

ES.1 Introduction

This ~~Draft~~ Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed San Rafael Transit Center Replacement Project (proposed project) and other build alternatives. Four build alternatives are being considered for the proposed project: the Move Whistlestop Alternative (the preferred project), Adapt Whistlestop Alternative, 4th Street Gateway Alternative, and Under the Freeway Alternative. All build alternatives are within Downtown San Rafael. As required by Section 15123 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Executive Summary contains the following sections.

- Project Overview
- Project Objectives
- Preferred Project
- Other Build Alternatives
- No Project Alternative
- Significant and Unavoidable Impacts
- Potential Areas of Controversy and Issues to Be Resolved

ES.2 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. 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. 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 both local residents and regional commuters.

ES.3 Project Objectives

The project objectives are 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 local residents and regional commuters. It would also, to the extent feasible, minimize traffic congestion and facilitate efficient transit operations while also promoting pedestrian safety.

Table ES-1 provides a comparison of the potential impacts of the three build alternatives compared to the impacts of the preferred alternative project, by resource topic.

ES.4 Preferred Project

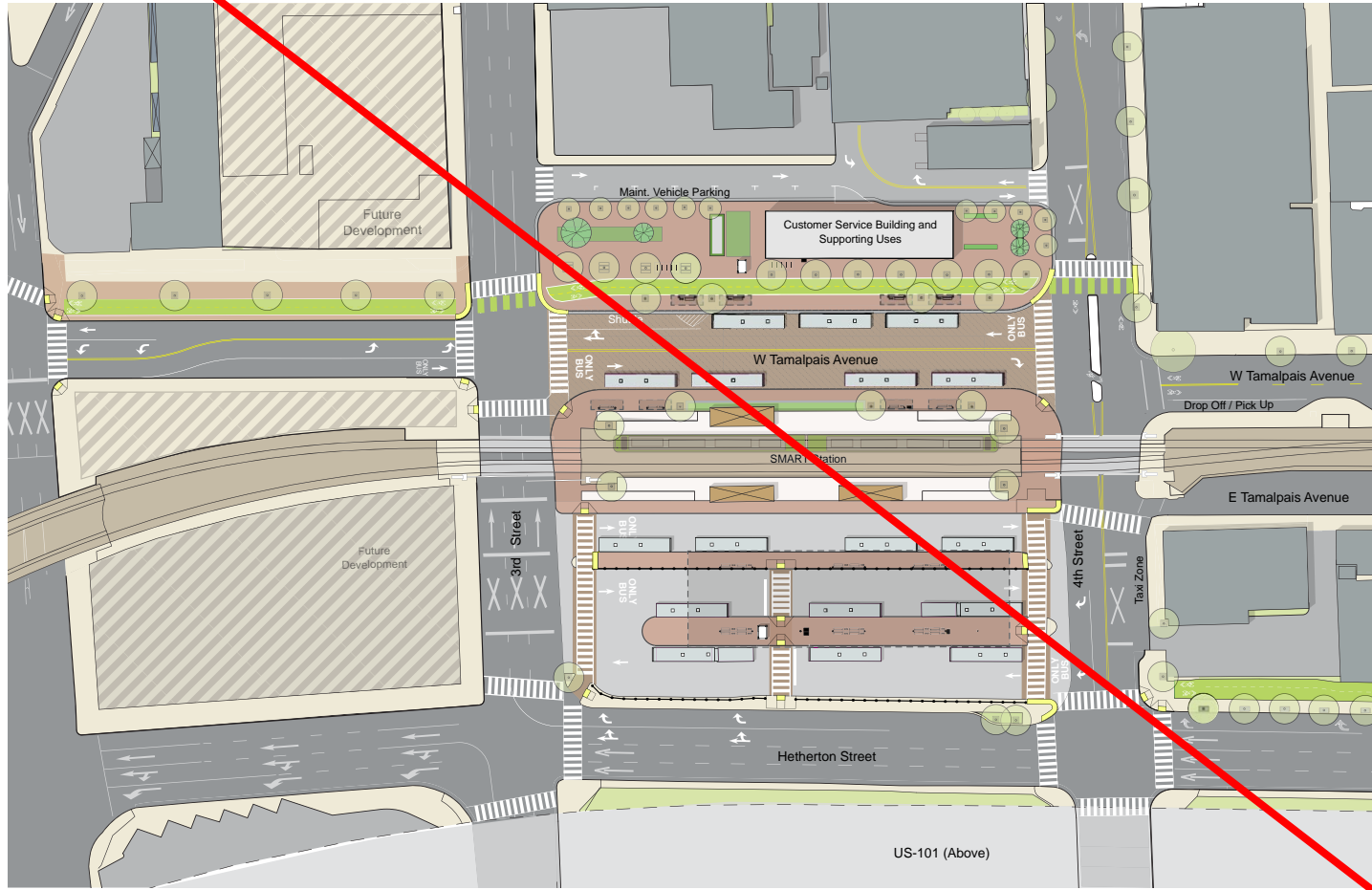
The Move Whistlestop Alternative has been identified as the District's preferred alternative project. The site is generally between West Tamalpais Avenue to the west, Hetherston Street to the east, 4th Street to the north, and 3rd Street to the south. Additional improvements are included to shift West 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 and from 3rd Street to 4th Street, this improvement would extend onto the existing west sidewalk along West Tamalpais Avenue. See Figure ES-1 for the site plan.

