Memorandum

TO: Diridon Station Steering Committee

FROM: Marian Lee, Caltrain Diridon Director
Jessica Zenk, City of San Jose Director

DATE: May 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Diridon Station Recommended Alternative and Community Engagement

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FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

At the March Steering Committee meeting, staff presented key findings from the constructability analysis of two station design alternatives (Elevated and At-Grade). The Elevated Alternative was found to have a fatal flaw. Short of making a decision on the station alternatives based on the findings, additional community engagement was recommended to discuss the findings with the community as well as continue to solicit their input on the remaining viable At-Grade Alternative.

With conceptual engineering efforts and community engagement now complete for this phase of the project, staff is seeking Steering Committee approval of the recommended At-Grade Station Alternative and Diridon Program of Projects for environmental review.

DISCUSSION

Background

The Diridon Partners are working together to plan for the transformation of San José's downtown transit hub (Diridon Station). Diridon Station currently serves Caltrain, Capitol Corridor, Altamont Corridor Express (ACE), and Amtrak passenger rail, as well as VTA light rail (LRT) and bus services. Diridon Station must also accommodate increased services as well as future services, including new California High Speed Rail (HSR), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and San José Airport Connector service. To effectively accommodate planned and future services, Diridon Station must be reconfigured, expanded, and upgraded to provide adequate capacity, functionality, and interconnectivity for passengers.

In 2020, the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) process produced a vision for redeveloping Diridon station. Based on the vision, station design alternatives were developed with the goal of reducing impacts and costs while continuing to prioritize customer experience. Initially three station alternatives were developed to meet established visions, goals, and objectives. Using a robust evaluation process, three alternatives were reduced to two for further investigation.

The two alternatives are the At-Grade Alternative and the Elevated Alternative. The At-Grade

Alternative rebuilds the station with the tracks and platforms at approximately street level, which is where they are today. The Elevated Alternative rebuilds the station with the tracks above street level. For both alternatives, the main concourse level is located just below the rail tracks and platforms. Access to LRT and the future BART tunnel is below the concourse level.

In 2024, both alternatives were discussed with the community at-large to solicit input and feedback. Staff and consultants also undertook further technical work, including engineering and constructability analysis.

Constructability Analysis
The table below summarizes the Constructability Analysis key findings for the At-Grade and Elevated Alternatives.

Considerations	At-Grade Alternative	Elevated Alternative
Construction Period & Rail Service Impacts	7-10 years	10-12 years
Cost ($2023)	$3B-$6B	$5B-$10B
Existing Rail Corridor	Modest encroachments outside existing corridor	Significant encroachments outside existing corridor
Caltrain Maintenance Facility	Maintains access	Loses access

Overall, compared to the At-Grade Alternative, the Elevated Alternative has a substantially higher cost, longer construction duration, and more significant encroachment outside of the existing Caltrain rail right-of-way. Additionally, and most importantly, the Elevated Alternative has a fatal flaw related to the Caltrain Maintenance Facility: the elevated tracks cannot descend quickly enough to connect with the southern entrance to the maintenance facility, given required track slopes and curvatures.

The At-Grade Alternative preserves and adapts the main Historic Depot and essentially avoids the PG&E Substation site. Further engineering will be prepared near the PG&E site to confirm this finding and establish an appropriate construction buffer. This is a particularly complex area where multiple tracks at the station merge to few.

Regarding rail crossings, unlike the Elevated Alternative, the At-Grade does not, by design, require new or replace existing grade separations. However, given the condition of existing infrastructure, desire for better connectivity across the tracks (particularly for people walking and bicycling), and future train traffic levels, the following needed crossing improvements have been identified beyond those required by the station/track improvements:

- **Park Avenue**: Alter the roadway and improving multimodal connectivity, in line with the Diridon Station Area Plan.
- **San Carlos Street**: Replace the existing, aging roadway bridge with a new, multimodal bridge.
- **Auzerais Avenue**: Create a new grade separation by lowering the roadway under the rail track, reprofile the roadway, add new pedestrian and bike facilities, and address neighborhood access.

- **West Virginia Street**: Close the road to vehicles and create a new pedestrian and bike undercrossing with associated neighborhood access improvements.

Additional associated improvements include noise/sound barriers. The locations and design for the noise/sound barriers will need to be developed. And lastly, the reconfiguration of Stockton Avenue/The Alameda, a critical intersection just west of the station connecting to Santa Clara Street, will need to be evaluated. The intersection, which currently does not function optimally, will need to be rebuilt given the lower roadway profile required by the at-grade station. Other opportunities to improve functionality, including for the bus and passenger drop off facility, will also be explored.

Community Engagement
Given the findings from the constructability analysis, additional community outreach was conducted in March and April. Community engagement included three events held on March 13th, April 1st, and April 2nd. The engagement focused on key findings of the constructability analysis, as well as access, connectivity, and design treatments in the neighborhoods near West Virginia Street and Auzerais Avenue, and the station/neighborhood interface along the western edge of the station.

There was broad support for the station design and program. Additionally, the following primary feedback was received:

- The project brings big regional mobility benefits. It could also bring big local benefits if it is well-designed and has the right amenities with in it.
- The impacts of the project are likely to be felt more locally; it will be critical to address safety, noise, and connectivity as part of the program to create a neighborhood and citywide asset, rather than a liability.
- The blend of historic and modern is successful in both alternatives. Arrival experience at the station, both by train and from downtown, is improved over status quo.
- Appreciate that spaces closest to rail concourses are devoted to pedestrians.
- Appreciate transparency that this is a big project with impacts that will cost a lot of money and take a long time to build.
- Appreciate broad and thoughtful public engagement process conducted to date.

The following feedback regarding construction was received:

- Increased rents and business displacement are concerning.
- Reliable access to businesses by all modes of transportation, both during construction and afterwards, for customers should be provided.
- Reliable loading, building servicing should be provided.
- Lessons from past transit construction projects like Alum Rock BRT should be applied.
- Clear communication, including signage, appropriate for all modes, whether those on foot, bike, or car during construction and permanent is needed.
- Affordable rents, partnerships and support during construction phase are needed.

Additional access studies and discussions with targeted neighborhoods will continue related to grade crossing improvements at West Virginia Street and Auzerais Avenue and station interfaces in the central station area, particularly related to Plant 51 and Laurel Grove Lane.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on conceptual design, findings of the constructability analysis, and community engagement, staff recommends approval of the recommended At-Grade Station Alternative and Diridon Program of Projects for environmental review, the next phase of work.

The Diridon Program of Projects for environmental review includes:

- At-Grade Station Alternative (platforms, tracks, historic station, concourse, plazas, bus facility, light rail station, other effected improvements)
- West Virgina Street closure and new pedestrian and bike undercrossing
- Auzerais Avenue grade separation
- San Carlos Street bridge replacement
- Park Avenue reconfiguration
- Noise/sound barriers at select crossings/locations
- Stockton Avenue/The Alameda reconfiguration

NEXT STEPS:

The environmental review process is expected to take up to three years to complete. This summer, we are scheduled to select and award the environmental consulting contract. During the following approximately 12-month period, additional technical work will be prepared and community engagement continued to support preparation of the environmental “project definition”. Particular technical efforts include: neighborhood access studies; developing construction strategies to reduce impacts; developing program phasing options; and assessing project delivery options.