

From: VTA Board Secretary
Sent: Tuesday, September 4, 2018 4:45 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: From VTA: September 4, 2018 Media Clips



VTA Daily News Coverage for Tuesday, September 4, 2018

1. [Train Bicycle Accident \(ABC 7 News\)](#)
2. [ACE Train Fatality KRON 4](#)
3. [Gas tax: What Californians actually pay on each gallon of gas \(Mercury News\)](#)
4. [Editorial: To preserve funds for roads, transit, vote no on Prop. 6](#)
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[Gas tax: What Californians actually pay on each gallon of gas](#) (Mercury News)

Hint: It's more than you think.

The state [gas tax](#) may have risen 12 cents last year — the amount targeted for repeal this November — but that's far from all the taxes drivers pay on each gallon of gasoline.

The actual tax on gas is closer to 73.82 cents per gallon, depending on where you fill up and the price of gas at the time. But the history of the gas tax, and various other taxes added to the cost

of fuel, reveal an ongoing debate politicians and voters have been grappling with ever since the state's gas tax was first instituted nearly a century ago.

Are roads a utility, like water and electricity, with users paying for what they consume? Or a public good, like schools, where every taxpayer chips in even if they don't use them? It all boils down to who benefits and who should pay, said John Harvey, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UC Davis.

"That is the major, ongoing question," he said. "Then, the thing that came in later was additional parts of that equation: What are the impacts of roads, not just the benefits? And who should shoulder those impacts?"

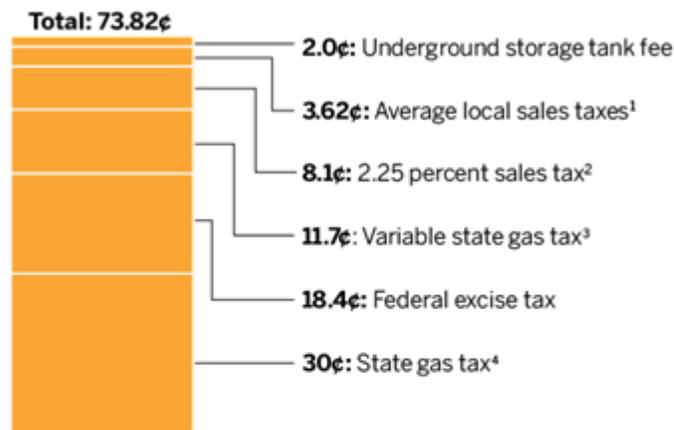
As voters head to the polls to consider Prop 6, which would repeal the 12-cent gas tax increase approved last year, along with a 20-cent increase in diesel taxes and additional vehicle registration fees that are expected to raise \$5.4 billion annually for transportation projects, they'll be joining the gas tax debate, confronting questions like those above, and many more.

Should road users subsidize transit riders? Or should the gas tax only go to highways, as supporters of the gas tax repeal suggest? And how did our taxes get so high, anyway?

To help get you oriented, we'll break the taxes on gas down for you:

HOW MUCH IS IN A GALLON?

How much Californians pay in taxes for a gallon of gasoline:



¹ According to the American Petroleum Institute

² Based on this week's statewide average price of \$3.60 per gallon, according to AAA.

³ Replaces the sales tax on gasoline; will be set at 17.3 cents beginning July, 2019.

⁴ Includes the 12-cent gas tax increase enacted in Nov. 2017.

Source: Caltrans

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

State gas tax: 30 cents per gallon

The state first began collecting a gas tax in 1923 at two cents per gallon as California was grappling with how to pay for maintenance of its new highway system. In 1909, the state financed a 3,000-mile, 34-route road network with an \$18 million bond that had no real funding

source, other than the general fund, identified to repay it, said Martin Wachs, professor emeritus of urban planning at UCLA.

Conceived as a user fee, the tax was meant to approximate a toll to cover the costs of ongoing maintenance. But since building and staffing toll booths cost more than the money the tolls would generate, an excise tax — in this case, a flat fee — was instituted as an easier way to collect the same amount of money while only charging people benefiting directly from the roads, Wachs said.

“The idea was not that you would be taxing gasoline,” Wachs said, “but you would be charging drivers for their use of the roads.”

