



# COUNCIL REPORT

**DATE:** April 25, 2023  
**CATEGORY:** Consent  
**DEPT.:** Public Works  
**TITLE:** Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing Preferred Alignment, Project 18-69

## RECOMMENDATION

As recommended by the Council Transportation Committee, select the eastern alignment alternative as the preferred alignment for the design and environmental review of Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing, Project 18-69.

## BACKGROUND

### Project Description

The Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing project aims to construct a pedestrian and bicycle crossing to connect North Bernardo Avenue and South Bernardo Avenue beneath the Caltrain railroad tracks and Central Expressway (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Project Location**

The project will provide a direct, safe active transportation connection between Mountain View and Sunnyvale housing, jobs, and schools south of the Caltrain line and numerous jobs and housing units in the Mountain View East Whisman, Sunnyvale Peery Park, and Sunnyvale Mary Avenue areas. In addition to local access, the project also represents an across-barrier connection that fills a regional bicycle network gap involving four jurisdictions: the City of Sunnyvale, the City of Mountain View, Caltrain, and the County of Santa Clara. For this reason, the project has been included in the Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA's) long-range plan—the Valley Transportation Plan 2040 (VTP 2040), Envision Silicon Valley Bike Superhighway Corridors map, and VTA 2016 Measure B projects list.

In 2004, the City of Sunnyvale completed an initial feasibility study on a Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing between Evelyn Avenue and the south side of Central Expressway. On [July 11, 2017](#), the Sunnyvale City Council awarded a contract to WMH Corporation to provide preliminary design and environmental clearance. The City of Mountain View subsequently entered into a cost-sharing agreement with Sunnyvale for the preliminary design and environmental clearance phase, which was authorized by the Mountain View City Council on [December 12, 2017](#) and Sunnyvale City Council on [February 6, 2018](#). Under the cost-sharing agreement, the undercrossing was extended to the north side of Central Expressway.

### **Project Funding**

In preparation for the final design and construction phases of the project, both cities have been pursuing grant funding as follows:

- In 2017, the City of Sunnyvale received a One Bay Area Grant, Cycle 2 (OBAG 2) grant award of \$500,000 for the final design phase of the project.
- In 2020, the cities of Sunnyvale and Mountain View and VTA jointly submitted a grant application for the Measure B Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. The project was awarded \$2.25 million for final design with an additional \$750,000 available to be requested in a future funding cycle, for a total of \$3 million. An additional \$15 million was requested and awarded but not yet allocated for the construction phase of the project.
- In 2022, the City of Mountain View applied for Federal earmark funds, and, on July 1, 2022, the City of Mountain View received correspondence from Congresswoman Anna Eshoo that the Appropriations Committee approved the inclusion of \$2.5 million for final design of the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing.

In total, \$21 million in Measure B, OBAG 2, and Federal earmark funds have been awarded for the project, with \$6 million for final design and \$15 million for construction. It is anticipated that the project will cost in the range of \$40 million to \$60 million for final design and construction.

### **Caltrain/Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board Rail Corridor Use Policy**

On [February 6, 2020](#), the Caltrain/Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain/JPB) approved the Rail Corridor Use Policy (RCUP). This policy is intended to guide the use of Caltrain/JPB property and support delivery of Caltrain's long-term service vision. As a nonrailroad use, the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing project was required to be reviewed by Caltrain staff and Caltrain's board. The project was the first project to be presented to Caltrain after adoption of the RCUP. On [June 3, 2021](#), Caltrain/JPB approved a Use Variance for the project, allowing it to move forward through Caltrain's review processes, with the following conditions:

- The project will be designed and constructed to account for, and minimally disrupt, all current and future rail infrastructure, assets, and facilities in the area.
- The project will be designed and constructed so as to minimally interrupt Caltrain operations and freight operations during and after construction.
- The proposed project will be designed to be compatible with the potential future grade separation project at Mary Avenue.
- The project design will comply with all current and future railroad standards, including engineering, operations, and maintenance.
- The project will be designed to not impede the railroad's ability to maintain its infrastructure and right-of-way in the area during and after construction.
- The JPB will be responsible for delivering the project from the 35% design stage through the final design and construction of the proposed project.
- Future agreements will provide clear roles and responsibilities for all parties for all stages of the proposed project.

