



LOWERING THE RAILROAD TRACKS THROUGH CARLSBAD VILLAGE AND BARRIO

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT

Lowering the Railroad Tracks Through Carlsbad Village and Barrio Public Input Report

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Introduction

The City of Carlsbad values community engagement based on several key principles:

- Members of the public have a right to be involved in decisions affecting their lives.
- Adequate time and resources are provided to allow for meaningful public involvement.
- The public involvement planning process is begun at the earliest stages of decision-making.
- Opportunities for public involvement are clearly defined, including the decision or decisions to be made, the decision-making process and how the public has influenced the decision.
- It is the city’s responsibility to seek out and facilitate the involvement of those interested in or affected by a decision. The city errs on the side of reaching out to people who might not be interested, rather than potentially missing people who are.
- Diverse participation helps ensure a broad range of perspectives is considered.
- Public involvement processes are designed to enable members of the public to participate in ways comfortable and convenient for them.
- City staff provide balanced and factual information to the public and do not engage in advocacy.
- Public dialogue strives for a focus on values over interests and positions.
- Members of the public do not need to have technical expertise to provide valuable input. Their everyday experiences as members of the community have intrinsic value to even the most complex and technical decisions.
- Public involvement planning is coordinated across all city departments to ensure consistency and avoid process fatigue.



Lowering the Railroad Tracks Through Carlsbad Village and Barrio

Train traffic through Carlsbad is anticipated to double by 2035. To accommodate the increase, the San Diego Association of Governments is planning to build a second set of train tracks alongside the existing tracks throughout the region. “Double tracking” has already been built in southern Carlsbad and throughout the LOSSAN corridor that runs from San Luis Obispo to San Diego and is now being explored for northern Carlsbad.

In 2014, the Carlsbad City Council made it a city priority to pursue lowering the railroad tracks through Carlsbad Village and Barrio due to impacts of increased train traffic and emergency response times. Lowering the tracks would involve trenching and constructing the double tracks below existing street elevations.

The City of Carlsbad, SANDAG and North County Transit District completed a study in 2017, determining that lowering the railroad tracks in a trench is technically feasible and has economic benefits. Two alternatives are now under evaluation: a short trench and long trench.

Both alternatives would double track across the Buena Vista Lagoon and require replacement of the Carlsbad Boulevard overcrossing bridge. Trenching would begin just south of the lagoon at Carlsbad Boulevard.

The short trench alternative spans 6,000 feet and would run from Carlsbad Boulevard to the north side of Tamarack Avenue. It would construct new vehicle overpasses at Grand Avenue, Carlsbad Village Drive and Oak Avenue, with new pedestrian/cyclist overpasses at Beech Avenue/Carlsbad Village Station and Chestnut Avenue.

The long trench alternative spans 8,400 feet and would run from Carlsbad Boulevard to the south side of Tamarack Avenue. It would include vehicle overpasses at Grand Avenue, Carlsbad Village Drive, Oak Avenue, Chestnut Avenue and Tamarack Avenue, with a new pedestrian/cyclist overpass at Beech Avenue/Carlsbad Village Station.

To determine the preferred alignment of the proposed railroad trench and gain public input, city staff organized various opportunities to engage the public to review the two proposed alternatives and identify the community’s needs, priorities and values. The public input process consisted of one large public workshop, community group presentations and an online survey.

Public Workshop

The City of Carlsbad, SANDAG and NCTD held a public input workshop to inform the community about the potential project and to seek input about the two proposed alternatives, the short trench and long trench options.

A mailer that included project information and visuals were mailed to all property owners west of the 5 freeway between the Buena Vista Lagoon and Agua Hedionda. The workshop was also

promoted on social media channels including Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor and the city's eblast.

Following a project overview from SANDAG project manager Linda Culp, questions were posed for small group discussions to identify values, community priorities and concerns about the two alternatives.

November 20, 2019
Harding Community Center
6 – 8 p.m.

Community Presentations

The city also coordinated with various Village and Barrio stakeholder groups to give presentations and answer questions.

Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee Meeting
Dec. 4, 2019
Carlsbad business owners and community leaders

Army and Navy Academy
Dec. 6, 2019
Army and Navy board of directors and community leaders

Carlsbad Village Association/Village Voices
Jan. 7, 2020
Village business owners, residents and community leaders

Friends of the Barrio at Lola's
Jan. 10, 2020
Barrio residents and community leaders

The city reached out to the Buena Vista Lagoon Foundation but did not hear back.

