

# Welcome!

## Community Workshop #3

Santa Paula Branch Line Trail Master Plan Update and EIR

December 11, 2025





# Agenda

- **Workshop Overview**
- **Project Background**
- **EIR Scoping Process**
- **Explore Proposed Alternatives**
- **Ways to Get Involved**

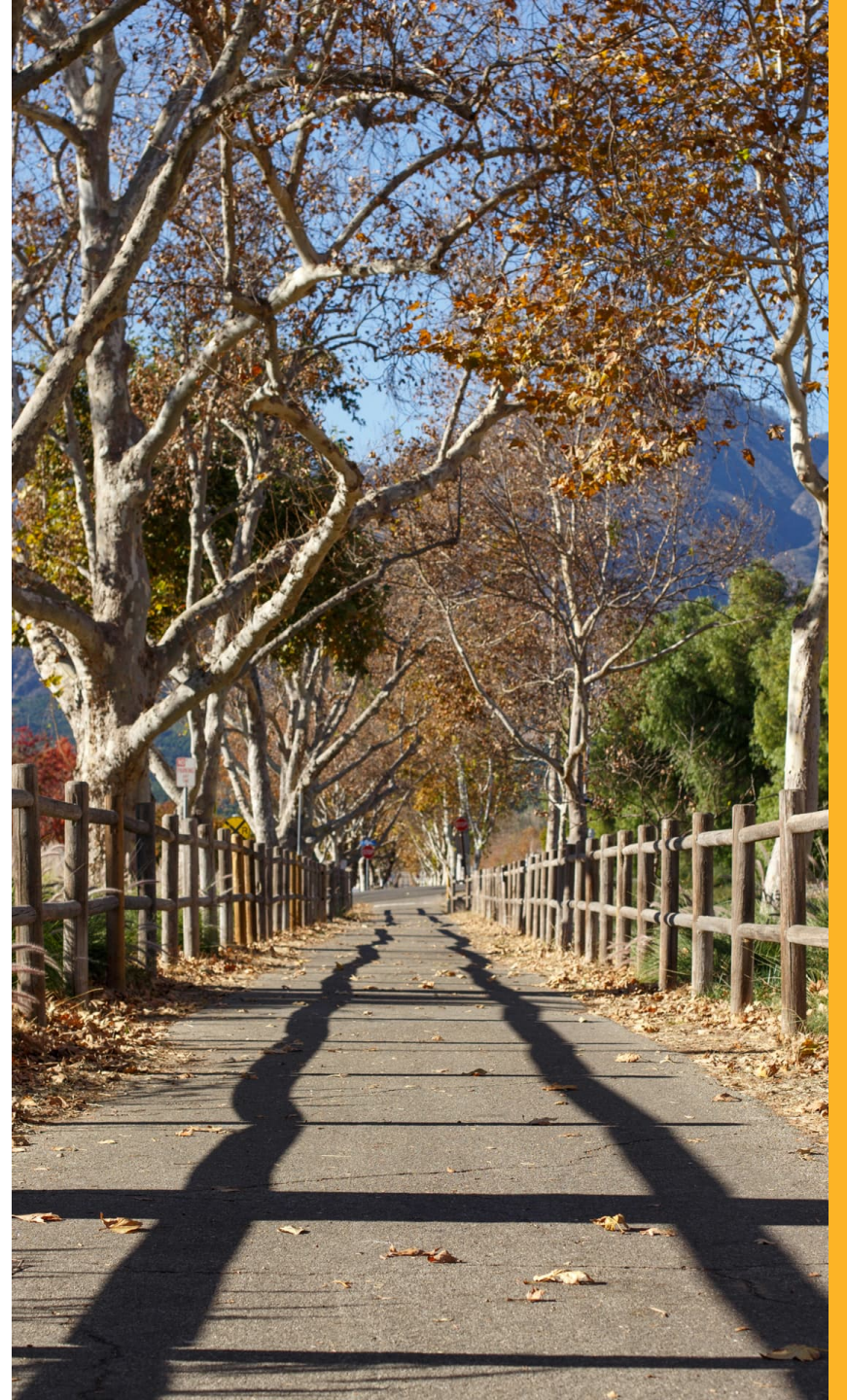


# Workshop Overview



# Why are we here?

- Share information about SPBL Trail Master Plan and EIR process
- Share proposed alternatives for the trail route developed based on community feedback
- Gather your input on scope of the EIR





# Community Workshop #1

June 24, 2025 – Fillmore Public Library

Gathered feedback on:

- Current conditions, safety, and design considerations
- Trail route options
- Engagement and outreach

# Community Workshop #2

October 7, 2025 – Santa Paula Agriculture Museum

Gathered feedback on:

- Proposed trail alignments and connections
- Trail amenities, fencing, and maintenance
- Engagement and outreach



# Incorporating Feedback

Feedback from the previous workshops is being used to:

- Inform understanding of existing conditions, constraints and opportunities
- Develop trail alignment alternatives
- Improve project coordination with project partners and stakeholders
- Contribute to Master Plan development process



# Today's Workshop

- Comment on the scope of the EIR  
**What do you view as the primary environmental concerns that require review and/or mitigation?**
- Explore proposed alternatives for the trail route
- Ask questions and share your thoughts with our project team



**Submit your comments  
today**

or

**Email before 12/21:**  
[spbl.trail@goventura.org](mailto:spbl.trail@goventura.org)



# Project Background

Talk to staff around the room to learn more!



