



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Key Planning and Environmental Terms

Alignment – A specific route or path of a project. A project can identify multiple alignments within one broader alternative or corridor.

Alternative – A broader approach to meeting the project's purpose and need, which may include one or more alignments or design variations.

Baseline/Existing Conditions – Under CEQA, the baseline for an environmental impact analysis usually consists of the existing conditions at the time of the Notice of Preparation or at the time the environmental studies began.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – State legislation enacted in 1970 and subsequently amended, which requires public agencies to analyze and consider the environmental impacts of their actions before making decisions.

Class I Bikeways – Also referred to as a **bike path** or **shared-use path**, typically built separate from roads along their own right-of-way or easement. Bike paths typically offer opportunities not provided by existing roads and can provide recreational opportunities or direct commute routes if the crossflow of motor vehicles and pedestrian conflicts can be minimized. The most common applications are along rivers, ocean fronts, canals, utility right of way, abandoned railroad right of way, within school campuses, or within, and between parks.

Class II Bikeways – Also referred to as a **bike lane**. Bike lanes are established along streets and are intended to delineate the right-of-way assigned to bicyclists and to better accommodate them through corridors where insufficient room exists for side-by-side sharing of existing streets by motorists and bicyclists. This can be accomplished by reducing the number of lanes, reducing lane width, or prohibiting or reconfiguring parking on given streets.

Class III Bikeways – Also referred to as a **bike route**. Bike routes are shared on-street facilities that serve either to provide continuity to other bicycle facilities or designate preferred routes through high-demand corridors. Bike routes are normally shared with motor vehicles.

Class IV Bikeways – Also referred to as **separated bikeways, protected bike lanes, or cycle tracks**. Separated bikeways provide an alternative to other bikeways and may minimize interactions with other modes of travel by introducing a vertical separation element. Separated bikeways can be one-way or two-way depending on network connections and the roadway configuration. The objective is to foster bicycling as a means of transportation in a manner that improves safety for all users, including motorists, transit users, and pedestrians, including persons with disabilities. The separation may include, but is not limited to, grade separation, flexible posts, inflexible posts, inflexible barriers, or on-street parking.

Corridor – The general area through which a project or alignment passes. This is a more general term than alternative, but more specific than Study Area.

Criteria – As they relate to an alternatives analysis, criteria are indicators that can be quantitative or qualitative and serve as the basis for evaluating and comparing alternatives. These evaluation criteria ultimately help to screen out low-performing concepts.

Easement – A term that refers to an agreement to use someone else's land for a specified purpose.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) – A detailed statement prepared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that describes and analyzes the significant environmental effects of a project. An EIR is required when there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. An EIR analyzes the potential significant environmental impacts of a project, ways to mitigate those impacts, and explores a reasonable range of alternatives. The EIR must identify an environmentally superior alternative that would feasibly meet most of the project's objectives while reducing potentially significant impacts.

Environmentally Superior Alternative – An alternative that would result in the fewest significant environmental impacts and must be an alternative other than the No Project Alternative.

Lead Agency – The public agency that has primary responsibility for carrying out or approving a project that may have a significant effect on the environment and preparing the environmental document.



Master Plan – Intended to serve as the framework for the phased implementation of a series of projects over time. It establishes the goals, guiding policies, and the organizational infrastructure and strategies necessary for implementation and ongoing operations and maintenance once the project is in place.

Master Plan Update – An update to a previously adopted master plan to reflect changes in the project history, goals, existing conditions, and implementation strategy.

Mitigation Measure – An action taken to reduce the severity or negative impact of a project. They are a means to prevent, reduce or control adverse environmental effects. Mitigation measures can include avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing, or eliminating the impact, or compensating for the impact.

No Project Alternative – An alternative required by CEQA and used for comparative purposes to evaluate the impacts of not approving the proposed project. The No Project Alternative is a baseline for comparing the environmental impacts of moving forward with the proposed project versus not moving forward with it not a baseline for determining the significance of impacts. The No Project Alternative presents the existing conditions at the time the NOP is published, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.

Notice of Preparation (NOP) – An official document that begins the EIR process by informing government agencies, the public, and other stakeholders that an EIR will be prepared for a proposed project. The NOP is the first formal step in preparing an EIR and is required by CEQA as soon as a lead agency decides an EIR is necessary for a project. The NOP is a 'scoping' tool that invites comments on the proposed project, potential environmental impacts, and possible alternatives to the project as feedback on the scope of the EIR.

Program EIR – A type of environmental document that evaluates the environmental impacts of broad policies, plans, or programs. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of potential impacts at a higher level, which can then be used to inform more specific, subsequent environmental reviews.

Project Footprint – The total area affected by the construction, operation, and maintenance of a project, including both direct and indirect impacts.

Right-of-Way – A term that refers to a legally defined property right along a linear corridor used for transportation infrastructure like roads, railroads, and trails.

Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) – The Santa Paula Branch Line consists of 32 miles of railroad right-of-way with 29 miles of serviceable track stretching from East Ventura/Montalvo within the City of Ventura through the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore and the unincorporated community of Piru within the Santa Clara River Valley.

Scoping – An early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the environmental document and can be used to identify feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that avoid potentially significant environmental effects.

Shared-Use Paths – Shared-use paths, also referred to as a **Class I Bikeway** or **bike path**, are paved, off-street travel ways designed to serve nonmotorized travelers, including bicyclists, pedestrians, inline skaters, roller skaters, skateboarders, wheelchair users, and micromobility users.

Study Area – The area within which any alternatives may exist.

Tiering – The process of preparing multiple levels of an environmental review, typically using the analysis from a broader program-level environmental document to concentrate narrower projects and subsequent environmental review solely on the issues specific to the narrower project.

Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) – VCTC is the regional transportation planning agency responsible for transportation planning and programming in Ventura County. Ensuring the ongoing efficient and effective operation of the transportation network in Ventura County is central to VCTC's mission. VCTC owns the SPBL railroad right-of-way and is the lead agency for the SPBL Trail Master Plan Update and EIR/EIS.

Wayfinding – Wayfinding is an informational system of signs, colors, and other design elements that helps people navigate space.