

### 2.1 Project Overview

The Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District), in coordination with the City of San Rafael (City), Marin County Transit District (Marin Transit), Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), and Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART), plans to replace the transit center in Downtown San Rafael (known as the San Rafael Transit Center, or the C. Paul Bettini Transit Center). The proposed San Rafael Transit Center Replacement Project (proposed project) is needed primarily to replace the existing transit center following the impact on some of the transit center facilities that resulted from the implementation of the SMART Phase 2 line to Larkspur. A new transit center solution in Downtown San Rafael would address near-term and long-term transit needs while improving the desirability and usability of transit for the local community and region.

### 2.2 Project Background

The San Rafael Transit Center, also known as the C. Paul Bettini Transit Center, is owned by the District, which operates Golden Gate Transit regional and inter-county bus transit services. Figure 2-1 shows the transit center's regional location. The transit center is in Downtown San Rafael, between 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Tamalpais Avenue, and Hetherton Street (see Figure 2-2). With over 800 bus trips daily and 17 operating bus bays, the transit center is the largest regional transit hub in Marin County, providing access to the regional transportation network for area residents and a key transfer point for employees, visitors, and students in San Rafael and the greater North Bay region. The transit center primarily serves bus routes operated by Golden Gate Transit and Marin Transit, but Sonoma County Transit, Sonoma County Airport Express, Greyhound, and paratransit services also use the transit center. On weekdays, there are approximately 9,000 bus boardings and alightings at the transit center. Downtown San Rafael is an important destination, with nearly half of the passengers traveling to or from Downtown and the remaining riders making transfers to other destinations. The 17 bus bays are fully occupied at times during the peak-period pulse. Figure 2-3 shows the layout of the existing transit center.

In August 2017, the SMART District commenced passenger rail service on its initial corridor, consisting of 43 miles of rail and 10 stations (Phase 1) in Sonoma and Marin Counties. SMART's Phase 1 corridor parallels U.S. Highway 101 (US-101) beginning at the Sonoma County Airport and terminating in Downtown San Rafael just north of the transit center. SMART riders transferring from the Downtown San Rafael SMART station—located north of 3rd Street—to access the existing transit center south of 3rd Street, as well as riders originating from Downtown San Rafael, must navigate a high volume of local and regional vehicular traffic along 3rd Street.

