

From: Board.Secretary
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2015 9:27 AM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: VTA Correspondence - Comments on El Camino Real BRT Project; Comments on SR 85; and VTA response to inquiries from Members of the Public

VTA Board of Directors:

We are forwarding to you the following:

From	Topic
Comments from Members of the Public	El Camino Real BRT Project
Comments from Santa Teresa Foothills Neighborhood Association	SR 85 Express Lanes Project
VTA	Staff response to inquiries from Members of the Public at the April 2, 2015, Board of Directors Meeting

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org

COMMENTS ON EL CAMINO REAL BRT PROJECT

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2015 7:46 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: Bus Lanes on El Camino

Please forward this email to all VTA board members.

Sincere thanks,

Pat Marriott

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2015 4:07 PM
To: citycouncil@mountainview.gov
Subject: Bus Lanes on El Camino

Council Members:

Thank you Councilman Siegel and Councilman Inks for being the voices of sanity and voting NO on bus lanes.

I just sent the following LTE to the Mountain View Voice:

Dear Editor:

By endorsing bus lanes on El Camino, Council Members Kasperzak, Rosenberg and Showalter have sent a clear message to residents of Mountain View and nearby communities: Suck it up.

Stuck in traffic? Suck it up.

Alternate routes more congested than ever? Suck it up.

Cars cutting through your quiet neighborhood, making your streets unsafe? Suck it up.

667 trees removed along the route? Suck it up.

VTA official John Ristow claims, "... we have such a rich network of roadways that can accommodate a diversion of traffic. It's a fairly modest and minor amount of traffic diversion."

He must not have read his own agency's Environmental Impact Report (<http://tinyurl.com/lztf7ue>). Each lane on El Camino carries 950 cars/hour. VTA assumes they would divert "to the surrounding roadway system," i.e., residential streets. The plan even lists intersections where diverted traffic would cause "significant and unavoidable traffic impacts."

Councilman Rosenberg thinks rejecting bus lanes means "we want more cars" and considers it a matter of future planning.

Were our local governments planning for the future when they approved millions of square feet of office space up and down the peninsula? Or were they just captivated by the dollar signs inherent in tenants like Google and Facebook?

Our quality of life has rapidly deteriorated because our so-called representatives engage in wishful thinking while ignoring complaints of traffic and parking problems. Then they condemn us for driving cars and being NIMBYs – while our neighborhoods become the collateral damage for their mistakes.

Pat Marriott Oakhurst Ave. Los Altos

I wrote the following guest opinion, which appeared in the Palo Alto Daily Post in January:

VTA bus lane plan raises concerns

Since 2009 the VTA has lobbied to reduce car lanes on El Camino Real from six to four, dedicating the 2 center lanes to buses.

I attended a public input session in Mountain View in November and reviewed the 500-page Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (<http://tinyurl.com/lztf7ue>). My concerns:

Collateral damage

VTA claims that auto travel time between San Jose and Palo Alto would increase only 3 – 4 minutes if car lanes are removed.

Traffic, like water, seeks the path of least resistance.

Each lane on El Camino has a capacity of 950 cars/hour. VTA does *not* expect those drivers to hop a bus. The plan assumes they would divert “to the surrounding roadway system,” i.e., through our neighborhoods.

The EIR provides a list of intersections where diverted traffic would cause “significant and unavoidable traffic impacts.”

Frustrated drivers, looking for shortcuts, tend to speed and neglect stop signs. In addition to driving dangerously, they would spend more time on the roads, spewing exhaust fumes around homes, parks and schools – adding to the increased greenhouse gases from stalled traffic at F-rated intersections like El Camino and Page Mill.

To compound the problem, 667 trees would be removed along the route, replaced “to the extent feasible.”

One woman at the meeting made this incisive appeal: “Don’t make my neighborhood your collateral damage.”

The first and last mile

Not everyone lives and works along the El Camino corridor, so must drive or bike to a bus stop (assuming it’s too far to walk). Where would they park?

The EIR says “the optimal occupancy rate of 85 to 95 percent (where drivers can find parking without excessive circling) would be exceeded in Los Altos.

In Palo Alto, 52 percent of the existing 496 spaces on El Camino (with a peak occupancy rate of 68 percent) would disappear. Not good for small businesses and their customers.

But don't worry. The VTA says “... on-street parking is still available on side streets ... in most areas and in project corridor facing parking lots.”

How many of those side streets provide parking for local businesses? How many are residential streets? How many are already jammed with workers' cars?

Yet the VTA assures us that “losses of parking would not result in excessively circling and waiting for a space to become vacant and thus would not substantially change congestion.”

Even assuming I found a parking space in time to catch a bus, how would I get to my destination after leaving the bus if my car is back where I boarded?

Success crisis

Everyone wants a Silicon Valley address. Everyone wants vibrancy. Everyone wants development dollars.

Mountain View just approved the second phase of San Antonio Shopping Center: a 50,000-square-foot movie theater, 167-room hotel, restaurants and shops, and office space for 2,000 employees.

Santana Row's developer is said to be buying Mountain View's largest shopping center, the 33-acre parcel that currently houses Trader Joe's, Walmart, Kohl's, etc.

Many recent housing developments are not yet occupied – and ABAG says we have to build more. Additional projects, large and small, will cause gridlock and even VTA says we won't trade our cars for a bus.

How vibrant do you feel, sitting in traffic?

Ignoring the evidence

At the meeting, I spoke to a VTA representative and told him he should drive through Menlo Park to see the impact of cutting car lanes from 3 to 2. He asked if that was because of construction, unaware that Menlo Park narrowed El Camino years ago to add median strips.

Every member of the VTA board and project staff should be required to drive up and down El Camino – from San Jose through Redwood City – during morning rush hour, during evening rush hour, and during school commutes. Only then will they be capable of judging the impact of their decisions.

High costs, dubious benefits, guaranteed disruption

The EIR states capital cost estimates up to \$232.7 million. We know that would only be a starting point.

Spending hundreds of millions on this short stretch of El Camino – with serious consequences – is not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

Let's instead demand a holistic plan that acknowledges rampant growth and consolidates BART, Caltrain, light rail, the tenuous possibility of High Speed Rail, as well as new technologies like self-driving cars and Elon Musk's Hyperloop.

The VTA is accepting comments through January 14th at ecbrt@vta.org.

Pat Marriott is Los Altos resident who lived in Palo Alto for 30 years. She has worked for HP, IBM, Apple, Electronic Arts and Adobe.

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 11:56 AM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: FW: Replacing car lanes with bus lanes is a bad idea

Since there are new members on the board, I am resubmitting several letters I sent last year. Please forward to the board.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Sunday, November 09, 2014 12:18 PM
To: 'ecbrt@vta.org'
Subject: Replacing car lanes with bus lanes is a bad idea

VTA Board Members:

I have read the EIR for the El Camino BRT and am strongly opposed to any plans to replace car lanes with bus lanes.

