

Southern California International Gateway Project Description

Introduction

This **Supplemental** Notice of Preparation and Initial Study is to inform Responsible, Trustee Agencies, and the public that the City of Los Angeles Harbor Department (LAHD) will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the planning, design, construction, and operation of a near-dock intermodal rail facility, called the Southern California International Gateway Project (the SCIG Project or the Project) by the BNSF Railway. The proposed SCIG Project would be primarily located on State of California owned property administered by LAHD (LAHD Property) in the City of Los Angeles, though portions of the Project would also be located in the City of Carson and City of Long Beach (see Figure 1).

The EIR for the SCIG Project will be prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Cal. Pub. Res. Code Section 21000 et seq, and the State CEQA Guidelines. The LAHD will serve as Lead Agency under CEQA for the EIR. The LAHD seeks comment from the public on the scope and content of the EIR and from Responsible and Trustee Agencies on the scope and content of environmental information relevant to each agency's statutory responsibility in connection with the SCIG Project and the actions and activities to be evaluated in the EIR.

As trade with Pacific Rim countries has continued to increase, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have worked to support and accommodate the development of rail facilities to expedite the movement of containerized cargo and other freight through the Ports, including development of the Alameda Corridor and four on-dock rail facilities. Recently, the LAHD adopted a Rail Policy to encourage the increased use of rail and provide for on-dock and near-dock rail facilities for movement of both existing and future containerized cargo. Following adoption of the Rail Policy, the Port selected BNSF Railway for the development and operation of the SCIG Project.

The SCIG Project is consistent with the LAHD Rail Policy in that it will provide for the planning, design, construction and operation of a near-dock rail facility to help increase necessary intermodal capacity for movement of cargo between truck and rail. The Project will also increase overall rail usage at the Port and thereby help meet future demand in a competitively balanced manner. BNSF Railway proposes to make the SCIG Project an industry leading facility, both in terms of its capacity per acre to handle cargo and its sensitivity to the environment. BNSF Railway is currently investigating numerous new technologies designed to achieve these ends and expects this investigation to continue through the EIR process. In particular, BNSF Railway is:

- Planning to incorporate an alternative to traditional diesel-powered railroad switch engines for use in the SCIG. Specifically, BNSF is:

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- Investigating multiple sequential low-emission engines for use as railroad switch engines;
- Currently operating in Los Angeles the only four LNG-powered switch engines in existence in the United States and BNSF Railway will be evaluating the feasibility of using this technology in SCIG;
- Already operating a battery-powered switch engine known as the “Green Goat” elsewhere in the Los Angeles area and BNSF Railway will be evaluating the feasibility of using this equipment in SCIG;
- Planning to incorporate an alternative to traditional diesel-powered yard hostling trucks for use in the SCIG. Specifically, BNSF is:
 - Investigating LNG-fueled yard hostling trucks for operations within SCIG, as opposed to traditional, diesel-powered trucks, subject to available fuel supply and results of a demonstration project planned for spring 2006 to prove the operational feasibility of this technology;
 - Investigating use of certified on-road heavy duty vehicle engines in yard hostlers;
 - Investigating use of California Air Resources Board verified emission reduction technologies for either alternative (and possibly in addition to either alternative);
- Planning to incorporate all-electric cranes into the facility, as opposed to traditional, diesel-powered cranes;
- Maximizing the use of lower sulfur diesel fuel in locomotives; and
- Incorporating Automatic Idling Reduction Devices in locomotives.

Site Description

The proposed Project site is located in an area that currently supports a significant amount of Port-related industrial activities. Figure 2 **(revised 10/31/05)** shows details of the Project site area. The central site area is referred to as the Primary Project Area, and would be utilized for train loading and unloading, overall site management and administrative support activities. This area includes approximately 96 acres of LAHD Property and approximately 57 acres of adjacent non-LAHD Property for a total 153-acres. At present, the Primary Project Area is generally used for cross docking, warehousing, and container and/or trailer maintenance servicing and storage. Cross docking includes cargo transfer from one mode of transportation to another mode, such as from a container to a trailer. The Primary Project Area is generally bounded by Sepulveda Boulevard to the north, Pacific Coast Highway to the south, the Dominguez Channel to the west,

and the Terminal Island Freeway to the east. Street addresses for the Primary Project Area are provided in Appendix A of the Environmental Checklist.

