1.0 Purpose and Need

In September 2010, the City of Hercules (City) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) prepared a joint Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the construction of the Hercules Intermodal Transit Center (Hercules ITC), which would include a new passenger train station on the existing Capitol Corridor line, a transit bus terminal, access roadways, trails and parking facilities. Additionally, the facility would be designed to accommodate potential future ferry service. The Hercules ITC will be located on the southeastern shoreline of San Pablo Bay (a part of San Francisco Bay), approximately one mile northwest of Interstate 80 (I-80) in Contra Costa County (Figure 1.1-1). The Hercules ITC is within the City's Waterfront District, which is planned for mixed-use development.

The Final EIR for the Hercules ITC project was prepared in June 2011 and approved by the City of Hercules on August 8, 2011; and a Notice of Determination was filed with the Contra Costa County Clerk on August 10, 2011 to complete the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process. This Final EIS (FEIS) is intended to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and other environmental requirements that apply to federal actions, such as Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. Section 303), Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Hercules ITC would serve commuters, residents, students, visitors, and recreational users who desire an alternative way to travel to and from the City and the San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area) and the Sacramento region to access employment, entertainment, educational, and recreational destinations. This FEIS will not include the evaluation of a ferry terminal as part of the Hercules ITC, although the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) is considering the construction of a ferry terminal in Hercules (see Section 1.3) and the proposed Hercules ITC would accommodate a connection to the Hercules ferry terminal. WETA is leading that project and it will be evaluated under a separate environmental document.

Similarly, a transit-oriented development project is currently proposed on land adjacent to the Hercules ITC. The Hercules Bayfront Project (HB) (see Section 1.3, below) has been initiated by a private developer, and would share some infrastructure with the Hercules ITC; however, it is the subject of a separate CEQA environmental review. Both the proposed Hercules ferry terminal and the HB would each have independent utility and can be constructed and/or operated exclusive of the Hercules ITC.

1.1 Purpose of the Proposed Project

Residents of the Bay Area depend heavily on regionwide and transbay commuting. Despite the use of existing public transit services, particularly rail and buses, traffic congestion continues to rank highly among the area's top concerns. The severity of congestion will increase in the future as population and employment in the Bay Area increase. The purpose of the proposed Hercules ITC is to increase local and regional mobility and transportation options by providing new and expanded transit services with multi-modal connections that would encourage use of public transit. The Hercules ITC would provide bus-to-train connections and provide car commuters with access to new transit options that would divert traffic from Interstate-80 (I-80), the most congested corridor in the Bay Area for the past six years. An expanded and more convenient transit system with new train, bus, and trail connections to existing transit services would provide commuters with more options and reduce car usage and its associated impacts.

Figure 1.1-1 Project Location Map

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1.2 Need for the Proposed Project

1.2.1 Traffic Congestion

Regardless of economic conditions, traffic congestion is an ongoing and steadily increasing problem in the Bay Area. Alternatives to reduce traffic congestion have been explored in numerous prior studies. According to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Bay Bridge approach corridor along I-80 from State Route 4 (SR-4) in Hercules to the Bay Bridge experiences the worst congestion in the Bay Area.

The California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans') Bay Area monitoring program found that between 1992 and 2005, traffic delay in the region more than doubled from 64,100 hours to 135,700 hours. According to Caltrans' 2006 report, between 2001 and 2005, traffic delay on the I-80 segment from SR-4 to the Bay Bridge metering lights increased by 16 percent—from 9,410 hours to 10,930 hours (MTC and Caltrans District 4 2007). This segment includes the stretch of I-80 that passes near the vicinity of the proposed Hercules ITC. MTC projects that traffic congestion will continue to worsen; by 2020, MTC expects that Bay Bridge traffic will increase by 50 percent and be "at capacity" for nearly 5 hours a day during the morning and afternoon peak hours. MTC also predicts that, due to high housing costs, many more Bay Area workers will be living far from their jobs, resulting in more commuting time and pollution on roadways. Even during an economic downturn, BART runs at capacity through the Transbay Tube during peak hours. Improvements in commuter bus service are dependent upon traffic flow and limited by road capacity and dedicated High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes for significant expansion. Increased train and transit services would provide expanded commute capacity, while avoiding corresponding increases in traffic congestion.

