

Neighbors,

See the two items from the San Jose Mercury below. The first is from columnist Gary Richards. I often point you to his "Mr Roadshow" column for information and opinions pertinent to our neighborhood. Sunday featured several people writing in about the high speed rail--in favor and against. Note there is contact information for you to give your views directly to the people "driving the train," so to speak.

Below that, is an article from Tracy Seipel, writing about San Jose's attempt to have more power to pave a few sections of highways, including Monterey. You'll note, unfortunately, their interest ends at Blossom Hill Road. We will attempt to find out why. It's possible that because the repaving of our section is already scheduled (or promised), it's less of an immediate concern.

Here are the two pieces:

**Mr. Roadshow**

[www.mercurynews.com/mrroadshow](http://www.mercurynews.com/mrroadshow)

**Mixed views on high-speed rail**

**Q**I'm just back from one of my frequent trips for work to Korea, Taiwan and Japan and have become used to the convenience, excellent service and quality of both local and high-speed rail in all three countries. The benefit created by these trains must be significant in the progress of these countries' economies. I bought reserved seats, take-away meals (amazing in quality) and picked up an English paper, all before I boarded. I speak no Korean or Taiwanese, but I found it much easier to get around in the cities and the countryside than here in the Bay Area. I challenge the naysayers of high-speed rail from San Francisco to L.A.

to take the Shinkansen from Tokyo to Osaka. It is more comfortable and convenient than business class on any airline. I have no problem paying airline-type fares on trains that arrive exactly on time. Until we figure out how to do it here, I will continue to drive my car, envying what could be if we only had the vision to create a truly great transportation system.

Jeffrey Hart

*San Jose*

**A** That's one view of the plan to build a \$40 billion- plus line from Southern California to the Bay Area.

Now for some other views.

**Q**Why are we so concerned about building high-speed rail from L.A.

to the Bay Area when we can't even get BART from Fremont to San Jose? The state can't make sure our kids have schoolbooks and we are worried about highspeed rail? We need to get our priorities set.

Phil Busch

*San Jose ...* **A** And

**Q**I'm very opposed to narrowing **Monterey Road**

from three to two lanes each way between San Jose and Morgan Hill to build a high-speed rail line.

Why are they even considering this? Those who say congestion will not have a significant impact should live in our area. Congestion happens now all the time. It's ridiculous. How can I have my voice heard? ... Narrowing Monterey Road is just crazy. What can I do to stop this?

Katheryn Blatt, Jim Goodman and a few others

**A** You can all let the California High Speed Rail Authority know your feelings. The agency is accepting comments on the revised environmental impact report through April 26 and will hold two meetings in San Jose on April 7 — from 10 a.m. to noon in the sheriff's auditorium, 55 W. Younger St., and from 5 to 7 p.m.

in the Santa Clara County supervisors chamber at 70 W. Hedding St.

You can read the report at [www.cahighspeedrail](http://www.cahighspeedrail).

[ca.gov/library](http://ca.gov/library). Mail comments to 925 L St., Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814, Attention: Dan Leavitt. Send an e-mail to [comments@hsr.ca.gov](mailto:comments@hsr.ca.gov).

## **Assembly bill would pave way for San Jose to take over three roadways from state**

**By Tracy Seipel**

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Whenever San Jose transportation officials want to pave a road or install a streetlight on The Alameda, Monterey Highway or Alum Rock Avenue, they have to get permission from Caltrans, which actually has jurisdiction over the three thoroughfares.

It's a tedious and costly process, said Hans Larsen, San Jose's acting transportation director, especially because the city has plans to redesign portions of all three roads. Besides, said Larsen, "We believe we can take better care of these facilities than the state is able to."

Now, a compromise is in the works to have the state relinquish control of the routes to San Jose. But the cash-strapped city, which can't afford to fix the roads it already has, isn't sure how it will fully pay for this new responsibility.

Today, Assemblyman Jim Beall, D-San Jose, is expected to introduce a bill handing over the three segments totaling 13.25 miles: State Route 82, between The Alameda and downtown San Jose; State Route 82, from Interstate-280 to Blossom Hill (Monterey Highway), and State Route 130, from U.S. Highway 101 to Alum Rock Avenue.

Both San Jose and Caltrans view the proposed exchange as a "win-win" opportunity: The city would gain control of the routes, which it wants to make more pedestrian-friendly and better landscaped. San Jose also is working with the Valley Transportation Authority on proposed bus rapid transit lines for all three routes.

Caltrans, meanwhile, would no longer have to assume the cost, liability or responsibility of maintaining the roads.

“It’s like handing over a pink slip,” said Lauren Wonder, a spokeswoman for Caltrans. “It’s ‘as is.’” Larsen’s department estimates it will cost about \$20 million just to upgrade the streets to a “state of good repair.” But with a \$249 million backlog of deferred maintenance to pave San Jose’s existing streets, Larsen said, the city is asking Caltrans to cover the cost to upgrade the three roads. Whatever amount is ultimately agreed upon would likely be doled out over several years, he said.

Yet the state — facing its own massive budget deficit — has yet to commit to the payments.

Wonder said any time a state route is relinquished through legislation, Caltrans assesses the condition of the road and may agree to repair the roads to standard condition or pay the local agency to do it. But she said such costs have not been discussed or negotiated. Moreover, any negotiated funds are for the restoration of the road into standard condition — not to fund improvements that the local agency wants.

“We are not at a point where we are making demands on Caltrans,” Larsen said. “It’s really a mutual process to agree on whatever repair is warranted on the streets and then negotiate over what they can afford to pay over what period of time.”

Included in the city’s redesign plans are enhanced streetscapes in the Alameda Business District, a reconfiguring of the route near the Diridon transit station in advance of a possible Major League Baseball stadium in the area and the narrowing of segments of Monterey Highway from six lanes to four to provide a better right of way corridor for high-speed rail.

The street improvements are expected to cost at least \$165 million, paid for by city, state and federal funds.

Councilman Pierluigi Oliverio, who represents the council district that includes The Alameda, said the improvements are something his constituents have long sought, though he’s not optimistic that beyond basic road repairs there will be any money left over for landscaping or other beautification projects, as Larsen envisions. “The grand plan for a Champs-Elysees is a multidecade process,” he quipped.

Councilwoman Nora Campos, whose council district includes the Alum Rock Avenue route, applauded the legislation, saying in an e-mail: “This will enable the city to improve pedestrian safety without having to wait years for the state to approve a traffic light.”

*Contact Tracy Seipel at 408-275-0140.*

Larsen’s department estimates it will cost about \$20 million just to upgrade the streets to a “state of good repair.”

\*\*\*\*\* End of Tracy's article \*\*\*\*\*

David Wilkins

*"The greatest of all mistakes is to do nothing, because you can only do a little." Sydney Smith*