

Santa Clara Station Area Plan: Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Report

Date: August 10, 2007

To: Responsible Agencies, and Interested Parties and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Santa Clara Station Area Plan

Location: Cities of Santa Clara and San José, California

The City of Santa Clara, the City of San José, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) are preparing a Station Area Plan (SAP) for the area surrounding the Santa Clara Transit Center, and have determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be necessary pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The City of Santa Clara and the City of San José (Cities) are Co-Lead agencies for the purposes of CEQA. Each city shall independently assess and certify the completeness of the EIR, and upon certification, each city shall be free to fulfill its statutory responsibilities, including Plan adoption and implementation, in accordance with CEQA and other applicable statutes.

The Cities request your input on how the Station Area Plan may affect the environment. More specifically, input is being solicited regarding the scope and content of environmental analysis that is relevant to your respective agency's statutory/regulatory responsibilities in order to ascertain potential impacts of the proposed project.

A historic landmark in Santa Clara, the Santa Clara Railroad Depot is the only enclosed structure occupying the Transit Center area. The Transit Center—which includes the Depot and the nearby parking areas and street that provide bus stops on the west side of the rail tracks—is currently served by Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) and Capitol Corridor rail lines, and VTA bus lines. A major effort is currently underway to extend Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) from Fremont to the City of Santa Clara, with the Santa Clara Transit Center forming the terminus of this extension. Additionally, future plans call for an Automated People Mover (APM) system that would connect Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport with both the Transit Center and VTA's Metro/Airport light rail station. With direct rail service to virtually all parts of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, the Transit Center will emerge as a key intermodal hub in the region.

The Station Area Plan public planning process has been underway for approximately a year and a half. A Preferred Plan was prepared and presented at a community workshop in June 2007. The project website (www.SantaClaraSAP.com) provides information on the process to date and background studies prepared. Although the Station Area Plan has not yet been fully drafted, your input at this stage will be taken into consideration during formulation of the Station Area Plan, and for the preparation of the EIR. A description of the proposed actions, location map, and preliminary identification of the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

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If an agency is a responsible agency as defined by Section 15381 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the agency will need to use the environmental documents prepared by the Cities when considering discretionary approvals related to the subject project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your comments should be submitted by the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after your receipt of this notice per CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b). Please send your written responses, with the name of your agency contact person, to:

Debby Fernandez, Planning Division – City Hall, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA, 95050; or

Jenny Nusbaum, City of San José, Department of PBCE, Planning Division, 200 East Santa Clara Street, San José, CA 95113-1905

Responses can also be provided by email to dfernandez@ci.santa-clara.ca.us or jenny.nusbaum@sanjoseca.gov, or faxed to Debby Fernandez at (408) 241-6771 or Jenny Nusbaum at (408) 292-6055

A Scoping Meeting for the EIR will be conducted on [time & location]. If you have questions regarding this NOP or the Scoping Meeting, you may call Debby Fernandez at (408) 615-2450 and Jenny Nusbaum at (408)535-7872.

Debby Fernandez
Planning Division – City Hall
City of Santa Clara

Date

Jenny Nusbaum
Planning Division – Dept. of PBCE
City of San Jose

Date

PROJECT TITLE

Santa Clara Station Area Plan

CO-LEAD AGENCIES

Planning Division
City of Santa Clara
1500 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, CA 95050

and

Planning Division
Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement
City of San José
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113-1905

CONTACT PERSONS

Jenny Nusbaum
City of San José
(408) 535-7872

PROJECT LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Location

Although the Transit Center is located in the City of Santa Clara, the planning area (referred to as “Planning Area” through the remainder of this document) encompasses land within the jurisdictions of both the City of Santa Clara and the City of San José. Both cities are situated south of the San Francisco Bay in Santa Clara County, The Planning Area is located in proximity to major transportation corridors and hubs, including Interstate 880, Highway 101, State Route 82, the San José International Airport, freight and commuter rail corridors, light rail, and other public transportation corridors. The regional location of the cities and the Planning Area are provided in Figure 1 on the following page.

Planning Boundaries

Encompassing approximately 432 acres (roughly 1.3 miles by 0.5 miles), the Planning Area comprises 244 and 188 acres in Santa Clara and San José, respectively. The area incorporates land within a half-mile radius of the existing and planned Caltrain facilities and the proposed BART Station, but also encompasses adjacent under-utilized land and vacant parcels along the Union Pacific Rail main line (UPRR corridor) and within the former Food Machinery Corporation (FMC) site for the purposes of a comprehensive land use planning effort. The area is bounded by the Norman Y. Mineta International Airport to the east, Newhall Avenue to the south, De La Cruz Boulevard to the north, and Santa Clara University to the west. The UPRR corridor and former Newhall Rail Yard run through the center of the Planning Area (see Figure 2). The SAP Planning Area does not have jurisdiction over the planning of the facilities for the anticipated BART or Caltrain stations located within the rail rights-of-way. Those facilities are specific planning efforts separate from this land use study area.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Insert Figure 2 Here

