



Stakeholder Working Group Meeting #6 Summary including follow-up input from SWG members unable to attend on May 18

Northbound US-101 – Eastbound I-580 Direct Connector Project
Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

The sixth Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) focused on surveying the SWG members for community priorities and discussion of the nine proposed alternatives for the US 101-I-580 Direct Connector project. Prior to this meeting, SWG members received a handbook to review in preparation for this meeting. The handbook compiled and summarized the visuals, comparisons, and details of each of the alternatives and is available on the website [here](#).

The information and discussion were on the following topics. The PowerPoint presentation for the meeting is available [here](#).

1. A recap of SWG meeting 5 and alternatives updates and Handbook
2. Alternative surveys and discussion focused on:
 - Community priorities.
 - Recommendations on alternatives to drop from further consideration.
 - Specific reasons to drop or advance an alternative.

Survey results, comments, and recommendations by the SWG members and the public are summarized below. The SWG comments and survey results include feedback from those who attended the meeting as well as those who were not in attendance and submitted their feedback later. Members of the public were invited to provide comments by email throughout the meeting and verbally during the public comment portion of the meeting. These comments are summarized together under Public Comments.

Welcoming Remarks

Anne Richman, TAM Executive Director, welcomed the SWG group and attendees and acknowledged the importance of their participation in helping the project team gather the community's perspective, priorities, and concerns.

SWG Meeting Recaps and Timeline

Connie Fremier, TAM Project Manager, presented the project history, scope, and goals and objectives, as well as a recap of SWG 5 and the handbook. Modified 3B and 6 were reviewed as the latest alternatives. She acknowledged the local concerns expressed in the previous meeting, including the local benefits for San Rafael, local traffic circulation, emergency access, and sea level rise. She reviewed the benefits included in the project for San Rafael:

- Remove regional traffic from the Bellam off-ramp intersection.
- Replace I-580 EB Bridge and create additional space for bike/ped improvements (\$11M)
- Bellam Boulevard improvements. *
 - Implement safer and more accessible bike and pedestrian facilities along Bellam (\$7M).

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- Complete the bike and pedestrian connection to Cal Park Path.
- Evaluate improvements along Andersen north of Bellam to provide better access to Davidson MS and downtown San Rafael.
- Incorporate placemaking, arts, and beautification elements throughout the corridor as feasible.
- Potentially replace I-580 WB SFD off-ramp exit bridge and make SFD/Andersen intersection safer for bike/ped access and improve intersection operation (\$19M).

*Designs to be developed with the community during the environmental phase.

She also noted the following:

- This project is a freeway-to-freeway direct connector project that includes local access and circulation improvements for vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit along Bellam Boulevard. All the alternatives include these improvements.
- The team will implement community outreach programs and capacity building for community members who have been historically impacted by large infrastructure projects and create opportunities for them to provide effective, meaningful, sustainable input as the project proceeds. Ricardo Huerta, a specialist in equity and community planning is on the team to develop this outreach plan.
- The Marin 101-580 Connector project is being planned to allow for additional improvements the City of San Rafael may develop. TAM will continue to coordinate with the city of San Rafael on its community-based transportation plan.
- The project must be consistent with voter-approved Regional Measure 3 ([RM3](#)), the enabling legislation, [Senate Bill 595](#), and with TAM's [Measure AA](#) voter -approved language. Several members requested the legislative and ballot text for these measures, which is posted with these notes.

Alternatives Discussion

The SWG discussion consisted of a series of survey questions to gather the individual stakeholder perspectives. The members were asked survey questions on their top three priorities, their recommendations of which alternatives to drop from further consideration and specifically why they would drop or advance each alternative.

