

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2019 5:44 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: December 9, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Monday, December 9, 2019

- 1. [Commuters may see changes on Bay Area public transit soon \(ABC7 News\)](#)**
- 2. [Environmental activists urge VTA to shift funds from highway projects to mass transit \(san Jose Spotlight\)](#)**
- 3. [Bart Opening Delayed \(KTVU CH. 2\)](#)**

[Commuters may see changes on Bay Area public transit soon \(ABC7 News\)](#)

As 2019 comes to a close, be prepared for changes to your commute. Some local transit agencies aren't waiting for the new year. Below is a list of upcoming changes to the busiest transit agencies serving the Bay Area.

[Golden Gate Transit: Dec. 8, 2019](#)

Bus schedules and routes are adjusted quarterly by the Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District to make the system run more efficiently. Starting on Sunday, Dec. 8, many routes will be affected, some stops will be moved, some buses canceled, and others will be added. Route 31 will no longer serve the Larkspur Ferry Terminal when new SMART Train service debuts on Saturday, Dec. 14.

[VTA: Dec. 28, 2019](#)

Changes to buses and light rail service start on Saturday, Dec. 28, 2019. VTA says buses will run more frequently on better routes. A new light rail line, the orange line, will debut. BART service to Santa Clara County is delayed longer than originally planned, so VTA bus service will continue to operate in the areas that will eventually be covered by BART trains.

[SFMTA: Jan. 1, 2020](#)

New fares take effect for some rides through the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. Cable car prices will go up by a dollar for all passengers. The main price will be \$8.00 per ride. The price for one-, three-, and seven-day passports are also rising.

Prices for MUNI bus and train rides are not changing.

[BART: Jan. 1, 2020](#)

Prices for BART rides go up 5.4% in the new year. This is part of a long term fare increase that BART's Board first approved in 2003. The increase is based on inflation. BART prices are calculated by distance so some short rides may only see a 10 cent increase.

[AC TRANSIT: Jan. 1, 2020](#)

Fares for transbay trips will go up 50 cents at the start of 2020. This is the second year of a five year plan of fare increases. A single cash or Clipper Card ride across the bay will cost \$6.00. Upgrade fees also go up 50 cents. The Transbay 31-day pass will increase in price from \$198.00 to \$216.00. Local bus fares are not changing.

[SAMTRANS: Jan. 1, 2020](#)

New fares will take effect in the start of the new year. Express fares are going up for cash, mobile, Clipper Card, and monthly pass holders. The price for a local fare day pass will go down. Currently adults pay \$5.50 and that will drop to \$4.50 in the new year. SamTrans is changing how it categorizes fares. This [article](#) explains why.

[SMART TRAIN: Jan. 1, 2020](#)

A new service schedule debuts in 2020 including earlier weekend service and more service on weekdays, especially during commute hours. New stations at Larkspur and Novato Downtown should be open by 2020. The Larkspur station connects passengers with the Golden Gate Ferry.

[CALTRAIN: Apr. 1, 2020](#)

In the Spring of 2020, Caltrain fares will change: "Adult Clipper one-way discount reduced from 55 cents to 25 cents. Eligible Discount Clipper one-way discount remains at 15 cents. Monthly Passes will be adjusted accordingly (30 times the One-way fare)". Another increase is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2020.

[Environmental activists urge VTA to shift funds from highway projects to mass transit \(san Jose Spotlight\)](#)

Dozens of young environmental activists implored the Valley Transportation Authority's Board of Directors to declare a climate crisis during its last meeting of the year this week.

The group — including many local high school students — asked the board to commit to a zero carbon emission bus fleet, forswear future cuts to bus service and to use money currently pegged for highway expansions for better mass transit options instead. The board is expected to address the issue at its January meeting.

Chloe Wang, a senior at Milpitas High School, said she watches the clock at the end of every school day. "As soon as that bell rings, I'm out of the door, not because I don't like my sixth period class but because I want to catch the next 66 bus that stops at Milpitas High," Wang said. "Students commute all the time — on school days, during the weekends furthering their passions — doing the things that really matter to them."

Jamie Minden, 16, co-founded the Silicon Valley Youth Climate Strikes — which organized a large student protest in San Jose in September — and says more needs to be done.

"Public transportation is important to kids and not just because we need a ride," Minden said Thursday.

"I'm here representing 3,000 local youth, educators and passionate citizens who marched with me on Sept. 20, because they don't believe our government is doing enough to tackle the climate crisis."

"We are fighting because we are terrified," Minden continued. "Kids my age know that if we don't act with urgency now, we will live to see the apocalypse in my lifetime."

The young activists got a boost from Congressman Ro Khanna, whose district includes much of Silicon Valley.