### **Joint BPAC Meeting**

On [December 2, 2020](#), a joint Sunnyvale/Mountain View Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) meeting was held. The project team presented one eastern alignment and six variations of a western alignment. BPAC members from both Mountain View and Sunnyvale provided feedback and highlighted the importance of various design features for enhancing directness, visibility, connectivity, safety, comfort, and security of the undercrossing.

## ANALYSIS

The Sunnyvale project team has been coordinating with City of Mountain View, VTA, County of Santa Clara, and Caltrain/JPB staff to review and receive feedback on the preliminary designs, and to gain clarity on Caltrain/JPB construction and design standards post electrification. Feedback received from public agencies and the joint BPAC meeting was reviewed, evaluated, and incorporated into the designs in order to refine two alternatives.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, these alternatives include a western alignment alternative and an eastern alignment alternative. Both alternatives feature: high-visibility crosswalks across Evelyn Avenue and Bernardo Avenue, ramp entrances on the north side of Evelyn Avenue and Central Expressway, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant ramps, elimination of free-running right-turn lanes on Central Expressway and Evelyn Avenue, and a generously spaced tunnel beneath the expressway and railroad. The design aims to include skylights in the expressway median, and the eastern alternative makes use of the County property southeast of the Bernardo Avenue/Central Expressway intersection between the expressway and railroad as a mid-undercrossing opening or plaza area.

