

COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2003 - 7:00 P.M.

I. INTRODUCTION

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY (Owner) and CONTRA COSTA COUNTY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (Applicant), County File #CP03-18: Treat Boulevard/Jones Road (Iron Horse Trail) Overcrossing and the Right Turn Lane on Oak Road to Treat Boulevard. The project site for the overcrossing is located along Jones Road and the site for the northbound right-turn lane onto Treat Blvd. is Oak Road at Treat Blvd., near the Pleasant Hill BART Station, in the unincorporated Walnut Creek area of Central Contra Costa County. The project site is within the area of the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan .

II. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends the County Planning Commission; having considered the environmental documentation prepared for the project, forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors as follows:

- A. Accept the environmental documentation prepared for the project as adequate,
- B. Adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program, and
- C. Approve bridge design for the Treat Boulevard/Jones Road (Iron Horse Trail) Overcrossing, and
- D. Approve the right-turn lane project at Oak Road and Treat Blvd.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- A. GENERAL PLAN/SPECIFIC PLAN: The subject site is designated Public/Semi-Public and Office in the Contra Costa County General Plan and Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan.
- B. ZONING: The subject property zoned Planned-Unit (P-1) Zoning District.
- C. CEQA STATUS: A Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration was posted for the project on March 17, 2003. The public review period ends on April 17, 2003.
- D. NEPA STATUS: Information required for the completion of NEPA was forwarded to CalTrans on April 8, 2003. Approval of the NEPA is pending.

IV. AREA DESCRIPTION

The surrounding area consists of a mix of high-density housing, offices, hotel and neighborhood-serving retail uses. The project connects Subareas 13 and 16, as identified in the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan. The Pleasant Hill BART Station Area is a unique area that provides many opportunities for achieving regional goals through the development of the site. The BART Station itself, which represents a substantial public investment, is an anchor for the area and is a people generator for a major public space and future housing, office and retail uses. In addition to the regional transit access from BART, the site has excellent visibility and automobile access from I-680 and Treat Boulevard, and pedestrian and bicycle access from the Iron Horse Trail.

V. SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site for the overcrossing is located along Jones Road and the site for the northbound right-turn lane onto Treat Blvd. is Oak Road at Treat Blvd., near the Pleasant Hill BART Station, in the unincorporated area of Central Contra Costa County. The project site is within the area of the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan.

Surrounding land uses include the BART Station, office and medical administration buildings, parking lot for the Muller Veterinary Hospital, temporary BART parking lot (that is to be removed), and the Renaissance Club Sport Hotel and Health Club complex. The I-680 freeway is approximately two blocks to the west of the site.

VI. PLEASANT HILL BART STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN:

The Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan contains policies regarding two pedestrian bridges across Treat Boulevard. One bridge was proposed to be aligned to cross Treat Boulevard on the east side of Oak Road. The Oak Road Pedestrian Bridge is included in Policy 4 (page 36) of the Specific Plan. Another pedestrian bridge across Treat Boulevard is proposed one block to the east at Jones Road. The alignment of the Jones Road bridge is on the Iron Horse Trail Corridor. The Jones Road (Iron Horse Trail Bridge) is included in Policy 7 of the Specific Plan.

An amendment to the Specific Plan to eliminate the Oak Road pedestrian crossing from the plan was considered by the County Planning Commission in October 2002 and by the Board of Supervisors in November 2002. The Board deferred action on the Oak Road bridge until further development proposals were brought forward. Staff intends to bring the Specific Plan Amendment back to the Board with the design considerations for the Jones Road (Ironhorse) pedestrian overcrossing.

