October 7, 2019

The Honorable Dave Cortese  
County of Santa Clara Supervisor, District Three  
County Government Center, East Wing  
70 West Hedding Street, 10th Floor  
San Jose, California 95110  

Re: Preferred Alternative for the San Jose to Central Valley Wye Extent of the San Jose to Merced Project Section

Dear Supervisor Cortese:

Thank you for your letter dated September 19, 2019 regarding the Preferred Alternative for the San Jose to Central Valley Wye extent of the San Jose to Merced Project Section. Santa Clara County has been an important stakeholder and we look forward to continuing work with you and the many County departments as we advance through the environmental review and project approval process. As we laid out at the September 17, 2019 California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Board of Directors meeting, the identification of a Preferred Alternative is not a final decision on the project, yet is a necessary step toward publishing the draft environmental documents for public and agency review. Please find attached the resolutions passed at the recent Authority Board of Directors meeting regarding the Preferred Alternative as well as the Authority’s corresponding news release.

Your letter expressed specific interest in the alignment options being studied between Diridon Station and Tamien Station in the City of San Jose as well as issues related to wildlife movement. The Authority is studying four alternatives in the San Jose to Central Valley Wye project extent and each will be designed and evaluated equally and extensively in our draft environmental document, which will be out in the Spring of next year. In the San Jose Diridon Station Subsection, specifically between Diridon Station and Tamien Station, there are two different configurations being studied: Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, which include an aerial viaduct alignment over I-280/SR-87, and Alternative 4, which includes an at-grade, blended alignment along the existing Caltrain right-of-way. Additionally, the high-speed rail project team has also consulted extensively with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, The Nature Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and Pathways for Wildlife on wildlife movement. Each of the four alternatives integrates features that will maintain or improve opportunities for wildlife to move through and near the high-speed rail alignments.

Staff’s recommendation of Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative was based on the best balance of system performance, operations, and cost factors, environmental factors, and community factors. Alternative 4 has the fewest displacements of residential properties, commercial properties, and public facilities, and the lowest impacts to public parks, historic resources, natural resources, and important habitat. Additionally, this is the only alternative that would contribute directly to the extension of electric-powered
Caltrain service to South San Jose and South Santa Clara County. However, as with any alternative, there are tradeoffs and one of the tradeoffs with Alternative 4 are impacts at the existing at-grade crossings along the rail corridor. These impacts are being studied and will be described in detail by the draft environmental document. You and members of the community will have an opportunity to provide additional input through comments on the draft environmental document and in subsequent stages of the environmental review process. The final decision on the analysis of impacts, the proposed mitigations, and the project alignment will be part of the Final EIR/EIS and associated Board decision scheduled for Spring 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (408) 447-5631 or boris.lipkin@hsr.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Boris Lipkin
Northern California Regional Director

Attachments:
1. CA High-Speed Rail Authority Resolution #HSRA 19-05
2. CA High-Speed Rail Authority Resolution #HSRA 19-06
3. September 18, 2019 News Release: California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Adopts Preferred Alternatives in Northern California