

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
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To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Nov 25-29, 2019 Media Clips

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Could LA-Las Vegas market delay Silicon Valley's connection to high-speed rail? (Business Journal)

Movement among some Southern California legislators to redirect the state's high-speed rail construction funds away from the Central Valley line now under construction to Los Angeles-area rail projects has found support from at least one member of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's board.

If successful, such a redirection could reverse plans in place since 2016 to make a Central Valley-Silicon Valley connection the project's first link to a major metropolitan region and significantly delay its arrival into San Jose's Diridon Station. But funding opportunities for a Los Angeles link to the Central Valley may emerge first.

Daniel Curtin, a labor official with the California Conference of Carpenters and member of the authority board, said last week that the authority should "discuss the options that are available. Nobody on this board is forgetting high-speed rail electrified (in the Valley) as soon as possible, but I think more in terms of the system statewide."

Both [Lenny Mendonca](#), chair of the authority board, and [Brian Kelly](#), its CEO, said at last week's board meeting that they oppose redirecting funds or changing the plan to connect to the Bay Area first. "I'm convinced the best way (to proceed) is to move forward on the 171-mile interim service connecting Merced, Fresno and Bakersfield with electrified high-speed rail service," Mendonca said.

Neither the Bay Area nor Los Angeles can be connected to the Central Valley with funds now available to the high-speed rail project because both will require billions of dollars to construct tunnels beneath the mountain ranges that separate the valley from the state's largest cities.

But Curtin said he's intrigued at the possibilities presented by the plans of British entrepreneur Richard Branson's Virgin Trains USA to break ground next year on a long-planned high-speed rail line from near LA to Las Vegas. Service is planned to begin in four years.

[Virgin received authority last month from the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank](#) to issue \$3.25 billion in tax exempt revenue bonds for the California portion of the line and is awaiting Nevada's approval for construction bonds to finance the line there. Neither state would be responsible for bond repayment, Kelly said.

The California high-speed project also has an [agreement with Virgin regarding tying the two systems together at a Palmdale station](#), which Kelly said last week could be "a very helpful one" for California's system "on things like interoperability issues and perhaps joint procurement issues."

Palmdale is a planned stop on the California project's line between Bakersfield and Los Angeles and Virgin's arrival could create a high-speed route between Las Vegas and its largest visitor market.

California's line south from Palmdale is planned to have miles of tunneling to reach Burbank on its way to the Los Angeles station.

Kelly's comments allude to the possibility of allowing Virgin Trains' access to California-owned rails between Palmdale and Los Angeles, to possible cost savings should both systems order trainsets or other major equipment from the same manufacturer, and help in attracting private investor interest to the California project.

The authority's staff is beginning work on the project's new biennial business plan, which will lay out the project's construction future and is required to be submitted next spring to the California Legislature.

Curtin's comments came after five straight business quarters in which the state's cap-and-trade markets have produced unusually high returns, 25 percent of which are earmarked for high-speed rail, and a month after the state's Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank approved Virgin's bond request.

[California's project depends partly on cap-and-trade funding at a level of at least \\$500 million per quarter](#).

The last five quarters have averaged about \$750 million, but the cap-and-trade law sunsets in 2030. High-speed rail officials and Sen. [Jim Beall](#) of Campbell, chair of the California Senate's transportation committee, say the law should be extended.

In a previous interview with the Business Journal, [Beall said redirecting money away from the Central Valley could be illegal](#).

The Central Valley line faces daunting construction challenges that threaten the December 2022 spending deadline required in one of the project's two federal construction grants. [The Trump administration earlier announced that it was cancelling one of the grants, a move that a lawsuit filed by the state is attempting to block, and that it wants to "claw back" the other grant's unspent money](#).

Nevertheless, the [Federal Railroad Administration has agreed to give the high-speed rail authority permission](#) to use a speeded-up environmental clearance process to meet its obligations. The process lets the authority do environmental work that federal agencies would otherwise do and has resulted in completing the clearance for the Bakersfield high-speed rail station.

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[**Latest line: A good week for Newsom, bad one for VTA**](#) (Mercury News)

VTA

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority announces two new BART stations long-awaited for Santa Clara County, Milpitas and Berryessa, won't open in 2019 as planned, and the agency won't provide the public a new estimated opening date.

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[VTA installs new safety railings in downtown San Jose](#) (San Jose Spotlight)

The next time you're strolling through downtown San Jose while staring at your phone, look up. You might bump into a VTA railing that's meant to save you from an oncoming train.

VTA recently installed a series of railings on Second Street as part of a pilot program to improve safety and speed for VTA customers. The railings were initially installed Nov. 2 and additional railings and safety signage will be up by Nov. 27. While the valley's public transit agency has no current plans to install more railings at different stations, a fencing project along North First Street is a possibility if funding becomes available.

In the past year, VTA officials say two people were killed after being struck by a train and there have been far too many close calls — incidents where passengers walk or drive onto the tracks without realizing it. Even worse, but perhaps not surprisingly, many are on their phones or have earbuds in. The new stainless steel railing lines the space between the sidewalk and the light rail tracks along Second Street from San Carlos to San Fernando.

"It really just is the way of the world — now that we have so much technology," VTA spokesperson Brandi Childress said. "These dangerous activities prevent trains from operating at the already slow 10 miles per hour and results in operators having to increasingly stop between stations to avoid people on the tracks."

On North First Street, trains can go up to 55 miles per hour, Childress said, yet jaywalking frequently occurs.

The installation of rails, which cost \$1.1 million from VTA's operating fund, is being closely monitored. A manager is doing on-site observations, riding in the light rail cab to collect track intrusion data, Childress said, and efforts have been made to hear from light rail operators and customers. There's also been "healthy debate" among customers on VTA's social media pages, she added.

Monica Mallon, 22, a frequent public transit rider and member of Silicon Valley Transit Users, a public transit advocacy organization, said she thinks the project is a wise investment. Mallon said she rides the light rail almost every day of the week.

"I'm really glad that VTA is actually prioritizing safety and speed," Mallon said. "I support this, but I think in order to have much better ridership, VTA needs to do a lot more."

Transit needs to be prioritized in any way possible, especially in light of the climate crisis, Mallon said. San Jose's impending development boom means more residents and more cars on roads that are already "unsafe," she added.

"Our roads are more congested than ever and we need to improve transit to the point where people want to take it," Mallon said. "We have these transit-oriented developments, but people aren't taking transit from them, which completely defeats the purpose."

Councilmember Raul Peralez, who represents downtown San Jose where the first set of rails were installed, helped with putting together the pilot's logistics, outreach plan and timing. The VTA also worked with businesses along South Second Street on developing and implementing the project.

"These kind of improvements are really key to getting people out of their cars," Peralez said. "All the thousands of people we'll be adding to our city, the jobs and the residents. We need to give them fast, efficient, reliable modes of transportation."

One of the top complaints transit officials receive is light rail trains moving too slowly, Childress said. That's primarily because the design of the transit station allows pedestrians to walk onto the tracks at any given time, but if the railings successfully keep a safe barrier between people and moving trains, the speed of trains could be increased. VTA plans to tackle that issue in an upcoming revamp of the bus and light rail service, which will be introduced on Dec. 28.

“We’re looking at less waiting for customers, we’re going to be opening service to our new transit centers in Milpitas and Berryessa,” Childress said. “It’s a faster, more frequent network and improved routing. We’re excited about it.”

If the railings enhance safety over the next six months, VTA officials plan to install railings further down the line in the downtown area. Some could even feature table tops and bike racks, officials said.

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Caltrain explores new governance (The Daily Journal)

Officials set to study possibly separating JPA from SamTrans

Caltrain officials have agreed to explore potential new governance structures for the railroad and one option is to have Caltrain be an independent agency separate from the San Mateo County Transit District.

At an off-site meeting in Half Moon Bay Thursday, Caltrain’s board of directors decided to form a working group or ad-hoc committee comprised of board members and staff to study potential governance models. The board also agreed to hire special counsel to assist with the process. It has not yet been decided who will be a part of the working group, but the plan is to have it return to the full board with recommendations within six months.

The board could ultimately choose to create a new independent agency to run Caltrain or it could choose some variation of the current structure in which the railroad is operated as a joint powers authority with board members appointed from the three counties it serves. The San Mateo County Transit District, or SamTrans, oversees this county’s bus service and also shares staff with the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, which oversees sales tax revenue for transportation. Caltrain staff is also shared with SamTrans.

“There’s a recognition in general from the entire board that this organization will have to change and grow to meet the demands of the service vision we have in mind,” said Board Member Charles Stone, also a Belmont councilman.

That vision is to significantly expand service and triple ridership from 65,000 daily riders to 180,000 daily riders within 20 years.

