

Community Impact Evaluation

Description of Existing Facility

Hazelton Avenue is four-lane east-west urban arterial in the City of Stockton (City). Hazelton Avenue intersects with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) Stockton Subdivision and Union Pacific Railroad (UPR). Hazelton Avenue is an at-grade crossing of UP tracks in the Traffic Study area of Stockton's [Traffic Report](#). This crossing is located one mile north of the Union Pacific depot, one mile west of the BNSF depot, two miles south of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) Regional Maintenance Facility (RMF) that services both ACE and Amtrak trains, and 1.5 miles east of the Port of Stockton, a bulk materials port that heavily relies on rail to receive and ship out goods. This crossing, while having had previous safety measures installed, including upgraded signals and pedestrian crossings, has still seen several incidents involving vehicles, pedestrians, and trains. This crossing therefore still poses an ongoing safety risk to pedestrians, vehicles, and trains.

Per the [General Plan](#) land use map, the crossing is adjacent to land currently zoned for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The City has updated its General Plan to a time horizon of 2040. The City's transportation plans for Airport Way continue to operate as a four-lane roadway.

Project Benefits

Reduced Blocking Delay

Traffic data from the City currently estimates that Hazelton in the vicinity of the UPR and BNSF crossing experiences approximately 4,913 vehicle trips per day and is projected to increase as commercial development continues in the crossing vicinity. The posted speed limit on Hazelton Avenue at the existing crossing is 35 miles per hour.

According to data provided by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and UPR, there are 42 freight trains and 12 passenger trains passing through this location every day, for a total of 54 trains. The trains travel at an average speed of 30 miles per hour at this crossing.

The "blocking/delay time" associated with those trains equates to approximately 162 total minutes of vehicle delay each day. Adjacent industrial and residential developments will continue to add a significant amount of traffic to Airport Way. As traffic and the frequency of train travel (both passenger and freight) increases, congestion at this railroad crossing will worsen, resulting in a greater potential for accidents.

Enhanced Safety

Safety is of paramount at any at-grade highway-railway crossing. The new grade separation will enhance safety by separating vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists from trains, eliminating the accident potential at the location. Based on information from the Federal Railroad Administration stemming from 1981, there have been five collisions involving trains, two of which resulted in fatalities (two persons killed overall). Enhancing safety at the crossing is critical due to the high volumes of vehicles and transit bus trips (4,913 ADT) using the crossing.

Coupled with freight traffic, the increased frequency and volume of passenger rail creates a greater risk of collision and fatal accidents to pedestrians and other travelers.

Air Quality and Noise Pollution

The existing crossing contributes to poor air quality and local noise pollution. The San Joaquin Valley Air Basin is a federal air quality non-attainment zone for ozone and particulate matter 2.5(PM2.5). The project area census tract suffers from high levels of air pollution and greenhouse gases, including PM2.5, PM10, ozone, NOX, ROG, and CO.

As vehicle traffic grows, the delays will increase beyond the current 162 minutes. This will intensify vehicle emissions and poor air quality. The grade separation will eliminate delays, idling vehicles, and reduce annual vehicle emissions. As traffic continues to grow, the total emission reductions will continue to increase and further impact air quality in the City and San Joaquin Valley Air Basin. The project is an important part of the region's air quality improvement strategies.

Trains passing through the closed crossing must use their horns and whistles to notify commuters and pedestrians of their presence. There are approximately 5,238 individuals living within .55 miles of the crossing. The elimination of the at-grade crossing also reduces noise by no longer needing the train horns to indicate the train is at the crossing.

Emergency Access

The project will provide increased access for emergency response vehicles, reducing delays at crossings in times of distress. The elimination of blockages to emergency services allows for vital public services for residents in the project area and beyond. This will reduce delays, providing critical extra minutes for emergency responders.

Enhanced Transit Service

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) completed the Valley Rail Sacramento Extension Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in 2020. SJRRRC will be extending Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) service and doubling the San Joaquin's Amtrak commuter rail services to Sacramento. The increased service is anticipated to be in operation by 2025. The additional commuter rail trains at the crossing will increase blocking delays. This will have a significant impact on traffic operations along Hazelton Avenue as well as an increase in vehicle emissions and decrease in air quality.

The project improvements will also benefit the movement of goods and people. The project will serve both Class 1 railroads in the area, allowing them to move more efficiently and effectively. The crossing will continue to serve the Port of Stockton, the agricultural base of the San Joaquin Valley, and multiple air freight facilities at the Stockton Metropolitan Airport.

Proximity to the Stockton Diamond Grade Separation

SJRRRC, in partnership with BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), will be grade separating two rail lines that intersect. The EIR for the Stockton Diamond Grade Separation was completed in 2021, and construction is anticipated to begin in 2023 and completed in 2026. The UPRR Fresno Subdivision will be elevated over the BNSF Stockton Subdivision, which will remain at-grade. This railway separation project will have significant freight and passenger rail benefits in the region. The movement of goods will be able to proceed without delays to the rail network and reduced road closures.

Multimodal Travel

The City's Bicycle [Master Plan](#), which was adopted in 2017, calls for Hazelton Avenue to implement bikeways on this key corridor. There will be a Class IV separated bikeway constructed. Currently, there are no sidewalks or bicycle facilities present on Airport Way at this crossing which makes it very unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. If the grade separation is constructed, it would help to achieve the City's

transportation planning goals, as well as provide safer pedestrian and bicycle access in the railroad crossing area. These efforts also promote citywide spatial equity and socioeconomic equity by connecting disadvantaged neighborhoods in central and south Stockton, as well as providing an additional travel mode for students attending school nearby.

The increase of rail service will have clear benefits to both pedestrians and the environment, with the reduction of single-occupancy vehicles providing idling emissions at the crossing gates. The grade separation at Hazelton Avenue will provide residents with increased travel mode options, reduced idling at the crossing, the elimination of a physical barrier to providing essential emergency services, and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for increased public health benefits.

Transportation Equity Investment

The Hazelton Avenue crossing with BNSF and UPR is located within census tract 6077000600. This census tract is identified as a Senate Bill 535 disadvantaged community with a score of 94 percentile in CalEnviroScreen 4.0. The census tract retains high rates of poverty in the 98th percentile, unemployment in the 67th percentile, and housing cost burden in the 93rd percentile. The project will help improve mobility by providing pedestrian facilities and improved rail transit operations. The project will also improve air quality and public health for residents in the census tract.

The project will provide historically disadvantaged residents with increased access to job opportunities, methods of travel, and reduced emission for improved public health. The residents of Stockton will benefit from faster emergency response times and increased access to basic amenities. The City of Stockton has committed to working with community partners to encourage disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) to apply for jobs, seek fair wages, connect with organized labor unions, and ensure proper representation on projects, including requirements for a percentage of women-owned, minority-owned, and disabled-owned businesses to apply for project activities.

Multiple Funding Sources

Other funding sources have been identified as potentially contributing to funding for this project, such as San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) Measure K funds and SJCOG's Regional Transportation Improvement Fee. The combined funding from several sources will help the City construct the project by reducing the burden on capital improvement program funding. The City has committed to a 20% match.