It didn’t take long, though, for voters to protect that money from being used for other purposes. Voters in 1937 approved a 3-cent tax on diesel, along with an amendment to the state constitution restricting the use of fuel taxes to the construction, improvement, repair and maintenance of highways and roads, or the purchase of rights-of-way to build new roads and highways. Later, in 1973, voters agreed gas tax money could also be used to help pay for public transit and to lessen the environmental impact of driving.

After collection and administration fees, half of the original fuel taxes went to highways, with the other half going to county thoroughfares, similar to how the funds are distributed today. Before last year, the last time the gas tax was raised was in 1989, when voters doubled it from 9 cents per gallon to 18 cents. Senate Bill 1 (SB1), the 2017 law that increased the gas tax and would be repealed under Prop 6, raised the current tax to 30 cents per gallon.

In this July 11, 2018 photo, workers repave a street in Roseville, Calif., partially funded by a gas tax hike passed by the Legislature in 2017. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli)

Federal gas tax: 18.4 cents per gallon

The federal tax on gasoline was [first enacted in 1932](#) at one cent per gallon. It was last raised in 1993 to 18.4 cents per gallon. It’s also considered a “user fee,” similar to California’s gas tax, though the federal government is increasingly relying on general fund money to pay for transportation projects, said Gian-Claudia Sciara, an associate professor at the University of Texas and former professor at UC Davis’ Institute for Transportation Studies.

State sales tax on gasoline: 2.25 percent (or, roughly 8.1 cents for a \$3.60-gallon of gas)

When the state’s general sales tax was first enacted, it didn’t include gasoline. That’s because road users were already paying a “fee” in the form of the gas tax, Wachs explained. That thinking changed in 1971, when the legislature approved the Transportation Development Act and included gasoline in the state sales tax, with some of those funds dedicated to public transportation for the first time.

California had just undergone a major expansion of its freeways, but they were already filling with more cars than they could handle, Harvey said. The state couldn't simply build its way out of growing congestion, and smog was getting worse. Much worse, Wachs said.

"The concept ... was to reduce auto dependency and reduce smog by getting more people on transit," he said.

The 7.25 percent sales tax on gasoline was eventually repealed in 2010 under a complicated funding scheme called the "gas tax swap" that eliminated all but 2.25 percent of the sales tax. Only .25 percent of the slashed sales tax on gasoline goes to transportation. The rest goes to public safety, local health and social service programs, and city and county operations.

A motorist speeds through a large pothole on Narvaez Ave. near Branham Lane in San Jose. A new report from a nonpartisan think tank finds that the recently passed \$52.4 billion transportation funding bill, which raises the gas tax by 12 cents a gallon, isn't a long-term solution for California's transportation needs (Gary Reyes/Bay Area News Group File)

Variable state gas tax: 11.7 cents per gallon

In a ruling that reaffirmed the idea that transportation revenues should be dedicated for specific uses, the courts in 2009 decreed the state could no longer use the sales tax on gasoline — which was supposed to be going to public transit — to pay off bonds related to highway and road construction.

So in 2010, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration devised the gas tax swap to bypass that ruling, Sciara said. It eliminated most of the sales tax on gasoline and replaced it with a new tax, also a flat fee. Unlike the gas tax, which charges the same per-gallon fee no matter the price, this new tax varies every year. It's designed to approximate the portion of the sales tax that was lost when the courts ruled it was being used inappropriately.

Money generated from the variable tax is restricted to roads, highways and public transit in the same way as the gas tax, but it allowed the state to use the new variable tax funds to pay for transportation-related debt. Voters pushed back against what was seen as another diversion of money needed for new transportation projects. So now, the state uses truck weight fees to pay off transportation bonds.

But the new variable tax created significant unintended consequences for cities, counties and transit agencies relying on those funds. Because it swings so much from year to year, local agencies never know how much they would receive, which makes planning years-long projects incredibly challenging, Wachs said. SB1 would eliminate the swap and, beginning July 2019, set the "variable" tax at 17.3 cents, the rate it was when the swap was first enacted.