The project team also met with the most affected property owners who would be affected by the long trench alternative. The city hosted the group at the Faraday administration building on Dec. 5, 2019.

Online Survey

The [online survey](#) provided an opportunity for members of the public to provide input at a time convenient to them. Topic areas identified at the public workshop helped inform the questions on the online survey. The survey was available in English and in Spanish.

Nov. 21 – Dec. 13, 2019
522 respondents
8691 individual responses
165 comments

About the Findings

By providing multiple ways for the public to provide input, decision makers can hear from a larger and more diverse group of community members. Respondents were asked to disclose where they live and the system prevented more than two responses per computer IP address (a computer's unique address). However, unlike a scientific survey, the findings of this process cannot be generalized to the entire Carlsbad population within a defined level of confidence.

That's why the input in this report should be considered with a similar weight as other qualitative forms of feedback that have always been part of the city's decision-making process, such as comments made at City Council meeting or emails sent to the city expressing an opinion.

Overall Themes

Comments have been categorized for the purpose of identifying key themes. Readers are strongly encouraged to read the verbatim comments in the appendices to get a better understanding of specific ideas, priorities and concerns expressed. Following are some of the key themes from the online comments:

- Noise
- Safety
- Accessibility/access
- Traffic
- Funding/costs
- Emergency access
- Environmental concerns
- Construction impacts

Workshop Input

With approximately 100 participants, the public workshop reflects the input of a small percentage of the overall community. However, by choosing to spend several hours at a public meeting, these community members, the majority who indicated that they live in the immediate areas around the Village and Barrio, demonstrate a high level of interest in this project. For that reason, this input is being reported separately from the online input and deserves unique consideration. Detailed information about the responses for all questions is available in the appendices.

Pros and Cons of Short Trenching Option

Pros:

- Cheaper to build
- No homes acquisition needed
- Keeps Chestnut as a pedestrian/bike only crossing
- Improves accessibility

Cons:

- More traffic delays over long trench option as Tamarack would continue to be an at-grade crossing
- Won't solve noise and pollution issues at Tamarack
- Less safe than long trench option
- Businesses and home owners impacted

Pros and Cons of Long Trenching Option

Pros:

- Improves safety all along Carlsbad Village/Barrio
- Reduces noise and pollution in downtown area including Tamarack
- Improves emergency response times and access
- Improved train operations
- Improves traffic flow
- Does it right the first time- trenches Tamarack

Cons:

- More expensive option
- Chestnut is an all vehicle crossing
- Accessibility/access east-west might increase traffic in neighborhood
- Businesses and home owners impacted
- Longer construction time
- Three properties need to be acquired

Online Input

Input from the public workshop was used to refine questions for the online survey.

Total participants: 522

Total responses: 8691

Comments: 165

Detailed information about the responses for all questions is available in the appendices.

Key Themes From 165 Comments (some comments referenced multiple themes)

[Trenching] Improves safety

Reduces noise and pollution

Improves accessibility

Participants expressed support for the long trench option by a large margin, contingent on learning the sources of funding.

Most would prefer to keep Chestnut pedestrian/bike only (several people listed the short trenching option as their preferred alternative solely due to this difference between the two concepts presented)

Next Steps

The project team plans to give an update about the Alternatives Analysis Report and public input feedback as an informational item to the following:

- City of Carlsbad's Traffic & Mobility Commission – May 4, 2020, 5 p.m. at Carlsbad City Hall, 1200 Carlsbad Village Drive, Carlsbad
- Carlsbad City Council – May 12 at 5 p.m. at the Faraday Center, 1635 Faraday Ave., Carlsbad
- NCTD Board of Directors – May 21, 2 p.m. at NTCD, 810 Mission Ave., Oceanside
- SANDAG Transportation Committee – TBD

No funding sources have been identified yet for the next phase of the project, which will include additional studies. The results of community outreach and studies may be used by decision makers to help choose one of the alternatives- the short trench or long trench alternative.

Once an alternative is selected and additional studies are in progress, there will be multiple opportunities for public input throughout project phases.