

### 3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section describes existing land uses found within the proposed project study area, evaluates the proposed project's consistency with relevant land use and planning documents and policies, analyzes the project's possible impacts on land use, including agricultural lands, and proposes potential measures to mitigate those impacts. The study area includes the area within ½ mile on both sides of the proposed project corridor and around the station sites as this is considered the area that could potentially experience impacts. Additional detailed information is in the *Community Impact Assessment* (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2005) prepared for this project.

#### 3.11.1 Regulatory Setting

The existing regulatory setting of the study area was documented by reviewing existing adopted land use plans and policies of Sonoma and Marin counties including those communities located along the project corridor. General plans are designed to guide counties' and cities' decisions regarding the physical growth and development, provision of public services and facilities, and the conservation and enhancement of natural resources. The proposed project was evaluated for consistency with the following adopted land use plans and policy documents governing the study area (see Section 3.11.7 for consistency analysis):

- Sonoma County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2004)
- Sonoma County General Plan (1989, revised 1998)
- Cloverdale General Plan Policy and Program Document (1992)
- City of Healdsburg General Plan Policy Document (1987, revised 2004)
- Town of Windsor General Plan (2000)
- Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan (2002)
- City of Rohnert Park General Plan (2000)
- City of Cotati General Plan (1996)
- Petaluma General Plan (1987)
- Moving Forward: A 25-Year Transportation Vision for Marin County (2003)
- Marin Countywide Plan 2004 (2004)
- City of Novato General Plan (1996, revised 2003)
- San Rafael General Plan 2020 (2004)
- City of Larkspur General Plan 1990 – 2010 (1990)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission Mobility for the Next Generation: Transportation 2030 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area (2005)

#### Local Plans

##### **Sonoma County General Plan**

In an effort to preserve open space and agricultural land and to limit the amount of residential sprawl, the Sonoma County General Plan includes various goals and objectives designed to guide the future development within the county. Goal LU-2 states that the county should accommodate the majority of future growth within existing cities and those unincorporated communities which are planned for adequate water and sewer capacities. Goal LU-3 states that the future growth within the cities and

unincorporated service areas should be done in a compact manner using vacant infill parcels and lands next to existing development at the edge of those areas.

The *Sonoma County General Plan* also includes goals and policies aimed at promoting local agricultural products, stabilizing and protecting agricultural land at the urban fringes and limiting the intrusion of new residential uses into agricultural areas. Some specific objectives include:

- Objective AR-2.1: Limit intrusion of urban development into agricultural areas.
- Objective AR-2.2: Maintain the urban service boundaries to protect agricultural lands at the urban fringe for continued agricultural production.

Goal CT-1 of the *Sonoma County General Plan* focuses on the development of a transit system. Objective CT-1 calls for the design and implementation of a circulation and transit system that will serve projected future travel demand, minimize congestion, achieve the shortest feasible travel times and distances, and achieve the land use plan of city-centered growth and limited growth in rural areas. Policies CT-3h and CT-3i focus specifically on encouraging continuing freight operations on the NWP right-of-way and preserving the right-of-way for public transportation purposes.

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District was created through a voter-approved initiative and a quarter-cent sales tax measure in 1990. The District works to preserve agricultural and open space lands through partnerships with willing landowners. Preservation of land is primarily accomplished through the creation of permanent conservation easements, which outline the types of activities that are permitted and prohibited on the land. The District also assists with providing new or expanded recreational opportunities through fee acquisition of key properties, which are then conveyed to State or regional parks departments to develop or manage for recreational and open space purposes.

### **Sonoma County Comprehensive Transportation Plan**

The *Sonoma County Comprehensive Transportation Plan* calls for implementing passenger rail service on the NWP right-of-way from Cloverdale, in the north, to downtown San Rafael, in the south, and constructing a north-south bicycle/pedestrian path adjacent to the railroad tracks in the NWP right-of-way from Windsor to the Marin County line.

### **Cloverdale General Plan Policy and Program Document**

The *Cloverdale General Plan* calls for implementation of passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way, increasing existing bus transit services and developing new bus transit services, and planning new residential and commercial development to fully accommodate, enhance, and facilitate public transit including pedestrian and bicycle access to transit. The passenger rail station at Cloverdale is already built in accordance with the Plan guidelines.

### **City of Healdsburg General Plan Policy Document**

The *City of Healdsburg General Plan Policy Document* calls for developing and maintaining a coordinated transportation system including bus service and rail transit on the NWP railroad right-of-way, developing and maintaining public transportation facilities including rail stations and park-and-ride lots, achieving the maximum benefits from locating retail, office, and high density residential land uses adjacent to public transportation facilities, and designating a rail station at the historic railroad depot as the central focal point for transportation services in Healdsburg. Plans goals and policies promote convenient transit service with complementary land use adjacent to transit stations. Policy #1 under Goal E indicates that sufficient land needs to be designated in the General Plan for transit facilities including bus stations, rail stations, and park-and-ride lots. Policy #3 under Goal E designates the historic railroad depot as the “center” of Healdsburg.