Mountain View and Los Altos nixed the idea in 2012. Then-Councilman Ron Packard, at a January 24, 2012 Los Altos council meeting, suggested that no further time be spent on the proposal, citing "fantastic" Light Rail projections that never materialized.

At that meeting, Kevin Connolly, VTA's transportation planning manager, gave a presentation on the proposed bus lanes. He claimed that auto travel time from Santa Clara to Mountain View would be reduced by only one minute with dedicated bus lanes replacing car lanes. That statement was grossly misleading.

When pressed, Connolly admitted that losing one lane would reduce the capacity of El Camino by 950 cars/hour!

He said the VTA is assuming those cars, frustrated by traffic jams, would divert to a different route, e.g., Foothill or Central, which are already at capacity. This would obviously have a negative impact on those already-crowded corridors and on residential streets.

Please consider the realities:

- * Frustrated drivers already cut through neighborhood streets to avoid traffic jams on arteries. A perfect example is Arastradero Road in Palo Alto. When the city narrowed Arastradero, traffic on Maybell, a parallel residential street, increased 24% by the city's own numbers.
- * Traffic on El Camino through Menlo Park, where the lanes drop from 3 to 2, is badly congested at all hours. Thus, we already have evidence of the negative impact of reducing car lanes.
- * Few people live and work on or near El Camino, thus buses are not a reasonable way to commute to work. Most big employers (Apple, Google, Facebook) are not located on El Camino because they need big campuses.
- * Those big companies already have corporate buses, so it's unlikely their employees will hop on a VTA bus.
- * Bus schedules don't fit the work hours of Silicon Valley employees, who are typically not 9-to-5ers.
- * Buses are impractical for most people with various chores and schedules. A commuter makes many stops going to/from work: drop the kids at school, stop at the grocery store/dry cleaners/drugstore, get a haircut, pick up kid from soccer practice, pick up kid from day care.
- * Assuming more people were willing to take the bus, but did not live and work along the corridor, where would they park? There are no parking lots near bus stops. In fact, a VTA lot at the corner of Page Mill and El Camino in Palo Alto was sold to a developer. Parking on streets near El Camino usually means parking in residential areas or taking up precious parking spaces in front of businesses.
- * As your EIR notes, there's a huge amount of dense development planned in every city along El Camino. If traffic is bad now, one can only imagine how much worse it will get when all those new offices and homes are built and occupied.
- * While Federal grants are available, how will this project be funded? Ultimately it's all taxpayer money. We should have the opportunity to vote before spending such massive amounts on plans that will only make traffic worse for the majority of people.

Someday we may have a workable public transit system on the peninsula. Until then, we have to realize that we are not like San Francisco or New York, where offices are in close proximity in dense skyscrapers and people can hop a train or bus to get to work.

Meanwhile, cars are becoming more energy-efficient, and more hybrids and electric vehicles are on the streets.

We can take a lesson from **East Bay bus line plan hits bumpy road**

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/matier-ross/article/East-Bay-bus-line-plan-hits-bumpy-road-4398936.php>

... cost estimates, they've been all over the map - topping \$350 million at one point before settling into the current estimate, which still works out to a jaw-dropping \$18.7 million per mile.

... after 10 years and \$14.4 million in planning, the idea still isn't selling well with the locals.

Transit-friendly Berkeley was the first to balk, deciding it didn't want to give up two lanes of traffic and lose parking along Telegraph Avenue. Oakland and San Leandro followed suit, scaling down the plans in their cities for similar reasons.

*Oakland City Councilman **Larry Reid**, whose district includes a large stretch of International, said he was "very reluctant" to support the project, given all the complaints he heard from local businesses.*

Please do not create more traffic jams, clog residential streets and limit our ability to get where we want to go in a timely and flexible manner.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott Oakhurst Avenue Los Altos

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 12:00 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: FW: 2 bus-only lanes for El Camino Real is a ridiculous idea

Since there are new members on the board, I am resubmitting several letters I sent last year. Please forward to the board.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott Los Altos

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2014 5:11 PM
To: ecbrt@vta.org
Subject: 2 bus-only lanes for El Camino Real is a ridiculous idea

VTA Board Members:

For the record, this column ran in today's San Jose Mercury and Palo Alto Daily News. I agree with the columnist.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott

http://www.mercurynews.com/News/ci_26966075/Diana-Diamond-column:-VTA-doesnt-get-it-that-2-busonly-lanes-for-El-Camino-Real-is-a-ridiculous-idea

By Diana Diamond

Daily News columnist

VTA doesn't get it that 2 bus-only lanes for El Camino Real is a ridiculous idea

Try, try again. That must be VTA's (Valley Transportation Authority) mind-set behind its proposal to convert two lanes of El Camino Real to bus-only lanes between Palo Alto and San Jose. It tried that in late 2011 and the proposal met with a lot of resistance from several cities, including Palo Alto, Sunnyvale and Mountain View. The reason: scaling down lanes would slow traffic on El Camino Real and clog up parallel Alma Street and Foothill Expressway with spillover traffic. Other problems could result if part of El Camino Real is designated a bike lane or if parking along either side of the road is prohibited. The project is estimated to cost \$232 million.

Other bad ideas

The other option VTA still is unenthusiastically offering is a "mixedflow curb lane" approach (\$91 million) where buses would be limited to the right lane with bulb-outs built along El Camino Real for people waiting to board them. The problem is that cars using this lane would have to wait behind the standing bus while people board, including the elderly and bicyclists. Sounds to me like a designated frustration lane.

Anyway, city objections notwithstanding, the VTA board is forging ahead. And unfortunately, any decision to downsize auto lanes along El Camino Real is not up to local communities but to Caltrans, the state's superagency for these decisions. It feels like we can object all we want, but to no avail.

I have lots of problems with VTA's proposal for the Bus Rapid Transit project. For one thing, reducing El Camino Real to four auto usable lanes would cause innumerable back-ups along the 17-mile stretch, especially during commute times. Second, why devote two small lanes to bicycles? That's a life-threatening thoroughfare. Why deprive merchants of customer parking just to accommodate bikers?

Then there's the left-hand turn problem. If buses run in the middle of the road, there will be a median barrier. Hence, autos trying to turn left on El Camino could not do it at Arastradero, San Antonio, Churchill and Embarcadero. Only right turns would be permitted. U-turns would proliferate. Gone would be a lot of our easy east-west access across town.

Fourth, VTA now is trying to make commuting even more difficult. Do you think that just because the bus would be faster you would use it every day? Those buses are barely filled now. Projected weekday ridership would rise from 12,512 in 2013 to an estimated 14,588 if nothing is done, but to 15,303 under the mixed-flow option and 18,616 with the two dedicated lanes. So we'd be spending \$232 million to add some 4,000 more bus trips.

By 2040, we could have 22,228 bus riders with a mixed lane or 30,336 with a dedicated lane. Most of those numbers could be attributed to a population increase, not fewer people using their cars. But VTA can easily rationalize usage.