Crews from O'Grady Paving, Inc. contractors with the city of San Jose repair patches on Willow Street west of Lincoln Avenue in the Willow Glen area of San Jose, Calif., on Wednesday, May 30, 2018. There are over \$3 billion in transportation projects like this one in the Bay Area alone that were funded the new state gas tax and registration fees — half of which could be

eliminated, deferred or delayed if voters decide to repeal the measure. (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group) (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group)

Local sales taxes: 3.62 cents per gallon on average

Beginning in the late 1970s, but with increasing fervor in the 1980s, counties and other transit agencies increasingly took it upon themselves to finance transportation projects in their own communities, Wachs said. It's a trend that continues to this day.

The most popular funding method is a local sales tax. In the 2016-17 fiscal year, local sources of funding, which the state's Legislative Analyst's Office defines as sales taxes, transit fares, development impact fees and property taxes, provided more than half of all transportation funding in California. The American Petroleum Institute estimates the average local tax for transportation projects in California amount to roughly 3.62 cents. That amount gets charged on all goods that aren't exempt from sales taxes, not just gasoline, but the revenue generated from local sales taxes on gasoline go directly to transportation projects in their communities.

Underground storage tank fee: 2 cents per gallon

The US Congress in 1986 established the Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund to pay for damage caused by leaking or abandoned petroleum storage tanks, said Matt Rocco, a spokesman for Caltrans. The trust fund reimburses small business owners, residents and local regulatory agencies for environmental cleanup, he said.

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[Editorial: To preserve funds for roads, transit, vote no on Prop. 6](#)

For transportation and environment, voters should keep Gov. Brown's 2017 gas and car tax increases

Proposition 6 is the sort of public vote on a tax increase that Jerry Brown promised when he ran for governor in 2010 but later reneged on.

Instead, the governor's political opponents gathered signatures to place an initiative on the ballot that would overturn his gas and car tax increases. So, voters will have a say, after all, on the transportation funding plan.

But when they cast their ballots, they should side with Brown. They should uphold the increases by voting no on Prop. 6. Note that we said vote no. A yes vote would overturn the transportation plan; a no vote leaves it in place.

The plan, approved by the Legislature at Brown's urging last year, will raise \$5.1 billion annually by 2020 to help fix our deteriorating freeways and local streets and refurbish our commuter trains and buses.

About two-thirds of the money goes to highways and roads, mostly for repairs and maintenance. The rest goes primarily to public transit operations and capital projects, and for improving congested transportation corridors.

It's reasonable to put the financial burden on those who drive for they use our streets and highways. Just as important, they should be encouraged through pricing mechanisms to seek environmentally friendly options, such as more fuel-efficient or zero-emission vehicles and public transportation.

The transportation plan increases gas taxes by about 18 cents a gallon, roughly 5 percent of the current cost, and registration fees by \$25 to \$175 annually, depending on the value of the vehicle.

Opponents are right that Californians already paid, directly and indirectly, the nation's highest surcharges for gas. When you total all state and federal taxes, fees and production-cost increases due to government mandates, they added about a dollar to the price of a gallon of gas. That was before Brown and the Legislature's 18-cent increase.

But a significant chunk of that is because Californians pay more to ensure the gas we burn and the process for producing it is more environmentally friendly. It's worth it. We need to clean our air and limit our carbon footprint.

The transportation package has flaws. For example, it lacks tough cost controls for road construction and maintenance or for transit agencies that receive state funding. But no legislative deal or ballot measure is perfect. Such is the reality of political compromise.

Which brings us to the other troubling part of Prop. 6. It would require a statewide vote for future tax or fee increases on vehicle fuel or registration — the sort of vote Brown promised when he vowed in 2010 that he would never raise taxes without voter approval.

It was a politically expedient move to bolster his tight-spender image. He did later go to the voters to raise income taxes on the wealthy to help balance the state budget.

But once he won re-election to his final term, he abandoned his pledge and promptly went to work on the transportation package, for which he narrowly won two-thirds approval of the Legislature.

Backers of Prop. 6, including Republicans statewide and nationally, want to raise that bar by requiring voter approval as Brown promised. Ironically, their use of the initiative system to put the issue on the ballot demonstrates that we already have sufficient checks on the Legislature and governor's taxing authority.