Caltrain is currently struggling to balance its budget because it lacks a dedicated revenue source and of course more funding will be needed as the railroad grows. Officials have proposed the much-needed revenue source be a sales tax and are currently working out the details of two potential 2020 ballot measures: a Bay Area-wide one-cent sales tax known as FASTER Bay Area that would include dedicated funding for Caltrain or an eighth-cent sales tax in the three counties served by Caltrain to help fund the railroad.

Caltrain board members in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties have in the past indicated that their support for a future revenue measure would be contingent on governance changes, but now appear to be less insistent on the matter, according to San Mateo County board members.

“One thing that came out of [the meeting Thursday] is it’s very clear San Mateo County and San Francisco’s position is that moving forward with important funding measures should not be held up by what’s going to be a somewhat lengthy governance discussion,” Stone said. “Santa Clara County appears to be headed in the same direction, but that was less clear.”

After the meeting, Board Member Cindy Chavez, who is also a Santa Clara County supervisor, said she acknowledges the need for Caltrain revenue measure, but doesn’t see it as a separate from the governance discussion.

“I have been very focused on making sure I can be as accountable as I can be to the Caltrain board while also recognizing I’m coming from Santa Clara County and making sure I as a Caltrain board member and VTA member and elected official coming from Santa Clara County can be as accountable as I can be to the residents of the county, to the VTA board and its riders,” Chavez said. “When you think about it from that perspective, one must put everything on the table to make sure we’re meeting that obligation.” Board Member Dave Pine, also a San Mateo County supervisor, suggested the success of any future revenue measure for Caltrain is dependent on the support of the entire board.

“Caltrain affects three counties and it can’t move forward in a productive way if all three counties aren’t supportive,” he said. “At the end of the day, it’s a regional asset and we want all three counties to feel comfortable and go the extra mile to support the direction we go in.”

Chavez said she does not have a particular governance model in mind for Caltrain and said she wants to let the working group “do its work.” Stone and Pine echoed the sentiment, but Board Member Shaman Walton, also a San Francisco supervisor, said he wants Caltrain to be an independent agency.

“I’d definitely prefer Caltrain being a separate [agency], but I don’t know what that looks like yet,” he said. “A lot of conversation and analysis is needed first.”

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San Jose BART plan absolutely, completely late (SF Curbed)

Every trick in the book couldn’t get trains running to Berryessa Station before December 31

Breaking their [original promise](#), BART and Santa Clara County’s Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) fessed up last week that service to San Jose just won’t happen this year, and that early 2020 is the best for which anyone can hope.

The writing has been on the wall about the 2019 schedule as [BART and VTA attempted a last-ditch effort with a new shorter testing schedule](#) that would have shaved a month off the process, allowing passengers to use the new Berryessa Station in North San Jose by the end of the year. That plan didn’t work.

But the two agencies have concluded that “in the interest of achieving a safe and reliable start of revenue service, a more practical work plan needs to be developed,” VTA spokesperson Bernice Alaniz [wrote on November 15](#).

Defaulting to the standard method of testing will “result in the start of passenger service after December 31, 2019.”

The South Bay transit agency’s [official timeline](#) does not specify a finishing date for the Berryessa Station.

Berryessa Station is part of a 10-mile, \$2.3-billion extension of what is now called the Warm Springs line, an expansion that also includes the [planned Milpitas Station](#) (also delayed until next year).

Proposals for San Jose BART service stretch back to [the 1950s](#) and the earliest days of BART planning.

Berryessa Station has been under construction since 2012; it is now five years overdue from its earliest service estimates.

The planned [downtown San Jose BART station](#), approximately six miles from Berryessa, [may take as long as 2030](#) before it takes on passengers.

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VTA charges ahead with new service plan, despite BART delays (San Jose Spotlight)

The Valley Transportation Authority spent most of 2019 making decisions about how to deploy public transit resources based on the assumption that Bay Area Rapid Transit would open two new train stations in the South Bay before the end of the year.

But despite months of promises from BART, that's not going to happen. Last week, the agency announced another delay in opening its stations in Milpitas and the Berryessa neighborhood of San Jose. Nevertheless, VTA is moving ahead with its new service plan for 2020, albeit with slight modifications to fill in the gaps left by the unopened BART stations.

"Express Lines serving BART to Fremont were introduced to build ridership for what would one day become the BART extension into Santa Clara County — that was always the intention," VTA spokeswoman Brandi Childress told San José Spotlight. "Now that the extension is built and it is just a matter of time before all the testing, training and acceptance phases are complete, these customers who have taken a bus across county lines will now have a faster mobility option."

But riders taking public transit from Santa Clara County to other parts of the Bay Area won't have that option until the stations open — and VTA is ending service on three of those express bus lines next month, not knowing when BART will be up and running. The VTA spokeswoman says those lines serve riders making about 375 trips per day and the authority is planning to merge riders from the Express 120, 140 and 180 routes into the Express 181 — a route that already averages more than 1,400 boardings per weekday.

Childress said the authority will deploy larger buses on Express 181 to handle the increase in ridership — adding that although the VTA doesn't know when the BART stations will open, the 181 will continue operating until they do.

"The expectation is that when we discontinue the three lines on December 28, those customers will be able to take the 181 to the new VTA Orange Light Rail Line that serves Milpitas, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale and Mountain View without an additional transfer to the Green Line," Childress said.

To serve would-be riders at the Berryessa station, Childress said the VTA is also planning to run a modified Rapid 500 route to connect riders to other options.

"Until BART opens, the 500 will be truncated at San Jose City Hall and serve the Diridon Caltrain Station along Santa Clara Street," Childress said.

That's cold comfort to VTA customers who rely on public transit as their primary means of getting around. And one activist said she expects the December VTA board meeting to be heavily attended by "outraged" bus riders who will be forced to cram themselves into the only remaining express bus headed to a BART station.

"This is the result of their poor planning," transit activist Monica Mallon told San José Spotlight. "They could continue to keep everything exactly the same until BART opens, but they are choosing not to because they believe that the new network will have more riders, but I think that is going to backfire on them."

Mallon said she actually expects ridership to drop when VTA deploys its new service plan, which will lead to more service cuts and continue the "death spiral" for public transit in Silicon Valley. She says the VTA board put too much faith in broken promises from BART, and the authority's own service has suffered tremendously as a result.

"This station was supposed to be open two years ago," Mallon said. "It has been delayed for the third or fourth time, and every time they delay it, we spend more of our tax money on BART— and we usually pay for it with cuts to the bus system."

But Childress says once the Milpitas and Berryessa stations open, VTA customers will have more destination options than the current service plan — and faster trips to boot, which the agency expects to draw even more riders into the system.

For more information about the VTA's 2020 service plan, [visit the authority's web site](#).

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A Mobility on Demand Service Designed for All People (VIODI)

Imagine a mobility service that offers on-demand, door-to-door capability for all citizens, regardless of physical ability. Gary Miskell, Chief Innovation/Technical Officer of VTA, Silicon Valley's transit and congestion agency, has been imagining that scenario and has begun putting the pieces in place to test such an approach in a real-world setting at the campus of the Veteran's Hospital in Palo Alto. [Gary Miskell, Chief Innovation/Technical Officer of VTA, Silicon Valley's transit and congestion agency, has been imagining that scenario](#) and has begun putting the pieces in place to test such an approach in a real-world setting at the campus of the Veteran's Hospital in Palo Alto.

By focusing on one of the most difficult and expensive transportation challenges, paratransit, the applied research Miskell, and his team are doing could have a huge long-term impact on the way mobility services are delivered in Silicon Valley. As Miskell describes in the above interview, an on-demand shuttle would meet the customer at her home. For those people needing help, a paratransit professional would meet that person and help her launch or end the trip.

What makes this approach unique is there would be one vehicle for both paratransit and mobility-on-demand applications. That is, the shuttle offering paratransit service would also pick up other passengers, regardless of whether they have paratransit needs. In this way, the shuttle assets would be shared across the entire network.

And regarding the network, on-demand, first/last-mile of autonomous shuttles would allow the existing buses to focus on core routes, creating more express-like routes (e.g. fewer stops) with greater frequency (e.g. 5 or 10-minutes between buses, instead of up to an hour). [See this article for more detail on this type of approach, <https://viodi.com/2015/09/08/a-transition-steps-to-an-autonomous-transport-future/>].

This video shows some of the challenges and opportunities in designing mobility solutions that address accessibility <https://viodi.com/2018/08/24/livinglaboratory/> and the second part explores how an open-source, largely 3D-printed autonomous shuttle could solve those challenges. Imagine a mobility service that offers on-demand, door-to-door capability for all citizens, regardless of physical ability. <https://viodi.com/2018/08/29/iot-to-improve-accessibility/>

Off-camera, Miskell mentioned that they are working with Local Motors, which are producing an autonomous shuttle that is largely 3D-printed. What makes Local Motors especially good for an agency like VTA is its open, modular nature, which allows different technologies to be mixed and matched. This is especially important when developing an ADA-compliant vehicle that also meets the many rules that a transit agency has to abide by (e.g. Buy American clauses, for instance).