Learn a lesson, please

Think about the two lanes each way along El Camino Real in Menlo Park that make getting through the city seem to take forever. Think about the lane slimming on Arastradero Avenue from four to two lanes and how neighboring Maybell Avenue now is crammed with cars. Haven't we learned a lesson yet?

A bus lane along El Camino Real is a very restricted route, with few public transit connections to Stanford Research Park or corporations near Highway 101. Why do we want to dismantle the travel mobility on El Camino Real to provide for buses that a few more people might use?

El Camino Real is not broken yet, but with VTA's ridiculous proposal, it soon could become unfixable.

Diana Diamond is a columnist for The Daily News. Her email is Diana@DianaDiamond.com.

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 12:01 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: FW: enough with bus only lanes

Since there are new members on the board, I am resubmitting several letters I sent last year. Please forward to the board.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott Los Altos

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Friday, December 05, 2014 1:42 PM
To: ecbrt@vta.org
Subject: enough with bus only lanes

I would like to enter this editorial from the Los Altos Town Crier into the comments regarding the El Camino Real EIR. I live in Los Altos, and I agree with the editorial position.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott 1530 Oakhurst Ave. Los Altos

<http://www.losaltosonline.com/news/sections/comment/258-editorials/48990->

[Enough with the bus-only lanes: Editorial](#)

Published on Wednesday, 03 December 2014 00:04

Written by Los Altos Town Crier Staff

It seems that the Valley Transportation Authority is trying to validate its service to our region with its latest master plan to add express bus lanes along El Camino Real.

VTA representatives presented their latest bus-route improvement plans Nov. 20 in Mountain View. The agency proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes along a 17.4-mile stretch of the King's Highway between Palo Alto and San Jose. The BRT routes would be in addition to existing bus service, only this system would be, according to VTA officials, "fast, frequent and reliable."

Alternatives include adding BRT routes as mixed use with the other bus and auto traffic. The alternative that has some dreading gridlock is the proposal to dedicate lanes on either side of the median for BRT-only use.

The latest effort is similar to one that the cities of Los Altos, Mountain View and Sunnyvale rejected two years ago. Apparently, the agency will not take no for an answer. But this is not the solution.

We're all for alternative transportation. But "Bus Rapid Transit" is an oxymoron if there ever was one. And reliable? The current bus system, subordinate to the flow of auto traffic, is anything but.

Even if BRT were everything VTA promised, ridership would remain limited. Like it or not, the automobile remains king. The car offers "fast, frequent and reliable" travel, plus the independence to travel on one's own schedule – and no waiting at the bus stop to hitch a ride.

The long-term solution to gridlock is a change in culture, which is happening gradually as more people cycle or carpool. Or another rapid transit alternative. Just not exclusive bus lanes on El Camino.

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 12:01 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: FW: Comments on EIR

Since there are new members on the board, I am resubmitting several letters I sent last year. Please forward to the board.

Thank you,

Pat Marriott Los Altos

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Saturday, December 27, 2014 8:36 PM
To: ecbrt@vta.org
Subject: Comments on EIR

I read the draft EIR at

<http://www.vta.org/sfc/servlet.shepherd/document/download/069A0000001fFdAIAU>

I also attended the evening meeting in Mountain View on November 20th. I appreciated the brevity of the presentations and the opportunity for so many members of the public to speak.

With respect, I offer these comments on the EIR:

(1) Much of the data is theoretical rather than empirical.

Prior to the meeting I spoke to a representative from the VTA and told him that if he wanted to see the impact of cutting car lanes, all he had to do was drive through Menlo Park, where El Camino narrows from 3 car lanes in each direction to 2. He asked if that was because of

construction. He was completely unaware that Menlo Park narrowed El Camino several years ago in order to add median strips.

The resulting congestions means that drivers like me use Middlefield Road in Palo Alto or divert through Menlo Park neighborhood streets west of El Camino.

CONCLUSION: EVERY member of the VTA board and VTA staff should be REQUIRED to drive up and down El Camino – from San Jose through Redwood City – during morning rush hour, during evening rush hour, and during the time kids get out of school.

Only then will you all understand existing congestion problems.

(2) Much of the data is just not plausible.

The claim that elapsed drive time from San Jose to University Avenue in Palo Alto would increase by only 3 minutes if bus lanes replace car lanes is impossible to believe. It took me 12 minutes just to get from El Camino at Showers Drive to Castro Street for the meeting!

In December 2004, one of Palo Alto's traffic officials thought it would be a good idea to reduce Middlefield Road in the midtown shopping district from 4 lanes to 2. He set up a 3-hour test with cones one evening, but traffic slowed so badly – with honking horns and irate drivers – that the test was cut short and the plan to narrow the road was abandoned.

Simple logic indicates that narrowing the path significantly increases travel time.

CONCLUSION: Theories that defy logic are probably wrong.

(3) Fewer lanes cannot handle more cars.

One member of the public said that Castro Street in Mountain View carries more traffic since it was narrowed from 4 lanes to 2. That's clearly impossible.

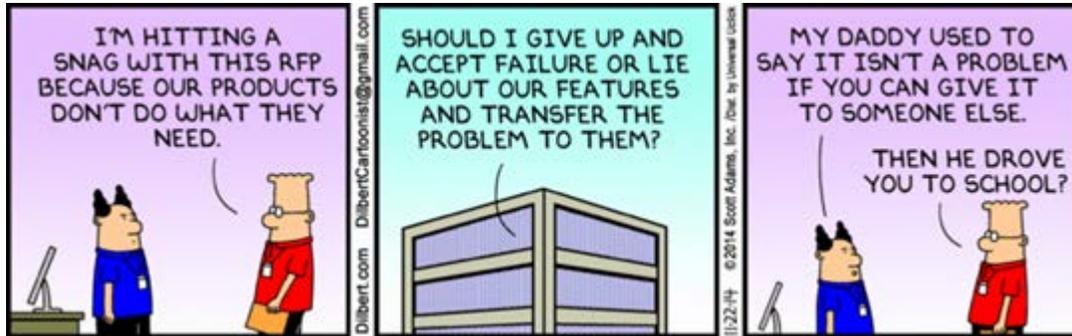
I was in Mountain View about 2:00 pm on a November weekday. I exited Central Expressway at Castro, which was so backed up that I had to wait on the Central side through a light change to avoid stopping on the RR tracks. Traffic was stop-and-go the entire length of Castro. I turned off at Church Street to look for a parking place. Ten minutes later I finally found a spot 4 blocks south of Castro. Elapsed time from exiting Central Expressway to a parking place: 20 minutes.

So yes, there is more traffic on Castro Street now because of more high-end restaurants and other business development. But that traffic is more congested because in addition to removing a lane, parking places have been given over to restaurants for outdoor seating.

CONCLUSION: Fewer lanes and fewer parking spaces increase congestion and greenhouse gases, as drivers circle the neighborhoods.

