Attachment D: Response to Public Comments

Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement Project – Draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration

Response to Public Comments

The following pages include responses to general comments received on the project during the December 10, 2020 virtual community meeting, and specific comment letters received during the November 20, 2020 through December 21, 2020 public review period for the Draft IS/ MND. General comments will appear first, followed by comment letters.

Responses to Public Comments Received on the Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement Project Draft IS/MND at the December 10 Project Information Meeting

Comment #	Comment	Response
General Topic: Haul Routes for Excavated Material		
G-1	Commenters asked if hauling excavated soil off-site by rail rather than by truck had been considered.	Due to the need to maintain rail service during construction, transporting excavated dirt/ construction spoil by rail is not feasible for the Project. The movement of soil by rail could result in unacceptable operational conflicts with freight and passenger service.
G-2	Commenters asked about haul routes to be used by trucks to access the construction site and the location of off-site soil disposal.	Truck routes were explained in the Transportation section of the Draft IS/MND. A new figure (Figure 13) has been added to the Final IS that illustrates the construction traffic routes for the Project. Excavated clean soil will be reused on-site to the extent practicable. The remaining material will be handled, transported, treated and disposed of at an appropriate facility and accordance with all applicable rules and regulations.
General Topic: Construction Duration		

Comment #	Comment	Response
G-3	Commenters noted that Caltrain's Los Gatos Creek Bridge Replacement Project was completed within one in-channel work window and the asked if Caltrain has evaluated constructing the Guadalupe River Bridge Project within one in-channel work window instead of two in-channel work windows as currently proposed.	During project planning Caltrain conducted a detailed constructability analysis comparing the construction of the project in one in-channel work window (June 15 to October 15) compared to two in-channel work windows. The two in-channel work window option was selected as the preferred option based on consideration of the overall schedule risk, construction costs and environmental considerations. The Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement involves several factors that make it more complex than the Los Gatos Creek Bridge Replacement, including the greater length of the MT-1 bridge span (265 feet with a 110 foot center span), the height of the bridges above the river channel, and the amount of excavation required within the channel. The Los Gatos Creek Bridge Replacement required multiple in-channel work window time extensions from the regulatory agencies. A major advantage of the proposed two-year construction time frame is the better cushion to be able to accommodate typical construction delay issues and still complete the in-channel work within the June 15 to October 15 window and avoid encroaching into the fall steelhead migration period.
General Comment: Project Alternatives		

Comment #	Comment	Response
G-4	A commenter noted that the Los Gatos Creek Bridge Replacement included a third track and asked if a similar alternative (two track bridge for MT-1) and been considered.	The tail track constructed as part of the Los Gatos Creek Bridge Replacement was justified to help address operational conflicts and delays in the Diridon Station area. Constructing additional track capacity as part of Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement is not warranted from an operational perspective based on the current needs of Caltrain and other existing operators on MT-1 and MT-2. Therefore, the purpose and need statement for the Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement does not include increasing track capacity. The focus of the project is on replacing the existing deficient MT-1 structure and addressing the geomorphic instability of the channel.
General Comment: Increase Public Outreach Efforts and Extend Public Comment Period		
G-5	A commenter stated they were on many Caltrain email lists, but did not receive notification of this meeting.	On November 20, 2020, the Notice of Availability and Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (NOA/NOI) for the Project was advertised in local English- and Spanish-speaking newspapers (The Mercury News and El Observador, respectfully). The NOA/NOI was also posted on the Caltrain project website, along with the draft IS/MND (see https://bit.ly/GuadalupeRiverBridge). Residents and businesses within one-quarter mile of the project area also received post cards to notify them of the Project and the December 10 virtual community/ public information meeting. Caltrain issued a press release regarding the public information meeting on December 8th and posted information about the meeting to Caltrain social media channels.

Comment #	Comment	Response
G-6	Commenters requested the public comment period be extended.	Appropriate public notice was issued regarding the availability of the Draft IS/MND. The 30-day public review and comment period meets CEQA requirements and has not been extended in consideration of the safety need for the project environmental clearance and design to proceed.
G-7	A commenter asked about the archeological sensitivity in the channel widening area in consideration of archaeological resources found in other nearby at Tamien Station.	A comprehensive archaeological coring study was conducted as documented in Appendix F of the Draft IS/MND. No archeological resources or features requiring further evaluation were detected. The coring locations are representative of the general area surrounding the bridges, including the channel widening. In addition, it should be noted that Valley Water did not uncover archeological resources in their construction of the Reach 6 bypass channel immediately downstream of the Project.
G-8	A commenter stated MT-1 is a UPRR track and asked why is Caltrain replacing this bridge?	UPRR will contribute towards the cost of the MT-1 bridge replacement consistent with funding agreement negotiations between JPB and UPRR.
G-9	Commenters noted there is a large homeless population in that area that will need to be relocated. How will this happen and what organizations are being looked at to help this happen?	Regarding the homeless population in the project area, Caltrain will work with City of San Jose to notify the affected population and connect them to existing support services as the Project's construction phase approaches.