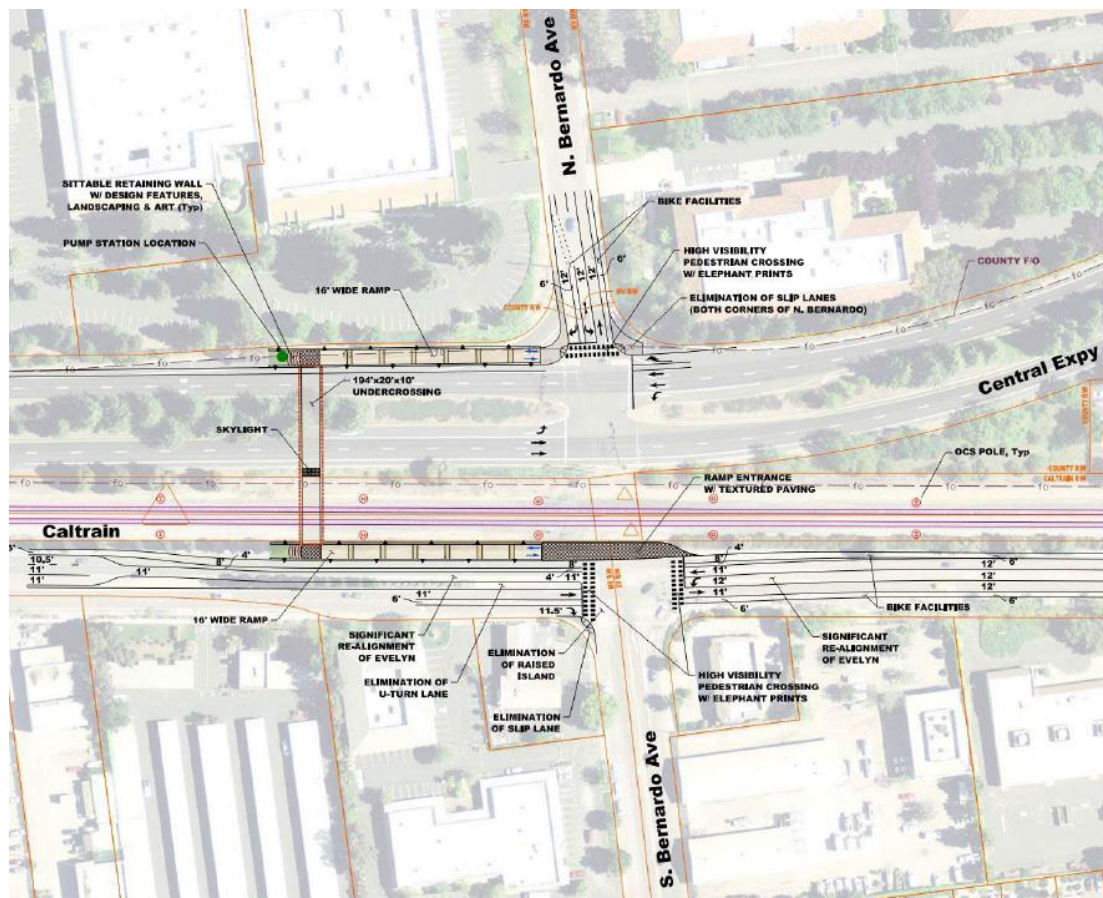


Figure 2: Western Alignment Alternative

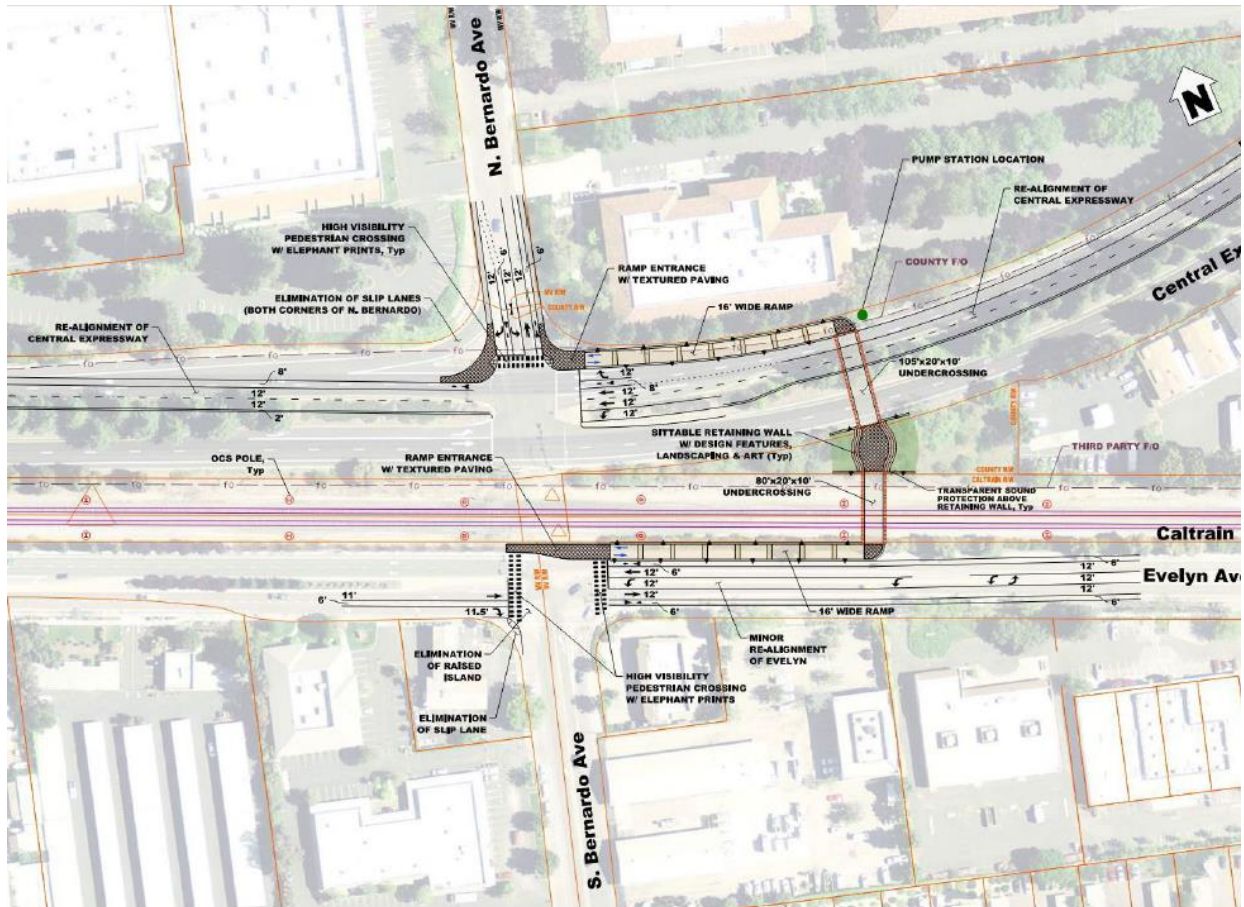


Figure 3: Eastern Alignment Alternative

**Benefits and Challenges of Each Alternative**

Each alternative has benefits and challenges as shown in the following table, with the shaded areas showing the better alternative for the factors listed.

**Table 1: Benefits and Challenges of Each Alternative**

	<b>Western Alternative</b>	<b>Eastern Alternative</b>
Lighting	Potential for median skylight	Potential for median skylight plus use of County property for opening
Length	Shorter total length; longer continuous tunnel	Longer total length; shorter continuous tunnels
Visibility	Straight tunnel which improves visibility	Mid-crossing bend reduces end to end visibility
Open space	Potential to request future plaza if 280 Bernardo Avenue substantially redevelops	Potential use of County mid-crossing property
Community support	Lower level of expressed community support for this alternative	Community support indicated by joint community meeting, Mountain View BPAC, Sunnyvale BPAC, and CTC
Utilities	More potential utility relocations	Fewer potential utility relocations
Construction impacts	Potential box-jack method of tunneling from expressway will require lane closures during construction	Potential use of County property for box-jack tunneling may reduce lane closures during construction

### **Relationship with Other Projects**

The City of Sunnyvale has plans to implement a two-way bicycle facility on the north side of Evelyn Avenue, between Mathilda Place and Bernardo Avenue. The City of Mountain View has plans to implement a two-way protected bikeway between the Mountain View Transit Center and State Route 85 and plans to conduct a feasibility study on implementing a similar facility between State Route 85 and Bernardo Avenue. The project does not prevent implementation of the Evelyn Avenue bicycle facilities, and coordination between the project teams will continue as they all move forward.