PROJECT SPONSORS' NAME AND ADDRESS

Planning Division
City of Santa Clara
Attention: Debby Fernandez
1500 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, CA 95050

and

Planning Division
City of San Jose
Attention: Jenny Nusbaum
200 East Santa Street
San Jose, CA 95113-1905

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

Land uses within the Planning Area are determined by the General Plans of both the City of Santa Clara and the City of San José (Cities). The General Plan for the City of Santa Clara establishes land use designations for mixed-use, commercial, residential, and industrial lands within the Santa Clara Station Area Plan boundaries. The San Jose 2020 General Plan establishes land use designations within the City of San José portion of the Planning Area, that may include residential, commercial, industrial and mixed uses.

The proposed Station Area Plan will recommend revisions to the land use designations in the Cities' General Plans. In addition, the General Plan amendment will include changes to the Land Use maps to reflect recommended land use changes.

ZONING

The City of Santa Clara and the City of San José zoning codes implement each city's General Plan land use designations within the Santa Clara Station Area Plan boundaries. Existing zoning districts in the Planning Area, including Planned Development Zoning Districts, may allow the following uses:

- Public, Institutional, and Park space,
- Industrial and combined industrial/commercial uses,
- Low, medium, and high-density residential uses ranging from seven to 50 dwelling units per gross acre,
- Mixed use, thoroughfare commercial, and downtown commercial uses.

Amendments to each City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance may be required to make the zoning consistent with the Planning Area land use regulations and to implement some of the new development and design directives. The specific nature of the zoning amendments will be determined after the draft Santa Clara Station Area Plan has been prepared and may be adopted by each agency, as applicable.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The City of Santa Clara, City of San José, and VTA are working together on a Station Area Plan for the area around the Santa Clara Transit Center. The project Planning Area encompasses 432 acres of land in the cities of San José and Santa Clara, incorporating land within a half-mile radius of the Transit Center as well as adjacent under-utilized and vacant land. Proposed land use changes associated with the Santa Clara Station Area Plan could potentially provide capacity for up to an additional 2,500 housing units for a total of approximately 3,500 housing units in the Planning Area. Capacity for roughly five million square feet of non-residential development could also be added for a total of approximately six million square feet in the Planning Area. Complementing new development, up to seven acres of new Public Parks and Open Space is also proposed in the Planning Area. New additions to the street network in the Planning Area are also proposed.

The Transit Center is one of six planned BART stations along the 16.1-mile BART Extension to Milpitas, San José, and Santa Clara, in the Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Corridor (SVRTC). Development and expansion of the Transit Center provides an opportunity to foster transit-oriented development (TOD) uses and support transit ridership. With the anticipated BART connection, the Transit Center will be one of the most transit-accessible stations in the entire Bay Area, with access to commuter rail and BART, bus lines, an APM and park-and-ride. Additional ridership will result from Caltrain, ACE/Capitols, and VTA buses. The Station Area Plan for the Santa Clara Transit Center will ensure that the BART station is accessible and well integrated into the existing Transit Center and surrounding area.

With a planning horizon to 2030, the Station Area Plan will articulate a vision and policies for the future development of the Planning Area, providing guidance for changes to the Cities' General Plans and Zoning Ordinances.

The first two phases of the project have been completed: The first phase included a comprehensive visioning process that involved community members, stakeholders, and decision-makers from both cities and an extensive analysis of existing land use, urban design, transportation, and infrastructure conditions. Documentation of this phase is recorded in several reports—*Santa Clara and San José Stakeholder Interviews Reports*, *Community Workshop #1 Summary*, and *the Existing Conditions Report*. These documents are available from the Cities and are posted on the project website (<http://www.SantaClaraSAP.com>). The second phase of the planning process involved the investigation of opportunities and constraints and development of alternative plans, which led to the creation of the Preferred Station Area Plan (Preferred Plan). The resulting reports from this phase—*Opportunities and Constraints*, *Market Assessment*, *Alternatives Working Papers*, and *Community Workshop #2 Summary*—formed the background analysis for the Preferred Plan.

As part of the development of alternatives and the Preferred Plan, the cities and VTA established overall Guiding Principles for the Santa Clara Station Area Plan. These principles, which are summarized below, reflect the overall goals of the cities for fiscal solvency and quality development, regional housing and transportation, urban design, and accessibility; the full text of the Guiding Principles is available at the project website (www.SantaClaraSAP.com):

1. A landmark gateway and destination that integrates the old with the new.
2. Higher-intensity, transit-supportive development.
3. Development that respects the scale and character of surrounding neighborhoods.
4. A mix of uses, including residential, east of the UPRR corridor.

