



# *Californians For High Speed Rail*

A Statewide Coalition of High Speed Rail Supporters | [www.ca4hsr.org](http://www.ca4hsr.org) | 510.931.0384

December 4, 2009

Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director  
California High Speed Rail Authority  
Attn: Altamont Corridor Rail Project  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## **RE: Altamont Corridor Scoping Comments**

Californians For High Speed Rail is a grassroots, statewide coalition of high speed rail supporters advocating for the high speed rail project approved by California voters in November 2008. Founded in 2005 and re-launched in 2009, we exist to educate, inform, and organize Californians about ways they can help make high speed rail a reality in this state. Additionally, Californians For High Speed Rail also encourages sustainable development of the high speed rail (HSR) system, promoting the building of HSR stations in city centers and surrounding transit-oriented development, as well as developing and improving feeder transit systems.

We are submitting this letter to provide our scoping comments regarding the Altamont Rail Corridor section of the environmental review process being undertaken by the California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority) in cooperation with the Altamont Corridor Partnership Working Group (Partnership).

### **Planning and Project Scope**

The scope of the Study Area currently being considered for the Altamont Corridor Rail Project (ACRP) is inadequate in that it is missing two key segments and endpoints of the Altamont corridor as defined by Proposition 1A. The Altamont corridor is identified as a "high speed train corridor" in Article 2 Section (B)(3). Furthermore, Article 2 (B)(3)(G) defines the corridor as "Merced to Stockton to Oakland and San Francisco via the Altamont Corridor." Given that the Authority is a partner of the ACRP and that Proposition 1A is funding the environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) of the ACRP, the scope should include the two endpoints of San Francisco and Oakland.

As planning for the core California High Speed Rail (CHSR) system is underway in the San Francisco - San Jose section, and the ACRP would be able to share tracks with the CHSR system along the Peninsula and San Francisco, the scope of ACRP should examine an alignment that extends across the San Francisco Bay in the vicinity of the Dumbarton rail bridge to a connection to the CHSR system in Redwood City. Furthermore, a Dumbarton connection via a high bridge is consistent with the MTC Regional Rail Plan under all three scenarios, including "A8 Modified" "P5" and "AP1 Modified", all of which include a Niles canyon tunnel alignment, a Livermore BART extension, and the high bridge as

later elements.<sup>1</sup> A Bay Bridge corridor alignment should also be considered for inclusion in the scope of the ACRP to provide access from San Francisco to Oakland. If a Bay Bridge alignment is not considered, the ACRP should examine potential routes to Oakland via a variety of East Bay routes. Routes along the East Bay should build off of the design work contained in the 2005 and 2008 CHSR EIR/EIS documents to produce the project level clearance.

The inclusion of both Oakland and San Francisco would likely lead the necessity of dividing the implementation of the project into phases. Budgetary constraints, permitting issues, and the need for local partner agencies may delay the implementation of some of the phases far more than others. CEQA case law is clear however that all potential phases and impacts must be studied in the initial EIR, after which phases may be constructed sequentially over time. Californians For High Speed Rail would in no way object to the phasing of implementation for the Altamont Corridor Rail Project to San Francisco and Oakland, with a first phase being defined between the Central Valley and San Jose. However, we want to ensure that planning consider how best to provide for future extension by designing the first phases consistent with future extensions.

We understand the current justification for limiting the scope to not include a Study Area that includes San Francisco and Oakland is due to the proposed connections between the ACRP project and future BART stations at Livermore and Warm Springs, or the existing Union City BART station. However, accessing the BART system (with the purpose of completing trips to San Francisco and Oakland) in Livermore, Warm Springs, or Union City are not adequate substitutes for “high speed train” service to either San Francisco or Oakland, of which Proposition 1A is referring to. As an urban transit metro, BART provides an entirely different level of service, speed, and amenities than high speed, intercity rail. Just as a forced Caltrain transfer at San Jose is no reasonable substitute to intercity high speed rail service to San Francisco, a forced transfer at a BART station is not a substitute for regional intercity service to San Francisco or Oakland. Therefore planning for high speed intercity service to both San Francisco and Oakland is essential to fulfill the Partnership’s and Authority’s obligation to study high speed, intercity service from Merced and Stockton to San Francisco and Oakland via the Altamont corridor.

The proposed scope has wisely added San Jose as a third endpoint to the corridor. Californians For High Speed Rail fully supports adding San Jose to the Altamont corridor and joint planning with ACE to transform and extend their services across Northern California.

We also want express our intention that the expansion of scope we are calling for the ACRP project is in no way related to the Pacheco vs. Altamont controversy. Californians For High Speed rail supports moving forward with the current Pacheco alignment for the core CHSR system.

### **Planning Criteria**

Alignments for the ACRP should be pursued which ensure the best possible locations of stations. Therefore, the determination of ideal station locations should be given high priority, with alignments designed to access these sites. Several specific criteria should be considered when deciding the location of ACRP stations. These criteria are summarized below. Please note we have also provided much more detailed suggestions for planning and mitigation criteria in Attachment A to this letter (see page 12).