# What is the Project?

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- SPBL Trail Master Plan Update and EIR Project
- Rails WITH Trails
- Updates Master Plan from 2000
  - No construction planned at this time
- Update Environmental Impact Report from 2000



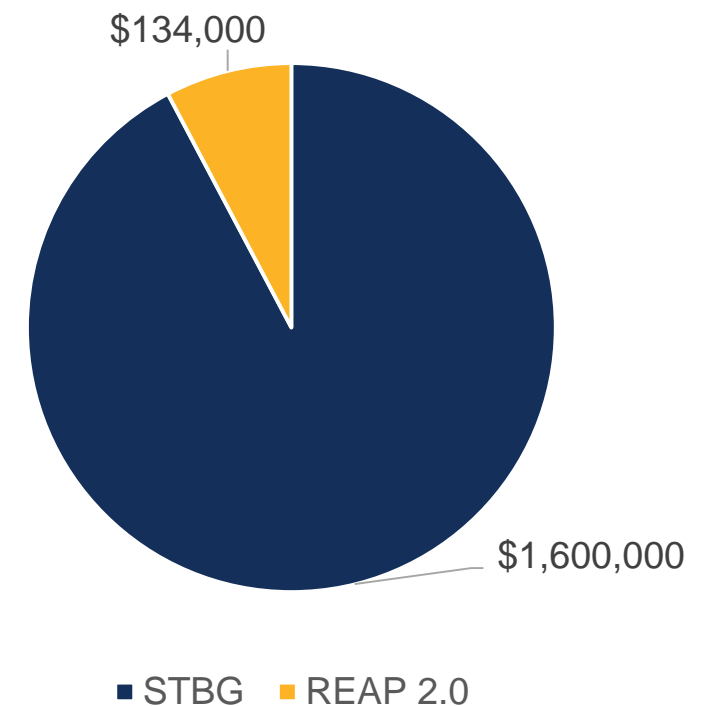
Source: <https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/public-works/engineering/public-works-projects/coastal-rail-trail>



# How is the Project funded?

- \$134,000 from Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 County Transportation Commission Partnership Program Grant Funds
  - Established as part of the 2021 California Comeback Plan under Assembly Bill 140
  - CA State Funds distributed via competitive grant programs to MPOs (SCAG) and suballocation to CTC (VCTC)
- \$1,600,000 STBG: Surface Transportation Block Grant funded from FHWA Highway Trust Fund- federal fuel and transportation-related excise taxes
  - Federal transportation funding source for projects that preserve and improve the conditions and performance of highways, bridges, and public roads; pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and transit capital projects.
- Competitive Grant Transportation Funds allocated to this SPBL Master Plan project **cannot** be used for local streets and roads or other miscellaneous projects (including other SPBL projects)

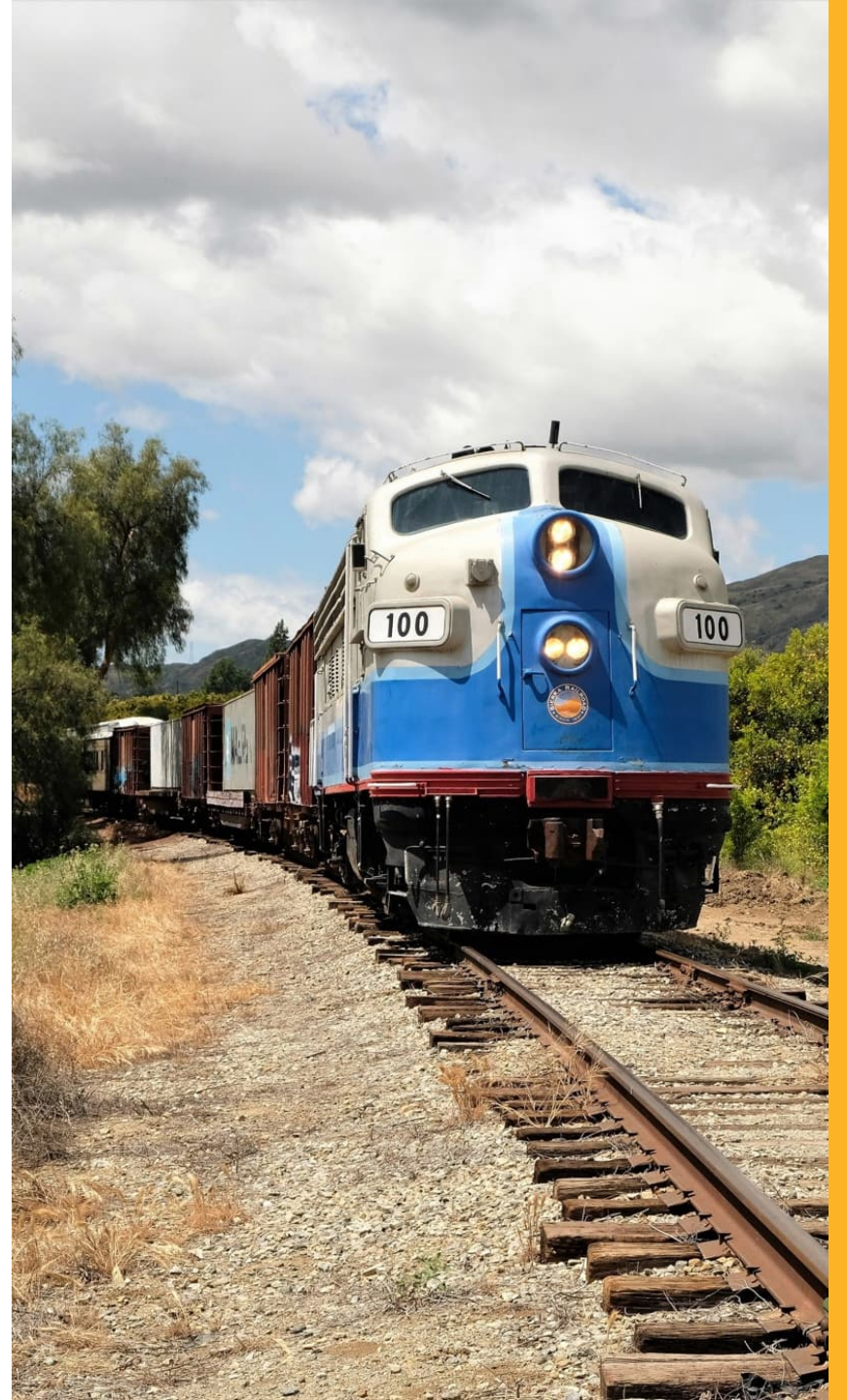
Funding Source



# Key Project Objectives

- Meet commuter and recreational needs
- Connect to existing and planned trails
- Maximize user safety
- Minimize disruption to adjacent agricultural activities
- Continued & expanded tourism
- Integrate cultural, historical, and educational elements
- High-quality linear park experience

