

PCEP TREE REPLACEMENT FAQ

WHAT IS THE PENINSULA CORRIDOR ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT?

The Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP) is a key component of the Caltrain Modernization Program. The PCEP will electrify the Caltrain Corridor between San Francisco and San Jose to allow the operation of electric trains, as opposed to the diesel-hauled trains that currently provide Caltrain service. The project, which is scheduled to be complete in 2020/2021, will allow Caltrain to increase the number of trains it operates and add passenger capacity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution, and providing other benefits such as improved air quality.

Additional details on the project are available online at: www.caltrain.com/PCEP

WHY ARE THE TREES NEXT TO THE CALTRAIN CORRIDOR BEING PRUNED OR REMOVED?

As stated in the PCEP Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a tree that is located within 10 feet of any electrified project elements (known as the electrical safety zone or vegetation clearance zone) will need to be pruned or removed to provide adequate safety clearance.

Along the Caltrain corridor from San Francisco to San Jose, there are approximately 4,645 trees within approximately 21 feet of the tracks. For this project, Caltrain estimates that 580 trees will be removed but all removed trees will be replaced at a 1:1 or higher ratio.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF A TREE ON MY PROPERTY IS GOING TO BE AFFECTED?

Beginning in the Spring/Summer of 2017, Caltrain will notify you by mail if a tree within your property requires pruning or removal. At that time, Caltrain will also solicit your feedback to determine if you would like the tree replaced on your property, and if so, Caltrain will offer you tree replacement options.

WHAT IS THE TREE REPLACEMENT PROCESS?

Caltrain has made a commitment to replace any tree that needs to be removed as part of the project. In addition, if a tree's canopy needs to be pruned more than 25%, a replacement tree will be offered while the original tree remains in place.

As indicated in the EIR, Caltrain will follow the local jurisdiction's replacement ordinance for replacing trees on private or public property. For trees within Caltrain property, trees will be replaced on a 1:1 ratio.

CAN I CHOOSE WHAT TYPE OF TREE WILL BE REPLANTED?

Property owners will be able to select the type of replacement tree from a list of trees that are either native or established in the area. Information and photographs of the replacement tree options will be provided when the owner is notified about the need to remove the tree for the electrical safety zone.

WHERE WILL REPLACEMENT TREES BE PLANTED?

Private owners can choose to plant the replacement tree anywhere on their property where it will not pose a present or future risk of interfering with the safety zone. On public and Caltrain property, the first priority, where feasible, will be planting the replacement tree as close to the removed tree as possible.

WILL REPLACEMENT TREES BE MAINTAINED? IF SO, HOW OFTEN?

For five years, the health of all replacement trees will be monitored on an annual basis by a professional arborist. Replacement trees will be maintained (i.e., irrigated), as appropriate, to ensure survival. Remedial replacement will occur if a replacement tree does not survive. If, at the end of the five-year monitoring period, a professional arborist determines the tree is considered successfully established, then no further maintenance will be required by Caltrain.

WILL CALTRAIN REQUIRE ACCESS TO MY PROPERTY FOR TREE REPLACEMENT AND MAINTENANCE?

If you request planting of a replacement tree on your property and you want Caltrain to maintain it for five years, written permission for Caltrain to access your property to plant and maintain the tree will be required.

WHEN WILL THE TREE REPLACEMENT OCCUR?

In any given area, the tree replacement process is anticipated to begin when construction of the electrified components of the project are complete. The timing of replacement activities will vary based on location.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT A REPLACEMENT TREE ON MY PROPERTY?

Property owners can decline to have trees replaced on their property. In such instances, Caltrain will either plant the replacement tree on Caltrain property or work with the local jurisdiction to identify an alternative replacement location on public property.

IF MY TREE IS GOING TO BE PRUNED, WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

A professional arborist will develop a recommendation for pruning, based on the individual tree. The recommendation will take into account several factors such as the health, size, and type of tree. The frequency of pruning will depend on the growth of individual trees and will be monitored at least once a year by maintenance staff. Faster growing trees may require annual pruning while some trees may rarely require pruning.

WILL CALTRAIN REQUIRE ACCESS TO MY PROPERTY FOR TREE PRUNING OR REMOVAL?

If a tree requires pruning but the work is accessible from the Caltrain property, no access to your private property will be required.

If a tree located on private property requires removal, or if pruning is only accessible from your property, Caltrain will require access to your property. This access will be negotiated with property owners during the acquisition of an electrical safety easement from the property.

WHAT DID CALTRAIN DO TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF TREES THAT NEED TO BE PRUNED OR REMOVED?

Caltrain conducted a tree canopy assessment of the entire corridor using multiple methods including aerial photography and an assessment from the railroad tracks. An individual tree survey was also conducted along the corridor. In the Draft EIR tree analysis (circulated in 2014) the electrical safety zone was 24 feet from the tracks' centerline. With refined design, in the Final EIR (certified in 2015) Caltrain was able to decrease the electrical safety zone to 21 feet from the tracks' centerline. Caltrain also implemented mitigation measures identified in the EIR, examining different pole configurations which resulted in a further reduction of the number of impacted trees. Through this process, the number of trees to be removed decreased by 74% (from 2,220 in the Draft EIR to 580 post Final EIR design work).

WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Website: www.caltrain.com/pcep

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Email: trees@caltrain.com