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<sup>1</sup> " Regional Rail Plan" Metropolitan Transportation Commission p. 19

#### Potential for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

- Give priority to station locations where there are strong commitments to significant amounts TOD within a half-mile radius of the station site.
- Ensure that growth management policies adopted by a given locality have teeth and are designed to efficiently direct growth into the half-mile radius of ACRP station sites.
- Consider eliminating station sites in localities that are not committed to maximizing development around ACRP stations.

#### Ability of Riders to Walk from an ACRP Station to Large Volumes of Urban Development and Major Destinations

- Closely study and analyze “walk sheds” based on a 12-minute walk time from a ACRP station to the surrounding area. With a 12-minute walking radius, determine how many square feet of development there is and what types of land uses exist. Prioritize station location that are within a 12-minute walking distance to land uses that stimulate high speed rail ridership, such as offices, residential, and large cultural and commercial destinations.
- Transportation strategies for access to and from ACRP stations should focus on transportation demand management (TDM) measures that reduce automobile trips generated (ATG). The amount of travel demand that can be satisfied by walking, transit usage, and bicycling will greatly impact the effectiveness of TDM measures used to mitigate the ATG impact of each station.

#### Convenient and Seamless Connections to Existing and Planned Transit Services

- Stations should be located where the most transit services converge, including metro and light rail services, commuter rail service, and bus service.
- A goal of one transfer from the ACRP station to another form of transit should be established to encourage convenient access to a large percentage of prominent destinations in a given city.
- Two or more transfers to prominent destinations should be discouraged.

#### Potential to Add Future Express Service

- Stations should be designed in a way to allow future upgrade to three or four tracks.
- Triple or quadruple track sections between any ACRP stations as necessary.
- Design the ACRP to not preclude future express service as ridership grows over the decades.

## **Station and Alignment Alternatives**

The comments of Californians For High Speed Rail are discussed below for various alternative alignments and station alternatives presented by the Authority at recent scoping meetings for the Altamont Corridor Rail Project EIR/EIS. Additionally, several new alternatives are suggested in certain areas of the San Francisco Bay Area section, especially leading to Oakland and Redwood City.

### **San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties**

Generally, we support downtown station locations and alignments that lead to the downtown station sites for San Joaquin and Stanislaus County.

- **Downtown Stockton Station**

The **Robert J. Cabral Station in downtown Stockton should be the only station location carried forward** for Stockton. The Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) already uses this station and it provides the best access to downtown Stockton for passengers headed to Stockton destinations. Furthermore the Stockton station will serve as a critical transfer station for San Joaquin riders to/from Sacramento to transfer to the Altamont service. It will remain so until such time as the CHSR system is constructed to Sacramento, allowing the Altamont trains to directly serve Sacramento.

- **Downtown Tracy Station and the UPRR Alignments**

The **former Southern Pacific station site in downtown Tracy should be the only station location carried forward** for Tracy. Conversely, **the current Tracy ACE station is not a good candidate to carry forward** due to the surrounding residential development and lack of TOD potential.

The former Southern Pacific alignment alternative through downtown Tracy should be examined, while the former Western Pacific alignment through should not be carried forward.

- **Downtown Modesto Station**

The **former Southern Pacific station in downtown Modesto should be the only station location carried forward for Modesto**. We don't support locating a Modesto station at the current Amtrak station site along the BNSF alignment.

### **Alameda County, Livermore Valley Area**

Generally, we support further study of downtown station locations in the Livermore Valley.

- **Downtown Livermore ACE Station / UPRR and SPRR Corridors**

Californians For High Speed Rail supports the examination of a downtown Livermore ACE station option served by trains along the UP or old SP track alignments. At-grade, elevated, and trenched station options should be considered.

Note: We only support creation of a Greenville or Vasco station if the City of Livermore is willing to support extremely high levels of TOD (i.e. at least 5000 housing units as part of a mixed use development) not currently envisioned. Moving the station outside of downtown Livermore to connect to a future Livermore BART Station is not reason enough to abandon a

downtown Livermore station.

- **Pleasanton - Transit Center Station**

Californians For High Speed Rail supports the examination of a downtown Pleasanton station option along the old SPRR alignment near the old SP station at West Neal Street and Railroad Avenue. Both aerial and trenched options should be examined for the approximately 1.75 mile section that runs through downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Southern Alameda County / Rail Junction**

The inner Bay Area presents many considerations, given the inadequate scope of the initial proposal. The excellent cooperative planning the Authority is undertaking with Caltrain and ACE to positively reinvent and transform their service needs to result in a coherent cross-regional network. It is essential that the Authority create new alignment alternatives that explore routes to bring Altamont Corridor Rail (ACR) trains from the Tri-Valley to the San Francisco - San Jose HSR corridor. This is critical to ensure an increase in Transbay travel capacity, create a connected and coherent Northern California rail network, and fulfill the objectives of the MTC Regional Rail Plan and Proposition 1A. Therefore many of the following comments are about additional alignments to be included in the project scope. We have outlined five additional alternatives for southern Alameda County that will facilitate the creation of up to three branches for the ACRP. The first three examine the ACRP with three branches at full build out, while the last two examine the ACRP with two branches at full build out.

