BOARD OF DIRECTORS WORKSHOP/SPECIAL MEETING

Friday, November 18, 2016

2:00 PM

PLEASE NOTE MEETING DATE, TIME AND LOCATION

VTA Auditorium
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134

**REVISED AGENDA**

To help you better understand, follow, and participate in the meeting, the following information is provided:

- Persons wishing to address the Board of Directors on any item on the agenda or not on the agenda are requested to complete a blue card located at the public information table and hand it to the Board Secretary staff prior to the meeting or before the item is heard.

- Speakers will be called to address the Board when their agenda item(s) arise during the meeting and are asked to limit their comments to 2 minutes. The amount of time allocated to speakers may vary at the Chairperson's discretion depending on the number of speakers and length of the agenda. **If presenting handout materials, please provide 25 copies to the Board Secretary for distribution to the Board of Directors.**

**Change from previous version: (Change is in red font)**

1) **Updated language for Agenda Item #3.1: Next Network Outreach Summary and Ridership/Coverage Balance**
• All reports for items on the open meeting agenda are available for review in the Board Secretary’s Office, 3331 North First Street, San Jose, California, (408) 321-5680, the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday prior to the meeting. This information is available on our website, www.vta.org, and also at the meeting. Any document distributed less than 72-hours prior to the meeting will also be made available to the public at the time of distribution. Copies of items provided by members of the public at the meeting will be made available following the meeting upon request.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, VTA will make reasonable arrangements to ensure meaningful access to its meetings for persons who have disabilities and for persons with limited English proficiency who need translation and interpretation services. Individuals requiring ADA accommodations should notify the Board Secretary’s Office at least 48-hours prior to the meeting. Individuals requiring language assistance should notify the Board Secretary’s Office at least 72-hours prior to the meeting. The Board Secretary may be contacted at (408) 321-5680 or *e-mail: board.secretary@vta.org or (408) 321-2330 (TTY only). VTA’s home page is on the web at: www.vta.org or visit us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/scvta. (408) 321-2300: 中文 / Español / 日本語 / 한국어 / tiếng Việt / Tagalog.

NOTE: THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MAY ACCEPT, REJECT OR MODIFY ANY ACTION RECOMMENDED ON THIS AGENDA.

3331 North First Street, San Jose, California is served by bus line 58 and Light Rail.

For trip planning information, contact our Customer Service Department at (408) 321-2300 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. Schedule information is also available on our website, www.vta.org.
1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

1.1 Roll Call

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons desiring to address the Board of Directors on any item within the Board's jurisdiction. Speakers are limited to 2 minutes. The law does not permit Board action or extended discussion of any item not on the agenda except under special circumstances. If Board action is requested, the matter can be placed on a subsequent agenda. All statements that require a response will be referred to staff for reply in writing.

3. WORKSHOP ITEM

3.1. ACTION ITEM - Direct staff to design a draft transit network employing an 85/15 balance between ridership-purposed and coverage-purposed services.

4. OTHER ITEMS

4.1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. ADJOURN
BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
   Board of Directors

THROUGH: General Manager, Nuria I. Fernandez

FROM: Interim Director - Planning & Program Development, Carolyn M. Gonot

SUBJECT: Next Network Outreach Summary and Ridership/Coverage Balance

Policy-Related Action: No 
Government Code Section 84308 Applies: No

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to design a draft transit network employing an 85/15 balance between ridership-purposed and coverage-purposed services.

BACKGROUND:

VTA updates its transit service plan every two years. Most updates include small changes to transit routes or changes to hours of service based on review of ridership data, public requests and changes in travel demand due to new developments. Over time, the changes in land use and travel demand can make the original network design less applicable to the current built environment. As such, it is healthy for transit agencies to reassess the goals they have for their transit system and redesign their networks from scratch approximately every ten years. VTA’s last redesign was in 2008 as part of the Comprehensive Operations Analysis. The combination of the start of BART service to Santa Clara County in 2017 and the desire to address VTA’s stagnant ridership and low and declining farebox recovery rate present an opportunity to once again reimagine our transit network. This redesign, known as the Next Network Plan, is a major component of VTA’s Transit Ridership Improvement Program, which seeks to make transit more useful, modern and appealing to Santa Clara County travelers.

