



SAN JOSE TO MERCED PROJECT SECTION GILROY TO MORGAN HILL COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY March 10, 2022

SUMMARY

Welcome, Agenda Review & Introductions

Joey Goldman, facilitator, welcomed the Community Working Group (CWG) members, and thanked them for joining. He reviewed the meeting agenda, went over participation protocols, and introduced Boris Lipkin.

A participant list is in **Appendix B**.

Draft 2022 Business Plan

Boris Lipkin, Northern California Regional Director, presented a summary of the Authority's [Draft 2022 Business Plan](#). On February 8, the Authority issued its Draft 2022 Business Plan with a 60-day public review and comment period. The Plan and instructions on how to provide comments are available on the [Authority's website](#).

Boris discussed opportunities for the project with new stable funding, provided an update on project progress in construction, right-of-way acquisition, and environmental clearance.

Lastly, Boris mentioned Governor Newsom's proposed new \$9.1 billion transportation infrastructure package which includes an appropriation of \$4.2 billion in high-speed rail funds. The Governor's transportation infrastructure package will help the Authority complete construction in the Central Valley and advance design and preconstruction phases across the state.

CWG members were given the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and share comments. There were no questions from CWG members.

San Jose to Merced Final EIR/EIS

Audrey Van, San Jose to Merced Project Manager, provided an overview of the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIR/EIS). The Final EIR/EIS is a comprehensive document that fulfills federal and state environmental review requirements, allowing the Authority to approve the project and proceed to final design and construction. The environmental document includes:

- An analysis of alternatives based on the preliminary design, including impacts/effects.
- A list of mitigations proposed to reduce negative impacts/effects.

- Public comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS and Revised/Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS and responses from the Authority.
- Revisions to the Draft EIR/EIS made in response to comments.

The Final EIR/EIS is available on the [Authority's website](#).

Audrey reviewed where the San Jose to Merced Project Section is in the environmental process schedule and explained the steps leading to the Final EIR/EIS release on **February 25th**. The Board will consider approving the Final EIR/EIS and directing the CEO to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) at its meeting on **April 20 and 21, 2022**. **[NOTE: Subsequent to the CWG meeting, the April Board Meeting has been rescheduled for April 27 and 28, 2022].**

Audrey walked through the four end-to-end alternatives for the San Jose to Merced Project Section. The major benefits for the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 4) include the fewest displacements, fewest impacts on natural resources (including wetlands and habitats), fewest impacts to parks, and lowest capital costs. This is also the only alternative that allows for electrified Caltrain service to South San Jose and Southern Santa Clara County, which is an important joint benefit.

Audrey also gave a summary of the design features and refinements to alternatives on the San Jose to Merced Project Section.

A quick reference guide to the Final EIR/EIS is in **Appendix A**.

Questions, Comments, and Responses

- Question (Q): A CWG member asked if members of the public could attend the Board meeting?
 - Response (R): Authority staff responded yes. The meeting will be conducted in-person and streamed online, but the location is not confirmed yet.
- Q: A CWG member asked if California or out-of-state construction companies would do the Santa Clara County corridor construction?
 - R: Authority staff responded that all construction contracts are competitively bid and have community benefits agreements and requirements for Small Business Enterprises (SBEs), Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBES). Federal funds do not allow local hiring only, but the processes that the Authority has in place have been effective in working with local companies. Over 700 small businesses have worked on the project so far, and almost all of them have been from California.
- Q: A CWG member asked if the Final EIR/EIS adds more grade separations in Morgan Hill. Also, is the Butterfield bridge sufficient, or will it be reconstructed?
 - R: Authority staff mentioned that grade separations were primarily part of Alternative 2. The preferred alternative is Alternative 4, does not propose grade separations in Morgan Hill. The existing grade separation at Butterfield Boulevard and below the rail corridor at Monterey Road are included in the Final EIR/EIS analysis.
- Q: A CWG member asked what traffic analysis has been done in Morgan Hill, and if that analysis accounted for Caltrain's trains and other trains?
 - R: Authority staff responded that the Authority analyzed traffic in the Final EIR/EIS in Section 3.2. As a standard, a traffic analysis considers peak hours (morning and evening) when congestion happens. The Authority's analysis accounted for Caltrain's train activity

and key factors such as how many trains can pass in an hour and how long the gates might be down. In the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority identified mitigations for site-specific impacts at intersections in Morgan Hill. Out of four intersections that had significant impacts in the Draft EIR/EIS in Morgan Hill, the Authority reduced those to one intersection in the Final EIR/EIS through mitigation measures.