1.2.2 Transit Options for Growing Population and Employment in Hercules

The project vicinity is designated for residential and commercial uses under the Land Use element of the City of Hercules General Plan (General Plan), which projects continued long-term population growth within the City limits. The Waterfront District Master Plan (WDMP) is the City's specific planning document that governs the development of properties in the Waterfront area including the project vicinity. The General Plan assumes that buildout of the City will increase population from 19,488 in 2000 to 28,400 by 2020 (ABAG 2009). The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) estimates that the population of Contra Costa County will increase by 25 percent during the same period. This growth in population and economic activity will contribute to the steady increases in local and regional traffic forecast in the General Plan and in the regional traffic projections prepared by the MTC. Development proposed on the remaining land under the WDMP includes 1,392 'non-flex' residential units and 134,000 square feet of 'flex space' (with an associated population increase of about 4,624 residents), as well as development of 81,000 sq. ft. of office and 74,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

As part of the General Plan and WDMP, the proposed Hercules ITC is intended to be the central element of the planned mixed use development in the waterfront area. Residential and commercial development would be clustered around transit facilities to enable local residents to use public transit and reduce the need for automobile use. The mixed use development will also include recreational, other public facilities, and open space (Figure 1.2-1). This projected

development is not part of the Hercules ITC considered in this FEIS, but will be the subject of a separate environmental review; however, the Hercules ITC and the planned mixed use project is being designed in close coordination. Improved bus service integrated with connections to new transit options would also benefit commuters in other parts of Hercules and other local cities. Ridership forecasts for the Hercules ITC for 2025 forecast a total of 1,124 daily boardings and 243 peak-hour boardings for train service.

Additionally, the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA), now the WETA, is a regional agency authorized by the State of California to operate a comprehensive San Francisco Bay Area public water transit system. In 2003, the WTA's plan, "A Strategy to Improve Public Transit with an Environmentally Friendly Ferry System" (Plan) was approved by statute (Senate Bill 915, Ch. 714, stats of 2003). The Plan drew on extensive technical studies that examined ridership demand, cost effectiveness, vessel design, environmental impacts, safety, and operations. A Hercules–San Francisco route was identified in the Plan as a potential future ferry route. The potential environmental effects of proposed new ferry service on San Francisco Bay under the WTA Plan were studied at a program planning level in the Program FEIR prepared in 2003 (SCH # 2001112048; URS 2003), and the Notice of Determination was submitted to the State Clearinghouse on July 15, 2003. The 2003 Program EIR included a Hercules/Rodeo location and seven other potential new ferry service locations around the Bay and Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. While ferry service is anticipated for the city of Hercules, current planning for the ferry is still in development and considered a future project. The current project proposes to construct a rail and bus transit facility that can eventually support future ferry service.

Legend

- Hercules ITC Project Boundary
- Hercules Bayfront Development
- Approximate Parcel Boundaries

1 in = 800 ft (at tabloid layout)

N

0 60 120 240 Meters

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

Figure 1.2-1: Project Boundaries

City of Hercules
Hercules Intermodal Transit Facility
Contra Costa County, California

Data Sources: Map information was compiled from the best available sources.
No Warranty is made for its accuracy or completeness. Topographic Base Map, Aerial photography from ESRI ArcGIS Online; Hydrography from National Hydrography Dataset; NWI Data from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and soils data from USDA NRCS Soil Survey.
Data is State Plane Feet, NAD83 Zone 3

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1.3 Project Background

1.3.1 History

The proposed project site is part of the Hercules Waterfront District, and is located within the former Hercules Powder Company (Company) property in the City of Hercules (Figure 1.3-1). The manufacture of explosives initiated the creation of the town of Hercules in 1881 as a company town for the Company. The Company provided homes and dormitories for its workers, and a small company town developed on the site, which was incorporated in 1900. Extensive facilities were developed on the site for the manufacture of black powder, dynamite and trinitrotoluene (TNT), and provided these products during both World Wars. The Company manufactured explosives at the site and shipped the products by ship using the pier at Hercules Point and by rail using the then Southern Pacific Rail Road. During World War II the Company was the largest such plant in the country, however, after the war, the demand for munitions plummeted and new products needed to be developed. As part of the development of the site, Refugio Creek was modified to accommodate the Company and maintained through the operation of the fertilizer company.