"Santa Clara County expects continued population growth that cannot be matched by just expanding roadways," the congressman wrote in a letter. "Shifting bus lines from overall coverage to ridership corridors can have negative impacts on those with low incomes, persons with disabilities, the student population and the elderly population. Reversing [VTA's recent reductions](#) and increasing bus service will benefit riders and decrease the severe congestion on San José roadways."

Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese on Thursday directed VTA staff to put a resolution on the agenda for January.

“I would like to add to the next regular agenda a resolution declaring a climate emergency that demands immediate action to halt, reverse, restore and address the consequences and causes of global warming,” Cortese said.

Director Rob Rennie, a Los Gatos Town councilmember, said the resolution should have substantive effects on how the board and VTA staff approach public transit.

“I’d like to see something substantial,” he said. “I don’t like just passing resolutions. I’d like to figure out what we are actually going to do because of it.”

Earlier in the meeting, the students received support from the South Bay chapter of Mothers Out Front Mobilizing for a Livable Climate.

“San Jose is expected to grow its population to 1.3 million,” said coordinator Martina Keim. “We are already experiencing a high density of traffic. And it is crucial for all of us to make this change now. It will help to reduce congestion, improve air quality and public health and go toward San Jose’s goal to be carbon free, since vehicle traffic is the leading source of carbon emissions.”

Longtime transit advocate Eugene Bradley, who founded Silicon Valley Transit Users in 2000, chastised the board for slowly cutting bus service over the last two decades. Bradley pointed out that the VTA is the only public transit agency in America that is also responsible for highway and freeway expansion projects.

“Declare a climate emergency,” Bradley said. “And don’t just talk about it, back it up with actions like reallocating money from highways to bus service.”

VTA spokeswoman Brandi Childress told San José Spotlight in previous interviews that the transit agency has consistently improved and enhanced public transit in Silicon Valley over the years.

Public safety at new VTA transit stations

Also on Thursday, VTA Board members approved a three-month extension of a longtime contract with the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office to provide public safety services at VTA facilities — including two unopened transit centers in Milpitas and the Berryessa neighborhood of San Jose. The \$4.2 million extension, which runs through March 2020, was approved as a part of the board’s consent agenda. The Milpitas and Berryessa BART stations were expected to open in 2016, but last month officials announced another delay until 2020.

Meanwhile, local law enforcements agencies are jockeying for a contract to oversee policing at the stations when they open.

BART has its own police that will have jurisdiction on its trains and platforms, but the Milpitas and San Jose Police Departments have both submitted bids to the VTA board to police the stations in their jurisdictions and the Sheriff’s Office has renewed its bid to provide public safety services throughout the entire system. San Jose Mayor [Sam Liccardo told San José Spotlight](#) his city’s police department will push for control of the Berryessa station.

The board will consider awarding new public safety contract(s) in 2020, VTA officials said.

[Bart Opening Delayed](#) (KTVU CH. 2)

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

Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2019 2:51 PM

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

Subject: Correspondence from VTA: Response to Congressmember Ro Khanna's letter regarding cuts to public transit services

VTA Board of Directors:

Last week, a letter from Congressmember Ro Khanna dated December 4, 2019, was forwarded to you. Congressmember Khanna's letter relayed the concerns of college students in Santa Clara regarding cuts to public transit.

The attached document has the VTA response and the December 4, 2019 letter.

If you have any questions, please reply to this message.

Thank you.

Board Secretary's Office
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street, Building B
San Jose, CA 95134-1927
Phone [408-321-5680](tel:408-321-5680)
board.secretary@vta.org





December 11, 2019

The Honorable Ro Khanna
221 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0517

Dear Congressman Khanna,

Thank you for your recent letter to the VTA Board of Directors, regarding VTA's new transit service plan, our efforts to encourage transit ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We thank you for your engagement with the community and concern for improving transit services in Santa Clara County. On December 28, VTA will implement the most comprehensive overhaul of the local transit network in the history of the county. Over the course of several years, VTA has evaluated every local bus and light rail route in our network, and thoughtfully developed a new network following substantial engagement with the public. The result of this effort will be a network that provides more reliable and frequent transit services to a much larger number of riders, especially students and transit-dependent populations.

Many of the residents who contacted you regarding VTA's transit service planning, highway projects and fleet expansion have also communicated with VTA staff. In the coming months, VTA plans to evaluate our projects and programs to further reduce our carbon footprint and we hope to work with these residents to champion state and federal programs that support our ongoing efforts to "green" our transit service and improve ridership. I hope this letter is helpful in responding to the concerns raised in your letter.