### **Town of Windsor General Plan**

The *Town of Windsor General Plan* calls for protecting the NWP railroad right-of-way for future passenger rail use, identifying and protecting preferred sites for future rail stations, and encouraging high density mixed-use residential, office and commercial development within walking distance of the rail station.

### **Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan**

The *Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan* calls for passenger rail service along the NWP railroad right-of-way; high density residential and mixed-use development up to 30 units per acre in the areas surrounding potential rail stations at Jennings Avenue, Railroad Square, and Bellevue Avenue; and a Class I Bikeway along the entire length of the NWP railroad right-of-way in Santa Rosa. Specifically, Policy T-1-1 supports implementation of rail service along the NWP right-of-way and Policy T-1-2 calls for zoning land in close proximity to potential rail stations for high density residential and/or mixed-use development.

### **City of Rohnert Park General Plan**

The *City of Rohnert Park General Plan* proposes passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way, shuttle service from the rail station and a bicycle/pedestrian pathway along the railroad right-of-way. It also calls for expanded bus services and a multi-hub transit corridor along the Rohnert Park Expressway with a rail station. Specially, Policy TR-33 encourages the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) to continue their efforts to develop the passenger rail service and directs the city staff to work with the SCTA to resolve specific issues associated with the implementation of passenger rail service.

### **City of Cotati General Plan**

The *City of Cotati General Plan* calls for implementing passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way including a transit center on Industrial Avenue, improving local bus service, implementing the City's Bicycle Master Plan, and supporting voluntary trip reduction programs.

### **Petaluma General Plan and Central Petaluma Specific Plan**

The *Petaluma General Plan* indicates that if either rail or express bus service is implemented on the NWP railroad right-of-way, then the intra-city Petaluma bus service should be focused on serving the new transit stations along the NWP right-of-way. The Central Petaluma Specific Plan calls for implementation of passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way, renovation of the historic train depot to a rail station, construction of a bus transit mall on Copeland Street, implementation of a second rail station at the southern end of the planning area near Caulfield Lane, and development of high density office, retail and residential uses in the area immediately surrounding the historic train depot.

### **Moving Forward: A 25-Year Transportation Vision for Marin County**

*Moving Forward: A 25-Year Transportation Vision for Marin County* provides the framework to help guide future transportation investments and improvements in Marin County. It was developed as a collaborative effort between the public, staff of the Transportation Authority of Marin and elected officials. It calls for both passenger rail service and express bus service from Sonoma County to Marin County. Specifically, the plan calls for passenger rail stations at the Bel Marin Keys and Fireman's Fund employment areas, coordination between rail and a planned transit center in Novato, local shuttles service, and the Novato Bikeway Connector project. In addition, the Plan calls for passenger rail stations at Civic Center and downtown San Rafael, and a rail/ferry connection at Larkspur.

### **Marin Countywide Plan 2004**

Marin County includes several goals and policies in the *Marin Countywide Plan 2004* designed to direct future growth and preserve open space. Policy CD-1.1 states that urban development should be concentrated in the City-Centered Corridor which is the area of the county generally located along Highway 101. Other policies (CD-2.3, CD-2.5 and CD-2.6) focus on locating housing near activity

centers and transit routes and locating commercial and high density residential development in areas with high transit accessibility.

The *Marin Countywide Plan 2004* includes several goals and policies emphasizing the expansion of transit services to meet growing traffic congestion. Goal TR-3 calls for the county to provide efficient affordable public transportation service. Policy TR-3.2 promotes rail service and an adjacent multi-use pathway on the NWP railroad right-of-way, expanded regional ferry service and enhanced regional express bus services. In order to achieve the goal, implementing program TR-3d states that the county should participate in planning for rail transportation through SMART and other regional transit expansion initiatives. Implementing policy TR-3.f encourages the development of compact mixed-use development within ½ mile of intermodal hubs and future rail stations. Goal TR-2 calls for the expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access in and between neighborhoods, employment centers and recreational sites. Specific policies to meet this goal include TR-2.1 and TR-2.2 while implementation program TR.2f advocates that the county continue to work with SMART to incorporate and fund a multi-use pathway that generally follows the proposed railroad corridor.

Two specific goals of the *Marin Countywide Plan 2004* are focused on preserving and sustaining agricultural uses within the county. Goal AG-1: Preserve Agricultural Lands and Resources is aimed at protecting agricultural lands by “maintaining parcels large enough to sustain agricultural production, preventing conversion to non-agricultural uses, and prohibiting uses that are incompatible with long-term agricultural production.” The Plan identifies 13 policies designed to meet this goal. Goal AG-2: Improved Agricultural Viability includes eight policies to “enhance the viability of Marin County farms, ranches and agricultural industries.”