To now lock in voter approval for fuel and car tax increases is excessive. The two-thirds approval of the Legislature and initiative threat are enough. At some point, we need to let our lawmakers do their jobs. And if we don't like what they're doing, we should replace them.

So, in sum, Prop. 6 misses the mark on two counts: It reverses badly needed funding for roads and transportation, and it imposes unnecessary restrictions on future fuel and car taxes. For either or both reasons, voters should say no.

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[PRO/CON: Should voters repeal Brown's gas tax increase?](#)

Prop. 6 would overturn fuel and registration hikes, and require voter approval next time

In 2017, legislators and Gov. Jerry Brown increased gas taxes by about 18 cents a gallon and car registration fees by \$25 to \$175 annually. Those levies would continue to rise with inflation. The new annual revenues of \$5.1 billion are for transportation funding. Proposition 6 would repeal those increases and require voter approval for future fuel and vehicle fee hikes.

[Yes on Prop. 6:](#) Backers say the increases were unfair and too costly.

[No on Prop. 6:](#) Opponents say we need the money for roads and transit.

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[Santa Clara VTA Endorses Transit as Official App \(Mass Transit Magazine\)](#)

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority has endorsed Transit as its official transit information and planning app, promoting it as the best smartphone application to check real-time information, look up schedules, and plan multimodal trips across its transit network.

Transit counts millions of active users in over 175 cities worldwide, including hundreds of thousands of users across the Bay Area.

Upon launching the app, VTA riders can see nearby transit options and departure times in big text and bright colors. Users can easily navigate the region, aided by accurate real-time bus and light rail tracking, trip planning, and step-by-step navigation with Transit's GO feature.

Transit offers real-time tracking and trip planning for VTA light rail and bus, in addition to information on first- and last-mile connections to transit. The app also integrates information for dozens of additional agencies in the Bay Area, including BART, Caltrain, Capitol Corridor, Altamont Corridor Express, SamTrans, Muni, AC Transit and more. Plus, Transit users can request Uber rides from within the app and check real-time information for point-to-point services like Ford GoBike, JUMP, and Scoot.

VTA's partnership with Transit offers, at no cost to the agency, an app that's comprehensive, easy-to-use, and already widely adopted by riders. Under the agreement, Transit will provide

VTA with anonymized usage data, the ability to customize information in the app, and technical support. In exchange, Transit will be marketed as VTA's endorsed app via its website and social media, as well as at stations and onboard vehicles throughout Santa Clara Valley.

"Transit makes accessing and using public transportation easier and more convenient, helps customers manage their time more efficiently, and enhances the overall customer experience," said Bernice Alaniz, VTA's director of marketing and customer service.

By endorsing Transit as its official app, VTA joins dozens of other forward-thinking agencies partnering with Transit, including Boston's MBTA, Baltimore's MDOT MTA, Tampa Bay's PSTA, and Montreal's STM.

"Partnering with a single app that prioritizes transit makes it clear to riders where they can go for information," said Sophie Le Blanc, business development manager for transit. "We're excited to work with VTA and to see more people using Transit as part of their daily routine."

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[The secret behind some of the Bay Area's smoother commute roads \(Mercury News\)](#)

Recycled rubber is being mixed into highway surfacing work at its highest rate ever, paving the way for quieter, smoother and safer rides and diverting 4.6 million worn out tires from California landfills a year.

Interstates 80, 205, 680, 880, El Camino Real and Highway 4 now are getting rubberized asphalt, two years after Interstate 280 used this formula to the delight of drivers.

"I hope and pray that they will get rid of the noisy, terrible pavement that was put on Interstate 80 years ago and put a topping that will be quieter than what it is now," said Gary Byer of Richmond. "The noise level from that rough pavement is disturbing thousands of people throughout the Bay Area as well as wearing out car tires prematurely and should be gotten rid of ASAP."

It soon should be quieter. The repaving now under way of 10 miles of I-80 from Highway 4 in Hercules to the Albany exit in Alameda County is using rubberized asphalt. Unlike concrete, with its grooves that make the sound of tires vibrate, rubberized asphalt provides a quieter drive in part because it adds elasticity to the pavement surface.