VII. IRON HORSE TRAIL

Following the alignment of the former Southern Pacific Railroad corridor, the Iron Horse Trail currently extends 25 miles from Solano Way in Concord to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station bisecting the communities of Concord, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Alamo, Danville, San Ramon, and Dublin. This paved multi-use regional trail provides a non-motorized transportation corridor, as well as recreation facility, linking parks, residential areas, businesses, school, and multi-modal transportation centers, including a direct link into the Pleasant Hill, Dublin/Pleasanton BART, and is less than one-mile from the Walnut Creek BART Station. The trail function as the major spine trail in the Diablo and San

Ramon Valleys and provides direct links to three other regional trails, including the Contra Costa Canal Trail, the Briones to Mt. Diablo Trail, and the Las Trampas to Mt. Diablo Trail. These trails then link to additional extensive parkland and trail networks. Future extensions of the trail are planned through Pleasanton and Livermore to extend to the San Joaquin County line.

The Iron Horse Trail is the East Bay Regional Park District's (EBRPD) most popular facility. EBRPD estimates that the Iron Horse Trail carries one million user trips per year. In a Trail Use Study (Summer 1997) commissioned by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, survey results indicated that more than 36% of trail users were utilizing the trail for alternative transportation purposes while 64% specified using the trail for recreational uses. A similar study on the Delta De Anza Regional Trail (Summer 1998) in Eastern Contra Costa County, which serves the communities of Bay Point, Pittsburg, Antioch and Oakley (and will eventually connect with the Iron Horse Trail) indicated that 64% of trail users were utilizing the trail for alternative transportation purposes to shopping, recreation, school, work, friends, and links to transit. One quarter of those surveyed stated they use the trail to travel to school, work, or the Bay Point BART Station.

The Iron Horse Trail currently has a gap between Hookston and Mayhew Road, approximately a half of a mile north of the Pleasant Hill BART Station. The Redevelopment Agency is presently in the process of clearing that portion of the Iron Horse Corridor of improvements. The Iron Horse Trail Gap Closure is expected to be installed in the summer of 2003.

#### VIII. IRON HORSE CORRIDOR GREENSPACE

An aspect of the land use program for the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan is the creation of a public open space amenity on the eastern edge of the Specific Plan. This edge (a portion of the former Southern Pacific right-of-way, now referred to as the Iron Horse Corridor), is presently used for temporary BART parking. The temporary parking managed by BART was established in 1989 in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake and later as a traffic mitigation measure for the Interstate 680/24 interchange project. Since the Interstate 680/24 interchange project is complete, the temporary parking area is to be removed and the development of the planned greenspace/trail use of the property, as described in the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan, is to proceed later this year.

The greenspace project is located within the former Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, from Treat Boulevard to the south extending approximately 1,100 north, adjacent to the 90-degree bend in Coggins Drive. The site is identified as Subareas 6 and 13 in the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan. The northern bridge alignment lands at the site planned for the development of greenspace. The greenspace is within the former Southern Pacific Right-of-way, in the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area. The northern bridge alignment was contemplated and incorporated into the Greenspace design.

#### IX. PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project involves the construction of a Class I Bicycle/pedestrian Bridge with ramps over Treat Boulevard at the intersection with Jones Road. Existing temporary BART parking on the north end of the overcrossing and the Jones Road northbound right turn lane to Treat Boulevard would be removed. The bridge alignment within the northbound right turn lane provides separation from the John Muir Diablo Health Systems facility and preserves a stand of mature trees along Jones Road. Landing

ramps would be constructed on Jones Road. The bridge overcrossing would connect with a realigned portion of the Iron Horse Trail on the north end and the existing trail alignment on the south end. A northbound right turn lane on Oak Road, located one block west of Jones Road, would be constructed to replace the dedicated right turn lane used to construct the overcrossing right of way on Jones Road.

X. DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

Determination of a preferred design has been undertaken through an extensive multimedia public participation process that began in 2000. Because the initial community design program did not conclude with a consensus design, the Redevelopment Agency created a web-based preference survey too to further inform decision makers on design options. The web based preference survey which took place in January and February 2003, included four conceptual design options for the Ironhorse Trail overcrossing - the Railroad Truss, Cable-stayed Bridge, Arch Bridge, and Concrete Girder Bridge. Each of these options were described along with a summary of engineering issues in a Summary of Design Options, November 22, 2002 (included herein as Attachment A). This summary of Design Options was part of the web-based preference survey. For reference, the proceedings of the 2000-2002 Community Design Program are chronicled in Attachment B- Pleasant Hill BART Pedestrian/Bicycle Overcrossing Community Design Program: Feasibility Study Report, December 1, 2000, and Attachment C-Pleasant Hill BART Bridge Overcrossing Program Summary Report, June 24, 2002.