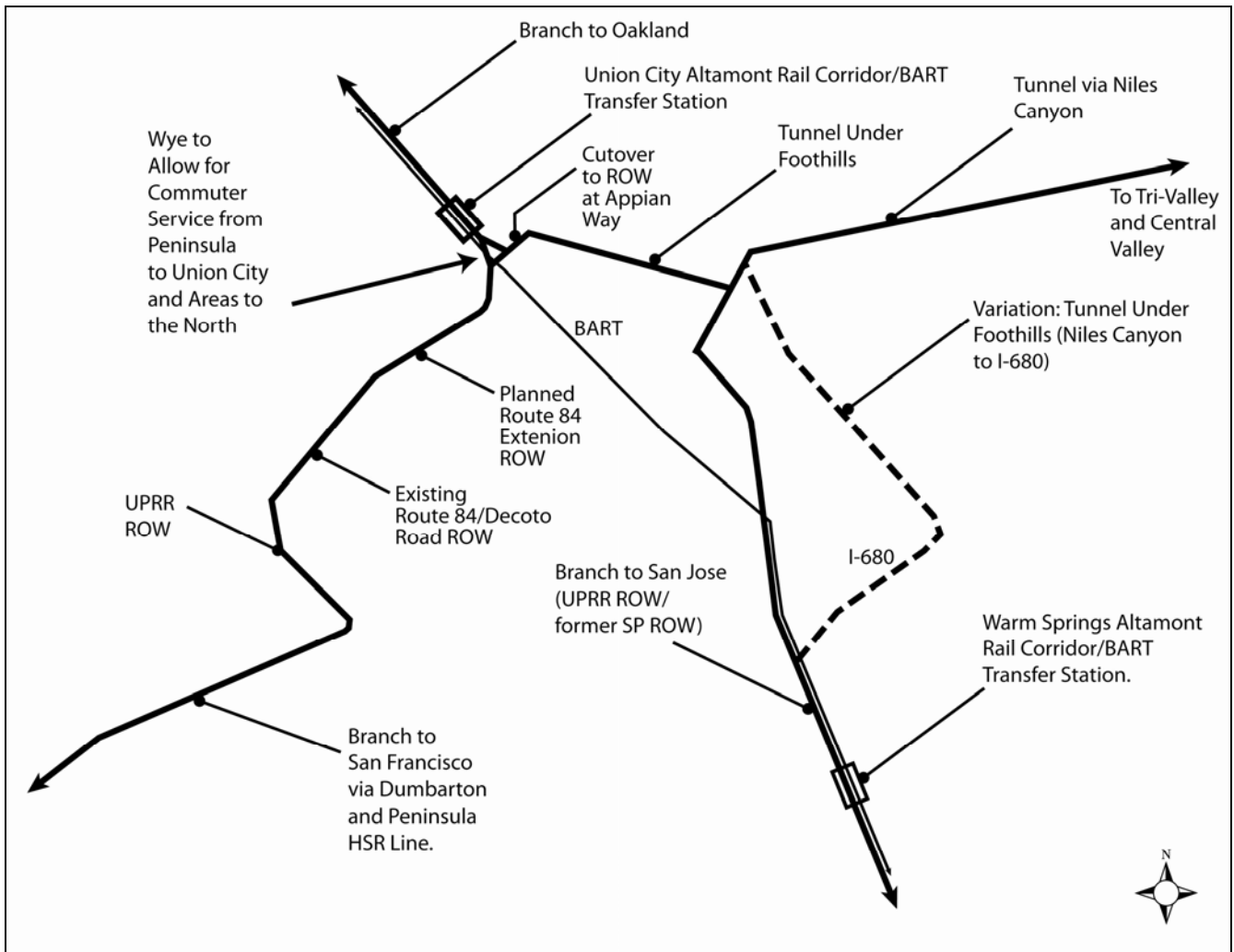
- **Proposed New Alternative #1: Junction of Three Branch System to San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose (via Niles Canyon to Union City, Route 84/Decoto, Dumbarton, and BART Alignment)**

This alignment would follow the Niles Canyon route described in the CHSR 2008 EIR/EIS. After exiting the canyon, trains would eventually split into three separate branches, with one branch headed to San Francisco, the second to Oakland, and a third to San Jose (see Figure 1). The San Francisco branch would exit the Niles Canyon and then turn northwest along the foothills and travel at grade (cut/fill) or through a tunnel. It would then turn west at Appian Way and travel along the Route 84 extension ROW as well as the exiting Route 84/Decoto ROW. Then the San Francisco branch would turn south along the UPRR Alviso line, or Thornton Avenue, to the Caltrain-owned railroad ROW where it would turn west to cross the Dumbarton rail bridge to access the planned HSR ROW along the Peninsula, where it would travel to San Francisco.

In addition to meeting the requirements of Proposition 1A, a San Francisco branch would likely allow for much faster service between San Francisco and Sacramento in the long term. In the near-term, commuters from the Central Valley to San Francisco will have much faster service than requiring riders to transfer to the BART system. Ride times from planned BART stations in Livermore or Warm Springs are likely to be approximately one hour or so, whereas the ARC service would likely provide access in just over a half an hour. Additionally, it is likely that transferring to BART could range anywhere from 5-20 minutes each way, greatly discouraging ridership.