The Marin Agricultural Land Trust was the first private non-profit land trust in the United States devoted to protecting agricultural land. As of 2003, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust has permanently protected 35,000 acres of land on 53 family farms and ranches (Marin Agricultural Land Trust, 2004).

#### **City of Novato General Plan**

The *City of Novato General Plan* calls for utilizing the NWP railroad right-of-way for a future transit service and a possible bike route in TR Policy 17. It also encourages coordinated planning for the use of the NWP railroad right-of-way (TR Program 17.1), including exploring the development of multi-modal transit facilities along railroad corridor (TR Policy 15.5). Lastly, in TR Policy 13, the General Plan supports the development of high-density land uses including mixed-use, multiple family residences, public services, and commercial retail centers near transit routes and facilities to reduce vehicle trips.

#### **San Rafael General Plan 2020**

The *San Rafael General Plan 2020*, specifically, the Circulation Element policy C-17 (Regional Transit Options) calls for the “development and use of a viable commuter rail service through San Rafael operating on the SMART right-of-way”. It also encourages efforts to connect the railroad with ferry service bound for San Francisco. Additionally, policy C-17a supports the establishment of rail stations in Downtown and at Civic Center. These stations are expected to become inter-modal transit hubs, as outlined in policy C-20, which calls for them to provide “convenient and safe connections and support for bus, rail, shuttle, bicycle, and pedestrian users, as well as automobile drivers using transit services. Hubs should include secure bicycle parking and efficient drop-off and pick-up areas”. If rail service is developed, policy C-18 also supports the development of shuttle service connections between rail stations and major employers. Moreover, both policy C-17a and C-26a call for a north/south bicycle/pedestrian path on, or adjacent to, the railroad right-of-way. Finally, policy C-17 encourages high-density, transit-oriented development in the vicinity of the San Rafael rail stations.

#### **City of Larkspur General Plan 1990- 2010**

The *City of Larkspur General Plan 1990 - 2010* calls for the implementation of passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way with a direct connection to the Larkspur Ferry Terminal, in Policy “v” in the Circulation Element. That same policy also encourages the eventual expansion of the railroad south of Larkspur. Policy “a” calls for the development of a coordinated system of roads, bike paths, foot paths,

and public transit, while Action Programs [7], [8] & [10] call for cooperation among local transit agencies to “periodically review, modify, and upgrade transit service”, to “provide amenities at transit stops” and to “expand opportunities for park-and-ride and shared-ride parking lots in or around Larkspur”. Policy “o” calls for coordination between circulation and development so that “higher intensity uses such as commerce, professional offices, public services, and higher density residences are located near major transit routes and are served by public transit facilities.”

## **Regional Plans**

### **Mobility for the Next Generation: Transportation 2030 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area**

The 2005 MTC *Transportation 2030 Plan* charts a 25-year course for transforming the Bay Area transportation system. The Plan proposes three approaches to enhance and improve mobility in the Bay Area. The first approach is to devote 85 percent of the plan’s budget to operate and maintain the existing transportation system. The second approach is to expand upon the techniques and technologies designed to improve system efficiency. The third approach of the plan is the investment in strategic expansion of the Bay Area’s road, transit and bicycle/pedestrian networks. In addition, the MTC established a five-point transportation/land-use platform to further coordinate transportation and land use planning with the region and neighboring areas. In this platform, the Plan calls for an emphasis on smart growth development patterns. This includes infill development in existing urban and suburban areas as well as coordinating transportation and land use decisions. MTC recommends that existing transportation infrastructure be utilized efficiently while new investment is coordinated regionally. This includes new public transit service supporting existing transit centers and densification of development around existing transit infrastructure. The proposed SMART project is included as a strategic expansion project for the Bay Area region. The full operation of the rail system is not included in the financially constrained element of the plan; it only includes the environmental study, preliminary engineering and right-of-way acquisition.

## **State Regulations**

### **Assembly Bill No. 2224**

Assembly Bill No. 2224 amended the California Public Utilities Code (section 105000 et seq.) to create the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District within Sonoma and Marin counties. The bill established a 12-member board of directors to govern the district and authorizes the district to own, operate, manage, and maintain a passenger rail system, including ancillary bicycle and pedestrian pathways, within the territory of the district. The bill requires the district to work with the NCRA to achieve safe, efficient and compatible operation of both passenger rail and freight service on the NWP in Sonoma and Marin counties. The bill gives authority to the district to exercise the right of eminent domain to take property necessary or convenient to the exercise of the powers granted in the act, with the exception of property acquired for transit-oriented development. For any property taken by eminent domain, the District is required to pay damages for the taking, in addition to the cost of removal, reconstruction or relocation of any substitute facilities.