Source: *Master Plan EIR 2000*



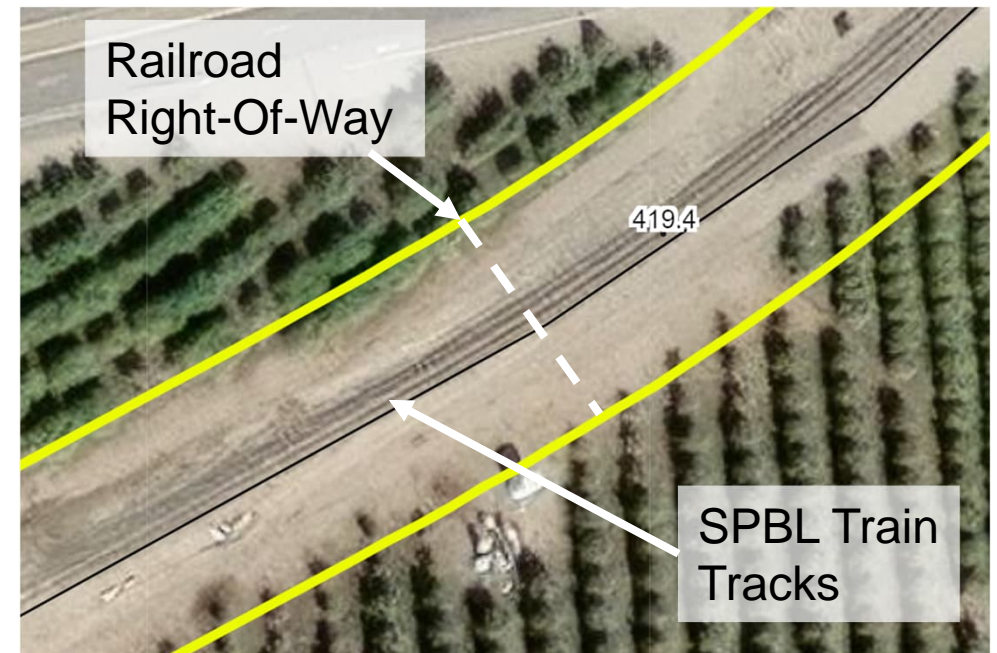
# History of the SPBL Railroad

- SPBL right-of-way assembled in 1880s by Southern Pacific Railway
- Opened in 1887
- Shared history of railroads and agriculture



# What is Right-of-Way?

- Right-of-way refers to a linear corridor used for transportation infrastructure like roads, railroads, and trails
- VCTC-owned SPBL right-of-way consists of 99 parcels typically 100' wide extending 32 miles from East Ventura/Montalvo Metrolink Station through unincorporated Piru community



Source: <https://www.goventura.org/getting-around/spbl/>

# SPBL Timeline (1995 - Now)

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# Services and Activities on the SPBL

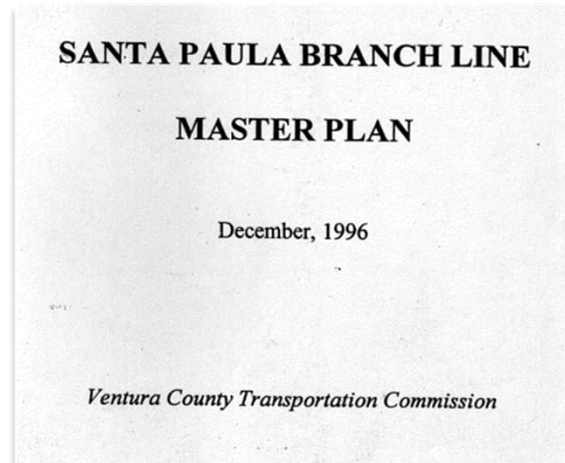
- Railroad Lease & Operations Agreement with Sierra Northern Railway defines use for “Railroad Purposes”
  - Freight and transload services
  - Installing spur lines
  - Storing/switching rail cars
  - Services related to movie, film, television, commercial, media, and entertainment
  - Tourism and seasonal passenger services



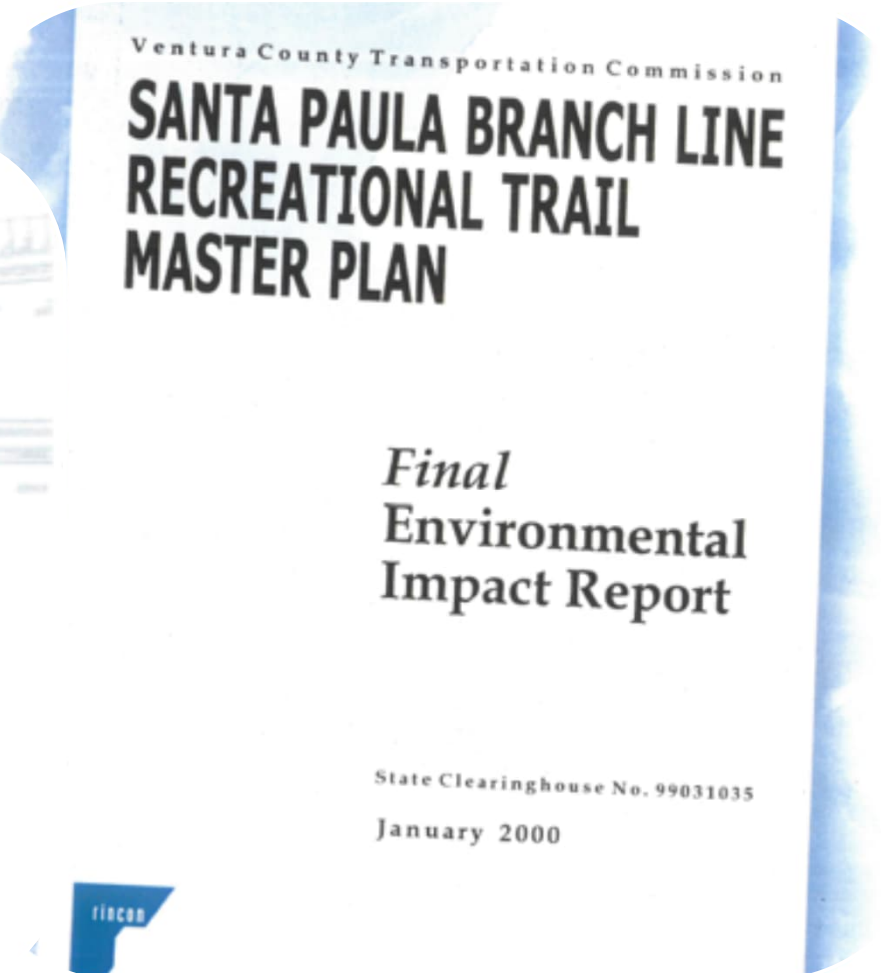
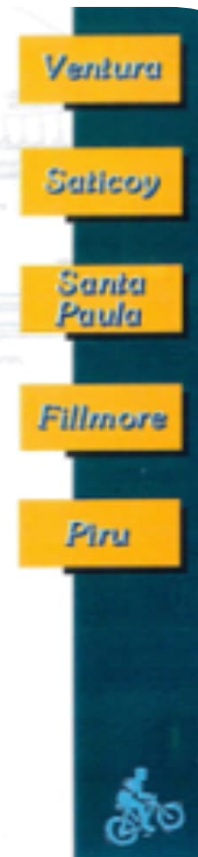
# Acquisition, Trail Master Plan & EIR