(4) Replacing El Camino car lanes with bus lanes doesn't solve a problem. It diverts the problem to someone else's patch.

Dilbert nails this perfectly:



Traffic is like water: it looks for the path of least resistance. If you dam up the main artery, drivers will shunt through residential areas.

You have studied diversion problems at intersections, but not general traffic flow through neighborhoods where children play and ride their bikes and people feel safe crossing streets.

Frustrated drivers are not safe drivers. They tend to speed and neglect stop signs. In addition to driving dangerously, cars will spend more time on the roads, spewing fumes around homes, parks and schools – adding to the increased greenhouse gases from stalled traffic on El Camino and at F-rated intersections.

CONCLUSION: As one speaker noted, “Don’t make my neighborhood your collateral damage.”

(5) The last mile problem has not been addressed.

Several people spoke about wheelchair travelers getting ON a bus. What was not mentioned was the problem of those people getting TO and FROM the bus.

Not everyone lives and works along the El Camino corridor, so must drive or bike to a bus stop (assuming it’s too far to walk). The EIR says drivers can park on side streets. But most cities already have huge parking problems.

And once I get off the bus, how do I get to my final destination if my car is back where I boarded?

CONCLUSION: Without efficient connectors to jobs, schools, shopping, etc. off El Camino, the bus is impractical.

(6) Planned development along the El Camino corridor will significantly increase traffic.

Just two examples, just from Mountain View:

- Mountain View City Council approved the second phase of the redevelopment of San Antonio Shopping Center. The project includes a 50,000-square-foot movie theater, 167-room hotel and a parking garage with over 1,300 spaces. It also plans for restaurants and shops ... and office space likely to be leased by LinkedIn, with space for about 2,000 employees. <http://www.mv-voice.com/news/2014/12/03/council-oks-san-antonio-center-project-milk-pail-market-saved>
- Santana Row's developer is set to buy most of Mountain View's largest shopping center. The 33-acre purchase includes nearly all of the shopping center that's still developed with single-story buildings: the sites of Trader Joe's, Walmart, Kohl's, 24-Hour Fitness, Fresh

Choice and JoAnn fabrics. <http://www.mv-voice.com/news/2014/12/17/santana-row-developer-makes-deal-to-buy-san-antonio-shopping-center>

CONCLUSION: Recent development over the past 2 years has significantly increased travel time on El Camino. Additional projects, large and small, will cause gridlock up and down the corridor.

(7) Costs are high, benefits are dubious, disruption is guaranteed.

Mountain View “Council member Ronit Bryant noted that San Mateo County decided against a similar system and questioned whether it was worth the increase in ridership of 4,000 riders a day over the 522 line.” <http://www.mv-voice.com/print/story/2014/12/19/el-camino-bus-lanes-win-praise-from-public-concern-from-council>

The EIR states capital cost estimates up to \$232.7M for Alternative 4c.

CONCLUSION: Spending millions on a project for a short stretch of El Camino – with serious consequences and arguable benefits – is not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

We need a comprehensive plan that incorporates BART, Caltrain, light rail, the possibility of High Speed Rail, as well as new technologies like self-driving cars and Elon Musk’s Hyperloop.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Pat Marriott Los Altos

From: Richard Placone
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 4:45 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Cc: James Keene; Hillary Gitelman
Subject: El Camino Express Bus Lane Project

April 26, 2015

Note to VTA Board Secretary: This is the second time I have mailed this letter, the first before the recent election. Please send this letter too all the new VTA Board Members and key administrative staff. Thank you. Richard C. Placone

Note to Palo City Council: Please not I have not changed my position stated earlier.

Attention: VTA Administrative Staff and Directors
Prepared by Richard C. Placone
601 Chimalus Drive
Palo Alto, CA 94306

I have studied the VTA EIR and reviewed the agency's plans to confiscate one lane in each direction along El Camino Real from Palo Alto south to San Jose. My wife and I are strongly opposed to this proposal and I urge the VTA Directors to firmly reject it, not just the section through our town, but the entire proposal.

For your background information, my wife and I are both seniors, ages 81 and 79. We have lived in Palo Alto since 1962 and have been and continue to be active in the community and various non profit organizations (Stanford University, Lytton Gardens, Elizabeth Seton School). Hence, we are very mobile and move all around our community on a regular and daily basis. While we think the idea of public transportation is a good idea in general, (we do use CalTrain every time we go to San Francisco, and the Muni once we are there) we believe this current plan of the VTA will not serve the community well. For people like us, there is no way we can use the VTA system, both for physical reasons, access to the system from where we live, and because of the diversity of our regular activities.

Mountain View, (originally but in April 2015 reversed its position) Los Altos and Palo Alto rejected this proposal in 2012. Then Los Altos Councilman Ron Packard, at a January 24, 2012 Los Altos council meeting, suggested that no further time be spent on the proposal, citing “fantastic” Light Rail projections that never materialized.

At that meeting, Kevin Connolly, VTA’s transportation planning manager, gave a presentation on the proposed bus lanes. He claimed that auto travel time from Santa Clara to Mountain View would be reduced by only one minute with dedicated bus lanes replacing car lanes. That statement was grossly misleading, and based on our experience with present traffic conditions, simply not true. For example, whenever my wife and I attend a performance at the Mt. View Performing Arts Center, and we plan to have dinner along Castro Street before the show, we always have to allow an extra half hour, just to get from Matadero Avenue here to Castro Street, the traffic with all three lanes operating is that bad. This is a distance of less than four miles!

When pressed, Connolly admitted that losing one lane would reduce the capacity of El Camino by 950 cars/hour! We can assume that will be true in Both Directions. He said the VTA is assuming the drivers of those cars, frustrated by traffic jams, would divert to a different route, e.g., Foothill or Central Expressways, which already operate at capacity during commute hours. This would obviously have a negative impact on all the residential residential streets that would be used to get to either one of those already crowded roadways.

Please consider these realities:

* Frustrated drivers already cut through neighborhood streets to avoid traffic jams on arteries. A perfect example is Arastradero Road in Palo Alto. When the city eliminated lanes on Arastradero, traffic on Maybell, a parallel residential street, increased 24% by the city’s own numbers. This neighborhood has been adversely impacted ever since.

* Traffic on El Camino Real (ECR) through Menlo Park, where the lanes drop from 3 to 2, is badly congested at all hours. Thus, we already have evidence of the negative impact of reducing car lanes on ECR. Moreover, consider that whenever a city’s utility department, or one of the other utility companies need to block one or more lanes on ECR, at times for hours, other times for a full day or more, traffic even during the-non commute hours backs up for several blocks and causes incredible delays.

* Few people live and work on or near ECR, thus buses are not a reasonable way to commute to work. Most big employers (Apple, Google, Facebook) are not located on ECR because they

need big campuses. These big companies already have corporate buses, so it's unlikely their employees will hop on a VTA bus.