VTA has partnered with Jarrett Walker and Associates, a world-renown transit network design firm, to assist VTA in designing a more useful transit network that will meet the goals of increasing ridership, cost-effectiveness and regional connections. Jarrett Walker and Associates has produced the Transit Choices Report (Attachment A) which offers an independent assessment of VTA’s system as well as the Transit Alternatives Report (Attachment B) which
lays out three concepts that VTA could pursue in network design and analyzes their effect on mobility.


In addition to adjusting transit routes to integrate future BART service at Milpitas and Berryessa Stations into VTA’s transit network, a central element of VTA’s Next Network Plan has been determining the appropriate balance between ridership and coverage services. This question concerns how much of VTA’s transit operating budget should be spent on ridership-purposed services and how much should be spent on coverage-purposed services. Presently, 70 percent of VTA’s operating budget is spent on ridership-purposed routes—routes that travel through dense, walkable, transit-supportive places. 30 percent is spent on coverage-purposed routes—routes that provide transit access to parts of the county with little regard for ridership demand. Both endeavors, ridership and coverage, are good, but they inherently conflict with each other. Determining the appropriate balance between ridership and coverage speaks to how VTA envisions its role as a transit operator given the county’s transportation needs, challenges and VTA’s obligation to use public funds in a cost-effective manner.

**DISCUSSION:**

Identifying the appropriate ridership/coverage balance is the essential first step in the design of a new transit network. This memo summarizes the input received during the recent community outreach effort, discusses other efforts that are closely related to the Next Network Plan and closes with a request for direction on the ridership/coverage balance.

**Next Network Phase I Outreach Summary**

Due to the magnitude of potential changes to the transit network, VTA staff sought to engage the public in a dialogue about how transit service could be improved before proposing any changes of our own. A five-month long outreach effort from May through September brought riders and residents inside the planning process, asking them to weigh in on the same decisions that transit service planners must consider as well as review three network concepts that represented different balances of ridership and coverage services (70/30, 80/20 and 90/10, see Attachment C).

For in-person public engagement, VTA held 12 Community Meetings (VTA staff-led) and four intensive Community Leader Workshops (led by Jarrett Walker and Associates) for the Next Network Plan. Additionally, VTA staff made 15 presentations to community and neighborhood groups. For online outreach, 104,000 unique visits were recorded to the project website. VTA collected 2,236 votes in online surveys, 1,139 social media interactions and 860 email list subscribers. Staff posted 12 blog posts that each generated dozens of public comments and staff responses. 150 Next Network-related comments were received through VTA’s customer service line. In all, over 5,000 points of public input were received—more than halfway to staff’s goal of receiving 10,000 points of input throughout the entire project.
The comments received followed many common themes:

- Concerns over personal impacts of service changes on mobility. How will those who might see their transit service decreased or discontinued get around?
- Desires for more frequent and reliable transit service. With many routes operating at 30-minute frequencies or less, transit is not a viable option for many who live within the core service area.
- Desires to lower the average rider subsidy by decreasing or discontinuing transit service to low-ridership areas.
- Desires to see public transit as a traffic congestion solution
- Desires to improve connections with regional services like Caltrain and future BART service
- A sense that transit did not go where riders wanted to go or that making one’s trip would be indirect or require lengthy transfers
- Recognition of the challenge of operating transit in low-density, suburban areas
- Concerns for the mobility of an aging population

At public meetings and online, the public was surveyed about how they would spend limited funding on various tradeoffs. For example, should VTA increase service frequencies or operate transit for longer hours? Some of the responses reinforced the status quo or existing characteristics of VTA’s transit network such as providing more service on weekdays than weekends and more service during weekday commute periods than off-peak periods. Other responses revealed a desire to make changes in VTA’s network design. Respondents demonstrated a willingness to walk farther to transit service that is more frequent or faster than current service. All survey questions and responses are included in Attachment D.