The Move Whistlestop Alternative would feature five platforms, A through E, and one District building. It would utilize the curbside bays on both sides of West Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets. West Tamalpais Avenue between 2nd and 4th Streets would be shifted east to be more proximate to the SMART tracks. The Whistlestop building would be relocated to the west side of West Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets or demolished and. ~~Alternatively,~~ a new building ~~could be~~ constructed utilizing similar façades or architectural elements from structures currently on the Whistlestop site.¹ This building would include District customer service and operations building space. The District building would be one story and an estimated 3,000 square feet. It would include a driver break room with restrooms, District offices and customer support area with restrooms and a kitchen, and a public lobby with a service counter and restrooms.
















¹ Should relocation become infeasible due to engineering or structural concerns, accessibility concerns, or feedback from the Community Design Advisory Group, the Whistlestop building could also be demolished and a new building constructed at the current location of 703-705 4th Street and 927 Tamalpais Avenue.

Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets would be limited to buses only. Bus bays on the parcel containing the Citibank building and its affiliated parking lot, also referred to as the “Citibank parcel,” would be accessed via driveways along 3rd and 4th Streets. The area west of West Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets (i.e., space not utilized by the relocated Whistlestop building) would be provided for public plazas, customer service, bicycle parking, and/or transit-supportive land uses. The existing SMART pick-up/drop-off area on East Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets would be removed and replaced with a pick-up/drop-off area in a new access alley constructed to the west of West Tamalpais Avenue, connecting between 3rd Street and 4th Street for six vehicles on West Tamalpais Avenue between 4th Street and 5th Avenue. The new access alley would also contain maintenance vehicle parking for six District vehicles. This would connect to a new driveway on 4th Street between Tamalpais Avenue and Lincoln Avenue that would replace the removed driveway on West Tamalpais Avenue to the condo complex at Lincoln Avenue and 4th Street. Fifty feet of shuttle parking would be provided on West Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd Street and 4th Street. ~~Maintenance vehicle parking for six District vehicles would be provided on a new access alley constructed at the western edge of the site, connecting between 3rd Street and 4th Street. This would connect to a new driveway on 4th Street between Tamalpais Avenue and Lincoln Avenue to replace the removed driveway on West Tamalpais Avenue to the condo complex at Lincoln Avenue and 4th Street.~~ Construction of the bicycle path on Tamalpais Avenue from 2nd Street to 4th Street, as described in Section 2.5.1, would reflect implementation of one of the City’s planned bicycle infrastructure improvements. This bike path would connect to the Mahon Creek Path. Additionally, the Move Whistlestop Alternative would include new on-street parking on West Tamalpais Avenue between 2nd Street and 3rd Street.

Refer to Table ES-2 for a summary of the environmental impacts of the Move Whistlestop Alternative.



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



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







Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2021.



Figure ES-1
Move Whistlestop Alternative



Legend

-  Feature Tree
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-  Bus Canopy
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-  Typical Paving



Graphics ... 0748.17 (10-12-2022).JC

Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2022.