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES (not to exceed 60 words)

This project is the acquisition of the 32-mile-long Santa Paula Branch railroad right-of-way for use as a multimodal corridor serving five communities within Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. The corridor will be used for a bicycle and hiking trail; for freight port access, recreation, and possibly commuter rail service; for pipelines and utilities; for public parks, greenbelts and gateways to communities; for access to the Coastal Bicycle Trail and the De Anza National Historic Trail; and for access to the State High Speed Rail Corridor. The acquisition includes 388 acres of land, 29 miles of operating track, bridges, buildings and related improvements.



Santa Paula Branch Line  
Recreational Trail  
Master Plan



# Existing Trail Segments

Built Trail Sections in Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru

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**Santa Paula –  
2.2 miles opened 2012**



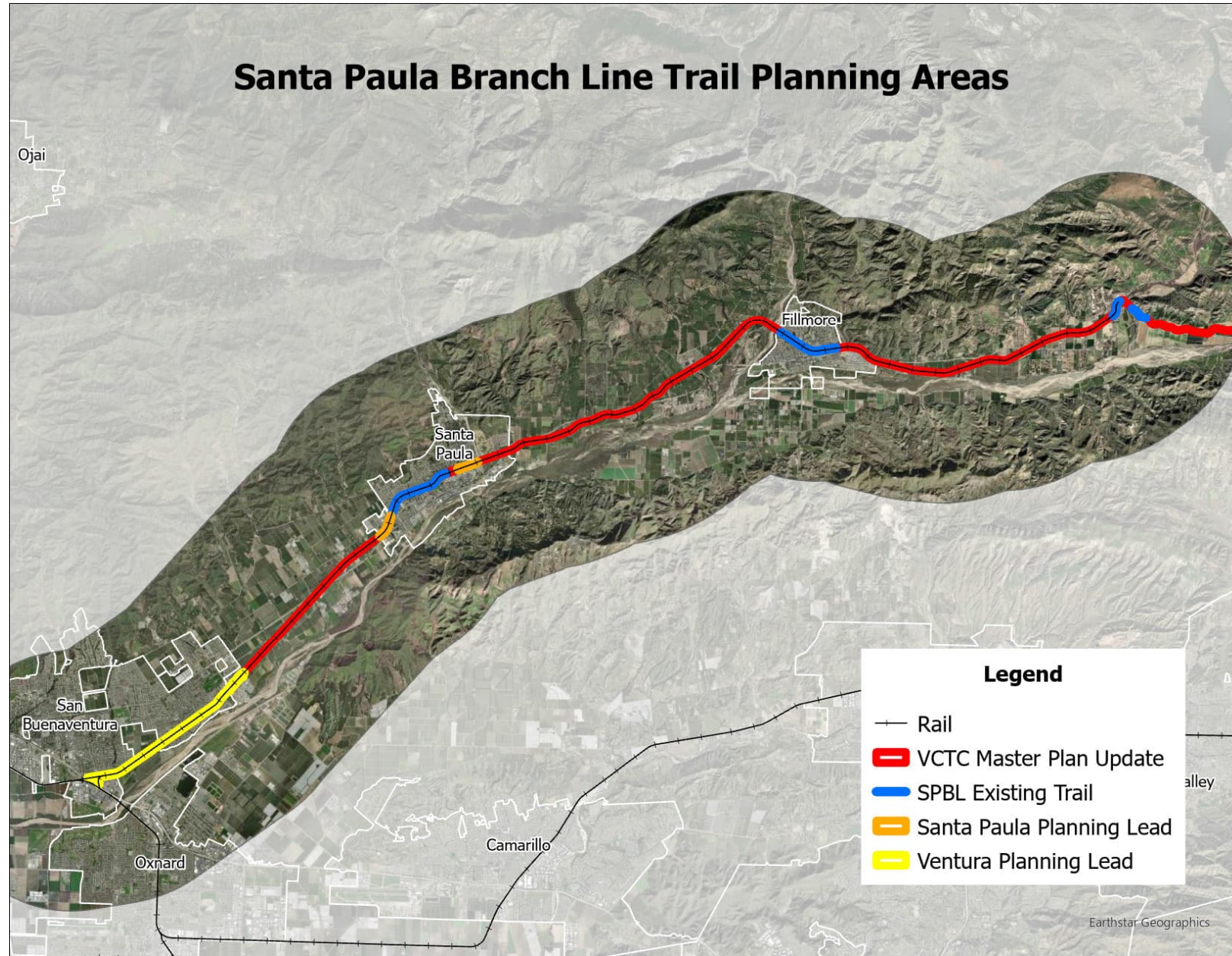
**Fillmore – 1.3 miles  
opened 2007**



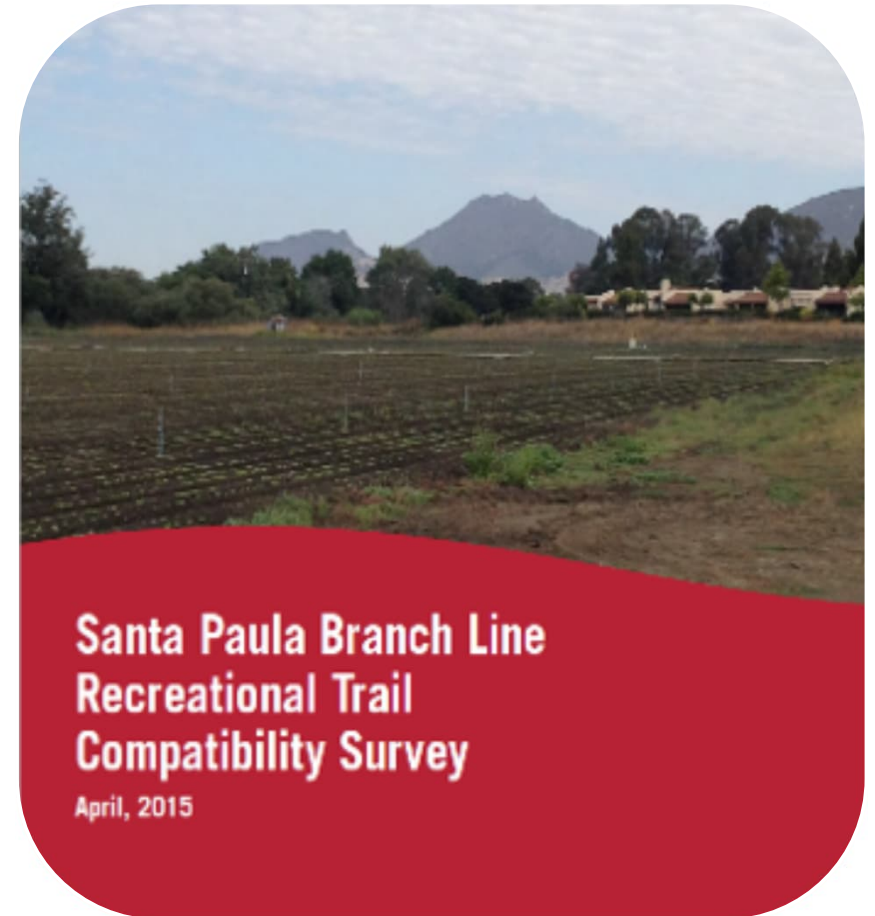
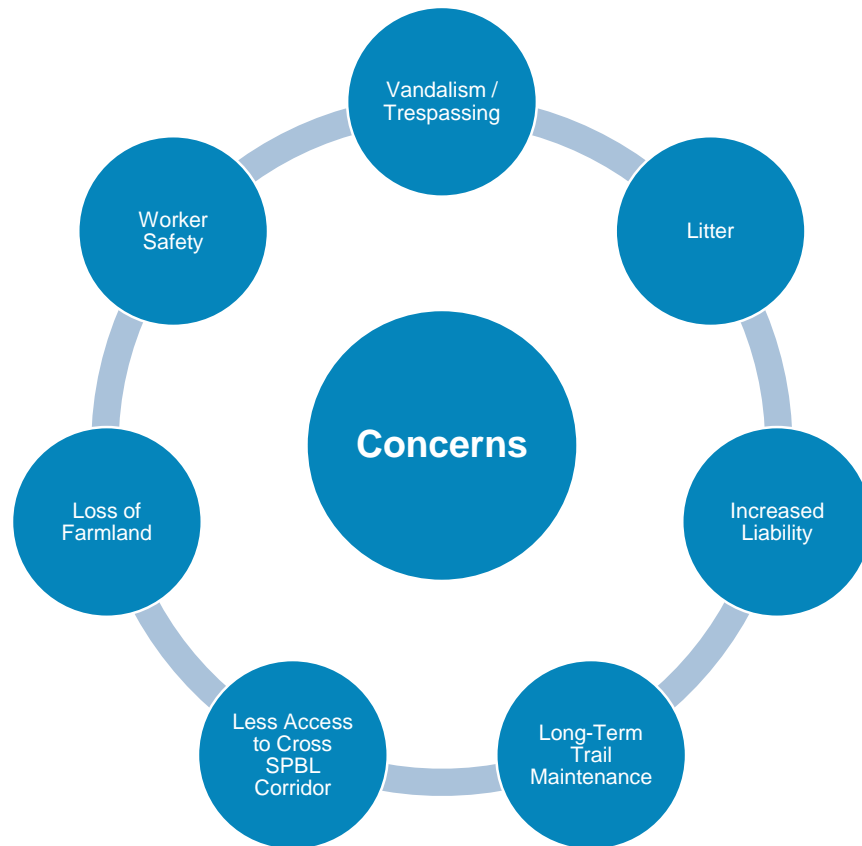
**Piru – 0.3 miles  
opened 2005 & 2007**



# Santa Paula Branch Line Today



# Trail Compatibility



# Local Plan Compatibility



Santa Paula 2040 General Plan



Source: City of Santa Paula General Plan Update, Mobility Element Technical Report, December 2019