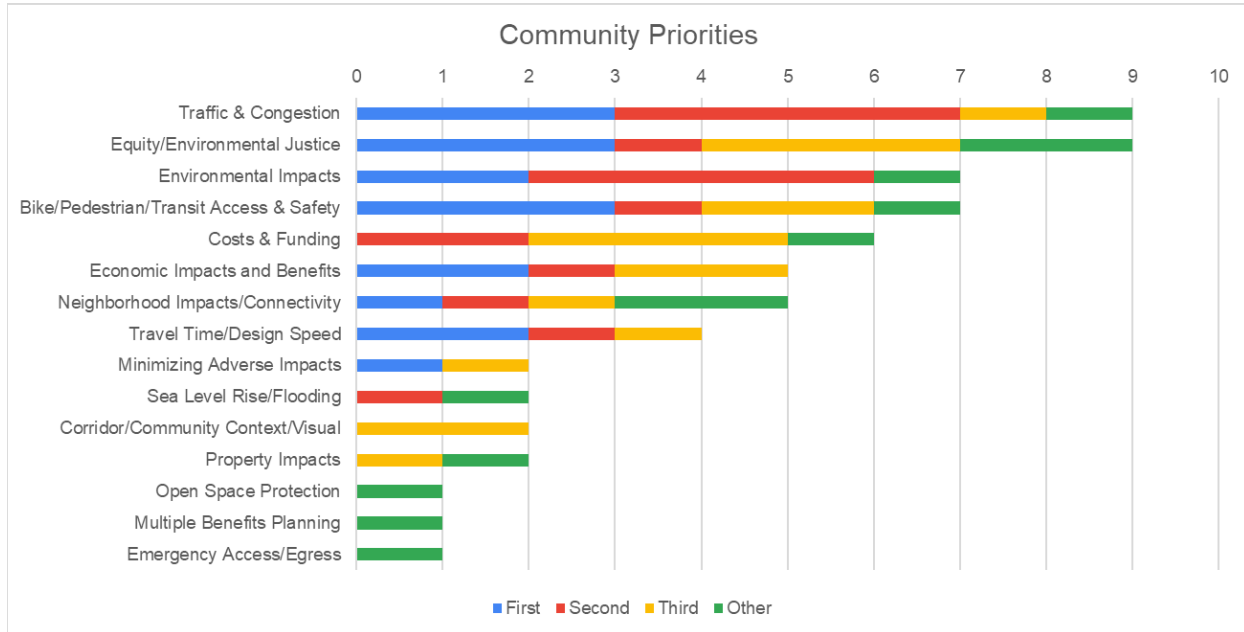
The input received is valuable, so the project team can accurately represent the community perspectives in a series of meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee, Executive Steering Committee, and the Ad Hoc Committee of the TAM Board. The Ad Hoc committee is expected to make recommendations to the TAM Board of Directors at their meeting on July 22, 2021. The TAM Board will make the final recommendation regarding the alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental review phase.

Question 1 – Community Priorities

Members were asked to indicate their priorities for the project by submitting their first, second, and third priorities and additional important considerations. Figure 1 shows the compilation of input from SWG members. Seventeen members provided answers during or after the meeting.

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Figure 1 - Community Priorities



Question 2 – Alternatives to Drop Recommendations

SWG members were surveyed on their initial recommendations regarding which alternatives to drop from further consideration. Following review and discussion of each alternative, the survey question was repeated. The combined results are shown below on page 10. The following summarizes the input and discussion regarding each alternative. Numbers in parentheses indicate similar comments from several members.

Alternative 1A – Lower Hillside

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 1A from further consideration?

- Alternative 1A is costly and complex (6).
- Alternative 1A does nothing for San Rafael except divert cars through the city and adds noise and gas pollution.
- Does not address the congestion on Bellam, which is the primary cause of the backlog on Highway 101. [The project team noted that this alternative, and all others would remove regional traffic from the Bellam offramp and reduce the backup and congestion at that location.]
- It negatively impacts Marin Sanitary Services (MSS), which is a crucial service in our community.
- Negatively impacts the environment. It intrudes on the open space, cuts into the forestland, and disrupts the hillside.
- The proposed height is unattractive.
- Alternative 1A is too disruptive to the developed area and not as clean as 1B.

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Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative 1A for further analysis?

- It has the fastest design speed and is the least disruptive to the Bellam neighborhood.
- This alternative keeps the same speed as the highway traffic yet does not impact the flow.
- 1A is a high-speed interchange so no Caltrans waiver is needed. It offers the greatest savings for peak travel time. There are only two parcels with existing businesses which are impacted. This option alleviates congestion from the Bellam/Andersen area by separating eastbound 580 traffic before San Rafael. It does not require the closure of southbound 101 exit to Bellam. In a survey of Bret Harte residents, 32% selected the Hillside 1A alternative as their first or second choice (the most out of all options). [*The Bret Harte Neighborhood Association conducted a separate survey of residents.*]

Alternative 1B – Upper Hillside

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 1B from further consideration?