The City of Mountain View has been awarded grant funding to deliver protected bikeways along Middlefield Road, between Bernardo Avenue and Moffett Boulevard. The City's East Whisman Precise Plan calls for buffered bike lanes along Bernardo Avenue between Middlefield Road and Central Expressway, which would ultimately connect to the proposed project.

A proposal for development at 189 North Bernardo Avenue was considered by the Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission on March 22, 2023 and is scheduled to be considered by the City Council on May 23, 2023. The applicant proposes to retain the existing building at

this address and add an additional building and parking garage using a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) agreement involving the City and the Los Altos School District. In compliance with the East Whisman Precise Plan, a multi-use path is proposed along the north side of Central Expressway adjacent to the property at 189 Bernardo Avenue. This path would connect with the ramp entrance to the eastern alignment of Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing or to the pedestrian crossing leading to the ramp entrance for the western alignment. A wide paseo between the existing and new proposed building at 189 Bernardo Avenue has been incorporated into the proposal to enhance visual access to and through the northern leg of the undercrossing if the eastern alignment is selected.

### **Community Feedback**

On February 2, 2023, a joint virtual community meeting was held with members of the public from both Sunnyvale and Mountain View. Outreach for this meeting included website updates, email correspondence to project subscribers (662 Mountain View recipients), social media postings on Twitter and Facebook, and postcard mailers to all Mountain View tenants, owners, and business operators within 750' of the project area (363 recipients).