### **California Land Conservation Act**

Since 1965, the California Land Conservation Act, more commonly known as the Williamson Act, has been the state’s primary agricultural land protection program. The Williamson Act was created in response to concerns about sprawl and leapfrog development. Through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive use contracts, the Act preserves agricultural and open space lands. Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses under minimum 10-year rolling term contracts with local governments. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value. In August of 1998, the State Legislature enhanced the Williamson Act with the Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) provisions. These provisions offer landowners greater opportunities for property tax reduction in return for a minimum rolling contract term of 20 years (California Department of Conservation, Williamson Act Program, 2002). Both Sonoma and Marin counties are Williamson Act-Farmland Security Zone participants.

### 3.11.2 Environmental Setting

#### Overview of Existing Land Use Patterns

The land area of Sonoma County covers 1,016,395 acres. In 2000, 92,923 acres (9 percent) were urban land and 923,472 acres (91 percent) were non-urban land (ABAG, 2000). Sonoma County is the largest of the nine Bay Area counties. Sonoma County includes a diverse mixture of landforms and environments, including rolling hills, flat plains, coastal prairies, oak woodlands and redwood and mixed conifer forests. The Santa Rosa Plain lies in the center of the county between the Sonoma Mountains to the east and low coastal hills to the west. The majority of urban development in Sonoma County is located within the Santa Rosa Plain along the project corridor.

Marin County encompasses approximately 335,380 acres; 47,565 acres (14 percent) were urban land and 287,995 acres (86 percent) were non-urban land in 2000 (ABAG, 2000). The majority of development in Marin County is located in the eastern portion of the county along the proposed project corridor. The western portion of the county includes large expanses of State and federal protected lands and open space.

Sonoma County has a series of cities with well-defined boundaries that are dispersed along the project corridor. Many of these communities developed around the historic rail stations on the NWP railroad. Current land use policies are aimed at maintaining the boundaries through community separators. Some jurisdictions, such as Healdsburg, Rohnert Park and Santa Rosa within the project corridor, have adopted urban growth boundaries. Several other jurisdictions in the county are considering placing measures on the ballot for voter approval to establish urban growth boundaries. Marin County has a relatively compact urban form, resulting from its geography and past policy decisions to focus growth in the eastern part of the county (Calthorpe Associates, 1997). Marin County's historic commitment to open space and agricultural lands preservation has also defined much of the county. In addition, Marin County has a significant amount of land preserved as national and state parklands.

Table 3.11-1 provides a summary of existing land uses in Sonoma and Marin counties in 2000. As shown in the table, both Sonoma and Marin counties consist primarily of nonurban/open space land. The second largest existing land use within both counties is residential. Each county also includes areas of downtown development and mixed-use development.

**TABLE 3.11-1  
LAND USES IN SONOMA AND MARIN COUNTIES, 2000**

Land Use Category	Sonoma County		Marin County	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Downtown/Town Center	1,835	0.2%	686	0.2%
Employment Center	9,091	0.9%	5,373	1.6%
Urban Undeveloped	2,962	0.3%	985	0.3%
Mixed-Use	4,389	0.4%	5,874	1.8%
Residential	74,646	7.3%	34,467	10.3%
Nonurban/Open Space	923,472	90.9%	287,995	85.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,016,395</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>335,380</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, Smart Growth Strategy/Regional Livability Footprint Project 2000.

#### Open Space and Agricultural Land

The open space systems of both counties are defined to a great extent by agricultural lands (Calthorpe Associates, 1997). In Sonoma County, the open space system is defined by land use policies designed to protect agricultural lands, hillsides and ridges, and streams and rivers (particularly the Russian River).

In Marin County, large areas of publicly owned lands, particularly the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Marin Municipal Water District watershed lands, have established the open space patterns of the county.

Based on 2002 data from the California Department of Conservation - Division of Land Resource Protection, Sonoma County has approximately 4,000 acres of Prime Farmland, 1,000 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, 2,000 acres of Unique Farmland, and 3,000 acres of Locally Important Farmland within a ½ mile corridor around the proposed project alignment. Marin County has approximately 2,100 acres of Locally Important Farmland within a ½ mile of the project corridor.

### **Land Uses Near Proposed Rail Stations**

A more detailed look at the existing land uses within ½ mile of proposed passenger stations along the project corridor is provided in Table 3.11-2. Data for the station areas is based on available geographic information systems (GIS) data and assessor data from Marin County and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority.

- Commercial/Retail/Office – includes various forms of commercial uses, retail establishments and offices.
- Industrial – includes both light and heavy industrial uses.
- Mixed-Use – includes those areas that are specifically designated to include a mix of commercial and residential uses.
- Single-Family Residential – includes those areas designated single-family residences and rural residential.
- Multi-Family Residential – includes those areas designated as multi-family residences.
- Open Space/Recreation/Agriculture – includes all open space areas, parks, recreation areas, urban separators, floodways, and agricultural lands.
- Public – includes those areas owned by public entities such as schools, municipal uses and libraries.
- Vacant - unspecified vacant land.
- Miscellaneous – includes areas that had no use designation, parking areas, private roads, railroad right-of-ways, and private non-taxable land.