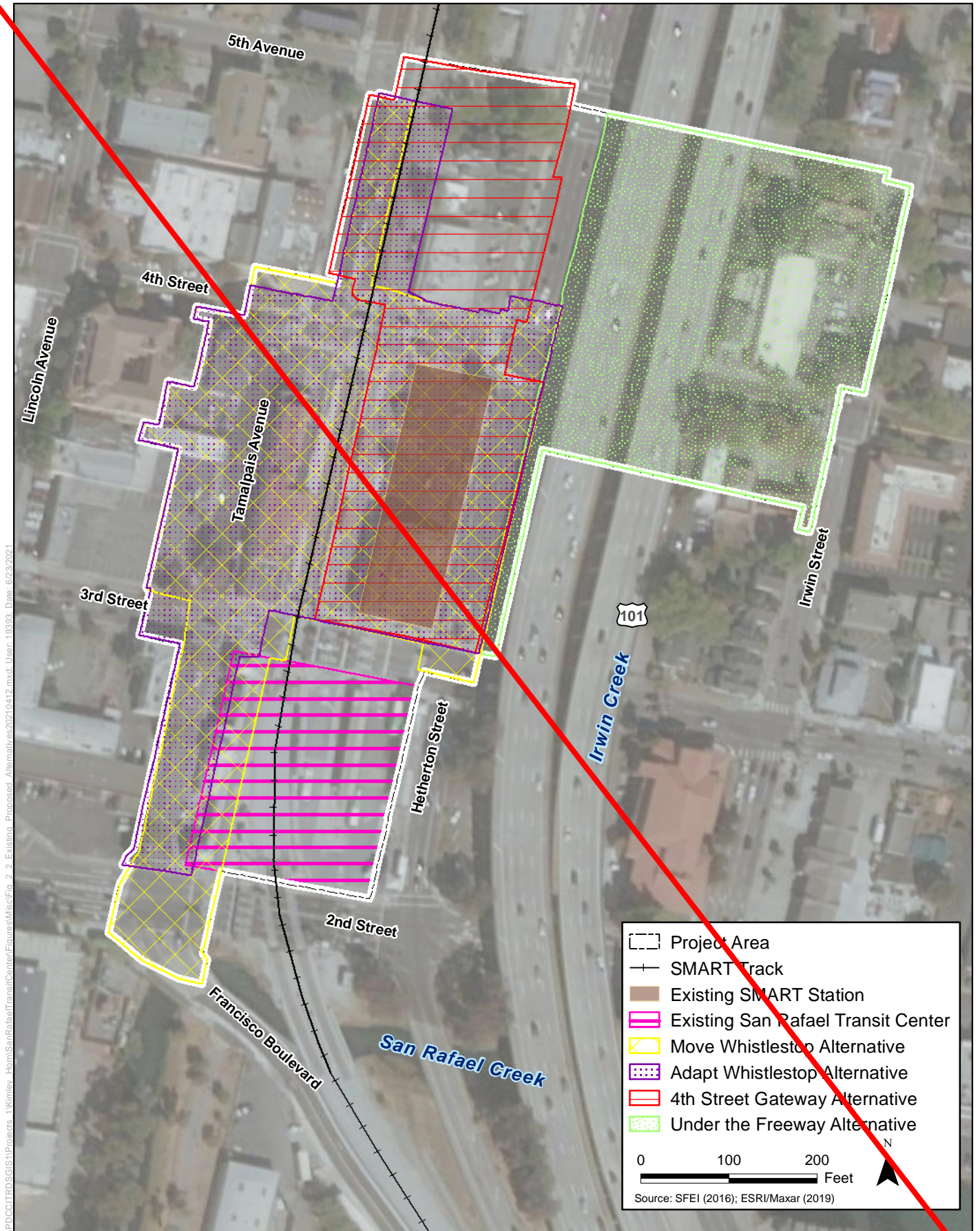


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Figure 2-1  
Regional Location Map



