

From: Lames

Sent: Monday, May 7, 2018 1:00 PM

To:

Cc: The Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo <TheOfficeofMayorSamLiccardo@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; Ramos, Christina M <christina.m.ramos@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; Groen, Mary Anne <maryanne.groen@sanjoseca.gov>; Rios, Angel <Angel.Rios@sanjoseca.gov>; Reid, Tara <Tara.Reid@sanjoseca.gov>; Wilcox, Leland <Leland.Wilcox@sanjoseca.gov>; Wilcox, Leland <Leland.Wilcox@sanjoseca.gov>;

Subject: the 2018 High Speed Rail (HSR) Business Plan

Dear Sir/Madam,

Attached please find my personal comments regarding the 2018 High Speed Rail (HSR) Business Plan.

Thank you,

~Lawrence Ames

California High-Speed Rail Authority
Attn: Draft 2018 Business Plan

Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email at

sent May 7, 2018

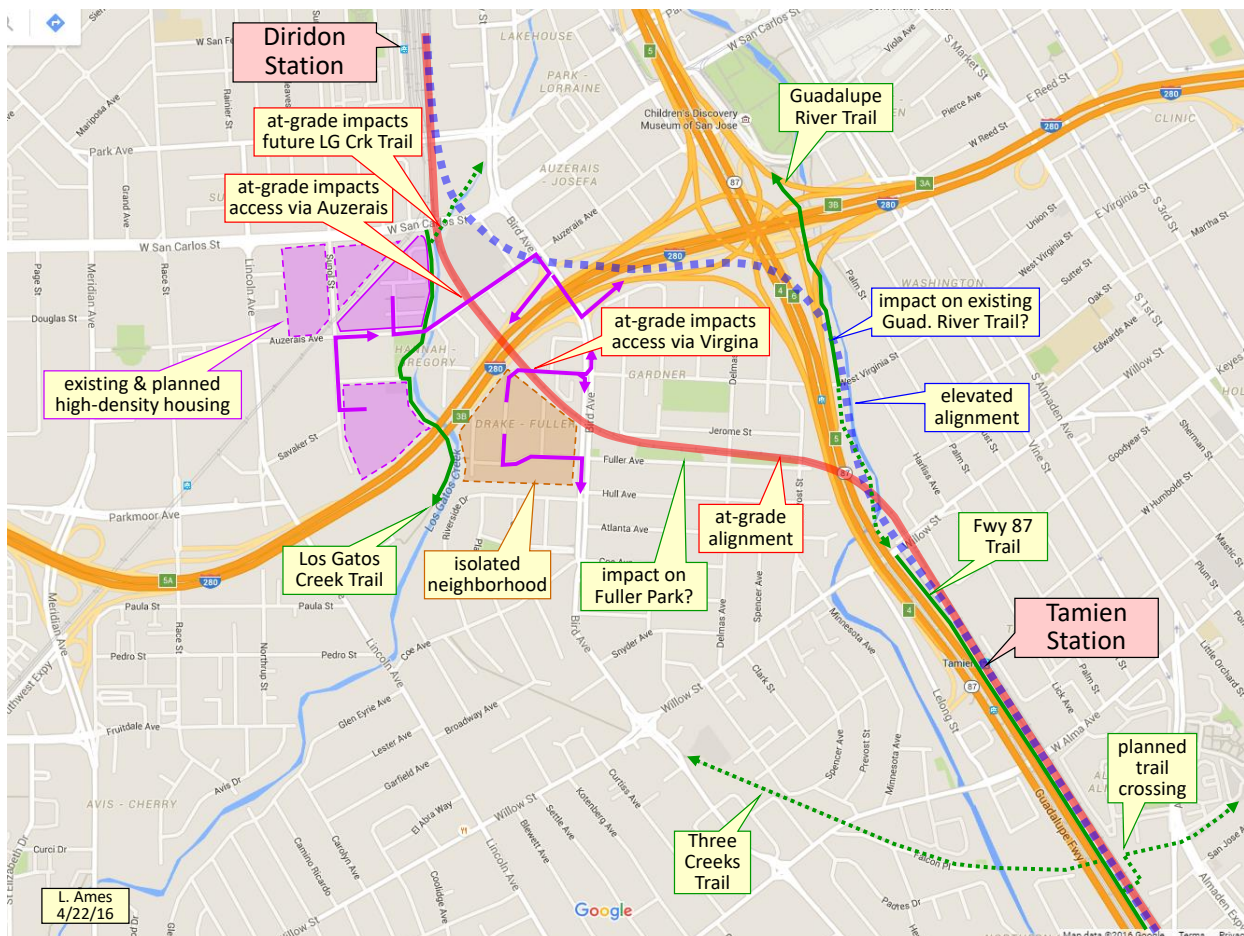
Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to give my personal comments regarding the 2018 High Speed Rail (HSR) Business Plan. Two years ago I [wrote](#) regarding the 2016 Business Plan, and many of my comments then are still relevant:

- I continue to support HSR coming to San Jose and the Bay Area.
- I support the electrification of the CalTrain service from San Francisco to San Jose and on south to Gilroy.
- I support the blended HSR/CalTrain service.

