



CITY COUNCIL  
**Staff Report**

**Meeting Date:** Sept. 10, 2019  
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Scott Chadwick, City Manager  
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**Subject:** Presentation from the San Diego Association of Governments regarding the Carlsbad Village and Barrio Railroad Trench Alternatives.

**Recommended Action**

Receive a presentation from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) regarding the short trench and long trench alternatives of putting the railroad tracks in a trench in the city's Village and Barrio areas.

**Executive Summary**

The City of Carlsbad, SANDAG and North County Transit District (NCTD) are developing an alternatives analysis for a future railroad trench in the downtown railroad corridor. Two alternatives, long trench and short trench, are under evaluation along the coastal railroad corridor from the Buena Vista Lagoon in the City of Oceanside to just north of the Agua Hedionda lagoon in the City of Carlsbad. The project would place two railroad tracks in a trench below grade, facilitating grade-separated crossings at various locations in the downtown area. The primary difference between the two alternatives is that Tamarack Avenue is a grade-separated crossing in the long trench alternative, but it is an at-grade crossing in the short trench alternative. SANDAG will provide an overview of the project and the trench alternatives study expected to be completed in spring 2020.

**Discussion**

Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner rail corridor is the nation's second busiest, serving six counties and 351 miles along the southern California coastline. This rail corridor, also known as the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) rail corridor, where the project area lies, is shared between Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail, Metrolink and COASTER commuter rail services and BNSF Railway freight services.

Capacity improvements along the railroad corridor are an important component of guiding planning documents at the regional, corridor and statewide levels. For example, San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan, the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan for San Diego, produced by SANDAG, identifies an improved LOSSAN Rail Corridor as a major transportation goal. This plan calls for double tracking, bridge replacements and station improvements such as additional track that will be needed to provide additional passenger and freight rail service as an alternative to the busy Interstate 5.

The Carlsbad Village and Barrio double-track project would construct a second railroad track from Cassidy Street in Oceanside south to and/or through Tamarack Avenue in Carlsbad. The two alternatives would include grade separation of the railroad tracks (existing track and new second track) by constructing them in a trench, beneath the existing street elevations. The first alternative, known as the short trench alternative, would construct the double-track railroad lowered in a trench passing under vehicular overpasses at Grand Avenue, Carlsbad Village Drive and Oak Avenue, with pedestrian overpasses at Beech Avenue/Carlsbad Village Station and Chestnut Avenue. The second alternative is the long trench alternative, which would construct a railroad trench passing under vehicular overpasses at Grand Avenue, Carlsbad Village Drive, Oak Avenue, Chestnut Avenue and Tamarack Avenue, with a pedestrian overpass at Beech Avenue/Carlsbad Village Station. Both trench alternatives would require replacement of the Carlsbad Boulevard overcrossing with a new bridge spanning the tracks. The short trench and long trench alternatives are shown in Exhibit 1.

Current conditions include only four locations for pedestrians and vehicles to cross the railroad tracks in the 1.8 miles between the Buena Vista and Agua Hedionda Lagoons, one grade-separated and three at-grade. The planned grade-separated crossings will eliminate delays to traffic and emergency responders caused by at-grade crossing gate arms that remain down as trains approach and pass by.

In 2014, the City Council decided to pursue lowering the railroad tracks through the Village and Barrio areas due to concerns about the impacts of the increased train traffic and second set of tracks in these two neighborhoods. In 2014, the City of Carlsbad, SANDAG and the NCTD initiated a feasibility study to double-track the railroad tracks in the city's downtown Village area in a railroad trench below grade. The Carlsbad Village Double Track – Railroad Trench Alternative Economic Analysis and Feasibility Study was completed in 2017 and identified that a trench would be feasible in the downtown Village area and would accommodate additional double-tracking that is necessary along the corridor, as identified in San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan. Two trench alternatives were studied at the preliminary level, and total costs ranged from a low of \$215 million for the short trench to a high of \$350 million for the long trench. The alternatives study and preliminary engineering are expected to be finalized in spring 2020. Depending on funding availability and the selected trench alternative, the project would be expected to be completed by 2035.