- Q: A CWG member asked what the Morgan Hill mitigation measurements for traffic at at-grade crossings are?
 - R: Authority staff mentioned that some of the Morgan Hill mitigation measures are signalization and intersection improvements. The Authority included mitigations in compliance with its policy. For example, if a mitigation would require purchasing and demolishing existing homes or businesses to widen roads, those mitigations were not considered because that is not consistent with the Authority's policy on traffic mitigation.
- C/Q: A CWG member mentioned that Morgan Hill and Gilroy are undergoing a huge surge of new housing and traffic. For example, a good portion of the traffic does not go on Highway 101 during rush hour. Instead, it goes through Morgan Hill. They asked how the Authority evaluated the existing population and traffic surge?
 - R: Authority staff responded that the Authority used regional land use and population forecasts and considered the traffic and population in 2040, as an out year for when high-speed rail service would be operational. In the analysis, the Authority assumed the highest number of trains that could be in the corridor. Train service is likely to increase incrementally over time. The starting point will be two trains per hour; there would need to be demand growth and other factors to justify the higher levels of service.
- C: A CWG member expressed concerns about the speedy growth in residential construction in Morgan Hill. They mentioned that Senate Bill 330 allows density bonuses for building taller and denser projects. In Morgan Hill, people are building on clusters of four or more single-family lots up to 50 or 60 units. These actions have a significant impact on traffic.
- Q: A CWG member mentioned that Morgan Hill, San Martin, and Gilroy provided many comments in the Draft EIR/EIS regarding noise impacts. They asked how those comments were addressed in the Final EIR/EIS?
 - R: Authority staff responded that the Authority follows the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines for noise analysis. In the analyses, the Authority included the speed, horn, engine, and wheel noise from the high-speed rail trains, and the freight, Caltrain, and Amtrak trains. Given the comprehensiveness of the previous work, the Authority did not redo the noise analysis based on the comments but did respond to each comment that was submitted.
- Q: A CWG member asked what the most significant adverse effects on Gilroy were with Alternative 4?
 - R: Authority staff mentioned some of the effects are as follows: the Gilroy station, some property displacements, residual noise effects, traffic effects, and the closure of the at-grade crossing at 7th Street.
- Q: A CWG member asked if the travel time for high-speed rail has increased or decreased in the San Jose to Merced Project Section since the Draft EIR/EIS?

- R: Authority staff responded that the travel times did not change much between the Draft EIR/EIS and the Final EIR/EIS; the Authority has strict travel time requirements from Proposition 1A. Between San Jose and Gilroy, in the Preferred Alternative, the train has a maximum operating speed of 110 miles mph, and east of Gilroy, the train has a maximum speed of 220 mph.
- C: A CWG member highlighted how important it is for the Authority to continue to maintain clear communication with stakeholders in Gilroy and Morgan Hill to make sure people understand what is going on with the project and how the community will be affected.
- C: A CWG member said that high-speed rail is a great project. They mentioned that the construction in Fresno and Madera is incredible. They noted that California is behind in high-speed projects compared with countries like Japan, which have had high-speed trains since the 1970s. They mentioned that the California high-speed rail project would do wonders for the State of California.
- Q: A CWG member asked if there could be a possibility to consider an alternative route instead of via the Pacheco Pass to connect the Central Valley with the Bay Area? The CWG member expressed cost concerns for the 13-mile tunnel in the Pacheco Pass.
 - R: Authority staff responded that a decade ago, after much discussion, the decision was made to go through the Pacheco Pass instead of the Altamont. Since then, the Authority has analyzed the best possible way to go through the Pacheco Pass as part of the environmental review process. However, much work is ahead, and the Pacheco Pass tunnel is a massive project within high-speed rail. Many things need to happen to build the tunnel, but that is the direction the Authority is heading.
- Q: A CWG member said that as a resident of Gilroy, they have safety concerns about at-grade crossings. They expressed concern about noise and vibration effects in downtown Gilroy and their impacts on historic buildings. They asked how the high-speed rail adversely affects downtown Gilroy residents and what are some of the planned mitigation measures in the Final EIR/EIS.
 - R: Authority staff responded that in the Draft EIR/EIS, the preliminary environmental justice analysis did not identify offsetting mitigation measures for significant impacts. However, in the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority's environmental justice analysis identified six different community improvements as offsetting mitigations. Some of the improvements include a pedestrian overcrossing at IOOF Ave; neighborhood lighting improvements; and sidewalk, curb, and bikeway improvements. A lot of the improvements are investments in safety. In the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority also identifies noise mitigation measures, such as noise wall barriers and others. These improvements were possible through cooperative work with the local entities and other partners through the Authority's environmental justice work.
- Q: A member mentioned that when BART went through parts of Milpitas and Fremont, they replaced windows to decrease the sound impacts in the rail line corridor. They asked if high-speed rail would do the same.
 - R: Authority staff responded that the Authority identified tentative locations for noise barriers along the route to help mitigate the noise. There is additional mitigation in the Final EIR/EIS to build noise insulation and could include window treatments if the noise barriers do not block the noise.