My principal concern is the impact HSR will have on the local communities of North Willow Glen, Gardner, and Newhall.

If “you” (HSR, CalTrain, Joint Powers Board and/or Union Pacific) electrify the existing section of at-grade track between San Jose’s Diridon Station and the nearby Tamien Station (the red curve in the graphic)



and also decide to blend HSR into CalTrain at Gilroy, then the HSR service would follow the current at-grade tracks. While the current pair of tracks (one for freight, one for both north and southbound passengers) may be adequate for present-day usage, they would need to be significantly improved to handle the increased HSR traffic. This would require at least one additional track (and also the possible realignment to smooth out some of the curves), which would take backyards from many residents, diminish or destroy Fuller Park, and probably require the severing of several neighborhood access ways (Virginia St. and Auzerais Ave.) and the further isolating of communities and limited access to new and planned high-density developments.

For years, HSR has been working with the local communities on the preferred “elevated alternative” – the dotted blue line in the graphic. I too support this alignment: it stays within freeway right-of-ways for much of way, thereby reducing the land impacts and limiting the noise impacts (thanks to the existing sound walls). To minimize construction costs, freight could continue to use the current tracks so that the elevated structure could be engineered for the lighter and more agile passenger trains. (This would also allow for a steeper grade which would enable the tracks north of Diridon to descend quickly and touch down at the Maintenance Yard before Taylor St.)

Additional considerations:

- The HSR tracks will cross a number of existing and planned off-road trails (in green in the graphic: the Los Gatos, Guadalupe, Fwy-87, and Three Creeks Trails). These trails are and will be important transportation corridors to provide access to the Diridon Station. They will need to be accommodated in the construction plans.
- Diridon will become a major transportation node, combining CalTrain and HSR in with other regional services (Amtrak, Capitol Corridor, and Altamont Corridor Express – ACE), VTA Light Rail, bus, future BART, and freight service. The station serves event-goers at the nearby SAP Arena, and commuters both now and soon to the planned Google Village. The Station will need to be sized to serve all, and there may not be the real estate available to accommodate HSR service at-grade: you may need to “build up” – which would pair well with an elevated electrified CalTrain line.
- With elevated tracks at Diridon, it’s important to the northern neighbors that the tracks descend back to grade before reaching the residential communities: choose the “quick descent” alternative and touch down at the CalTrain Central Equipment Maintenance and Operations Facility (CEMOF) rather than the “long descent” alternative that had proposed to first touch down in the city of Santa Clara.
- The aesthetic design of the elevated structure will be critical. San Jose already feels “divided” by the downtown earthen bulwarks of Fwy 87 and the existing CalTrain and freight tracks: an elevated HSR must not further divide the city, either physically by restricting access or visually with ugly or bulky structures.
- And in southern San Jose: be aware that the tracks pass across a sensitive wildlife corridor by Tulare Hill (near Metcalf Road), north of Morgan Hill. This is nature’s passageway between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range: it helps keep the wildlife populations from becoming isolated and in-bred. As you make needed improvements in the tracks, be aware of the need to accommodate these wildlife crossings, either by providing adequate undercrossing or overcrossings. Do not build an at-grade intrusion barrier between the tracks.

My recommendation:

Proceed with the 2018 Business Plan for CalTrain electrification and the blending of High Speed Rail at Gilroy, but only if the Plan includes the timely construction of the elevated structure within the Freeway 87/280 Right-of-Way between Tamien and Diridon for both electrified CalTrain and the future HSR service, and only if adequate measures are taken to protect adjacent neighborhoods, crossing trails, and wildlife corridors.

Thank you for this opportunity to give comment.

~Dr. Lawrence Ames,
longtime environmental-, community-, and trail advocate.

cc: City of San José: Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Peralez (D3) and Davis (D6),
SJ Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS): Dir. Rios
Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG): Tara Reid, Lee Wilcox
San Jose Downtown Association: Scott Knies
Friends of CalTrain, Greenbelt Alliance, Cmte for Green Foothills, SPUR
Community: J. Urban, H. Darnell, J. Dresden, D. Arant, E. Rast, J. Leyba, D6NLG