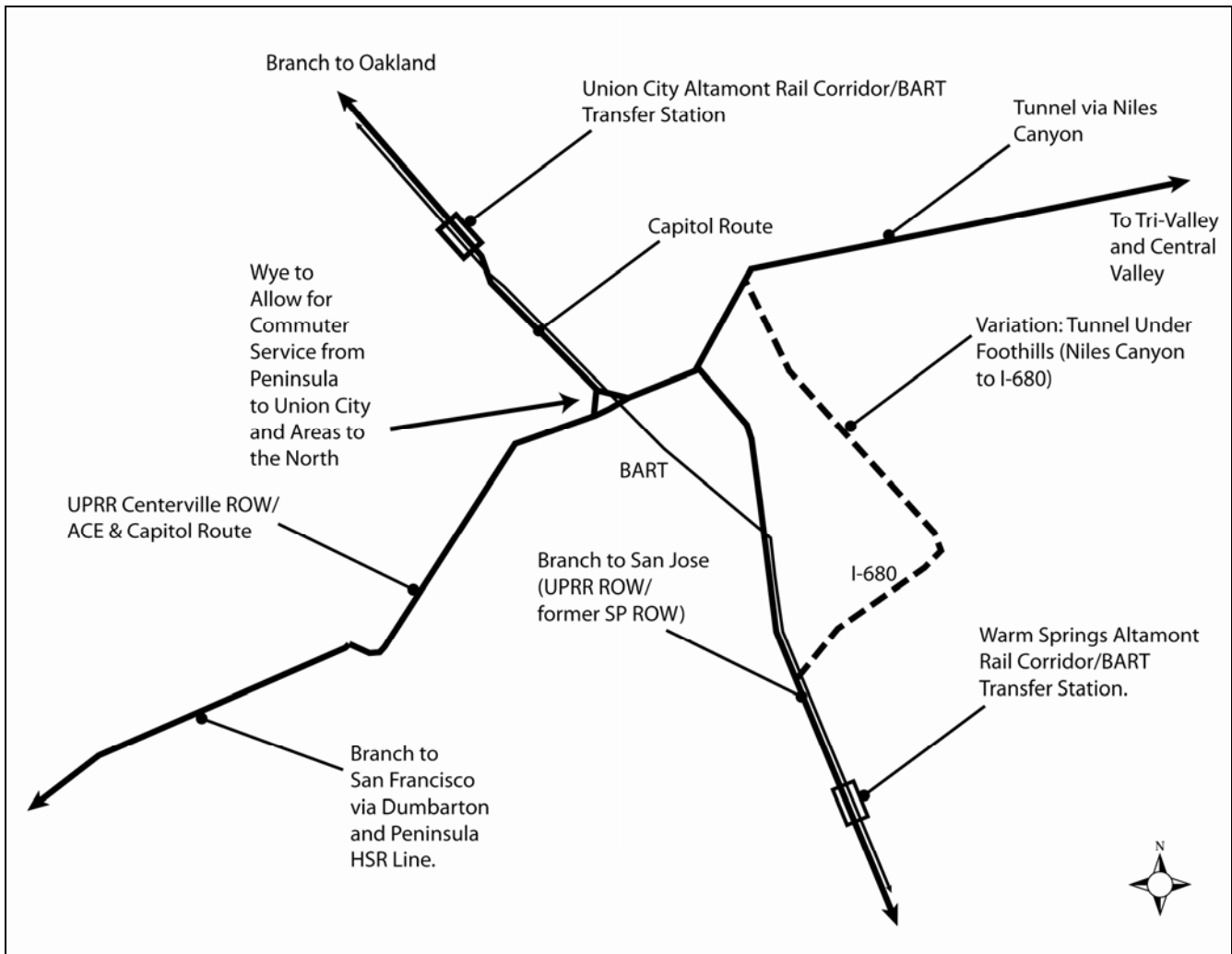
The Oakland branch would follow the same route as the San Francisco branch until reaching the intersection of the proposed Route 84 extension and the URPP ROW (and Capital Corridor route) just east of the BART line. At this point, a wye at the intersection of the Route 84 rail ROW (discussed above) and the Oakland subdivision would allow trains to turn north into the Union City intermodal station and then continue north to Oakland. It would follow the Niles subdivision line to the Coliseum Amtrak/BART station, and then proceed to downtown Oakland, as described in the CHSR 2005 and 2008 EIR/EIS documents. Other alignments to Oakland along the East Bay should be considered if necessary. Again, service to the East Bay and Oakland would be much faster with ARC service than require riders to transfer to BART.