Regarding the ridership/coverage balance, respondents were split evenly across the spectrum from 70/30 to 90/10 (see Attachment E). About one-quarter of votes were submitted for 70/30, one-quarter for 80/20 and one-quarter for 90/10 with the remainder sprinkled evenly across the range. Three-quarters of the votes indicated some desire to increase the proportion of funding spent on ridership-purposed services. The average of all votes was 80.2 percent ridership and 19.8 percent for coverage.

It should be noted that the attendees of the four Community Leader Workshops favored an 85/15 ridership/coverage balance. These four-hour workshops included detailed discussions of transit network design and were attended by elected officials, neighborhood association leaders, transit riders and leaders of community organizations that represent disadvantaged, low-income, disabled and transit-dependent constituencies. The expertise, level of engagement and closeness of Leadership Workshop attendees to those affected by public transit decisions leads us to consider their ridership/coverage balance with additional weight and is the basis for the staff recommendation.
Next Network Phase II Outreach Plan

Upon release of the Draft Next Network Plan on January 5th, VTA will begin a second phase of outreach including public meetings throughout the county, webinars, guest presentations, online tools and on-vehicle collateral. The focus of Phase II will be to show how we incorporated Phase I input in the design of a draft transit network and ask the question: “did we get it right?” During the last major redesign of VTA’s transit network a decade ago, the comments received during this phase of outreach yielded 45 changes that were incorporated into the design of the final transit service plan, underscoring the importance of public review in crafting the Final Next Network plan.

Upcoming dates

Jan. 5  Release of the Draft Next Network Plan
Jan. 5 - Feb. 20  Phase II Public Outreach
Jan. - Feb.  VTA Advisory and Standing Committee updates
Mar.  Final Plan reviewed by VTA Advisory and Standing Committees
Apr.  VTA Board adopts Final Next Network Plan
Fall 2017  Next Network Plan implemented

Related Efforts

The design of the Next Network Plan will have implications for several other VTA efforts, policies and programs, which are discussed below. As such, it is important to consider the design of the transit network in context. VTA staff is coordinating the planning of the Next Network Plan with these related efforts and each will come to the Board of Directors for consideration on a more detailed level in the coming months.

BART Operating Plan

BART is on track to begin revenue service to Milpitas and Berryessa Stations in the fall of 2017. Presently, two routes terminate at Fremont, providing direct connections to Richmond and Daly City. Only one of these routes, which will operate generally every 15 minutes, will be extended to Berryessa (which route is yet to be determined) in the fall of 2017 due to an insufficient number of BART trains. Once more trains are added to the system, both routes will terminate in Berryessa, likely one to two years after initial service starts. As a result, the initial ridership and demand upon VTA for connecting service may be lighter at first.

Light Rail Operating Plan

The ridership/coverage question pertains to the geographical distribution of transit service and is more applicable to bus service since buses can operate on most streets while light rail is restricted to train tracks. However, other aspects of service like frequency, connections to regional service and hours of service are relevant to light rail. To this extent, VTA staff has already proposed changes to the light rail operating plan that, if adopted, would go into effect in the fall of 2017 (see Attachment F). They include:
- Adding a new light rail route along Tasman Drive and Capitol Expressway between Downtown Mountain View and Alum Rock Transit Center, operating every 15 minutes
- Shortening the Mountain View/Winchester line to Old Ironsides/Winchester
- Increasing the frequency of the Old Ironsides/Winchester line to 15 minutes all day (currently 15 in the peak period and 30 off-peak)
- Shortening the Baypointe/Santa Teresa express train to St. James/Santa Teresa and increasing the daily express trips from three in each direction to six in each direction.

Core Connectivity

If VTA pursues a more ridership-purposed transit network, routes that would be leading candidates to be decreased or discontinued are coverage-purposed routes located in the low-density areas of Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, Saratoga, Los Gatos, Morgan Hill, Gilroy and the Almaden Valley, East Hills and Evergreen areas of San Jose. Some of the riders in these areas depend on VTA for transportation and VTA is exploring alternatives to retain their mobility while lowering the per-ride subsidy that VTA currently pays, which generally ranges from double to triple the system-wide average per-ride subsidy.

