustainable transportation alternative. By curbing the volume of vehicle miles traveled and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the rail service not only contributes to a healthier environment but also enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors. Our desert climate is particularly susceptible to increasing greenhouse emissions, and as our community grows quickly, it'll be important to provide transportation alternatives.

Recognizing the profound benefits a station will bring to our community and those who come here daily or seasonally, we respectfully request the Riverside County Transportation Commission to consider Palm Desert as the placement of the 'Mid Valley' station.

Sincerely,

Agam Patel
Executive Director
UC Riverside, Palm Desert Center