The San Jose branch would head south and utilize the former Southern Pacific ROW south from Niles Canyon with a stop at Warm Springs before heading south to Santa Clara County. A variation on this would have trains branch to the south farther east and tunnel under the foothills until reaching I-680, where it would then follow I-680 and then cut over to the ex-SP ROW. (see dashed line in Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Proposed New Alternative #1 - Junction of Three Branch System to San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose (via Niles Canyon, Route 84, Dumbarton, and UPRR/Former SP ROW)**

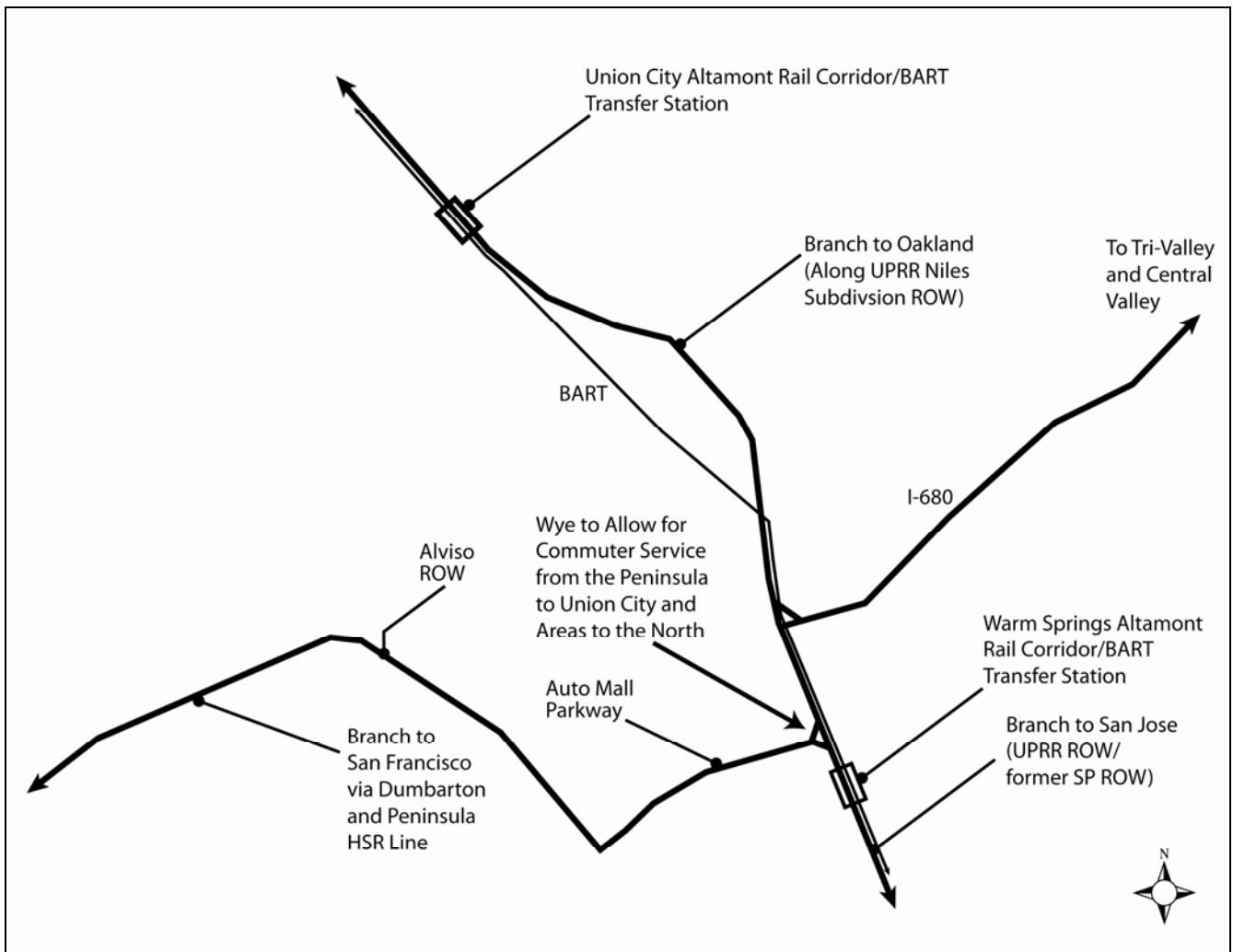
- Proposed New Alternative #2 - Niles Canyon to Newark via Centerville (ACE Alignment)**  
 This proposed alternative is very similar to the proposed new alternative #1 in that it would provide the same three branched service to San Francisco, Oakland (via the East Bay) and San Jose. The San Francisco branch would use an aerial or trench along the UPRR Centerville ROW (currently used by ACE/Capitol rail services) to Newark and the Dumbarton rail bridge. The Oakland branch would turn northward from the Centerville ROW along the Capitol Corridor route to Union City, and the north to Oakland. The San Jose branch would see no change from alternative #1. This alternative would also allow for ARCP to service the existing ACE/Capitol station in Centerville, whereas proposed alternative #1 would bypass this station.