In addition to the Community Design process described above, the County sponsored a design Charrette for the Pleasant Hill BART Station Property in early 2001. In addition to looking at the design of the BART property, the Charrette included the other planning issues within the BART station area. Several meetings were held to discuss the various aspects of the two overcrossings, including designs, alignments, and the need for two pedestrian overcrossings within a block of each other. Charrette discussions and a follow-up study determined that the Oak Road Bridge would not likely be used as much as the at-grade crossing.

As discussed previously, the County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors considered a request to remove the Oak Road Bridge from the Specific Plan. Several improvements to the at-grade crossing were examined for inclusion in the action, including the installation of a count-down signal at the intersection and changing the existing crosswalks to "ladder-style" crosswalks. These improvements have been incorporated into the Oak Road right-turn lane portion of the project.

The web-based survey of the designs occurred from January 2, 2003 to February 28, 2003. Public announcements, including press coverage was provided. Individuals without access to the internet, or uncomfortable with this media were provided the option to express their preference in writing. All materials on the on the web-site were available and distributed in hard copy. Four designs were described and shown on photo simulations. Approximately 550 individuals provided their preference

of the designs and many included additional comments. Attachment D summarizes the comments received. Following is a tally of the preferences.

Design Option	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Total Points*
Railroad Truss	155	211	131	40	<b>1,555</b>
Cable-Stay	81	56	86	316	<b>980</b>
Arch	168	183	155	26	<b>1,557</b>
Concrete	149	77	142	135	<b>1,246</b>

\* Four points for each first choice, 3 points for second, 2 points for third, and 1 point for fourth.

In addition to the process described above, the County received four expressions of preference from institutional entities- The City of Walnut Creek, the Walden District Improvement Association, the Contra Costa Centre Association, and the Iron Horse Corridor Advisory Committee. The City and Walden prefer the concrete girder design, while the Contra Costa Centre preferred the cable-stay. The Iron Horse Corridor Advisory Committee prefers the railroad truss design. Their letters are reproduced in Attachment E.

## XI. STAFF DISCUSSION

- A. Design Standards: Regardless of the bridge design ultimately selected for the bridge, it will be constructed according to California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) standards. These standards set out the civil and structural engineering specifications and performance requirements of bridges in California. An independent engineering review will be conducted as is normally required for such structures in California. The Contra Costa Transportation Authority will provide peer review of design specifications. Seismic safety is an aspect of these specifications. The minimum vertical clearance to the underside of the bridge is taken as 16'-9" per Caltrans requirements for pedestrian overcrossing structures over the traveled way of state roadways. Caltrans requires a screen with a minimum 8'-4" high on all pedestrian overcrossings to protect the roadway below. A combination pedestrian-bicycle railing is contemplated for the portions that are not above roadways. Consistent with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), ramps with a continuous 1:20 slope (no landings) are incorporated in all four schemes.

Some concerns have been expressed about the slope and bicycle speed. One way to address potential bicycle speed issues would be to require bicyclists to dismount and walk across length of bridge. Due to the length of the bridge overcrossing, bicyclists would find a requirement to dismount and walk difficult and an impediment to reaching their destination. Bicyclists would be unlikely to comply with this type of regulation. Enforcement would be very difficult for any public agency, and is therefore not recommended by EBRPD. Trail users are not required to dismount on the Ygnacio Valley Rd. overcrossing. An appropriate trail width would allow for safe passing by trail users utilizing the "call out ahead when passing" trail etiquette technique. With the proposed bridge crossing at 5% slope, speeding will be discouraged. A speed limit sign could be posted at either end with trail use information posted as well.

The following design features have been incorporated to enhance safety for the public using the facility and the immediate surroundings.

