



SAN JOSE TO MERCED PROJECT SECTION SAN JOSE COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY March 9, 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.

Questions, Comments, and Responses

- Questions (Q): A CWG member talked about a Mercury News article published last week saying that High-Speed Rail is \$19 billion short on funding and asked about High-Speed Rail's point of view on the article.
 - Response (R): Authority staff responded that, the Final EIR/EIS for the San Jose to Merced project section estimates that the cost will be around \$19 billion. As the Authority has advanced its design and project development activities, it has made commitments to mitigations and other things that have increased the project section costs. At the same time, the estimate is probably a higher-end estimate because the Authority makes assumptions that are on the conservative side in the environmental documents.
- Q: A CWG member said that the environmental document does not include funds to implement the DISC plan to raise the tracks at Diridon Station, or the grade separations in North Willow

Glen and the Monterey corridor. They asked if additional funds would be required for these elements.

- R: Authority staff responded yes.

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, she 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

- Comment (C): A CWG member said that the environmental document is difficult to navigate and suggested that the Authority schedule one-on-one meetings with people to help them navigate the document.
 - R: Authority staff said they would offer one-on-one meetings and they would follow up to schedule the meetings.
- Q: A CWG member asked if there are opportunities for changing the Final EIR/EIS, or whether the released document is the same one that will be presented to the Authority Board of Directors. Also, if community members don't agree with the environmental document's decision, could they present their concerns directly to the Authority Board?

- Authority staff explained that the Final EIR/EIS is set, was published, and will be presented to the Board. There is an opportunity to comment at the Board meeting in April.
- C/Q: A CWG member said they reside along Monterey Road and believe that Alternative 4 has the worst environmental impacts including visual/aesthetics and that the at-grade crossings are a significant safety hazard. They asked why Alternative 4 was considered the best alternative in the Final EIR/EIS. They said they believe one of the most significant considerations for Alternative 4 was the low cost.
 - Authority staff responded that Alternative 4 has the best balance of the alternatives when weighing community, environmental, and system performance factors. The decision on the Preferred Alternative was made in 2019 and subsequent analysis has reaffirmed that.
 - Regarding at-grade crossings, there are several crossings through San Jose, Morgan Hill, and Gilroy. The Authority is implementing safety features to help limit auto, bicycle, and pedestrian access when trains are going by, such as quad gates and fencing along the corridor. The Authority is also executing an MOU with the City of San Jose following the models that Caltrain currently uses in the corridor to help advance work on plans for grade separations.
 - Regarding visual/aesthetic impacts, all 4 alternatives will have highly visible trains going down Monterey Road whether on a viaduct, small embankment, or at-grade. In the EIR/EIS, Alt. 1 and 3 have significant aesthetic effects along Monterey Road, while Alt. 2 and 4 have less than significant aesthetic effects. The primary aesthetic effect of Alt. 2 is not the embankment per se, but the grade separations will change the appearance of Monterey Road at the three grade separated roads (Skyway, Branham, Chynoweth). The Authority judged that Alternative 4 along Monterey Corridor had the fewest visual impacts on aesthetics because it has the least visual changes compared to the other alternatives.
- Q: A CWG member asked how people can provide feedback on the Draft 2022 Business Plan.
 - R: Authority staff reminded that there is an ongoing 30-day period through April 11, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., where people can share feedback with the Authority in written form. The Plan and instructions on how to provide comments are available on the [Authority's](#) website.
- Q: A CWG member asked if the project is still on the 2030 timeline for completion, or if that timeline changed given some of the needs for funding.
 - R: Authority staff responded that in the Business Plan, the Authority maintained the early 2030s assumption for service to the Bay Area. The timeline in the Business Plan is aggressive and funding-dependent: many things need to go right to achieve that goal.
- Q: A CWG member asked if the Authority representatives present in today's meeting are the ones who decided what goes into the Final EIR/EIS. They said it feels like the CWG concerns haven't been heard.
 - R: Authority staff mentioned that they've heard the CWG's input and have tried to integrate it in the development of the EIR/EIS. The Authority hasn't been able to do everything that everyone wants. While Authority staff has completed the environmental

document, the ultimate decision on the project's approval is up to the Board of Directors.