Why Changes are Being Made

The service changes adopted by VTA's Board of Directors in May 2019 largely reallocate transit service within VTA's network to respond to changing travel patterns, connect to the BART extension, serve more people and achieve higher ridership. In general, service levels on routes that have low ridership—and therefore a high cost per rider—will be reduced while service levels on cost-effective routes in high-demand places will be increased. 266,000 residents and 204,000 jobs will gain access to frequent transit in the new plan, which makes transit a more viable option for many more people.

Regarding "Cuts"

Service along low-performing routes will be re-allocated but these re-allocations allow these resources to be used in areas that will enjoy higher ridership. The new transit service plan employs 1.67 million annual service hours, a slight increase from the 1.66 million that is currently operated. Service levels are essentially the same, but where the service is located, how frequently it operates and how many hours of the day it operates will change for many routes. In many cases, routes that are "cut" are replaced with superior alternatives that offer faster, more frequent or more direct service.

Ridership and Coverage

At the heart of the service change discussion is a question about what public transit should achieve. The difficulty is that public transit is asked to achieve two goals that are in conflict with each other. The Ridership Goal says agencies should carry as many people as possible at the lowest cost-per passenger. This perspective leads transit providers to offer frequent service in high-demand areas. On the other hand, the Coverage Goal says that transit service should go to as many places as possible so that the number of people with transit access is maximized. This is a social service perspective that values access over cost-effectiveness or ridership.

Unfortunately, transit providers cannot simultaneously constrict their service to high demand areas and spread it out to the low demand areas. They must decide how much to spend toward each goal. VTA went through years of community engagement including over 200 meetings and presentations and 15,000 public interactions and found that there was general support for redesigning service to spend more on the ridership goal. After long and careful evaluation, VTA's current ridership/coverage balance will change from 70/30 to 90/10 with the new service plan.

Decreasing Congestion

Increasing transit service can result in a greater share of people traveling space-efficiently and in an environmentally friendly way, but it will not change congestion. Transportation experts observe that changes that open up road space—whether by transitioning people to transit or adding capacity—do not result in less congestion. These changes merely induce more trips to be made since the road is now more appealing to use, resulting in the same level of congestion as before. This is known as the Law of Induced Demand. More accurately, more transit service allows more people to move along a roadway, but at the same speed as before.

Highway Projects and New California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Requirements

VTA staff has been closely following the changes to CEQA pursuant to California State Senate Bill 743 (2013). VTA has taken a leadership role in helping implement SB 743 in Santa Clara County, including providing technical assistance to the cities and the County of Santa Clara. Regarding highway projects, any projects that VTA helps fund or perform project development work on will be evaluated under CEQA. In cases where VTA is the Lead Agency, VTA will conform to the latest CEQA guidelines in effect at the time of environmental clearance. In cases where Caltrans is the Lead Agency and VTA is assisting with project development, VTA will follow Caltrans environmental clearance procedures, which will conform to the latest CEQA guidelines.

Zero Emission Buses

VTA is currently developing a plan to transition to an all zero-emission fleet by 2040, in accordance with a statewide mandate by the California Air Resources Board. A major challenge is that VTA buses drive up to 390 miles in a day of work and zero-emission electric buses can only travel about 150 miles per charge before needing several hours of recharging. To transition to a new fleet in a five-year time frame would require VTA to purchase and store 2 to 3 times as many buses as it operates today, hire new operators and buy new storage yards, which would bear costs in the hundreds of millions and require service cuts elsewhere. This effort is further impeded by the cost of electricity under PG&E's current price structure and their insistence that upgrades to the transmission system infrastructure needed to charge

these vehicles must be paid by VTA. VTA's plan is to upgrade to zero-emission buses as technology and vehicle ranges improve and in ways that will not offset the agency's ability to operate transit service at current levels. Expansion of VTA's bus fleet to 750 is eligible for a portion of the funding generated from a local sales tax measure enacted in 2000, though that ballot measure does not mandate a fleet expansion within five years.

VTA is committed to engaging Santa Clara County residents on our latest efforts to improve our transit network and ridership, and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. I hope this information is helpful in responding to the concerns of our constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nuria Fernandez".

Nuria Fernandez
General Manager/CEO

cc: VTA Board of Directors

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4th, 2019

VTA Board of Directors
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134

To the Board of Directors:

I write today to relay the concerns of college students in Santa Clara regarding cuts to public transit services.

As you know, thousands of residents of Santa Clara County rely on the VTA bus system. Students at SJSU, Foothill, De Anza, and other colleges and schools depend on the buses to get to and from classes. Commuters using the buses to get to work may have no other method of transportation available.

Santa Clara County expects continued population growth that cannot be matched by just expanding roadways. Shifting bus lines from overall coverage to ridership corridors can have negative impacts on those with low incomes, persons with disabilities, the student population and the elderly population. Reversing VTA's recent reductions and increasing bus service will benefit riders and decrease the severe congestion on San Jose roadways.

