



# CALIFORNIA High-Speed Rail Authority

## SAN JOSE TO MERCED COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY NOVEMBER 18, 2020

### SUMMARY

#### Introductions & Agenda Review

Joey Goldman, facilitator, welcomed San Jose to Merced Community Working Group (CWG) members and thanked them for joining. He reviewed the meeting agenda: overview of Project updates, highlights from the 2020 Sustainability Report, a discussion of the Early Train Operator (ETO) passenger experience primary research, international examples of blended service operations, and an update on outreach activities.

A participant list is in Appendix A. The presentation is available on the California High-Speed Rail Authority's (Authority's) [website](#).

#### Project Update

Boris Lipkin, Northern California Regional Director, provided an overview of the Central Valley Wye Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), the recent Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) adoption of the Blueprint for Plan Bay Area 2050, and the results of the Draft EIR/EIS public review period for the San Jose to Merced and San Francisco to San Jose Project Sections.

#### Questions, Comments, and Responses

No questions or comments were shared.

#### 2020 Sustainability Report

Meg Cederoth, Director of Planning and Sustainability, presented a summary of the 2020 Sustainability Report.

#### Questions, Comments, and Responses

The following questions, comments and responses were recorded following the presentation:

- A member asked Authority staff to discuss acoustics in relationship to sustainability, including the criteria to identify mitigation measures used to reduce noise impacts.
  - Authority staff responded that the sustainability team does not address acoustics directly but coordinates with the environmental and design teams which measure impacts and analyzes design features to mitigate or minimize noise in communities.
- A member commented that there are significant issues regarding acoustics, for humans and wildlife, that are relevant to sustainability, and asked if acoustics are being evaluated as a sustainability or design issue.
  - Authority staff responded that acoustics are being evaluated from a quality of life perspective, which falls under sustainability. The Draft EIR/EIS contains extensive information on noise impact analysis, on both humans and wildlife, and includes noise mitigation efforts in specific locations. Responses to comments on noise will be part of the Final EIR/EIS.



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## **Early Train Operator Passenger Experience Primary Research**

Madeline Rodriguez, DB Engineering & Consulting USA, presented the process and methodology for research conducted by the ETO on the passenger experience.

### **Questions, Comments, and Responses**

The following questions, comments and responses were recorded following the presentation:

- A member asked when the survey was conducted relative to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Authority staff responded that the survey was conducted online in the fall of 2020, but the survey questions asked respondents to recall a trip they took in 2019 when answering questions.
- A member asked Authority staff if the interior design of the trainset had been finalized.
  - Authority staff clarified that the survey had been completed but that the actual design of the trainset was far from completion. The survey results will inform the creation of interior design concepts for trainsets.

## **International Examples of Blended Service Operations**

Paul Hebditch, Operations Planning Lead, provided an overview of blended service operations in Europe.

### **Questions, Comments, and Responses**

The following questions, comments and responses were recorded following the presentation:

- A member asked if blended operations in the United Kingdom include freight and passenger trains.
  - Authority staff confirmed this, noting that most train routes in the United Kingdom have a mix of passenger and freight service at varying speeds.
- A member asked if Eurostar trains are electric.
  - Authority staff confirmed that Eurostar trains are electric and use either an overhead catenary system or third rail.
- A member asked if the train in the photograph (on the slide) had a third rail.
  - Authority staff confirmed that it does, noting that systems in the area of Ashford International Station, where that image was taken, have a third rail.
- A member asked if trains can operate on either third rail or overhead catenary systems.
  - Authority staff responded that it is possible for trains to transition from one system to the other. This is typically done when the train is stationary, though, some trains are able to make the transition while travelling at lower speeds.
- A member asked if all trains in England, whether passenger, freight, or otherwise, use the same track gauge.
  - Authority staff confirmed that they do, stating that there is a standard track gauge, which is consistent across the United Kingdom, following the technical interoperability standards across Europe. These standards are also used for the traction power system and train widths. Locally, Caltrain and Capitol Corridor also use standard gauge, while BART operates on a wide gauge.
- A member requested information on high-speed rail ridership versus air and/or car travel in Europe.
  - Authority staff responded that they would follow up with more information. However, they noted that when high-speed service was introduced from London to Manchester, the domestic flight market along that route was drastically reduced. They also stated



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that the 2020 Business Plan includes information on changes in travel modes caused by the introduction of high-speed rail.

