



# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer

**SUBJECT:** SANTA CLARA/ALUM ROCK  
TRANSIT CORRIDOR

**DATE:** 04-22-05

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Approved

Date

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## RECOMMENDATION

Accept status report on the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Transit Corridor project.

## BACKGROUND

As part of the Downtown East Valley Transit Improvement Program, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is developing a project to construct transit improvements along the Santa Clara/ Alum Rock corridor. The Santa Clara/ Alum Rock project is considering two transit mode alternatives to serve the corridor: 1) Enhanced Bus and 2) Single-Car Light Rail Transit. This status report provides information on the following topics:

- Policy Advisory Board (PAB) recommendations
- VTA staff preliminary recommendations
- Project funding issues
- Status of environmental review process

## ANALYSIS

The following is a description of the two transit mode alternatives:

- Enhanced Bus - The Enhanced Bus alternative would provide direct, limited stop service between the Diridon Station and the Eastridge Transit Center and would utilize transit priority measures that may include queue jump lanes and signal priority. Eleven new light rail-type stations would be constructed as part of the project.
- Single-Car Light Rail - The Single Car LRT alternative would provide direct, at-grade service from Diridon Station to the Eastridge Transit Center with 11 stations. Vehicles would operate in separate right-of-way from the Diridon Station along San Fernando and along Almaden Boulevard to Santa Clara Street, and in mixed-flow traffic along the

outside auto lane on Santa Clara and Alum Rock between Almaden Boulevard and King Road. Continuing eastward, vehicles will operate in the median east of King Road.

### Policy Advisory Board Recommendations

At the April 7, 2005 meeting of the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board (PAB), the Board adopted the Single-Car Light Rail as the mode for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Transit Improvement Project and directed that this recommendation be forwarded to the Santa Clara Valley Board of Directors and included in discussions at the April 22, 2005, Board of Directors Workshop (see attached memorandum from the PAB). Members of the PAB include City of San José Vice Mayor Chavez (Board Chairperson), City of San José Councilmember Campos (Board Vice-Chairperson), City of San José Councilmember Cortese and Santa Clara County Supervisors McHugh and Alvarado.

### VTA Staff Preliminary Recommendation

At the April 7, 2005 meeting of the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board, VTA staff presented their preliminary recommendation favoring the Enhanced Bus option. Their recommendation is based on the following key findings:

- Meets projected passenger demand – At peak demand, light rail is limited to 10-minute headways requiring supplemental bus service to meet demand. The Enhanced Bus can operate at 5-minute headways.
- Delivers both operating and capital cost effectiveness – Annualized cost per passenger for Enhanced Bus is less than half the cost per passenger for light rail (\$5.86 to \$12.76, respectively).
- Provides optimal operational flexibility – The light rail alternative will operate in mixed flow with automobiles on a fixed guideway and will be unable to provide the same operational performance and reliability as the rest of the light rail system.
- Allows for expedited implementation – Enhanced Bus service can be operational within a three to four year timeframe. The light rail alternative is dependent upon completion of the Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Project.
- Minimizes construction impacts – A key issue of adjacent businesses and residents. Enhanced Bus will primarily impact station areas and will be of a much shorter duration.

### Project Funding Issues

The Downtown East Valley Transit (DTEV) Improvement Plan includes two primary projects:

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Cost (2003\$)</u>
1A) Capitol Expressway LRT extension to Eastridge	\$291 million
1B) LRT extension from Eastridge to Neiman Light Rail Storage Facility	\$118 million \$ 21 million
2) Santa Clara/ Alum Rock Transit Corridor	
a) Enhanced Bus or	\$ 85 million
b) Single-Car Light Rail	\$298 million

The total budget for the DTEV plan from the 2000 Measure A program is \$550 million (in 2003\$). Based on the estimated year of construction, the escalated project budget is \$655 million. It is noted that the current DTEV budget is not sufficient to fund light rail projects in the both the Capitol corridor (with the extension to Neiman) and the Santa Clara/ Alum Rock corridor.

Additionally, due to the severe economic downturn, the revenue for the Measure A program has been reduced by 27%. As a result, the VTA Board is reviewing a long-range transit strategy for the Measure A program that considers a new tax measure and changes to schedules and funding levels for the various projects in the program, including the DTEV projects. The VTA Board held a workshop to discuss the transit strategy on April 22, 2005 and will continue discussions through June 2005.

#### Status of Environmental Process

It is estimated that circulation of the Draft EIS/R and the public hearings would occur in Fall 2005. The process for formal policy action on the selection of a preferred alternative includes the following sequence of events.

1. Public release of Draft EIS/R
2. Community outreach and public hearing
3. VTA staff recommendation of preferred alternative
4. BBT Committee/ City Council review and recommendation
5. VTA Policy Advisory Board action

The earliest expected schedule for BBT Committee review of the preferred alternative is now October 2005. Staff will continue to monitor the status of the project and recommend a new schedule for the Summer/Fall BBT Committee workplan.

JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation

Attachment