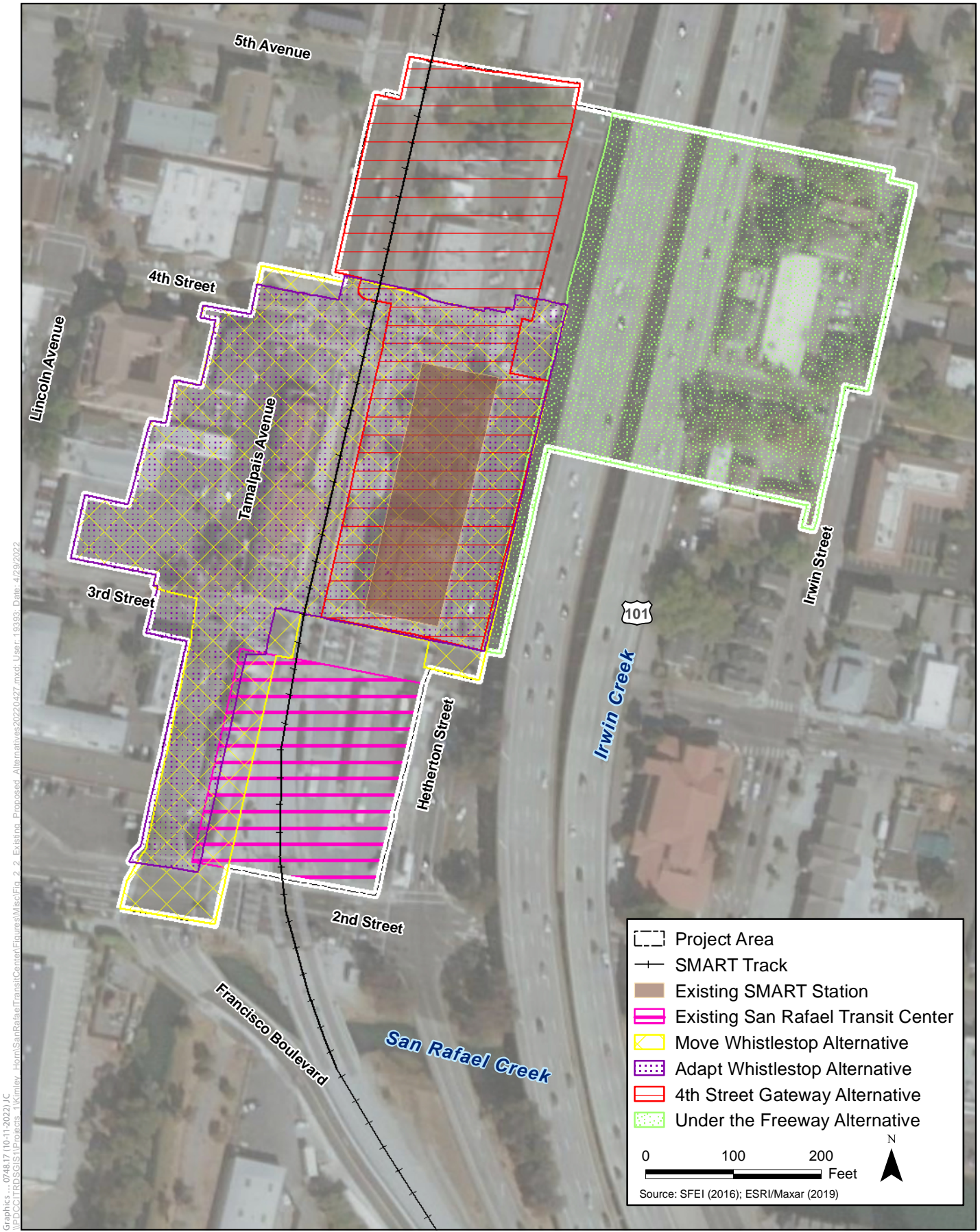


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**Figure 2-2**  
**Existing San Rafael Transit Center and Proposed Alternatives**



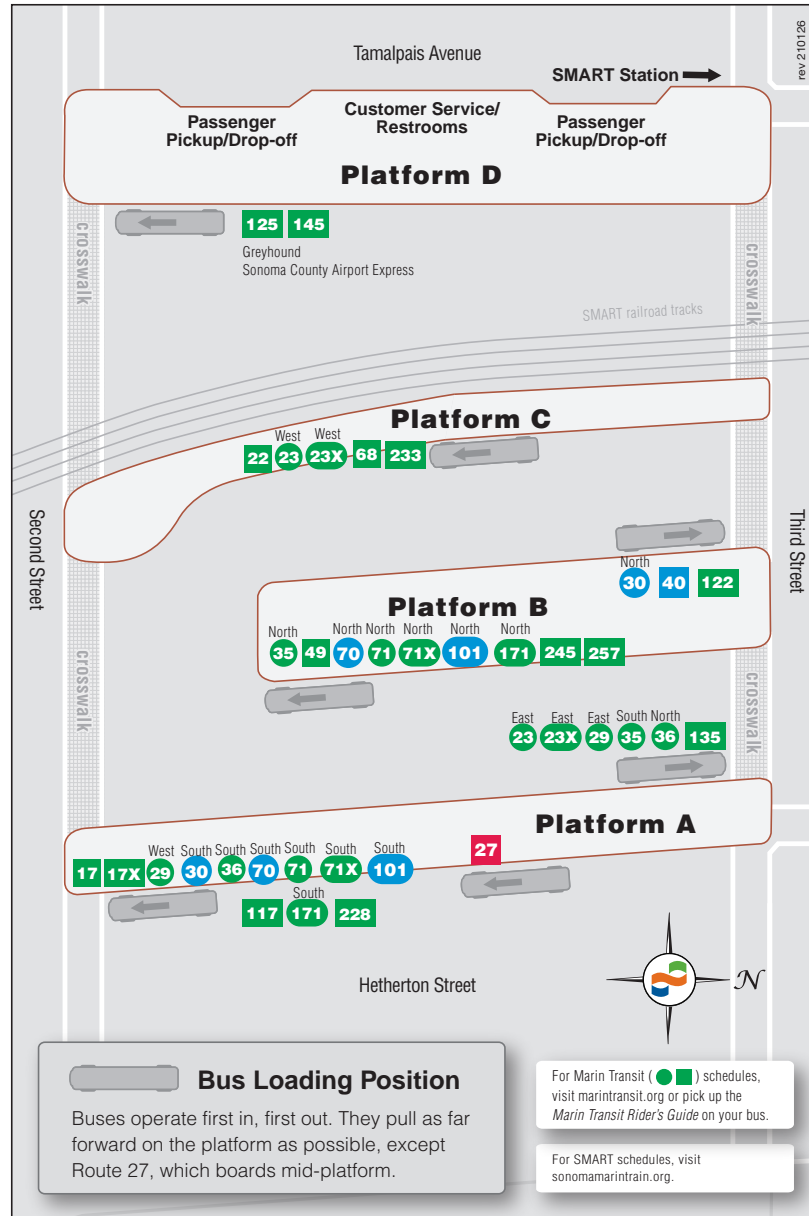


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**Updated Figure 2-2**  
**Existing San Rafael Transit Center and Proposed Alternatives**





