



## Stakeholder Working Group Meeting #5 Summary

### Northbound US-101 – Eastbound I-580 Direct Connector Project

Monday, April 26, 2021, 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

The fifth Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) meeting focused on new and modified alternatives and prior concepts considered and rejected with respect to the US 101-I-580 Direct Connector project and associated improvements to Bellam Blvd. Comments were taken from SWG members. The meeting was open to the public with members of the public in attendance invited to provide comments.

The meeting provided information and discussion on the following topics:

1. Recap of the previous four SWG meetings, team activities, and the project timeline
2. Prior Concepts, Alternatives and SWG discussion
  - Review of prior Concepts considered and rejected
  - The introduction of new and modified alternatives
    - i. Alternative summary table
    - ii. Alternative comparison; travel times, design speeds, preliminary costs, height, active transportation, property/business and environmental impacts, and equity considerations
3. Topics for virtual SWG meeting #6

Comments and requested clarifications provided by the SWG members are summarized below. The PowerPoint presentation for the meeting is available [here](#).

### Welcoming Remarks

Anne Richman, TAM Executive Director, welcomed the group and thanked them for their participation. She presented the origination of the US 101-I-580 Direct Connector project, along with its vision and how this project is highlighted in multiple guiding documents at TAM, such as [TAM Strategic Vision Plan](#), [Sales Tax Expenditure Plan](#) and [Regional Measure 3](#). The project is still in the early planning phase and will be moving to the next phase soon. The next phase includes additional community outreach, initiating the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) review process, and conducting the environmental review. See slide 4.

### SWG Meeting Recaps and Timeline

Connie Fremier, TAM Project Manager, presented the project goals and objectives and provided a summary of the previous SWG discussion topics. The equity discussion and feedback from SWG #4 was highlighted with a reminder there is an opportunity to engage and evaluate equity throughout the project. Connie restated TAM's commitment to address equity. Ricardo Huerta, Senior Advisor, Equity and Community Engagement, has joined the team to assist with neighborhood outreach and capacity building.

Connie also presented the near-term planning roadmap and timeline from April 2021 through 2022 and the overall project schedule. (Slides 9-14).

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### **Alternatives Update**

Chadi Chazbek, Kimley-Horn Project Manager, reviewed the prior concepts, the current seven alternatives and presented the modified alternatives under consideration. The SWG discussed and provided input on each alternative. (slides 15 – 28)

The prior concepts considered in the Larkspur and Sir Francis Drake (SFD) area and the reasons the prior concepts were found to be infeasible were presented. These prior concepts include the following:

- The widening of Sir Francis Drake (SFD) in the eastbound direction only (slide 19).
- Widening SFD in both directions (slide 20).
- An elevated structure over the entire length of SFD along the existing alignment, keeping the local traffic on the surface and the regional traffic on the structure/bridge (slide 21).
- Top of the ridge concept between San Rafael and Larkspur (slide 22).

The current, modified, and new alternatives discussed are the following:

- 1A - Hillside
- 1B - Hillside
- 2 - Simms St
- 3A - Low Speed
- 3B - Low Speed – close 580 off ramp to Bellam
- Modified 3B Low Speed (newly modified and added)
- 4 - Swing Out over 101 – close 580 off ramp to Bellam
- 5 - Marin Square Medium Speed
- 6 - Andersen Mid-Way (newly added)

The team developed Modified 3B and 6 to address community concerns about closing the 580 Bellam offramp and impacts to east San Rafael businesses.

### **Clarifying Questions – on all alternatives**

- What is the elevation of Alternative 6?
  - *60 ft over Andersen Dr. and 90 ft over Jacoby.*
- What are the buildings that are outlined in the rendering of Alternative 6?
  - *Marin Sanitary, Rafael Lumber, Marin Airpointer are the buildings shown.*
- Do the new alternatives remove all the traffic movement off the Bellam and Francisco intersection?
  - *Alternative 6 takes all the freeway-to-freeway traffic off Bellam.*
  - *Modified 3B – the regional freeway traffic will be on the new connector not through the intersection. The local traffic using Bellam will still use the signal as it does today.*
  - *All the alternatives take the freeway-to-freeway traffic off Bellam and reduce the regional traffic using city streets to get to the freeway.*
- Regarding Modified 3B, will local traffic see improved travel times?
  - *There is an additional lane added from Southbound 101 to Bellam on a new exit ramp. These exit lanes would be separate from the Northbound 101 Bellam offramp traffic, which results in a two-phase signal at Bellam that would increase the traffic signal time to turn left or right. A detailed traffic analysis will be performed to determine the number of turn lanes needed during the environmental phase.*
- Regarding Alternative 6, will the existing offramp from Bellam and Southbound 101 remain as is?