Stay tuned, as testing is expected to start in April or May of 2020.

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City readies a trio of safe parking lots for homeless (Mountain View Voice)

New sites expected to take in 70-plus vehicles during the winter, but opening date is uncertain

Mountain View's safe parking program is on the cusp of a dramatic expansion, potentially adding enough space to take about 70 inhabited vehicles off the city's streets this winter.

City officials say they are just about ready to launch three new safe parking sites, each larger than any current locations. If all goes according to plan, city staff and nonprofit partners believe the expanded safe parking program can eventually funnel homeless people off the streets and into permanent housing.

The first and largest of the new sites is a city-owned parking lot located near Shoreline Amphitheatre at the corner of Crittenden Lane. Under city guidelines, the lot is expected to hold up to 30 RVs or trailers, significantly more than city officials originally expected. The downside is the site can only be used temporarily, during the winter, and that window is closing. By March 15, city officials say the Shoreline lot must be cleared out because of the city's contract with Live Nation for use of the parking during the amphitheater's concert season.

Exactly when the Shoreline lot will begin taking in residents is up in the air, and neither the city nor its nonprofit partners could provide a firm launch date to the *Voice*. In recent days, city officials say they have canvassed all the inhabited vehicles in Mountain View to encourage occupants to sign up for the safe parking program through the Community Services Agency (CSA).

A waiting list of families and individuals is ready to go as soon as the safe parking sites open, said CSA executive director Tom Myers. The nonprofit has reportedly been screening applicants to ensure their RVs or other vehicles are functional.

When a sufficient number of people are cleared to move in, the Shoreline lot will open up, said Amber Stime, director of Move MV, the nonprofit that runs Lots of Love, which offers overnight parking in church lots.

"Right now, the lots are ready, and as soon as the tenants are ready, they'll open up," she said. "Quite a few vehicles need some repairs, and we don't want them breaking down in the lots."

Under city rules, anyone residing in a safe parking lot must have a working vehicle that doesn't leak oil, sewage or other hazardous materials. Citing potential liability, city officials restricted the hours of operation of their safe parking sites to 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. During the day, safe parking residents are required to move their vehicles to some other location off-site. This condition is the main reason that individuals have been discouraged from signing up for the program, according to CSA officials.

Up to 30 more vehicles could soon be parked at a former VTA parking lot at the now-closed Evelyn light rail station. Earlier this year, Mountain View officials signed an \$11 million deal with the transit agency to lease the parking lot for 65 years. City officials intend to eventually redevelop the site for affordable housing, but in the meantime they say it should serve well as a temporary safe parking location.

The VTA parking lot is expected to open shortly after the Shoreline site, but again no clear date has been announced. Move MV members say the VTA site is expected to open after the Shoreline lot reaches capacity.

Less clear is the fate of a third safe parking site, this one located in the Terra Bella neighborhood. The property was offered by the Palo Alto Housing Corporation as a temporary parking site before it is developed for affordable housing. Over a year ago, the City Council approved \$230,000 to prepare the site to host vehicles, and later allocated an additional \$65,000 after a request by city staff.

City officials have received criticism for dragging their feet on opening up the Terra Bella site. In September, city staff finalized a set of formal rules and regulations for safe parking lots as it became clear that elected leaders wanted to reduce the number of inhabited vehicles on the street. Last month, the Terra Bella site received a conditional use permit to open after being reviewed by seven separate city departments. When it opens, the Terra Bella site is expected to host eight RVs and three smaller vehicles.

Even when all the anticipated safe parking sites are opened, they won't provide nearly enough spaces to accommodate all the inhabited vehicles in Mountain View. By city counts, about 200 inhabited vehicles have settled along city streets, and officials have acknowledged that they still need to find more locations that can host vehicles. Additionally, each of the three new safe parking sites that will open soon is only available on a temporary basis.

Two groups have taken up the job of trying to encourage property owners to participate in the safe parking program. As of this summer, the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning launched its own task force to work on expanding safe parking. Around the same time, the Mountain View Human Relations Commission was assigned a similar job on behalf of the city. The two delegations have approached numerous private landowners, but so far none has been willing to sign up, said IdaRose Sylvester, a Human Relations commissioner.

"Everyone shares a similar set of concerns. They're concerned about who will be living on the lot, the liability, and if there is insurance available," she said. "There's all these moving parts and it's in flux. We're all volunteers, but we're trying to move as fast as we can."

City Council members have said they need to step up enforcement to restrict the rising number of large inhabited vehicles along city streets. In recent weeks, the council approved a package of measures that would limit where large RVs and trailers can park, banning them from most city streets. On Nov. 22, a citizen referendum was submitted to the city to overturn those rules.

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[San Jose: Wet weather spoils Holly Trolley's debut \(Mercury News\)](#)

[VTA says holiday-themed historic streetcar can't run on rain-slicked rails](#)

The Holly Trolley, a downtown San Jose holiday tradition, will not make its debut this weekend because of inclement weather, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority said Friday.

"She was all decorated and ready to go, but the rain made rails slick and that's a no no," the VTA said in a tweet. "Rain is expected for the rest of the weekend, we'll try when it's dry to bring out our friend."

Asked why the trolley can't run in the rain, the VTA explained, "We just don't like to risk operation when it's wet. These historic trolleys, although beautiful, can be a bit temperamental."

The Holly Trolley is scheduled to run Friday evenings, Saturday and Sunday from Nov. 29 to Dec. 22, but not on Dec. 6, 15 or 21, because of events at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, according to the VTA.

"When it rains, the trolley stays in the barn," the VTA said in a recent [news release](#) announcing the Holly Trolley. "Please check the forecast before you check the schedule."

The service is free and offered between the Civic Center and Convention Center stations. Classic holiday music is played aboard the trolley and riders can write letters to Santa Claus.

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2019 4:39 PM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 3, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Tuesday, December 3, 2019

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[The competition is on for policing new BART stations, including San Jose](#) (San Jose Spotlight)

As Bay Area mass transit services struggle to protect public safety, Silicon Valley law enforcement agencies are competing for a chance to police the new Valley Transportation Authority transit centers in Milpitas and San Jose when BART trains start rolling into Santa Clara County for the first time in 2020. An [Alameda County Grand Jury Report](#) released this summer found violent crime on BART more than doubled in the five-year period ending in 2018 — driven by robberies and aggravated assaults — and reported criminal activity has skyrocketed 115% since 2014. A grisly, fatal, daytime stabbing on a moving BART train between the [San Leandro and South Hayward stations](#) the week before Thanksgiving brought the issue of safety on public transit back into the spotlight in the East Bay.

Meanwhile in Silicon Valley, VTA has also had fatal violence — a knife-wielding man was shot and killed by a private security guard at the [Santa Teresa light-rail station](#) in San Jose the night before Halloween, raising questions about who should be responsible for public safety in the region's transit network.

"VTA currently contracts with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department for Transit Patrol," said authority spokeswoman Bernice Alaniz.

But that contract expires at the end of the year, and the VTA board of directors is expected to extend it through March 2020. After that, San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo, whose city controls five of the board's 12 seats — says he wants the city police department to take responsibility for public safety at the Berryessa station.

If San Jose police or another law enforcement agency take over policing duties at the Santa Clara County stations — including adding private security to supplement sheriff's deputies — it would be a first for BART. For all the 48 stations currently in service, BART police patrol the properties and do not contract with other local law enforcement agencies, said spokesman Jim Allison.

It is amazing how little sense of urgency there is. I really hope Santa Clara County gets to use their own police. It will give folks a comparison of just how bad Bart police are in comparison. [@sliccardo](#) So many folks don't take Bart because they don't feel safe.

We're pushing to ensure [@sjpdchief](#) will be overseeing policing at the Berryessa station

"We have some strong views about this because the police are already responsible for the surrounding neighborhood," Liccardo told San José Spotlight in an interview. "And literally the streets that go through the BART station — that's a city responsibility, so it becomes silly at some point and you wind up with a Keystone Kops situation."

The existing arrangement with the Sheriff's Department makes sense, VTA officials say, because the authority's facilities are spread out all over the county.

"Ultimately, with countywide jurisdiction, the sheriff's sworn officers who conduct transit patrol under this contract supplement the primary law enforcement of the 15 local municipal jurisdictions within Santa Clara County, where VTA operates," said Angelique Gaeta, the agency's chief of system safety and security.

But Liccardo sees it differently.

"It's really important for us to have clear accountability about who is responsible for safety in this area," the mayor argued. "And we want it to be one agency and we want that agency to be SJPD."