Responses to Comment Letter A from Mark Long, District Branch Chief, California Department of Transportation

Comment #	Comment	Response
A-1	Construction-Related Impacts The contractor needs to be aware of the 15 feet 6 inches (15'-6'') vertical clearance under the railroad bridge and Willow Street UC (37-0422L/R) on Willow Street to avoid a high-load hit on the structures when bringing in the construction equipment to the construction staging sites.	The vertical clearance under the railroad bridge and Willow Street undercrossing will be Included in the maintenance and protection of traffic plans during final design.
A-2	Construction-Related Impacts Security lighting for the contractor construction/storage yard needs to be placed such that it does not distract or blind freeway traffic at night.	The security lighting requirement will be incorporated into final plans and specifications.
A-3	Construction-Related Impacts Placement of Rock Slope Protection (RSP) along the Abutment 1 for structures M1 and M2 should be imbedded into the existing river bank/abutment slope so the RSP will not reduce the cross-sectional flow of the Guadalupe River along the areas of RSP placement.	The Project is increasing the cross-sectional flow of the Guadalupe River by widening the channel, embedding RSP is not required to avoid constricting the flow area.
A-4	Construction-Related Impacts Mud/debris removal rumble strips to be placed at all access points to McLellan Avenue, Virginia Street and Willow Street to avoid tracking mud/rocks/debris from the construction site onto the public roads. Install erosion control devices along the perimeter bordering Caltrans property as well as seed all disturbed slopes to mitigate erosion.	The requirements related to mud/debris removal rumble strip placement, erosion control devices, and disturbed slope seeding will be incorporated into final plans and specifications.

Comment #	Comment	Response
A-5	Construction-Related Impacts Rebuild all fencing within the State Right-of-Way (ROW) affected during construction operations.	Commented noted. The requirement to rebuild all fencing affected by construction operations, within State ROW, will be incorporated into final plans and specifications.
A-6	Construction-Related Impacts Project work that requires movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on state roadways requires a transportation permit that is issued by Caltrans.	The applicable oversize load permits will be obtained by the contractor prior to construction.
A-7	Construction-Related Impacts Prior to construction, coordination may be required with Caltrans to develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to reduce construction traffic impacts to the State Transportation Network (STN).	Caltrain will continue to work with Caltrans on satisfying all applicable requirements to minimize impacts to the state transportation network during final design and permitting.
A-8	Lead Agency As the Lead Agency, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the STN. The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.	Comment noted.

Comment #	Comment	Response
A-9	Encroachment Permit Please be advised that any permanent work or temporary traffic control that encroaches onto the ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As part of the encroachment permit submittal process, you may be asked by the Office of Encroachment Permits to submit a completed encroachment permit application package, digital set of plans clearly delineating the State ROW, digital copy of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp expiration date) traffic control plans, this comment letter, your response to the comment letter, and where applicable, the following items: new or amended Maintenance Agreement (MA), approved Design Standard Decision Document (DSDD), approved encroachment exception request, and/or airspace lease agreement.	A Caltrans encroachment permit will be necessary during construction of the Project. A completed Caltrans encroachment permit application package will be submitted prior to the start of any Project construction activity. No Caltrans facilities will be impacted by the Project.

Responses to Comment Lett from Lawrence Ames

Comment #	Comment	Response
B-1	Plans for the Diridon Station include raising the train tracks by the station. I understand that that is far enough away that the tracks will have returned to original grade by this point, but I'd like that to be confirmed for the record.	The preferred concept for the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan does not propose any track elevation changes at the location of the Guadalupe River Bridge Replacement project.
B-2	Caltrain is electrifying service in this stretch: will any modifications be required to accommodate the supports for the overhead power lines?	As explained in the project description section of the Draft IS/MND, an existing overhead catenary system pole near the southern abutment of MT-2 will be relocated as part of the Project.
B-3	High Speed Rail (HSR) is planning on using this alignment for their planned service: will the bridges and tracks be suitable for this anticipated use? Are the tracks' curves and slopes appropriate?	Caltrain is in regular coordination with the California High Speed Rail Authority and the design of the Project will not preclude or conflict with potential future high-speed rail service or additional bridges. The Project will replace MT-1 (and extend MT-2) on the same alignment.