**Figure 2. Proposed New Alternative #2 - Junction of Three Branch System to San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose (via Niles Canyon, UPRR Centerville ROW, Dumbarton, and UPRR/Former SP ROW)**

- Proposed New Alternative #3 - 680 to Warm Springs BART and Newark via Auto Mall Parkway/utility corridor**

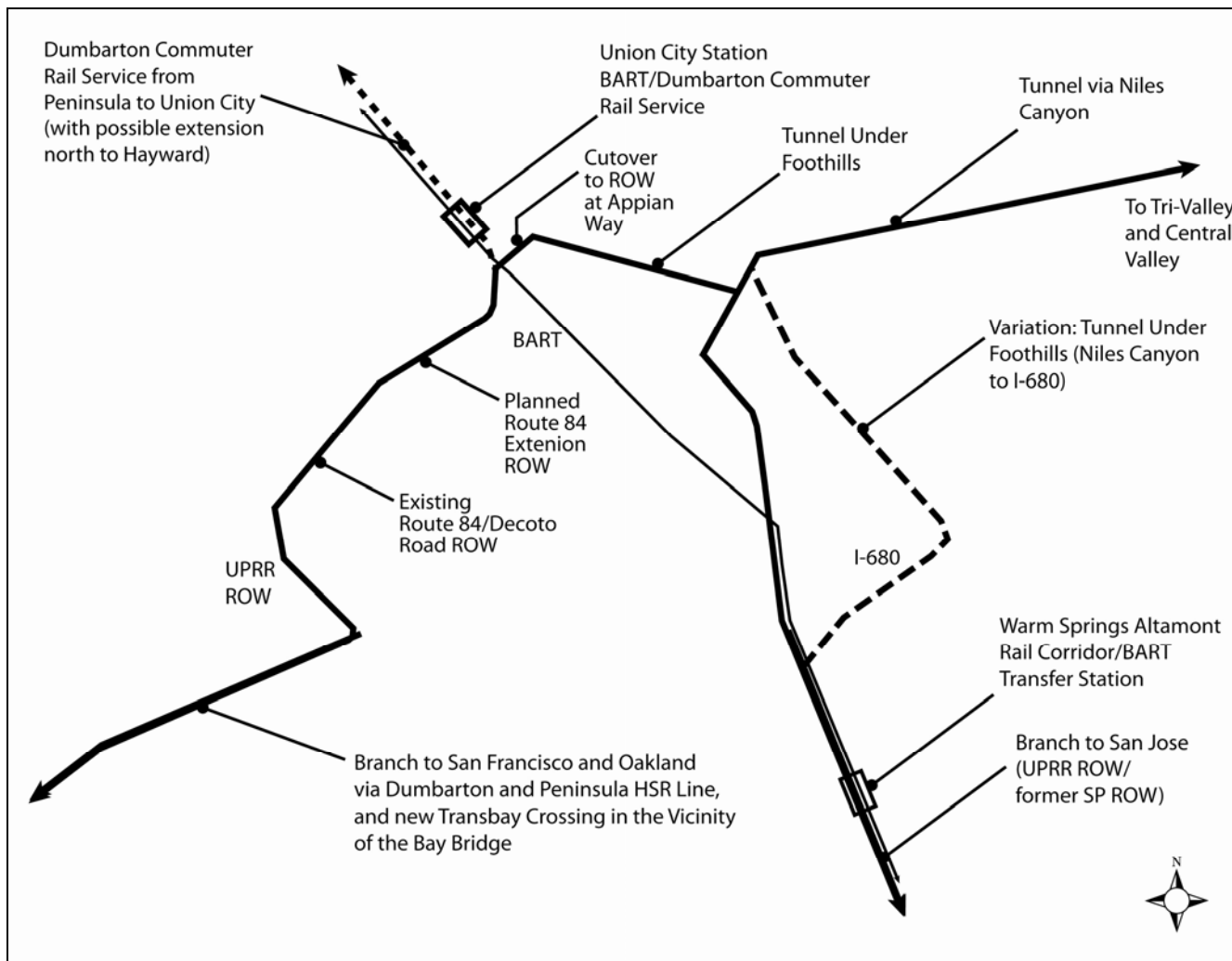
The proposed new alternative #3 would approach the Fremont area from Livermore Valley via an I-680 alignment rather than Niles Canyon (as is the case in proposed new alternatives #1 and #2). The ARC service would then split into an Oakland branch and a San Jose branch around Blacow Road. The Oakland branch would follow the UPRR Niles Subdivision as defined in the 2008 EIR/EIS north through Union City, and then on to Oakland. The San Jose branch would follow the former Southern Pacific ROW southward, with the San Francisco branch splitting off west along Auto Mall Parkway, or the utility corridor approximately 1,000 feet north of the parkway. Then the San Francisco branch would turn north along the Alviso line until the Newark Junction where it turns west to continue to Dumbarton Bridge.



**Figure 3. Proposed New Alternative #3 - Junction of Three Branch System to San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose (via I-680, Auto Mall Parkway, Alviso Line, Dumbarton, and UPRR/Formal SP ROW)**

- **New Alternative #4 - Niles Canyon to Union City and Newark via Route 84/Decoto**