By 1964, a large facility had been constructed for the production of fertilizer and other chemicals. The company name was changed to Hercules, Incorporated and the facility stopped producing explosives, and began producing fertilizers. Excess safety buffer zone lands were sold off, since they were no longer needed. The fertilizer operation was closed in 1977 and many of the factory facilities were demolished. The land was purchased in 1979 by Hercules Properties, Ltd. and underwent site remediation procedures during the 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, residential and neighborhood commercial mixed-use development has been taking place in what is currently the Historic Town Center District, south and east of the proposed Hercules ITC site. Development within the facility grounds continues and current proposals exist before the City to develop remaining areas as part of the Waterfront District Master Plan and Waterfront Now Initiative.

1.3.1.1 Waterfront District Master Plan and Waterfront Master Plan Initiative

Pursuant to General Plan Programs 8A.2 and 8A.3, on July 25, 2000, the City Council approved the Waterfront Development Master Plan (WDMP) for 167acres of property, including the proposed Hercules ITC site (generally known as the Waterfront Area)The WDMP established the five Planning Sub-Districts, including a 23-acre Transit Village as proposed by the WDMP. Development of the sub-districts have been and will continue to be implemented as separate projects by private interests and would consist of a mix of residential and commercial uses focused on a commuter railroad station. Two of the five planning sub-districts have already been developed.

On July 22, 2008, the Hercules City Council adopted the Waterfront Master Plan Initiative (WMP Initiative). The purpose of the WDMP Initiative was to modify the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and WDMP in order to facilitate completion of the Waterfront Area as a transit-oriented neighborhood mixed-use project. Among the goals and objectives of the WDMP Initiative, is the provision “for the location of a Multi-Modal Transit System linking

together rail service via Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA), a connection to downtown San Francisco via a ferry terminal, and bus service via Western Contra Costa Transit Authority (WestCAT), making Hercules home to the first train, ferry, and transit center in California."

The WDMP Initiative included a development agreement between the City of Hercules and Hercules Bayfront LLC. Specific projects allowed by the development agreement will undergo review pursuant to CEQA and pursuant to the City's governing ordinances.

In October 2009, Hercules Bayfront LLC submitted development applications to the City to facilitate development of two sub-districts within the WDMP. The applications exclude the Hercules ITC. The Hercules Bayfront (HB) project would implement the elements of the General Plan and WDMP through the development of a mixed-use neighborhood that includes walkable streets, supporting a variety of dwelling types and community-oriented businesses, with public plazas that have views of San Pablo and San Francisco bays. The applications that propose additional amendments to the WDMP, the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance provisions, and the Hercules Bayfront Development Agreement. The changes basically seek to increase office space by 34,000 sq. ft. and retail space by 15,000 sq. ft. No change has been submitted for residential uses (1,392 units).

The HB Development project has completed a separate environmental review under CEQA and was certified by the City of Hercules on October 11, 2011.

1.3.1.2 Water Transit Services

Senate Bill 428, enacted in October 1999, formed and empowered the WTA to plan and operate new and expanded water transit services and related ground transportation access services for the San Francisco Bay Area. WTA's mission was "to build and operate a cost-effective, convenient, and environmentally responsible ferry system that will enhance commuter choices and the Bay Area's public transit system." Key service provisions that reinforce the agency's mission include:

- Providing convenient access to and enhanced shuttle/transit connections with the ferry;
- Providing service frequencies and hours of operation that meet demand, focusing on those periods of peak demand, to maximize use of the service in the most cost effective manner;
- Providing transbay travel times that compete with automobile travel and encourage single occupant drivers to use alternative modes of transportation, including ferries; and,
- Using vessels designed to reduce emissions and that can accommodate bicycle riders.

In July 2003, the WTA submitted the Implementation and Operations Plan (IOP) to the state's Governor and Legislature, in accordance with WTA's legislative mandate. The IOP presented a strategy to improve Bay Area transit service with an environmentally - friendly ferry system. The IOP proposed a total of nine new regional ferry terminal locations to supplement existing ferry service, including one at Hercules / Rodeo.