Comment #	Comment	Response
B-4	From all the discussions around Caltrain electrification and the resulting anticipated increased service in this area, plus HSR coming to Diridon and the reconfiguring of Diridon Station: all these plans call for at least three tracks in this reach: one for freight, one for northbound passengers, and a third track for Southbound passengers. Your plans call for dewatering the river one season to replace the older bridge (MT-1), and then dewatering the river a second season to extend the other bridge (MT-2), leaving it to you or some other agency to have to dewater the river a third season to construct the needed third bridge (#3). So my question: is there a way to minimize these impacts to the Guadalupe River?	See response to comment G-3 for the need to de-water the river twice. The Project has independent utility from HSR and needs to be constructed as soon as possible for public safety purposes. As such, it cannot be combined with the HSR project (for which a definite construction timeline has not been established).
B-5	One alternative to the Project: why not replace MT-1 with a double track bridge? I appreciate that the plan here is to extend MT-2 rather than replace it, and thus it is not practical to add a second track to that bridge, but MT-1 is a completely new bridge which readily could be made wider. Double the tracks on MT-1 now when there's the opportunity, and then the river will not need to be dewatered for a third season in order to construct the needed third bridge, and thus environmental damage can be reduced.	See response to comment G-4. There is no operational justification to construct additional track capacity as part of this independent safety project. Note that the MT-1 track is not being electrified, only MT-2. The current HSR preferred option involves a new bridge (MT-3) upstream of MT-2, not adding track to MT-1. The Project cannot be delayed until the HSR project (which will have a substantially longer review, design and permitting lead time) is ready to be built.

Comment #	Comment	Response
B-6	Another possibility: build the third bridge at the same time you are working on one or the other of the other two bridges. The third bridge could even be built over two seasons if that made it easier: construct the foundation for #3 while replacing MT-1, and then complete #3 while extending MT-2. I appreciate that there might be issues related to the ownership and operation of a double-wide bridge, with one track on a double-wide MT-1 run by Union Pacific while the other track is run by Caltrain.	See response to comment G-4, the purpose of this project is to address the structurally deficient MT-1 and geomorphic instability issues, not to increase track capacity or advance infrastructure required solely for the HSR project. The HSR project is a separate and independent undertaking that will have it owns environmental clearance and permits.
B-7	And is it even necessary to dewater the river for two seasons? Could the in-channel grading for MT-2 be done while the river is dewatered for the construction of MT-1, without disrupting train service on MT-2….Then, during the second season when MT-2 is being extended, all of the remaining grading…would be outside of the river channel and thus wouldn't require a second river dewatering.	See response to comment G-3, one in-channel work window was considered, but found infeasible. There is substantial work for the extension of the southern end of MT-2 that is considered "in-channel" work and needs to comply with the June 15 to October 15 work window.
B-8	The Guadalupe River Trail is one of the region's most important trails, running from Alviso, through downtown San José, and out to Almaden Valley. … It was pointed out to me that the City's current plans do not call for the trail to cross beneath these bridges… However, now you are going to replace and modify those bridges, and that opens up the possibility of extending the Guadalupe River Trail … when Valley Water undertakes their channel-widening project in this reach. Note: I'm not asking Caltrain to construct this trail; all I'm asking is that you not needlessly impede it.	The City of San Jose has confirmed that the Project does not conflict with the City's plans to extend the Guadalupe River Trail through the project area. See *Attachment E* to the *Final MND*, C*oordination with City of San Jose regarding Guadalupe River Trail*.

Comment #	Comment	Response
B-9	Utilizing an analytical technique from my aerospace past, it appears to me that it would be quite feasible to grade a "bench" between Bents 4 and 5 on MT-1 that is outside even the channel of a 100-year flow and still have in excess of 9' vertical clearance. (Analysis method: the blue box in the diagram matches the feature that is dimensioned as 45'3"; scale it by 20% to get a 9' box, and copy that box onto the 100-Yr WSE ("water surface elevation") mark to check vertical clearance. Of course, a more thorough analysis is needed to verify and refine these PowerPoint studies.). For the extension of MT-2, it looks like it would be possible to have nearly 12' of vertical clearance outside the 100-year flood zone, passing between Pier 5 and Abutment 6. It would appear to require a trivial amount of grading to go from the "approx. FG" ("future grade", in the orange-brown line) to what I'm proposing (the purple line by the red box). If this possible future trail alignment is not precluded by the Caltrain construction, then trail advocates in the community can discuss further details with Valley Water as they design their next projects in this reach.	The City has not proposed to extend the Guadalupe River Trail under the bridges, therefore modifying the Caltrain project design to accommodate a hypothetical alternative trail design is not reasonable.
B-10	I hope you improve your public outreach. There are many in the community interested in trains, creeks, and/or trails whom I imagine wish had known about this opportunity to give public comment.	Appropriate public notice and outreach efforts were undertaken in compliance with CEQA, please refer to response to comment G-5. The Project has no impact on trails.