**Updated Figure ES-1
Move Whistlestop Alternative**

ES.5 Other Build Alternatives

This EIR analyzes three other build alternatives at an equal level of detail. The build alternatives vary in site area and location as well as specific features. Similar to the preferred project, all build alternatives have the following components:

- Installation of 17 straight-curb bus bays to accommodate transit, airport coach services, and Greyhound services at the transit center
- Provision of paratransit, pick-up/drop-off, maintenance vehicle, and shuttle curb space
- Provision of bicycle parking, including racks and lockers
- Installation of minimum 9-foot-wide platforms adjacent to bus bays
- Installation of passenger amenities including weather protection (such as shelters or canopies) and seating
- Installation of other features including public art, security, and wayfinding signage
- Provision of a roughly 3,000-square-foot building including customer service, public restrooms, driver relief facilities, small retail, maintenance, and security

Adapt Whistlestop Alternative: This alternative site is generally between West Tamalpais Avenue to the east, Hetherton Street to the west, 4th Street to the north, and 3rd Street to the south. This alternative would include the construction of a bike path and pedestrian improvements on the west side of West Tamalpais Avenue from 2nd Street to 4th Street. See Figure ES-2 for the site plan. This alternative is on the same block as the existing SMART station. This alternative site crosses nine parcels currently occupied by the Whistlestop building, a café, a restaurant, parking spaces, the SMART tracks, and the Citibank parcel. Uses surrounding the project site include retail, commercial, and office uses to the north, U.S. Highway 101 (US-101) to the east, the existing San Rafael Transit Center to the south, and restaurants, residential, and retail facilities to the west.

The Adapt Whistlestop Alternative would feature five platforms, A through E, and one District building. There would be 17 straight-curb bus bays to accommodate transit, airport coach services, and Greyhound services at the transit center. Each bus bay would have a minimum 9-foot-wide platform adjacent and platforms would provide passenger amenities including weather protection (such as shelters or canopies) and seating. Paratransit, pick-up/drop-off, maintenance vehicle, and shuttle curb space would be provided. Other features would include public art, security, provision for bicycle parking including racks and lockers, and wayfinding signage. The Whistlestop building (minus the Jackson Café) would be renovated or remodeled to serve as District customer service and operations building space. Space would be provided for public plazas, customer service, bicycle parking, and/or transit-supportive land uses. Construction of the bicycle path on Tamalpais Avenue from 2nd Street to 4th Street would reflect implementation of one of the City's planned bicycle infrastructure improvements. This bike path would connect to the Mahon Creek Path. Additionally, the Adapt Whistlestop Alternative would include new on-street parking on West Tamalpais Avenue between 2nd Street and 3rd Street.

