

# County of Santa Clara

## Department of Planning and Development

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### MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Jacqueline R. Onciano, Director, Dept. of Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Report from Administration relating to High Speed Rail and an analysis of the proposed fourth alternative for High Speed Rail alignment in Santa Clara County for conformance with Board of Supervisors recommendations

This memo provides a report back to the Board of Supervisors ("Board") regarding the consideration of a proposed fourth alternative for the High Speed Rail alignment in Santa Clara County.

On September 10, 2019, the Board was scheduled to consider a report from the Administration regarding the proposed fourth alternative for the High Speed Rail alignment that travels through Santa Clara County. The Report evaluated the consistency of the proposed fourth alternative that addressed recommendations by the Board to the High Speed Rail Authority on September 11, 2017, when it reviewed three alternatives for the design of a High Speed Rail line through Santa Clara County.

The proposed fourth alternative would locate the High Speed Rail line within the existing Union Pacific Rail (UPRR) right of way between Gilroy and the City of San José. According to High Speed Rail Administration staff, this alignment was proposed to address the Board's recommendations and other feedback received from stakeholders regarding the potential environmental impacts in relation to the three alternative alignments proposed by the High Speed Rail Authority. This proposed fourth alignment was identified and recommended as the "preferred alternative" by High Speed Rail Administration staff, to be considered further within a forthcoming Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared for the project.

As described in the September 10, 2019 report, the Administration evaluated the proposed fourth alternative and determined that it substantially conformed with the recommendations made by the Board on September 11, 2017. This included an evaluation of potential impacts on County resources and residents, and incorporation of feedback from the Habitat Agency concerning impacts to habitat and ensuring wildlife crossings as prioritized under the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan.

The September 10, 2019 report was intended to allow the Board an opportunity to provide feedback to the High Speed Rail Authority prior to the High Speed Rail Authority's consideration to designate a "preferred alternative," on September 17, 2019. However, the Board continued the September 10, 2019 report to the September 24, 2019 Board hearing, and on September 24, 2019, the Board continued the High Speed Rail report to a date uncertain.

On September 17, 2019, the High Speed Rail Authority approved the fourth alternative as the "preferred alternative" for the alignment through Santa Clara County, south of San José.

### **Next Steps**

On September 17, 2019, the High Speed Rail Authority approved the Staff recommendation regarding identification of the fourth alternative as the preferred alternative. Going forward, the High Speed Rail Authority will prepare a Draft EIR evaluating the preferred alternative and the other proposed alternatives for the High Speed Rail Alignment. The Draft EIR is scheduled to be published in winter 2020. The County will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the proposed project and Draft EIR during the public comment period.

### **Scope of County Administration Review of High Speed Rail Alternatives**

As described within the September 11, 2017 and September 10, 2019 reports, the Administration evaluated the High Speed Rail alignments for the sections that would affect the rural unincorporated area south of San José, including potential impacts to County residents, County Parks, the County roads, and any County-owned facilities. As described in the September 10, 2019, report:

*"As the HSR alignment for the San Jose to San Francisco section of the rail line is predominantly located within the existing Caltrain right of way, the Administration has focused on the different proposed alignments for the San Jose to Merced section of the rail line within the County, which predominantly traverses through rural unincorporated areas."*

The Administration did not evaluate potential impacts of the High Speed Rail alignment on areas within the city limits of San José, Morgan Hill, or Gilroy; and the recommendations by the Administration in the September 10, 2019 report regarding the fourth alternative are not intended to address the design or alignment of the High Speed Rail line within these incorporated areas. The Administration presumes that each of these respective cities would provide feedback to the High Speed Rail Authority regarding design issues within these incorporated areas.

For further information regarding this memo, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Eastwood, Planning Manager, at (408) 299-5792.

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