Figure 2 also shows additional project features outside of the Primary Project Area, generally located south of Pacific Coast Highway (approximately 27 acres of non-LAHD owned property). This property is also currently used for container and/or trailer maintenance servicing and storage, and rail service. Portions of this area are proposed by the Project to be used for a corridor for rail lead tracks south of Pacific Coast Highway connecting the Primary Project Area to the Alameda Corridor. In addition, as also shown on Figure 2, the Project proposes to make use of a portion of the existing railroad right-of-way along the eastern edge of the Primary Project Area for rail support tracks, and a small portion of the existing railroad right-of-way north of Sepulveda Boulevard for train operations and possibly for rail support tracks though, as shown, most of the northern most stretch of this track would be subject only to less frequent use by the Project. **If the assessment of Cal Cartage indicates the necessity to do so, the EIR will identify a new area that, among other sites, could be used for operations of Cal Cartage, which presently operates in the Primary Project Area, or other affected property owners/lessees. This new area is presently the site of auto salvage activities, or is vacant.**

Finally, Figure 3 illustrates the current primary local truck routes between Port facilities and BNSF's Hobart facility (red line) and the currently anticipated primary local truck routes between Port facilities and the SCIG Project (yellow line). The potential changes in traffic patterns will be evaluated in the EIR process.

Project Objectives and Purpose and Need for Agency Action

The Project Objectives for the SCIG, consistent with the LAHD's Rail Policy, are as follows:

- Increase use of the Alameda Corridor, which provides for the efficient transportation of cargo between the San Pedro Bay Ports and the inland destinations in the most environmentally beneficial way.
- Effectively and efficiently help manage the demands of current and anticipated growth in containerized cargo at the San Pedro Bay ports by providing for sufficient near-dock intermodal rail facilities and reducing the distance of truck trips associated with increase in containerized cargo.
- Provide comparable near-dock intermodal rail facilities for Class I railroads, generating benefits for carriers, shippers, and terminal operators.
- Construct a near-dock intermodal rail facility that is sized and configured to provide maximum intermodal capacity for the transfer of marine containers between truck and rail in the most practical and cost effective manner.
- Promote Port infrastructure improvements consistent with the Governor of California's Goods Movement initiative.

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As described above and consistent with the Project Objectives, LAHD has expressed a need for increased use of rail in general and increased near-dock rail facilities in particular, as indicated in its Rail Policy, for movement of both existing and future containerized cargo. The purpose of this proposed SCIG Project is to help address the need for increased near-dock facilities and also to provide an efficient connection directly to the Alameda Corridor.

As a new near-dock facility for movement for containerized cargo, the SCIG Project is expected to divert truck traffic that is currently using nearby freeways, such as the 710, to a facility in closer proximity to the Port. This will create shorter truck trips for movement of containers from ships to rail, which is expected to ease traffic conditions on local freeways and reduce air quality impacts. The proposed location for the SCIG Project will provide direct access to the Alameda Corridor and will enable the Alameda Corridor to reach its potential in terms of train capacity, thereby further realizing the significant benefits that already result from using it, such as reduction of traffic congestion and improvement in air quality.

Finally, by providing comparable near-dock rail service for the Class I railroads serving the Port, the SCIG Project would benefit carriers, shippers, and terminal operators, and further contribute to improving the movement of containerized cargo in an efficient manner.

Project Elements

The SCIG Project is the planning, design, construction and operation of a near-dock intermodal rail facility by BNSF Railway. The following potential elements of the SCIG Project will be evaluated in the Project EIR:

- Demolition of existing site infrastructure which primarily includes: (i) three warehouses, (ii) several small buildings/structures, (iii) pavement currently used for container and trailer maintenance servicing and parking, and (iv) access roads.
- Construction and operation of new tracks for: (i) the transfer of marine containers between truck and rail, (ii) supporting infrastructure for storing and staging railcars, and (iii) supporting infrastructure for train ingress and egress at the facility from Pacific Coast Highway and to connect the facility to the Alameda Corridor.
- Construction and operation of the following facilities: an administrative building, a hostler yard tractor maintenance building, a trailer maintenance building, a crane maintenance area, an air compressor building, fueling areas, and a truck in/out gate.
- Construction and operation of the following site improvements: installation and/or upgrade of storm drains; sewer systems and utilities; grading, paving, striping, landscaping, lighting, and fencing; installation of warning devices at railroad grade crossings; and security, communications, and fire protection systems.