Some transit agencies have addressed these challenges by partnering with taxis or transportation network companies. In such arrangements, the transit agency will subsidize the traveler’s trip, typically up to a certain point, provided that one end of the trip is at a transit stop. This arrangement decreases the subsidy per passenger paid by the transit agency while maintaining mobility for the traveler. Though it may increase the cost borne by the passenger (depending on their proximity to transit stop), it provides an alternative to discontinuing service in a particular area. These partnerships allow passengers to summon a ride when they want and can take a trip directly to or from their front door. VTA staff is currently studying the applicability of such arrangements for Santa Clara County and will be presenting information and analysis to the Board of Directors and VTA committees in December and January.

Another option is for cities to expand or start operating local shuttles with financial contributions and planning assistance from VTA, potentially as a grant program. The 2016 Measure B contains language permitting such solutions.

Paratransit

VTA is required by the Americans with Disability Act to provide paratransit service to areas within ¼ of a mile of a fixed route service while that route is in operation. VTA’s Board-adopted paratransit policy exceeds this minimum and offers paratransit service up to 1 ¼ of a mile of a fixed route, though at a premium fare. If VTA pursues a more ridership-purposed transit network, coverage-purposed routes that serve outlying areas of the county could be discontinued. Under current policy, this would decrease the size of the paratransit coverage area and mean that some clients’ trips would fall outside of the coverage area or would fall into the premium fare area. VTA’s Board may consider revising the paratransit policy to lessen or prevent impacts to paratransit clients.

It should be noted that some network design recommendations included in the Transit Choices Report would be beneficial to paratransit users such as increasing midday service levels and
weekend service levels. These would have the effect of extending the hours in which paratransit service operates and would give paratransit clients more freedom to make trips by time of day or day of the week. Increasing midday and weekend service levels would could be afforded by decreasing peak-hour service or decreasing coverage service.

VTA staff is currently analyzing the potential impacts to paratransit passengers and will be working with the VTA’s Committee for Transit Accessibility to develop policy recommendations. Adjustments to paratransit policy will be considered by the Board of Directors in early 2017.

System Map Redesign/Service Classes

In addition to redesigning service, VTA is working to simplify the transit system nomenclature and make maps and route schedules more useful and easier to use. The implementation of a new transit network in the fall of 2017 will be accompanied by the release of a redesigned transit map that is based on frequency of service, which is more useful to riders than the service class-based map that is in circulation today. Maps on route schedules will be improved with added context and stop listings and will become a resource that is useful through all phases of a transit trip: planning, waiting at stops, on-board and at destination. VTA is also exploring simplifying service classes and branding frequent services as part of a “Frequent Network.” Such strategies have been used successfully by LA Metro (Los Angeles, California) and TriMet (Portland, Oregon).

Fares

As VTA considers the possibility of a more ridership-oriented network, it is necessary to review VTA’s fare structure to ensure that it is supportive of the Next Network Plan. In particular, Jarrett Walker has noted that VTA’s policy of charging riders for each vehicle boarding, including transfers required to complete a single trip, greatly undermines the value of a fast, frequent network.

In this context, VTA has initiated a fare policy study to analyze the ridership and revenue impacts of offering free or reduced price intra-operator (VTA-to-VTA) transfers, within a defined time period, for any rider using Clipper. The current fare policy allows for unlimited transfers for riders with monthly passes, Eco Passes or day passes, but other riders have to pay a full fare for each boarding. Allowing free or reduced price transfers to all Clipper riders would encourage more transit trips by eliminating the penalty for trips that involve transfers.

The fare policy study will estimate the potential loss of fare revenue resulting from free transfers and evaluate options for making up this revenue through other actions.

The fare policy study will also review discounts for youth, fares for low income riders, fares for the Community Bus service category and the Eco Pass program.

Title VI and Low Income Analysis

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin in the use of federal funds. As a recipient of federal funds, VTA must ensure that changes to the transit network or to fare policy do not discriminate against the Title VI protected classes.
Though not a protected class under Title VI, VTA also ensures that transit service changes do not discriminate against low income residents as part of its Disproportionate Burden Policy.

