

Save Our Trails!



Promoting trails in Santa Clara County for the benefit and enjoyment of all

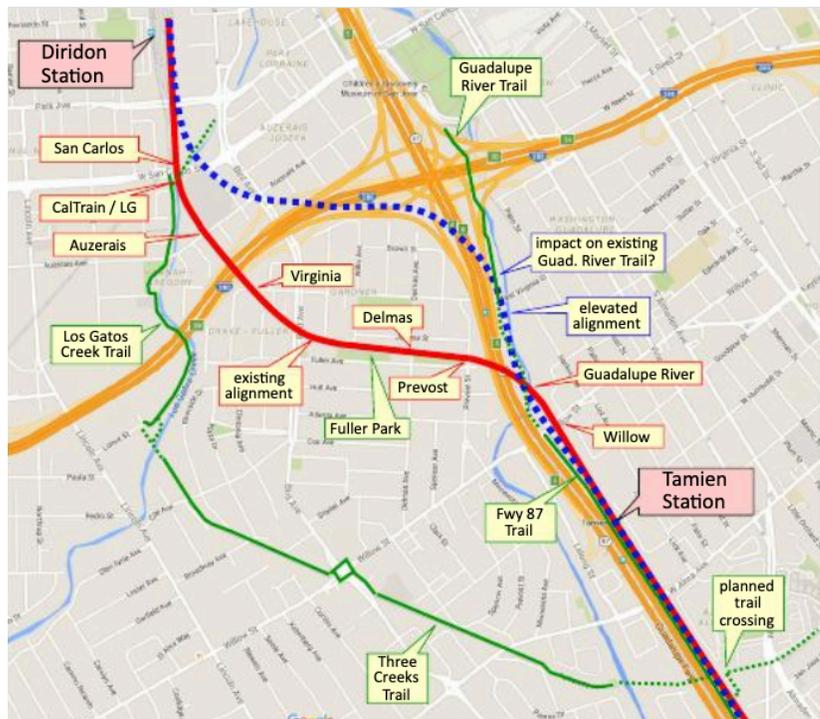
Honorable Mayor Sam Liccardo
and Members of the San José City Council
via email, sent December 3, 2019

re: December 3rd Agenda Item 6.2, "San José Diridon Station Integrated Concept Plan"

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

Save Our Trails of Santa Clara County has, for over a decade, advocated on behalf of bicycle /pedestrian trails for recreation and transportation throughout Santa Clara County. We submit these comments regarding the San José Diridon Station Integrated Concept (DISC) Plan to point out potential trail impacts and to note potential trail opportunities.

We understand that the Staff recommendation is to elevate the Diridon Station and all approaching train tracks, utilizing the existing track alignment (shown in red in the figure), and we make the following comments:



- We appreciate the raising of the Diridon Station, as this will improve bicycle and pedestrian access in the vicinity of the Station by improving the Julian, Santa Clara, San Fernando, and Park Avenue crossings.
- Raising the station requires raising the tracks, which means replacing the recently reconstructed train bridge over the Los Gatos Creek near San Carlos Street. We expect that this will make it easier for the Los Gatos Creek Trail to be extended from its current northern terminus, and we urge that the trail be constructed as part of the overall project.
- We understand that raising the tracks will mean that the San Carlos Street roadway bridge will need to be removed, vehicle traffic will cross under the tracks, and the street will cross the Los Gatos Creek over a new and lower bridge. We urge the planners to include accommodations for the future Los Gatos Creek Trail in the design of the creek crossing so that the trail can readily be extended northward to Montgomery Street. We urge that the trail extension be included as part of the overall project.

The Mayor has coauthored a memo with Councilmembers Peralez and Davis requesting that Staff evaluate an aerial alignment for passenger trains that generally stays within the right-of-ways of freeways I-280 and CA87 (shown as the dotted blue line in the graphic above). Again, there are a couple trail impacts to consider in the planning:

- Accommodate the existing Guadalupe River Trail. We expect that it will be straightforward to make minor realignments if needed to pass around support columns.
- Accommodate the planned extension of the Los Gatos Creek Trail near Montgomery Street.
- And, if the San Carlos Street bridge is replaced, accommodate the planned extension of the Los Gatos Creek Trail, and include the trail construction as part of the overall project.

The Liccardo/Peralez/Davis memo also asks Staff to evaluate the possibility of having all trains, freight as well as passenger, follow the 280/87 aerial alignment. This presents the City with a fantastic opportunity: the tracks could then be removed and the existing alignment could become a trail.

- This new trail could be similar to New York's High Line, passing over the existing historic bridges over Delmas and Prevost.
- The trail could cross over I-280 on the current bridge, affording a wonderful view of Downtown San José and the new aerial-alignment train bridge over I280.
- The existing train bridge over Willow Street could be used to connect the existing Fwy-87 trail to the planned extension of the Guadalupe River Trail, avoiding the need of planning and constructing a trail overcrossing of Willow.
- The existing crossing over the Guadalupe River could eliminate the need of building a new trail crossing of the river.
- The newly reconstructed train bridge over the Los Gatos by San Carlos would no longer be carrying any train traffic, and so there would be no need for an undercrossing of the extended Los Gatos Creek Trail.
- And, depending on the elevation and grade, perhaps the new train tracks would remain elevated even south of Alma Avenue, which would allow for the Three Creeks Trail to cross both the Freeway87 and the existing train tracks at-grade, and would allow the trail to reach Almaden Road and the Alma/Almaden neighborhood without the expense of a flyover trail bridge.

Trails provide an excellent means for people to access the Diridon Station in a manner compatible with the General Plan goals of reducing greenhouse gases, vehicle-miles-travelled, rain runoff from parking lots, and traffic congestion. With a little advanced planning, the trail network can be enhanced rather than impeded, and we have the opportunity even of giving an existing but impacted community a wonderful and attractive new amenity.

We look forward to remaining involved, and offer our assistance in community outreach.

Sincerely,



Bill Rankin
President, Save Our Trails; Web: www.saveourtrails-scc.org