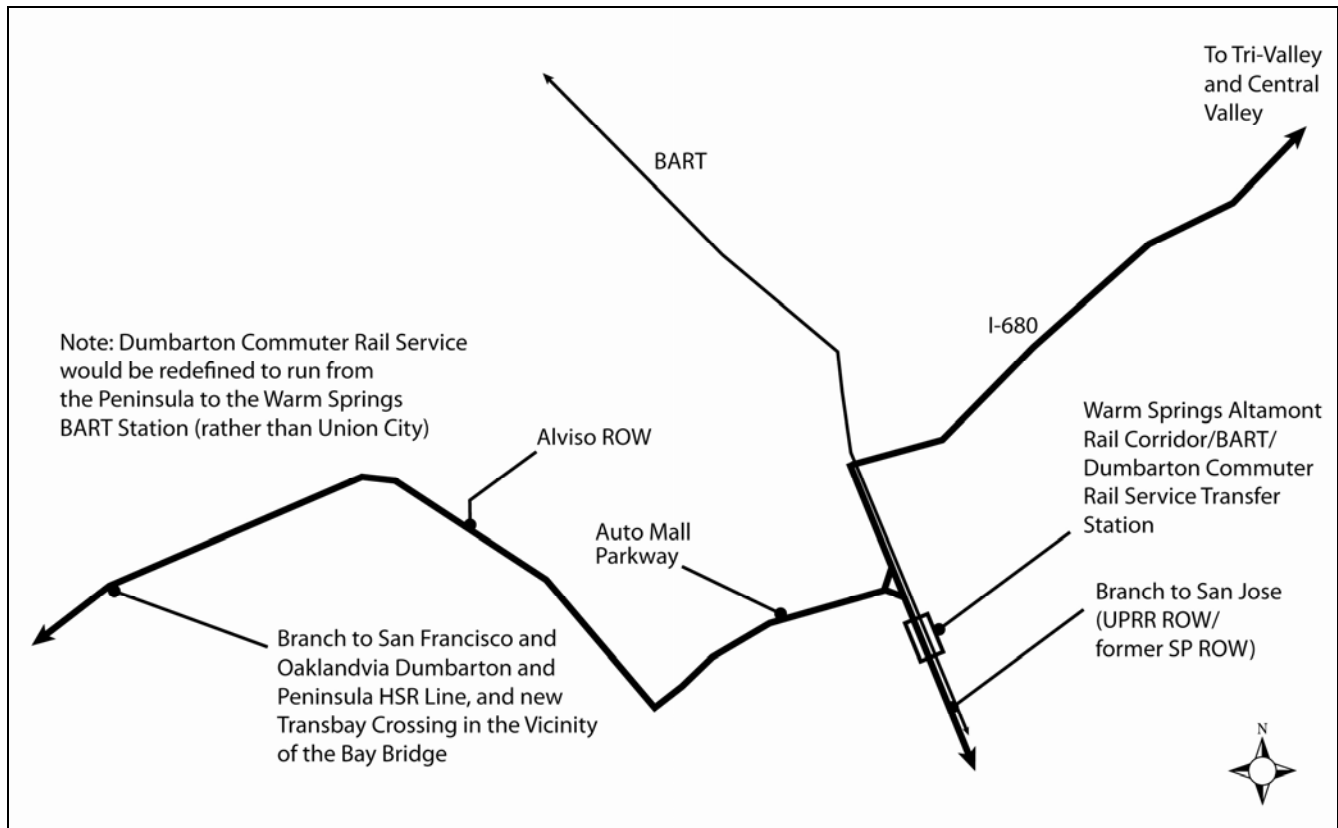
This alignment is similar to proposed new alternative #1 except Oakland is reached via a new Transbay Tube in the vicinity of the Bay Bridge rather than a line up the East Bay. The wye for the Union City intermodal station would be retained for Dumbarton commuter rail service only, with a possible extension to Hayward along the Oakland subdivision.



**Figure 4. Proposed Alternative #4 - Junction of Two Branch System to San Francisco and San Jose (via Niles Canyon, Route 84, Dumbarton, and UPRR/Formal SP ROW)**

- **New Alternative #5 - to Warm Springs BART and to Newark via Auto Mall Parkway/utility corridor**

This alignment is similar to proposed new alternative #3 except Oakland is reached via a new Transbay Tube in the vicinity of the Bay Bridge rather than a line up the East Bay. The northern branch from alternative #3 is completely eliminated.



**Figure 5. Proposed Alternative #5 - Junction of Two Branch System to San Francisco and San Jose (via I-680, Auto Mall Parkway, Alviso, Dumbarton, and UPRR/Formal SP ROW)**