* Buses are impractical for most people with various chores and schedules. A commuter makes many stops going to/from work: drop the kids at school, stop at the grocery store/dry cleaners/drugstore, get a haircut, pick up kids from soccer practice, pick up kids from day care and more.

*Even if we assume more people were willing to take the bus, but did not live and work along the corridor, how would they get to ECR to catch the bus, and if they drove, where would they park? There are no parking lots near bus stops. In fact, a VTA lot at the corner of Page Mill and El Camino in Palo Alto was sold to a developer. Parking on streets near El Camino usually means parking in residential areas or taking up precious parking spaces in front of businesses.

* As the VTA EIR notes, there's a huge amount of dense development under construction or planned in every city along El Camino. If traffic is bad now, one can only imagine how much worse it will get when all those new offices and homes are built and occupied, and ECR is reduce by one lane in each direction.

* While Federal grants may be available, how will this project be funded? Ultimately it's all taxpayer money. It is inconceivable to us that the VTA will not require every city along this proposed route to contribute to the project, because the VTA makes claims of benefits to each city - bike lanes along ECR, improved landscaping, improved bus stops with better lighting and so on. Does the VTA seriously believe any city council, most already strapped for funds, will kick in a million or two to finance these unlikely benefits? Moreover, these so-called benefits are not only unlikely, along most of ECR will prove impossible to develop: bike lanes - are you serious?; landscaping - with buildings being constructed up to the sidewalks, landscaping is no longer possible. Voters should have the opportunity to vote before spending such massive amounts on plans that will only make traffic worse for the majority of people. In fact, this entire project should be submitted to county voters for approval before the VTA continues to spend taxpayer money on a project doomed to be a failure.

Someday we may have a workable public transit system on the peninsula. Here, residential areas are mostly set aside in enclaves somewhat removed from local businesses, and significantly removed from major places of employment. People here just cannot hop a train or bus to get to work. It is a major hassle just to get from home to the nearest public transportation stop.

We want to give you another example of real life on the peninsula. Many of us are retired people, no longer commuting to work. This does not mean we are not mobile. My wife is 80 and I am 82. Getting around on foot is not as easy for us as when we were, oh say 60. From where we live in Barron Park, it would be a four block walk to get to the bus on ECR. If my wife were going to her volunteer assignments at Lytton Gardens or Stanford Hospital, how would she get there? It could involve at least one transfer for either location, and take an hour or more each way. Similarly, how would I get to Seton School on Channing for my twice weekly remedial reading class I teach? Moreover, we rarely make a trip for one purpose, making two, three or

more stops to shop, mail items, see the doctor or dentist, buy groceries and more. Right now, in the middle of the day, I have to allow a half hour to get from Barron Park to the PAMF to see my doctor, a distance of three miles on ECR. Tie up ECR with the VTA plan and I can see greatly increasing the time to get around this town.

We can take a lesson from a recent similar plan in the East Bay:

“East Bay bus line plan hits bumpy road... cost estimates have been all over the map - topping \$350 million at one point before settling into the current estimate, which still works out to a jaw-dropping \$18.7 million per mile.... after 10 years and \$14.4 million in planning, the idea still isn't selling well with the locals.”

“Transit-friendly Berkeley was the first to balk, deciding it didn't want to give up two lanes of traffic and lose parking along Telegraph Avenue. Oakland and San Leandro followed suit, scaling down the plans in their cities for similar reasons.”

Oakland City Councilman Larry Reid, whose district includes a large stretch of International, said he was "very reluctant" to support the project, given all the complaints he heard from local businesses.

Finally, here are the results of my own survey of ridership on the buses currently operating on the Palo Alto portion of ECR: regardless of time of day, day of week, or month of year, I have never seen more than one or two passengers on the 22 and 522 buses, sometimes this includes the driver. Looking at the VTA's ridership figures which are not easy to understand, I calculated that the average ridership of these two buses along their entire route is 29 passengers per 12 hour day, or an average of 2.4 passengers per hour. For this we are going to virtually shut down a major state highway used by thousands of drivers everyday of the week? I certainly hope not!

Please do not create more traffic jams, clog residential streets and limit our ability to get where we want to go in a timely and flexible manner.

Say NO to dedicated bus lanes on El Camino.

Thank you.

Richard and Jeanne Placone

From: Gene & Linda Golobic
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2015 4:50 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: Dedicated lanes

I am totally against the concept of dedicated lanes on El Camino Real for numerous reasons. The building of the dedicated lanes is another adventure of the Agency in "Dynasty Building". Reducing the number of lanes for automobiles will not force people to use the bus, it will force them to find alternate routes to get to their destination. If automobile density is the concern, stop building so much residential development. Building developments such as residential, commercial or retail each increase the automobile density.

I have seen the # 26 bus riding near empty since we moved to Saratoga 25 years ago. 15 years ago or so I spoke with the then General Manager about the empty buses and suggested he consider the use of smaller busses, he refused to respond to my statement and completely changed the topic. Almost every day I sit at the signal at the intersection of Wolfe Road and El Camino and watch the near empty tandem busses pass, this is around 8:30 am and 5:00 pm on weekdays. I have also noticed that the bus windows are painted with murals or tinted very dark, same with the light rail. One can argue that it is for the comfort of the passengers due to potential heat gain from the sun, I believe it is so that people cannot see the lack of people riding the busses.

Rather than continuing on, let me just say that as a tax payer, not a free loader, my vote is against using any portion of my tax dollars for the dedicated lanes.

Gene Golobic

From: Robert Hoop

Sent: Monday, April 27, 2015 2:23 PM

To: Board.Secretary

Subject: input on removing car traffic lanes on el camino in favor of bus traffic.

April 24, 2105

Dear VTA,

This letter is to provide feedback on the VTA proposal for dedicated lanes on El Camino Real for buses. That will eliminate 2 lanes of traffic to cars.

I understand that you plan on destroying 600 to 700 trees on El Camino. That is an awful plan. You want to improve the environment with mass transit AND destroy hundreds of trees. I do NOT understand the logic.

This VTA plan will create a traffic mess on El Camino far worse than it is currently. So, many consumers will avoid shopping at businesses on El Camino. Currently I frequent restaurants, electronics stores, grocery stores, and more. If you remove 2 car lanes on El Camino, I will be reluctant to shop at those El Camino businesses.

The cost is estimated to be at least or more than \$230,000,000. Correct? If bus ridership increases by 5,000 that amounts to a taxpayer cost of at least \$46,000 per new rider. If the bus ridership increase is 10,000 that amounts to a cost of \$23,000 per rider. This is taxpayer money; not bus rider money and that is inordinately expensive and a silly use of taxpayer money!!

In the past I have voted for mass transit tax revenue proposals. If VTA moves ahead with this crazy El Camino plan, many of us will be very reluctant to vote for VTA bond proposals in the future. Beware.

