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High Speed Rail (HSR) call to Action STATE TO DECIDE ON ALIGNMENT IN THE NEXT MONTH AND 1/2

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My job is to visualize the future as it is expressed in both buildings and the landscape. I've attended the last three community, business, and MH City Council discussions of the proposed High Speed Rail line, and I'm shocked at what the vision is for Morgan Hill in the next three years if we don't act now.

HSR is moving ahead much more quickly than anyone had anticipated. I expected HSR to come to Morgan Hill in my lifetime. However, the decision on the **preferred option through or around Morgan Hill** is going to be made this fall by the HSR Authority, **within the next month and a half.**

The California HSR Authority has currently identified four different options:

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

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

The tracks through Morgan Hill would be located on a berm with a retaining wall on both sides, up to 14 feet tall, and relatively consistent through the community.

That would place a 14 foot wall that divides the community. In areas where there is a concern about additional noise (i.e., adjacent to residential structures or other locations) there could be an additional 12 foot high sound wall. Thus the total height could be that of a three-story building.

In addition, the wall may be located at up to 102 feet from the existing Union Pacific tracks, eliminating hundreds of homes and businesses on the east side of the UP tracks. This plan would also remove and replace UP tracks a minimum of 6 feet higher than their current height, impacting both sides of the tracks.

So "at grade" becomes an extremely high dividing wall. East-west vehicle and pedestrian travel will be limited to 4 crossings in MH, effectively dividing the town.

If you can imagine a three-story building with no windows, activity, ornamentation, or life extending all the way through the community, from north of Cochrane to south of Tennant Ave., you can visualize how the potential divide will impact the community.

Option 2- The aerial approach adjacent to the Union Pacific line Monterey Road corridor

The aerial approach is a monorail-like structure but with two tracks and up to 50 feet wide. This would be substantially higher than Option 1, at a minimum of 30 feet and up to 60 feet above the area just to the east of the tracks through the city. Once again, there may be a 102-foot set back from the UP lines.

This option is somewhat more favorable than the “at grade” approach. However, it would substantially impact hundreds of brand-new residential units, existing housing, and businesses, as well as create a huge visual and sound division through the center of the city. The speed and sound has not yet specifically been identified, although the HSR Authority has stated that the HSR trains need to maintain speeds of 200 mph.

Option 3- Along the east side of 101

The focus of option 3 is to shift the entire high-speed rail to the east side of 101. The impact on the homes and businesses on that side is clear. However, one of the biggest concerns for the HSR Authority is the need to cross 101 twice, at a minimum. The interception and passing over existing freeway overpasses and on and off ramps puts the HSR potentially 60+ feet in the air. There is a substantial impact and concern from the FAA at San Martin airport, so it is doubtful that this option would be financially viable.

Option 4- Along the west side of 101

The most recent option, and the one that seems to make the most sense, calls for an aerial approach that would come down Monterey Highway and then, to the north of Sobrato High School, would angle off towards 101. HSR would then parallel 101 through Morgan Hill and, after passing Tennant Ave., would return to connect again with the UP alignment and continue south to Gilroy. This option disrupts the least number of businesses and residents and co-locates noisy activities, freeway and train.

Decision making

WE NEED TO TELL THE HSR AUTHORITY OUR PREFERRED OPTION NOW!!!! IF WE DO NOT WEIGH IN ON THE 4 OPTIONS AND CLEARLY IDENTIFY WHICH WE PREFER AS A COMMUNITY, WE WILL BE COMPLETELY DISREGARDED BY THE HSR AUTHORITY, AND IT WILL MAKE THE DECISION WITHIN THE NEXT 6 WEEKS ON WHICH OPTION TO PURSUE.

There is no question it is going to happen; funding is already allocated and the timeline is incredibly fast. According to the HSR Authority timeline, by fall of 2016 (yes that's this year) their intent is to have selected two options to take through the environmental review process or CEQA. The CEQA process is typically a very involved and long process; however, the HSR Authority wants to expedite the review and allow it no more than a year.

It is important as a community that we immediately come together in a way that clearly identifies our preference. Option 4 may not be perfect but it avoids channeling the HSR through the main part of town, and clusters like functions together.

The time is now to respond, for us to organize and to be able to provide input that reflects our vision for Morgan Hill. Use the High Speed Rail Comments form on the city website <http://www.morganhill.ca.gov/forms.aspx?FID=212> to tell the HSR Authority your preference for the HSR route through Morgan Hill.