Figure 3-10 – Preferred Plan, Bicycle Facilities

March 4, 2020

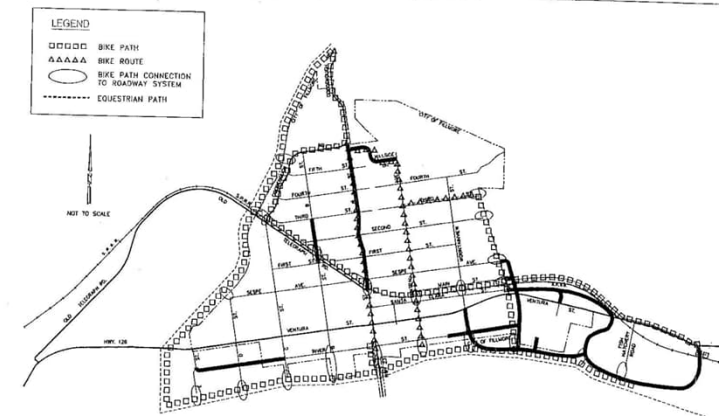
Circulation and Mobility – 3-35

**City of Santa Paula 2040  
General Plan (2020)**



**County of Ventura  
2040 General Plan**

City of Fillmore  
Circulation Element



Source: Wilson Associates, 2000

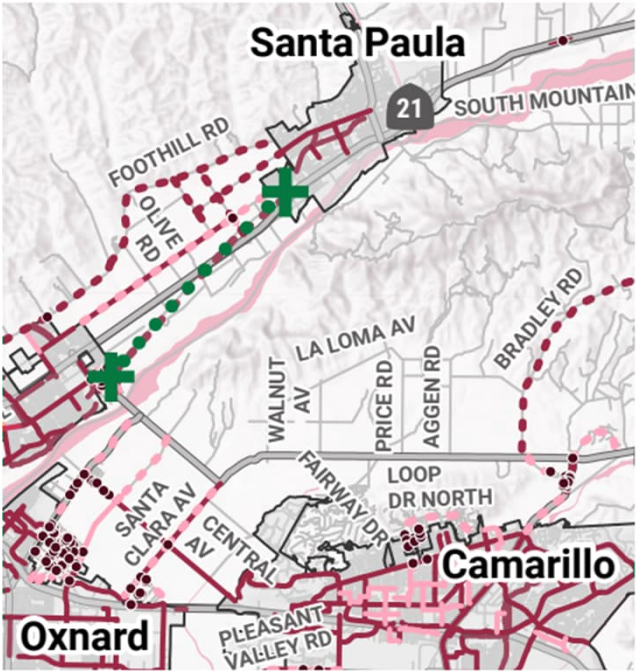
Proposed City-Wide Bicycle Circulation System

C-7

City of Fillmore

**City of Fillmore  
General Plan (2003)**

# VCTC Bicycle Wayfinding Plan (2017)



Location within county



## Ventura County Active Transportation Plan (2024)



## Saticoy Active Transportation Plan (2020)



Saticoy Active Transportation Plan  
September 2020



# Challenges & Opportunities

## Challenges:

- Right-of-way constraints
- Constrained bridges
- At-grade crossings
- Minimize disruptions to adjacent agricultural activities

## Opportunities:

- Build on previous studies
- Connect to existing and planned trails
- Incorporate historic and educational elements