- Embankments: the length of embankments have been minimized to reduce the amount of concealed areas created by the embankments.
- Lighting: create a well-lit environment on the bridge and the areas under the bridge.
- Handrails: conform to Caltrans specifications for pedestrians and cyclists, and incorporate screening material in as visually unobtrusive manner as possible.
- Pathway width: provide a wider path than the minimum requirement to permit a safe and comfortable pathway for cyclists and pedestrian users alike.
- Permit passage of a maintenance vehicle (such as pick-up truck) over the bridge.

B. Alignment: The overcrossing roughly follows the current alignment of the Iron Horse Trail but also considers the proposed Ironhorse Greenspace to be built on the north side of Treat between Jones Road and Del Hombre. The alignment is described below and is shown on Drawings SK-1 to SK-4, pages 5,7,9, and 11 in Attachment A.

- South of Treat Boulevard: the proposed alignment utilizes the existing right-turn lane of Jones Road. The pathway and ramps have been pushed as far west as practicable. This location creates a buffer zone between the overcrossing and the properties on the east side of Jones Road.
- Over Treat Boulevard: the pathway moves to the east by about 55 feet as one travels from the south side of Treat to the north side. Therefore, for all the options the main span is straight but with an alignment that angles to the east as it crosses Treat Boulevard.
- North of Treat Boulevard: per the above discussion, this new angled alignment over Treat Boulevard places the overcrossing structure to the east of the planned Iron Horse Greenspace north of Treat Boulevard, consistent with the community's expressed desires and incorporated into the final Greenspace design. In relation to existing conditions, the overcrossing is located east of the existing BART surface parking lot along Jones Road. The location of the north end of the ramp is consistent with the design of the Greenspace pathways.

The purpose of placing the north ramp easterly in the former Del Hombre Land alignment is twofold. First, this alignment reduces the amount of space within the Greenspace project that is not viable from public rights-of-way, thereby enhancing security; and second, the intersection of the Iron Horse Trail and the cross trail from Treat Commons/Honey Trail Condominium to the BART property is placed in a location that can reduce trail congestions between BART patrons and through-trail users (a straight alignment would put the ramp landing very close to the location where pedestrian/bicyclists are waiting to cross Jones Road to enter the BART property).

C. Utilities: In general, the four conceptual design options and their alignment avoid major underground utility relocations. Due to the new angled alignment that is consistent with the final Greenspace design, in the four options there is a need to relocate a portion of the existing overhead PG&E power lines that run along the Iron Horse Trail. The power lines would be re-aligned to be parallel with the proposed angled alignment such that they do not cross over the bridge structure. This is particularly relevant for the Railroad Truss, Cable Stayed, and Arch structural options

because the heights of their superstructures would conflict with the current location of the electric cables.

- D. Bridge Width: The width of the deck from inside face to inside face of railing is 10 ft. This is consistent with the typical width of the trail itself when it is on-grade, and with that of similar overcrossings such as the Ygancio Valley Road Bridge in Walnut Creek. This width exceeds the minimum width required in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual.

From a trail and pathway capacity and level-of-service point of view, a 10ft. width consists of two 1.5 ft. wide clearance zones adjacent to railings, two 2 ft. wide pedestrian paths, and one 3 ft. wide cyclist path. In other words, a cyclist can pass two pedestrians walking side-by-side. The total capacity of the trail at level-of-service "C" is therefore estimated empirically at 2400 pedestrians per hour. Level-of-service "C" is normally defined as: "Sufficient area to freely select walking speed, bypass others in primarily unidirectional streams; where cross- and reverse-flow exists minor conflicts occurs; walking speed is reduced". Given that in the best-case development scenarios for the area the expected pedestrian flows will be significantly lower than the calculated capacity at this level-of-service, it is expected that actual level-of-service will be higher than this.

The pathway provided can accommodate circulation of emergency and maintenance vehicles if the bridge is shut down for pedestrians and cyclists during that time. Given that an alternate at-grade route exists along the same corridor (i.e., the current at-grade crossing of Treat Blvd.), a temporary shut down can be accommodated, albeit with some inconvenience to facility users. The up-front cost to eliminate future occurrence of such inconveniencies is proportional to the any additional pathway width to be considered. In addition, there may be aesthetic and planning impact considerations to accommodate any additional width.