### Santa Clara County

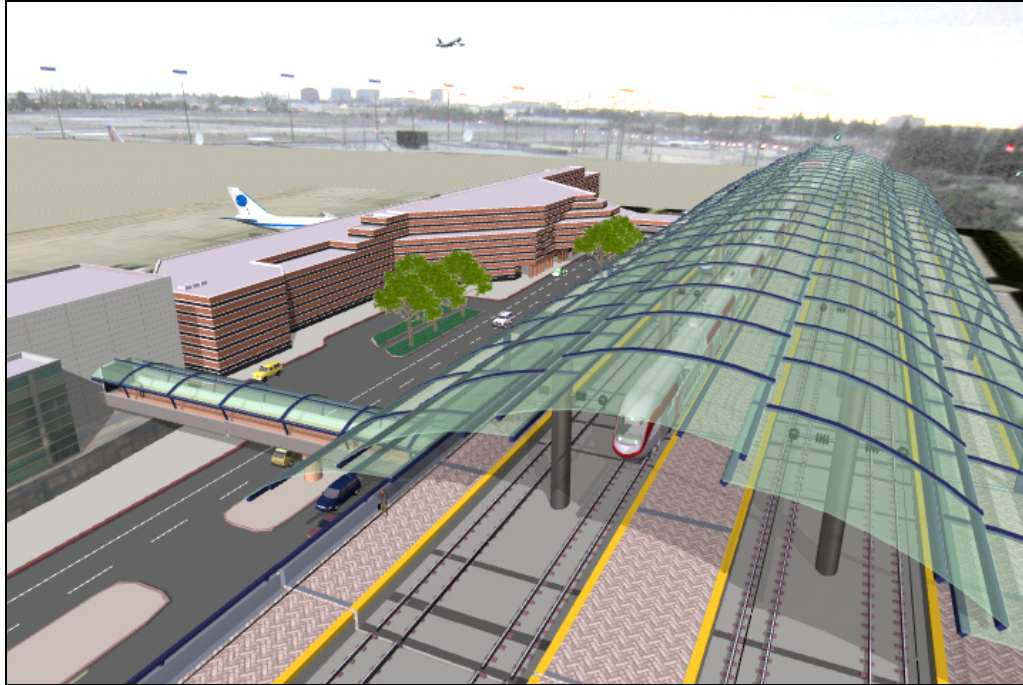
The Alignment choices in Santa Clara County are simpler than in Alameda County, and our comments generally support the scope as proposed by the Authority and the Partnership. However, we would like an examination of providing direct access to the Mineta International Airport.

- **UPRR and/or I-880 Milpitas, Milpitas and North 1<sup>st</sup> Street Stations**

Californians For High Speed Rail recommends continued study of both the UPRR and I-880 alignments for the ARCP within Santa Clara County. The UPRR route may be more viable in Fremont due to the recent closure of the Fremont NUMMI plant, and subsequent reduction in rail traffic. A station should be provided that connects the ARCP to the Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) light rail system in Milpitas for either alignment. Additionally, we support further study of the Trimble corridor. We strongly encourage that a station be located at North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Trimble to connect to VTA's light rail system.

- **Mineta International Airport Station**

We would also like to **encourage the Authority and the Partnership to study the possibility of providing direct service to a station located immediately east of the terminals at the Mineta International Airport**, as envisioned by the Caltrain Metro East vision promoted by several organizations. This would be much more convenient than forcing riders to transfer to a people mover from a station in Santa Clara. This link would allow for the flexibility of some core HSR trains to head directly to the airport from Diridon station as well, or at least the ARC service could serve as a feeder to/from the airport for core HSR system riders (as current plans have no way for HSR riders to access the airport from/to Diridon Station unless they transfer to Caltrain and then to the proposed people mover).



**Figure 6. Image of proposed Mineta Airport Station. (Image created by David Vasquez)**

South of a Mineta Airport station, routes for ARCP would need to be studied. One possible route is along Highway 87 until it intersects with tracks that connect to the Diridon Station.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian Stanke  
Executive Director and Co-Founder  
Californians For High Speed Rail

Daniel Krause  
Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors and  
and Co-Founder  
Californians For High Speed Rail

## **Attachment A: Criteria and Mitigation Measures**

The land use impacts, growth inducement potential, and transportation impacts of a HSR stations along the Los Angeles to San Diego alignment can be very environmentally beneficial or negative, depending on the station location, mitigation measures chosen, and land use and transportation policies undertaken by the host localities. The following criteria and mitigation measure should be included in the process of selecting station and alignment alternatives.

The station sites need to maximize walking and transit access to the station in order to maximize ridership and minimize automobile trips generated (ATG). Therefore the amount of existing and planned transit-oriented development (TOD) around the site is of critical importance.

### **Station site selection criteria:**

- Number of residences and hotel rooms existing within a half-mile radius of proposed station site.
- Square footage of commercial/ retail space within a half-mile radius of the proposed station site.
- Amount of transit-oriented development (TOD), residences and commercial square footage, the locality has committed to planning for within a half-mile radius of the proposed station site.
- The existing and planned peak hour capacity of connecting transit network to the proposed station site.
- Number of residences and hotel rooms and square footage of commercial and retail space within a one-seat, 15-minute, transit ride of the proposed station site.

Land use mitigation needs to focus on pulling development into the station area, away from more environmental sensitive areas on the urban fringe.

Land Use and Growth Inducement mitigation strategies:

- Growth management policies the locality has adopted or is committed to adopting that would direct growth into the half-mile radius of the station site.

Transportation mitigation strategies likewise need to focus on the reduction of automobile trips generated (ATG) rather than the subsidization of automobile parking and access. Transportation mitigation strategies include:

- Transportation demand management measures to be adopted by the station operator to mitigate ATG.
- Use of the Natural Resources Agency 2009 Proposed Rulemaking to evaluate transportation impacts in a broader more multi-modal approach, rather than the conventional intersection automobile level-of-service (LOS) analysis.<sup>1</sup> This includes use of ATG rather than LOS as the measure to mitigate.
- Transportation demand management measures adopted or committed to by the locality to mitigation traffic generation.
- Availability of current and planned local transit access to HSR stations to mitigate traffic generation.

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<sup>1</sup>California Natural Resources Agency. "Proposed Guideline Amendments" ("to the "Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act"). <[http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/Text\\_of\\_Proposed\\_Changes.pdf](http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/Text_of_Proposed_Changes.pdf)>