

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

May 29, 2018

To:
Reviewing Agencies and Organizations

From:
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Environmental Programs
3331 North First Street, Building B-2
San Jose, CA 95134-1927

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Eastridge to BART Regional Connector: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), will prepare a Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR-2) for the Eastridge to BART Regional Connector: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project (EBRC-CELR or Project). We request the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The Draft SEIR-2 will supplement the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) (SCH 2001092014), Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (Final SEIR-1), and the Subsequent Initial Study/Mitigation Negative Declaration (Subsequent IS/MND), which were certified by the VTA Board of Directors in May 2005, August 2007, and March 2014, respectively. Your agency may need to use the Final EIR, Final SEIR-1, and Subsequent IS/MND available here: <http://www.vta.org/projects-and-programs/transit/capitol-expressway-light-rail-project/library> as well as this SEIR-2 prepared by our agency when considering permits or other approvals for the EBRC-CELR Project.

The project description, location, overview, and potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study is is not attached.

Because of the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Christina Jaworski at the address shown above or via email at EBRC-CELR-Comments@vta.org . We request that the name for a contact person in your agency be provided with your response.

Project Title: Eastridge to BART Regional Connector: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project
(formerly named "Downtown East Valley Capitol Expressway Corridor" and
"Capitol Expressway Corridor")

Project Applicant, if any: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Date: 05/29/18

Signature: Christina Jaworski

Name: Christina Jaworski

Title: Senior Environmental Planner

Telephone: (408) 321-5789

Email: EBRC-CELR-Comments@vta.org

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (State CEQA Guidelines) Section 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

**Attachment to the Notice of Preparation of a
Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the
Eastridge to BART Regional Connector: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project**

Introduction

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA's) Eastridge to BART Regional Connector: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project (approved project) is located in the City of San José. The approved project (discussed below under *Approved Project*) would be implemented in two distinct phases. The first phase consisted of pedestrian and bus improvements, including sidewalk, landscaping, and lighting along Capitol Expressway; bus stop improvements at Story Road and Ocala Avenue; and the replacement of Eastridge Transit Center. Construction of the pedestrian and bus improvements was completed in 2012 and the replacement of Eastridge Transit Center was completed in 2015. The second phase consists of the extension of light rail along Capitol Expressway between the existing Alum Rock Light Rail Station and Eastridge Transit Center, a distance of approximately 2.4 miles.

Following project approval (discussed below under *Prior Environmental Documentation*), work began on Preliminary Engineering (PE), which advanced designs to a greater level of detail. Because of the nature of the design changes recently proposed during PE (discussed below under *Changes to the Approved Project*), VTA determined that additional environmental review is required and that a Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR-2) is the appropriate level of documentation. An SEIR is prepared only if minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the changed situation. According to Section 15163(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the SEIR needs to only contain the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised.

Prior Environmental Documentation

The federal and state environmental process for the approved project was initiated in September 2001 with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the federal register and the filing of the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with the State Clearinghouse. A Draft EIS/EIR was circulated in April 2004, but only a Final EIR was completed as a result of limited opportunities for securing federal funds.

In May 2005, the VTA Board of Directors certified the Final EIR and approved the Light Rail Alternative. As a result of PE, the Light Rail Alternative was modified to address agency comments, improve operations, minimize right-of-way acquisition and lower costs. The VTA Board of Directors certified a Final Supplemental EIR (Final SEIR) and approved these modifications in August 2007.

Due to unprecedented declines in revenues beginning in 2008, the implementation plan for the Light Rail Alternative was modified to construct the project in phases. An Addendum was approved in June 2010 that included the installation of pedestrian and bus

improvements as Phase 1 and the extension of light rail along Capitol Expressway as Phase 2.

A Subsequent Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was approved in March 2014 that eliminated the Ocala Station, eliminated sidewalk widening and sound wall relocation north of Ocala Avenue, and expanded the Eastridge Park-and-Ride lot.

Proposed Location

The approved project is located along Capitol Expressway, generally between Capitol Avenue and north of Quimby Road in the City of San Jose in Santa Clara County. Exhibit 1 depicts the approved project alignment and the proposed changes to the approved project (discussed below under *Approved Project* and *Changes to the Approved Project*).