#### Fiscal Analysis

This item has no fiscal impact.

#### Next Steps

The alternatives study and preliminary engineering for Carlsbad Village and Barrio railroad trench are expected to be completed in spring 2020. In addition, the City of Carlsbad and SANDAG will coordinate implementation of the public outreach and involvement plan and public workshops to support this study in fall 2019.

### **Environmental Evaluation (CEQA)**

Receiving a presentation does not qualify as a "project" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, as it does not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

### **Public Notification**

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act (California Government Code Section 54950 et seq.), published and distributed at least 72 hours prior to the meeting date and time.

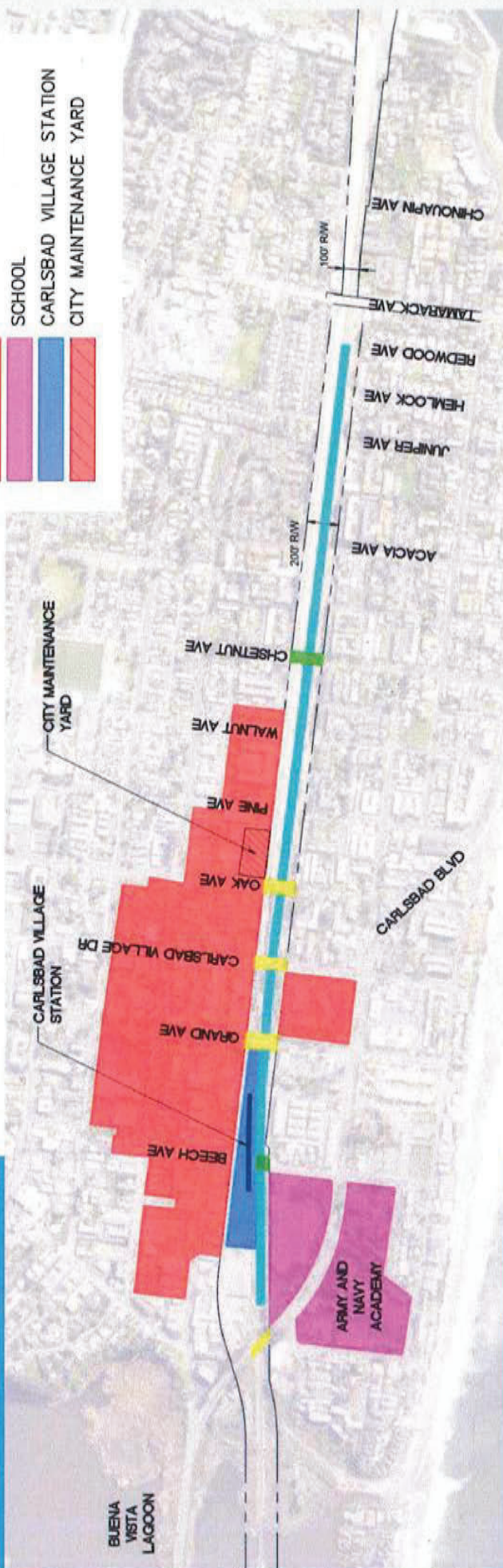
### **Exhibit**

1. Location Map - Carlsbad Village and Barrio Railroad Trench Alternatives.

**LEGEND:**

- PROPOSED TRENCH LIMITS
- EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PEDESTRIAN OVERCROSSING
- VEHICLE OVERCROSSING
- COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
- SCHOOL
- CARLSBAD VILLAGE STATION
- CITY MAINTENANCE YARD

# Short Trench Alternative



# Long Trench Alternative

## LEGEND:

-  PROPOSED TRENCH LIMITS
-  EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY
-  PEDESTRIAN OVERCROSSING
-  VEHICLE OVERCROSSING
-  COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
-  SCHOOL
-  CARLSBAD VILLAGE STATION
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