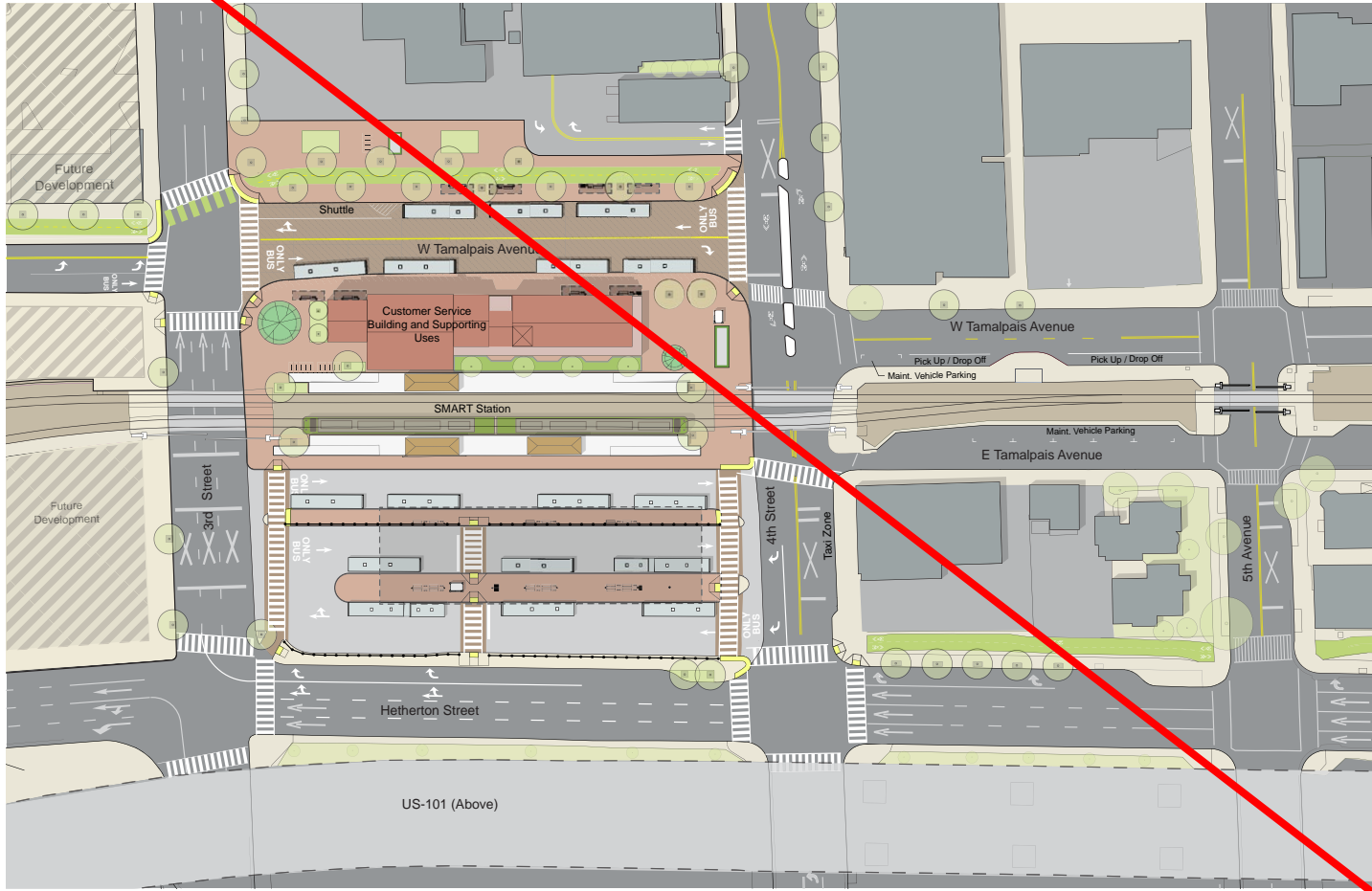
Table ES-2 summarizes the impacts of the Adapt Whistlestop Alternative.

4th Street Gateway Alternative: This alternative site is bounded by 5th Avenue, 3rd Street, Hetherton Street, and the SMART tracks, as well as curb space along West Tamalpais Avenue; see Figure ES-3 for the site plan.
















The 4th Street Gateway Alternative would feature six platforms, A through F, and two District buildings. There would be three on-street bays located curbside on the west side of Hetherton Street between 4th Street and 5th Avenue. In order to accommodate these curbside bays, southbound right turns from Hetherton Street to 4th Street would be precluded. On the east side of both sites, space would be provided for public plazas, customer service, bicycle parking, and/or transit-supportive land uses. Table ES-3 summarizes impacts of the 4th Street Gateway Alternative.

Under the Freeway Alternative: This alternative site is generally located beneath US-101 and bounded by 5th Avenue, south of 4th Street, Irwin Street, and Hetherton Street; see Figure ES-4 for the site plan. Underneath US-101 there is a park-and-ride lot, maintained and operated by the California Department of Transportation. Irwin Creek, underneath US-101, flows parallel to US-101.

The Under the Freeway Alternative would feature six platforms, A through F, and one District building. The affiliated bus bays would be accessed via driveways on 4th Street, Irwin Street, and Hetherton Street. Internal circulation would be provided for the northern block to allow buses accessing bays from either side of the site to egress on either side as well, which is critical given the diverse bus routing accessing the site. Space would be provided for public plazas, customer service, and/or transit-supportive land uses. This would require three bridges/viaducts over Irwin Creek to connect Hetherton Street to the bus bays. Table ES-4 summarizes impacts of the Under the Freeway Alternative.



Legend

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



Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2021.