- High costs (8).
- It does nothing for San Rafael except divert cars through our city and adds noise and gas pollution.
- Does not address the congestion at Bellam, which is the primary cause of the traffic backlog on highway 101; it does speed cars up for a few minutes but will ultimately result in backup on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.
- Negatively impacts the environment. It intrudes on the open space, cuts into the forestland and disrupts the hillside.
- It inhibits the operation of a necessary region-serving business and civic service – Marin Sanitary Services (MSS).
- The height is unsightly.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative 1B for further analysis?

- Even with the costs, alternative 1B is still a viable option because it does not slow down the connection speed.
- 1B is probably the best choice for flow with minimal disruption of existing paths of travel and should allow the Canal residents access without the monumental backups we now have during commute hours and sometimes weekends.
- Like alternative 1A, alternative 1B is a high-speed interchange so no Caltrans waiver needed, and it offers the greatest savings for peak travel time. Only two parcels with existing businesses are impacted. It alleviates congestion from Bellam/Andersen area by separating eastbound 580 traffic before San Rafael. It does not require the closure of southbound 101 exit to Bellam. In a survey of Bret Harte residents, 28% selected Hillside 1B as their first or second choice (the second highest out of all options).

Additional SWG Discussion of Alternatives 1A and 1B

- The Hillside of San Rafael has long been identified as far back as the 1970s and 1980s as a defining characteristic of the community. A lot of money and planning effort from the voters has gone into preserving and protecting through the development process the

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open space views. For Sustainable San Rafael, the concept of taking publicly protected lands and open space in perpetuity to construct a freeway is appalling.

- These alternatives offer no benefits other than the basic freeway-to-freeway connector.
- Alternatives 1A/1B do not address the Bellam congestion. The congestion backup on 101 during commute hours is due to Bellam. Once past Bellam the traffic is better.
- There are multiple commuters using this exit, there are the northbound commuters getting off at the Bellam exit and then there is the conversion of the commuters coming around and going South. Better to use the funds to design Bellam better to relieve the congestion rather than cut into the hillside. Even removing the regional traffic there is still a congestion issue at Bellam. This is even an issue for residents at San Quentin Village there is a backup at Larkspur Landing.

Alternative 2 – Simms Street

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 2 from further consideration?

- High cost for estimated minutes saved.
- Intrudes into the long-standing commercial area of East San Rafael. The negative functional and visual impact with large columns on local streets will be unsightly for local residents and business owners to look at and experience.
- The physical and geographic proximity to Bellam, essentially undoing some of the improvements being made to Bellam in other parts of this project.
- Creates freeway presence on Andersen that will be compromised by overpasses and supports.
- While the speed is better, there is concern about crossing over Andersen, and the Golden Gate Transit (GGT) Bus parking area. 55 feet is high. [*The project team clarified that this alternative does not affect the Golden Gate Transit bus parking area (Alternative 6 is the alternative that affects that parcel).*]
- This alternative solves a single-issue direct connection.
- Noise impacts in the valley.
- May slow traffic due to reduced speed.
- This alternative will just move the congestion but not really let traffic flow. It will be quite disruptive to businesses.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative 2 for further analysis?

- Cost and simplicity make this worth saving, just don't think this goes far enough to solve the problem, address both directions now.
- Reasonably good design speed (45 mph).
- Easier connection to I-580.
- Less impacts.
- Alleviates congestion from Bellam/Andersen area by separating eastbound 580 traffic but adds visual congestion with a bridge over Andersen and Simms Street.
- It does not require the closure of southbound 101 exit to Bellam.
- In a survey of Bret Harte residents, 10% selected Simms Street alternative 2 as their first or second choice (the fourth highest out of all options). Alternative 2 should be retained for further analysis based on Bret Harte survey results.