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- *There will be no change to the intersection, except the regional traffic will shift to the Alternative 6 connector. There is another near-term project that would add lanes to this intersection, however, that is a separate project.*
- Has there been research conducted around safety of the 3B alternative? A five-way intersection could present safety issues especially for pedestrians.
  - *Safety will be considered during the design phase of the project, including walking distance and signal phasing.*
- What are the impacts to Golden Gate Transit bus yard? What are the advantages?
  - *Alternative 6 potentially impacts bus parking spots.*
  - *Bus washing and fueling facilities will have to be relocated as Caltrans does not allow permanent structures under their bridges.*
  - *Entrance and exits from the GG transit yard will remain the same.*
  - *There would need to be administrative agreements between Caltrans and Golden Gate Transit to address ownership and access rights. Typically, Caltrans owns the right of way under the connector bridge. Caltrans could lease the space under the bridge for bus parking.*
- Since alternative 6 does not impact Bellam, are improved bike and pedestrian lanes on Bellam still part of this project?
  - *The Bellam bike and pedestrian improvements are included in all alternatives.*
- What was the impetus for alternative 6? How does it increase access to East San Rafael neighborhood and how can it enhance development of additional parcels?
  - *The team explored alternatives with fewer impacts to privately owned parcels, further from the Canal neighborhood, and without another structure over the Bellam corridor.*
  - *Regional traffic is removed from the local streets which will provide better access for local traffic to East San Rafael. Design speed is 45 miles per hour (Modified 3B is still at 35 miles per hour because the curve radius was not changed).*
- Why was 3B modified? Where does the benefit lie between 3A and 3B, does it have to do with design speed? The five-way intersection is concerning because of the longer signal phasing and traffic congestion.
  - *A closely spaced five-way intersection will be evaluated during the design phase to ensure an interconnected signal operation that creates free-flowing conditions on Bellam.*
  - *3A does not close the Southbound 101 to 580 offramp to Bellam. Original 3B would close that offramp. Modified 3B and original 3A maintain access from Southbound 101 to Bellam. All the 3A, 3B, and Modified 3B maintain 35 mile per hour speed limits for the freeway to freeway connector.*
- Does Alternative 6 impact properties?
  - *It impacts two privately owned parcels, a storage facility, and the Golden Gate Transit yard.*
- Can the team reevaluate the 101-northbound/Greenbrae interchange proposal (from 7 years ago)? It decreased commute time and already had a price estimate, can you provide the background?
  - *This project is intended to find a solution for the missing freeway to freeway connection from NB US 101 to EB I-580. The Greenbrae project does not fit the purpose and need statement for this project and therefore cannot be evaluated under the current efforts.*

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*However, this project does not preclude future efforts to re-evaluate the Greenbrae project.*

