

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is partnering with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), BNSF Railway (BNSF), and the City of Santa Fe Springs (City) to construct an overpass at the intersection of Rosecrans Avenue, Marquardt Avenue, and the BNSF right of way (ROW) in the City of Santa Fe Springs (Santa Fe Springs) (Project). The study area is bordered by Foster Road to the north, north of Interstate 5 (I-5) to the south, Carmenita Road to the west, and west of Valley View Avenue to the east (see **Figure 1-1. Regional Location Map**, **Figure 1-2. Project Location Map**, **Figure 1-3. Project Area**).

FRA and Metro have prepared this Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FRA Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (FRA Procedures), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA implementing regulations. The purpose of this EA is to assess the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the human and natural environment resulting from the Project. As the NEPA Lead Agency, FRA has the primary responsibility for preparing the EA.

The Project has been selected for federal funding through the 2016 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program. The FRA is administering TIGER grant funds for the construction of the Project. Other funding sources for the Project include Proposition 1A, Measure R, State's Section 190 program, and the BNSF Railway Railroad Share.

1.2 Project Area and Study Area

The project area is in an industrial area of Santa Fe Springs, and includes the existing roadways; the BNSF railroad tracks; and industrial and commercial buildings. The existing roadways are asphalt-paved with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, and provide access to industrial and commercial businesses. Existing roadways in the project area include:

- Rosecrans Avenue, an 84-foot-wide, 4-lane roadway (two lanes in each direction) within a 100-foot-wide ROW that runs in an east-west direction and is classified as a major arterial roadway with approximately 25,000 vehicle trips per day;
- Marquardt Avenue, a 64-foot-wide, 2-lane roadway (one lane in each direction) within an 80-foot-wide ROW that runs in a north-south direction and is classified as a minor arterial roadway with approximately 5,000 vehicle trips per day;

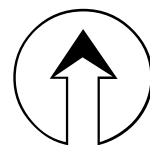


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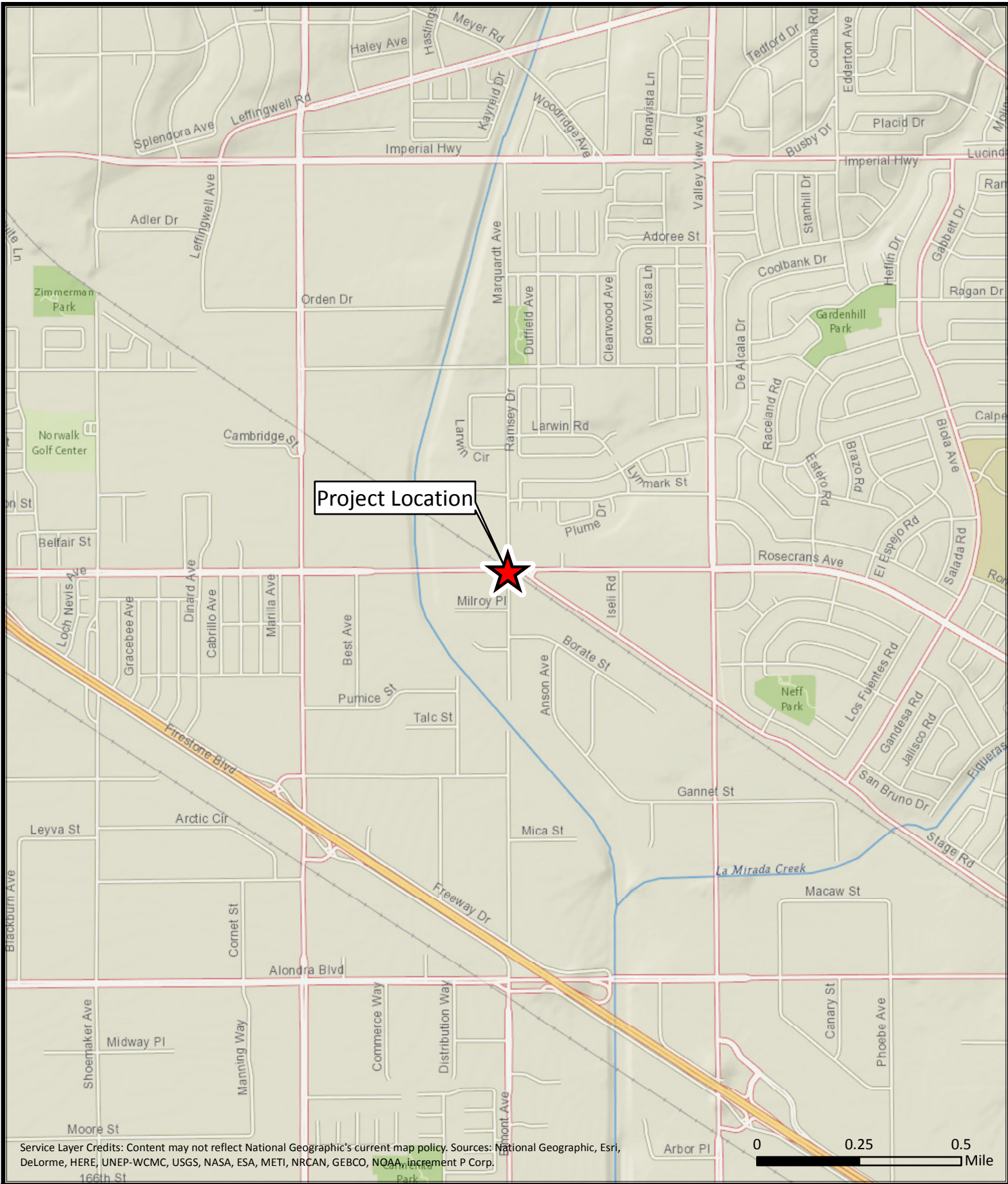
Metro