Source: [www.sonomamarintrain.org](http://www.sonomamarintrain.org), 2021



**Figure 2-3**  
**Existing Transit Center Layout**



Phase 2 of the SMART project, which completed construction and began service in late 2019, extended passenger rail service from its previous Downtown San Rafael terminus to Larkspur. The southward extension of SMART required the construction of two sets of tracks through the middle of the existing transit center site south of 3rd Street. The SMART Phase 2 line bisected the existing transit center; reconfigured Platforms C and B, negatively affecting bus circulation and bus bay flexibility within and around the transit center; and disrupted pedestrian access and transfer activity among the remaining platforms at the site. This change affected how buses and people access and travel through the transit center and reduced the amount of space available for buses and riders, which was detrimental to bus, vehicle, and pedestrian access and safety. As a result, the transit center must be relocated to another location in Downtown San Rafael.

## 2.3 Project Objectives

The District, in coordination with the City, Marin Transit, TAM, and SMART, plans to replace the transit center in Downtown San Rafael. The proposed project is needed primarily to replace the existing transit center following the loss of some of the transit center facilities that resulted from the implementation of the SMART Phase 2 line to Larkspur. Specifically, the purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Provide improved transit connectivity and ease of use in and around Downtown San Rafael.
- Enhance local and regional transit use by bringing together multiple modes of the transportation network—including the SMART-bus connection—into a hub that affords transit users the safest, most efficient means of using bus and rail services.
- Efficiently accommodate transit users and services, optimize operating costs, and improve transit desirability.
- Design a functional, attractive, and cost-effective facility that can meet long-term projected service levels and be implemented in an expeditious manner, so as to minimize the period of use of the interim facility.
- Provide a transit facility that is readily accessible to individuals with disabilities, transit users, and transit-dependent populations, including those with low incomes.
- Provide a secure, safe, and inviting space for transit patrons.
- Create a more accessible transit facility for all users by reducing vehicular, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian conflicts and improving safety.
- Provide convenient, pedestrian connections to surrounding land uses.

A new transit center solution in Downtown San Rafael would address near-term and long-term transit needs while improving the desirability and usability of transit for the local community and region. It would also, to the extent feasible, minimize traffic congestion and facilitate efficient transit operations while also promoting pedestrian safety.

In addition to the project objectives described above, the City of San Rafael developed design goals for the proposed project. These goals are outlined in the 2018 San Rafael Transit Center Guidance Report, included as Appendix C, and are distinct from the District's project objectives, which are specifically formed to assist the District in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate



in the EIR that would avoid or minimize potentially significant project impacts and would aid it in preparing findings and related materials. The City’s design goals, included here for informational purposes, are to maximize 4th Street vitality, clearly define the San Rafael Transit Center access routes, improve utilization of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way (under the US-101 overpass), demonstrate sustainable design, and preserve 930 Tamalpais Avenue (also referred to as the Whistlestop building).

## 2.4 Project Location

The San Rafael Transit Center is in Downtown San Rafael, between 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Tamalpais Avenue, and Hetherton Street (see Figure 2-2). There are four project alternatives being considered for this project: Move Whistlestop Alternative (the preferred alternative), Adapt Whistlestop Alternative, 4th Street Gateway Alternative, and Under the Freeway Alternative. All project alternatives are within Downtown San Rafael. Each alternative is within 500 feet of the existing San Rafael Transit Center and is bordered with a mix of office, residential, and retail uses. See Sections 2.5 and 2.6 below for more details regarding the specific location and boundaries of each alternative. Table 2-1 shows the land use and zoning designation for each parcel where the four build alternatives would be located. In August 2021, the City adopted *San Rafael General Plan 2040*, which revised the land use and zoning designations in the Downtown area. The footprint of the preferred alternative and build alternatives is now designated in the *Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan’s* form-based code as T5MS (Main Street) and T5N.

