



**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES CENTER**

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August 21, 2019

To: Boris Lipkin  
Northern California Regional Director  
California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA)  
100 Paseo de San Antonio, #206  
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: CHSRA STAFF RECOMMENDED PREFERRED ALIGNMENT

Dear Mr. Lipkin:

On behalf of the City of Morgan Hill, we would like to comment on the CHSRA staff identified Preferred Alignment as it relates to the Morgan Hill section within the San Jose to Merced segment of the proposed High Speed Rail (HSR) system.

The City of Morgan Hill has previously requested that the CHSRA consider using the Highway 101 right-of-way for the placement of the HSR system. While this continues to be the City's preference, we would like to provide feedback regarding HSR's staff recommended Preferred Alignment and hope CHSRA takes these comments into consideration.

**Alternative 4 - Blended, At-Grade Alignment**

The blended, at-grade alignment (Alternative 4) uses the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way (ROW) and proposes to share this ROW with Caltrain and UPRR. This Alternative assumes electrification of the tracks, reconstruction of the Downtown Caltrain Station to add a second platform and the elimination of the at-grade pedestrian crossing. Alternative 4 reduces the train speed to 110 mph through Morgan Hill and provides for Quad Gates and other necessary infrastructure to improve crossings safety and qualify for Quiet Zones. Alternative 4 suggests a maximum capacity of 16 trains per hour during peak hours (north and southbound) and eight trains per hour during off-peak hours (north and southbound). Given that Alternative 4, as proposed, does not provide for any grade separations, it would significantly impact emergency response times within the City. Based on these assumptions, please consider the following comments during the engineering and design of the HSR project:

**1. TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIME IMPACTS**

Morgan Hill has been developing at a steady rate of 2% with much of that development occurring along the UPRR corridor. Additionally, the grade crossings on East Dunne Avenue

and Tennant Avenue currently experience some of the highest average daily volumes along the Caltrain Corridor<sup>1</sup>. The proposed number of HSR trains along the UPRR corridor will severely impact traffic circulation and emergency response time in Morgan Hill without providing grade separations at these two crossings. The HSR trains alone equate to approximately one train every four minutes during peak hours, and one train every seven and one-half minutes during off peak hours. Without grade separations at the East Dunne Avenue and Tennant Avenue crossings, the proposed HSR train activity would effectively divide the City and impact both traffic circulation and emergency vehicle response times significantly within the City. **We urge the Authority to 1) reduce the maximum number of trains proposed along the corridor; 2) include grade separations as a mitigation to emergency vehicle response time due to gate-down time, and; 3) include staffing, operational costs and capital costs of new fire stations, and the deployment of an integrated traffic control system for the City traffic signal network.**

## 2. CALTRAIN SERVICE

South Santa Clara County needs public transit solutions for this growing area of the region. We must work to provide adequate service to Morgan Hill and neighboring communities. As you well know, communities south of San Jose are growing at a faster rate than other communities in the Bay Area, providing housing for the growing Bay Area workforce. Highway 101 is no longer a viable commuting option as it is severely congested during the morning and evening commute hours. Local streets including Monterey Road and Hale Avenue are bearing the brunt of this congestion and have become regional transportation corridors. Needless to say, without regional funding to manage the traffic related impacts to these roadways.

The 2040 Caltrain Business Plan recommends increased service to South County within an electrified system and in conjunction with HSR. We recognize that electrification of the system is important for the long-term viability of Caltrain service to Morgan Hill. The City of Morgan Hill supports electrification of the corridor and increased Caltrain service. Morgan Hill needs increased public transit service now. We want to ensure that nothing in the CHSRA project impedes, delays, or prohibits incremental improvements to Caltrain service to South Santa Clara County. **We request that the CHSRA Draft EIR for the San Jose to Merced Project consider the additional Caltrain service proposed in the 2040 Caltrain Business Plan and be evaluated within the EIR study for environmental clearance for this section of the blended system.**

## 3. STATION PLANNING

Alternative 4 impacts the Downtown Morgan Hill Caltrain station and requires the addition of a second platform and grade separation of the pedestrian crossing. The City of Morgan Hill

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<sup>1</sup> Caltrain's "Grade Crossing Hazard Analysis Final Report" September 2015 and VTA's "Consolidated Safety Study for Caltrain in Santa Clara County."

requests the immediate attention of Caltrain, High Speed Rail, and Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to engage on the planning of the Caltrain Station so the City can best plan for the future Transit Station and adjacent sites (sites that would be impacted by these improvements). Regardless of what agency (High Speed Rail or Caltrain) causes the improvements to the Station, we all will benefit by working together to develop and design solutions for the Morgan Hill Downtown station. This work cannot wait. **Therefore, we request that CHSRA staff begin a Morgan Hill Downtown Station planning effort in collaboration with Caltrain, VTA, and City of Morgan Hill staff.**

We take this opportunity to remind CHSRA of the City of Morgan Hill’s “guiding principles” that the City Council adopted in response to the High Speed Rail project. We ask that these principles be considered and taken into account during the decision of selecting the preferred alignment in Morgan Hill:

*Principle No. 1—Avoid residential, school, and commercial impacts by using existing public right-of-way.*

*Principle No. 2—The most advanced engineering and design solutions should be used to address the real-life issues of constructing California’s most ambitious public works project in existing urban centers.*

*Principle No. 3—Ensure economic vitality for the City, its residents, and businesses during and after construction.*

*Principle No. 4—Use HSR to bring benefit to the community by providing telecommunications infrastructure, recycled water, Wi-Fi and public art, among others.*

*Principle No. 5—Construction should occur sequentially from the Central Valley to San Jose.*

The City of Morgan Hill appreciates CHSRA's careful review and consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please contact Edith Ramirez, Director of Economic Development, at [Edith.Ramirez@morganhill.ca.gov](mailto:Edith.Ramirez@morganhill.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Christina Turner  
City Manager, City of Morgan Hill

CC: Morgan Hill City Council, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, Assembly Member Robert Rivas, Senator Bill Monning, Caltrain Board, and VTA Board