



Figure 4: Location of Helendale Relative to Los Angeles and Major Ports

Source: ESRI, AECOM

9. EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

9.1 Project Readiness

9.1.1 National Environmental Policy Act

A preliminary environmental study was conducted in 2012 and full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance through a Categorical Exclusion (CE), as well as California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) clearance through a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), is expected by June 2028.

9.1.2 Status and Timeline of Agreements

The County anticipated announcement of the grant award by June 2026, with pre-construction activities to commence shortly after. The environmental analysis would begin in June 2006 and complete one year later. Concurrent with the environmental analysis would be the advancement of preliminary design from 60% to 95% (January 2027 – August 2027) and right-of-way acquisition (January 2027 – December 2027). Final Design would begin in September 2027 and complete by January 2028. Following acceptance of the final design review package by FRA, the receipt of a NEPA determination, and the satisfaction of all other pre-obligation administrative requirements, the County anticipates grant obligation in the first quarter of 2028. Bidding and procurement would follow immediately after with construction anticipated to begin in July 2028 and completing in December 2029. An overview of the Project's proposed schedule is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Vista Road Crossing Closure and Grade Separation Project: Proposed Schedule

Lifecycle Stage	Activity	2026		2027				2028				2029			
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	FSP Grant Award Notification														
Project Development	Environmental Documentation														
	Right of Way Acquisition														
	60-90% Design														
Final Design	Final Design and Specification														
	FSP Grant Obligation														
	Bid Notification/Procurement														
Construction	Construction														

Source: San Bernardino County, AECOM

9.1.3 Lifecycle Stage Activities

The grant request is for activities across three lifecycle stages: Project Development, Final Design, and Construction. The Project is currently at 60% design and is ready to proceed into more advanced planning and design. Project Development activities will include advancement for design from its current level of 60% to 95%, environmental review and determination, and right-of-way acquisition. Final design activities bringing the Project's design up to 100% and construction readiness will follow. Following acceptance of the 100% design package by FRA, the construction lifecycle activities to deliver the Project will commence.

9.1.4 Partner Coordination and Commitments

San Bernardino County has partnered with BNSF, which is providing a financial commitment to the Project. A letter of funding commitment is attached to this application. Additional letters of support are attached and indicate strong community, business, and coordinating agency support for the Project.

9.2 Technical Merit

9.2.1 Tasks and Subtasks Outlined in Articles 4-6 (Statement of Works) Are Appropriate to Achieve the Expected Outcomes

Please refer to Attachment 2 for the Article 4-6 (Statement of Work, or SOW) detailing the Project components. The County estimates that the Project period of performance will be complete in December 2029.

The breakdown of Project tasks is as follows:

- Task 1** Project Administration and Management
- Task 2** CEQA/NEPA Clearance (June 2027 completion)
- Task 3** Right-of-Way Clearance (December 2027 completion)
- Task 4** Final Design (January 2028 completion)
- Task 5** Construction (December 2029 completion)

9.3 Technical Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel

The County has an established track record of delivering projects of similar scope and size. The County has extensive experience, both in-house and through consultants, in administering federal aid projects, including the following bridge projects funded through USDOT's Highway Bridge Program and railroad crossing projects:

- Glen Helen Bridge Project in San Bernardino (\$52,000,000 – in progress);
- Garnet Bridge Reconstruction in Mentone (\$6,400,000 – completed in 2022;)

- 10 Bridges Project (bridges larger than 20 feet) on National Trails Highway (\$30,000,000 total – in progress); and
- Glen Helen Parkway Grade Separation over the BNSF and UPRR rail lines, (\$25,685,000 – completed in 2018).

In addition, the County has completed 95% design on its Rock Springs Road bridge over the Mojave River. This \$21,745,000 bridge project began construction in the spring of 2025.

Technical expertise, historical accomplishments, and successful project management will be brought to the table to ensure the Project is fully and successfully executed within the proposed time frame and budget. The County will designate experienced staff to manage the proposed project.

- Andy Silao, B.S., P.E. will serve as project manager. Andy brings over 20 years of engineering experience in both the private sector and with the County. He currently serves as the Division Chief for the Contracts Division, which is responsible for the advertisement, award, and administration of federal, state, and locally funded County Public Works and Flood Control District construction projects.
- Chris Nguyen, P.E. - Chris brings 29 years of engineering experience both in the private and public sector, bringing a key understanding of the dynamics of working with both parties.

9.3.1 Plan Identification

The proposed Project is consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by USDOT, including those required by law or State rail plans developed under Title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 227. The proposed Project is consistent with the California State Rail Plan.

9.3.2 Deployment of Innovative Technology

The Project will incorporate two innovative construction methods that are new to the area to reduce GHG emissions. Firstly, rubberized asphalt will be employed for the deck of the grade separation. Secondly, concrete containing up to 15% fly ash will be used. The inclusion of fly ash in concrete diminishes cracking, permeability, and bleeding, resulting in a dense, high-durability concrete that is impervious to sulphates and alkali-aggregate reactions. This type of concrete mix requires less water and is prone to resist shrinkage. Rubberized asphalt generates 34% fewer CO2 emissions, extends the lifespan of roads by twofold, and reduces the life cycle cost of the road by 43%. These innovative methods foster sustainable construction.