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Alternative 3A – Low Speed (retain I-580 Bellam offramp)

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 3A from further consideration?

- Low speed can lead to a traffic jam.
- Does not offer enough improvement to justify the expense and disruption to build. Impacts two parcels with several existing businesses. Brings all local and eastbound 580 thru traffic into San Rafael which is already congested enough with Bellam and Central San Rafael exits. Only 6% of Bret Harte residents selected this option.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative 3A for further analysis?

- Seems to integrate best with the existing road infrastructure and retains the southbound 101 offramp at Bellam at a reasonable cost. (4)
- Relatively low cost, although design speed (35 mph) is slow.
- Least environmental impacts overall (pollution, noise, visual).
- Fewer impacts on businesses and minimal impact on Marin Square.
- Best chance for safest Bellam improvements for pedestrians.
- Provides good access to I-580 and Bellam with separate traffic lanes.

Alternative 3B – Low Speed (close I-580 Bellam offramp)

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 3B from further consideration?

- Closure of the southbound 101 off-ramp does not meet the purpose and need of reducing surface street congestion on Bellam. (6)
- Negatively impacts travel time into the Canal neighborhood due to the closure of the Bellam ramp. Closing Bellam is not viable; it directly contradicts the new goal of equity.
- Concerned about additional traffic impact at the already dangerous intersection of Andersen and Francisco Blvd West, near the entrance to the Cal Park Hill Pathway.
- Similar to option 3A, alternative 3B has a low speed design at 35 mph, does not offer enough improvement to justify the expense and disruption to build. Impacts two parcels with several of existing businesses. Brings all local and eastbound 580 thru traffic into San Rafael, which is already congested enough with Bellam and Central San Rafael exits. Forces the closure of southbound 101 exit to Bellam, which would negatively impact the Canal and East San Rafael neighborhoods (residential and business). It would also add congestion to Francisco Blvd. Only 1% of Bret Harte residents selected this option.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative 3B for further analysis?

- Worth exploring for the low visual impact.
- Cost, speed and less impact on businesses.

Modified Alternative 3B – Low Speed (replace I-580 Bellam offramp)

Why do you recommend DROPPING Modified Alternative 3B from further consideration?

- The atypical intersection at Bellam will complicate an already complicated area. The benefits over 3A are unclear. This seems like a more complicated version of 3A.
- Complicates the turning issues on Bellam Blvd.

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- Widens the crossing of the off-ramps for pedestrians and bicyclists on Bellam, significantly increasing the danger of that crossing.
- Modified 3B has a low speed design at 35 mph and does not offer enough improvement to justify the expense and disruption to build. Impacts two parcels with several existing businesses. Brings all local and eastbound 580 thru traffic into San Rafael which is already congested enough with Bellam and Central San Rafael exits. Includes building a new bridge over the northbound exit ramp for 580, which seems extremely complicated. The impacts to the intersection at Bellam would be mostly negative. Only 3% of Bret Harte residents selected this option.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative Modified 3B for further analysis?

- Relatively low cost, although design speed (35 mph) is slow.
- Maintains Bellam exit and utilizes current freeway footprint (albeit more design work is needed for pedestrian safety).
- Does not impact as many businesses.
- Retains the Bellam exit (more design work is needed for pedestrian safety).
- Lower environmental impacts (noise, air pollution).
- This modified version is similar to 3A and is worth more analysis. It should be vetted next to 3A and the other alternatives.

Additional SWG Discussion of Alternatives 3A, 3B, and Modified 3B

- 3A and Modified 3B what are the differences as they seem very similar in cost, design speed and structure. Are there any advantages to keeping Modified 3B with its complex 5-way intersection?
 - *3A and Modified 3B both maintain access to Bellam from the 101 and 580 offramp to Bellam. Modified 3B eliminates the weave for southbound 101 traffic exiting to Bellam and turning right. This traffic currently crosses the northbound 101 traffic exiting at Bellam and turning left. Modified 3B also has more lane capacity to hold cars waiting at the Bellam light, which would reduce backups onto the freeway. However, Modified 3B would require a five-phase signal at Bellam. Future traffic studies would evaluate the traffic impacts of a five-phase signal on Bellam.*
- Crossing Bellam Blvd. currently is timely and concerning. Adding another signal phase and elongating the crossing time with modified 3B would not make it any safer for bikers and pedestrians.