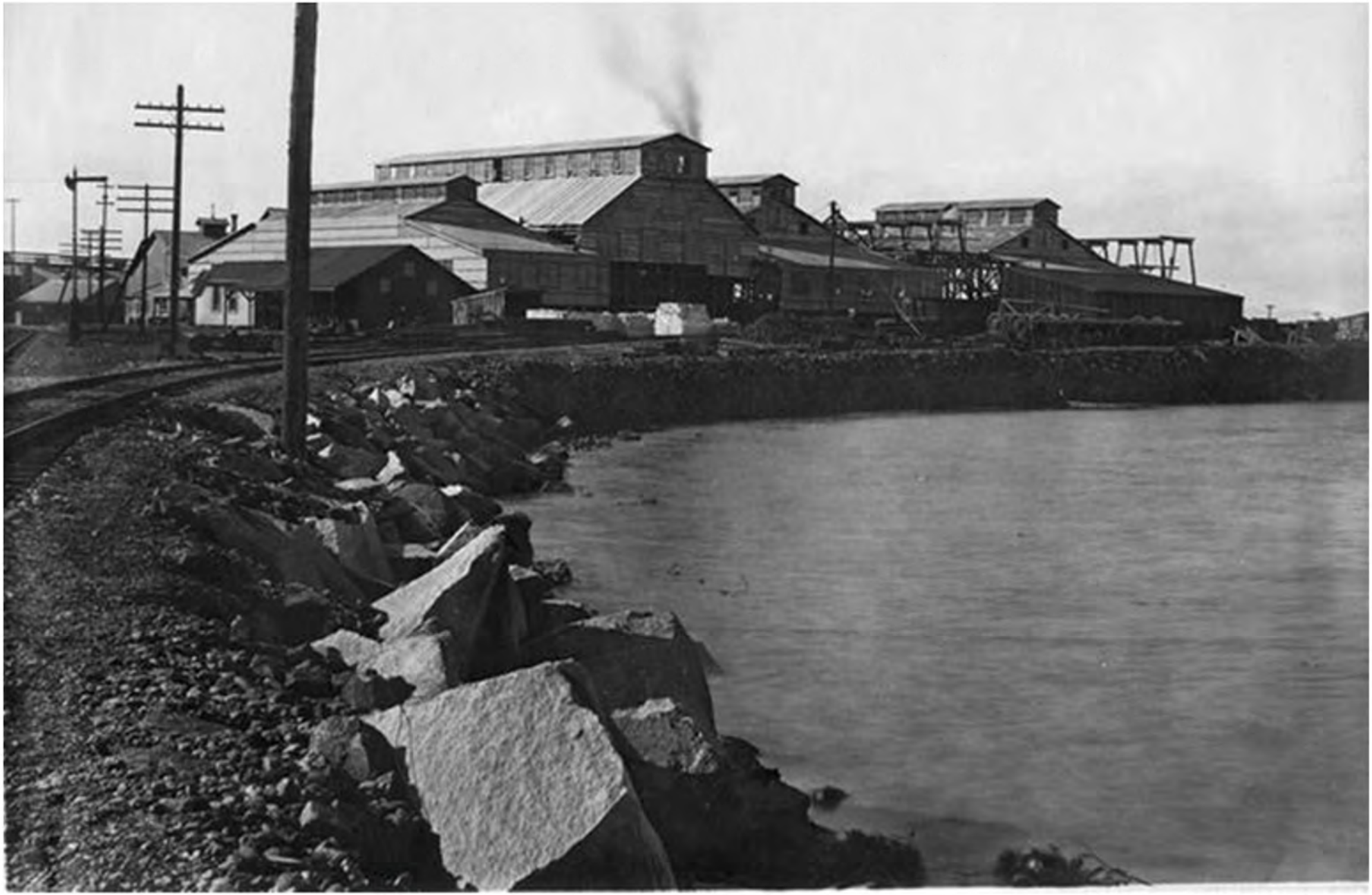

Figure 1.3-1: Hercules Powder Company original dynamite plant, early 1900s

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A Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) was then prepared for the regional ferry service expansion defined in the IOP. The EIR evaluated several alternative proposals for the expansion of ferry services, as well as for railroad and mass transit. The Final Program EIR was issued in June of 2003. On July 27, 2006, the WTA approved a motion to carry forward the remaining ferry / rail service / transit options, including Hercules / Rodeo, for further examination and analysis in a combined CEQA / NEPA environmental document. The FTA was designated the federal lead agency and WETA was designated the local lead agency for the joint environmental document.

1.3.1.3 Reorganization of WTA

In November 2007, the State Legislature reconstituted WTA and modified its mission. The new organization, called the WETA, became responsible for planning the mobilization of ferry service to respond to emergency circumstances that prevent or impair the use of the Bay Bridge or Transbay Tube, and for expansion of regional ferry service as described in the IOP.