The San Jose Police Department submitted a proposal to the VTA's directors for the new Berryessa station, and likewise the Milpitas Police Department put in a bid for the new station in its jurisdiction — meanwhile the county sheriff wants to extend its contract for the whole VTA system, including both unopened, long-delayed transit centers.

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[Train Ped Accident](#) (ABC7 News) (link to video)

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[San Jose: Woman hit, killed by light-rail train](#)

Fatal collision occurred at Race Street and Parkmoor Avenue on Monday night

A woman was hit and killed by a light-rail train in San Jose on Monday night, authorities said. The collision occurred about 6:10 p.m. at Race Street and Parkmoor Avenue, near the light-rail station, according to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. The victim was rushed to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead a short time later.

The Santa Clara Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office identified the woman as Pingping Zhu, 68, of San Jose.

A preliminary investigation by the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office showed no indication that Zhu died by suicide, said Sgt. Michael Low.

A bus bridge replaced 902 Green Line service between the Diridon and Fruitdale stations until just before 10 p.m. Monday.

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[San Jose Puts Finishing Touches on 'Tiny Homes' for the Homeless](#) (San Jose Inside)

Under the pelting rain on a recent weekday morning, San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo joined some of his colleagues to put the finishing touches on the city's first so-called [tiny homes](#) for the homeless.

The cluster of 40 miniature sleeping cabins that cropped up on a Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) property by the Berryessa BART station after years of planning and negotiations is part of a pilot program to provide transitional shelter for the South Bay's burgeoning homeless population.

"As we're all muzzling through the rain, it's too easy to forget that over 6,000 of our neighbors are actually living outside in the rain and somehow surviving," Liccardo said at the pre-Thanksgiving Day building event. "We have a lot to be thankful for. We critically need to put that gratitude into action to do more to help our friends and neighbors who are struggling."

Constructed by Habitat for Humanity, each 80-square-foot bungalow features a twin-sized bed, desk, shelves, electrical outlets, heating and cooling systems and some storage. Two larger homes are reserved for people with disabilities, with a ramp built outside for easy access. Residents will share bathrooms, showers and laundry services at a common area called the “wet house.”

The service provider of the project, HomeFirst, is now accepting applications for the tiny houses from partner agencies. Applicants are eligible to stay in a tiny home if they already receive case management. They must also either be employed or demonstrate a strong work history.

The project will prioritize people who can be housed quickly, HomeFirst CEO Andrea Urton said.

“Currently, the options they have are encampments that are not sanctioned [and] gets swept regularly, or sleeping in overcrowded shelters—those are literally the two options.”

In the first month, residents will pay rent that amounts to 10 percent of their income, followed by 20 percent in the second month and, if all goes according to plan, 30 percent by the third, Urton explained. She said she hopes that residents will only need to stay at the homes for three months, though HomeFirst will grant extensions as needed.

A case manager on-site will assist residents to ensure that they have a plan to find permanent housing. HomeFirst aims to house 120 residents annually through the pilot, which will continue until January 2022 when [AB 1276](#)—a bill by former Assemblywoman Nora Campos (D-San Jose) permitting the homes—is set to expire.

The city had to jump several hurdles to finish the tiny home settlement. When it was first proposed, the idea sparked outcry among a vocal cohort of residents. At neighborhood meetings in 2017, residents said they [feared](#) that the project would attract crime and drive down property values.

Liccardo said he hopes to show that such concerns are misplaced. “My goal is to prove them wrong [and] demonstrate how tiny home communities can be great,” he said.

Seattle has also built tiny home neighborhoods and, Liccardo said, “over time, the neighborhoods really do embrace the communities—often adopting them, bringing food out, engaging them in fellowship.”

The VTA site is part of a larger proposal to build 80 tiny homes for the homeless. Habitat for Humanity plans to build another 40 at a Caltrans site near Felipe Avenue. Under [SB 519](#), co-authored by state Sen. Jim Beall (D-San Jose) and his colleague Steven Bradford (D-Gardena), Caltrans can lease unused properties for \$1 per month to the cities of San Jose and Los Angeles for these kinds of projects.

But negotiations have delayed the opening of the VTA and Caltrans site. The *Mercury News* [reported](#) that the VTA site was slated to open in June 2019 and the Caltrans location in August 2019. Now, officials anticipate that residents will move into the VTA site this month.

Meanwhile, Habitat for Humanity has yet to install any tiny homes at the Caltrans site. Liccardo said the city had just reached an agreement with Caltrans last month, and that the whole process was slow and complicated by legal challenges.

Liccardo said the city was required to establish an insurance fund against property damage at the Caltrans site, which came with an “unrealistic” price tag. He said that was just one among many sticking points. Now that the city finally inked a deal with Caltrans, he said he’s hopeful that that future negotiations with Caltrans will go much smoother.

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From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 4:44 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: VTA Information: Updated December 5, 2019 Board of Directors Agenda Packet
Importance: High

VTA Board of Directors:

The December 5, 2019, Board of Directors Agenda Packet has now been updated to include materials for the following items:

- **Agenda Item # 3.1** - Election Of Chairperson And Vice Chairperson For Calendar Year 2020
- **Agenda Item # 8.9** - Amendment of Sheriff's Office Contract with VTA
- **Agenda Item # 8.11** - Highway 17 Consolidated Transit Service Amendment #9
- **Agenda Item # 9.1** - Revised VTA Transit-Oriented Development Policy
- **Agenda Item # 9.5** - Update from the Future of Transportation Board Workshop
- **Agenda Item # 9.6** - Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan Update
- **Agenda Item # 10.1.B** - SVRT Program Update
- **Agenda Item # 10.4.A** - Standing Committees' Unapproved Minutes for 12/5/19 BOD

You may access the updated agenda packet on [our portal](#).

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street, Building B
San Jose, CA 95134-1927
Phone [408-321-5680](tel:408-321-5680)



From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 12:48 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: VTA Information: Ridership Memo for October 2019

VTA Board of Directors:


Attached is a memorandum from Interim Chief Operating Officer Dale Austin Jenkins regarding VTA ridership for October 2019.


Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org



TO: VTA Board of Directors

THROUGH: Nuria I. Fernandez 
General Manager/CEO

FROM: Dale Austin Jenkins 
Interim Chief Operating Officer

DATE: December 3, 2019

SUBJECT: VTA Ridership for October 2019

October 2019 total monthly system ridership for bus and light rail was 3,357,915, a decrease of 2.0% over October 2018.

Bus ridership was down by 1.0%. Light Rail ridership was down 5.1%. October 2019 total monthly ridership recorded a 9.1% increase compared to September 2019. Ridership change from September to October typically averages +8.0%.

There were two SF 49ers matches at the Levi's stadium averaging 14,437 riders per event. In October 2018 there were two 49ers games that averaged 11,530 per event. During October 2019, there were two "Spare the Air" days. There were none in October 2018.

The Overhead Catenary Rehabilitation work continued during two weekends in October. Bus Bridges were used to supplement Light Rail Service during these times.

Ridership	Oct-2019	Oct-2018	Percent Change	Sep-2019	Percent Change
Bus	2,588,107	2,614,193	-1.0%	2,369,746	9.2%
Light Rail	769,808	811,064	-5.1%	708,200	8.7%
System	3,357,915	3,425,257	-2.0%	3,077,946	9.1%

38 of the 69 bus routes, or 55%, did not meet the weekday standards as defined in the Service Design Guidelines. However, 12 of the 18 core routes, or 67%, met the weekday standards as defined in the Service Design Guidelines.

Several core routes recorded an increase in overall average weekday ridership. The top core routes that recorded an improvement of 4.1% over October 2018 are shown in the table below:

Route	Oct-2019	Oct-2018	Difference	Percent Change
522	7,757	7,400	357	4.8%
25	6,832	6,497	335	5.2%
23	7,268	6,959	309	4.4%
55	2,548	2,438	110	4.5%
68	5,064	4,999	65	1.3%
61	1,700	1,635	65	4.0%
Totals	31,169	29,928	1,241	4.1%

The core routes and light rail stations that had the most average weekday ridership declines are shown in the tables below:

Route	Oct-2019	Oct-2018	Difference	Percent Change
22	8,820	9,831	(1,011)	-10.3%
72	2,990	3,092	(102)	-3.3%
70	4,540	4,637	(97)	-2.1%
64	3,348	3,407	(59)	-1.7%
77	2,156	2,209	(53)	-2.4%
Totals	21,854	23,176	(1,322)	-5.7%

Station	Oct-2019	Oct-2018	Difference	Percent Change
San Antonio Station	2,151	2,378	(227)	-9.5%
Winchester Station	767	921	(154)	-16.7%
Ohlone-Chynoweth Station	1,257	1,407	(150)	-10.7%
Mountain View Station	1,081	1,200	(119)	-9.9%
Tasman Station	1,772	1,860	(88)	-4.7%
Totals	7,028	7,766	(738)	-9.5%

The fiscal year-to-date total system ridership for bus and light rail was down by 1.0%

Ridership	(Current) Jul'19-Oct' 19	(Prior) Jul'18-Oct' 18	Percent Change
Bus	9,377,423	9,415,445	-0.4%
Light Rail	2,924,245	3,013,359	-3.0%
System	12,301,668	12,428,804	-1.0%

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 9:07 AM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 4, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Wednesday, December 4, 2019

- [1. New bus route enhances safety for south Los Altos students \(Los Altos Town Crier\)](#)**
- [2. New Express Lanes On Highway 237 Can Save Commuters Time For A Price](#)**
- [3. Not everyone is a fan of the Idaho Stop: Roadshow \(Mercury News\)](#)**

[New bus route enhances safety for south Los Altos students \(Los Altos Town Crier\)](#)

As the winter season approaches, Cupertino Middle School and Homestead High students from Los Altos will have another option for getting to and from school: the new Valley Transportation Authority Route 51H.