**Updated Table 2-1. Land Use and Zoning Designations of the Build Alternative Footprints**

| Parcel Number                        | Land Use- and Zoning Designation                    | Address                     |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Move Whistlestop Alternative</b>  |   |                             |
| 011-279-07                           | <del>Mixed Use Public/Quasi-Public</del> T5N 50/70  | N/A                         |
| 011-279-01 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Public/Quasi-Public</del> T5MS 70/90 | 800 Tamalpais Avenue        |
| 014-121-14 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 666 3rd Street              |
| 011-277-02                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 680 3rd Street              |
| 011-277-01 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 930 Tamalpais Avenue        |
| 011-275-13 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 706 3rd Street              |
| 011-275-05                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | N/A                         |
| 011-275-04 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 927 Tamalpais Avenue        |
| 011-275-01                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 729 4th Street              |
| 011-275-02                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 709 4th Street Unit 200     |
| 011-275-03 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 701 4th Street              |
| <b>Adapt Whistlestop Alternative</b> |   |                             |
| <u>011-279-07</u>                    | <u>T5MS 70/90</u>                                   | <u>N/A</u>                  |
| <u>011-279-01<sup>1</sup></u>        | <u>T5MS 70/90</u>                                   | <u>800 Tamalpais Avenue</u> |
| 014-121-14 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 666 3rd Street              |
| 011-277-02                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 680 3rd Street              |
| 011-277-01                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 930 Tamalpais Avenue        |
| 011-275-13 <sup>1</sup>              | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | 706 3rd Street              |
| 011-275-05                           | <del>Mixed Use Hetherton Office</del> T5MS 70/90    | N/A                         |



| Parcel Number                         | Land Use- and Zoning Designation                          | Address                   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 011-275-04 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 927 Tamalpais Avenue      |
| 011-275-01                            | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 729 4th Street            |
| 011-275-02                            | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 709 4th Street Unit 200   |
| 011-275-03 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 701 4th Street            |
| <b>4th Street Gateway Alternative</b> |   |                           |
| 014-121-14 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 666 3rd Street            |
| 011-277-02 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 680 3rd Street            |
| 014-084-14 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 1006 Tamalpais Avenue     |
| 014-084-13 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 637 5th Avenue            |
| 014-084-02 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Hetherton OfficeT5MS 70/90</del>           | 633 5th Avenue            |
| <b>Under the Freeway Alternative</b>  |   |                           |
| 014-122-12 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Commercial/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del>  | 915 Irwin Street          |
| 014-122-13 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Commercial/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del>  | 615 4th Street            |
| 014-085-07 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Commercial/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del>  | 610 4th Street            |
| 014-085-09 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Commercial/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del>  | 1001 Irwin Street         |
| 014-085-10 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Residential/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del> | 1011 Irwin Street         |
| 014-085-11 <sup>1</sup>               | <del>Mixed Use-Residential/Office DistrictT5N 50/70</del> | 1015 Irwin Street         |
| <u>N/A</u>                            | <u>Park-and-ride lot owned by Caltrans<sup>2</sup></u>    | <u>N/A (under US-101)</u> |
| <u>N/A</u>                            | <u>Park-and-ride lot owned by Caltrans<sup>2</sup></u>    | <u>N/A (under US-101)</u> |

<sup>1</sup> Buildings at this parcel number would be relocated or removed.