**FIGURE 1-1. REGIONAL LOCATION
Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation Project**





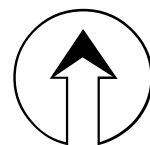
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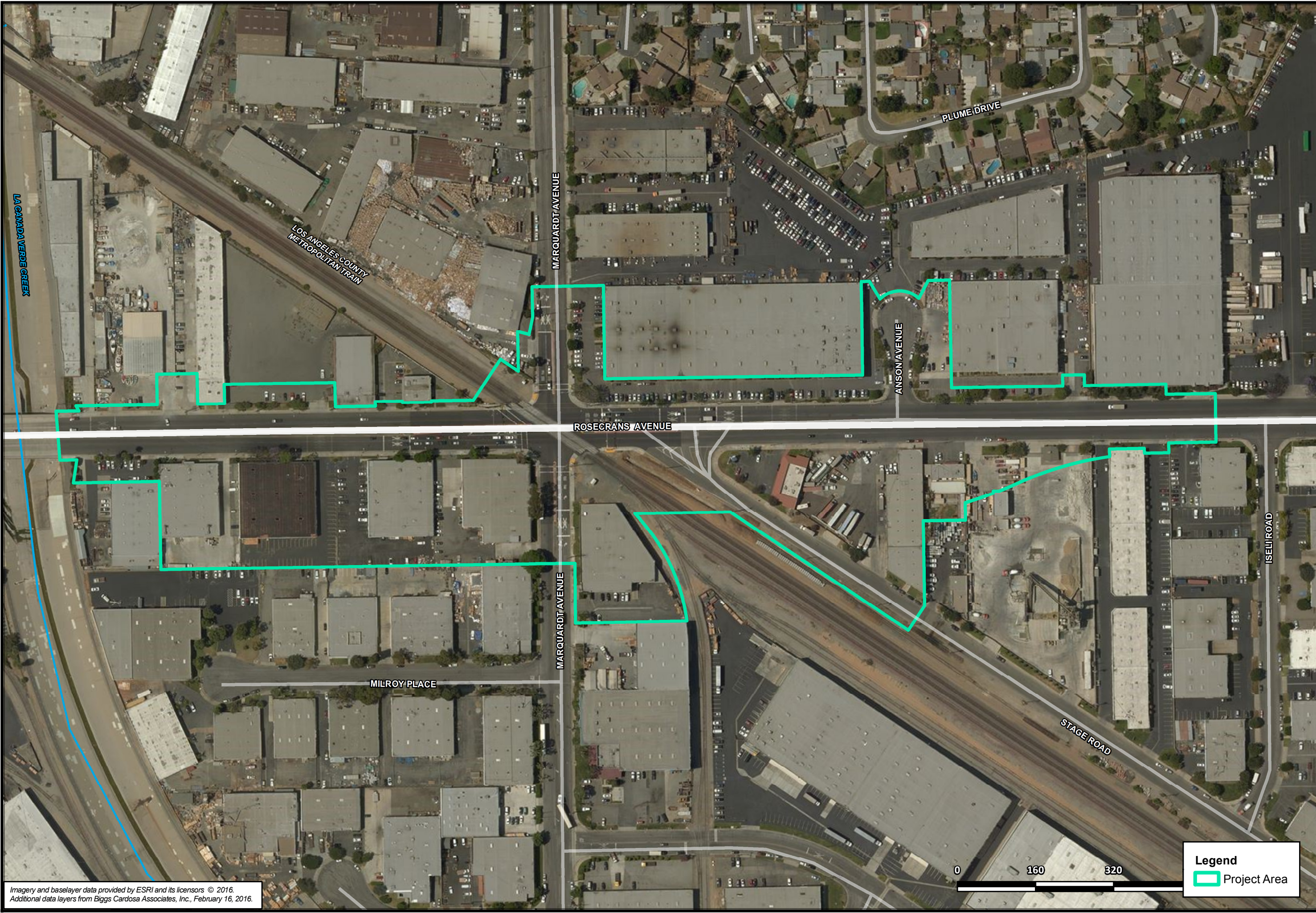