Adjacent to the proposed project corridor and outside of the urban boundaries for each city along the project corridor, land uses are dominated by agricultural uses and open space (see Table 3.11-1).

**TABLE 3.11-2  
EXISTING LAND USE WITHIN ½ MILE OF PROPOSED STATIONS (2000 – 2005) (ACRES)**

<b>Station</b>	<b>Commercial /Retail /Office</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Mixed-Use</b>	<b>Single-Family Residential</b>	<b>Multi-Family Residential</b>	<b>Open Space/ Recreation/ Agricultural</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>Miscellaneous</b>
Cloverdale	29.9	122.7	1.6	147.7	17.0	210.5	95.3	65.2	0.3
Healdsburg	54.6	137.6	6.0	87.2	39.6	178.5	35.2	34.4	16.4
Windsor	12.5	6.4	2.3	149.8	53.9	37.0	160.7	61.1	13.1
Jennings Avenue	114.6	33.0	-	71.7	29.5	0.2	17.9	26.0	9.6
Santa Rosa Railroad Square	108.3	51.4	-	81.4	46.9	18.8	34.2	34.3	16.6
Rohnert Park	84.8	93.4	7.9	284.2	19.6	385.0	105.9	107.2	15.6
Cotati	15.4	106.4	0.3	236.8	94.7	24.0	33.7	18.2	20.3
Corona Road	58.6	114.6	-	150.3	52.7	48.5	33.8	41.0	-
Downtown Petaluma	111.8	51.3	2.3	107.3	11.3	6.2	97.6	58.7	2.2
Novato North	74.6	3.1	1.7	69.7	7.0	64.3	102.0	68.9	4.0
Novato South	52.6	83.9	-	41.9	21.0	3.6	117.4	33.1	37.4
Marin Civic Center	96.5	3.9	0.9	60.5	10.7	1.0	130.9	43.9	53.8
Downtown San Rafael	90.6	32.7	9.1	59.7	43.9	0.4	81.8	19.4	31.7
Larkspur	63.9	1.4	-	138.2	13.0	-	86.5	35.1	4.0

Source: GIS and assessor data from Marin County (2003) and Sonoma County Transportation Authority (2004).

### Zoning at Station Sites

The proposed station sites vary in terms of their zoning designations. Table 3.11-3 summarizes the zoning at each proposed station site.

**TABLE 3.11-3  
ZONING AT PROPOSED STATION SITES**

Station	Zoning Designation
Cloverdale	Public/Institutional
Healdsburg	Light Industrial
Windsor	Public/Institution (station) Town Center Commercial (park-and-ride lot)
Jennings Avenue	Light Industrial
Santa Rosa Railroad Square	Planned Development – Historic
Rohnert Park	Public/Institutional
Cotati	Specific Plan – Santero Way
Corona Road	Light Industrial
Downtown Petaluma	Railroad District
North Novato	Business and Professional Office District
South Novato	Light Industrial/Office
Marin Civic Center	Public/Quasi Public
Downtown San Rafael	Hetherton Office District
Larkspur	Public Facility

Sources: Material from the world wide web: City of Cloverdale zoning map, City of Healdsburg zoning map, Town of Windsor zoning map, City of Santa Rosa Community Development Department, City of Rohnert Park zoning map, City of Cotati zoning map, City of Petaluma GIS Portal, City of Novato Community Development Department, City of San Rafael zoning ordinance, City of Larkspur General Plan. July 2005.

### 3.11.3 Significance Criteria

The proposed project's effects on land use were considered significant if they would result in the following conditions:

- Physically divide an established community;
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect;
- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
- Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use; or
- Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

### 3.11.4 Impact Assessment Methodology

ABAG land use data from the Smart Growth Strategy/Regional Livability Footprint Project was utilized for a general overall inventory of existing land uses in Sonoma and Marin counties. A more detailed inventory of the land uses within ½ mile radius of each of the 14 stations along the project corridor is based on GIS and assessor data provided by Sonoma and Marin counties.

An inventory of farmland resources was provided by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The most recent and complete biennial farmland land use inventory for both Sonoma and Marin counties was for the period 2000-2002.

Impacts on land uses within the project area were assessed based on the significance criteria outlined in Section 3.11.3. The assessment examined whether the introduction of passenger rail service would create a physical division between established communities, if the implementation of the proposed project would conflict with existing plans and policies of the region, and if any important agricultural land would be lost or otherwise impacted as a result of the proposed project.

