



PRESS RELEASE

Date: April 17, 2015
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plans to increase passenger rail service to the Coachella Valley and San Geronio Pass received an important boost this week thanks to the approval of a \$2.98 million Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant for passenger rail planning.

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) recently launched a comprehensive planning effort to bring daily Amtrak service between Los Angeles and Indio. The award of the grant will fund the completion of an effort that requires a full analysis of various alignment alternatives, the completion of an environmental impact report and the development of a service plan.

“While we still have a lot of work to do, this is great news for Riverside County, the Coachella Valley and the San Geronio Pass,” said RCTC Chairman Daryl Busch, who serves as the Mayor of Perris. “Our desert communities are known throughout the world but there needs to be another way to get there besides having to drive on Interstate 10.”

Currently, the only train service to the Coachella Valley is provided three times a week with Amtrak’s Sunset Limited which travels between New Orleans and Los Angeles. The only stop in the Coachella Valley is at an isolated train platform in Palm Springs with inconvenient stop times. RCTC’s proposal would provide at least one round-trip per

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day between Los Angeles and Indio with a stop in the San Geronio Pass and two stops in the Coachella Valley.

“We’ve talked about rail service for years, but this is the first time we have seen a positive response in favor of this service from an important federal agency,” said RCTC Vice Chairman Scott Matas, a Councilman from Desert Hot Springs. “This can be a popular service for travelers headed in either direction.”

The overall planning work is a team effort involving RCTC, the California Department of Transportation Rail Division, and consulting firm HDR. Earlier this year, two public meetings were held, which attracted the interest of more than a hundred people who either attended the meetings or participated on-line.

More than 140,000 travel trips are taken along this 141-mile corridor, primarily by car and much of it on Interstate 10. Air passengers can access the area via Palm Springs International Airport and Ontario International Airport but rail and bus service is extremely limited.

“This is about providing effective travel choices,” said Greg Pettis the Mayor Pro Tem of Cathedral City and RCTC Commissioner. “You’ll find that Coachella Valley is united in pursuing more rail service and we are supported by our local businesses and the tourism and convention industry. Moreover we received support from Senator Feinstein and Congressman Ruiz as well as from our state representatives including Senator Stone and Assemblyman Garcia,” Pettis said.

“I see a future for our Valley with more rail service and can’t wait for it to get here.”

For more information on the Coachella Valley-San Geronio Pass Rail study please see” www.CVRailProject.info.