



Community Meeting #1

Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Eliot Elementary School, 475 Old Gilroy Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

Meeting Summary

The City of Gilroy held its first community meeting for the Downtown Gilroy Station Area Plan at Eliot Elementary School on November 17, 2015. Approximately 60 members of the public attended the workshop. The goal of the workshop was to provide an overview of the project and gather input from the community on opportunities and constraints for improvements in Downtown Gilroy.

David Bischoff of the City of Gilroy welcomed and introduced City staff, the Citizen Advisory Committee, and PlaceWorks, who is the prime consultant for the project. The meeting started with an icebreaker, during which all participants were asked to write down three things they like about Downtown Gilroy that they wish to be continued in the future. The notes were collected at the end of the meeting, and the photographs of the notes are attached to this summary. The following lists frequently mentioned features:

- Small town feel
- Locally-owned businesses and restaurants
- Historic atmosphere
- Theater and Gilroy Center for the Arts
- Walkability

Bruce Brubaker of PlaceWorks gave a presentation, summarizing the project, project background, project schedule, and the project's Opportunities and Constraints report. The presentation is available on the project's website at <http://www.gilroyhighspeedtrain.org>. During the presentation, Mr. Brubaker, Mr. Bischoff, and Ben Lichty from the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) answered several questions from the participants, which are summarized below.

Questions and Comments

- Participants asked about the City's position regarding high-speed rail (HSR) coming to Gilroy. Mr. Brubaker responded that the City Council identified the Downtown alignment as their preferred option as opposed to the East Gilroy alignment east of US 101 during the visioning process in 2012. HSR located in Downtown is expected to be beneficial to Downtown businesses and its livelihood. Mr. Lichty added that the CHSRA

has not yet made a decision on which alignment the CHSRA will proceed with. The CHSRA will conduct an environmental impact analysis on both alignments, which will be completed in early 2018 and used to make decisions about the location of alignments and stations.

- Participants asked about the relationship between the existing and HSR tracks. Mr. Brubaker responded that it is possible that there will be two sets of railroad tracks, one set for existing tracks (potentially at grade) and the other set for HSR (potentially raised with cross streets running under the tracks). He, however, added that it is also possible that HSR will use the existing tracks.
- Participants asked about HSR's speed range and its potential to increase noise levels. Mr. Lichty responded that the maximum speed in open space will be 220 miles per hour. It has not been determined how many trains will be pass-thru trains versus stopping trains. The speed range and its noise impacts are unknown at the moment, but with advanced equipment technology, HSR is likely to be quieter than existing diesel trains. Mr. Lichty suggested reading a noise study prepared by the CHSRA based on examples in Europe and Asia, which is available here:
http://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/programs/eir_memos/Proj_Guidelines_SoundFactSht.pdf

Small Group Discussions

After the presentation, participants divided into four small groups to discuss and provide input on different topics related to the Station Area Plan. These topics include (1) Economic Development, (2) Land Use and Development, (3) Transportation and Parking, and (4) Environmental Sustainability. Each group had a map of the Plan Area for reference. Participants' comments and ideas were recorded on maps and presentation paper, photographs of which are attached to this summary. At the end of the discussion session, spokespersons representing each group presented their group's discussion. The following summarizes key points from each group's discussion.

Economic Development

- Grants and loans to help existing or future businesses deal with unreinforced masonry buildings
- Facelift for Downtown to have attractive businesses that draw in more crowds
- Account for parking with new development
- City of Gilroy should work with the CHSRA to provide incentives for new and existing businesses
- Account for how local businesses will handle years of construction
- Keep development in Downtown rather than in outer parking areas
- Promote Downtown businesses

- Attract more diverse businesses (i.e. restaurants, eateries)

Land Use and Development

- Concern about isolating the east side of the railroad tracks and widening socioeconomic gaps between the communities east and west of the tracks
- Preserve and expand the arts center across from the train station
- Concern about vibrations from rail threatening existing unreinforced masonry buildings
- Promote development of mixed use, open space/plazas, restaurants, theaters, and night spots, schools, live-work housing for artists
- Incorporate zoning for future industrial, high-tech, and office development
- Provide housing for a range of income levels, including affordable housing, in mixed use development
- Require podium or underground parking in denser development in core Downtown

Transportation and Parking

- Enhance east-west connectivity
- Provide all transportation modes with safe and convenient access to the station, parking areas, and other services in Downtown
- Ensure parking structures are easily accessible and affordable. New parking should be located between the freeway and the station (near off-ramps).
- Consider different levels of parking pricing to accommodate all types of users, including commuter rail users, existing residents, shoppers, HSR users, short-term, and long-term parkers
- Local streets could be widened, which should be accounted for determining future parking locations
- Station should have bike lockers to encourage biking and free up car parking, and biking should have its own on-street facilities
- Need sidewalks in south end of Downtown near the senior housing
- Account for the impacts of existing congestion from school traffic
- Account for the impacts on large events (e.g. Gilroy Garlic Festival)

Environmental Sustainability

- Concern about noise. Existing noise sources from trains are horns from freight at night and squeaking noises from equipment. HSR is unlikely to create such noises; HSR will likely be grade separated, which will not require trains to blow horns.
- Concern about visual impacts, especially from the east side; could consider screening

- Concern about graffiti on walls if the tracks are raised
- Consider additional crossings to improve access and traffic congestion
- Promote recycled water for landscaping and renewable sources of energy (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal)
- Create an “EcoDistrict.” An EcoDistrict as a neighborhood or district committed to sustainability. EcoDistricts set forth sustainability performance goals, promote sustainable development, including green buildings and smart infrastructure, and monitor the results over time.

Next Steps

Mr. Brubaker informed participants that the project team will develop draft alternative land use and transportation plans, which will be reviewed by the City Council and Planning Commission in spring 2016. Based on their feedback, the project team will evaluate and compare impacts of alternative plans and present the results at the next community meeting in summer 2016.

Mr. Brubaker stated that the City would send out an email notification about the next community meeting to people who signed in with an email address at the meeting. City staff noted that all workshop materials, including the presentation and summary notes, would be available on the project’s website at <http://www.gilroyhighspeedtrain.org>.