WETA is currently considering a project to build a ferry terminal adjacent to the proposed Hercules ITC. The Hercules ferry terminal would provide additional public transportation service from the San Pablo Bay – San Francisco East Bay area to downtown San Francisco, and tie in to the Hercules ITC commuter rail and bus facilities. The Hercules ferry terminal would operate independently of freeways or bridges and could provide continued transit service during emergencies when these other infrastructures are compromised. The Hercules ferry terminal project would include dredging of a portion of San Pablo Bay, driving support piles, constructing the ferry dock structure, and building the access ramp that ties into the Hercules ITC station building. The Hercules ferry terminal would utilize the other transit and support facilities that are to be developed as part of the Hercules ITC project.

Initially, the ferry terminal and rail/transit station was planned as one multi-modal facility with WETA as the lead. In 2009, the City of Hercules, in consultation with WETA, decided to advance the rail service and transit components separately as the Hercules ITC Project. At that time, it was uncertain when the ferry component could feasibly be developed. The City then replaced WETA as the local lead agency for the environmental document to evaluate the rail and transit components, while WETA remains as the lead for the ferry service component.

1.4 Project Objectives

The following are the objectives for the Hercules ITC:

1. Reduce vehicle trips on I-80, the most congested freeway in the Bay Area, by providing alternatives to commuting in single occupant vehicles.
2. Provide coordinated, intermodal transit connections by bus, train, human-powered connections (bicycling and walking), and a future ferry service, for transport to/from jobs, recreational uses, educational opportunities, etc.
3. Implement a station design that satisfies existing regulatory and owner/operator guidelines and policies mandated by UPRR, CCJPA, Amtrak, and WETA.
4. Improve emergency response by having rail and (future) ferry services available in case of a natural or man-made disaster that disables the Bay Bridge or other highways/roadways. Ferry and rail service could also be used to deliver goods and services, if bridges or major highways are disabled in an emergency.
5. Support TOD and "new urbanist" standards by providing the transportation links within the 43-acre waterfront development, which also includes housing (including affordable housing), retail, office, and commercial space.
6. Improve safety along the railroad corridor by providing completely grade-separated access over railroad tracks from the adjacent development by constructing a series of retaining walls and fences for approximately 2 miles along the waterfront and by constructing over-crossings to Hercules Point and the future ferry terminal.
7. Implement the Goals, Policies and Programs in the General Plan to:
   - Develop transportation facilities to provide access to the region, particularly public transit systems (buses, ridesharing, rail transit, as well as potential over-water transit) (Land Use Policy 3A, Circulation Policy e).
   - Establish trail linkage between Pinole and Rodeo as part of the regional bay access trail system (Land Use Program 14A.2 and Open Space/Conservation Policy 1b) and continue to improve and protect Refugio Creek as a major environmental amenity (Program 14.A.3).
8. Improve Refugio Creek to reduce existing risk of local flooding and protect project improvements while allowing adequate flows into the San Pablo Bay and enhancing ecological value.
9. Implement the General Plan, WDMP, and Waterfront NOW Initiative and their directive to construct an intermodal transit center on Block I, consistent with state and federal regulations.
10. Promote public access and views toward the San Pablo Bay by parks and promenade with safe crossings over the UPRR railroad tracks providing public access to future open space at Hercules Point and viewing areas of San Pablo Bay and beyond.

1.5 Project Funding and Schedule Summary

The City of Hercules has secured numerous grants and other funding for the Hercules Intermodal Transit Center project. The proposed project will be fully-funded through a mix of federal, State, regional and local sources. Currently, the project has secured federal funding through High Priority Project earmarks and two STIP-TE grants. Future federal sources include additional appropriation requests, TIGER II grant requests and FRA Rail and Realignment and Improvement funds. Federal funding for environmental analysis for the Transit Loop, as well as construction of Transit Loop Drive and Bridge and the bus shelter/colonnade (approximately $10.3 M); State funding has been secured through the State Traffic Congestion Relief Fund, and the STIP - Regional Improvement Program. State funds for preconstruction, construction of the rail station, Bayfront Bridge, and Bay Trail (approximately $10 M).

