

## VTA's BART Silicon Valley Phase I Extension: Frequently Asked Questions



***Q: When will VTA's BART Silicon Valley extension be open for passenger service?***

A: The schedule for passenger service along the new 10-mile extension originally established with the Federal Transit Administration\* (FTA) is June 2018. VTA has tracked more than 6 months ahead of schedule for most of the 5 years of construction and was trending towards an earlier opening date. Once our project began the process of tying into BART's Warm Springs Extension and system testing started, the schedule became more dependent on the progress of the thousands of tests that must be performed by VTA, VTA's contractor and BART. VTA is working hand-in-hand with BART on the sequence of milestones that must be achieved to safely open for passenger service on the new 10-mile extension consistent with the FTA schedule.

*\*FTA is a major funding partner that oversees all critical aspects of the project.*

***Q: When will construction of the project be complete?***

A: VTA plans to complete the Milpitas and Berryessa/North San José BART stations and trackway by the end of this year. A sequence of testing phases by both VTA, VTA's contractor and BART will continue after construction until the new extension is certified as safe and reliable. This also involves three stages of safety certification: 1) design; 2) construction, and 3) operations. VTA and VTA's contractor are responsible for the first and second stages. Since BART will be responsible for the operations of the Silicon Valley extension, only BART can complete the third stage of safety certification. Only then will the new 10-mile extension be ready for passenger service.

***Q: How has BART's Warm Springs Extension affected your project?***

A: VTA's project needs to be fully integrated into the existing BART system. Important changes were made by BART to the requirements for the conversion of the Warm Springs/South Fremont Station from an end-of-line operation to a pass-through operation. Combined with the latest progress information from VTA's contractors, it has become necessary to adjust the sequence of remaining work for VTA's BART Silicon Valley extension.

***Q: How does the change in project delivery schedule affect the project budget?***

A: VTA remains under budget on the new 10-mile extension. Physical construction of the project is almost complete. Although the remaining work is critically important, it does not involve large quantities of costly materials like steel and concrete. Additionally, unlike earlier construction activities, the various testing and safety certification phases do not involve a large labor force and major equipment; therefore it is not the most costly portion of the work.

***Q: VTA announced significant changes to bus and light rail service to coincide with the start of BART passenger service in Santa Clara County. Does that mean the new service plan will not go into effect until the new 10-mile extension is open to the public?***

A: VTA's new service plan contains many benefits for Santa Clara County residents – one of which is to better connect VTA transit with BART service at the new Milpitas and Berryessa/North San José Transit Centers. Since most of the operational changes are directly tied to the opening of BART, VTA's new service plan will coincide with start of passenger services on the new 10-mile BART Silicon Valley extension.

However, there are a few service changes that VTA riders can look forward to beginning in January of 2018, including free transfers between buses and light rail. Additionally, VTA staff is evaluating some bus and light rail service changes where it appears early implementation may be beneficial.

## **Testing and Safety Certification**

### ***Q: What all is involved in the remaining test phases of the project and why does it take so long?***

A: There are three testing phases during which the new 10-mile BART Silicon Valley extension becomes fully integrated with the existing BART system. During these phases, there are literally thousands of complex tests to be performed, all of which are necessary to assure the safety and reliability of all newly constructed facilities and systems.

First, VTA will perform static testing where all track, communications and signals are tested along the trackway, in the six train control facilities, and within the two stations. Next, VTA will perform dynamic testing, where train movements will be tested along the 10-mile extension. Finally, VTA will turn the project over to BART, so that they may perform integration testing and conduct operations training for the new extension. Even after VTA completes all its construction work and testing phases, only BART and regulatory agencies can certify the safety and reliability of the fully integrated extension as being ready for passenger service.

### ***Q: What can I expect during train testing?***

A: During the initial phase of train testing, one three-car train will be used. Eventually, as the train testing progresses, multiple ten-car trains will be operated along the entire 10-mile BART Silicon Valley extension, simulating passenger service, so that BART can test the safety and reliability of the system. Tests can occur at any time during the day and night.

### ***Q: What regulatory agency certifies the system to assure it is safe and reliable?***

A: The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), in collaboration with the FTA, is the agency that oversees the safety certification of rail transit systems in California. Under CPUC oversight, all systems are certified to ensure they are correctly designed, constructed, installed, and operating as intended. Once these certifications are in place, and the CPUC is satisfied with the process, BART may begin passenger service on the new 10-mile extension. After passenger service begins, BART will be responsible for operations and maintenance of the system, and the CPUC will continue oversight of the system operations.

### ***Q: Is public safety at risk during the upcoming phases of the project or once passenger service begins?***

A: VTA has implemented safety and security measures to protect people and property during construction. Furthermore, all testing stages of the project exist to verify safe and reliable operation of the 10-mile BART Silicon Valley extension once it is in service.

While the new BART service in Santa Clara County will operate in the same manner as the current BART system, the public should be aware of key differences between VTA's light rail system and the BART system. VTA's light rail vehicles draw power from an overhead electrical system; in contrast, BART vehicles use a different system that draws power from a contact rail, better known as the third rail, which is powered by 1,000 volts of electricity. For that reason, all tracks throughout BART's operating system, including in Santa Clara County, are fenced-in and entirely separated from vehicle, bicycle and foot traffic so as not to disrupt traffic flow and to provide a safe and accessible environment for the public.

It is important that the public adhere to all safety signage and avoid all fenced-off areas of the project. The system is electrified during the testing phase and should be considered "live" at all times. The two station areas are still considered active construction sites, and are actively patrolled by law enforcement officers and private security. Nonetheless, there is no safety risk as long as the public does not enter into the secured areas of the BART system.