Alternative 4 – Swing Out

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative 4 from further consideration?

- The closing of the Bellam exit will have a major impact on those persons traveling to the Canal neighborhood. Cannot limit access to East San Rafael by closing Bellam, there is no equity in that.
- No eastbound I-580 off ramp to Bellam. Not compatible with future westbound-to-southbound connector.
- This “Swing Out Option” brings unwanted construction, highly negative visual impact, and a greatly reduced quality of life to the California Park neighborhood. The

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undeveloped parcel along Woodland Ave. that is part of the connection path marks the eastern boundary of our neighborhood. It is inappropriate and unnecessary to create such a significant and lasting impact to a residential neighborhood when there are other options that avoid this.

- The height of the proposed connection - crossing above 101 twice - would tower above neighborhood homes, apartments, and a Montessori School creating additional noise and pollution.
- Huge visual (100 ft.) and noise impacts at great cost.
- Visual impact for residents.
- Impacts to a sensitive seasonal freshwater marsh immediately across Woodland Ave. from the proposed connector that would certainly be impacted by the project. This was not mentioned in the existing analysis and should be thoroughly investigated and evaluated before considering this alternative further.
- Concerned about additional traffic conflicting with the SMART path connection to Cal Park Hill at the intersection of Andersen and Francisco Blvd W.
- The exit at Andersen will cause more backups on 101 southbound, and congestion on local streets.
- Cost.
- Alternative builds a 90-foot bridge over Woodland Ave in California Park, which is a residential area and marsh land with many animals and bird species. The Audubon Society may own some of the land in this area. Also, it forces the closure of the southbound 101 exit to Bellam, which negatively impacts the Canal and East San Rafael neighborhoods (residential and business). Also, this option is not compatible with a southbound 101 connector to 580. Only 1% of Bret Harte residents selected this option.
- Very disruptive and roads with a great view tend to move slower than purpose-built expressways. Go back to the hillside road that makes sense.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative Modified 4 for further analysis?

- Slow speed yet may help minimize community impact with the under overcrossing.

Alternative 5 – Marin Square

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative Modified 5 from further consideration?

- This alternative is unnecessary and highly undesirable. First, it cuts through the Marin Square retail center, the only retail center in the immediate neighborhood. Marin Square has recently changed ownership and has been upgraded to become a community asset. A grocery store will soon move in and other desirable tenants are being considered. The location of the proposed connection would likely close some or all of Marin Square, representing a significant loss to the community. In addition, the elevated roadway crossing both Andersen and Bellam negatively impacts the aesthetic and logistical improvements that are being considered to Bellam as part of this project. Other alternatives being considered do not sacrifice this significant commercial community asset.
- Visual, noise, dirt, pollution impacts on one of East San Rafael's key retail centers and housing opportunity sites.
- Relative high cost and relatively low design speed, with no outstanding advantages.

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- The two additional flyover crossings on Bellam, increased cost/structure height/property impacts do not seem justified by nominal design speed increase (compared to 3A/3B modified).
- Alternative 5 adds two more bridges over Andersen and Bellam, which means more visual congestion. It also means building bridge supports through the new Marin Square shopping center parking lot. This newly remodeled shopping center with stores, restaurants and a grocery store add a ton of value for the families and business in the area. Building this option would negatively impact Marin Square, which in turn would negatively impact the entire area. Also, this option is not compatible with a southbound 101 connector to 580. Only 2% of Bret Harte residents voted for this option.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative Modified 5 for further analysis?

- Better speed

Alternative 6 – Andersen Mid-Way

Why do you recommend DROPPING Alternative Modified 6 from further consideration?

- Cost exceeds funding availability (6).
- An expensive option that brings minimal benefit to the City of San Rafael.
- Impacts businesses, including Golden Gate Transit and the Marin Airpporter.
- Significant visual and noise impacts to neighborhoods as well as negative impacts to one of San Rafael's economically viable areas.
- Height of structure is too high and unattractive.
- Needs a higher speed.
- This alternative will be too close to the Sir Francis Drake north 101 entrance and it will create an unsafe highway entrance and exit.
- This alternative is not compatible with a southbound 101 connector to 580.