Regional funding sources will include Contra Costa County Measure J funds, West County Transportation Mitigation Program funds and East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW funds. Regional funds would be applied to the rail station and the Bay Trail ($9 M). Local matching funds will be provided through the City of Hercules Redevelopment Agency. Redevelopment agency funds (as needed to fully fund phases of the project), in addition to funding obtained by developer fees. City staff will continue to submit grant applications at all levels.

The project will be implemented over a series of five phases (see Table 1.5-1). The Bay Trail portion of Phase 1 is anticipated to start in 2012. The remainder of the Phase 1 elements (Intermodal Transit Center, rail improvements, John Muir Parkway extension, Refugio Creek crossings, Refugio Creek realignment and improvements, utility line relocations) is anticipated to commence mid-year 2013 and continue for approximately 24 months. Phase 2 (Café/Transit Annex Building and Transit/Civic Plaza) would be implemented in late 2015, and Phase 3 (Hercules Point Bridge) is anticipated to start in 2016, and last for about 6-8 months each. Phase 4 (Hercules Point and Open Space), and Phase 5 (Ferry Terminal), are Future Projects and their anticipated implementation dates are not presently determined. Detailed information regarding each of the individual project phases is provided in Section 2 of this FEIS.

Table 1.5-1 Project Implementation

Project Phase Description	Start	Complete
Phase 1 – Station & Access Infrastructure	2012	2016
Phase 2 – Café & Plaza	2015	2016
Phase 3 – Hercules Point Access	2016	2017
Phase 4* – Point Park & Open space	2018	2019
Phase 5* – Ferry Pier & Parking Garage	2019	2020
*dependent upon separate environmental clearance and funding availability		

1.6 Purpose of FEIS Document

This FEIS updates the Draft EIR/EIS which describes, analyzes, and compares the potential environmental impacts of implementing the alternatives, and provides additional information on the methods and assumptions used for the analyses. The FEIS also presents mitigation measures that have been identified as part of the proposed project to avoid or minimize adverse impacts.

The City held several meetings between 2007 and 2011 to gather input from local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties through the preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS and FEIS documents. On November 18, 2009, the City participated in an interagency meeting at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office in San Francisco and presented an overview of the Hercules ITC and invited agency comments on the project.

The next phase of the Draft EIR/EIS process began with the initiation of scoping, the process used to identify issues to be examined in the Draft EIR/EIS. The scoping period and public meeting accompanying scoping were announced by publishing a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on November 20, 2009 (see Appendix B), as required under NEPA. To meet CEQA requirements, a Notice of Preparation containing the scoping information was submitted to the State Clearinghouse and distributed to appropriate state, regional, and local agencies on November 24, 2009 (see Appendix B). In addition, the City and FTA sent out Letters of Participation to state and federal agencies to encourage their participation in the environmental process. A scoping meeting was held on December 8th, 2009 in Hercules. Ongoing consultation with interested agencies has occurred. More information about agency participation and consultation is provided in Chapter 6.

The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR/EIS was published in the Federal Register on September 17, 2010, commencing a 45-day formal review and comment period that concluded on November 1, 2010. The comment period was later extended to November 15, 2010. The Draft EIR/EIS was published and circulated for review. It was made available electronically on the City of Hercules' website and hard copies were available for viewing at the City of Hercules Office of the City Clerk, City of Hercules Planning Department, and the Hercules Library. Two public hearings were held on October 18, 2010 at 3:00 pm and 7:00 pm at Hercules City Hall. Agencies and the general public had the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIR/EIS during the comment period and at the public hearings. The NOA and local notice of availability of the Draft EIR/EIS and public hearing events are included in Appendix D.

At the end of the comment period, public comments were recorded and categorized, and responses to the comments were prepared (see Section 6.2 and Appendix D). The City and FTA reviewed the information presented in the Draft EIR/EIS, as well as the comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS, and selected a preferred alternative. In addition to revisions in the text that correspond to the comments received, this FEIS identifies the lead agency's preferred alternative and the reasons for selecting this alternative (see Chapter 5).

An NOA published in the Federal Register on April 27, 2012 commences a 30-day public review period of this FEIS. A Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be issued by the FTA upon completion of the 30-day review period. The ROD identifies the project alternative that the FTA has selected to be carried forward for more detailed engineering and design and the rationale for that decision. The FEIS analysis is considered as part of the decision-making process, an over-all process that may also include consideration of other decision factors in addition to environmental effects, such as costs, technical feasibility, agency statutory mission, project purpose and need, and study goals and objective.

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