### 3.11.5 Impact Summary

Implementation of passenger rail service along the existing rail corridor would not result in any significant unavoidable land use impacts. Although passenger rail service on the tracks has been dormant for many years, the reintroduction of rail service would not physically divide the communities, since they were originally established around the railroad and the historic stations. Other proposed facilities such as the stations and maintenance facility would not create physical divisions within neighborhoods or communities. The proposed passenger rail and associated facilities including stations, maintenance facility, and bicycle/pedestrian pathway would not present a conflict with existing land uses in the project area. Existing land uses within the station areas are generally compatible with transit facilities and would be supportive in terms of commercial and residential activity. Some of the station sites are already being used or developed for transit purposes. Placement of the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway adjacent to the railroad and the minimal amount of additional land that would be required would not conflict with existing land uses along the proposed project corridor. All of the general plans for communities along the project corridor call for the use of the existing railroad for transit purposes; therefore implementation of passenger rail service along the railroad would be consistent with local general plan policies.

In order to accommodate station improvements, the development of a maintenance facility, and the implementation of the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway along the corridor, land acquisition would be required and several businesses would be displaced. Development of some of the proposed rail stations would require the acquisition of parcels outside of the right-of-way currently owned by SMART. These acquisitions would be necessary for placement of station facilities and parking. Table 3.11-4 summarizes station-related acquisitions, which vary depending on the station option. If the Corona Road Station option 2 is selected, acquisition of one residential parcel located on the east side of Corona Road would be required.

Acquisition of industrial property would also be required for the placement of the maintenance facility. The Cloverdale option for the maintenance facility would require the acquisition of five industrial parcels, for a total of approximately 26 acres. The Windsor maintenance facility option would require the acquisition of one 31-acre industrial parcel.

In order to accommodate the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway at a safe distance adjacent to the railroad, it would be necessary to extend the pathway out of the existing right-of-way onto adjacent properties in several locations. Approximately 43 miles of the 70-mile proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would be located in the railroad right-of-way. The remaining 27 miles would be constructed outside of the existing right-of-way. About 14.5 miles of the 27 miles outside of the existing right-of-way would need to be constructed by SMART. The remaining 12.5 miles outside of the rail right-of-way either exists today as part of an established path or would be constructed by local jurisdictions as independent projects. To provide the 14.5 miles of bicycle/pedestrian pathway outside the right-of-way, SMART

would need to acquire an additional 9.8 acres of privately owned property and about 7 acres of public easements. Table 3-11-5 summarizes the privately owned properties that would need to be acquired for the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway construction. This property acquisition would not displace any businesses or people, but would require acquisition of about 2.2 acres of agricultural land.

**TABLE 3.11-4  
PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS FOR RAIL STATIONS**

Station	Approximate Acres	Existing Land Use
Jennings Ave (Opt 1)	3.0	Vacant
Jennings Ave (Opt 1)	0.8	Public
Jennings Ave (Opt 2)	8.4	Industrial (vacant)
Corona Rd (Opt 1)	0.2	Industrial (vacant)
Corona Rd (Opt 1)	0.7	Public (vacant)
Corona Rd (Opt 1)	6.9	Industrial
Corona Rd (Opt 2)	12.1	Single-Family Residential
South Novato	0.7	Commercial*
Downtown San Rafael	0.6	Commercial

Sources: Community Design + Architecture and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., 2005.

Note: \* Possible acquisition by Marin County Transit District for bus transit center.

**TABLE 3.11-5  
PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS FOR THE BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH**

County	Approximate Acres	Existing Land Use
Sonoma	0.3	Unknown
	5.6	Industrial
Marin	2.2	Agriculture
	0.6	Private Non-taxable
	0.9	Open Space
	0.2	Vacant
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.8</b>	

Sources: HDR Engineering Inc. and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., 2004.

Notes: Dates of GIS data used vary from 2000 to 2005.  
None of the agricultural land affected is prime, unique or of statewide importance.

Public easements would be required for the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway at the following locations. These easements would not require displacement of homes, people or businesses.

- Milepost 52.0 – 52.5
- Milepost 46.3 – 47.4
- Milepost 27.5 – 28.5
- Milepost 26.2 – 26.8
- Milepost 23.9 – 24.2
- Milepost 20.3 – 20.9

The areas where additional right-of-way would be needed to accommodate the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway include low-value agricultural/grazing, open space, private nontaxable, and

industrial land uses, none of which would lose their functional value by the acquisition of small portions of their total area that are adjacent to the railroad right-of-way. No Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance would be converted to other uses by the proposed project. None of the parcels proposed for acquisition are Williamson Act properties.

As stated in the Regulatory Setting (Section 3.11.1), the SMART enabling legislation would require that the District pay damages for the taking of property by eminent domain, in addition to the cost of removal, reconstruction or relocation of any substitute facilities. Compliance with these regulations would ensure that the displacement impacts on workers or businesses resulting from the implementation of the proposed project would not be significant because those persons or businesses affected would be compensated and relocated. Negotiations with property owners would occur as part of the right-of-way acquisition phase.