Homestead Dean of Students Steve Puccinelli made the official announcement about the new line at a Nov. 20 PTSA meeting. The route is expected to begin operating Dec. 28, along with changes to other VTA routes.

The existing Route 51 runs along Grant Road; the new 51H extension will turn onto Homestead Road to drop off students near the schools. The extension is aimed at mitigating traffic on Homestead Road and helping students avoid safety hazards.

“We see Route 51H as a big step forward for safety to and from school for families in Los Altos,” Puccinelli said in an email. “Much discussion has happened about the route along Homestead Road from Foothill Boulevard to school, and this bus route provides a safe and practical way for students to traverse the route.”

According to Cupertino Union School District spokeswoman Leslie Mains, district officials are excited because the new route will give students an opportunity to use public transportation to get to and from school.

“We have been working with (the VTA) for over a year on this and we are so excited about the community effort behind this – parents, City and School District Leaders and most importantly, VTA,” Mains said in an email.

It was “a long process to get the VTA to agree to open the new route,” Puccinelli said. The route was first pitched a few years ago, but he said the VTA initially concluded it would be too costly. In the spring, the VTA determined that it was possible to modify Route 51 to serve students.

He added that Los Altos Mayor Lynette Lee Eng and VTA board chairman John McAlister largely led the effort. Lee Eng said the idea for the route came from local residents.

“I heard from many people who are frustrated with the traffic on Homestead,” she said in an email. “I have also heard from many parents who wanted a bus program so that Los Altos children would be able to get to Cupertino Middle School and Homestead without adding to the congestion.”

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[New Express Lanes On Highway 237 Can Save Commuters Time For A Price](#)

It has been exactly 18 days since the Express Lanes went active on one of the most congested freeways in the Bay Area.

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) says drivers going the whole distance, traveling the entire 7-mile stretch between 880 and 101, can save about 20 minutes.

On Tuesday, during the heart of the evening commute, for the first time in a long time, the carpool lane, now known as the Express Lane, was actually moving.

Jody Hayes, who lives and works off Highway 237, and travels it every day, noticed a difference right away, driving from San Jose to Fremont.

“Probably 10 to 15 minutes [less], where we were going,” said Hayes.

Buses and carpoolers with two or more passengers can go in the express lane for free. Qualifying clean air vehicles with a valid sticker get a 50% discount. Solo drivers pay the full rate.

Hayes was carpooling and went for free, saving a good chunk of time.

“Time is valuable,” said Hayes.

KPIX also got our first look at the Express Lanes Operations Center, which is staffed from 5am to 8pm every day.

Drivers who go in the express lane must use the new transponders with a toggle switch to indicate how many passengers are in the vehicle. The sensors read that signal and flash the corresponding number, so that CHP officers can double-check.

If you don't have a transponder, then the series of video cameras will capture your license plate, calculate the distance you traveled, how much you owe, and then send you the bill, with a \$25 penalty.

“We are offering some time for people to get used to this new rule and we will allow folks to pay the toll that they do owe because they used the lane, but we can waive the fee,” said Brandi Childress, a VTA spokesperson.

“This is a choice for people, you don't have to use the lane. But folks choose to use the lane if their time is worth money,” said Childress.

VTA expects to make about \$3 million in revenue the first year. That will go to pay off the loan they took out to build the system and for maintenance and operations. Once the loan is paid off, the money will go to fund other express lanes around the region.

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Not everyone is a fan of the Idaho Stop: Roadshow (Mercury News)

As a driver of a commercial vehicle in Oakland, Emeryville and Berkeley for 21 years, here are my thoughts [on Idaho Stops](#) where bicyclists treat stop signs as yield signs.

I lost count of the number of near misses I have had. My experience is that bike riders blow through red lights and stop signs like it is their right to do so. They don't realize a truck does not stop like a car.

The scariest times are when trying to make a right-hand turn. You're completely stopped at the corner scanning the intersection and all of a sudden a bike rider blows through without stopping. They never realize you started to accelerate and just how close they come to a horrific end.

Greg Scott, Newark

A: I understand. Right turns are a leading cause of bicycle injuries.

Q: A couple of people [propagated the idea](#) that bicyclists routinely do not stop at stop signs while implying that automobile drivers do. This is a common misconception. In reality, all road users (whether on two wheels or four) commonly proceed at stop signs without stopping when there is no other traffic. Saying bicycles don't stop at stop signs is not fair because many bicyclists do, and many car drivers also don't.

Murali Krishnan, Sunnyvale

A: Including in San Jose.

Q: The problem is not bicyclists making Idaho Stops. It's *cars* making Idaho Stops on Willow Glen Way at Creek Drive, and Willow Glen Way at Bird Avenue, and Pine Avenue at Creek Drive, and I suspect, throughout all of San Jose.

Bob Prots, San Jose

A: And I suspect throughout the state.

Q: People create litter, and the amount is directly related to the population of any given area. Heavily populated metropolitan areas have more litter than rural areas. The Bay Area has approximately the same number of people as the entire state of Arizona. Of course, Arizona will have less litter because the same amount will be spread out over a far greater area. You don't see a lot of litter off Interstate 5 because far fewer people live there. Drive up to Mendocino County (population about 100,000) and you will see very little litter — because there are far fewer people.

Yes, we have a litter problem, but we can't clean every mile of the freeway. I've driven sections of highway around San Jose that are clean and there are also hotspots and eyesores. Some areas have narrow shoulders, steep sides or dense vegetation, all of which means Caltrans has to block a lane so it's safe for workers to do the cleaning. I invite anyone who is really disgusted to find an Adopt-A-Highway team and volunteer.

Loui Tucker, San Jose

A: On Thursday, possible solutions.

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From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 1:43 PM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 5, 2019 Media Clips

VTA News Coverage for Thursday, December 5, 2019

- 1. [VTA Funding Transfer Request \(KPIX Ch. 5\) \(link to video\)](#)**
- 2. [San Jose BART Station Police \(KNTV NBC Bay Area\) \(Link to video\)](#)**
- 3. [The Bay Area has 151 mass transit organizations \(SF Curbed\)](#)**

[VTA Funding Transfer Request](#) (KPIX Ch. 5) (link to video)

[San Jose BART Station Police](#) (KNTV NBC Bay Area) (Link to video)

[The Bay Area has 151 mass transit organizations](#) (SF Curbed)

How many distinct organizations are operating mass transit in the San Francisco Bay Area? The answer depends on how you count them.

Everybody is familiar with the well-known players: BART, Muni, AC Transit, Caltrain, et cetera. But if asked how many players are in the region's transit game, few riders could offer a specific definition of what defines a transit agency, much less identify them all.

[Seamless Bay Area](#), a nonprofit founded in 2017 dedicated to uniting the region's "fragmented and inconvenient" public transit, has given its best shot, releasing what it calls a "[Definitive List of Bay Area Transit Agencies](#)."

The results: Seamless claims that no fewer than 151 distinct organizations run buses, trains, ferries, and other mass-transit vehicles in all nine counties.

If that number seems graphically shocking, note that Seamless employed its own, intentionally broad definition of terms to get to it.

Officially, the [Metropolitan Transportation Commission \(MTC\) recognizes 23](#) Bay Area transit operators.

The complete list is as follows.

