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The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) is the managing agency for the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE). ACE is primarily a commuter rail service that runs four round-trips from Stockton to San Jose, Monday through Friday. ACE carries over 1.3 million passengers annually.

## ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project – Notice of Preparation of an EIR

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC), acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), intends to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project.

The ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project would include Phase I and Phase II improvements. Phase I improvements would support the ACE service extension to Ceres and Phase II improvements would support the ACE service extension to Merced. Phase I improvements include new stations, upgrades to track, a new track connection, a temporary Ceres Layover Facility, an interim bus bridge between Merced and Ceres, and two operational scenarios. Phase II improvements include upgrades to existing track and addition of new track between Ceres and Merced, new stations, a new permanent Merced Layover Facility, and two operational scenarios. No improvements are proposed along the existing ACE corridor between Stockton and San Jose.

The purpose of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that SJRRRC plans to prepare the EIR and to request input on the scope of the environmental analysis to be performed. The NOP provides a more detailed description of the project as well as the potential environmental effects and can be viewed online [here](#) or by visiting: [www.acerail.com/About/Projects-Initiatives/Current/ACE-Extension-Lathrop-to-Ceres-Merced](http://www.acerail.com/About/Projects-Initiatives/Current/ACE-Extension-Lathrop-to-Ceres-Merced)

### **Connection to ACEforward:**

A prior NOP was issued for the ACEforward project in June 2013, and the draft EIR was released in May 2017. The ACEforward project included the expansion of ACE service between the San Joaquin Valley and San Jose, as well as extension of ACE service to Modesto and Merced.

As the ACEforward project has progressed, funding for the entirety of ACEforward improvements has been uncertain. However, as part of SB 132 passed in April 2017, SJRRRC was awarded \$400 million for the ACE service expansion in the San Joaquin Valley. Through the ACEforward project development and environmental review, substantial financial, environmental, and logistical challenges were identified with some of the improvements necessary to increase ACE service levels to San Jose. In addition, SJRRRC ridership studies have shown that expansion to Ceres and Merced would provide substantial increases in ACE ridership without the financial, logistical, and environmental challenges of some of the improvements necessary to increase service levels to San Jose. As a result, the feasible and

fundable extension of service in the Central Valley is now the focus of SJRRC vision for commuter and intercity passenger rail services for ACE. The improvements envisioned in the *ACEforward* plan no longer represents the intention of SJRRC for ACE. For this reason, SJRRC is rescinding the prior *ACEforward* NOP and draft EIR and intends to prepare a new EIR for this ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project. Since the *ACEforward* project is not moving forward, response to comments received on the *ACEforward* draft EIR will not be responded to and will not be part of the administrative record for this new EIR.

**Scoping Period:**

From public agencies, we are inviting comments on the scope and context of the environmental information that is germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities with regard to the proposed project. We are also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of the environmental document.

Written responses and comments on the scope of the ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project will be accepted until 5:00 PM on Friday, February 9, 2018. Please send written comments to:

Email: [ACEextension.south@gmail.com](mailto:ACEextension.south@gmail.com)

Mail: San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission

Attn: ACE Extension Lathrop to Ceres/Merced Project

949 East Channel Street

Stockton, CA 95202

**Scoping Meeting:**

SJRRC will hold a public scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for SJRRC to explain the project and to give interested agencies, organizations, and individuals an additional opportunity to comment on the scope and content of the EIR.

Date & time: Monday, January 29, 2018, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Location: Ceres Community Center

Small Assembly Room

2701 Fourth Street

Ceres, CA 95307