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## Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #2

June 7, 2016, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Police Department Conference Room, 7301 Hanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

### Meeting Summary

#### I. Call to Order

Members present: Peter Leroe-Munoz (Chair), Toby Echelberry (Vice Chair), David Almeida, Steve Ashford, Eldon Chappell, Tom Fischer, Guy Preston  
Members absent: Sharon Albert, Mark Turner, Craig Morris  
Staff / Consultant: Henry Servín, Rebecca Tolentino, City of Gilroy;  
Bruce Brubaker, PlaceWorks

The agenda for this Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was posted on May 31, 2016.

#### II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Peter Leroe-Munoz welcomed everyone.

#### III. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

There were the following public comments on items not on the agenda:

- The High -Speed Rail (HSR) meetings that have been held have not been notified properly – the notices don't arrive or they arrive late. Commenter indicated he does not live in Gilroy, but owns property in Gilroy.
- More information is needed to assess the different alternatives. For example, noise is a function of speed and there are tables that summarize noise levels at different speeds. Concern that the noise for high-speed rail will be very loud.

#### IV. Draft Alternatives Analysis Report Discussion

Henry Servín thanked committee members for coming, gave a brief introduction to the project and turned the presentation to Bruce Brubaker, Associate Principal, PlaceWorks. The presentation was based on a recently published report, the Public Review Draft Alternatives Analysis Report for the Downtown Gilroy Station Area Plan. It is available on the project's website and at this link:

<http://www.gilroyhighspeedtrain.org/documents/>

The Report contains alternatives for land use and circulation in the Downtown area. These were created from input at the first CAC meeting, a community meeting, and Planning Commission and City Council meetings. The Report also has technical analysis of the alternatives on topics that include urban design, vehicle circulation, noise, and several others.

Mr. Brubaker presented the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives to the Committee. The three alternatives have the following titles: Transit Focus, Downtown Focus, and Employment Focus. The alternatives show different areas and types of land uses in the Plan Area. Each alternative also shows a different HSR vertical alignment option, or arrangement of the tracks through Downtown. These vertical alignment options are Modified At-grade with Martin Street closed to through vehicular traffic, Aerial Alignment, and Modified At-grade with Martin Street open to vehicular traffic. In addition, the three alternatives have slightly different locations for the station platform, ranging from more northerly to more southerly along the tracks.

During the presentation, CAC members (and occasionally community members) had questions. Below is a summary of the questions and following discussion.

- **What is the schedule for High-Speed Rail?** Guy Preston, CAC member and Northern Regional Delivery Manager of the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), answered that Environmental Review is scheduled to be completed and decisions on the alignments are to be made by the end of 2017. Service along this segment from San Jose to the Central Valley is scheduled to begin around 2025. When work will commence in Gilroy depends on land acquisition and the development of procurement packages. Due to the time needed to construct tunnels, it is likely that construction in the Pacheco Pass segment would begin first, as soon as 2018, followed by construction in and near Gilroy. It is likely construction in Gilroy would begin sometime between 2020 to 2022.
- **What will be the width of the aerial tracks through Downtown?** The HSR right-of-way in much of Downtown near the station would be four parallel tracks, which would require an aerial structure (Alternative 2) of approximately 125 feet wide to support four tracks and two platforms. This is not clearly represented in the Report – the aerial structure cross section on page 3-4 only shows a 50-foot wide structure, which would be the case only at the north and south ends of Downtown, before transitioning to four tracks at the approaches to the station. The Report should be modified to include mention of a wider structure in addition to the narrower one. Although the CAC specifically discussed the width and configuration shown in Figure 3-4, CHSRA has since indicated that all alignment options consist of four tracks and two platforms at the station, with transitions from two tracks at both ends. Stations platforms are about 1,400 feet long (approximately a quarter mile). Each transition (north and south of the

station) would also be about quarter of a mile long.

- **What will be the speed of HSR trains through Downtown?** The Noise analysis section of the Report (page 3-17) discusses the speed of HSR through Downtown as being 125 miles per hour or less because the trains are slowing to stop at the station. In fact, the CHSRA plans for some trains to pass through Gilroy without stopping, so this section should be modified. Mr. Preston explained that HSR is designing the track for 220 MPH. He noted that there has not been a decision about the operating speed through Gilroy, but there have been prior discussions about potentially reducing the operating speed in certain locations below the speed at which aerodynamic noise becomes dominant, somewhere below 180 MPH. The EIR/EIS will include a technical study on Noise and Vibration. Upon further review of a technical study, CHSRA has since indicated that aerodynamic noise becomes dominant (over propulsion and mechanical/structural sources) at about 160 MPH, not 180 MPH as indicated at the CAC meeting. To the best of Mr. Preston's knowledge, there has been no decision on what the operating speed will be through Gilroy city limits. Until a decision has been made, planning documents should consider HSR speeds of up to 220 MPH.
- **Why don't the alternatives include a trench alignment option?** As discussed in the previous Gilroy High-Speed Train Station Visioning Project Vision Report completed in 2011, an underground trench for HSR tracks would be extremely expensive, partly because the tracks would need to be constructed under existing watercourses that run through Downtown and the long approaches at both ends of Downtown. Cost estimates from 2011 showed an additional \$1.02 billion to put the HSR tracks in a trench. For this reason, the current planning effort is not including the trench in its alternatives.
- **Could the HSR station be located east of the Gilroy Outlets?** Several commenters expressed concern about the effects of a large HSR structure in Downtown and brought up the previously discussed location of the station to the east of Downtown. While CHSRA is continuing to review that alternative in its environmental documents, they are focusing on and funding this effort to plan for HSR in Downtown. The task for the CAC and the planning team is to review the potential vertical alignment options and Land Use and Circulation Alternatives for Downtown and recommend the best possible solution. In the end, the station location will be decided by the CHSRA. CHSRA will utilize public input as a factor in making a decision about the location of the station.
- **Is it possible to extend the Plan Area to the west?** The Plan Area is the study area of the existing Downtown Gilroy Specific Plan with the addition of some commercial areas to the east of the tracks to take advantage of HSR opportunities. A comment was made that it should include some of the residential neighborhood to the west of Church Street, as those areas are still within a half mile of the station. The response was that the Plan Area was set at the outset of the project so it would be difficult to adjust now, and that established single-family residential areas typically prefer to not change. It was

also noted that property outside the Downtown Specific Plan study area is being considered by the ongoing update to the General Plan.