Approved Project

The approved project would consist of the extension of light rail along Capitol Expressway between the existing Alum Rock Light Rail Station and Eastridge Transit Center, a distance of approximately 2.4 miles. Light rail would operate primarily in the median of Capitol Expressway within exclusive and semi-exclusive rights-of-way. To provide the additional right-of-way to accommodate light rail, high-occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV lanes) would be removed between Capitol Avenue and Tully Road. The alignment would include an elevated section that would extend from Capitol Avenue north of the Capitol Expressway intersection to south of Story Road, and an elevated crossing of Tully Road. The approved project would include new light rail stations at Story Road (aerial) and Eastridge Transit Center (at-grade). At Eastridge Station, the existing Park-and-Ride lot would be expanded to accommodate the project. The approved project would also include traction power substations at Ocala Avenue and Eastridge Transit Center. Five 115-kilovolt electrical transmission towers and two tubular steel poles (TSPs) would require relocation from the median of Capitol Expressway to the east side of Capitol Expressway in order to accommodate the approved project.

Changes to the Approved Project

VTA is proposing changes to certain elements of the approved project, including:

- Extension of the aerial guideway (south of Story Road) to grade-separate the Ocala Avenue and Cunningham Avenue intersections;
- Revisions to Capitol Expressway roadway lane configurations (including the conversion of the existing high-occupancy vehicle lanes to general purpose traffic lanes and maintaining eight lanes between Story Road and Capitol Avenue);
- Modifications to Eastridge Station platforms and track;
- Reduction in parking spaces at Eastridge Park-and-Ride lot;
- Modification of the Story Station pedestrian overcrossing;
- Modification to Story Station pedestrian access; and
- Relocation of a construction staging area.

Exhibit 2 provides a detailed description of the proposed changes to the approved project.

Proposed Scope and Content of the SEIR-2

The purpose of the SEIR-2 is to disclose the environmental consequences of the proposed changes to the approved project. The SEIR-2 will explore the extent to which the proposed changes will result in environmental impacts and discuss actions to reduce or eliminate such impacts. Based on the proposed changes, VTA is proposing to focus the SEIR-2 on the following topics of potential environmental effects:

- Transportation
- Noise and Vibration
- Environmental Justice

To ensure that the significant environmental issues are identified, and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures are considered, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties on the scope and content of the SEIR-2. Comments or questions on the SEIR-2 should be directed to VTA as noted below.

Scoping Meeting

VTA will hold a public scoping meeting for the project. The meeting will begin with staff presentations on the project's history, proposed changes to the project, and the environmental process. The meeting will conclude with an open house where attendees can receive additional project information, ask questions, and submit written comments on the scope and content of the SEIR-2. Details of the scoping meeting are as follows:

Thursday, June 14, 2018

6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

William C. Overfelt High School

Multi-Purpose Room (Building F, Room 5F)

1835 Cunningham Avenue

San Jose, CA 95122

This location is served by VTA Bus routes 22, 70, and 77.

Individuals who require language translation, American Sign Language, or documents in accessible formats are requested to contact VTA Community Outreach at (408) 321-7575 / TTY (408) 321-2330 at least five business days before the meeting. The meeting facility is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Comment Due Date

Written scoping comments must be received by **June 28, 2018** and can be sent via the following methods to:

Mail: Christina Jaworski, Senior Environmental Planner
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Environmental Programs
3331 North First Street, Building B-2
San Jose, CA 95134-1927