- E. Existing At-Grade Crossing: The existing at-grade crossing at the Treat Blvd./Jones Road intersection would be retained after completion of the overcrossing. Retaining the crossing would be more convenient for pedestrians originating from the office buildings close to the intersection. Some comments have suggested that direct access to the bridge be provided for at both ends of the overcrossing at the northeast and southeast corners of the Treat Blvd./Jones Road intersection. To provide such access would vcompel the project to include ADA Accessible access at these corners, which would mean both stairways and an elevator system. Inclusion of a elevator system would have significant capital and maintenance cost implications. Elevators are not recommended. The physical space required for both a stair element and elevators was studied during the feasibility study portion of the process and determined to be too onerous for the project.
- F. Vandalism Protections: Protection against vandalism/graffiti/assault climbers is provided at the bridge and surrounding areas by adequate lighting. Vandalism should be minimized by the fact that the perpetrators would be highly visible to passing public who could notify local authorities. Anti-graffiti finishes to apply to the structure to allow the easy clean-up should the bridge be painted by vandals are being explored. The type of finish will likely be driven by the final choice of bridge structure (concrete vs. steel). Additionally the County Public Works Department runs a Graffiti Hotline where the public can call in and leave a message as to the location and type of graffiti, this message is forwarded to the County Public Works Maintenance crews to clean/replace a sign/or paint over the graffiti.

Climbers will be hindered by the installation of standard Caltrans chain link railing. This railing will be a minimum of eight feet above the bridge deck and is comprised of a one inch diamond pattern as opposed to a standard two inch cyclone fence. This smaller mesh makes climbing the structure much more difficult.

- G. Construction Impacts: Construction of the overcrossing is likely to result in traffic impacts to commuters and noise impacts to the residents. To reduce noise impacts, the initial study recommended limiting construction to the hours of 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM Monday-Friday and requiring construction contractors to include measures to reduce equipment noise such as:
- All internal engine-driven equipment shall be equipped with mufflers that are in good condition;
  - Use 'quiet' gasoline-powered compressors or other electric-powered compressors wherever possible.
  - Retain a disturbance coordinator to monitor construction activity and to identify additional mitigation measures as needed, consistent with the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the EIR.

The construction of first, the new right turn lane on Oak Road, and subsequently the access ramp and Iron Horse Trail overcrossing within the existing right turn lane on Jones Road, would result in short-term, temporary impacts on pedestrian and vehicular circulation. On each of these streets, the temporary closure of at least one additional lane may be required during the respective construction periods to provide space for the construction activities, staging of equipment, temporary construction vehicle parking, and storage of construction materials. For Oak Road, the temporary closure of the existing combination through/right turn lane may be four to six weeks in duration. For Jones Road, the through lane adjacent to the existing right turn lane may be temporarily closed for a considerably longer period.

To mitigate circulation impacts, the initial study recommends the following measures:

#### Scheduling

- Scheduling of construction shifts or lane closures so that the majority of construction related traffic/circulation disruption occurs outside of peak commuting hours;
- Scheduling, to the maximum extent possible, delivery of construction materials outside of peak commuting hours.

#### Public Notification

- Require construction contractor to give notification to public agencies and to the general public to alert them in advance of lane closures;
- Changeable Message Sign (CMS) boards or other appropriate notification devices shall be installed at least 3 consecutive days prior to a lane closure;
- As needed, warning signs shall be placed at appropriate locations in advance of the construction operation to alert traffic within the affected streets, and cones or other approved devices shall be placed to safely channel pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

#### Safe Crossings, Vehicular Access, and Barriers

- Prior to the construction of the dedicated new right turn lane on Oak Road, the construction contractor shall temporarily reroute pedestrian traffic to the west side of Oak Road, the east side of Oak Road shall be temporarily closed to pedestrian access;
- At least three traffic lanes (northbound left, through or right turn) on Oak Road shall be

- maintained;
- During construction of the access ramps and overcrossing of Treat Boulevard at Jones Road, the construction contractor shall temporarily reroute pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the west side of Jones Road, the east side of Jones Road shall be temporarily closed to pedestrian access;
- At least one combination left turn/through northbound traffic lane on Jones Road shall be maintained;
- The construction contractor shall place and maintain barriers and warning devices necessary for safety of the general public.
- Flagmen shall be provided as necessary to control the flow and circulation of traffic and pedestrian crossings.