9.3.3 Financial Support from Impacted Rail Carrier

The County has partnered with BNSF to obtain a financial commitment to the Project. A letter of funding commitment is attached to this application.

9.3.4 Improved Mobility

The Project, situated within BNSF's Cajon Subdivision, lies along a bustling freight corridor extending from the Ports of San Pedro (Los Angeles and Long Beach) inland. The track at the Project's location comprises double and triple rail lines, with the at-grade crossing existing as a two-track crossing. This existing rail line effectively segregates the Silver Lakes community, causing accessibility issues due to the frequent train traffic, averaging 70 trains daily, including two Amtrak passenger trains. With future plans for intermodal facilities and an increase in domestic passenger rail travel, rail operations are expected to rise. However, the Project will help to significantly reduce travel delays for all users. Currently, the Vista Road crossing experiences an average of 70 freight train-related delays per day. These delays affect all system users, including emergency responders, school buses, and the train traversing the corridor.

The Project aims to enhance the mobility of various transportation modes, impacting daily routes and improving access to community services, local businesses, and amenities. The southern extension of Vista Road will offer neighboring landowners new paved access driveways, simplifying property access. The grade separation over the BNSF rail line will establish an unimpeded connection to the National Trails Highway.

Upon completion, the Project will address east-west commuting challenges in the County's western region. Shadow Mountain Road, a crucial east-west arterial route, provides access to State Road 395 and Interstate 15. Construction will bridge a gap, linking Shadow Mountain Road with Vista Road and National Trails Highway, creating an east-west corridor beneficial for freight transportation and inter-regional travel.

The Project aims to enhance mobility and accessibility in the Silver Lakes community, which is currently isolated by a rail corridor. Through the prevention of accidents and the reduction of travel delays for emergency services, the Project will improve access to vital services. The nearest emergency services are located quite far from the community. The nearest hospital is located in Victorville, 16 miles to the south, and the County Sheriff's Department (Victor Valley Sheriff's Station) is located approximately 21 miles south. Ingress and egress from both locations is currently hampered by train traffic. The Project is vital for increasing community mobility and accessibility, particularly for emergency services through the decrease in travel delays.

The Project will also enable pedestrians to cross the BNSF rail corridor safely and unobtrusively, providing access to the National Trails Highway and other commercial and residential properties. This access is vital for the rural community as the highway leads to job centers, as well as recreational and educational opportunities in Barstow to the north and Victorville to the south, both major regional cities offering amenities, medical care, and higher education institutions.

9.4 Project Benefits

9.4.1 Improved Safety

The Project will improve safety at the existing at-grade crossing by decommissioning the Vista Road crossing, significantly reducing the risk of vehicular and train collisions, and addressing the pressing need for safety improvements. Based on safety accident/incident activity recorded by FRA's Office of Safety Crossing Inventory at the crossing which has occurred within the past five years, the implementation and operation of the project would result in the avoidance of approximately four (4) fatalities and eight (8) injuries over its first twenty years of operation. Through the prevention of accidents at the intersection, the Project will yield additional safety benefits, such as the reduction of travel delays for emergency services. As the nearest hospital to Silver Lakes is located approximately 16 miles south in Victorville and the community is isolated by the rail corridor, the response time of emergency services is contingent on train traffic. Similarly, the County Sheriff's Department (Victor Valley Sheriff's Station), the nearest police station to the Silver Lakes community, is located approximately 21 miles south. Police response times to emergencies can likewise be hindered due to train traffic at Vista Road. Therefore, the Project is crucial to improving safety and emergency response times in the community. The Project will also reduce exposure to train crews traversing the crossing as well as signal and maintenance-of-way employees inspecting and repairing the crossing.

9.4.2 Increased Reliability of Passenger and Freight Rail Operations

The implementation of the Project, and specifically, the closure of the existing at-grade crossing will eliminate the potential for conflicts between rail, vehicles, and pedestrians. Unfortunately, the existing at-grade crossing has been the site of accidents resulting in injury and death in recent years which lead to the crossing being closed to all rail traffic for a duration while the accident is investigated, documented, and cleared. During these closures of the crossing, rail traffic is unable to pass through the corridor, leading to idling trains and rerouting of trains on the network leading to significant delay, increased travel times for passenger rail users, and increased operating costs for both passenger and rail operators. The elimination of the crossing would also eliminate the need for signal inspection, maintenance, and testing (monthly requirement). It would also reduce the amount of track inspection needed at the crossing location. In constructing the project, the potential for crossing closure, and the associated delay for passenger rail and freight rail, will be eliminated. Over the first twenty years of operation following its implementation, the Project would lead to the avoidance of more than 90,000 hours of delay from rail passengers and nearly 3,000 hours of delay by freight and passenger trains.

9.4.3 Grade Crossing Elimination

The Project will close the at-grade crossing at Vista Road. There are frequent and ongoing delays due to the crossing being occupied and, in recent years, it has been the site of rail/vehicle accidents resulting in fatalities and injuries. The Project's construction of a grade-separated crossing over the rail corridor will allow for improved vehicular mobility, safety, and travel efficiency.