



August 13, 2020

“South Bay Connect” Capitol Corridor Project
Environmental Scoping

To the South Bay Connect Project staff,

We are writing on behalf of TransForm, an Oakland-based transportation and land use policy and advocacy organization. We would like to highlight concerning potential impacts regarding the realignment of the Capitol Corridor rail line, including noise, air quality, recreation and public service access impacts on the already heavily burdened communities of East Oakland along the rail line, as well as the particular impacts to tribal culture and land belonging to the Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. East Oakland is a historically underserved neighborhood with many residents who are working hard to make ends meet, and their interests and well-being must be primary when planning for this project.

We have grave concerns about a transportation project that does not center the needs and improve the lives of people in the affected communities — especially when those people have been ignored, excluded, and harmed by planning decisions in the past. We share concerns raised by Sogorea Te’ Land Trust and Planting Justice. As important community-led projects serving communities of concern along the corridor, the project team must work with them directly to address their concerns and mitigate impacts in whatever way they deem appropriate and sufficient. This is a matter of addressing a long history of disinvestment in the area, and ensuring community-centered decision-making.

The realignment of the Capitol Corridor line will cause increased noise for residents along the track and traffic at new rail crossings, which will lead to more car idling, air pollution, and potential safety concerns for those who need to cross the tracks. The project must mitigate these health and safety impacts through sound barriers, double-paned windows, and other strategies as requested by impacted community members.

The proposed realignment intersects with San Leandro (Lisjan) Creek, and the regionally-significant San Leandro (Lisjan) Creek Greenway Trail, which is under development. The realignment must consider the land use and transportation access implications of this crossing, and ensure public pedestrian and bicycle access to natural areas, and BART and other public transportation amenities. The Capital Corridor rail line largely serves high-income regional commuters, not the local communities it is being routed through. The Greenway Trail project is a long-term priority for the community, and its completion must be prioritized.

Our organization is helping the City of Oakland write its East Oakland Mobility Action Plan, which covers part of the Capitol Corridor project area. As we have been conducting community engagement to write the plan, we are centering local residents and their needs to inform mobility-related recommendations. This community-driven planning document should be recognized as the plan for the area, and regional plans that contradict the community interests outlined in it should be deprioritized, altered to reflect community interests, or halted. Community-led decision-making is essential for addressing the impacts of a long history of injustice in East Oakland.

Finally, we share the concerns raised by UC Berkeley Professor Kristina Hill in her August 6 letter regarding the expected effects of sea level rise and rising groundwater levels on the proposed realignment of the railway. This appears to be a major risk all along the proposed project, and could also jeopardize the potential for transit-oriented development close to Capitol Corridor stations.

Please feel free to contact us at hcurrier@TransformCA.org and jjackson@TransformCA.org with any questions.

Thank you,

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