



Memorandum

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Councilmember Jimenez

SUBJECT: Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG) Membership

DATE: January 29, 2018

APPROVED

DATE 01/29/2018

Recommendation

Approve the Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG) membership as part of the community engagement process for the development of the Diridon Station Area, with the following modifications:

1. Adjust the role of agency staff (Santa Clara County, Caltrain, High Speed Rail Authority, VTA, Water District, and San Jose Unified School District) using either of the following options:
 - a. OPTION 1: Continue to seat agency staff on the SAAG, but as non-voting members who provide technical assistance to the voting stakeholders and to City staff, including through participation on relevant subcommittees;
 - OR--
 - b. OPTION 2: Remove agency staff from the SAAG roster and instead seat them in a new, separate Technical Advisory Committee, which would provide recommendations on a narrower scope of relevant issues to City staff and the Council.
2. Add the following members to the SAAG roster as voting members:
 - a. The Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
 - b. People Acting in Community Together (PACT)
 - c. Friends of Caltrain
 - d. TransForm
 - e. Sierra Club
 - f. Minority Business Consortium
3. Identify a homeless advocate or formerly homeless individual to participate as a voting member of the SAAG.
4. Direct staff to prepare a memo to Council in the near future describing a potential work plan for the SAAG, proposed goals, and possible governance structures that would ensure that the SAAG is productive and successful in achieving its purpose.

Analysis

The City Manager's Office has provided a strong list of respected organizations and key neighborhood stakeholders to participate in the Station Area Advisory Group. It is not easy to balance the need for representation with the desire to keep the group small enough to be manageable, and the Administration's recommendation is commendable. However, there may be some opportunities for improvement.

The SAAG is an inherently political body that will provide recommendations on a range of disparate and contentious issues, from traffic congestion and parking to affordable housing and displacement. Although staff from each of the identified governmental agencies will provide invaluable technical expertise, it does not seem appropriate to place them in a situation where they may need to participate in a discussion or vote on a divisive, political issue. As an example, should Caltrain staff be expected to weigh in on matters like displacement or local neighborhood concerns?

To address this, agency staff could serve as non-voting members of the SAAG who may participate in relevant subcommittees and provide technical assistance to SAAG voting members and City staff (without affecting quorum). For example, the Caltrans representative on the VTA SR 85 Policy Advisory Board serves as a non-voting Ex-Officio member.

Alternatively, agency staff could provide recommendations on a narrower scope of issues as members of a separate committee, like VTA's Technical Advisory Committee. A similar model was utilized during the convening of the Coyote Valley Task Force in which a Technical Advisory Committee worked diligently in parallel with the task force and would advise on critical issues as needed.

With six fewer voting members, there is an opportunity to increase representation from currently unrepresented or underrepresented groups. The Memo from the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Councilmembers Davis, Peralez, and Arenas, dated June 16, 2017, directs the inclusion of "local residents, small businesses, and faith-based and local organizations" in the community engagement process. Of these, only faith-based organizations are currently not represented on the SAAG. PACT would represent this stakeholder group well. Similarly, minority businesses are currently underrepresented and would be an asset to creating a more holistic advisory group.

Item 1(g) from my memo, dated June 19, 2017, which was also approved by the Council, directs the inclusion of tenants' rights groups in the process. The Law Foundation of Silicon Valley not only would represent this key stakeholder group, but also provide social justice oriented legal expertise that would be invaluable to the SAAG.

As proposed, the only transportation advocacy group recommended for inclusion in the roster is the Silicon Valley Bike Coalition. Friends of Caltrain has a history of involvement in the improvement of Diridon Station, including as a represented stakeholder in the Downtown/Diridon Community Working Group for BART Phase 2 and the High Speed Rail Community Working Group for Santa Clara County. TransForm also has deep levels of involvement with the City of San Jose. Lastly, the Sierra Club has proven expertise and commitment in ensuring safe and healthy communities. All three groups would provide valuable

input not only on transportation issues, but also land use, environmental sustainability, and equity.

The homeless have historically been largely excluded from participation in important stakeholder groups like the SAAG. A homeless advocate or formerly homeless individual would speak to the needs and concerns of a severely impacted, disenfranchised population.

Finally, although it is ideal for the SAAG itself to generally determine the matters it would like to focus on, it is essential that the City have a plan in place to ensure the success of this advisory body. What are the goals of the SAAG? What kind of input would be most valuable to the City and especially to the Council? How can the structure of the SAAG allow for disagreement without diminishing the quality and meaningfulness of the discussion and recommendations produced?

The City can reasonably anticipate a contentious, and at times even hostile, debate within the SAAG. Let us ensure that the SAAG is set up for success and not failure at this early stage.