

October 10, 2011

John Davison, Project Manager  
City of San José, Diridon Station Area Plan  
via email: John.Davidson@sanjoseca.gov

cc: Joe Horwedel, SJ Planning Director  
Michael Brilliot, SJ Planning Dept.  
Pierluigi Oliverio, SJ Councilmember, Dist. 6

re: Draft Program EIR for the Diridon Station Area Plan

Dear Mr. Davison,

I would like to make a number of comments and pose a number of questions related to the Draft Program EIR for the Diridon Station Area Plan.

First, I believe the scoping process needs to be extended. There were only two meetings: one was during the day when most of the public is busy with their day jobs; the second was in the evening, but in a meeting room (T-332) that was inaccessible unless one arrived early. (I know of at least one individual who came to City Hall for the meeting but who was unable to get any of the elevators to take her to the floor of the meeting.) Additionally, I don't believe that the meeting was extensively promoted. As a result, there were only two members of the public present at the Sept 29 meeting. By happenstance, both of us public members are Ph.D. physicists, illustrating how a statistically small sampling of the public comment is likely to be skewed.

Second comment: we in the public verbally gave a number of suggestions and comments for the DEIR at that meeting, but we were then told that verbal comments would not be counted and that only those submitted in writing (by letter, fax, or email) would be accepted. This makes us feel that we had wasted our time by attending the meeting, and also that the project stands to lose out because it might not get an as-thorough and thoughtful of a review if we can't recall all of our comments.

Third comment: I do not want you to say that the EIR scoping process was followed to the letter and that there were no comments submitted. Therefore, in writing and for the record, I would like to ask that the following questions be part of the scoping of the Draft Program EIR for the Diridon Station Area Plan:

Transportation:

- How will the Light Rail system contribute to the area?
  - Will there be late-night trains to accommodate the public attending events at the stadium, if is built?

- Will the Light Rail schedule be coordinated with the High Speed Rail (HSR) and BART schedules?
- The transportation diagram did not appear to include the Los Gatos Creek or Guadalupe River Trail
  - What percentage of stadium event patrons are likely to arrive and depart via the trail for daytime events? For evening events?
  - How does the percentage depend on distance traveled?
  - How will pedestrians and bicyclists impact the vehicular traffic?
  - Will there be safe and secure parking for bicycles?
- What does the plan propose to do to encourage a walkable experience?
  - What are the on-site pedestrian amenities? Pavement styles, street-level activities, shade and landscaping, benches and chairs, shops and displays?
  - What are the adjacent pedestrian amenities? What “entices” visitors to walk to downtown or the SJ State Campus? The Diridon Station has a nice pedestrian boulevard by the entrance, but it stops after a block and a half: San Fernando should be extended as a pedestrian walkway along the Light Rail corridor, with crosswalks at Montgomery and with broad and inviting sidewalks.

### Riparian Habitat

- There are plans to reconfigure Autumn/Montgomery St. and Park Ave. The Los Gatos Creek has been confined to a culvert under that intersection for years. When the streets are redone, will the plan recommend seizing this great opportunity to “daylight” the creek and restore the riparian habitat?
  - The Los Gatos Creek supports steelhead trout and coho salmon. (Besides the official reports, I personally have seen steelhead spawn in the Los Gatos upstream from here, and several friends have reported seeing meter-long salmon upstream of here.) An improved riparian habitat would benefit these important species.
- What are the impacts of Light Pollution from the planned development on the fish and wildlife in the Los Gatos Creek and Guadalupe River riparian corridors?
- What are the impacts to the Los Gatos Creek from contaminated water run-off from structures and pavement? What measures are proposed to mitigate this?
- What is the impact of noise (e.g., from stadium events and associated traffic) on the wildlife in the Los Gatos Creek riparian corridor?

### Trail Usage

A significant fraction of folks attending stadium events or traveling via HSR or BART who live within a couple miles of the Diridon Station are likely to arrive via the trails, in part to avoid the traffic congestion and in part to avoid the hassles and high cost of parking.

- Would a “day-lighted” Los Gatos Creek enable a grade-separation of the Los Gatos Creek Trail at Autumn/Montgomery and at Park? If trail users don’t have to cross that busy intersection at-grade, they are more likely to utilize the trail, and also there would be less pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the signalized intersections, thereby enhancing vehicle motion.
- What would be the impacts on Auzerais at its at-grade crossing of the Los Gatos Creek Trail due to the increased trail usage? Can the trail be grade-separated by means of an undercrossing?

- What would be the impacts on Woz Way at its informal (but still well-utilized) at-grade crossing of the Guadalupe River Trail due to the increased trail usage? Can the trail be grade-separated by means of an undercrossing? (There actually is already an undercrossing in place, but it dead-ends: a ramp up to grade would alleviate this concern.)
- If a significant number of event attendees arrive via the creek trails, they will generate their own traffic impacts. What improvements to the Guadalupe River Trail would be proposed? There are a couple hairpin turns (at Park and at Woz Way), several places where the through-route follows a sidewalk (e.g., the Park Ave. bridge), and other hazards (a blind curve at Park, and also a path that directly runs off the embankment and into the water, also at Park) – a few ramp-trails and/or some in-channel crossings would connect existing trail segments and greatly improve the flow of bicycle and pedestrian traffic with minimal impact to the environment. (For example, now that there is a flood-control bypass channel, the water level will be limited: a trail bridge could be constructed under several street bridges so as to connect trail segments with no impact to the riparian habitat.)

### Airport Impacts

- Are proposed buildings compatible with the FAA “One Engine Inoperative” constraints? I understand that the OEI is not yet adopted policy, but also that each airline has to figure out on their own whether to fly certain routes, given the needed fuel load and whether an OEI event would be hazardous. If the buildings infringe on the OEI flight-path, the airlines may discontinue long-haul routes and not institute others, and so the city’s billion-dollar investment in SJC could be jeopardized.
- Will there be a “people mover” between Diridon and SJC? If the airport connection is not convenient, then air travelers from Fresno, for example, would be more likely to go to LAX than SJC.
- Would the Diridon Station users be able to utilize the rental car facility at SJC, or would there have to be parking structures for rental cars in the Diridon Station area?

### Parks

- Will visitors be able to appreciate the architecture of the Diridon Station? Will there be a plaza that allows sight-lines to the HSR station, or will it be “buried” in a dense urban grid?
- I am pleased to see that the current Fire Training Site on Bird at Park is designated to be parkland. This will be needed for the residents in the nearby developments. Note that this park, with neighborhood-serving facilities (swings, picnic areas, playgrounds, and possibly trailhead amenities) is different from the very open and public plaza at the entrance to the Diridon Station.

### Noise

- The stadium is likely to generate significant noise during events: its impact has been analyzed as part of the Stadium EIR. Will structures within the Diridon Station Area Plan be analyzed for their effects on that noise? For example, a poorly designed and positioned structure could act like a mirror and reflect stadium noise into adjacent residential areas.

I recall the other public participant and I had other comments as well, and I’m sure the other members of the public who wished to attend would have additional questions and comments as well. I urge you to extend the comment period and to solicit additional public input.

The Diridon Station Area Plan will have a profound impact on a vibrant and vital region of San José for years to come: it is critical that it be done well.

Thank you,

Dr. Lawrence Ames