

## PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102



August 5, 2019

Meenaxi Raval  
City of San Jose  
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3rd Floor Tower  
San Jose, CA 95113

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

August 6, 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Sent via email: meenaxi.raval@sanjoseca.gov

**Re: AVENUES SILICON VALLEY PRIVATE SCHOOL PROJECT  
SCH 2019070270 — Notice of Preparation**

Dear Meenaxi Raval:

The California Public Utilities Commission (Commission/CPUC) has jurisdiction over rail crossings (crossings) in California. CPUC ensures that crossings are safely designed, constructed, and maintained. The Commission's Rail Crossings Engineering Branch (RCEB) is in receipt of the *Notice of Preparation (NOP)* for the proposed Avenues Silicon Valley Private School Project (Project). City of San Jose (City) is the lead agency.

The Project applicant, Avenues: The World School, proposes to develop a private pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school campus on the site. The school would support approximately 2,744 students and 480 faculty and staff. The campus development would include both adaptive re-use of existing buildings and new construction, resulting in a total of seven buildings including 128 classrooms, a theater, gymnasium and aquatic center, administrative space, and a sports field. The Project is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Parkmoor Avenue and Race Street.

The proposed Project will be located adjacent to the skewed, at-grade crossings of Race Street (CPUC # 082D-4.12, DOT# 750157A) and Parkmoor Avenue (CPUC# 082D-4.16, DOT# 750158G) of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). The Race Street crossing is currently equipped with five Commission Standard 9 (flashing light signal assembly with automatic gate arm) warning devices, with two of these located on the south side of the intersection, and one Commission Standard 9-A (Commission Standard 9 with additional flashing light signals over the roadway on a cantilevered arm) warning device. The Parkmoor Avenue crossing is currently equipped with three Commission Standard 9 warning devices, one Commission Standard 9-A device, and one Commission Standard 8 (flashing light signal assembly) warning device. The crossings share a sidewalk across the tracks in the northwest quadrant of the intersection.

Any development adjacent to or near the railroad or light rail transit right-of-way (ROW) should be planned with the safety of the rail corridor in mind. New developments may increase pedestrian or vehicular traffic volumes not only on streets and at intersections, but also at nearby rail crossings. Traffic impact studies should analyze rail crossing safety and potential mitigation measures. Safety improvement measures may include the planning for grade separations or improvements to existing at-grade crossings. Examples of improvements may include but are not limited to: addition or upgrade of crossing warning devices, detectable warning surfaces and edge lines on sidewalks, and pedestrian channelization. Pedestrian and bicycle routes should be designed to clearly prohibit and discourage unauthorized access (trespassing) onto the tracks, except at authorized crossings.

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This crossing is on a shared corridor with Union Pacific Railroad (UP) freight traffic in addition to the VTA light rail transit traffic. The tracks are skewed through the intersection creating a challenging geometry with regards to pedestrian safety.

There have been three pedestrian and bicyclist train accidents over the past 5 years. Pedestrian inattention to the flashing light signals and disregard for oncoming 2<sup>nd</sup> trains have contributed to the incidents. The combination of the VTA light rail station, and both this proposed World School and the BASIS Independent Silicon Valley school in the southeast quadrant of the Race and Parkmoor intersection vastly increase the pedestrian traffic in the area and will lead to increased use of the crosswalks crossing the tracks as students travel between the school and the VTA rail station.

CPUC staff met with the City, VTA, and the Federal Railroad Administration on May 28, 2019 to discuss the issues and mitigation measures. In addition to the questionable pedestrian behavior at these crossings, the existing quiet zone further exacerbates the situation. CPUC staff has also observed many southbound motorists stopping on the tracks in the zone marked "KEEP CLEAR."

The CPUC recommends:

- The school incorporate a rail safety training presentation at the beginning of each school year for both parents and students.
- The project install Commission Standard 9 pedestrian automatic gates with EXIT swing gates and channelization on all sidewalks of the crossings.
- The school install a pedestrian bridge from the school over Race St to provide an avenue to the VTA station without crossing tracks at-grade.
- The project refresh all pavement markings on the adjacent roadways.
- Planning the campus routes from the school to the rail crossing needs to take into account rail crossing safety issues.
- The project install channelization along Race St to prevent pedestrians from jaywalking across Race St. Jaywalking pedestrians can cause queuing back onto the tracks.

In addition, construction or modification of public crossings requires authorization from the Commission. RCEB representatives are available to discuss any potential safety impacts or concerns at crossings. Please continue to keep RCEB informed of the project's development. More information can be found at: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/crossings>.

If you have any questions, please contact Felix Ko at (415) 703-3722, or [fko@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:fko@cpuc.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Felix Ko  
Senior Utilities Engineer  
Rail Crossings Engineering Branch  
Rail Safety Division

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