"There should be a big difference once the repaving is completed," said Bill Kimball, who for years oversaw Caltrans paving projects in the East Bay. "The concrete will be replaced with rubberized, open graded asphalt, which is very durable and quiet."

Rubberized asphalt is visible as a dark layer compared to concrete, which is gray. It's been in use for decades. But after 2013, the state was required to use rubber materials in the mixing

process of 35 percent of all asphalt projects to reduce noise and enable drivers to more easily spot lane lines. In 2013, the ratio was 22.9 percent.

Rubberized asphalt is placed on the fast lane on eastbound I-80 after the San Pablo Dam Road exit in San Pablo, Calif., on Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2018. California Department of Transportation is paving approximately 10-miles of new rubberized asphalt between Interstate-80 and Highway 4. The new asphalt will last longer, is quieter and smoother to drive for motorists. (Ray Chavez/Bay Area News Group)

But in 2015, the most recent data available, the mix jumped to 41.3 percent on roadwork statewide.

For decades, concrete was the preferred option. Though more expensive, it could last 40 years while asphalt might crumble in half that time.

Advancements in technology, lower costs, the desire for less noise and all those tires being dumped have led to a reversal in strategy. In one of the first rubberized jobs in the Bay Area, I-880 from south of Oakland to Milpitas was repaved 20 years ago and continues to rank as one of the Bay Area's smoothest commutes.

In another improvement, new lane striping has gone from four inches wide to six inches to improve visibility on many routes. Safety is expected to be boosted thanks to better long-term color contrast for pavement markings, because carbon black in the rubber acts as a pigment that keeps the pavement blacker longer.

When Caltrans replaced broken concrete on I-680 over the Sunol Grade recently, rubberized asphalt was used on two lanes.

But asphalt isn't the cure-all everywhere. On I-80 east of Sacramento up to Lake Tahoe, durable concrete is essential because of winter storms and heavy truck traffic. And on Highway 85 in the South Bay, concrete was installed to cope with portions of the freeway that sunk into the ground and were prone to flooding.

"This is a specialty mix that requires an attention to detail during placement," said Russell Snyder, executive director of the California Asphalt Association.

Many drivers are already on board.

"I see that it has held up well," said driver Sally Porter of work on I-280 on the Peninsula with rubberized asphalt. "The absence of noise when you drive on this surface is quite amazing."

Rubberized repaving projects

El Camino Real: From Portola Avenue to Lawrence Expressway in Santa Clara. Status: To be done in another year.

Highway 4: Nine miles in San Joaquin County. Done.

Interstate 80: Ten miles from Highway 4 to the Albany exit. Status: To be completed in early November.

Interstate 80: From Rudgear to the Benicia Bridge, in 2021.

Interstate 205: 11 miles from the Alameda County line to I-5 in San Joaquin County. Status: To be done in October.

Interstate 280: In Los Altos area. Completed three years ago.

Interstate 680: Over Sunol Grade, completed last year.

Interstate 880: Through Oakland. Work to begin next year.

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Conserve paper. Think before you print.

From: VTA Board Secretary

Sent: Friday, September 7, 2018 9:08 AM

To: VTA Board of Directors

Subject: VTA Information: September 21, 2018, VTA Board of Directors Workshop Cancellation Notice

VTA Board of Directors:

Please be advised that the **VTA Board of Directors Workshop Meeting** scheduled for September 21, 2018 has been **cancelled**.

You may now access the Cancellation Notice on our website [here](#).

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street, Building B
San Jose, CA 95134-1927
Phone [408-321-5680](tel:408-321-5680)



From: VTA Board Secretary
Sent: Friday, September 7, 2018 10:47 AM
To: VTA Board of Directors
Subject: From VTA: September 7, 2018 Media Clips



VTA Daily News Coverage for Friday, September 7, 2018

1. [BART Delay \(Multiple broadcast outlets\)](#)
2. [VTA staff proposes Next Network bus & light rail service increases be “dead on arrival” \(GreenCaltrain.com\)](#)

BART Delay (Multiple broadcast outlets)

[KTVU Ch. 2](#)

[KCBS Radio](#)

[NBC Bay Area](#)

[KPIX Ch. 5](#) [KPIX Ch. 5](#)

[ABC 7 News](#)

[VTA staff proposes Next Network bus & light rail service increases be “dead on arrival” \(GreenCaltrain.com\)](#)

At the August 17th meeting of the VTA board Ad Hoc Financial Sustainability Committee, [VTA staff proposed that Next Network bus and light rail service increases be “dead on arrival”](#) – a 5% service cut, instead of 10% service increase, in response to deep budget deficit of \$50M-\$60M per year including operating and maintenance.

