

## **High Speed Rail (HSR) update and call to Action**

September 21, 2016

I've had the opportunity to go to the last two high-speed rail discussions. The first was focused on the community but then the second on the business community and the impacts both potentially positive and as well as a negative that may occur with the high-speed rail alignments.

It is a process that is moving ahead substantially more quickly than anyone had anticipated. I did not think that would not actually occur in my lifetime. However, it appears to be moving ahead at the rate where the weight of our decision and an impact that we may have in the decision-making process needs to occur within the next month and a half.

The HSR group has currently identified four different options. Based on our meeting yesterday I have tried to summarize my understanding of the options.

### **Option 1- The "at grade" option adjacent to the Union Pacific line Monterey corridor**

It is important to understand that the "at grade" proposal is not what you imagine based on the name.

Instead, the tracks are located on a berm that has a retaining wall on either side of a height up to 14 feet relatively consistent across the community. So that would represent a 14 foot wall that divides the community. In areas where there is a concern about additional noise for example adjacent to residential structures or other locations, there could be an additional 12 foot high sound wall so the total height could be that the height of a three-story building. If you can imagine a three-story building with no windows, activity, ornamentation or life going all the way through the community from North of Cochrane to south of Tennant you can see how the potential divide that will impact the community overall in a very significant way. So "at grade" is not really at grade it is an extremely high wall.

In addition, the wall will be located at up to 102' from the existing tracks eliminating hundreds of homes and businesses.

We need to advise the Planners that this is unacceptable.

### **Option 2- The Aerial approach on the Monterey corridor following the Union Pacific line.**

The aerial approach is a monorail looking structure but with the two tracks. In this case substantially higher and wider at a minimum of 30 feet above the area just to the east of the tracks through the city. Once again, there may be a 102' set back from the UP lines. This is somewhat more favorable than the "at grade" approach however it would substantially impact typically hundreds of brand-new residential units as well as once again create a real visual division across that center spine of the city.

### **Option 3- Along 101 on the East side**

Along 101 is another option that focuses to shift the entire high-speed rail to the east side of 101. The impact on the business on that side is clear however one of the biggest concerns for the high-speed rail group is the need to cross 101 at the minimum twice and the interception and pass over the freeway for on and off ramps are a substantial impact and concern for the FAA at San Martin airport. These issues make the proposal not feasible.

#### **Option 4- West of 101**

The most recent and what seems to be the option that makes the most sense is the option that calls for an aerial approach that would come down Monterey to the north of Sobrato and would angle off towards 101 and follow 101 through town and then after Tennant go back to connect again with the UP alignment and down to Gilroy. This option disrupts the least number of businesses and residents and is located adjacent to noisy activities together- freeway and train.

This is the option that should be moved forward at this time.

Many of us have thought that the high-speed rail was a fantasy and would never happen... the concern is that now we have an extremely limited window to make a significant impression on the high-speed rail committee to request that they focus on and identify the alignment that will have the least impact to the community.

There is no question it is going to happen; there is funding already allocated and the timeline is incredibly fast. According to their timeline by fall of 2016, yes that's this year, the intention is to have selected two options to review through the environmental review process or CEQA. The CEQA process is a typically very involved and long process; however high-speed rail is looking at providing no more than a year for that process, expediting the review.

It is important as a community that we immediately come together in a way that clearly identifies our preference. Of the four different options and clearly Option 1 is abhorrent and would completely divide the town. Option 2 the aerial option, is equally a divider and does not create a sense of community and eliminates many homes and businesses and introduces noise into the center of town. Option 3 which is the going down 101 isn't a reasonable option to select as it has already been identified by the HSR group that it is not acceptable. So that leaves us with the final option, Option 4, which although it's not perfect has the benefit of avoiding the main part of town, and clustering like functions together.

The time is now to respond and for us to organize and to be able to provide input that reflects our vision for Morgan Hill. In the next eight years construction is anticipated to be complete and the trains will be running from San Francisco to the Central Valley...2024-25, we need to be the influencers now!

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