Analyzing Title VI impacts to transit service changes involves some amount of uncertainty as there is no definitive or comprehensive metric to assess the impact that changes to frequency, hours of service, fares and walk distance will mean to different travelers. For example, is walking farther to a faster or more frequent bus a positive or negative impact? Given the room for subjectivity, the Federal Transit Administration has advised transit agencies to ensure equitable treatment on two fronts: to conduct Title VI analysis to ensure that measurable disparate impacts are not created and to involve Title VI communities in the planning process so that such subjective judgments can be informed by the communities that would be affected. VTA’s Public Participation Plan, adopted in 2013, guides VTA’s inclusive approach to community participation in public planning processes.

As part of the planning process, VTA has conducted an analysis of the Title VI impacts of the 70/30, 80/20 and 90/10 network concepts. That analysis evaluated changes to the number of people who could benefit from nearby transit service and compared how that change would be borne by minority and non-minority residents.

To determine whether a disparate impact has occurred, staff analyzed how the changes in potential transit usage compared against the minority and non-minority proportions of Santa Clara County. A negative impact of greater than VTA’s adopted threshold of 10 percent is considered a disparate impact. An independent analysis of the network concepts found that none of the three networks would cause a disparate impact. In general, the analysis found that the more ridership-oriented network concepts (80/20 and 90/10) increased transit trip potential in areas with high-minority populations and low-income populations.

Additional Title VI analyses will be conducted for the Draft Next Network Plan, which will be released in January of 2017, as well as the Final Draft Next Network Plan, which will be released in March of 2017.

2016 Measure B Discussion

The 2016 Measure B, posed to the voters of Santa Clara County in November 2016, included funding transportation improvements and programs through a 30-year, ½ cent sales tax. The 2016 Measure B includes nine program areas. The projected share of funding for the Transit Operation Program in 2016 Measure B is $500 million over 30 years ($16.7 million per year) and may be spent in the following ways:

- Expand mobility services and affordable fare programs for seniors, disabled, students and low-income riders
- Enhance frequent core bus network service
- Improve amenities at bus stops to increase safety, security and access
- Support new innovative transit service models to address first/last mile connections

In many ways, these funding categories are compatible with the Next Network Plan. The frequent service objective reinforces the philosophy behind a more ridership-oriented network
design. Supporting innovative first/last mile services could be applicable to Core Connectivity solutions for travelers whose transit service may be decreased or discontinued.

Therefore, VTA staff will be asking the Board of Directors to provide guidance about 2016 Measure B funding and its application to the Draft Next Network Plan. The bus service network that will be presented to the VTA Board and public in January would be based on guidance received from the Board.

**Recommendation - Ridership/Coverage Balance Direction**

VTA’s current transit service plan spends 70 percent of its funding on ridership-purposed routes and 30 percent on coverage-purposed routes. When surveyed about the ridership/coverage balance during the recent phase of public outreach, three-quarters of respondents indicated a preference for increasing spending on ridership-purposed services. Per the earlier discussion of the Phase I Outreach Summary which takes into account overall public input and places special consideration on that of community leaders, VTA staff recommends designing a draft transit network at an 85/15 balance.

The draft transit network will be presented to the Board of Directors at their January 5, 2017 meeting and will be reviewed by the public in the following two months. Should it be determined that revisions need to be made to the ridership/coverage balance, that can be incorporated into the final transit network that will be reviewed by VTA Committees in March and the Board of Directors in April of 2017.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Direct staff to design a draft transit network employing a different ridership/coverage balance, to be defined by the Board of Directors.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The financial impact of redesigning the transit network will depend on a number of related factors that are currently in a conceptual stage: the ridership/coverage balance, possible changes to fare policy and paratransit service area policy as well as changes in fare revenue that could result from changes in ridership.

Prepared by: Adam Burger
Memo No. 5809

**ATTACHMENTS:**
- Attachment_C_Transit_Choices_Survey_Results (PDF)
- Attachment_D_Ridership_Preference_Survey_Results (PDF)
- Attachment_E_Conceptual_Network_Alternatives(PDF)
- Attachment_F_Recommended_Light_Rail_Operating_Plan (PDF)
VTA Transit Choices Survey Results

Designing public transit service on a fixed budget involves making tough decisions between good things. Increasing one element of transit service means decreasing another.