1. [AC Transit](#)
2. [ACE-Altamont Commuter Express](#)
3. [BART](#)
4. [Caltrain](#)
5. [County Connection](#)
6. [FAST-Fairfield Suisun Transit](#)
7. [Golden Gate Transit & Ferry/Marin Transit](#)

8. [Napa VINE](#)
9. [Petaluma Transit](#)
10. [Rio Vista Delta Breeze](#)
11. [San Francisco Bay Ferry](#)
12. [SFMTA-Muni](#)
13. [SamTrans](#)
14. [Santa Rosa CityBus](#)
15. [Soltrans](#)
16. [Sonoma County Transit](#)
17. [Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit \(SMART\)](#)
18. [Tri Delta Transit](#)
19. [Union City Transit](#)
20. [Vacaville City Coach](#)
21. [VTA](#)
22. [WestCAT](#)
23. [WHEELS-Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority](#)

Seamless references four additional agencies that MTC does not. And while the MTC designations sound authoritative, it does leave off several popular and essential services.

For example, shuttles like the Emery Go Round and PresidiGo provide critical links for many commuters, but don't fall under the MTC purview.

Map graphic via Seamless Bay Area

And folding those into the equation also means including some less widely known but very similar services. For example, not many people know about [Stanford's Marguerite shuttle](#), but Seamless says that it moves 6,000 people per day.

What about for-profit transit ventures? Many wouldn't count such enterprises, as generally we think of public transit as, well, more public.

But if companies like the Blue & Gold fleet ferries provide crucial services, does this make them "unofficial transit agencies," as Seamless would have it?

To reach the 151 figure, the group also included many of the Bay Area's 100-plus individual municipalities in the listings, arguing that some cities and towns—among them, Menlo Park, Cupertino, and Walnut Creek—fill the function of transit "because they plan and administer shuttle service."

But the would-be definitive list still draws the line at services like [ride-hailing apps](#), [rental bikes](#), and [scooters](#), which are [increasingly popular](#) and useful transportation options but not really in the same spirit as a bus or ferry.

Check out [Seamless Bay Area](#) to see the complete list and the verbose explanation of how it came together.

What do readers think? What counts as mass transit in the Bay Area, and how should both riders and analysts define such basic but sometimes elusive terms?

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 1:43 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Approved 2020 VTA Board of Directors Meeting Schedule
Importance: High

VTA Board of Directors:

Listed below and attached is the **2020** VTA Board of Directors meeting schedule that was approved at the December 5, 2019, Board of Directors meeting.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>
Thursday, January 9 (2nd Thurs.)	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Friday, January 24	9:00 a.m.	Board Workshop Meeting
Thursday, February 6	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Friday, February 21	9:00 a.m.	Board Workshop Meeting
Thursday, March 5	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, April 2	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Friday, April 17	9:00 a.m.	Board Workshop Meeting
Thursday, May 7	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, June 4	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Friday, June 19	9:00 a.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, August 6	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, September 3	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Friday, September 18	9:00 a.m.	Board Workshop Meeting
Thursday, October 1	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, November 5	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, December 3	5:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting

Please place these meeting dates/times on your calendar.

Thank you.

VTA Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street, Building B-1
San Jose, CA 95134-1927
Phone: 408-321-5680



From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 2:47 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: VTA Correspondence: Week ending December 6, 2019

VTA Board of Directors:

We are forwarding to you the following:

From	Topic
Members of the Public	Comments regarding climate emergency and 2016 Measure B
Member of the Public	Comment regarding 2016 Measure B funds
Members of the Public	Comments regarding the New Transit Service

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street, Building B
San Jose, CA 95134-1927
Phone [408-321-5680](tel:408-321-5680)



VTA Board Correspondence – Comments regarding climate emergency and 2016 Measure B

From: Mary Williams

Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 10:39 PM

To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>; VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>

Subject: Climate emergency and reallocation of Measure B funds from highways to transit operations to improve bus service

To: VTA Board of Directors

I've been a resident of West San Jose (District 1) for 30 years, and I'm an active member of the The Climate Reality Project Santa Clara County chapter, Orchard City Indivisible and Mothers Out Front.

A Climate Emergency has been declared in Santa Clara County and we must reduce single-occupant vehicle traffic if we hope to lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduce area gridlock — switching everyone to EVs is not enough — an affordable, efficient mass transit system with better coverage, increased frequency and reliability is needed. I encourage the board to also declare a Climate Emergency that not only supports moving to an all-electric fleet ASAP but also ensures that bus service will not be cut in 2021. I would encourage the board to reallocate Measure B funds from highways to transit operations to improve bus service, including expanding the network of Express buses.

My work commute is 6 miles to Cupertino and, when the weather is good, I ride my bicycle, but during inclement weather, I ride #26 from Campbell/Saratoga (Westgate Mall) to Wolfe/Homestead with peak service every 20 minutes. With the New Service changes starting December 28th, my route changes to #56 with downgraded frequency of service that runs only every 30 minutes. My residential area is slated to be part of the Saratoga Avenue corridor of higher density urban villages according to San José Vision 2040 Plan, so the residential population will increase in the near future with the first redevelopment project for El Paseo in the planning stages now. The Apple Park campus, served by #56, has an occupancy of up to 12,000 employees with more in the existing office buildings near Main Street Cupertino and more planned for the Vallco Mall redevelopment. Beyond my work commute, I find that traveling via bus is frustrating due to lack of coverage and inefficient routes taking 2-3 times longer than driving a single-occupancy vehicle.

I hope you will consider improvements to bus service a priority today and in the years to come.

Thank you,

Mary Williams

From: Linda Sell

Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 3:09 PM

To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>

Subject: Letter to VTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS for 12/5/2019 Meeting.

Dear VTA Staff,

Please forward this email and attached letter to the VTA Board Members before today's VTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING on 12/5/2019.

The letter requests that VTA must reallocate Measure B funds away from highway expansions to public transit operations as soon as possible to provide Santa Clara County residents with a fast, frequent, and reliable network of express and local buses.

In addition, the letter requests for VTA to declare a Climate Emergency that publicly states their support of both

- 1) a just transition to a fleet of clean vehicles AND
- 2) a commitment to avoid future cuts to bus service throughout the County.

Sincerely,

Linda Sell
Board Vice Chair, Bay Area for Clean Environment

Dear VTA Board:

VTA and other government agencies must re-examine their plans in light of the unexpected greenhouse gas-caused environmental disasters such the rapidly melting ice from Greenland, the newly released methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) bubbling up after dozens of millennia being frozen on the Arctic seabed, and unprecedented weather due to a weakened Polar Jet Stream. Forbes has recently reported and quoted from an open letter by 11,000 climate scientists:

“The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected. It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity.”

In light of these ominous reports and findings, VTA must revise their plans and current commitments and take bold action to QUICKLY and AFFORDABLY establish a zero-carbon transit system. Our current reliance on our car-centric transportation system has not and will not solve this problem. For too long VTA has depended on widening roadways only to find them jammed with even more traffic. Our car-centric system is responsible for over HALF the GREENHOUSE-GAS (GHG) emissions and HALF the HARMFUL POLLUTION due to millions of vehicle-miles traveled in our region. **VTA must reallocate Measure B funds away from highway expansions to public transit operations as soon as possible to provide Santa Clara County residents with a fast, frequent, and reliable network of express and local buses.**

A system of effective electrified or zero emission local and express buses would not only reduce GHG-emissions but also improve air quality as half our air pollution is due to vehicular traffic. A well-designed bus network that provides faster travel times, frequent service, boarding stations with attractive facilities near major destinations and areas with significant existing and future housing and employment, will make public transit more enticing to the public.

TransformCA has an excellent proposal to achieve these objectives as part of a seamless regional express transit network on our highways with convenient local connections to major destinations across the county and the region. We suggest the agency collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders to assess the local application of the proposed network and opportunities to improve upon it in 2020, rapidly pilot the most promising corridors in the short term and monitor their performance over the next two years to show proof of concept, and plan for and support longer term infrastructure and operations and maintenance investments, including realigning its own highway spending to support this vision, with the aim of full build out of the network within the next decade¹.

In addition, VTA must declare a Climate Emergency that publicly states their support of both 1) a just transition to a fleet of clean vehicles AND 2) a commitment to avoid future cuts to bus service throughout the County.

¹ Regional Express (REX) Transit Network (<http://www.transformca.org/ReX>)

Bay Area for Clean Environment (BACE) and climate coalition would like to officially ask you to bring a **Climate Emergency Declaration** to the VTA Board.