5. Improved east-west connectivity.
6. A place for connections, a connected place.
7. A diversity of transportation modes and parking choices.
8. Pedestrian orientation.
9. Synergistic mix of uses and parking.

Preferred Plan

The Preferred Plan is the result of the planning process to date. The land use and connectivity diagram provide a general overview of the project (Figure 3). As shown in the diagram, the Planning Area is anchored by a vibrant, mixed-use core of hotel, office, and commercial development surrounding the multi-modal transportation hub, including the proposed BART Station. Hotel development is emphasized in this core, capitalizing on the Station's accessibility to the San José Airport, Downtown San José, and San Francisco via BART, the Airport APM, and Caltrain. In addition, a strong pedestrian and retail connection along Benton Street connects the core to Downtown Santa Clara and Santa Clara University. Just outside of the core, within a five-to-ten minute walk of the Station, are two medium-to-high density residential neighborhoods to the southwest and southeast, and an intensified commercial center to the north. A mix of office, commercial, and industrial park development is located south of the mixed-use/residential Station Area, along the east side of the BART Maintenance Facility and rail corridor; while to the southwest, medium and medium-high residential development replaces light industrial development along the Campbell Avenue corridor in San José. Similar to the intensities throughout the Planning Area, building heights vary, and are defined by area and/or by FAA Height Limits for the San José Norman Y. Mineta International Airport, such as for the FMC site.

The major circulation components and improvements within the Planning Area include a possible east-west vehicular underpass with a grade-separated bicycle path between Coleman Avenue and El Camino Real within the study area, south of De La Cruz Boulevard; a new street grid and boulevard between Coleman Avenue and the rail corridor; and an improved intersection at Campbell Avenue and El Camino Real. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is also improved, with new pedestrian bridges and crossings located at the Station (along the Benton Street/Brokaw Road alignment) and Newhall Avenue.

The Preferred Plan is being revised to take into account preliminary impact analysis, community input, and further research, which will result in a Draft Station Area Plan. The Co-Lead Agencies are now gathering feedback to consider any additional policy issues in order to develop the Draft Station Area Plan in addition to input on the scope and content of the EIR.

The Draft Station Area Plan will contain background information, goals, and policies addressing several topics, including

- Land Use;
- Urban Design;
- Transportation and Circulation;
- Open Space and Recreation;
- Pedestrian Connections and Streetscape Design;
- Parking Management;

Insert Figure 3 Here

- Public Services and Infrastructure; and
- Phasing and Implementation.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND SETTING

The area immediately surrounding the Planning Area is characterized by a very diverse setting of light industrial, residential, institutional, commercial, and transportation-related uses. The northeast edge of the area is adjacent to light industrial development and the San José Norman Y. Mineta International Airport. As such, the Planning Area is included in the area addressed by the Airport's Compatible Land Use Plan. To the south, small-scale light industrial uses, mixed with well-established single-family neighborhoods and newer medium-to-high density residential development, abut the Planning Area. To the north and west, Santa Clara University, Downtown Santa Clara, and the Old Quad residential neighborhood lie along the edge of the Planning Area.

OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES WHOSE APPROVAL IS REQUIRED

Development under the Plan may require discretionary approvals of State, federal, and other responsible trustee agencies that may rely on the EIR for information relative to their area of expertise and jurisdiction. Such agencies may include, but are not limited to:

- The California Department of Fish and Game,
- The California Department of Transportation,
- The Regional Water Quality Control Board,
- The State Historic Preservation Office,
- The Regional Air Quality Control District,
- The Native American Heritage Commission, and
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
- The Joint Powers Board (JPB)
- The Federal Aviation Administration

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO BE CONSIDERED

The EIR will address the following environmental issues:

- Land Use;
- Aesthetics;
- Transportation and Circulation;
- Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity;
- Biological Resources;

- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Agricultural and Mineral Resources;
- Utilities and Service Systems;
- Safety and Hazardous Materials;
- Public Services;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Historic and Cultural Resources;

The EIR will be a Program EIR. In accordance with Section 16060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was not prepared for the project because an EIR is being prepared.

In addition to the potential environmental effects listed above, the EIR will evaluate potential cumulative effects of the proposed Santa Clara Station Area Plan as well as alternatives to the proposed Station Area Plan. The No Project alternative will evaluate the impacts resulting from continued implementation of existing plans, policies and regulations that govern the proposed project area. As appropriate, other alternatives that would avoid or lessen environmental effects related to the proposed Santa Clara Station Area Plan will be discussed. These will be identified as the evaluation of environmental impacts is prepared for the EIR once the preferred plan has been determined.

Development and subsequent projects under the Station Area Plan will be subject to subsequent environmental review; these proposals may rely on the Station Area Plan EIR to the extent applicable to their circumstances.