



CALIFORNIA High-Speed Rail Authority

Northern California Regional Office

Nov. 30, 2016

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The Honorable Steve Tate
Mayor
City of Morgan Hill
17575 Peak Ave.
Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Dear Mayor Tate:

Thank you for your continued interest and engagement in the development of the California High Speed Rail project. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the nation's first high-speed rail program with you and the Morgan Hill community and look forward to collaborating with you in the future as the environmental review process in the San Jose to Merced project section continues.

Prior to the recent City Council session which gathered a number of questions from the community regarding the high-speed project, my staff had been collaborating with City of Morgan Hill staff on responding to a 27-page document that contained 160 public comments from residents regarding the project that had been forwarded to the California High-Speed Rail Authority. The comments were compiled in October and forwarded to Authority staff shortly thereafter. Our communications team reviewed those comments and identified the ten most common themes expressed by your constituents.

Attached, you will find a document outlining program history in the area, as well as responses to the ten most prevalent issues and questions raised by residents.

Feel free to use this document to respond to any questions or comments you may receive from your constituents moving forward. In addition, we will be collaborating with City staff to respond to those questions raised at the recent Council session and we will provide a regularly updated list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) to the community. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Ben Tripousis
Northern California Regional Director
(408) 277-1985
ben.tripousis@hsr.ca.gov

Attachment(s)

EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR





Morgan Hill Background November 2016

- The San Jose to Merced Project Section is part of the first phase of the California High-Speed Rail System that will provide a critical rail link between the Silicon Valley and the Central Valley. The approximately 84-mile project section will travel between stations in San Jose and Gilroy and (after passing through the Central Valley Wye) north to Merced or south to Fresno. The focus of the San Jose to Merced Project Section is the area between San Jose and the Central Valley Wye, – the Central Valley Wye alignment and alignment connections to Merced and Fresno are part of the Merced to Fresno Section.
- The project section generally follows the Caltrain corridor and then the Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR) corridor through San Jose. From south of San Jose through Morgan Hill and Gilroy, the corridor will traverse either east of the UPRR corridor or along US 101. From Gilroy, the corridor extends east through the Pacheco Pass, generally following State Route 152, and then along Henry Miller Road to Carlucci Road, approximately 8 miles east of Los Banos in Merced County.
- In 2001, the Authority, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), started a tiered environmental review process for the statewide high-speed rail system per requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The 2005 first-tier California High-Speed Rail Program Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Statewide Program EIR/EIS) described the program alignment, which included the San Jose to Merced Project Section.
- The development of the environmental document for the San Jose to Merced Project Section is advancing and a draft is anticipated for release in 2017. The release of this draft will include public hearings as well as agency and public comment opportunities. The Authority is committed to an ongoing planning process that will continue to include public involvement opportunities.

Morgan Hill Frequently Asked Questions November 2016

- 1.) Residents of Morgan Hill have expressed concerns about noise impacts of the high-speed rail system and are interested in knowing what action the Authority will take to mitigate noise impacts?**

Once operational, California's high-speed trains will operate at generally quieter levels than conventional diesel locomotive passenger trains and freight rail. The Authority is committed to mitigating noise impacts outlined in Federal Railroad Administration guidelines. Additionally, in areas where the train will need to travel through at-grade crossings, the Authority will investigate the establishment of "quiet zones" – where additional safety measures remove the need to sound train horns – which can significantly reduce noise disturbance.

In addition to train operations, other mitigation measures such as sound walls, sound barriers (solid and/or transparent), or earthen berms built between the train tracks and residential or other noise-sensitive areas can help reduce noise disturbance caused by the train service. In low density neighborhoods, residents may receive insulating window treatments.

For additional information, please visit

https://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/newsroom/fact%20sheets/cahsr_noise_2016.pdf to view the fact sheet on the Authority's approach to minimize noise impacts.

2.) Why not consider the option of running at-grade along the HWY 101 median or the eastern side of HWY 101?

Highway 101 was built to accommodate vehicular traffic with a design speed of up to approximately 70 mph. High-speed trains will be capable of running at speeds of up to 220 mph. Because Highway 101 was designed for slower vehicular traffic, the curves of the highway are too sharp to safely accommodate a high-speed train track along the center median.

The Authority is currently studying two alignments alternatives through Morgan Hill;

- 1) An alignment west of HWY 101, which would avoid several new residential and commercial developments.
- 2) An embankment alternative adjacent to Union Pacific Railroad/Monterey Road.

3.) Why is HSR not considering building a station in Morgan Hill?

Proposition 1A, the High-Speed Rail Act approved by voters in 2008, identified up to 24 stations for the statewide high-speed rail system. Morgan Hill was considered for a station in the Bay Area to Central Valley Program Level EIR/EIS certified by the Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration in 2008. However, when the document was completed, it was determined in the final analysis that that the city of Morgan Hill was not the most prudent location for a station. In order to accommodate the community of Morgan Hill, the Authority will be collaborating with its regional transit partners to ensure residents have the requisite connectivity for both the Gilroy and Diridon stations.

Documents that discuss planned stations are available online, here:

http://www.hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Environmental_Planning/bay_area.html.