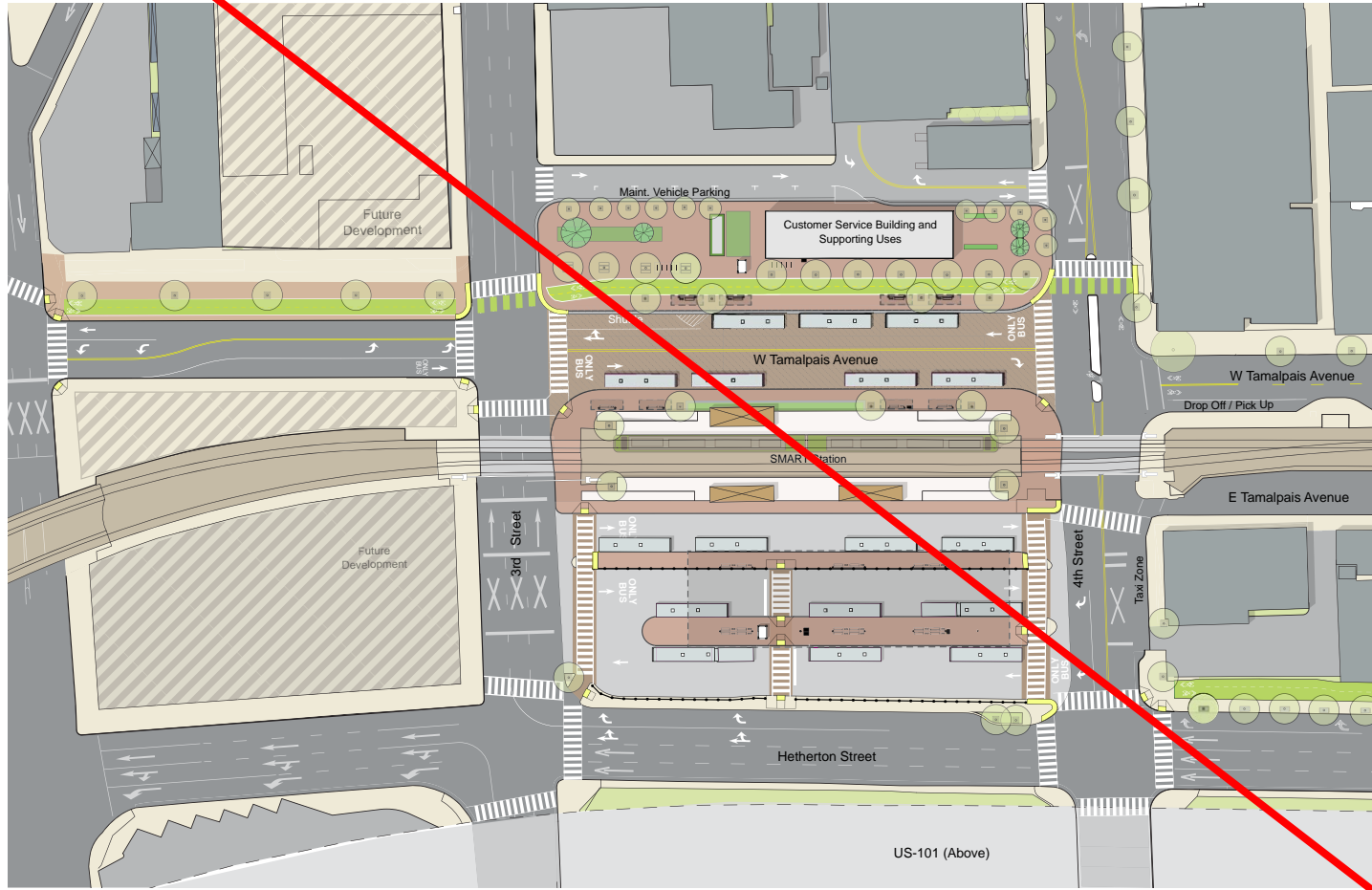
<sup>2</sup> Properties owned by Caltrans are not subject to local land use designations or zoning.

## 2.5 Preferred Alternative: Move Whistlestop
















The District has identified the Move Whistlestop Alternative as its preferred alternative.

### 2.5.1 Existing Uses and Site Characteristics

The site is generally between West Tamalpais Avenue to the west and Hetherton Street to the east, 4th Street to the north, and 3rd Street to the south. Additional improvements are included to shift West Tamalpais Avenue to the east from 2nd Street to 4th Street. This modification would align West Tamalpais Avenue with the block to the north and include construction of a bike path and sidewalk improvements on the west side of West Tamalpais Avenue from 2nd Street to 4th Street. From 2nd to 3rd Street, this improvement would extend into space occupied by the existing transit center. From 3rd Street to 4th Street, this improvement would extend onto the existing west sidewalk along West Tamalpais Avenue. See Figure 2-4 for the site plan. This alternative is on the same block as the existing SMART station. This alternative includes several parcels ~~and is~~ currently occupied by the Whistlestop building, a café, a restaurant, parking spaces, the SMART tracks, and the parcel containing the Citibank building and its affiliated parking lot, also referred to as the “Citibank parcel.” Surrounding the project site are retail, commercial, and office uses to the north, US-101 to the east, the existing San Rafael Transit Center to the south, and restaurants and retail facilities to the west.



### Legend

-  Feature Tree
-  Tree with Tree Well
-  Tree
-  Platform Seating
-  Bus Canopy
-  Landscaped Area
-  Bike Racks
-  Secure Bike Parking
-  Security Kiosk
-  Bike Path
-  Canopy Overhead
-  Ped Safety Barrier
-  Ticket Machine
-  Improved Paving
-  Typical Paving



Graphics ... 0748.17 (6/24/21) AB

Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2021.



**Figure 2-4**  
**Move Whistlestop Alternative**