- A member inquired about the number of trains per hour in European markets and how that compared to the anticipated train traffic for local routes such as San Francisco to Gilroy.
  - Authority staff responded that the routes with the highest traffic go into London and operate up to 24 trains per hour at their peak (i.e., every 90-seconds). However, for longer distance intercity routes, there are three trains per hour at their peak.
- A member asked if there have been safety concerns with at-grade crossings in Europe.
  - Authority staff responded that at-grade crossings are recognized as a risk, and that there are major efforts in the United Kingdom to improve safety. Given the large number of trains operating (approximately 24,000 trains per day for the entire network) and at-grade crossings, the number of incidents is low.
- A member asked how Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks will be integrated into the Authority's system and stated that it did not seem as though much thought was given to this integration, especially for communities like Morgan Hill with numerous at-grade crossings.
  - Authority staff clarified that the Authority intends to have full-service integration with UPRR and Caltrain. For example, in the UPRR corridor, the Authority is negotiating to add passenger service and additional tracks and is closely coordinating with UPRR to meet their design requirements.
- A member asked if UPRR has given Caltrain and the Authority permission to share the rail corridor.
  - Authority staff responded that Caltrain currently shares the corridor under an agreement with UPRR. The Authority has discussed future arrangements and requirements to use the corridor and are still negotiating with UPRR, though, UPRR's engineering standards have been followed in the Authority's designs.

## **Outreach Update**

Rebecca Fleischer, Northern California Outreach Representative, provided a brief update on upcoming outreach events and results from a recent survey to understand how participants want to receive information from the Authority during the COVID-19 pandemic and what types of information they want to receive.

## **Questions, Comments, and Responses**

- A member asked when the Authority expects to finish reviewing comments on the Draft EIR/EIS and publish the Final EIR/EIS.
  - Authority staff responded that the Final EIR/EIS, which will include responses to comments, will be published prior to its presentation to the Authority's Board of Directors, which is tentatively planned for October 2021.
- A member asked if there are any opportunities to meet with staff about the comments submitted regarding wildlife connectivity.
  - Authority staff responded that wildlife movement and land conservation are continuing areas of interest and activity. The Authority is evaluating comments and will use this information to guide the level and type of communication that will be provided, possibly in advance of publishing the Final EIR/EIS.
- A member asked who the Authority's point of contact is for discussing comments on the Draft EIR/EIS.



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- Authority staff responded that Morgan Galli, Northern California Regional Stakeholder Manager, is the primary point of contact, followed by the Project Manager for the San Jose to Merced Project Section.
- A member asked if the funding secured by Mayor Liccardo for MTC, as was mentioned in an article, would include upgrades to at-grade crossings, specifically for the Monterey Corridor.
  - Authority staff stated that the Mayor noted five potential grade separations in San Jose, including three in the Monterey Corridor, and that while the Authority did not intend to change the alternatives or design, they would consider follow up projects with the City as those move forward.
- A member expressed interest in having aesthetically pleasing project elements such as sound walls and asked when such things would be considered.
  - Authority staff stated that this process would not occur until the final design stage, after environmental clearance. The first step is to identify impacted areas and where barriers, such as sound walls, would be effective. Following that, the Authority would use an aesthetic guideline and engage with community members to ensure buy-in.
- A member asked if the public would be notified of the engagement process for the final implementation of mitigation measures and their design.
  - Authority staff responded that the public would be notified and engaged, highlighting that this was one purpose of the CWGs—liaisons between neighborhoods and the Authority.
- A member asked if the travel times from San Francisco to Los Angeles (operational travel time of three hours and the nonstop time of two hours and forty minutes) stated in Proposition 1A are still required.
  - Authority staff confirmed that the system is required to be designed to achieve a nonstop travel time of two hours and forty minutes from San Francisco to Los Angeles and that the system has been designed to meet this requirement. However, the service time is often longer because of stops, pad, and other operational characteristics – most trains will probably have at least one stop between San Francisco and Los Angeles.
- A member asked if the two hour and forty-minute travel time requirement was planned in or prior to 2008 (i.e., assuming travel through the Monterey Corridor).
  - Authority staff responded that there have been several changes to the project's design and alternatives, which were not known when the ballot measure was passed. However, the Authority has continued to comply with the two hour and forty-minute requirement. This is an expected part of the project development process.