- Q: A CWG member asked why the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), and high-speed rail trains are not at the same elevation?
 - R: Authority staff responded that the high-speed rail in the Preferred Alternative would run at grade, the same as UPRR trains.
- C: A CWG member expressed disappointment because Gilroy is getting access to high-speed rail; in contrast, Morgan Hill ends up with a 110-mph train blowing its horn, racing through the community with only one opportunity to cross under the tracks. They expressed safety concerns and did not think the current plan was a viable solution for Morgan Hill.
- C: A CWG member said that San Martin is not being heard and is not being addressed as Gilroy or Morgan Hill are. They mentioned that San Martin would change a lot with the project, and the Authority is not providing more information to the neighborhood.

Public Comment

Members of the public were invited to share their comments. Their comments are summarized below.

- C: A member of the public mentioned that local cities could establish " Quiet Zones" under the Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222) to mitigate noise. They encourage members of the public to learn more about the process as well as local jurisdictions such as City of Gilroy and Morgan Hill.
 - C: Authority staff noted that while the Authority analyzes Quiet Zones in the Final EIR/EIS, the Authority or UPRR cannot establish Quiet Zones – it is completely at the prerogative of local jurisdictions. However, the Authority modified language in the Final EIR/EIS to note that if a local jurisdiction decides to pursue Quiet Zones, the Authority will provide technical assistance. Also, the proposed quad gates, fencing, and median channelization improvements are usually required to get a Quiet Zone approved, so those features would also help jurisdictions in that process.
- Q: A member of the public asked if the San Jose CWG meeting on March 9 was like the Morgan Hill/Gilroy CWG meeting?
 - R: Authority staff responded that the San Jose CWG meeting was similar to the Morgan Hill/Gilroy CWG meeting.

APPENDIX A – Quick Guide to Final EIR/EIS

- Impact in my community
 - [Volume 1](#) – Within each resource section, impact analysis is provided by project subsection:
 - San Jose Diridon Approach
 - Monterey Corridor
 - Morgan Hill to Gilroy
 - Pacheco Pass
 - San Joaquin Valley
 - Volume 1, [Chapter 5](#) – Environmental Justice

- Responses to Comments
 - **Volume 4** –
 - [Chapter 16](#) - Introduction
 - [Chapter 17](#) – Standard Responses
 - [Chapters 18 to 20](#) – Standard Responses in [Spanish](#), [Mandarin](#), and [Vietnamese](#)
 - [Chapters 21 to 27](#) – Responses to Agency, [Elected Official](#), [Tribe](#), [Business and Organization](#), and [Individual](#) Comments

- Maps of Alternatives
 - **Volume 1**, [Chapter 2](#), Alternatives, General Maps
 - **Volume 2**, Appendix 3.01-A, Maps of Affected Properties
 - **Volume 3**, Preliminary Engineering Design Plans

- Visual Simulations of Alternatives
 - **Volume 1**, [Chapter 3](#), [Section 3.16](#), Aesthetics and Visual Quality

APPENDIX B – Participants

COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEMBERS		
AFFILIATION	NAME	PRESENT
Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission	Patrick Flautt, Sean Reedy	No
Casa de Fruta	Gene Zanger	Yes
City of Gilroy	Connie Rogers	Yes
Economic Blueprint Thought Leader	Ed Tewes	No
Economic Development Corporation	Greg Sellers	No
General Plan Advisory Committee	Dick Oliver	No
Gilroy Chamber of Commerce	Mark Turner	No
Gilroy Downtown Business Association	Nancy Maciel	No
Gilroy Planning Commission	Reid Lerner	No
Green Foothills	Julie Hutcheson	No
Greenbelt Alliance	Sarah Cardona, Zoe Siegel	No
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley	Joel Velasquez	Yes
Morgan Hill Downtown Association	Rosy Bergin	No
Morgan Hill Downtown Property Owner/Developer, Weston Miles Architects	Lesley Miles	Yes
Morgan Hill Economic Blueprint Thought Leader	Karl Bjarke	No
Morgan Hill Property Owner	John Kent	No
Planning Commission & Tourism Alliance/Morgan Hill Downtown Association	John Mckay	No
San Benito County Farm Bureau	Richard Bianchi	No
San Martin Neighborhood Alliance	Sharon Luna	Yes
Santa Clara County Farm Bureau	Jess Brown	No
Santa Clara Valley Water District	John Varela	No
Visit Gilroy	Jane Howard	No

Authority Staff: Anthony Lopez, Audrey Van, Boris Lipkin, Bruce Fukuji, Chris Diwa, Morgan Galli, Stephen Tu, Rich Walter, Vidya Bhamidi, Josh Mahar, Joey Goldman, Jennifer Vazconcelo