Why do you recommend RETAINING Alternative Modified 6 for further analysis?

- Faster design speed.
- Shorter overall connection length.
- It only impacts 2 parcels with business, and Golden Gate Transit may be able to make modifications and not have to relocate. Although it adds visual congestion with a bridge over Jacoby and Andersen, at least it's not in the immediate Bellam area. A downside is that it's not compatible with a SB101 connector to 580, but it's better than most of the other alternatives. 17% of Bret Harte residents voted for this option as their first or second choice.

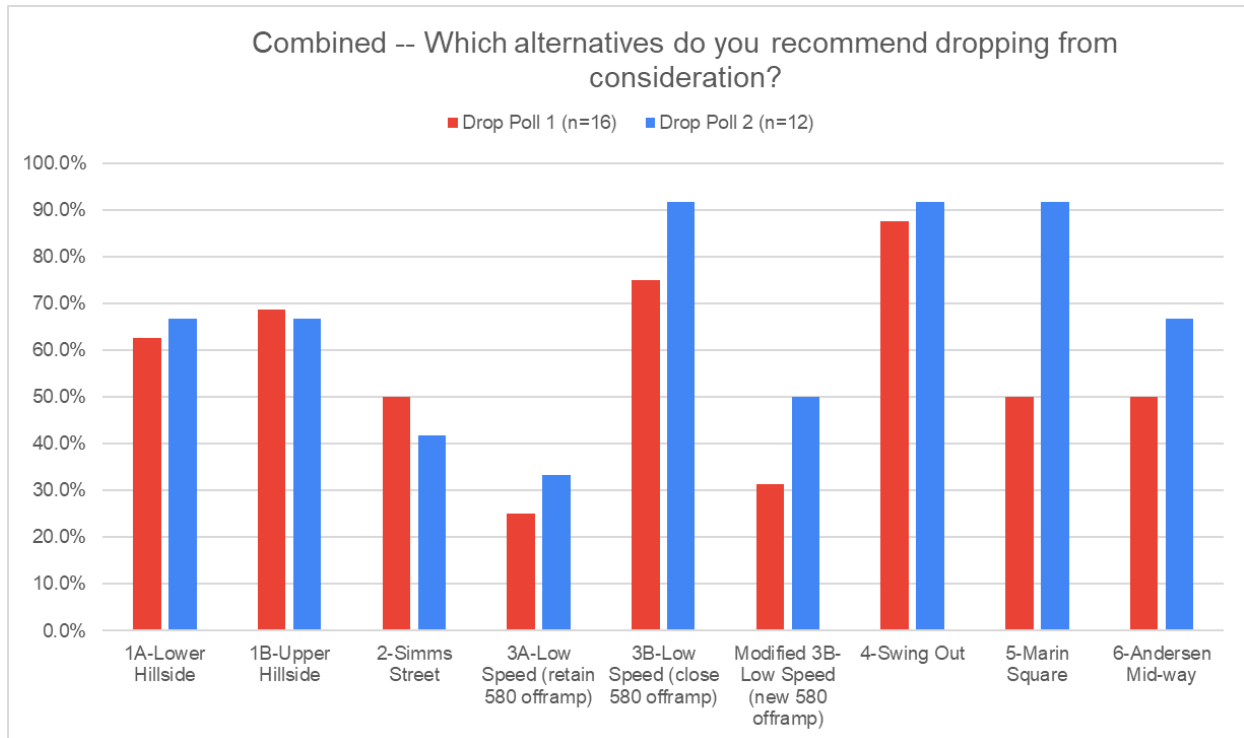
Alternatives to Drop Recommendations

The project team repeated the survey question regarding the recommendations for dropping alternatives. Figure 2 shows the combined results of the question by percentage of respondents recommending that an alternative be dropped. These results include input from SWG members who attended the meeting and from those who were not able to attend and responded to the survey questions (16 total respondents). Following the alternatives discussion at the meeting, there was an increase in the percentage of members recommending that Alternatives 3B, Modified 3B, 5, and 6 be dropped and a slight decrease in the percentage who recommended

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dropping Alternative 2. For the other alternatives, the changes in percentage are the result of different numbers of participants in each survey.

