

4.3 FARMLANDS

4.3.1 Introduction to Analysis

This section addresses potential impacts to farmlands associated with the development of transit improvements in the DNA study area. The DNA study area is different from most other areas in the Sacramento Region for which major transit projects are planned in that substantial portions of the area are under development or could be developed during the 2027 planning horizon. The majority of the study area is urbanized. However, agricultural resources in the northern portion of the study area could be affected by implementation of the DNA project. Due to their economic and open space contribution, wildlife value, and other factors, farmland is considered an important resource of concern both statewide and in the Sacramento region.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 requires that federal projects minimize conversions of farmland to nonagricultural uses and that such projects consider, to the extent practicable, state and local farmland protection policies. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the California Department of Conservation uses various categories to describe the value of agricultural resources, including the following categories of “important farmlands” that occur in the project area:

- **Prime Farmland.** Defined by the California Department of Conservation as farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural crop production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. It also must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. The land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each County’s Board of Supervisors and a Local Advisory Committee. For Sacramento County, this category includes lands that do not qualify as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland. These lands are irrigated crops or pasture or nonirrigated crops; lands that would have designations of Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance and have been improved for irrigation but are now idle; and lands that currently support confined livestock, poultry operations, and aquaculture.
- **Unique Farmland.** Farmland with lesser quality soils that is used for the production of the state’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but it may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. The land must have been cropped at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.

4.3.2 Environmental Setting

Agriculture has been an important resource in the Natomas Basin portion of the DNA project study area since the reclamation of the basin in the early 1900s. Beginning with the development of South Natomas in the 1980s and continuing today with the development of North Natomas, urban uses have gradually replaced agriculture as the predominant land use along most of the DNA Corridor. This analysis focuses on the areas that currently remain in agricultural production, which is limited to the area west of SR 99 (Sacramento County, 2000b).

No farmlands are present along the Corridor south of the American River, in South Natomas, or in North Natomas. In Sacramento County, farmlands along the DNA alignment include the area between SR 99 and the Sacramento International Airport, including Greenbriar (Figure 4.3-1). According to information from the FMMP, most of these lands are Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide and/or Local Importance.

The only area currently under agricultural production is Greenbriar. This area represents a 1-mile segment of the DNA Corridor and is almost entirely Prime Farmland. It is currently either farmed for rice or is idle. Greenbriar is outside of Sacramento County's current Urban Services Boundary. Greenbriar is not planned for development within the current *Sacramento County General Plan*. This area, however, is proposed for annexation to the City of Sacramento for a large residential development. The Greenbriar development project is currently under consideration by the City.

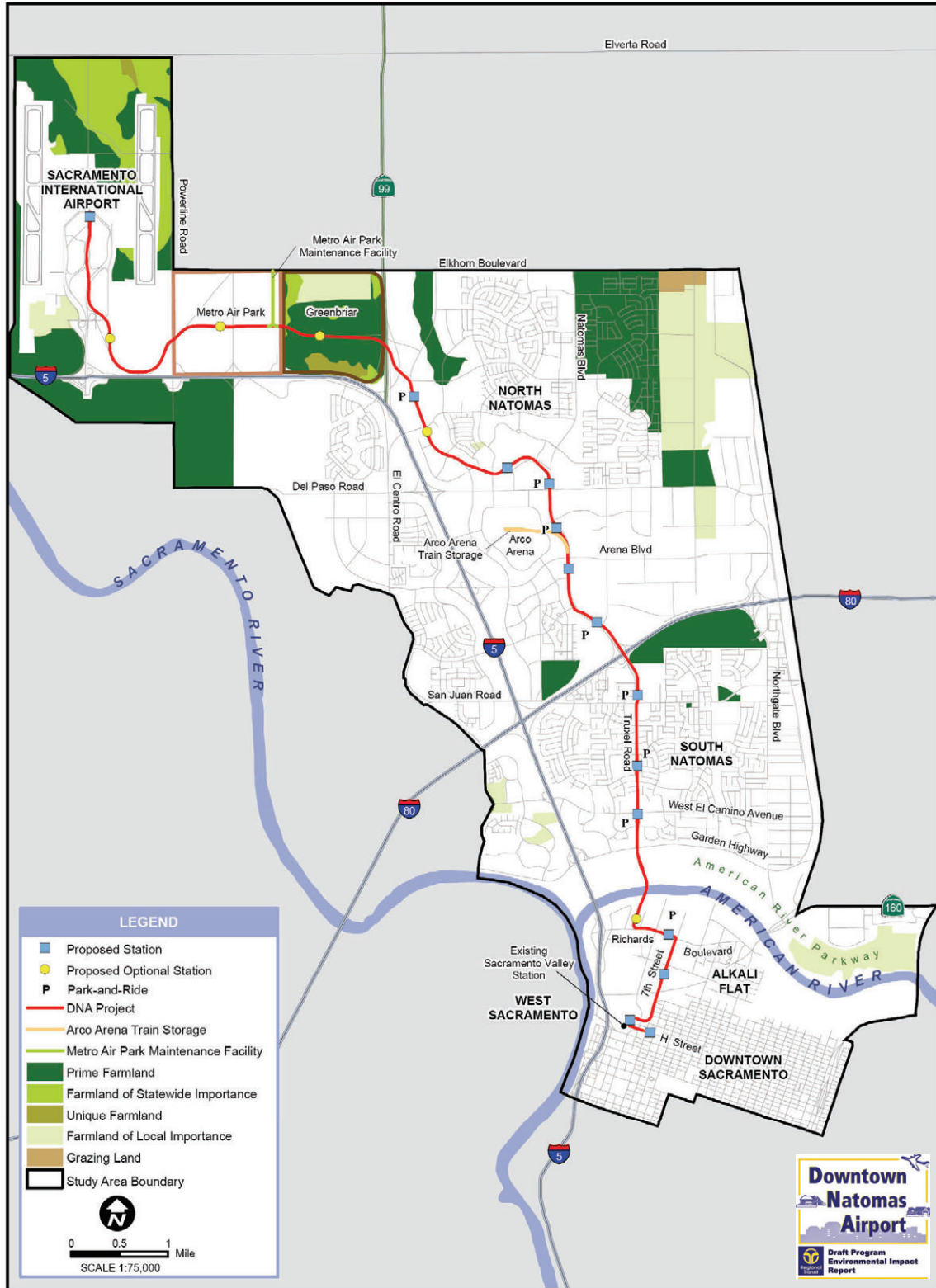
To the immediate west, Metro Air Park has been in production in recent years, primarily with rice or other field crops, but substantial mass grading has occurred in preparation for pending urban development. Land south of the Airport's east runway is considered Prime Farmland. During the field survey conducted on June 26, 2006, the land was not in production and was being maintained by the Airport.