FIGURE 1-2. PROJECT LOCATION
Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation Project





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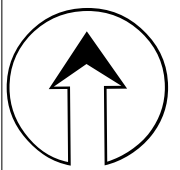


FIGURE 1-3. PROJECT AREA
Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation Project



Legend
 Project Area

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- Stage Road, a 35 to 40-foot-wide, 2-lane roadway (one lane in each direction) within a 70-foot-wide ROW that runs in a northwest to southeast direction with exclusive eastbound and westbound turn lanes onto Marquardt Avenue from Rosecrans Avenue, approximately 80 feet north of and parallel to the BNSF railroad tracks, and is classified as a major arterial roadway with approximately 5,000 to 10,000 vehicle trips per day; and
- Anson Avenue, a 50-foot-wide, 2-lane cul-de sac (one lane in each direction) within a 64-foot-wide ROW that runs in a north-south direction and is approximately 700 feet east of the Rosecrans/Marquardt intersection and BNSF railroad tracks intersection.

Existing BSNF railroad tracks diagonally traverse the project area at grade level from northwest to southeast through the Rosecrans/Marquardt intersection. The project area is zoned as light industrial and is populated with industrial and commercial buildings (City of Santa Fe Springs, 2007b). A motorcycle parts store is in the northeast corner of the Rosecrans/Marquardt intersection, a warehouse in the southeast corner of the intersection, a metal stamping facility in the southwest corner of the intersection, and offices and a recycling facility in the southeast corner of the intersection.

The railroad corridor that runs through the project area serves approximately 55 long distance and local freight trains, as well as an average of 57 passenger trains for both Metrolink and Amtrak, making it the second busiest intercity passenger railroad corridor in the nation (Biggs Cardosa Associates, Inc., 2016). Most of the long-distance freight traffic along the corridor goes in and out of the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, and the corridor is an important route for the movement of goods from the ports to the rest of the country.

The project area is within the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN Corridor), a 351-mile rail corridor that travels through a 6-county coastal region in Southern California. The LOSSAN Corridor is under jurisdiction of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, which is a joint powers authority originally formed in 1989 that works to increase ridership, revenue, capacity, reliability, coordination and safety on the coastal rail line between San Diego.