- The project should consider the impacts of moving Larkspur traffic to San Rafael, such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and visual impacts. Balance the benefit and costs with the impacts to the community, including economic development. It is hard to see the benefit to the communities.
  - *The air quality visual, and economic analysis was reviewed at a high level at a previous SWG meeting. More detailed analysis will happen during the environmental phase.*
- Alternatives 6 and Modified 3B – have you talked to City of San Rafael traffic engineers on the impacts to the Bellam exit ramp and traffic conditions? Do you have a visual of 3B with Bellam from street level?
  - *Full analysis will be conducted on any alternatives that move forward. The purpose of Modified 3B was to re-establish the Bellam access that was eliminated in the original 3B. Additional visual renderings would be provided during the environmental phase for the alternatives that will be selected to move forward.*
- How many alternatives are going into the next phase?
  - *There is no specific number of alternatives. Fewer alternatives will be more efficient.*
- How does 3A compare to 3B?
  - *3A includes two exit lanes. The right lane is for regional traffic heading east to the Richmond Bridge, the left lane is for NB 101 local traffic exiting at Bellam. SB 101 traffic exiting at Bellam remains as it is today.*
  - *3B includes two exit lanes. The right lane is for NB 101 local traffic exiting at Bellam. The left lane is for regional traffic heading east to the Richmond Bridge. This alternative would close the existing SB 101 to Bellam exit and re-route traffic to the SB 101 Anderson Drive exit along Francisco Blvd. East, to southbound Anderson Drive and westbound Bellam. This would create a longer route for SB 101 traffic that wants to exit at Bellam.*
- Regarding Modified 3B, is the team considering the tradeoffs of using the existing footprint instead of building new structures and columns?
  - *Modified 3B will utilize as much as the existing footprint as possible, however, additional right of way will be needed to accommodate the new exit ramp structure.*
- What would it take to combine the other project with 3A into one project low speed connector? Seems buildable, practicable and affordable and likely to happen in near future unlike the others which are going many years out into future. Can we combine the two projects?
  - *Combining Alternative 3A and the near-term project for the Bellam offramp would not provide near-term benefits as that combined project would have the same review and approval process as other alternatives through 2029. The near-term Bellam offramp project could be constructed in the next few years.*
- Are you asking people from the south not to get off in Larkspur but to travel all the way to the Bellam area in San Rafael and then go back down to the bridge?
  - *Yes, the freeway-to-freeway connector will improve travel times for regional traffic, even for connector alternatives located further to the north, such as Alternatives 3A and 3B.*
- Is the modeling shown based on TAM's travel demand study, which shows a 1% annual increase for 20 years with no toll lanes, assuming no other policy shifts?
  - *Yes, the travel time analysis uses the TAM model with no toll lanes.*

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- What would be the impact of starting metering lights onto 580 at SFD now instead of after the project? Could it reduce the need for the project?
  - *Once the connector is built, the plan is to meter the onramp to 580 from both SFD and Bellam. Metering will deter regional traffic from using the local connection. Metering that traffic now, before the connector would increase traffic congestion on the local network.*
- With the improvement, is there a travel time reduction on SFD?
  - *Sir Francis Drake will have travel time savings for local traffic. Using the connector will be faster than using Drake.*
  - *The metering would slow traffic getting on the freeway plus Drake has two signals – Larkspur Landing West and Larkspur Landing East. The amount of time it will take to travel through all the signals and metering along Drake will be longer than the time it will take using the new connector. Diverting the regional traffic onto the connector would reduce traffic on Drake significantly. How much of the cost is the rebuilding of the Bellam Bridge, and might Caltrans pay for that bridge reconstruction out of the State Highway Operation Protection Program (SHOPP) thus reducing the connector cost?*
  - *Caltrans would not likely use SHOPP funds for this project as those funds are usually used for maintenance activities.*
- How do the conversations on equity that TAM has had with the City of San Rafael around the Priority Development Area designation and the site-specific plan integrate with the work of this project? How will it impact the alternatives? How are you going to communicate conversations and feedback from Ricardo Huerta back to the SWG group?
  - *The community outreach will consist of capacity building for the community to effectively engage during the environmental review phase and the development of Bellam improvements concepts. The outreach will ensure the entire community is engaged to provide effective input during that phase. Summary of the outcome from the community engagement process led by Ricardo will be provided to the SWG at future meetings. The equity evaluation process will be used to inform alternatives selection.*
- How are the equity components shown in each alternative?
  - *The equity considerations/issues will be identified, evaluated, and reported in the environmental review phase using the equity framework that was presented at SWG meeting #4.*
- The Bret Harte community members are concerned about noise pollution – is there going to be consideration about noise reduction during construction and normal operation of the roadway?
  - *Noise will be considered as part of the environmental phase of the project. Noise impacts on sensitive receptors, such as schools, churches, and neighborhoods will be assessed. Noise mitigation measures will also be considered. Noise during construction is governed by the local jurisdiction's noise ordinance.*
- When you look at noise is a lot of it based on the speed of the road or the radius of the curve? How is noise assessed?
  - *Noise is modeled on the "worst case" conditions. Noise tends to peak at certain speeds so models typically use 50 – 55 mph. The terrain is also considered as a factor. The existing noise conditions are monitored first, then a model of the project is used to identify future noise conditions, impacts, and mitigation.*
- Is there any preliminary information on noise impact as a tool to consider for which alternatives should be pursued?