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- Construction and operation of the following rail and roadway infrastructure improvements: a new railroad bridge over Sepulveda Boulevard; a grade separation at Pacific Coast Highway; expansion of a rail bridge over the Dominguez Channel; additional BNSF trackage from the SCIG Project to the Alameda Corridor and North of Sepulveda; and modifications to entrances, driveways and traffic signals.
- The operation of the SCIG Project will be an industry leading facility, both in terms of its capacity per acre to handle cargo and its sensitivity to the environment. New technologies designed to achieve these ends will be investigated during the EIR process.

The impact on Port lessees and non-Port property owners and lessees within the project boundaries, whose property would be directly affected as a result of this SCIG Project, will be evaluated in the EIR **(see Figure 2 showing potential operations areas for affected property owners/lessees). If the assessment of Cal Cartage indicates the necessity to do so, the EIR will include evaluation of alternative sites that could be available for future Cal Cartage operations.**

Description of Alternatives

Consistent with CEQA, which requires an evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives that would meet most of the Project Objectives and the Purpose and Need, the following preliminary list of alternatives is presented and will be addressed in the EIR. This list is subject to modification in response to comments received during the public scoping process. The Alternatives consider a range of site configurations with the Preferred Alternative assuming new all-electric crane equipment that has not been previously used by Class I railroads. The LAHD would appreciate comments regarding whether there are additional alternatives that should be considered for this Project.

Preferred Alternative (Proposed Project): Double-ended, Reduced Track Centers Track Design

Under this alternative, the loading/unloading tracks (“strip tracks”) would be double-ended, meaning train operations could occur from either the south end or the north end of the primary project area. The primary operating plan will involve the majority of train operations from the south end. The distance between track-centers for the strip tracks would be reduced as compared to the track design described in Alternative 2. The track design inside the primary project area would have driveways on one side of the strip tracks, allowing trucks and hostling vehicles to deliver/pick-up containers directly to/from trackside; and driveways on the other side of the strip tracks allowing trucks and hostling vehicles to deliver or pick-up containers directly to/from container stacks. The container stacks located next to the strip tracks would be used for containers that are not ready to load to an outbound train or be picked-up by a truck. Under this alternative, all electric cranes would be used to perform both strip track activities and for container stacking activities.

Alternative 2: Double-ended Track Design

Under this alternative, the loading tracks will be double-ended, meaning train operations could occur from either the south end or the north end of the primary project area. The primary operating plan will involve the majority of train operations from the south end. The track design inside the primary project area will include four pairs of strip tracks with a driveway in between each pair of strip tracks allowing trucks or hostling vehicles to park trackside to deliver or pick-up containers. Under this alternative, rubber tire, diesel-powered gantry cranes will be used for train loading/unloading activities and for container stacking activities.

Alternative 3: Alternative Site Location.

A siting study will be performed to determine feasibility of other site locations and these will be assessed as appropriate.

Alternative 43: No Action – Continuation of Existing Uses

Under the No Project Alternative, the SCIG Project would not be built and existing uses at the site would continue.

Additional Assessment

In addition, based on comments received at the public scoping meetings on October 6 and October 13, 2005, the EIR will evaluate the following:

- **Alternative non-diesel delivery systems for the movement of containers between the Ports and the proposed rail facility. This would include: alternative fuel/electric delivery trucks and alternative delivery systems such as magnetic levitation, electric, and others.**
- **Optional access to the proposed SCIG Facility, including the feasibility of a new grade separation from the Terminal Island Freeway directly into the proposed SCIG Site to determine if opportunities exist to reduce identified potential traffic impacts to the local community.**