# EIR Scoping



# California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

**Jan 1, 1970:** President Nixon signs  
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

**Sept 18, 1970:** Governor Reagan signs  
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)



## Statute

Laws passed by  
Legislature



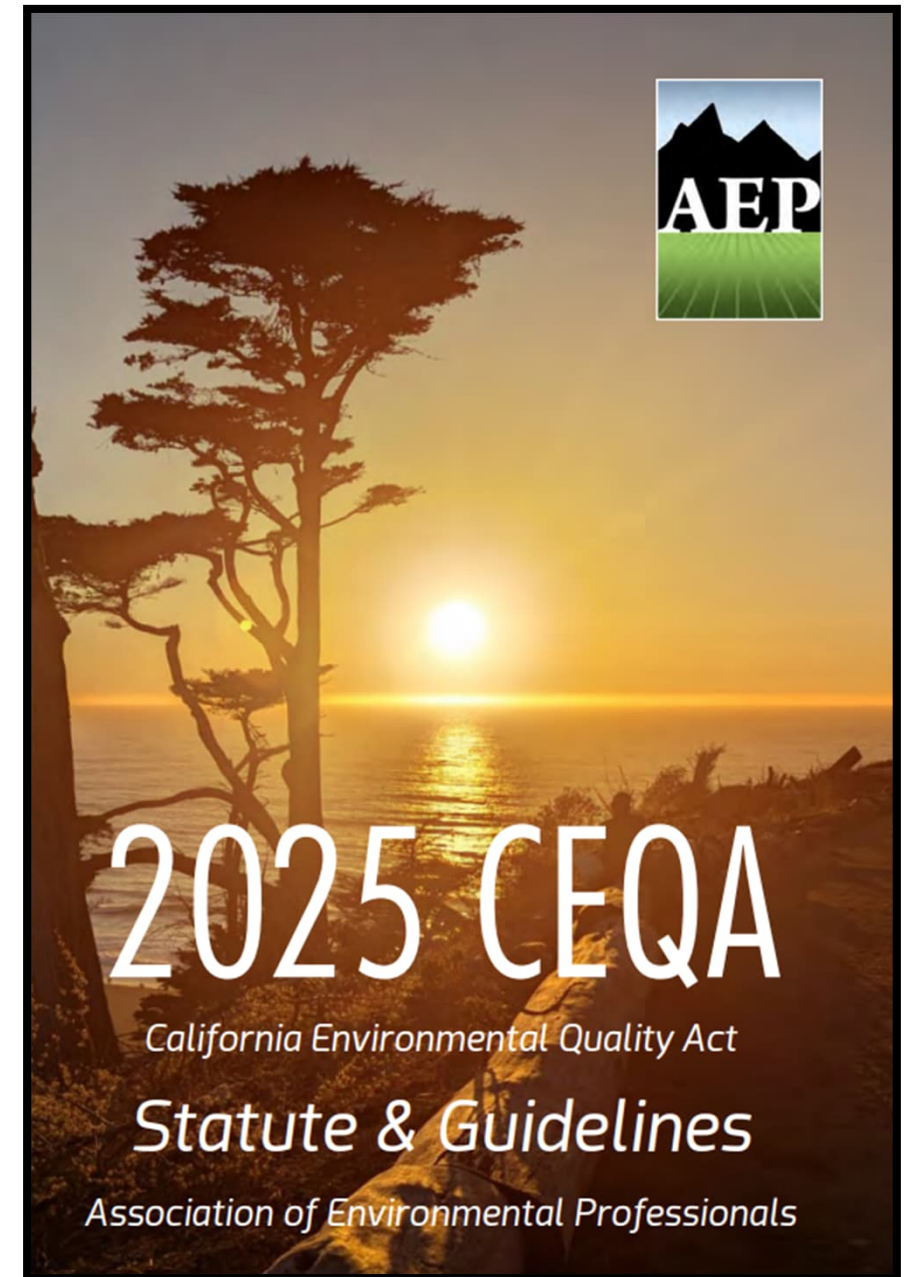
## Guidelines

Implementing  
Regulations adopted  
by the State Resource  
Agency



## Courts

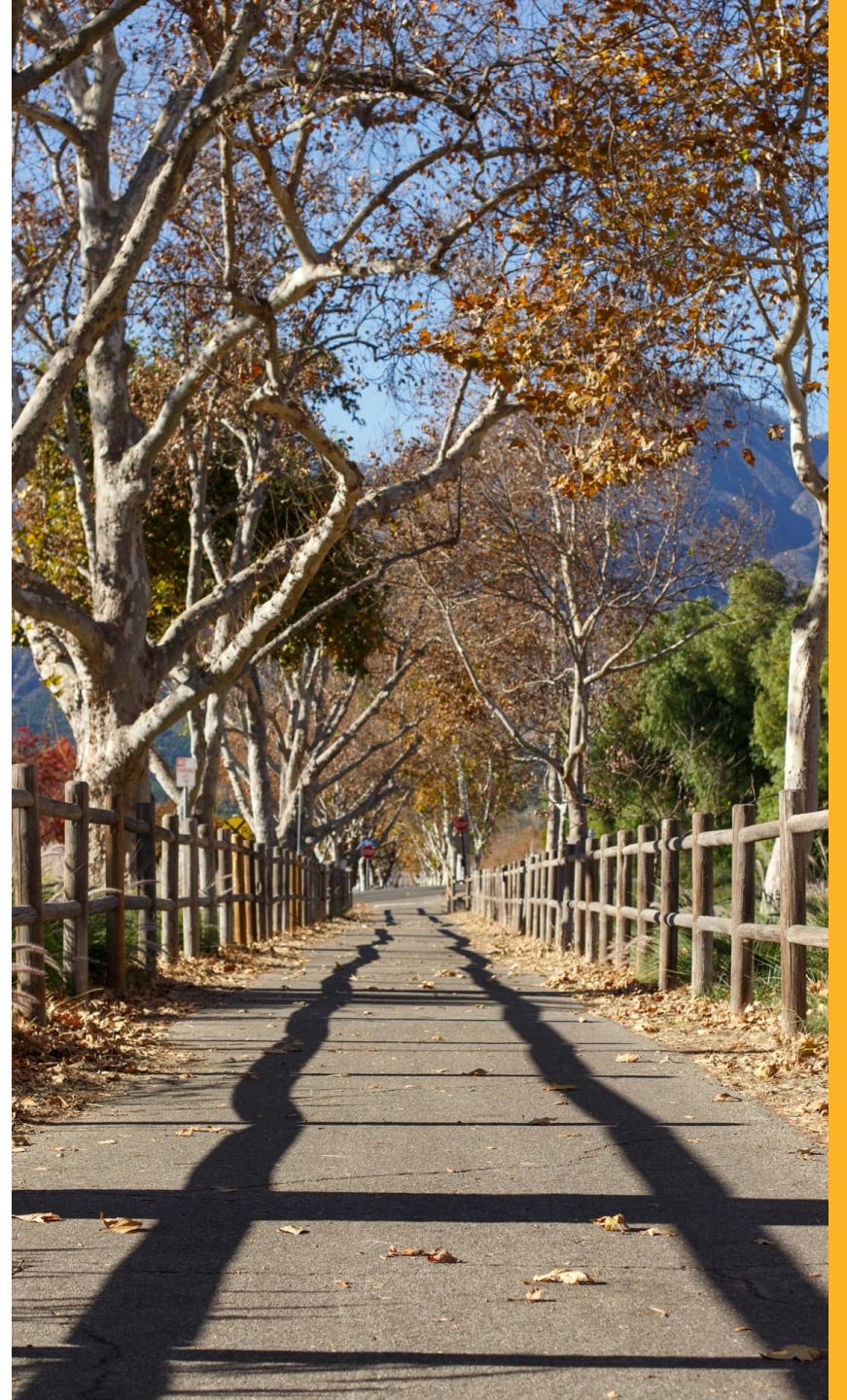
Interpreting Statute  
and/or Guidelines



# Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for SPBL Trail

**WHAT:** Detailed report that analyzes the potential environmental effects of a proposed project or plan

**RESULT:** Informs the lead agency and public about the potential environmental impacts of the entire plan, including mitigations and any alternatives that may reduce impacts



# What are the advantages of a Program EIR?

- Streamlines approval of future projects
- Reduces reconsideration of recurring policy issues
- Provides a thorough consideration of direct and cumulative impacts
- Analyzes a reasonable range of project alternatives





# Contents of an EIR

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- Table of contents
- Summary
- Project description
- Environmental setting
- Analysis of impacts
- Significance thresholds
- Significant effects
- Mitigation measures
- Alternatives
- Cumulative impacts
- Significant irreversible changes
- Growth inducing impacts
- Effects found not to be significant
- Organizations and persons consulted

# Environmental Factors Analyzed in EIR

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- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

## **Fill out a Comment Card:**

As the project enters the EIR analysis, what do you view as the primary environmental concerns that require review and/or mitigation?