Sincerely,

Gary Latshaw, Board Chair, Bay Area for Clean Environment (glatshaw@gmail.com)

Hoi Y. Poon, Co-Chair, Environmental Committee, SV Democratic Club, Co-Founder, SV Youth Climate Action (hoipoon@gmail.com)

Monica Mallon, SV Youth Climate Action, SJSU Associated Students Transportation Solutions, SV Transit Users (monicamallon@icloud.com)

Linda Sell, Vice President, Sunnyvale Democratic Club, Board Vice Chair, Bay Area for Clean Environment (Indsell@gmail.com)

Scott Mace, District 4 South Board Representative, California Association of Bicycle Organizations (CABO), San Jose CA (macerider@gmail.com)

Richard Mehlinger, Vice Chair Livable Sunnyvale; Director-at-Large, Sunnyvale Democratic Club

Kirk Vartan, President, WNAC; VP, Cory Neighborhood Association; Co-founder and Board member, Catalyze SV; Co-chair, Stevens Creek Advisory Group; Founder and General Manager, A Slice of New York (vta@kvartan.com)

Michael Abramson, Carbon Free Mountain View (abramson53@gmail.com)

Lexi Crilley, Founder of the Los Altos Youth Climate Action Team

Pastor Jethroe Moore II President San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP (moore2j@att.net)

Carol Cross, Fossil Free Mid-Peninsula

Cynthia Kaufman, PhD., Director, Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action, De Anza College

David W. Poeschel, SV Youth Climate Action Advisor

Jamie Minden, Saint Francis High School Student, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Strikes Co-Founder, Silicon Valley Climate Action Mountain View Team Lead, Palo Alto Sunrise Hub Leadership Team.

Peter Pham, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action San Jose Team Lead, Fmr Chair of Student Rights and Services at De Anza College, Project Lead at Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action

Frederick Rehhausser, Endorsement Chairman SVDC

Hoai-An Truong, Mothers Out Front South Bay

Linda Hutchins-Knowles, Mothers Out Front California

Brian Haberly, 350 Silicon Valley and South Bay Progressive Alliance

Lauren Weston, Acterra

Bruce Hodge, Carbon Free Palo Alto

Gladwyn d'Souza, co-chair, Conservation Committee, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Mary Dateo

Bruce Naegel, Carbon Free Mountain View and Sustainable Silicon Valley

Robert Neff

Michelle Matsumoto, Mothers Out Front South Bay

Jeffrey Levin, South Bay Progressive Alliance and Silicon Valley Democratic Club,
Communications Chair

Nassim Nouri, Green Party of Santa Clara County Council

Patricia Blevins

Tad Keeley

Diane Harrison - member, Santa Clara Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Veronica Jacobi Founder, OurGreenChallenge.org

Susan Stansbury

Dr. Scott Lankford, Foothill College Center for a Sustainable Future

Lotina Nishijima, Mothers Out Front South Bay

Maia Kobabe, a Sonoma county author

Stacy Levy, Mothers Out Front South Bay

Michele Mashburn, Santa Clara County Green Party member: Director of San Jose Peace and
Justice Center

Alison Hicks, Mountain View City Council

Helen Deng, Archbishop Mitty student, co-lead of Silicon Valley Youth Climate Strikes

Kristel Wickham, Sunnyvale resident

Judy Young, South Bay Progressive Alliance, Move to Amend

Linda Reis, San Jose resident

John Cordes, Sunnyvale resident

Nick Cortez, South Bay Progressive Alliance

Jake Tonkel, Candidate for San Jose City Council District 6

Edward Mason, San Jose Resident

Frank Ponciano, Silicon Valley Democratic Club

VTA Board Correspondence – Comment regarding 2016 Measure B funds

From: Pria Graves
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2019 2:46 PM
To: cindy.chavez@bos.sccgov.org
Cc: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: Measure B Funds

Dear Supervisor Chavez (and VTA Board Members),

I understand that you will be discussing Measure B funding at your meeting this coming Thursday, December 5th. Unfortunately I am unable to join you due to other commitments but I want to take this opportunity to encourage you to reallocate these funds away from highway expansions and put them to a better use supporting public transit.

Climate change is real and it is caused by the huge carbon impact of humans, with the use of cars being the #1 source in this area. It's time we stopped spending tax money to support this unsustainable way of living.

I am a long-time transit user, beginning when I was an undergraduate in Santa Cruz in the early 1970's. Throughout my working years, I continued to use public transit including busses from Campbell to Sunnyvale and Caltrain from Palo Alto to Lawrence/Santa Clara. Even now I continue to use the 522 & 22 on a frequent basis as well as taking Caltrain to locations north of here. In short, I have lots of personal experience with transit.

There are a couple of specific improvements which allocation of Measure B funds could help address.

The first, which I believe would make a big difference to the willingness of North County residents to use transit, would be to mend the gap in bus service at the county line. It is absurd that I must take two busses (and pay two fares) just to travel the 2.7 miles from California Avenue to Menlo Park! Or that Redwood City or Menlo Park residents must use two busses to reach my area or Mountain View!

And second, we've been promised for years that the Dumbarton Rail Bridge would be put in service to help address our commute nightmare near the county line. It's time to make good on these promises.

The extra funds from Measure B could easily help to solve these problems, moving our area away from our continued oil-addiction and toward a sustainable future!

Thank you for your consideration.

Pria Graves
Palo Alto, 94306

VTA Board Correspondence – Comments regarding the New Transit Service Plan

From: Jeremy Erman

Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2019 5:04 PM

To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>

Subject: No schedules available for new VTA service starting in 25 days

Jeremy Erman's comments:

At the Board of Directors meeting on Nov 7, a VTA board member or official said regarding the “New Transit Plan:”

“We are also developing a new system map and hand schedules. These are the printed schedules used to navigate our system. We are putting the finishing touches on this now and we'll have those available for riders and distributing those out to our riders very shortly.”

It is now December 3, almost a month later, and NONE of these new schedules are available, in print or even on-line. The sudden attempted rollout of this “all-new transit plan” (which is NOT “all-new” has been a communications disaster, and I suggest at your board meeting this week you delay the implementation of this plan indefinitely, perhaps until the next regular schedule change period in April, so that the public has time to learn when and where the buses will be running, and to comment on the specifics of the proposed timetables..

Without specific schedules and times in hand, I don't know if I'll be able to continue getting to all of the jobs I have, or continuing all of the activities I normally do. The public should be able to comment on the timetables for the new bus system to make it work as effectively as possible. I am especially concerned with the frequency and timing of evening and weekend service, as I rely on this to get to and from jobs and family activities, and the information VTA has released is simply not enough to know exactly how this “new” service will affect my ability to get around.

I live in Mountain View and don't have a car or a full-time job, so I rely on VTA to get around. I am particularly concerned that the new 523 does not seem to run late enough to provide connections between El Camino (line 22) and Stevens Creek (line 23) between the hours of 9pm and 12am at night, both weekday and weekend. Considering how late and frequently some San Jose-based lines run, like the new 26 and 57, it's weird and worrying that there seems to be no late-night route connecting the main late-night frequent lines 22 and 23 on the north/south corridor. I have a Saturday night job that is relocating from downtown San Jose, where I can use the 22 or 522 to get back to Mountain View, to Stevens Creeks and DeAnza. This job usually goes until 9:30 or 10pm on Saturday night, so I may be effectively stranded unless I take the 23 all the way to downtown San Jose and the 22 back to Mountain View, which will take several hours. Yet the 523, 56, and 51 are closer at hand, but don't seem to run late. The 56 does not seem to run as late the 26 used to. Until several years ago, the 26 ran north until about 11pm, which was then cut. If the goal of the new service is to run buses more frequently, this shouldn't just be in San Jose and environs, but the whole county, and at least allow people to get from Stevens Creek to El Camino in Mountain View late at night, linking the north and south of the county.

Thank you.

From: Betsy Megas

Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 10:27 AM

To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>

Subject: To VTA Board, regarding the new service plan

To the VTA Board of Directors:

As I waited in the rain this morning for the 330 bus to arrive, I told the other passenger waiting at my stop that there were plans to cancel that bus line at the end of this month. **It was the first she'd heard of the new service plan.** She cannot attend the board meeting tomorrow night, and neither can I.

I had a similar conversation with a different passenger at that stop last week. He had no idea.

I don't rely on that bus (I bike my commute on drier days, because it is faster), but she does. She was not happy to hear about the cancellation plan, because her alternative is two buses. My alternatives, on rainy days, are to bike in the rain, to give up and drive, or to take the 57 and add half a mile to my walk. I may be able to take the new 59 and 60, but she won't, and the roundabout route 60 as it stands is a maddeningly slow way to move the five miles from home to work.

The 330 is not an empty bus. The morning trips routinely have 15 or more people on them as they pass through Santa Clara. I believe **we are making a mistake counting "riders per hour"** on a bus that takes two hours to go from Almaden to north San Jose in commute traffic. Would this bus would be considered more useful if we counted how many people in total it serves, how many cars it keeps off the road, or some other measure?

The 330 bus may also be one of the routes that comes closest to being of real use to tech workers who make up such a large share of area commuters. There's at least one corporate shuttle using the same stops along San Tomas, which routinely have riders. **People here don't hate buses, but they don't use buses that come infrequently or late, that take forever to get there, that are dirty, or that don't go where they're needed.**

I urge the board to consider carefully all the riders whose bus commutes will be upended—or even ended—by the service changes. I hope we will someday reinstate some version of the coverage that's being canceled.