Regards,

Robert Hoop

From: Pat Marriott

Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2015 9:28 AM

To: Board.Secretary

Subject: Tech expansion overruns cities

Please forward this to all members of the VTA board. We have a crisis on our hands. We've got to stop selling our cities to tech companies. Bus lanes are NOT the answer.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/tech-expansion-overruns-cities-in-californias-silicon-valley-1430156870>

Thank you,

Pat Marriott (former tech employee)

From: Julie Lovins]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 9:55 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Cc: Julie Lovins
Subject: Support for option 4c, El Camino Real BRTproposal

Dear VTA Board:

As a supporter of VTA's ECR BRT proposal, option 4c, I have been frustrated by the lack of public understanding of both the "dedicated lanes" proposal and the disastrous probable alternative, "no project". I hope that you will find a way for us to end up with El Camino for All, not El Camino for No One.

It is clearly still necessary for VTA staff to pursue detailed discussions with BOTH decision-makers and staff in each of the corridor cities, concerning BRT implementation tailored to the needs of each city. I have reluctantly concluded that discussion of project alternatives and details is still, at this very late date, largely mired in communication failures.

Thank you for your work on improving mobility for all Santa Clara County residents.

Sincerely,

Julie B. Lovins
Mountain View

From: Martin Landzaat
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 11:28 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: El Camino BRT comments

Please forward my comments in the attached .PDF to the VTA Board members

Regards,
Martin Landzaat

April 30, 2015

BY EMAIL (.PDF)

VTA Board Members
3331 North First Street, Bldg. B
San Jose, CA 95134

Attention: Office of the Board Secretary
(board.secretary@vta.org)

Re: El Camino BRT

Dear VTA Board Members:

I'm a Sunnyvale resident that's concerned dedicated BRT lanes in Sunnyvale will impede commerce on the El Camino. A decrease in commerce could reduce sales tax revenues which would impact City services.

I'm also concerned dedicated BRT lanes in Sunnyvale and Mountain View will impede access to urgent and emergency medical care. Sunnyvale is the largest city in California without a hospital, hospital emergency room (ER) or urgent medical care clinic. As a result, most Sunnyvale residents travel to El Camino Hospital at 2500 Grant Rd. in Mountain View for hospital and emergency medical services. For urgent medical care, many Sunnyvale residents visit the Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) urgent care clinic at 701 E. El Camino Real, Mountain View. The fastest and most direct route to the PAMF urgent care clinic and El Camino Hospital ER is usually via El Camino Real. There are few routes to El Camino Hospital from Sunnyvale due to the limited number of Highway 85 crossings.

I understand the Board will be voting on the preferred alternative before the Draft EIR comments will be addressed. The Draft EIR erroneously assumes Sunnyvale residents seeking urgent/emergency medical services always travel in an emergency vehicle, i.e. ambulance. The Draft EIR failed to consider people that use private automobiles to access urgent and emergency medical care.

I would appreciate your consideration of the impact dedicated BRT lanes will have on commerce in Sunnyvale and access to urgent and emergency medical services by Sunnyvale residents using private vehicles before voting on the preferred alternative. Please vote for the mixed flow alternative for the BRT in Sunnyvale and Mountain View.

Sincerely,
Martin Landzaat

From: Barbara Fukumoto
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2015 3:31 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: BRT on ECR

I urge you to continue to work with the cities along El Camino to find ways to make BRT with dedicated lanes work.

Please know that the Sunnyvale Council vote came after a rushed and cursory staff report, due to the tight time line for writing the report. The report focused on the traffic/parking/LOS aspects of the project (and ridership and speed of BRT alternatives) because staff judged that these were what most interested Council. It omitted all discussion of landscaping, sidewalk, and crosswalk improvements with the dedicated lanes; improved bike/ped safety features; reductions in VMT, criteria air pollutants, and particulates resulting from the project; social equity concerns and potential economic benefits of the project. The Sunnyvale staff report also omitted any discussion of city plans and policies that would be fulfilled by the project. No wonder that I was told that the project had nothing for Sunnyvale! Despite neglecting any rationale for the project, there were still three of seven votes opposing the motion that opposed dedicated lanes and bulb outs with mixed flow.

I look forward to top quality transit and thank you for your efforts to provide it.

Barbara Fukumoto
Sunnyvale Resident

From: Nirit Lotan
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2015 11:17 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: Support for BRT in El Camino Real - from MV resident

Dear Board members,

I am writing to express my support for the BRT project on ECR.

As a Mountain View resident who needs to rely on her car for everything, I think this project can bring about a well needed change. It won't solve all the problems by itself but it can be a great booster for better transit. I hope you'll move on with it quickly.

Thank you,

Nirit Lotan

MV

From: Pat Marriott
Sent: Friday, May 01, 2015 11:49 AM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: Mt. View Councilman Rosenberg's vote

Please forward to the VTA board. Thanks!

Today's Palo Alto Daily Post has a front page article titled: Councilman softens bus-only support. It's an interview with

Mountain View City Councilman Ken Rosenberg, who voted FOR the bus only lanes on El Camino.

"Rosenberg ... says his vote was simply a way to start negotiations with VTA on the project. ... His April 21 vote was an 'advisory vote' for yes, but if he had to vote on the project as it is now, his vote would be no."

Given Rosenberg's comments, I think you should consider that the Mountain View city council rejected the bus lane plane.

Pat Marriott Los Altos

From: Paul Bickmore
Sent: Friday, May 01, 2015 6:52 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: I support Bus Rapid Transit along El Camino Real.

VTA Board Members

Support safe, sustainable, and accessible transportation options for everyone in our community with the El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project.

I am very excited about VTA's BRT proposal because it will provide me and my family with a real option to safely and conveniently walk, bike, or take public transportation along El Camino Real for the first time ever! By offering us real transportation options, BRT will help reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, and make our community healthier and more affordable.

Once El Camino Real is transformed into a more livable street and adapted to the needs of all users, it will create a demand for more homes, offices, and shops around the BRT stations. Not only will this land use and transportation integration provide more people with the opportunity to live close to work, but it will also lead to more foot traffic that will in turn be a boon for small businesses and our local economy!

I strongly urge you to:

- Support the most important element of increasing the reliability and speed of transit along El Camino Real – bus only lanes, and
- Invest in buffered bike lanes, more crosswalks, upgraded pedestrian refuges, and sidewalk extensions (bulb-outs) to calm traffic and improve traffic safety.

Thank you for your work to make Santa Clara County a better place for us all to live, work, and get around.

Paul Bickmore

From: Megan Agustin
Sent: Sunday, May 03, 2015 12:12 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: I support Bus Rapid Transit

Hello,

I'm Megan and I'm really glad that the project for dedicated bus lanes finally took off in Mountain View! I think a lot of people will benefit from it, especially those who bike, walk, or don't drive. It's an economic, environmental, and social justice issue in the Silicon Valley and I believe that Bus Rapid Transit is the equitable solution! I would definitely stop driving if the BRT was implemented on Stevens Creek Boulevard for De Anza since I'm currently a student at the college. Having emergency vehicles use that dedicated bus lane on Stevens Creek would also be an amazing idea for Santa Clara, San Jose, and Cupertino since that road gets impacted too often.