More than 20 members of the public attended the virtual community meeting. At this meeting, the two refined alternatives shown in Attachment 1 were presented to community members along with some potential design features for consideration. The meeting participants supported moving the project forward and had a preference for the eastern alignment due to the potential benefits associated with use of the triangular County property. Community members also expressed support for natural light features, visibility from one end of the undercrossing to the other, seamless connections to the wider network of low-stress bicycle facilities, and similar design treatments for designated bicycle and pedestrian areas as used in the Homer Avenue Undercrossing across the Caltrain tracks in Palo Alto.

On [February 22, 2023](#), the Mountain View BPAC considered the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing alternatives and passed a motion recommending that Council move ahead with the eastern alignment alternative. The BPAC members also requested the use of natural lighting features, bicycle-friendly street design on Evelyn Avenue, smooth corners, avoidance of obstacles (like bollards), connections to Mary Avenue or Mary Manor Mobile Home Park in Sunnyvale, and similar design treatments to the Homer Avenue Undercrossing.

On [March 16, 2023](#), the Sunnyvale BPAC also considered the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing alternatives and unanimously passed a motion recommending that the Sunnyvale City Council move ahead with the eastern alternative. Sunnyvale BPAC members also requested wide cross-sections, good lighting and openings, integrated public art elements (such as mosaics and art lighting), avoidance of bollards, drainage treatments, reduced gradients at the base of the ramp, slip lane elimination, and wayfinding for eastbound expressway bicyclists.

On [April 10, 2023](#), the Mountain View Council Transportation Committee (CTC) considered the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing alternatives and passed a motion recommending that the City Council approve the eastern alignment alternative as the preferred alternative to move forward into design and environmental clearance. CTC members also provided the following comments:

- Coordinate with the City of Sunnyvale on a joint endeavor to incorporate public art into the project, including in the mid-undercrossing opening or plaza area in the County property between the expressway and railroad;
- Design the undercrossing, including mid-undercrossing plaza area, to be inviting and safe for all users, especially at night; and
- Provide designated pedestrian and bicycle zones within the undercrossing, similar to the Homer Avenue Undercrossing.

Given the benefits and community support for the eastern alignment, staff recommends that the eastern alignment be approved as the preferred alternative.

### **Next Steps**

The Sunnyvale City Council is tentatively scheduled to consider the selection of a preferred alignment alternative on May 16, 2023.

After obtaining support from both City Councils, the next stage of the current project will include environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The appropriate environmental clearance documents will be prepared and presented to the City Councils for approval prior to starting final design.

Final design and construction will be undertaken by Caltrain/JPB in accordance with the RCUP.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funding for the current preliminary design phase of the project is available under Sunnyvale Project 832910—Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing, which includes approximately \$520,000 from Mountain View's Bernardo Avenue Pedestrian/Bike Undercrossing, Project 18-69. Project 18-69 is funded in the amount of \$4,188,000 from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Reserve Fund. The current action does not impact the existing project budget, and no additional appropriation is being requested at this time.

As part of the preliminary design and environmental review, cost estimates will be prepared for the final design and construction phases of the project. It is anticipated that the full cost of the project will be in the range of \$40 million to \$60 million. A total of \$21 million in grant funding



has been secured to date, and additional grant funding opportunities will be sought. It is expected that Mountain View and Sunnyvale will cost-share the balance. A funding strategy for the project will be developed during final design when more detailed construction cost estimates are available.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing project will provide an active transportation connection between Bernardo Avenue south and north of the Caltrain tracks and Central Expressway. The cities of Mountain View and Sunnyvale have been partnering on preliminary design, applying for grants, and engaging with Caltrain/JPB, County of Santa Clara, and VTA. A preferred project alignment must be selected by both Mountain View and Sunnyvale City Councils to move the project forward into design and environmental review. Based on an analysis of benefits and challenges, community members, Mountain View BPAC, Sunnyvale BPAC, and Mountain View CTC all recommend selection of the eastern alternative as the preferred alignment for the project.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Select the western alignment as the preferred alignment for the Bernardo Avenue Undercrossing Project.
2. Provide other direction.

## **PUBLIC NOTICING**

Agenda posting, email to project subscribers, and a copy of this report to the Mountain View BPAC.

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