**Figure ES-2
Adapt Whistlestop Alternative**



Legend

-  Feature Tree
-  Tree with Tree Well
-  Tree
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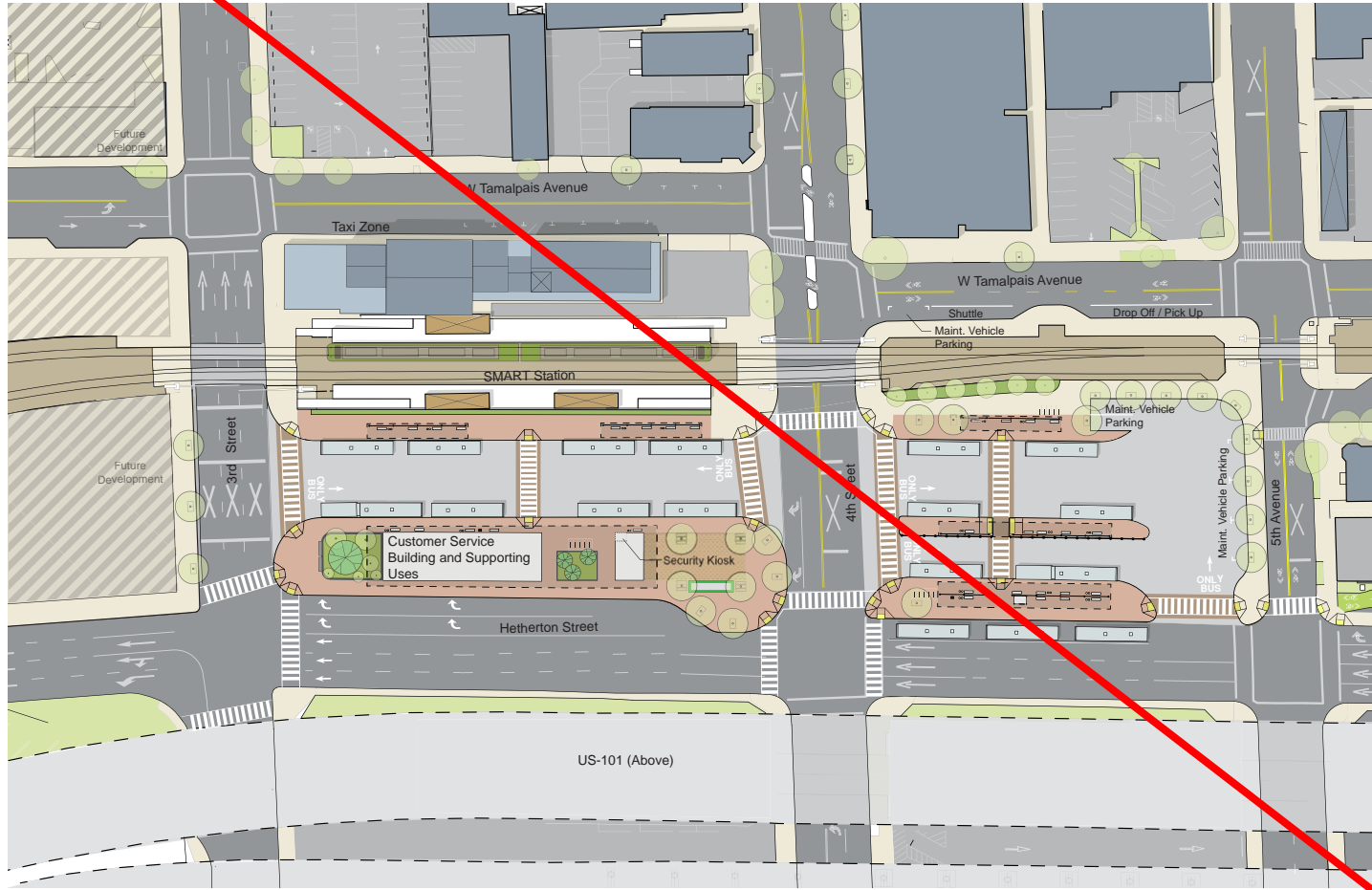


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Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2022.



**Updated Figure ES-2
Adapt Whistlestop Alternative**



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- Feature Tree
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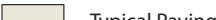
Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2021.