In response, advocates and policy analysts are encouraging creative thinking to address the budget gap without triggering a spiral of service cuts and ridership decreases.

VTA went through an extensive [professional analysis](#) and community outreach to [redesign its transit network](#), approved by the board in 2017, with goals to increase transit ridership with a

more frequent and connected transit network. After board approval, however, the Next Network rollout was mostly delayed, waiting for the completion of the extension of [BART to Beryessa in San Jose](#), with a delivery date that has been repeatedly deferred. Now, with facing a steep budget deficit, the bus and light rail service increases may not see light of day.

Service Hours Comparison

	FY17 Actual	FY18 Actual*	Original Next Network Plan	Proposed FY20
Bus Service	1,474,841	1,482,518	1,601,000	1,400,000
Light Rail Service	149,940	153,029	192,000	150,000
Total	1,624,781	1,635,547	1,793,000	1,550,000

The staff report proposes to continue shifts away from service that provides geographical coverage in areas with low ridership, toward a network of routes that are expected to gain more “ridership” with increased frequency. The report proposes to keep some frequency increases on high ridership routes and to add connections to the new BART extension stations. But overall, the service level would be down instead of up.

The staff report recommends long-term consideration of capital project changes. But so far, it doesn’t include anything specific about changes to capital projects like the Vasona Light rail extension, where land use plans (or the region’s land use philosophy) may have changed since the project was initially conceived decades ago as a light rail extension into low-density suburban neighborhoods. Nor is there any sign of reconsideration of the BART extension from Diridon to Santa Clara, exactly paralleling the current Caltrain service, on a part of the Caltrain line that isn’t crowded, even as the Caltrain line is being electrified, with the potential for more frequent stops. BART service duplicating Caltrain service between Diridon and Santa Clara would be redundant, but is politically popular among local voters and leaders who have a brand preference for BART over Caltrain.

Instead of cutting redundant and/or likely-low-ridership but popular capital projects, VTA staff proposes to cut service for largely low-income riders of buses and light rail trains; though the VTA Next Network analysis showed that VTA runs fewer service hours per capita than at earlier times in VTA’s history or at other better-performing transit agencies (see the [Next Network analysis reports](#) from 2016).

While capital project changes weren’t discussed specifically, VTA has recently issued a Request for Proposals for a “[Strategic Plan for Advancing High Capacity Transit Corridors](#).” Such strategic planning has the potential to refine VTA’s capital plans in a way that reduces the costs of projects that won’t perform as well as initially conceived, and sets the stage for better performance in the future.

Additional proposed strategies to reduce the deficit include freezing the hiring of non-critical positions, and adjustments to employee wages and/or benefits; and in the long-term revisiting contributions to regional partner services (logically including Caltrain).

Policy nonprofits recommend creative solutions

Two letters to the committee from transportation policy nonprofits, included in the staff report, offered additional suggestions to re-think VTA service.

Regional think tank [SPUR](#) recommended reviewing operating cost factors compared to peer agencies, and looking at regional partnerships not only in terms of costs, but in terms of value to customers. [Working Partnerships](#), a labor-backed public policy organization, offered recommendations including new sources of revenue such as stronger transit-oriented development, taxes on rideshare, partnerships with major employment centers and transportation management associations (TMAs) for transit pass bulk purchases, and “mobility as a service” (MaaS) offerings to bundle first and last mile options such as scooter, bikeshare, and rideshare.

Combining SPUR’s suggestion about building on the value of regional partnerships, and WPUSA’s suggestions about MaaS and employer partnerships – VTA might get better financial results by thinking broadly and expanding service packages to meet the needs of customers, instead of retrenching to offer less service. For large and medium-sized customers, such as Google at Diridon, or Stanford, or San Jose State University, or residential developments near transit lines, it is inefficient and perplexing to have to purchase separate transportation packages from VTA, Caltrain, BART, plus carshare, carpool, bikeshare and scooter offerings. The MaaS opportunity – for services and revenue – would logically be bigger with a footprint that meets the needs of customers. Rather than retreating from partnerships, this strategy would see VTA embracing coordination to address customer needs.

