



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 08/20/2019

ITEM NO: 14

DATE: August 15, 2019
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Provide direction on a Town position with respect to the Valley Transportation Authority study of the State Route 85 Corridor

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide direction on a Town position with respect to the Valley Transportation Authority study of the State Route 85 Corridor.

BACKGROUND:

Under guidance of the State Route (SR) 85 Corridor Policy Advisory Board for the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), staff from the VTA have been advancing towards a study of alternatives for the future use of the median island along SR 85 from US 101 in Mountain View to SR 87.

Although the original vision for the median island was the continuation of light rail service, the costs and low ridership of that transit alternative have caused it to fall out of favor. At the last Advisory Board meeting on July 2, 2019 this option was removed from further study.

DISCUSSION:

VTA staff has been working with the Advisory Board to identify the scope of the study. Over the course of a number of meetings, that scope has been narrowed significantly.

At the July 2, 2019 meeting, the Advisory Board identified a number of components important to the project. These include:

- Construct minimal stations – stations have been deemed too expensive and frequent stops create increased headway.

PREPARED BY: Matt Morley
Parks and Public Works Director

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

DISCUSSION (continued):

- Avoid right of way challenges – procuring property would drive up the costs. This would limit the addition of park and ride lots and station stops. This goal also allows for care in impacting private property.
- Prioritize speed over capacity for new lanes – this leads to one option that limits access to high occupancy or transit vehicles as a trade off to an express lane option.
- Plan limited public transit – due to likely demand and cost challenges, public transit would run infrequently with the bulk of use in a transit option dedicated to private shuttles.
- Anticipate long transit routes - Public transit would collect passengers at the beginning of the route and drop them at the end with few stops in between. This is similar to the Express Bus Model that VTA currently operates.

At the same Advisory Board hearing three recommendations were made for inclusion in the study. These are provided diagrammatically as Attachment 1.

No build option – This would maintain the status quo for the corridor with no change. This option is included in the study to set a baseline for comparison of the other alternatives.

Express lanes – This option would construct express lanes in the median, with one additional lane southbound and one additional lane northbound from SR 87 to I-280. The existing high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane would also be converted to express lanes, resulting in two express lanes in each direction. The lanes north of I-280 would be converted from HOV to express lanes with no addition of additional lanes. Express lanes would be open to HOV use aligned with established standards and to single occupancy vehicles for a fee based on congestion levels and distances travelled.

Long transit lane – This option would add an additional lane from US 101 in Mountain View to SR 87 and dedicate it to transit, including VTA Express Bus service and private shuttles. The existing HOV lane would be converted to an express lane. This option would likely require freeway widening from US 101 to I-280 to accommodate the additional lane. The need to widen the freeway and the potential impact would be analyzed through the study.

A further option, called the Short Transit Lane, which would build a transit lane between I-280 and SR 87 was discarded as not desirable as it did not extend northward into the employment areas near US 101.

PAGE 3 OF 3

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DISCUSSION (continued):

The Cupertino City Council discussed this topic and provided a letter (Attachment 2) to VTA setting forward their preferences. Note that, although the letter states that an additional lane should be “closed to public vehicles,” it was meant to say, “closed to private automobiles.”

Staff has provided a draft letter (Attachment 3) for Council consideration to provide input to VTA leading up to the SR 85 study.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Town Council could provide additional input, change the input as provided, or choose to not provide input at this time.

CONCLUSION:

Approval of this item will result in the draft letter being sent to the recipients identified in the letter.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

COORDINATION:

This report has been coordinated with the VTA.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

Attachments:

1. Diagram of Study Options
2. Cupertino Letter
3. Draft Letter