

Request for Transit Service Planning on San Antonio Road Corridor

October 12, 2022

Carolyn Gonot, General Manager  
Valley Transportation Authority  
3331 North First Street  
San Jose, CA 95134

Re: Request for Transit Service Planning on San Antonio Road Corridor

Dear Ms. Gonot,

On behalf of the City of Palo Alto and the north County VTA Policy Advisory Group members, I am writing to request that VTA direct transit service planning resources to the San Antonio Road corridor serving the four north County cities of Mountain View, Palo Alto, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills.

Over recent years, this corridor has experienced massive new office and residential development, primarily in Mountain View to date. Mountain View, Los Altos, and Palo Alto are all planning for many thousands of units of housing along the corridor within the next few years as central parts of their state-mandated Housing Elements. In addition, Mountain View and Palo Alto have located their Project Homekey/LifeMoves transitional housing projects, requiring lifeline transit service, toward the lower end of the San Antonio Rd corridor. Congestion in the corridor is already significant and that problem will be very compounded in the next few years. While VTA staff have recently agreed to include consideration of the corridor as part of the 2024 Transit Service Plan development effort which will begin in the spring of 2023, this letter provides the land use and transportation context for this request and seeks partnership in developing a robust transit network for the single corridor. We believe that VTA needs to incorporate significant changes to development plans in the north County when considering its service patterns, similar to the VTA commitments to investing in the upcoming development pattern in the Diridon station area.

In addition, the San Antonio Caltrain station currently will soon go from one train per hour except during peak periods to a train every 30 minutes. Serving this station with appropriate transit will be key to supporting mobility and reducing congestion in this area. VTA needs to place a greater emphasis on integrating its network with the electrified Caltrain network coming in 2024. Together, these two systems make a single network for the County.

VTA is leading on the upcoming re-design of the US101 interchanges at San Antonio Road and at Rengstorff Avenue to improve safety and add the missing southbound on-ramp at San Antonio Road. This redesign will support plans to improve bike and pedestrian plans for the corridor.

Palo Alto City staff look forward to working with VTA Transit Planning staff on the 2024 Service Plan. In particular, City staff is interested in partnering on grants that would plan for this area. A corridor study of San Antonio Road that included all affected jurisdictions may be an effective approach.

Recent conversations between City and VTA staff surfaced the following considerations and some constraints to adding bus service in the near term to San Antonio Road:

- Budget: VTA has not been able to add service due to budget constraints, although the FY24 budget may allow some additional service.
- Frequent Network Preference: VTA prefers development to be located along its frequent network.
- Land Use: VTA does consider existing and long-term development plans in their network planning.
- Connectivity: New routes need to improve connections and connectivity with the rest of the network.
- Complete Streets: VTA looks for improvements to the roadway network that are pedestrian- and transit-friendly.
- Timing: Annual service planning begins in the spring of the prior year, community engagement occurs in the summer, VTA committees and board adoption in October, and the new service is implemented in January.
- Title VI Service Equity Analysis: New routes cannot have disparate impacts on groups identified by race, color, or national origin. This FTA-mandated analysis includes outreach to the entire VTA service area to weigh in on a proposed new route. New routes that require VTA to pull service or resources from a community where more people of color are served would not pass the equity analysis.
- Route Productivity/Partnerships/Grants: Given the equity analysis requirement, the north County cities would have a better chance of adding a route if the route were productive or if the cities provided some funding so that resources from other parts of the transit network would not need to be recruited. For example, Stanford Research Park (SRP) subsidizes 25% of the costs of express buses that serve SRP. VTA would also be open to partnering on grant funding. The Valley Medical Hospital shuttle is supported by a partnership between the County, VTA, and TFCA funds. An Equity Analysis was done before this service was added.
- Collaboration with Neighboring Jurisdictions: Staff noted the importance of including adjacent cities in any planning effort as they have also expressed a desire for more transit service in the corridor.

San Antonio Road will be the backbone of future bus network connectivity in South Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills (Foothill College) as land uses intensify around the corridor and as transportation upgrades accrue at US101 and by Caltrain. Beyond moving forward in the spring to discuss what might be possible in the near-term, future collaboration with VTA

and the north County cities needs to include a comprehensive planning process for transit service and multi-modal mobility in this part of the County.

Thank you for your partnership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Burt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mayor Pat Burt