



# Alameda Creek Alliance

P.O. Box 2626 • Niles, CA • 94536  
Phone: (510) 499-9185  
E-mail: [alamedacreek@hotmail.com](mailto:alamedacreek@hotmail.com)  
Web: [www.alamedacreek.org](http://www.alamedacreek.org)

*Sent via e-mail to [jack.siauw@dot.ca.gov](mailto:jack.siauw@dot.ca.gov) on 2/26/14*

February 26, 2014

Jack Siauw  
Project Manager  
Caltrans District 4

## **Initial Scoping Comments on Alameda Creek Bridge Replacement Project**

These are initial comments and questions from the Alameda Creek Alliance on the Alameda Creek Bridge Replacement Project. We will likely have additional comments as more information about the project becomes available.

### 1) Need for an additional project-design alternative

We suggest that Caltrans include and evaluate an additional alternative in the EIR for the bridge replacement. We suggest an alternative that replaces the bridge but maintains similar road geometry to existing conditions for the east and west approaches to the bridge, and addresses road safety by slowing traffic on the approaches to the bridge. Even if this additional alternative is not selected, it would be helpful to the public to have Caltrans explain why it would not be feasible.

The four alternatives for the project presented by Caltrans at the February 25, 2014 open house all have essentially the same road footprint, with differing treatments for the east and west approaches. Caltrans should evaluate and explain whether there are other options to meet the project objectives for safety other than the variants of the currently proposed design.

### 2) Explain rationale for design elements

Our concerns about the alternatives for the project presented by Caltrans at the February 25, 2014 open house mostly have to do with the environmental and aesthetic impacts from tree cutting, placing fill in the floodplain, construction of retaining walls, and placement of rip-rap on the creek side of the roadway. Obviously, the alternative with the minimum retaining walls on the east approach is environmentally preferable. Caltrans should explain and justify why and where retaining walls or rip-rap would be needed, and why other materials or designs would not suffice.

### 3) Quantify trees affected by the project

Caltrans should identify the number, species and sizes of all trees that would be cut under the various alternatives.

### 4) Quantify changes in fill in Alameda Creek floodplain and changes in bridge pier area

Caltrans should quantify the existing area of current roadway within the project area which is in

the 100-year floodplain of Alameda Creek. Caltrans should calculate the new area of roadway and fill that would be in the floodplain under the various alternatives. This will help determine whether the project alternatives would have a negative, neutral, or beneficial impact on the hydrology of Alameda Creek. Our understanding is that the piers for the replacement bridge will have a smaller footprint in the active creek channel than the existing bridge piers, under all alternatives, and that there may be potential to remove previous-placed fill from the east footing of the existing bridge. These potentially beneficial impacts should be quantified.

#### 5) Mitigation for previous tree-cutting

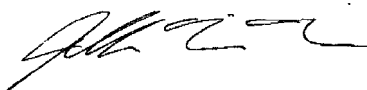
We suggest that Caltrans should complete its required mitigation for the cutting of trees in 2011 along Alameda Creek in lower Niles Canyon as part of the abandoned Niles Canyon State Route 84 Widening Project, before any tree cutting occurs as part of the proposed bridge replacement project. Caltrans is legally obligated to complete replacement tree planting both on site and off site for the trees cut in lower Niles Canyon in 2011. We would like an update on the status of this mitigation and a timeline for completion of replacement tree planting.

#### 6) Cumulative impacts

The EIR for the project should fully evaluate the cumulative impacts of all the road safety improvements contemplated by Caltrans for Highway 84 between Mission Boulevard and Highway 680.

One cumulative impact we would like to see evaluated is potential increase in driving speeds from road geometry and safety improvements, and the potential for increased driving speeds to lead to a raising of the speed limit through the canyon. Caltrans is fond of saying that the posted speed limit is not changing as a result of the project, but the cumulative road "improvements" contemplated throughout the canyon may result in higher driver speeds, resulting in an upward adjustment of the speed limit, thus triggering a future new round of projects to increase design speed of the road.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Miller", written in a cursive style.

Jeff Miller  
Director