- **What is the number of parking spaces needed for HSR?** The CHSRA is updating ridership and station access models so the required number of parking spaces is uncertain at this time, but could be from 1,800 to 3,000 spaces when full service is in operation. CHSRA has since indicated that the unconstrained parking demand estimate should be between 510 to 1,510 spaces, based on the 2029 moderate scenario (510 spaces) and the 2040 high scenario (1,510 spaces). The Report should be modified with these updated projections.
- **What is the height of the tracks for a modified-at grade vertical alignment option?** As indicated on page 3 of the Report, the tracks would be 15 to 28 feet above existing grade. This is inaccurate and should be changed to say 15 to 20 feet.
- **What is the distance between the vertical columns for the aerial vertical alignment option?** As indicated on page 3 of the Report, the columns would be spaced approximately 100 feet apart. The columns could possibly be spaced farther apart but the depth of the solid structure that spans between the columns would then need to be increased.

After the presentation and discussion of the alternatives, CAC members expressed their initial reactions and preferences.

The following summarizes the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives comments from CAC members:

- A CAC member made the point that even though the alternatives have a name like “transit focus” or “employment focus,” all alternatives have some of these elements.
- A CAC member indicated that Alternative 3 (Employment Focus) is attractive, but expressed uncertainty that the office development will actually come. Currently, there is space for office development, and although the City strives to attract employers, office development is still difficult. For this reason, this CAC member thought the housing development shown in Alternative 2 is more likely.
- A CAC member was opposed to 12-story development indicating that this type of development would change the existing character of Gilroy’s historic downtown. They mentioned that there is a lot of push back on the approval of the current 5-story housing development.
- A CAC member commented that the City is trying to move away from being a bedroom community; therefore, employment in Downtown should be a focus. They thought that commuters sometimes have difficulty being a full part of the community.

- A CAC member expressed that the alternatives should not determine the land uses so rigidly. The Plan Area should instead be made up of a mix of uses with requirements for the physical form of buildings (like a form based code), allowing the market to determine land uses. Many younger people want to live within walking distance of Downtown. The CAC member also commented that Alternative 3 isolates the offices away from other uses.
- A CAC member commented that there should be more jobs in Downtown. There has been development since the 2005 Downtown Specific Plan, but most of this development has been for low income housing, which does not contribute to the success of Downtown.
- A CAC member expressed that it is difficult to attract businesses to Downtown. Gilroy is located too far from the supply chains in the Silicon Valley, where there are supply networks. If Gilroy could attract the businesses that form supply networks, then Gilroy would have a better chance attracting employment.
- A CAC member commented that he likes Gilroy because it has a small town atmosphere and would not want to see the city grow in scale. Gilroy should maintain its small, boutique establishments and not grow in residential development Downtown.
- A CAC member expressed that he sees limited benefits to HSR because he believes most people will pass through Gilroy. They also mentioned that Downtown was once a thriving destination until the Outlets opened.

The following summarizes CAC comments on the HSR vertical alignment options through Downtown as well as a few comments on the station location:

- A CAC member supported the modified at-grade alignment option. The structure for the aerial alignment option is too large in scale for Downtown and the trench alignment option is too expensive.
- A CAC member reluctantly supported the modified at-grade alignment, including Martin Street closed, since it would provide more access to alleyways. Martin Street could become a park with shops facing the park. On the other hand, the aerial alignment option is “a freeway in the sky.”
- A CAC member favored the station location centered between Old Gilroy and Tenth Streets, rather than located more northerly or more southerly.
- A CAC member strongly opposed the aerial alignment option. They asked if there is an opportunity to locate retail shop fronts under the HSR tracks as done in other countries.
- A CAC member preferred a trench alignment option due to the other alignments’ impacts to properties and businesses on Railroad Street.

- A CAC member expressed that the tracks may divide Downtown east from west. He preferred the modified at-grade alignment option if we can't have a trench.
- A CAC member liked the aerial alignment option because it has a more open design, it would not divide the Downtown as much, and it does not require the depression of streets. They also mentioned there should also be convenient transit shuttle connections to the Outlets from Downtown.
- A CAC member requested that the station be located more northerly, closer to the historic Downtown.

After the CAC discussion, there were a few more public comments:

- The HSR train speed and noise levels should be published. Then we can work to find ways to mitigate the noise.
- The station should be located on the east side of the City beyond the Outlets. If that was the case, people could travel between Downtown and the Outlets in pod vehicles and driverless vehicles and other alternative transportation methods.

## **V. Next Steps**

The second community meeting will take place on June 28, 2016 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Eliot Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room. There was some discussion about outreach, particularly to people on the east side of Downtown. City staff will be reaching out to residents in this area.

The next CAC meeting will be held after the June 28 community meeting. The purpose of the CAC meeting will be to further determine a recommendation for a preferred alternative. Project team staff will circulate a poll to committee members to confirm a date.

## **VI. Adjournment**

- Summary by Bruce Brubaker, 6-15-16