Thank you for reading this,

Megan Agustin

From: john hesler
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2015 5:26 PM
To: Board.Secretary
Subject: Letter of Support for Hwy 85 Express Lanes Project

Dear VTA Board Secretary,

Please see the attached letter in support of the Highway 85 Express Lanes Project. Please forward this letter to each VTA Board Member.

Thank you.

John Hesler, Board Member/Treasurer
Santa Teresa Foothills Neighborhood Association, San Jose



April 21, 2015

Jon Reinke
President

Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San Jose, California 95134

Matt Freeman
Vice President

John Hesler
Treasurer

Subject: **Support for SR 85 Express Lanes Project**

Rick Mandel
Secretary

Dear VTA Board Members:

Lynne Paulson
Recording Secretary

The Santa Teresa Foothills Neighborhood Association represents over 4,200 residences in South San Jose. Our Association is generally bounded by Santa Teresa Boulevard on the north, Cottle Road on the east, Winfield Boulevard on the west, and the Santa Teresa Foothills on the south.

Trudi Konzem
Director

The Board of Directors of our Association has taken a position in support of the proposed State Route (SR) 85 Express Lanes Project, including the addition of the fourth lane between SR 87 and I-280. We believe that the project will provide an important and sorely needed improvement on a key highway in our local transportation network. The express lanes will be utilized not only by carpools, but also by buses carrying commuters.

Jacquie Heffner
Director

Jack McKinney
Director

Stephanie Norris
Director

The right-of-way for the project, including the fourth lane between SR 87 and I-280, already exists. The fourth lane will be constructed in the median of SR 85. Therefore, the increased capacity and benefits associated with the project can be realized without negatively impacting the communities located along the freeway. This conclusion is borne out by the analyses undertaken by VTA in the project's environmental document. Given these facts, we believe the proposed project is one that should be approved and implemented as it will benefit the community without creating adverse impacts to adjacent residents.

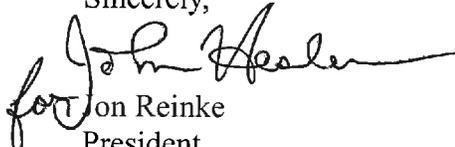
Stacie Shih
Director

Dave Van Etten
Director

Ash Kalra
Director – Ex Officio

Johnny Khamis
Director – Ex Officio

Sincerely,


for Jon Reinke
President

VTA Staff Response to Inquiries from Interested Citizens

From: Patrick Griffin [<mailto:patrick.griffin@vta.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 10:18 AM
To: [johnrainville](#)
Subject: Board of Directors Meeting

Dear Mr. Rainville,

Thank you for taking the time attend the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Board of Directors meeting on April 2, 2015. In your comments to the Board of Directors you mentioned people riding bikes and skateboards on light rail platforms, as well as some of our buses running late. As you are aware, to help ensure the safety of our passengers, VTA has a policy that people are not to ride bikes or skateboards on our light rail platforms. When security staff observe individuals breaking policy and engaging in unsafe behaviors they intervene. Due to available resources, we are not able to have security personnel at all locations at all times. I have passed your concerns on to our Protective Services group who manage our security force. In addition, you also commented that some buses were running late out of Great Mall. We try to maintain schedules as close as possible, but there are times when unforeseen occurrences prevent us from meeting the published times. I would encourage you to report any specific incidents of buses running late, with date, time route, and location, of occurrence. You can report these cases to our Customer Service staff at (408) 321-2300. We have agents available from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 7:30 am to 4:00 pm on Saturdays. Any of our Information Service Representatives can take a report and get it to Operations for review and follow up. I hope this information helps. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions, comments or concerns. You can reach me via email at patrick.griffin@vta.org or by phone at 408-321-7506.

Regards,

Patrick Griffin
Manager, Public Affairs & Customer Information

From: Patrick Griffin [<mailto:patrick.griffin@vta.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 10:14 AM
To: [k.kittila](#)
Subject: Forward Facing Bus Seats

Dear Mr. Kittila,

Thank you for taking the time attend the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Board of Directors meeting on April 2, 2015. In your comments to the Board of Directors you inquired why VTA has removed the forward facing bus seats from service?

Safety is first and foremost at VTA, and we are taking this precaution because transit systems across the country have experienced incidents where passengers were injured by falling when buses rapidly stopped or decelerated. Passengers who are standing are typically prepared to brace or restrain themselves using the bars and straps throughout the bus. Most seated passengers do not brace themselves, but have a barrier in front of them to prevent them from falling forward if the operator has to brake suddenly. To reduce the risk to passengers we have removed the first row of forward facing seats from service as these seats do not have a barrier to help stop

passengers from falling forward in the event of a hard-brake. We are currently in the process of determining how we can safely provide the prior seating capacity. As we work on solutions, we will keep passengers updated through our [Headways Blog](#) and on social media: @VTA on Twitter and [facebook.com/scvta](https://www.facebook.com/scvta). We are pleased to report that now all buses that VTA procures have been designed to ensure this safety concern no longer exists.

I hope this helps to clarify the reason VTA made the decision to take these forward facing seats out of service. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions, comments or concerns. You can reach me via email at patrick.griffin@vta.org or by phone at 408-321-7506.

Regards,

Patrick Griffin
Manager, Public Affairs & Customer Information

From: Board.Secretary
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2015 4:38 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: VTA Correspondence: Support for ACA 4 (Frazier)

VTA Board of Directors:

The Board is copied on the following correspondence:

Date	Addressed to	Topic
May 4, 2015	Honorable Philip Ting, Chairperson Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee	Support for ACA 4 (Frazier)

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org



May 4, 2015

The Honorable Philip Ting, Chairperson
Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee
State Capitol, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairperson Ting:

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) requests your support for ACA 4 (Frazier) when it comes before the Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee for a vote. ACA 4 calls for placing before the voters an amendment to the California Constitution to change the voting requirement for local special taxes for transportation purposes from a two-thirds to a 55 percent vote.

Given that federal and state dollars have not been sufficient to meet all of California's transportation needs, more and more emphasis has been placed on raising local revenues for transportation purposes. However, the California Supreme Court's decision in Santa Clara County Local Transportation Authority v. Guardino, which requires a two-thirds vote to renew existing or enact new local transportation special taxes, presents a significant hurdle for many jurisdictions to overcome.

Local transaction and use tax measures have become a fundamental element of the state's transportation funding matrix, with existing programs contributing significant dollars for state highways, local streets and roads, mass transit, and other types of transportation improvements. In fact, these measures have provided more than 50 percent of new capital funding for transportation facilities over the last several decades. Counties representing more than 85 percent of the state's population currently have in place local transaction and use taxes for transportation purposes. Most are temporary and will have to be renewed. In addition, various counties without existing programs are finding that their transportation needs cannot be met unless they seek voter approval of their own local transportation transaction and use tax measures.