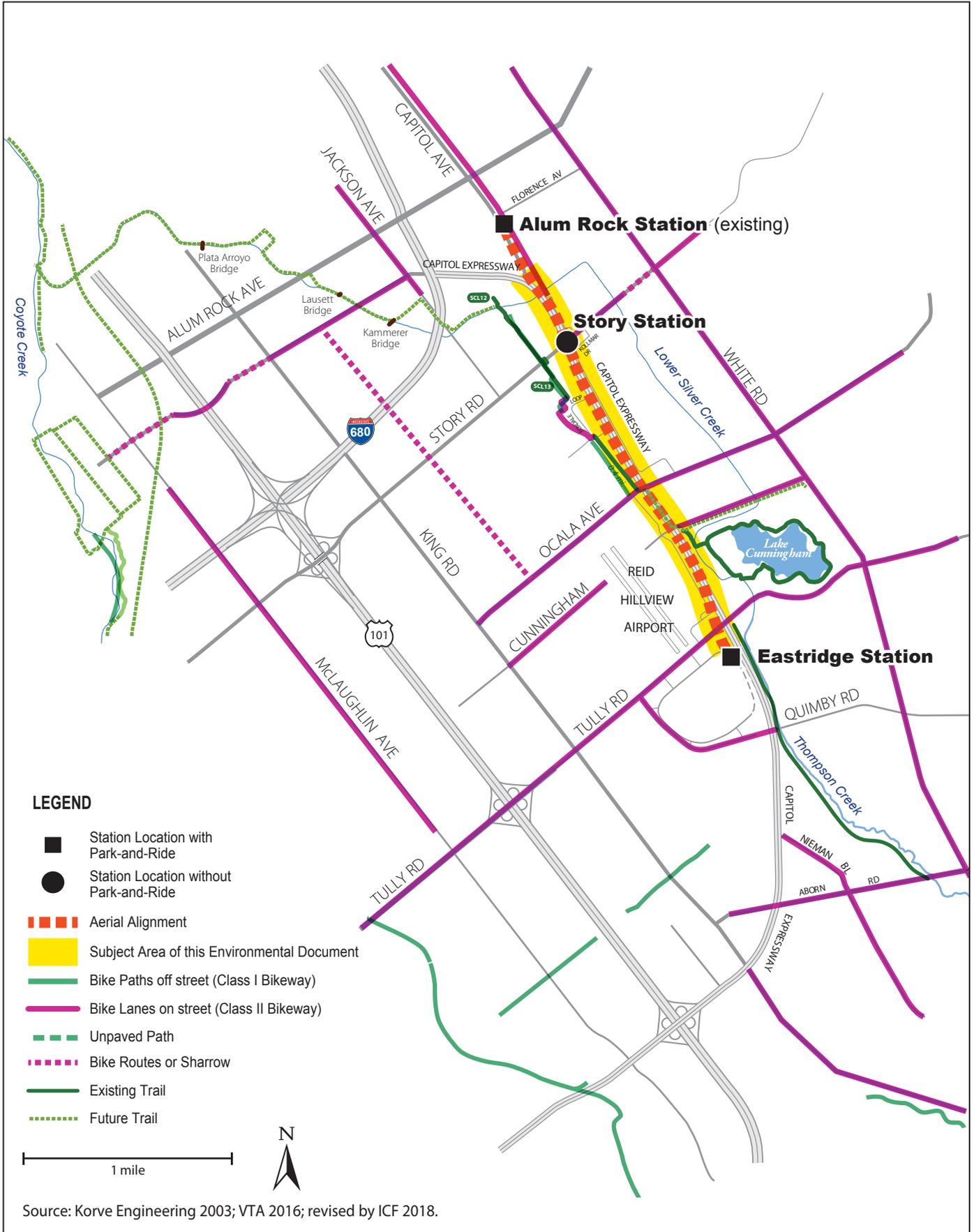
E-mail: EBRC-CELR-Comments@VTA.org

For Further Information Contact

For further information regarding the environmental process, to be included on the project mailing list, or to receive additional information about the project, please contact Christina Jaworski at (408) 321-5789. People with special needs should contact VTA Community Outreach at (408) 321-7575 / TTY (408) 321-2330.

Issued on: May 29, 2018

Signature: Christina Jaworski
Christina Jaworski
Senior Environmental Planner
Environmental Programs and Resources Management



Source: Korve Engineering 2003; VTA 2016; revised by ICF 2018.

Exhibit 1 Proposed Changes to Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