Maintenance of Existing Building Access

- The construction contractor shall maintain the existing pedestrian access to the Treat Boulevard/Jones Road building entry to the John Muir Health Center Administrative Offices at 1400 Treat Boulevard.

The mitigation measures for noise and the measures for traffic circulation conflict. Each of the design alternatives require construction crews to work on the actual installation of the overcrossing directly over Treat Blvd. during evenings and weekends to avoid closure of Treat Blvd. during peak periods and other traffic impacts. Staff recommends that the noise mitigation measure be modified to allow work outside the listed hours, provided neighbors are notified with a schedule.

H. PROJECT COSTS:

According to design estimates, the cost of the project could vary between \$2.68 million and \$3.89 Million, depending on the design selected. The funding earmarked for this overcrossing are not County General Fund Revenues, but rather are specific revenues (including Redevelopment Tax Increments, developer fees, Measure C Transportation Funds, and federal transportation funds) which must be used for transportation and infrastructure projects. These funds are not available for the funding of schools, police, and other general governmental purposes.

The Iron Horse Trail Overcrossing is provided for in the Adopted Specific Plan for the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area. The Overcrossing is a component part of the circulation element of the Pleasant Hill BART Specific Plan, which emphasizes activities and projects, which facilitate alternative mode (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, but, etc.) access to the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area. The Environmental Impact Report prepared at the time the County was considering the Pleasant Hill BART Specific Plan indicated that a significant fraction of vehicular trips could be converted into alternative modes if a program of enhancements such as the proposed Iron Horse Trail Overcrossing were provided.

I. COLOR:

The choice of color is ultimately an aesthetic one. Lighter colors make the structure stand out more from its surroundings, whereas darker colors tend to make the structure blend into its surroundings. Public comment suggests a preference for a preference for a darker color, however that was not unanimous.

## XII. CONCLUSION

The Community Development Department recommend the Planning Commission forward a bridge design recommendation to the County Board of Supervisors.

In formulating its recommendation, the Commission may wish to consider the following staff observation/recommendations:

1. Design selections- Over 73% of the first place votes went to a design that makes a statement, i.e., either the railroad truss, arch, or cable-stay options. This suggests that a strong majority of the public wants a design choice. The cable-stay received by far the lowest support and tended to receive the most negative comments. Therefore, the two design choices that would seem to be available are the railroad truss and the arch. Many commenters seemed to treat these two choices interchangeably, e.g., comments were made in support of both the arch and the railroad truss because they “were similar” to the Ygnacio Valley overcrossing. Both the railroad truss and the arch design are suggestive of the railroad heritage, although the railroad truss may have a stronger connection in this area. Comments tended to be split as to whether the Treat Blvd. overcrossing should be different than the Ygnacio Valley Road overcrossing, some feeling the two are different places therefore the designs should be different, others feeling a common theme was appropriate.

Staff recognizing that the choice is ultimately an aesthetic one and not a technical one. Therefore subjective, not technical/objective considerations control. It is staff’s recommendation that an arch design be selected, because the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area is characterized by high quality and distinguished design and has developed identity.

2. Costs – The bridge costs do vary among the designs. Based on best available information at this time, the County has sufficient funds to move forward on any of the four design choices. Cost is not a constraint in design choice.
3. Color - The choice of color will be an important one. The predominance of opinion suggests a darker color so that the facility blends in to the surroundings to a degree. The street light and public signage program for the Pleasant Hill BART Station Area is a dark forest green, which staff recommends be retained.