The two-thirds threshold for approving such special taxes allows a small minority of voters to control transportation investment decisions and contributes to the difficulty in funding critical projects. We believe this issue is important enough for California voters to have an opportunity to decide whether the two-thirds requirement for approving local transportation special taxes should be changed. Therefore, we respectfully seek your support for ACA 4. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perry Woodward", is written over a white background.

Perry Woodward, Chairperson
Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

From: Board.Secretary
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 3:02 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: VTA Correspondence: Support for SB 321 (Beall) and AB 464 (Mullin)

VTA Board of Directors:

The Board is copied on the following correspondence:

Date	Addressed to	Topic
May 7, 2015	Members of the California State Senate	Support for SB 321 (Beall)
May 7, 2015	Members of the California State Assembly	Support for AB 464 (Mullin)

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the California State Senate

FROM: Perry Woodward, Chairperson 
Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

DATE: May 7, 2015

RE: Support for SB 321 (Beall)

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) respectfully requests your support for SB 321 (Beall) when this bill comes before the Senate for a vote. This legislation makes a much-needed technical fix to the administrative process that is used by the Board of Equalization to set the rate for the variable portion of the state's gasoline excise tax in order to reduce the overall volatility of this revenue stream.

As you know, the Board of Equalization recently voted to lower the variable gas tax rate by 6 cents because of the steep decline in fuel prices that has occurred over the past year. This action would result in a reduction of more than \$800 million in gas tax revenues that otherwise would go to cities and counties for local streets and roads; the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); and the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP).

As you will recall, the reason for this adjustment dates back to the complex transportation funding swap that was initially enacted by the Legislature in 2010 and then reaffirmed in 2011 in order to correct a series of problems that resulted from the passage of several ballot measures in November 2010. Under the transportation funding swap, the state's share of the sales tax on gasoline was eliminated and replaced with a variable excise tax that the Board of Equalization is required to adjust annually to ensure that the same amount of money is being generated as by the former sales tax.

The looming 6-cent reduction would present a significant, near-term problem for cities and counties, the STIP, and the SHOPP, unless legislation is enacted prior to July 1, 2015, to restructure the administrative process that the Board of Equalization uses to calculate the adjustment. But it also spotlights a fundamental problem with how the adjustment is calculated under current law. By basing the calculation on a one-year forecast of fuel prices, which tend to be very volatile, rather than taking into account historical data, the annual adjustment in the variable gas tax rate can vary dramatically from one year to the next. This uncertainty makes it difficult for state and local agencies to plan their multi-year transportation budgets.

Members of the California State Senate
Support for SB 321 (Beall)
May 7, 2015
Page Two

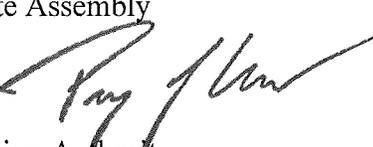
SB 321 is intended to maintain the revenue-neutrality of the transportation funding swap, but protect against wide swings that could result from the annual adjustments to the variable gas tax rate. Specifically, the bill requires the Board of Equalization to calculate the adjustment based on a five-year average that relies on fuel price data from the previous four fiscal years and estimated fuel prices for the current fiscal year, as opposed to just the upcoming fiscal year. This change prevents disproportionate impacts that could result from periods of unusually low or high gas prices. In addition, the legislation allows the Board of Equalization to adjust the variable gas tax rate more frequently than annually in cases of extreme changes in fuel prices.

Because SB 321 would substantially “smooth out” the impact of any adjustments to the variable gas tax rate and, thus, reduce volatility, we respectfully seek your support for this measure. Thank you for your consideration of our request.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the California State Assembly

FROM: Perry Woodward, Chairperson 
Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

DATE: May 7, 2015

RE: Support for AB 464 (Mullin)

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) respectfully requests your support for AB 464 (Mullin) when this bill comes before the Assembly for a vote. AB 464 raises the maximum combined rate of all local option transaction and use taxes that could be imposed in a county from 2 percent to 3 percent.

Because of insufficient federal and state funding, more and more cities and counties have imposed or are considering placing before the electorate transaction and use taxes to address their fiscal challenges in providing much-needed services to their communities. At the same time, countywide transaction and use taxes have become a significant revenue source for transportation infrastructure projects. In fact, locally imposed transaction and use taxes provide more than 50 percent of new capital funding for transportation facilities.

In recent years, several counties seeking to place a countywide transportation transaction and use tax measure before their voters found that they would exceed the 2-percent cap in some of their cities that had already imposed such taxes within their jurisdictions for general government purposes. As a result, these counties had to pursue state legislation to allow them to move forward. Because this situation will become more prevalent in the future, it makes sense for the Legislature to enact a statewide solution, rather than putting individual counties in the position of having to sponsor their own bills.

By raising the cap to 3 percent, AB 464 would avoid potential conflicts between countywide transaction and use tax measures and any existing or planned taxes by individual cities, and eliminate a potential barrier for generating local revenues to support transportation, public safety and other vital local programs. For this reason, we respectfully seek your support for AB 464. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

From: Board.Secretary
Sent: Friday, May 08, 2015 4:39 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: VTA Ridership for March 2015

VTA Board of Directors:

Attached is a memorandum from Chief Operating Officer Michael Hursh regarding VTA ridership for March 2015.

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org



MEMORANDUM

Writer's Direct Telephone: (408) 321-7005

TO: VTA Board of Directors

THROUGH: Nuria I. Fernandez
General Manager

FROM: Michael Hursh
Chief Operating Officer

DATE: May 7, 2015

SUBJECT: VTA Ridership for March 2015

<u>VTA Ridership</u>	March 2015	March 2014	Percent Change
VTA System	3,941,890	3,779,628	4.3%
System Average Weekday	148,977	147,328	1.1%
Bus	2,965,783	2,838,666	4.5%
Bus Average Weekday	112,927	111,181	1.6%
Light Rail	976,107	940,962	3.7%
Light Rail Average Weekday	36,050	36,147	-0.3%

March 2015 total monthly system ridership for bus and light rail was 3,941,890, an increase of 4.3% compared to March 2014. The average weekday system ridership for March 2015 increased by 1.1% compared to March 2014.

Bus average weekday ridership was 112,927, an increase of 1.6% compared to March 2014. Light rail average weekday ridership was 36,050, a slight decrease of 0.3% over March 2014.

Factors contributing to the increased ridership include the unemployment rate for Santa Clara County, the WrestleMania event at Levi's Stadium (23,662 riders) and the San Jose Earthquakes game at Avaya Stadium (1,861 riders). The unemployment rate for Santa Clara County in March 2015 was 4.1%, an improvement compared to the 5.8% recorded in March 2014.

March 2015 had one more weekday (22 days) compared to March 2014 (21 days).