Figure ES-3
4th Street Gateway Alternative



Legend

-  Feature Tree
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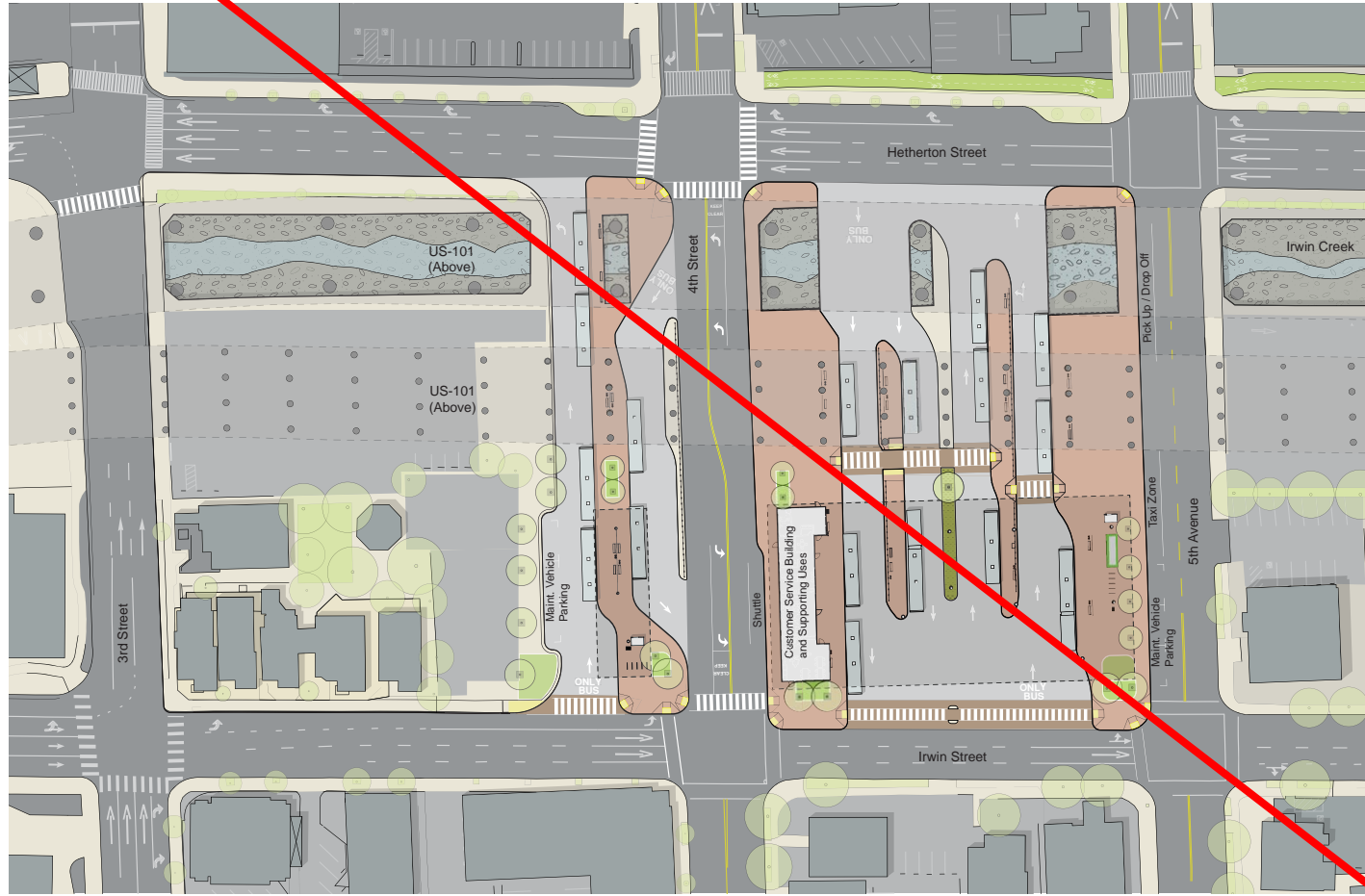


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Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2022.



**Updated Figure ES-3
4th Street Gateway Alternative**



Legend

-  Feature Tree
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Source: Kimley-Horn, Via Architecture, 2021.

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



Figure ES-4
Under the Freeway Alternative