Throughout the summer, at community meetings and on the Next Network Project website, VTA asked the public how they would balance these competing aspects of service in order to learn how VTA can design a transit system that better meets Santa Clara County’s transportation preferences.

For each question, respondents were asked to select a point along a spectrum to indicate their preferred balance. Responses were grouped into quintiles, which are shown tallied here.

Question 1
< More Frequent Long Hours of Service >

In-person responses heavily favored frequency, rider responses favored longer hours of service.

Question 2
< More Weekday Service More Weekend Service >

Question 3
< Infrequent, Direct Service Frequent, With Transfer >

Question 4
< Short Walk/Infrequent Longer Walk/Frequent >

Question 5
< Shorter Walk/Slower Longer Walk/Faster >

Question 6
< More Buses in Rush Hour Even Service All Day >

Question 7
< More Service in High Ridership Areas Service to as Many Places as Possible >

1358 RESPONSES
1348 RESPONSES
1358 RESPONSES
1340 RESPONSES
1346 RESPONSES
1358 RESPONSES

Attachment C
VTA Ridership Preference Survey Results

The key question of VTA’s summer Next Network Outreach is how VTA should balance the ridership and coverage goals of the transit network. Currently, VTA spends 70% of its operating funding on ridership-purposed routes and 30% on coverage-purposed routes. Should VTA adjust its ridership/coverage balance?

To help the community understand the potential impacts of changing the ridership/coverage balance, VTA has developed three network concepts that envision what a 70/30, 80/20 and 90/10 balance might look like.

In community meetings and through an online survey, VTA has asked the public how they would balance the competing ridership and coverage goals.

Community input as well as direction from VTA’s Board of Directors will guide the development of a draft network that will be released in December of 2016.

**Ridership Goal of Public Transit**

- “Think like a business”
- Focus where ridership potential is highest
- Support dense and walkable development
- Maximize reduction in vehicle miles traveled
- Maximize cost-effectiveness of public funds on a per-rider basis

**Coverage Goal of Public Transit**

- “Access for all”
- Support suburban low-density development
- Lifeline access for everyone
This is not a proposal; it is one of three alternative concepts.

This map shows only light rail and VTA local and Rapid bus service. During rush hour, VTA Express, Limited, and ACE/Caltrain shuttle services are retained, except where duplicated by other services shown. All Express lines to Fremont are deleted, as replaced by BART connections to light rail and local bus at Milpitas and Berryessa Stations.
This is not a proposal; it is one of three alternative concepts.

This map shows only light rail and VTA local and Rapid bus service. During rush hour, VTA Express, Limited, and ACE/Caltrain shuttle services are retained, except where duplicated by other services shown. All Express lines to Fremont are deleted, replaced by BART connections to light rail and local bus at Milpitas and Berryessa Stations.

VTA Route Midday Frequencies

- Extra Frequent Rapid: Rapid plus every 6 minutes at peak (BART - Diridon)
- Rapid: every 12 minutes or better and limited stops
- Every 15 minutes or better
- Every 30 minutes plus 15 minute peak
- Every 30 minutes
- Every 30 minutes peak only
- Every 60 minutes plus 30 minute peak
- Every 60 minutes
- Every 60 minutes peak only

VTA light rail
VTA Transit Center

Other Transit Services

- Future BART
- Caltrain / ACE commuter rail

natural area
outside Santa Clara County
This is not a proposal; it is one of three alternative concepts.

This map shows only light rail and VTA local and Rapid bus service. During rush hour, VTA Express, Limited, and ACE/Caltrain shuttle services are retained, except where duplicated by other services shown. All Express lines to Fremont are deleted, replaced by BART connections to light rail and local bus at Milpitas and Berryessa Stations.

**Network 90**
(90% Ridership Goal, 10% Coverage Goal)

**VTA Route Midday Frequencies**
- Extra Frequent Rapid: every 5 minutes (BART - Diridon)
- Rapid: every 10 minutes and limited stops
- Every 15 minutes or better
- Every 30 minutes plus 15 minute peak
- Every 30 minutes
- Every 60 minutes

**Other Transit Services**
- Future BART
- Caltrain / ACE commuter rail

**Natural Area**

**Outside Santa Clara County**

06/04/2016