4.3.3 Impact Evaluation

The only portion of the study area that includes farmland is the area between SR 99 and the Airport. This area is known as Greenbriar and is currently under consideration for a large residential development. If the Greenbriar development project is not implemented, farmland would be disturbed and potentially lost in this area as a result of construction of the DNA project.

Methodology

Information on farmlands in the DNA study area was collected and a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the extent that farmland resources would be lost due to implementation of the DNA project. FMMP data were downloaded from the California Department of Conservation. Because of the rapid urbanization occurring in the project area, data from the FMMP were supplemented with a field survey conducted on June 26, 2006. Digital maps of the DNA project alignment were compared to the FMMP data, enabling a quantitative assessment of farmland impacts.



SAC \\\G\GLACIER\SACGIS\SAC_LRT\MXDS-REVISIONS-06262000\FIG4_3-1_FMP.MXD 11/28/2007 12:14:01

Figure 4.3-1
Farmland in the DNA Study Area

Significance Criteria

Implementation of the DNA project would have a significant impact on farmlands if it:

- Results in the conversion of more than 50-acres of important farmland, per the County of Sacramento General Plan Policy CO-55 (Conservation Element).

DNA Project Impacts

Construction of the DNA project would affect rural and urban lands, both existing and planned, along most of the Corridor east and south of SR 99. No impacts to agricultural resources would occur in these areas.

The DNA project would require a 40-foot-wide, 1-mile-long section of right-of-way on the Greenbriar property. This area is almost entirely Prime Farmland; however, it is currently being considered for a large residential development. The DNA project would require a total of 7.40-acres, which includes areas for the trackway, a station, a small Park-and-Ride, and access (Impact FARM-1).

If the Greenbriar development project is approved, then no impacts to farmlands would occur as a result of the DNA project. If this development project is not approved and Greenbriar remains in agricultural production, then the impacts to farmlands would be associated with the DNA project. A portion of the expected impact (if the development plan is not approved) would be attributable to the planned construction of the Meister Way overcrossing and roadway extension to Metro Air Park, although this improvement is not scheduled to occur until 2027 per the MTP. Because of the planned integration of the DNA alignment with the future Meister Way overcrossing and extension, farmland impacts would be less than significant.

The ARCO Arena train storage site is not located in a farmland area and therefore has no impact on farmland. A 15.5-acre maintenance facility and Park-and-Ride lot may be located in the Metro Air Park area. Metro Air Park had been in agricultural production in recent years, but site grading has occurred in preparation for urban development. Additionally, the Metro Air Park area would be developed for urban use within the 2027 planning horizon. Therefore, implementation of the DNA project would not result in any new effects to agricultural resources in the Metro Air Park area.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.