



# Memorandum

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Mayor Sam Liccardo  
 Councilmember Sergio Jimenez  
 Councilmember Raul Peralez  
 Councilmember Dev Davis  
 Councilmember Maya Esparza

**SUBJECT:** CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED  
 RAIL UPDATE

**DATE:** August 16, 2019

Approved

Date

*Sam Liccardo* *Dev Davis* *Maya Esparza*

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept the staff report and direct the City Manager and Mayor to communicate the following City Council position to California High Speed Rail staff and the Authority Board when they convene in San José on September 17th:

1. That the City's support for the project depends upon the California High Speed Rail Authority's willingness to integrate a feasible alternative alignment recommended by the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) Plan planning process into a supplemental environmental impact statement and environmental impact report.
2. That High Speed Rail (HSR) **must fully grade-separate train and vehicular/pedestrian traffic** at key San José locations, including Auzerais, West Virginia, Branham, Skyway, and Chynoweth. To that end:
  - a. Restate the Council commitment to minimize negative impacts to the Gregory/Gardner/North Willow Glen neighborhoods by fully developing and evaluating the alignment over 280/87.
  - b. If what emerges from the DISC process does not include a viaduct over 280/87, then, at a minimum, separate train traffic at Auzerais and West Virginia south of Diridon Station, and provide infrastructure improvements to mitigate noise and neighborhood impacts.
  - c. Affirm the City's role in advocating for grade separations, infrastructure improvements, and a development plan that mitigates unfavorable impacts to the neighborhoods and residents along the Monterey Corridor.

- d. Direct staff to formally submit the final results and analysis of the City's Feasibility Study on grade separations to HSR, and continue to build on this work through the Rail Corridor Planning process.
3. That HSR remain engaged in the DISC process and the subsequent Rail Corridor Plan work, including efforts to identify funding and make necessary changes during HSR environmental and design processes to accommodate the station plan and grade separations.

## DISCUSSION

San José's growth and quality of life depends on the expansion of rail capacity, but it matters enormously how that rail is designed, engineered, constructed, and ultimately operated. We have monitored with great interest the process that California High Speed Rail (CAHSR) has done to reach the recently announced Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA), and we appreciate the multifaceted benefits of this complex project. Nonetheless, we remain steadfastly in support of our community's priorities, rooted in reasonable concerns for safety and neighborhood welfare. We shared the following priorities on January 30, 2019, with the Diridon Station Joint Policy Advisory Board, the interagency public body addressing current and future rail issues in San José converging at Diridon Station:

- **Grade Separations:** With future service increases, many more passenger trains will be operating at rapid speeds through our City. Experience throughout the country and the world show that grade separations are the only way such volumes can operate safely, reliably, and compatibly with surrounding communities. Designing and building grade separations should remain strongly at the forefront of all discussions and be included as a project cost.
- **Monterey Corridor:** All existing rail alignments along Monterey Road should be highly sensitive to residential properties, and pedestrian and traffic safety. The latter is essential to mitigate the increased number of trains along the corridor.
- **Highway 280/87 Overpass Alignment:** Any future rail alignments should prioritize developing an alternative that avoids the Gardner/North Willow Glen community, such as going along the Highway 280/87 overpass. The only fair process is one that thoroughly vets and includes a full evaluation of options including at least one alternative that does not penetrate the Gardner/North Willow Glen neighborhoods.
- **"San José's Grand Central" Station:** Rail alignments should enable development of a significant transit center at Diridon Station that will facilitate the convergence of multiple lines, seamless passenger experience, and the multi-modal needs of the entire region.

It is no surprise that we are deeply concerned about CAHSR's recommendation for alternative #4, which is counterintuitive to all the concerns that our community has voiced through the public process. Alternative #4 leaves open potential risks to life safety with a lackluster proposition of quad gates and subjecting existing residential neighborhoods to impacts from an unprecedented volume of high speed trains.

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**Subject: California High Speed Rail Update**

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We understand the CAHSR must continue to press forward with their PPA considering the timelines established under federal funding provisions, but the door for dialogue and improvement of the project design must remain open – and transparent. We strongly expect that by participating in the DISC and the Rail Corridor Plan, CAHSR will ensure that the recommendations that emerge from those efforts can be feasibly integrated into the project's environmental process and final design.

*Brown Act Disclaimer*

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*