At a minimum, you must **put clearer announcements on affected buses and at the stops**, especially on lines that will change or end. For the first time today, there was an audio announcement* and a printed notice in among the ads. Both said, "Service is changing." Neither said, "This bus won't exist next month." The changes need to be front and center on the website this month, too, both on the landing page and on route-specific pages and results.

Thank you for your consideration.

Betsy Megas

(Santa Clara BPAC as of January; speaking for myself, and for fellow passengers who may not have the opportunity.)

*One guy even took his headphones off.

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 5:12 PM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 6, 2019 Media Clips

VTA News Coverage for Friday, December 6, 2019

1. [Cindy Chavez New Chair \(KCBS Radio – link to audio\)](#)
2. [‘Failure to communicate’ at bottom of BART delay \(Business Journal\)](#)
3. [When will San Jose and Milpitas BART stations open? Get ready to wait well into 2020 \(Mercury News\) After missed deadlines, nobody wants to commit to an opening date](#)
4. [San Jose and Milpitas BART off until April \(SF Curbed\)](#)

[Cindy Chavez New Chair](#) (KCBS Radio – link to audio)

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[‘Failure to communicate’ at bottom of BART delay](#) (Business Journal)

When Thursday’s meeting of the [Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority](#) board got to its final late-night agenda item — a report on the repeatedly postponed opening of the BART extension to San Jose — chair [Teresa O’Neill](#) remembered the most famous line from the 1967 prison movie “Cool Hand Luke.”

“I think we have a basic failure to hear, to communicate,” she said, paraphrasing prison warden Strother Martin’s character: “What we have here is a failure to communicate.”

She was talking about the year-long history of contradictory announcements about the transit line’s opening that was played out in stereo Thursday as BART and VTA gave separate explanations for the delay of the rail extension, now expected to run into the second quarter of 2020.

And she was also talking about the apparent difficulties of the staff of VTA, which built the 10-mile line to Berryessa, and the staff of BART, which will operate it once it’s fully tested, to effectively work together or even predict that neither of them could get their individual work done if they did testing simultaneously.

Some problems were anticipated as being endemic to huge, complex construction projects, said Dennis Ratcliffe, VTA deputy director, “but it was further complicated by having a handoff between one agency as builder and another agency” as operator. “It creates a bit more of a different relationship between the builder and the operator in our case.”

VTA program manager Jorge Martinez talked about the thousands of “discrepancies” that have turned up in testing so far, some of them easy-to-fix problems that recur in hundreds of places along the line and some that are significant safety concerns. He pegged the total cost of addressing the problems at only \$1 million, however — a small fraction of a \$1 billion project.

County Supervisor Cindy Chavez, who will succeed O’Neill as board president in January, said prior to the meeting “that it is very difficult to get different cultures of agencies always to work together. But the thing I am 100 percent confident about is that for both agencies, making sure we have the safest, most reliable transportation system that we can possibly bring into Silicon Valley is our highest goal.”

In the meeting, Chavez wanted to know whether VTA and BART would be able to document the mistakes and correct them before this extension moves on to Phase II, which is to tunnel the line beneath downtown San Jose to the envisioned transit hub for the entire Bay Area — Diridon Station — and then on to Santa Clara.

Martinez assured her that this experience is being documented and a dispute resolution process has been created that has already discounted a thousand of more than 4,000 problems found since testing began.

San Jose City Councilmember Raul Peralez said the communication problems need to be elevated to the board level at both agencies, which has produced some successes when they worked jointly such as deciding on a single-bore tunnel design for the subway portion.

“I just hope we can get that next meeting scheduled as soon as possible,” he said.

Neither agencies’ board meetings Thursday produced a target date for opening the line but Ratcliffe did say he thought such a date could be announced in February.

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[When will San Jose and Milpitas BART stations open? Get ready to wait well into 2020](#) (Mercury News)

After missed deadlines, nobody wants to commit to an opening date

South Bay BART riders can expect to wait well into next year for the opening of new stations in Milpitas and North San Jose that were supposed to make their debuts this month.

[After confirming in November](#) that the new stations won’t open in 2019 after all, nobody at BART or the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Administration, which built the long-awaited \$2.3 billion extension, has been willing to say precisely when in 2020 passengers will finally be able to ride to San Jose.

But estimates laid out by the agencies in recent weeks indicate the Milpitas and Berryessa stations might not open until late April — if not later.

Before the stations can open, VTA crews need to finish their work on the 10-mile extension and resolve problems BART workers identified when they worked on the system earlier this fall. VTA spokeswoman Bernice Alaniz said the agency plans to wrap up its work by Jan. 31.

From there, BART will need a while to conduct its own safety testing and make sure there aren’t any lingering problems that it still wants VTA to fix. Precisely how long that will take isn’t clear.

BART Assistant Chief Engineer Shane Edwards told the transit agency’s board at a meeting last month that crews would need 12 weeks to do the work. Edwards’ estimate would put the opening around the final weekend of April, though he cautioned that “there is not a hard date at this time.”

On Thursday, BART spokesman Jim Allison backed away from the timeline Edwards previously laid out, saying the agency’s leaders are no longer hazarding a guess about when the stations will open. And Allison did not give any indication that people anxiously awaiting the start of BART service in Santa Clara County can expect it any sooner.

“We aren’t going to publicly state a number of weeks we will need for testing because, at this point, there are too many variables,” Allison said. “Bottom line is that the extension will be ready for revenue service as soon as it is safe and reliable.”

The extension to the new Milpitas and Berryessa stations is the first phase of a project that will eventually bring BART through Downtown San Jose and into Santa Clara. When construction on the extension began, the first two stations were supposed to open in 2016.

The project since then has been hampered by a series of delays and missed deadlines, pushing the planned opening to Dec. 28, 2019. As that date approached, crews from both agencies [scrambled to resolve](#) a mounting list of problems and get the extension ready to open, as VTA and BART officials [insisted the stations would open](#) before the end of the year.

In mid-November, VTA [quietly acknowledged](#) that the opening wouldn't happen in 2019. Supervisor Cindy Chavez, who was elected chair of the VTA board Thursday night, stressed that the testing work that still needs to be done on the extension is vital to ensure the system is safe. "I recognize that the voters have voted to support BART, and they deserve to have access to it as soon as possible," Chavez said. "I'm anxious for it to be open." But, Chavez added, "Right now I'm just focused on it being done right, and well." Meanwhile VTA is moving forward with a planned [slate of service changes](#) that will go into effect Dec. 28. The new service has good news for some VTA riders and bad news for others — it calls for more frequent service along the system's more popular bus routes, while also reducing frequency on less-popular routes and eliminating some entirely. Among the cuts are three express bus lines and the Almaden light rail spur, which includes two stations. As commuters wait for the new BART stations to open, VTA will continue to run one of its express bus routes to the Warm Springs station, but will eliminate the other. Route 181, which connects connecting BART riders to stops in San Jose, will keep running until the new stations open. Route 180, between the station and Milpitas' Great Mall, which will eventually be served by a new BART station, is being shut down on Dec. 28. Some riders have complained that shutting down routes will only worsen VTA's [declining ridership and budget woes](#). While Chavez said she hopes the more frequent service along core routes will make VTA's service more attractive to potential riders, she also said Santa Clara County ought to be putting its money toward an expanded public transportation system that serves more people. Cutting lines, Chavez said, "Is the wrong direction."

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[San Jose and Milpitas BART off until April \(SF Curbed\)](#)

No fooling—BART riders won't get their long-awaited extension into the South Bay until at least April 2020, four months after what both BART and Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) previously touted as the final deadline for opening the two new stations.

[San Jose Mercury-News reported the latest delay](#), basing it on what both transit agencies said about the time needed to properly test the new parts system leading to Milpitas Station and San Jose's Berryessa Station.

Previously, BART and VTA had proposed an accelerated testing schedule that would have seen the new stations barely open on time by the end of this year. But [in November they scrubbed that plan](#) and decided to do it the old-fashioned way, even if it meant resigning to a 2020 finish.

VTA says that it will wrap up its phases of tests at the end of January. And in November, BART's chief engineer tentatively estimated that tests will take approximately 12 weeks. So that leaves riders looking at an April completion date—at the earliest.

April is not, however, the official new service date for either station. In fact, there is no new date—BART has thus far declined to designate a 2020 target for opening, simply saying that the agency is working as fast as it can.

The 10-mile, \$2.3-billion extension of the lines that currently end at Warm Springs Station has been delayed seemingly since day one, originally breaking ground in 2012 and hoping to reach the point of rider service by 2015.

VTA projects that by 2030 roughly [20,000 passengers will use Milpitas Station](#) each day, and [25,000 will pass through](#) Berryessa Station, the first of the planned San Jose stops. A further six-mile extension into San Jose has yet to begin construction.

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