The railroad corridor has been designated by the United States Department of Defense as part of the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET). STRACNET is an interconnected and continuous rail line network consisting of over 36,000 miles of track serving over 120 defense installations. Railroad designated for STRACNET must comply with certain specifications that meet the needs of the United States military (Military Traffic Management Command Transportation Engineering Agency, 1998). In addition, the railroad corridor has been identified by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) as a viable shared HSR corridor alternative for the LA-Anaheim section.

A study area is the area in which direct and/or indirect impacts associated with a project are likely to occur at their greatest intensity. The study area is inclusive of the project area, and exact study area boundaries differ between specific environmental topics. The study area for each environmental topic is described within its respective topic section of Chapter 3.

1.3 Project Background

In 2003, the Project was environmentally cleared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that was prepared for the Third Track and Grade Separation Project on the BNSF Railway East - West Main Line Railroad Track (Triple Track Project) (State Clearing House (SCH) #200204111), with Caltrans as the CEQA Lead Agency. The objective of the Triple Track Project was to increase the efficiency of the BNSF main east-west corridor to better accommodate existing and future freight and passenger service and to allow specific increases in the speed and volume of planned intercity and commuter railroad passenger service. Specific improvements included in the Triple Track Project are:

- Installation of a specific set of grade separations to substantially enhance safety and traffic flow on surface streets throughout the railroad corridor; and
- Installation of a third main track to enhance the efficiency of train movement along this corridor to ensure passenger service operates on a frequent and reliable schedule.

Several grade separations were environmentally cleared through the Triple Track Project EIR. Two of the grade separations, Passons Boulevard and Valley View Avenue, were completed in 2012 and 2014 respectively.

Since the 2003 Triple Track Project EIR was completed, the design of the Project has changed. The Project is statutorily exempt from CEQA, and will not require additional environmental review under CEQA (see Appendix D).

1.4 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Project is to:

- 1) Improve safety;
- 2) Maintain access to the railroad for emergency responders;
- 3) Maintain existing railroad facilities and operations; and
- 4) Accommodate future High-Speed Rail in the corridor.

The Rosecrans/Marquardt Avenue and BNSF railroad tracks intersection experiences an average of 45,000 vehicles and 112 trains traveling through the intersection within each 24-hour period, as estimated using Los Angeles County Department of Public Works traffic data from 2011 (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, 2015). The BNSF line serves approximately 55 long distance and local freight trains, as well as up to 57 passenger trains for both Metrolink commuter and Amtrak within a 24-hour time period (Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2016). The existing BNSF railroad tracks and roadway are at the same grade. This causes a high volume of vehicle conflicts at the intersection. In addition, the railroad crossing traverses the intersection diagonally, which results in poor sight distance between roadway and railroad vehicles.

The combination of these factors has caused the intersection to experience a higher proportion of traffic incidents than average, including fatalities. The ongoing danger has prompted the CPUC under Section 190 to rate this intersection as the most hazardous at-grade railroad crossing in the state (see Appendix E and Appendix F). The completion of this Project would alleviate the existing vehicle conflicts and safety hazards at the intersection.

Motorist, cyclist, bus, and emergency vehicle access will need to be provided at all times during construction of the Project. In addition, train volume in the BNSF corridor is anticipated to increase in the future. Additionally, a third BNSF track is planned for this corridor. The Project would facilitate continued access to and around the project area, including access to the railroad.

The intersection of railroad and roadway infrastructure poses competing interests, which lead to collisions and accidents in the project area. To accommodate existing and planned railroad facilities and operations, the Project would elevate Rosecrans Avenue to an overpass, which would allow critical improvements along the roadway and BNSF ROW to occur.

The project area does not currently accommodate for future HSR planned in the BNSF railroad corridor. At the conclusion of the California High-Speed Train System Tier 1 EIR/EIS, FRA and CHSRA identified the BNSF corridor as the proposed corridor for the HSR Los Angeles to Anaheim project section. FRA and CHSRA are currently conducting further Tier 2 environmental analysis and this Project would be designed to accommodate and not preclude future HSR infrastructure, minimizing time and costs between both projects.