- Q: A CWG member said they were interested in the approximate construction and service start date in the Guadalupe Washington neighborhood.
 - R: Authority staff mentioned that there is a general construction schedule in chapter two of the Final EIR/EIS. The schedule shows pre-construction starts in 2022, but the schedule depends on available funding. In the Guadalupe Washington neighborhood specifically, some track construction is required for the preferred alternative, and some construction is needed on the Guadalupe River, which will take several years.
- C: A CWG member said the Guadalupe Washington neighborhood is getting high-rise apartment buildings that will increase the population in the community by around 10,000 people in the next ten years. If all the new residents don't consider alternate travel plans (other than cars that will congest the neighborhood) it is important for high-speed rail to start service soon.
- C: A CWG member said they felt Authority staff dismissed the comments provided on the environmental document. In North Willow Glen, the train will go through the middle of the neighborhood within 30 or 40 feet of houses, and the neighbors need more respect than what they are getting. The member said they no longer supported the project or its funding.
- Q: A CWG member expressed concerns about noise and aesthetic impacts in the Metcalf/California Maison neighborhood, and the mitigation measurement being considered. They asked if the Authority is analyzing construction impacts (health issues, traffic control, etc.) on the Metcalf/California Maison neighborhood?
 - R: Authority staff replied that they looked at ways to reduce construction impacts through feasible mitigation measures along the project section. It depends on the infrastructure in different areas; the type of work varies by location. The Authority couldn't do simulations at every location along the route, but the preferred alternative is at-grade in South San Jose. There is a track adjacent to the existing Union Pacific line in the preferred alternative, but not a viaduct. Additionally, there will be some periodic supporting electrical facilities, but these are small; occasionally, there will be communication towers throughout the area. In the Final EIR/EIS chapter two, maps show neighborhood-specific features and where those are located. Chapter two also shows the electrical substations and radio tower locations, cables, and other specifics.
- Q: A CWG member asked if securing funding for the complete project would be a continuous effort for the Authority.
 - Authority staff responded that the project has never been fully funded. In 2008, when the voters approved Proposition 1A, the Authority received one-fifth of the cost of the high-speed system at the time. Since 2008, the Authority has matched the funding with federal and state funds from cap-and-trade. The Authority expects additional funding from the federal infrastructure bill, and other potential sources of funds are included in the Business Plan. Additional funding will be needed to build out the system.
- Q: A member asked how the CWG members' feedback impacted the alternatives and the development of the design work. Also, does new feedback from CWG members matter at this point with regard to the Final EIR/EIS?
 - R: Authority staff responded that since 2009, many alternatives have been considered. The Authority has heard the concerns about aesthetics, noise, safety, and other aspects

of the different alternatives. The Authority analyzed four alternatives in depth and considered other alternatives. The fact that there is a preferred alternative that people might disagree with doesn't mean that the Authority hasn't been listening. The environmental document lays out all the alternatives and their impacts and tries to make a good-faith effort at responding to comments. It is up to the Board to decide what to do about the project and which alternative to choose. The Authority spent a long time considering all the feedback received; that's one of the reasons it took around 13 years to get the project where it is now.

The Board meeting is a two-day meeting because the Board may request additional information in certain areas. The Authority staff will present responses to the Board's requests or other information during the second day. The reason the Authority hosts the CWG meetings is to be able to understand the input/information ahead of the Board meeting, and the information can be transmitted to the Board. The Authority staff wants to ensure that the Board members have all the information necessary to make a decision on the Final EIR/EIS.

Public Comment

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

- C: A member of the public said the California High-Speed Rail project was approved in 2008; since then, a half-dozen countries have built high-speed rail systems for a fraction of the cost. However, 99% of the State's residents who support the rail don't live on a railroad right-of-way, and everything adds up to billions of dollars. Many communities in Millbrae, Gilroy, and others don't want any of the impacts and instead suggest building trenches and tunnels for the whole system, but those structures will add to the project's budget. Hence, balancing the taxpayers' money and the project's structures is essential. Additionally, the price of the high-speed rail system has increased due to trying to reduce community impacts. Lastly, zero impacts to communities are not realistic.
- C: A member of the public mentioned that the biggest concern at the Preservation Action Council of San Jose was that the MOU was completely silent on the issue of Diridon Station and its preservation in the high-speed rail plan. The EIR assumes that the station will stay in place. There will be significant unavoidable impacts but not demolition; those impacts might be alterations of track alignment and outbuildings, even a large viaduct above the station but no demolition. However, the DISC process is not there yet, and there is a discussion of demolishing and moving the station. If that does come to pass, how does that affect high-speed rail's environmental clearances? Does that reopen the environmental processor? Is that somebody else's project?
- Q: A member of the public asked about the design alternative for the Virginia Street crossing in San Jose and the potential impacts to that area.
- C: A member of the public requested more information on the issue of the North Willow Glen historic conservation district.
 - R: Authority staff mentioned that they would follow up with the Authority Cultural Resources experts on the matter.