Further, the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy collaborated to determine the most appropriate location for a high-speed rail station and jointly decided that Gilroy was the best location. See attached letter from Mayor Tate date 11/19/10

4.) How will the Authority prevent potential cost overruns?

The Authority takes concerns about the cost of the program seriously. The Authority's Board of Directors Finance and Audit Committee reviews the latest financial and schedule information on the program in a monthly meeting that is open to the public. The findings of this committee are then reported quarterly to the Board of Directors at one of their monthly meetings. The latest materials and reports from the Finance and Audit Committee meetings are available here: http://hsr.ca.gov/Board/monthly_fa_committee_meeting.html

The Authority has also implemented a Risk Management Program that uses state-of-the-art risk management tools that will help facilitate and drive prudent and timely risk response action before program cost and schedule have the potential to be impacted. For additional information on the Authority's risk management plan, please view the Authority's 2016 Business Plan, which is available here: http://hsr.ca.gov/docs/about/business_plans/2016_BusinessPlan.pdf

5.) Will homeowners whose property will be impacted by the high-speed rail system be fairly compensated?

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) understands that private property owners will be affected by the proposed construction of the high-speed rail system. In light of this fact, the Authority is committed to doing everything it can to educate, inform and work collaboratively with affected property owners to minimize the impacts of any potential property acquisition.

State and federal constitutions recognize the need for public agencies to maintain the ability to purchase property for public use, while providing appropriate safeguards to accomplish this purpose. The state and federal constitutions and various other statutes, including the California Eminent Domain Law and state Relocations Assistance Act, and the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (Uniform Act), authorize the purchase of private property for public use and outline how public agencies are required to protect the rights of each citizen whose property is being acquired.,

The Authority has a team of Right-of-Way agents assigned to work closely with property owners impacted by the high-speed rail program. Right-of-Way professionals on the high speed rail team will provide owners with relocation information, relocation advisory assistance, a one-time moving cost reimbursement, replacement housing payments and supplemental rental assistance.

This document provides an at-a-glance reference for property owners potentially impacted by the project:

https://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/programs/private_property/Your_Property_Your_HSR.pdf.

6.) What have you done to ensure residents in Morgan Hill can engage in any discussion about possible alignments in the city?

The Authority has and will continue to engage in an aggressive and robust public outreach effort to ensure residents and civic leaders in Morgan Hill have multiple opportunities to provide input on the high-speed rail program. The Authority has convened a regular Technical Working Group (TWG) and Community Working Group (CWG) that hold meetings in the Morgan Hill area. The TWG is composed of city, county and agency staff. The CWG is composed of people representing a broad spectrum of community stakeholders to provide input, interact with engineering and environmental staff and assist in moving the planning process forward. The meetings will be held on a continuous basis as the Authority works to identify preliminary preferred alternatives for the San Jose to Merced alignment.

Materials from these meetings can be found on the Authority's website here:

http://hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Statewide_Rail_Modernization/Project_Sections/sanjose_merced.html.

The Authority has previously held open house meetings in the San Jose to Merced project section, including in Morgan Hill, in the fall of 2015 and in May 2016. The Authority will host additional open houses in this project section in early 2017 to allow residents to receive the most up-to-date information, ask questions and learn more about the alternatives that are being studied as part of the environmental review process.

Materials from these meetings can be found on the Authority's website here:

http://hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Statewide_Rail_Modernization/Project_Sections/sanjose_merced.html.

7.) Is the Authority considering building an elevated structure within the city of Morgan Hill?

No. The Authority is studying an embankment alternative – an alternative that is built on a prism of soil - adjacent to Union Pacific/Monterey Road. The proposed Morgan Hill Bypass alignment will be on a viaduct structure to reduce impacts to agricultural land and allow for the passage of wildlife.

8.) Is the UPRR alignment being considered through Morgan Hill?

As part of the process to select a final alignment between San Jose and Merced, there are two alternatives being studied

- 1) Adjacent to the UPRR right-of-way/Monterey Road on an embankment or
- 2) An aerial alignment bypassing the downtown Morgan Hill area, running adjacent to the west side of HWY 101.

9.) What measures are being taken to ensure the high-speed rail system is safe?

The Authority is committed to creating a 21st-century transportation system that will use the most advanced and innovative safety technology available. High-speed rail is supporting Positive Train Control technology statewide, an early earthquake detection system, the installation of four-quadrant gates at grade crossings, and building intrusion barriers throughout the system to ensure optimum safety.

The following is a link to the High-Speed Rail Safety Program:

https://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/newsroom/fact%20sheets/cahsr_safety_2016.pdf

10.) Is there a possibility that HSR can avoid the downtown area?

As part of the process to select a final alignment between San Jose and Merced, the Authority is currently studying two alignment alternatives through Morgan Hill:

- 1) An alignment bypassing the downtown Morgan Hill area, running adjacent to the west side of HWY 101, which would avoid several new residential and commercial developments.
- 2) An embankment alternative adjacent to Union Pacific Railroad/Monterey Road. This alignment does run through the downtown area east of Monterey Highway.

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