Exhibit 2: Detailed Description of the Proposed Changes to Approved Project

Location	Proposed Changes to the Approved Project
Capitol Expressway, from south of Story Road to north of Tully Road	<p data-bbox="557 338 1386 401"><u>Extension of the Aerial Guideway to Grade-Separate the Ocala Avenue and Cunningham Avenue Intersections</u></p> <p data-bbox="557 411 1386 604">The proposed change to the approved project would replace the at-grade track alignment with approximately 1.25 miles of aerial guideway from south of Story Road to north of Tully Road. The aerial guideway would include concrete columns supported on pile foundations. The aerial guideway would also include aerial sound walls.</p> <p data-bbox="557 625 1386 758">As a result of an additional left turn pocket (as discussed in detail below) on Capitol Expressway at Story Road, the alignment of the aerial guideway between Story Road and Foxdale Drive would be shifted slightly west by three feet.</p>
Capitol Expressway, between Capitol Avenue and Story Road, and at Story Road, Cunningham Avenue, and Tully Road intersections	<p data-bbox="557 772 1386 806"><u>Revisions to Capitol Expressway Roadway Lane Configurations</u></p> <p data-bbox="557 816 1386 911">The proposed change to the approved project would revise the roadway lane configurations along Capitol Expressway. The proposed roadway lane configuration changes include:</p> <ul data-bbox="557 921 1386 1814" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="557 921 1386 1184">• <i>Four traffic lanes in each direction north of Story Road.</i> Both of the existing high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes (one northbound and one southbound) would be converted to general purpose (GP) traffic lanes, resulting in a total of four GP lanes in each direction between Story Road and Capitol Avenue. One southbound inner GP lane would end at the introduction of the left turn pockets at Story Road. This proposed change would be accomplished by the widening of Capitol Expressway and a reduction of the median. <li data-bbox="557 1194 1386 1257">• <i>Maintain two way street on Kollmar Drive between Story Road and Sussex Drive.</i> <li data-bbox="557 1268 1386 1394">• <i>Right turn lanes.</i> Exclusive right turn lanes on southbound Capitol Expressway would be added at Story Road, Cunningham Avenue, and Tully Road intersections. Exclusive right turn lanes will be maintained on northbound Capitol Expressway at Story Road. <li data-bbox="557 1404 1386 1572">• <i>Bicycle Slot.</i> At the locations where exclusive right turn lanes are added or maintained on Capitol Expressway (as discussed in detail above), bicycle slots would be included to the left of the right turn lanes. Exhibit 3 includes pictures of a typical bicycle slot with bicycle detector. <li data-bbox="557 1583 1386 1751">• <i>Left turn lanes.</i> Longer left turn lanes on Capitol Expressway would be added at the following intersections: northbound and southbound at Story Road, northbound at Ocala Avenue, and southbound at Tully Road. At Ocala Avenue, one northbound left turn lane would be removed. <li data-bbox="557 1761 1386 1814">• <i>Left turn pocket.</i> A second left turn pocket would be maintained on northbound Capitol Expressway at Story Road.
West of the Capitol Expressway, between	<p data-bbox="557 1829 1386 1862"><u>Modifications to Eastridge Station Platforms and Track.</u></p> <p data-bbox="557 1873 1386 1892">The approved project includes two platforms, additional tail tracks,</p>

Location	Proposed Changes to the Approved Project
Tully Road and Eastridge Loop	<p>and one traction power substation at the Eastridge Station. The proposed changes to the project include only one, center platform at Eastridge Station, which would be adequate for the anticipated patronage.</p> <p>Additional changes to the Eastridge Station include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of the siding track; • Reconfigure tail tracks, including the addition of a pocket track; • Diamond crossover shifted from structure to ballast; • Addition of passenger access at north end of station (adjacent to the Park-and-Ride Lot); • Shift platform to north, which would eliminate reconstruction of Eastridge Loop/Capitol Expressway intersection; • Platform would be raised on retained fill; and, • Tully Road bridge crossing would be lowered.
West of the Capitol Expressway, between Tully Road and Eastridge Loop	<p><u>Reduction in Parking Spaces at Eastridge Park-and-Ride Lot</u></p> <p>The approved project includes 445 spaces at Eastridge Station to partially address the increased demand for parking from the project. VTA is proposing to reduce the parking to approximately 200 spaces due to the relocation of VTA Paratransit staff and vehicles to a remodeled building at this location in September 2017.</p>
Capitol Expressway (northbound), south of Story Road	<p><u>Modification of the Story Station Pedestrian Overcrossing</u></p> <p>The approved project includes a pedestrian overcrossing at the Story Station. The proposed change to the project would adjust the location of the eastern and western landings of the pedestrian overcrossing. On the east side of the pedestrian overcrossing, this change would maintain an existing driveway along Capitol Expressway into the gas station located south of Story Road. On the west side of the pedestrian overcrossing, this change would provide for improved clearances at the bottom of the access stairs, the crosswalk ramps, and the waiting areas at the intersection.</p>
Capitol Expressway/ Story Road intersection	<p><u>Modification to Story Station Pedestrian Access</u></p> <p>The approved project also includes a pedestrian access point to Story Station at the median. The proposed change to the project would restrict pedestrian access to the Story Station at the median to emergency purposes only.</p>
Northwest corner of the Capitol Expressway/ Tully Road intersection	<p><u>Relocation of a Construction Staging Area</u></p> <p>The approved project includes a construction staging area at Capitol Expressway/Tully Road. The proposed change to the project would eliminate this construction staging area. Thus, the project will require additional areas for staging construction material and equipment. The actual locations and associated access remain to be identified, and it is expected that the laydown areas will be adjacent to the roadway in areas that are either vacant or available for use.</p>



a. View of an example bike slot facing west at Lawrence Expressway and Cabrillo Avenue in the City of Santa Clara.



b. View of a bike detector embedded in a bike slot. The purpose of a bike detector is to detect a bicyclist approaching an intersection and communicate with the traffic signal cabinet to provide enough time for cyclists to safely cross an intersection.

Source: VTA and ICF 2018.