## **Public Comment**

No questions or comments were shared from members of the public.

## **Action Items and Next Steps**

- The Authority will develop and distribute a meeting summary to CWG members.
- The Authority will follow up with Green Foothills regarding comments on the Draft EIR/EIS.
- The Authority will follow up with a member's request for information on high-speed rail ridership versus air and/or car travel in Europe.



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## Appendix A – Participants

SAN JOSE TO MERCED COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEMBERS		
Affiliation	Name	Present
Alma Neighborhood Association	Cyndy Broyles	No
Bellarmine College Preparatory	Brian Adams	Yes
Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission	Eldon Chappell	No
California Maison Homeowners Association/Metcalf Neighborhood	Patricia Carlin	Yes
Casa de Fruta	Gene Zanger	Yes
City of Gilroy	Casey Estorga	No
Green Foothills	Alice Kaufman	Yes
D10 Leadership Coalition	Steve Levin	No
Delmas Park Neighborhood Association	Bert Weaver, Kathy Sutherland	No
District 10 Leadership Coalition / VEP Community Association	Marilyn Rodgers	No
Downtown Residents Association	Bill Souders	Yes
Economic Blueprint Thought Leader	Ed Tewes	No
Economic Development Corporation	Greg Sellers	No
Flowers Neighborhood Association	Matthew Young	Yes
Friends of Caltrain	Adina Levin	No
Gardner Neighborhood	Kevin L. Christman	Yes
General Plan Advisory Committee	Dick Oliver	No
Gilroy Chamber of Commerce	Mark Turner	No
Gilroy Downtown Business Association	Nancy Maciel	No
Gilroy Historical Society/Gilroy Growing Smarter	Connie Rogers	No
Greenbelt Alliance	Sarah Cardona, Zoe Siegel	No
Guadalupe Washington Neighborhood Association	Ray Moreno	No
Hayes Neighborhood Association	Brendan McCarthy, Manny Souza	No
Hellyer-Christopher Riverview Skyway Neighborhood Association	Stephani Rideau	No
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley	Joel Velasquez	Yes
League of Women Voters in San Jose and Santa Clara	Bob Ruff, Karen Nelson	No
Los Paseos Neighborhood Association	Amy Georgiades	Yes
Mexican-American Political Association (M.A.P.A.)	Danny Garza, Terry Padilla	No
Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce	John Horner	No
Morgan Hill Downtown Association	Rosy Bergin	No



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Morgan Hill Downtown Property Owner/Developer, Weston Miles Architects	Lesley Miles	Yes
Morgan Hill Economic Blueprint Thought Leader	Karl Bjarke	No
Morgan Hill Planning Commission	Jennifer Carman	No
Morgan Hill Property Owner	John Kent	No
Newhall Neighborhood Association	John Urban, Matt Bright	No
North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association	Harvey Darnell	Yes
Oak Grove Neighborhood Association	James Patterson	No
Planning Commission & Tourism Alliance/Morgan Hill Downtown Association	John Mckay	No
San Benito County Farm Bureau	Richard Bianchi	No
San Jose Downtown Association	Marie Millares, Michelle Azevedo	No
San Jose State University	Monica Mallon	No
San Martin Neighborhood Alliance	Trina Hineser, John Sanders	No
Santa Clara & San Benito Counties Building & Construction Trades Council	David Bini	Yes
Santa Clara County Farm Bureau	Jess Brown	No
Santa Clara Valley Water District	John Varela	No
SAP Center	Jim Goddard, Mike McCarroll	No
Senter Monterey Neighborhood Association	Jonathan Fleming	No
SPUR San Jose	Michael Lane	Yes
The Silicon Valley Organization	Eddie Truong, Matthew Mahood	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
Visit Gilroy	Jane Howard	No
Working Partnerships USA	Jeffrey Buchanan	Yes

**Authority Staff:** Boris Lipkin, Meg Cederoth, Dave Shpak, Kelly Doyle, Paul Hebditch, Madeline Rodriquez, Michele Boudreau, Morgan Galli, Rebecca Fleischer, Joey Goldman, Abby Fullem, and Mary Beth Day.