



# City of Morgan Hill

## Legislation Text

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## **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

### **MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2016**

PREPARED BY: Edith Ramirez/Economic Development Director/ Community Development  
APPROVED BY: City Manager

## **REVIEW OF QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECT SCOPING LETTER**

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Review and provide feedback on draft list of questions and issues for High Speed Rail Project scoping letter.

### **COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:**

#### **Ongoing Priorities**

Protecting the environment  
Maintaining fiscal responsibility  
Preserving and cultivating public trust

#### **2016 Focus Areas**

Planning Our Community  
Developing Our Community  
Participating in Regional Issues

### **REPORT NARRATIVE:**

The purpose of this agenda item is for the City Council to highlight issues and receive community input on items that should be studied during the environmental review process of the High Speed Rail project. Regardless of the alignment that will ultimately be decided by the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), there are many questions that the City Council and community must have answered prior to any decisions.

In preparation for this meeting, the City sent an invitation to the community to solicit its input and made a draft list of questions to be considered for submission to the CHSRA regarding the project available on the City's website. Staff will provide any input received prior to the meeting as supplemental information for the Council's discussion.

#### **Background**

The California High Speed Rail (HSR) system is a State of California project that will connect the San

Francisco Bay Area to Los Angeles (eventually from Sacramento to San Diego) with a train system that will run at speeds of over 200 miles per hour. The project envisions train stations in the cities of Gilroy and San Jose. The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is currently considering the following alternatives through Morgan Hill:

1. At grade, on a berm, along Monterey Road or adjacent (on the east side) of the Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR) tracks
2. Elevated in a viaduct along Monterey Road or adjacent (on the east side) of the UPRR
3. Elevated in a viaduct alongside the west side of Highway 101
4. Elevated in a viaduct alongside the east side of Highway 101

The Authority plans to choose a “preferred alignment” through Morgan Hill by Spring 2017. The High Speed Rail project is managed by the CHSRA, which is an independent public agency created by the state. This entity is responsible for the planning, design, construction, and operation of the High Speed Rail project. The City of Morgan Hill has no legal authority to determine the future of the project. The Authority will ultimately determine all aspects of the project, including what alignment is selected through Morgan Hill and how the project is constructed.

As a result, the City is working with the Authority to influence the project so that it minimizes impacts on the community while developing the best project through/around Morgan Hill. To that end, a list of issues and questions has been developed and is being presented to the City Council and community for review and feedback. This list will help inform the scoping letter that needs to be submitted to High Speed Rail so that these issues and questions are considered during the environmental review of the project.

Even though this is a CHSRA project, the City has worked to highlight and increase visibility and communication with the residents of Morgan Hill on this project. A number of City driven meetings and workshops have taken place in order to enhance High Speed Rail's communication efforts. A dedicated page in the City's website has been created to provide information we have received on the project and collect feedback from the community. Comments and questions collected through the City's website are being shared with High Speed Rail communication staff.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Collaborate**

Many meetings have taken place over the last couple of months, including internal and regional technical meetings and two regional Working Group meetings with community representatives from the communities of Morgan Hill, San Martin, and Gilroy. At the last Working Group meeting, a new east of 101 alignment was presented. A City Council Study Session took place on September 21, 2016, at which the lead project engineer presented the various alternatives over an aerial. A business meeting was held on September 20, 2016 in collaboration with the Downtown Association and the Chamber of Commerce, and a community meeting was held on September 27, 2016. High Speed Rail staff attended all of these meetings and presented information on the new alignment which seems to suggest is the more viable option for High Speed Rail in terms of costs and construction impacts.

## **ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:**

The Council may direct staff not to write a Scoping Letter for the High Speed Rail Project.

### **PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:**

On June 1, 2016, the City Council received a presentation by the CHSRA regarding the status of its project. At that meeting, the City Council approved a reimbursement agreement with the CHSRA and approved consultant agreements with Apex Strategies and David J. Powers and Associates. The Council also adopted a resolution reaffirming the City of Morgan Hill's position that Highway 101 is the preferred alignment for HSR through Morgan Hill. A similar resolution was approved in 2009 and 2010. A study session with the City Council took place on September 21, 2016, at which the lead project engineer presented the various alternatives over an aerial. On October 19, 2016, the Council approved an amendment to the David J. Power and Associates contract.

### **FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:**

The City has invested a significant amount of time working with the CHSRA. The recommended action has no fiscal impact to the City. A Reimbursement Agreement with CHSRA provides for reimbursement to the City for staff and consultant work. While the General Fund will upfront these costs, staff anticipates full reimbursement by High Speed Rail.

### **CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):**

Not a Project

By the definition provided in the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15378, this informational item does not qualify as a "project" and is therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act requirements.

### **LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:**

Draft Issues and Questions for High Speed Rail Project Scoping Letter