The proposed public transit use is not specifically included under current zoning designations at several station sites, but the proposed use would be consistent with the general plan designations for each community as these plans call for the implementation of transit service along the railroad. The SMART District is exempt from local zoning regulations, so any zoning inconsistencies would not be considered a significant impact.

There would be no substantive construction-related impacts to land uses within the project area as Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented on construction sites.

### **3.11.6 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

#### **Construction-Related Impacts**

Construction of the proposed project would not temporarily divide an established community; conflict with any applicable land use plan or policy; nor result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Construction activities would, for the most part, take place within the SMART right-of-way and at SMART-owned station sites, which are exempt from local zoning regulations. Some project construction would occur on properties that are proposed for acquisition by SMART for implementation of the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway, stations and the maintenance facility. No significant impacts would occur to those land uses adjacent to proposed construction staging areas, since these areas would only be used for the temporary storage of equipment and materials and would be accessed only during the hours of construction activities. The majority of staging areas are located within the rail right-of-way in areas with predominately industrial uses. Construction staging areas are identified in Chapter 2, Project Description.

Construction activities would follow standard BMPs to reduce any potential impacts on surrounding land uses and access to all adjacent land uses would be provided during the construction period. BMPs that would limit the impacts associated with construction noise and dust to a less than significant level include: use of enclosures or walls to surround noisy equipment; installing mufflers on engines; substituting quieter equipment or construction methods; minimizing time of operation and locating equipment farther from sensitive receptors; watering all active construction areas at least twice daily; covering all trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials or requiring that all trucks maintain at least two feet of freeboard; and sweeping daily all paved access roads, parking areas and staging areas at construction sites. Construction of the proposed project would, therefore, not result in any adverse short-term environmental impacts related to land use. Impacts associated with short-term noise, air quality, hazardous materials, and construction-related traffic are discussed in greater detail under relevant sections of the DEIR.

### **Long-Term Impacts**

#### **Impact LU-1: The proposed project would require the conversion of approximately two acres of farmland. (*Less than significant*)**

In order to accommodate the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway, the rail right-of-way would need to be extended outward between 15 and 25 feet into adjacent properties in some areas along the corridor. The estimated 2.2 acres of farmland affected is located along the western edge of the railroad in an area just north of Smith Ranch Road in San Rafael (see Table 3.11-5). Conversion of this limited amount of non Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance would not be a significant impact to agricultural lands in Sonoma and Marin counties.

#### **Impact LU-2: Rail stations would be supportive of existing commercial uses within a ½ mile and provide the opportunity for mixed-use development. (*Beneficial*)**

The area surrounding each of the proposed station sites includes commercial, retail and office land uses (see Table 3.11-2). The Jennings Avenue, Santa Rosa Railroad Square, Downtown Petaluma, Novato North, Marin Civic Center and Downtown San Rafael station sites each include a substantial portion of commercial/retail/office uses within a ½ mile. Increasing the transit accessibility of these commercial areas would be a positive benefit of the project.

Mixed-use development is a combination of complementary land uses such as residential, office and commercial uses in one specified area. Mixed-use development near transit facilities generally would be expected to increase transit ridership and reduce the need for automobile use. Station locations that currently support mixed-use development are Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Windsor, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Downtown Petaluma, North Novato, Marin Civic Center, and Downtown San Rafael. The Larkspur Landing Shopping Center adjacent to the proposed Larkspur Station includes a mix of retail and offices uses, with adjacent high density housing.

All proposed station sites currently have vacant lands within a ½ mile radius that could potentially serve as infill sites for future high density commercial, residential or mixed-use development. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed project and rail stations has the potential to increase the pressure for development around the stations. The general plans and/or central city plans for Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Windsor, Santa Rosa, Cotati, Petaluma, Novato, and San Rafael include specific elements that support higher density development in the station areas. Any additional pressure associated with a proposed station in those locations which may accelerate development would be in accordance with the local plans.

#### **Impact LU-3: Development of station sites for transportation purposes is inconsistent with current local zoning at several stations. (*Less than significant*)**

Currently, the zoning designations at six of the proposed station sites - Healdsburg, Jennings Avenue, Corona Road, Novato North, Novato South, and Downtown San Rafael - do not specifically permit transportation facilities (see Table 3.11-3 for the current zoning designation at each site). Transit-related improvements at these sites to facilitate implementation of passenger rail service along the corridor would, however, be consistent with the local general plans and compatible with surrounding and nearby land uses. It should be noted that several of these station sites are already being developed for transportation uses or are adjacent to existing transportation uses. The Healdsburg site is currently under development for a transportation facility, as Sonoma County Transit is building a transit stop and park and ride lot adjacent to the historic Healdsburg Depot. In Downtown San Rafael, the proposed station site is just north of the existing Bettini Transit Center, the major transfer point for bus service in Marin County.