- A member of the public expressed appreciation for the public comment space and meeting to gather input from the local community and stakeholders. The participant mentioned interest in the plans to align the California High-Speed Rail process with other regional transit investments and project timelines in San Jose, such as Diridon/BART; and interest in seeing the outcome and new development from the MOU agreement between the City of San Jose and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (particularly on the design, financing, and construction process for the grade separations proposed to be led by the City in cooperation with the Authority). Also, they said they were interested in the considerations for residential industrial, agricultural, and environmental uses along Monterey Corridor. High-speed rail will run through Coyote Valley, and it will be interesting to know the considerations for the region's wildlife and the local existing land uses.

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
African American Community Service Agency	Milan R. Balinton	No
Alma Neighborhood Association	Cyndy Broyles	No
Bellarmine College Preparatory	Brian Adams	Yes
California Maison Homeowners Association/Metcalf Neighborhood	Patricia Geyer Carlin	Yes
D10 Leadership Coalition	Steve Levin	No
Deacon	Ruben Solorio	No
Delmas Park Neighborhood Association	Bert Weaver, Kathy Sutherland	Yes
District 10 Leadership Coalition / VEP Community Association	Marilyn Rodgers	No
Downtown Residents Association	Elizabeth Chien-Hale	No
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, San Jose State University	Peggy Cabrera	No
EGOPIC Neighborhood Association	Yazmin Rios	No
Flowers Neighborhood Association	Matthew Young	Yes
Friends of Caltrain	Adina Levin	No
Gardner Neighborhood	Kevin L. Christman, Robert Jones	No
Green Foothills	Brian Schmidt, Julie Hutcheson	No
Greenbelt Alliance	Sarah Cardona, Zoe Siegel	No
Guadalupe Washington Neighborhood Association	Ray Moreno, Rosalinda Aguilar	Yes
Healing Grove Health Center	Brett Bymaster	No
Hellyer-Christopher Riverview Skyway Neighborhood Association	Stephani Rideau	No
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley	Joel Velasquez	No
League of Women Voters in San Jose and Santa Clara	Bob Ruff, Karen Nelson	No
Los Paseos Neighborhood Association	Barbara Buchanan, Karen Lattin, Gregory Peck, Amy Georgiades	Yes
Mexican-American Political Association (M.A.P.A.)	Danny Garza, Terry Padilla	No
Newhall Neighborhood Association	John Urban, Matt Bright	No
North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association	Harvey Darnell	Yes
Oak Grove Neighborhood Association	James Patterson	Yes
San Jose Downtown Association	Michelle Azevedo, Nathan Ulsh	No
San Jose Planning Policy Manager	Erika Pinto	Yes
San Jose State University	Monica Mallon	No
San Jose Word of Faith Christian Center	Glenna William	No

COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEMBERS		
AFFILIATION	NAME	PRESENT
Santa Clara & San Benito Counties Building & Construction Trades Council	David Bini, Jean Cohen	No
SAP Center	Jim Goddard, Mike McCarroll	Yes
Senter Monterey Neighborhood Association	Jonathan Fleming	No
Silicon Valley Leadership Group	Jason Baker	No
Silver Leaf Neighborhood Association	Nuria Ulsh	No
Tulare Hill Homeowners Association	Brian Gurney	Yes
United Neighborhoods of Santa Clara County	Ed Rast, Ken Podgorsek	No
VEP Community Association	Rich Giammona	No
Working Partnerships USA	Asn Ndaiye, Jeffrey Buchanan	No

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