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- *Not in a numeric form. Qualitatively, one could consider proximity to a particular neighborhood.*

### **SWG Comments**

- Options with speed limits below 50 miles per hour seem counterproductive. Alternative 6 with its 45 miles per hour speed is a more viable addition.
- Reducing congestion and commute time – two major benefits identified, including for the buses.
- Modified 3B makes it difficult to walk through the intersections on Bellam. There are six crossings, adding a five-lane exit ramp at Bellam will have a heavy impact for pedestrians in the area. Safety is a primary concern.
- Regional traffic needs to get off the Sir Francis Drake interchange.
- The eastbound bridge at Bellam is deficient for bicycles and pedestrians under new Complete Streets programs.
- Equity should be listed/stated as one of the primary goals and components of this project and should be stated at the beginning. Appreciate that Ricardo Huerta is on the team. Over twenty-five percent of the San Rafael population lives in the Canal neighborhood and more than sixty percent of the City's tax dollars are generated here. Additional concern about limited access to this neighborhood, the project should enhance access.
- Regarding the Priority Development Area planning for the Canal neighborhood, it would be valuable to have a timeline that includes the planning processes that are happening simultaneously. The San Rafael General Plan is in final approval phase over the next few months. Not sure what the status of the PDA or if there funding for the process or when it would start. Need to understand how/when the planning processes intersect.

### **Public Comments and Questions**

- The scope of the project does not address the Richmond-San Rafael bridge to Sir Francis Drake Larkspur corridor. The design and environmental clearance processes are costly and time consuming. Concerned it will not achieve the goal of the project without considering the full corridor. An alternative has been presented that considers both Larkspur and San Rafael. This proposed alternative should be considered. An additional concern is that the project will not benefit the community but only the East Bay commuter.
- An equity consideration to add to the list is the evacuation and safety of the Canal neighborhood in emergency situations such as fire, flood, or sea level rise. The access to these neighborhoods is currently extremely constrained.
  - *Evacuation is included in the emergency response category and will be evaluated as part of future analyses.*
- The Larkspur Ferry is a valuable regional connector as is the Marin Airporter. Prefer that the project does not become too large or pushed back on Sir Francis Drake. The project benefits commuters traveling through Marin not residents of Marin.
- What is the process for calculating the impact on businesses as well as the cost? What metrics were used to measure or access this? Concern for misrepresentation or underestimating the impact to misplaced businesses.
  - *A right-of-way specialist estimates the costs based on the land acquisition, property values, the type of business, and value of that business.*

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### **Next Steps**

Participants will receive the Stakeholder Working Group Handbook summarizing each of the alternatives. Access the handbook [here](#).

SWG 6 – there will be an interactive exercise to compare alternatives. (Slide 46)

- SWG members are asked to review the handbook prior the next SWG.
- Gather input from groups and community members you represent.
- Consider alternatives that can be dropped for further evaluation.
- Draft comments about what you like/don't like about each alternative.
- Contact the team with clarifying questions.

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### Standing Working Group Members

<b>SWG Participation – SWG #5, April 26, 2021</b>			
<b>Present</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
✓	Air Gallegos	Commuter	East Bay to/from San Rafael
	Becky Kittredge	Commuter	East Bay to/from Larkspur
✓	Betsy Swenerton	Community	Brett Harte Community Assoc
	Dave Pedroli	Community	San Rafael City Schools
✓	Dave Troup	Transit Rider	Rides GGT through project area
✓	DJ Allison	Bike & Pedestrian	San Rafael Bike/Ped Adv. Comm.
✓	Douglas Mundo	Community	Multicultural Center of Marin
	Elaine Lin/Libby Schenkel	Business	Country Mart, Larkspur Landing
✓	Jim Draper/Richard Bernstein	Community	Fed. of San Rafael Neighborhoods
✓	Joanne Webster	Business	San Rafael Chamber of Commerce
	Jon Horinek	Community	College of Marin
✓	Julie Cervetto	Business	Larkspur Chamber of Commerce
✓	Kate Powers	Environmental	Marin Conservation League
✓	Kevin Hagerty	Community	League of Women Voters
✓	Linda Jackson	Environmental	Sustainable San Rafael
✓	Michele Barni	Community	Pt. San Quentin Village HOA
✓	Omar Carrera	Community	Canal Alliance
✓	Stephanie Plante	Business	East San Rafael Businesses
✓	Warren Wells	Bike & Pedestrian	Marin County Bicycle Coalition
✓	Wendi Kallins	Environmental	Sustainable Marin

✓ signifies in attendance.