As state legislation exempts the SMART District from adherence to local zoning regulations, use of the parcels for rail transportation purposes would not require changes to the existing zoning designations. In

addition, none of these station sites are currently zoned for agricultural purposes and therefore would not impact properties zoned for agricultural use or those governed by the Williamson Act.

**Impact LU-4: An option for the Corona Road Station would require the acquisition of a portion of one residential property. (*Less than significant*)**

The Corona Road Station option 2 would require the acquisition of one residential parcel located on the east side of Corona Road. Under this option, the proposed station would require approximately 12 acres of the parcel, which is classified as rural residential. Although there are no structures on the portion of the parcel that would be required for the station, there is a single-family residential structure located just north of the proposed station site. Development of the station would not require the removal of the residence, but placement of a transit facility immediately adjacent to a residence may be incompatible and require the full acquisition of the parcel and removal of the residence. The loss of one residential unit would not be considered a significant impact under the specified criteria since the loss of one house would not specifically necessitate the construction of replacement housing as new housing stock is continually being added to the region. Additionally, the SMART District would be required to pay damages for this taking, in addition to the cost of removal, reconstruction or relocation of any substitute facilities.

**Cumulative Impacts**

The implementation of the proposed project in conjunction with other past, present and future projects listed in Section 3.1 would not contribute to adverse cumulative impacts on the land use of Sonoma and Marin counties. The other projects identified for the cumulative impact analysis are located in existing developed areas along the project corridor and would not physically divide communities. Other projects in combination with the proposed project, would not contribute to cumulative impacts in regards to community connectivity.

Although transit-oriented development is not proposed as part of project, there are several such projects being proposed near the rail station sites. This future development combined with the proposed rail facilities would be generally consistent with local general plans, would be compatible land uses with each other and with surrounding land uses and would support infill development.

As the other projects identified for the cumulative impact analysis would likely not include a significant conversion of agricultural land to other uses and therefore would not have a significant cumulative impact on conversion of agricultural uses. The addition of the two acres of agricultural land that would be converted to a transportation use as part of the proposed project would not result in a significant cumulative impact on the overall agricultural land of Sonoma and Marin counties. The land converted for the proposed project would be comprised of narrow bands between 15 and 25 feet along the edge of large parcels that would retain their full function.

**3.11.7 Project Consistency with Local and Regional Plans**

This section evaluates the consistency of the proposed project with the transportation and land use elements of local and regional plans in Sonoma and Marin counties.

All of the local plans in Sonoma and Marin counties call for establishment of passenger rail service on the NWP railroad right-of-way. Some of the plans -- the *Sonoma County Comprehensive Transportation Plan*, the *Cloverdale General Plan*, the *Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan*, the *City of Rohnert Park General Plan*, the *City of Cotati General Plan*, and the *San Rafael General Plan 2020* -- also call for the establishment of a bicycle/pedestrian pathway on or adjacent to the railroad right-of-way. The proposed project would generally be consistent with all of these plans. There are a few inconsistencies with some of the local plans as noted below.

### **Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan**

The *Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan* calls for a Class I bikeway along the entire railroad right-of-way through Santa Rosa. The proposed project would be inconsistent with the plan since a portion of the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would have to diverge from the railroad right-of-way in the vicinity of Railroad Square due to the lack of adequate space to safely accommodate the bicycle/pedestrian pathway within the rail right-of-way.

### **City of Rohnert Park General Plan**

The proposed Rohnert Park Station site would be inconsistent with the station location at Rohnert Park Expressway called for in the plan. The Rohnert Park Expressway Station was evaluated as a potential station site, but was eliminated due to site constraints. The station site in the proposed project was developed in cooperation with the City of Rohnert Park and has been determined to be a viable site for the Rohnert Park rail station.

### **Petaluma General Plan and Central Petaluma Specific Plan**

The proposed project would include a rail station at the historic train depot as recommended in the *Central Petaluma Specific Plan*, and the second station would be located at Corona Road. Caulfield Lane was considered as a potential station site but was dropped due to less than desired station spacing distance from the Downtown Petaluma Station, as well as insufficient park-and-ride capacity. The Corona Road site also proved superior in terms of access, site capacity, and connections to surrounding areas.

### **City of Larkspur General Plan 1990 - 2010**

The proposed Larkspur Station is located approximately 1,500 feet to the north of the Ferry Terminal rather than adjacent to it as recommended in the *City of Larkspur General Plan 1990 - 2010*. Access to the terminal would be provided via existing sidewalks. The proposed station site was chosen based on direction from the Larkspur City Council in order to minimize impacts to existing land uses in Larkspur.