Figure 2 - Recommendations for Dropping Alternatives



Public Comments

Public Input on Question 1 – Community Priorities

The public was asked to provide their input on the survey questions by email. The following are the comments received on project priorities:

- Minimize climate change impacts of the direct connector: we know build it and they will come, so whatever design will minimize additional passthrough trips from GG Bridge to Richmond Bridge and NOT ADD VMT is important.
- For the residents of East San Rafael (Canal Neighborhood) the first priority (by far) will be “Local Access.” This would appear to be referenced in the slide as “Neighborhood Connectivity.”
- A missing overall objective is creativity in our public works projects, beyond the strictly utilitarian. One of the great examples: the GG Bridge, an esthetic monster by its famous engineer, Jos. Strauss, saved by the intervention of a local architect, then created as a world masterpiece.
- Three priorities:
 1. Environmental impact
 2. Equity
 3. Economic impact

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- Three priorities:
 1. Traffic and congestion
 2. Emergency exit capabilities out of Southeast San Rafael
 3. Sea level rise
- My greatest concern is that pedestrian and bicycle access between the North and South sides of 101 and 580 is enhanced and made safer. We would especially like to see a new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over 101, in line with Medway Ave, which would connect the Canal neighborhood to the North South Greenway on the Smart ROW.

Public Input on Alternatives 1A and 1B

The following are the email comments received on Alternatives 1A and 1B:

- OK to keep the 1960's dream of 1A, but it really is anti-climate and will induce VMT and GHGs.

Public Input on Alternatives 3A, 3B, and Modified 3B

The following are the email comments received on Alternatives 3A, 3B, and Modified 3B:

- Please keep the low-speed connector 3A as it is most buildable in our current climate funding conditions and will reduce air pollution and impacts to regional ferry and smart train and bicycles on SFD.

Public Input on Alternative 6

The following are the email comments received on Alternative 6:

- I remain concerned for earthquake re height, and negative visuals on Alt 6. However, one positive is it looks to leave 101N earlier, up the hill, so removes congestion from the Bellam exit better.

Public Input on the Alternatives to Drop

The following are the email comments received on alternatives to drop:

- All the modelling shows all these alternatives are attractive to reducing cut throughs on local roads like SFD, but some are needlessly big, or have needless negative impacts. Drop 1A and 1B.
- Please drop 3B and Modified 3B as both are negatives for safety and use of Canal in cars and on foot.
- I would drop those that have a lot of elevated roadways because we live in earthquake country. Drop 4,5,6.
- From a "local access" standpoint, dropping 3B and 4 would likely have strong support from the residents who need to go through this access point every day leaving and returning to their homes in East San Rafael.
- All but 3A and 3B
- Alternatives 1A, 1B, 2, 4, 5, and 6

During the public comment period, there was one question from the public:

- How does this project and the chosen alternatives fit with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure](#)

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(CAPTI) prioritization of climate in transportation infrastructure? I think it is important to fit with CAPTI.

- *Anne Richman noted that TAM is tracking the development of CAPTI, which is currently a draft proposal by the Newsom Administration for addressing climate change through transportation funding. It is too early to tell how that plan might affect this project.*

Next Steps

- Access the presentations, agendas and the SWG handbook from previous meetings [here](#).
- The additional comments, input, and survey results were provided to the project team by **June 1**.
- The project team will summarize the input on the alternatives, provide the summary to the SWG and present the information to the Technical Advisory Committee, Executive Steering Committee, Ad Hoc Committee, and ultimately to the TAM Board this summer.
- The project team will provide the specific language regarding the direct connector project from Regional Measure 3 and Measure AA, the Marin ½-cent transportation sales tax.

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Stakeholder Working Group Members

SWG Participation – SWG #6, May 18, 2021			
Present	Name	Interest	Affiliation
	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/Jim Rosenfield/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/Tarrell Kullaway	Bike & Pedestrian	Marin County Bicycle Coalition
✓	Wendi Kallins	Environmental	Sustainable Marin

✓ signifies in attendance.