

South Santa Clara County Community Workshop #1: January 25 & 27, 2011 Executive Summary

In January 2011, the San Jose to Merced Section outreach team initiated a series of community workshops to provide information and gather input related to the high-speed train alignments and station options being evaluated for South Santa Clara County. The objectives of these workshops are to:

- Build a common understanding of the environmental review process and methodologies used to evaluate issue areas
- Explain how the project team developed the alignments and will continue to refine both alignments and station plans
- Expand the project team's knowledge and understanding of the diverse interests in the area through community engagement
- Prepare the community through the sharing of information and interactive two-way dialogue for effective participation during the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS) review and comment process

This outreach is intended to promote the community's understanding of the high-speed train system and the environmental review process, and provide additional opportunities for community members to share what is important to them. The targeted engagement effort will assist the public in making informed, effective comments leading up to and upon release of the Draft EIR/EIS.

The first workshop in the series, Workshop #1, was held in two locations: Gilroy (January 25) and Morgan Hill (January 27). Approximately 160 people attended these workshops. Each workshop began with an open house, followed by a presentation and interactive break-out group sessions followed by report outs by each break-out group.

The goal of Workshop #1 was to explain how the Authority and project team arrived at the current set of alignments in South County using established criteria, engineering constraints, and community feedback. The project team solicited comment on the alignment development from attendees, who expressed their comments and issues verbally and in writing throughout the workshop. All comments made during the workshops have been provided to the technical team for consideration.

Key issues from the Gilroy meeting include:

- Preference for the East of UPRR alignment, as it follows an existing transportation corridor and avoids impacts to agricultural land in East Gilroy
- Concern about environmental impacts arising from US 101 to East Gilroy alignment, including agriculture, wildlife, and floodplains

- Concern about proposed modifications to the roadway network and their impacts, including private roads becoming throughways and potential increased distances and time for access to/from fire stations, hospitals and other services
- Preference for a downtown Gilroy station, which has better connectivity to Caltrain/regional rail and transit systems and will encourage downtown redevelopment
- Concern about impacts to private property and businesses; Request to hold a separate meeting on property acquisition and compensation
- Request for the HSR Authority, not locals, to pay for mitigation measures

Key issues from the Morgan Hill meeting include:

- Concern about sound/vibration impacts/evaluation and mitigation methods
- Potential impacts to Aquatic Center/outdoor sports complex, hospital expansion plans and (future) school sites
- Concern about security on the train and around the station
- Some in favor of the alignment along US 101; others in favor of the alignment adjacent to the existing UPRR tracks
- Concern about potential impacts to agriculture and flood zones
- Consideration of at-grade or underground alignments through Morgan Hill and San Martin
- Information on how Californians will be employed in the construction/operation of the system
- Concern about cost (and overruns) and taxes being raised to pay for the project
- Concern about potential visual impacts/height of aerial structures
- Concern about impacts to property, property values and compensation

Following the end of Workshop #1, materials were posted to the Authority website in the San Jose to Merced library. Workshop #2 is anticipated to occur in late March/early April 2011. The focus of the workshop will be on the methodology for evaluating sound and visual impacts and the relationship to at-grade, trench and aerial alignments.