# Alignment Options to be Analyzed

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- Alignments have been developed through an iterative process with routes initially proposed by the technical team and refined through stakeholder feedback
  - Previous workshops, advisory committee meetings, one-on-one discussions, and online feedback
- Primary project corridor is Santa Paula Branch Line right-of-way
- Alignment variations being considered based on community suggestions and where constraints make utilizing the Santa Paula Branch Line right-of-way difficult
- Full range of options being considered are shown on the roll plot maps

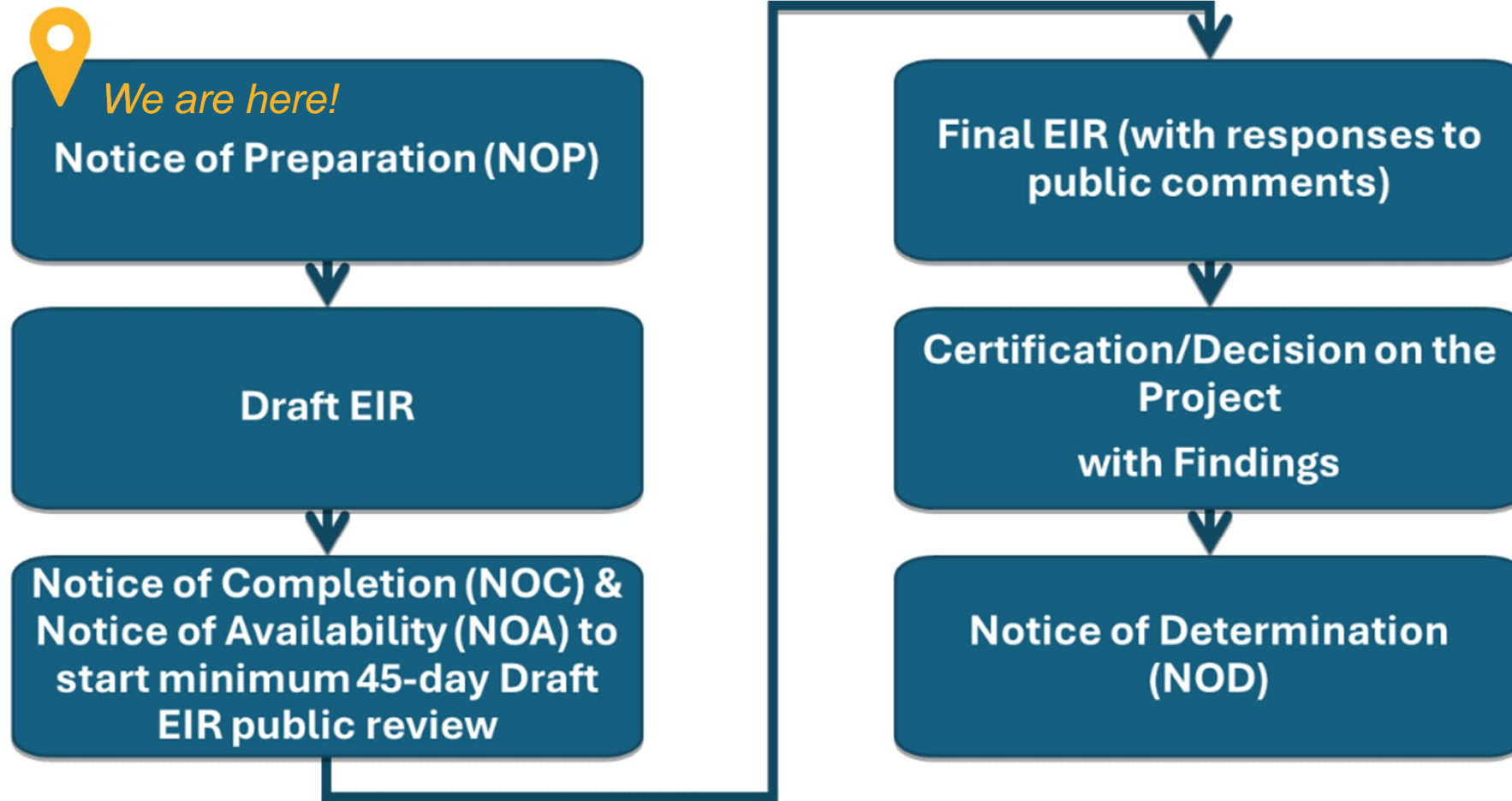


## Explore the Alignments

Check out the roll plot maps and  
talk with staff to learn more



# EIR Process



# How Public Feedback Shapes the EIR Process

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- Helps to identify technical areas of focus and potential impacts, *in a local context*
- Informs the consideration of project alternatives
- Suggests more effective mitigation measures



*Detailed, specific comments related to the technical areas of focus, alternatives, and specific mitigation measures are most helpful.*

# What We've Heard So Far

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Feedback gathered from Project Development Team (PDT), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings:



## **Agriculture**

intersection between agriculture and other topics, pesticide use, liability, theft, trail maintenance, leases and crossings, food safety, fencing



## **Aesthetics**

solar lighting, light pollution in rural areas



## **Air Quality**

impacts on trail segments along Hwy 126



## **Biological Resources**

wildlife corridors, endangered species, invasive plants



## **Hydrology & Water Quality**

flooding, drainage, culvert maintenance



## **Population & Housing, Land Use**

gentrification, connections to new housing developments, medical centers, and business parks



## **Recreation and Transportation**

accessibility, walkability, trail connections and crossings, e-bike safety and speed



## **Wildfire**

Emergency access along the trail



# Ways to Get Involved





# Stay Engaged



**Have ideas later that you want to share? Friends who couldn't make it to the workshop?**

Share your thoughts on the future trail, alignments, and areas of interest via our interactive **online Pin Map tool!**



**Last Call for Pin Map submissions!**

Pin Map will close on 12/21. Share your comments, concerns and ideas!



<https://www.goventura.org/spbl-trail-master-plan/>



# Engagement in 2026

- TAC and CAC meetings
- Ongoing one-on-one and small group engagement
- Additional pop-up events
- **Summer 2026: Draft EIR comment period**
- Final EIR and Master Plan public hearing: Fall 2026



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**Thank You**

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