According to second-hand information – your blogger wasn’t at the meeting and minutes aren’t posted yet – the VTA Ad Hoc Financial Sustainability Committee didn’t recommend the staff report’s recommendations to the board. We will seek an update on what next steps are in assessing responses to VTA’s serious budget challenges.

What are your thoughts about ways for VTA to address its budget deficit while avoiding a death spiral of service cuts to reduce revenue?

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2. [Rail Safety Month Sting \(ABC 7 News\)](#)
3. [VTA staff proposes Next Network bus & light rail service increases be “dead on arrival” \(GreenCaltrain.com\)](#)
4. [California rail providers join together for Rail Safety Month \(RT&S\)](#)

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Two letters to the committee from transportation policy nonprofits, included in the staff report, offered additional suggestions to re-think VTA service.

Regional think tank [SPUR](#) recommended reviewing operating cost factors compared to peer agencies, and looking at regional partnerships not only in terms of costs, but in terms of value to customers. [Working Partnerships](#), a labor-backed public policy organization, offered recommendations including new sources of revenue such as stronger transit-oriented development, taxes on rideshare, partnerships with major employment centers and transportation management associations (TMAs) for transit pass bulk purchases, and "mobility as a service" (MaaS) offerings to bundle first and last mile options such as scooter, bikeshare, and rideshare.

Combining SPUR's suggestion about building on the value of regional partnerships, and WPUSA's suggestions about MaaS and employer partnerships – VTA might get better financial results by thinking broadly and expanding service packages to meet the needs of customers, instead of retrenching to offer less service. For large and medium-sized customers, such as Google at Diridon, or Stanford, or San Jose State University, or residential developments near transit lines, it is inefficient and perplexing to have to purchase separate transportation packages from VTA, Caltrain, BART, plus carshare, carpool, bikeshare and scooter offerings. The MaaS opportunity – for services and revenue – would logically be bigger with a footprint that meets the needs of customers. Rather than retreating from partnerships, this strategy would see VTA embracing coordination to address customer needs.

According to second-hand information – your blogger wasn't at the meeting and minutes aren't posted yet – the VTA Ad Hoc Financial Sustainability Committee didn't recommend the staff report's recommendations to the board. We will seek an update on what next steps are in assessing responses to VTA's serious budget challenges.

What are your thoughts about ways for VTA to address its budget deficit while avoiding a death spiral of service cuts to reduce revenue?

[California rail providers join together for Rail Safety Month \(RT&S\)](#)

September is Rail Safety Month in California, and area rail providers such as the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (SCVTA), Amtrak and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) are reminding passengers to stay alert near rail systems.

Throughout September, SCVTA will launch a campaign to remind the public about the importance of moving safely on and around the agency's light-rail system.

According to Nancy Sheehan, the state coordinator of California Operation Lifesaver (CAOL), a nonprofit safety education and awareness program dedicated to ending incidents at highway-rail grade crossings and on railroad rights of way, there were 114 deaths and 89 injuries of railroad trespassers in 2017. There were 38 rail-crossing fatalities and 58 injuries the same year, officials said.

SCVTA also urges passengers and nearby residents to watch the agency's new safety video.

The Amtrak® Pacific Surfliner® will highlight the importance of safety near train tracks with public outreach events in collaboration with CAOL and two Southern California Major League Baseball teams: the San Diego Padres and the Los Angeles Angels.

Officials said the Pacific Surfliner will host educational events featuring rail safety experts from CAOL on Sept. 16 at Angel Stadium, prior to the Angels game against the Seattle Mariners, and Sept. 17, at Petco Park, before the Padres game against the San Francisco Giants.

Attendees will learn safety tips to keep in mind near railroad tracks, including those used by the Pacific Surfliner between San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties.

The LACMTA team will be out in the local community throughout the month handing out safety tote bags and reminding riders to be alert.

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