Additionally, the reduction in individual commuters reduces our carbon footprint, especially if fleet expansion includes electric buses. Forty-one percent of all greenhouse gas emissions in California come from the transportation sector.

My constituents have specifically requested the following:

- (1) Adjust transit service guidelines to retain buses in communities with no other transit options such as students, seniors and people with disabilities;
- (2) Reevaluate highway projects based on new CEQA (SB 743) standards that will take effect on July 1st, 2020;
- (3) Develop a plan to rebuild the entire bus network with zero emission vehicles and increase the fleet to 750 busses as approved by voters within five years.

I encourage you to give full and fair consideration to the students' concerns consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ro Khanna', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2019 5:37 PM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 11, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Wednesday, December 11, 2019

1. [San Jose lawmakers to discuss transforming BART stations into transit communities \(San Jose Spotlight\)](#)
2. [VTA changes should ease clogged downtown San Jose: Pizarro \(Mercury News\) Most buses will be rerouted off busy San Fernando Street starting Dec. 28](#)
3. [Transit Outlook 2020: Funding, election concerns color expectations \(Progressive Railroading\)](#)
4. [When will BART get to San Jose? \(Mercury News\)](#)
5. [VTA Light Rail Running Bus Bridge Downtown Due To Mechanical Issue \(SFGate\)](#)

San Jose lawmakers to discuss transforming BART stations into transit communities (San Jose Spotlight)

The Valley Transportation Authority has spent years developing a plan to create new, vibrant communities around transit hubs, especially at a time when BART is expanding its reach in Silicon Valley. On Tuesday, the San Jose City Council will hear a report highlighting VTA's major goals for Phase II of BART's Silicon Valley expansion project, just weeks after a [vital agreement](#) between the two regional agencies has been authorized, and the first phase of the expansion — the 10-mile BART extension to Milpitas and Berryessa — is in the testing phases.

City officials will discuss a plan to create more housing of all types and a strong job market around two vital future BART stations, one in downtown and the other on 28th Street in the Little Portugal neighborhood.

"VTA's BART Silicon Valley Phase II extension through Downtown San Jose and Santa Clara presents an extraordinary opportunity to sustainably organize Santa Clara Valley's future growth around the future BART stations," wrote city Planning Director Rosalynn Hughey and Transportation Director John Ristow in a memo to city leaders. "High demand for housing of all types, a strong job market, and new transit options provide the essential ingredients for developing (transit oriented communities) that are equitable, walkable and thriving places."

VTA has rolled out its plan with the release of a "playbook"— a draft outlining the agency's recommendations for each station to encourage the development of "transit oriented communities," transforming the areas around the stations into transit friendly, walkable jobs hubs.

The playbook plan for the future downtown BART station aims to create nearly 16,000 new homes, with nearly 3,200 of them affordable. The plan for the 28th Street/Little Portugal station calls for 7,800 new homes, with nearly 2,000 affordable units. The plans also concentrate retail at ground levels and office uses closest to the BART station.

"At a time when the Bay Area is in a dire housing crisis, high-density housing near our public transportation infrastructure is an effective solution for helping to ease housing woes, increase transit ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Vince Rocha, senior director of housing and community development at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. "The playbooks provide a map for leaders to plan for smart growth for the future of San Jose and its residents."

Despite agreeing with the plan's goals, San Jose officials voiced concern with the level of resources and staffing required to implement some of the recommendations. Finding the financing tools to fund the

projects poses a number of challenges, according to city officials, including implementing VTA's suggestion of using Mello-Roos tax revenue to support the construction of infrastructure, public amenities and services and affordable housing.

City officials propose identifying funding to pay for the resources and additional staff to implement VTA's recommendations.

In a memo released late Monday, Councilmember Raul Peralez expressed worry that the plan conflicts with a new state law, [AB 3194](#), which strengthens the Housing Accountability Act by limiting cities' ability to require rezoning or reject housing projects that align with the city's general plan. The new law prohibits rezoning projects to create a "[value capture mechanism](#)," where public investment in a newly developed area can create massive increases in land value for private landowners.

Value capture is a type of public financing that is often used by local governments to fund public amenities and improvements. According to a new report from [SPUR](#), San Jose's current Urban Village plan in Alum Rock, which is where the proposed 28 Street/Little Portugal station is located, relies on developers to adhere to city requirements to provide funding for new amenities and infrastructure in the urban villages. The plan allows the city to withhold rezoning unless the developer provides specific public amenities for the urban village project. But under the new state law, this policy might have to change.

"While the (transit oriented communities) playbook illustrates wonderful and picturesque amenities that would benefit the community through a value-capture district, we need to be realistic with our community of what is achievable in this new landscape," Peralez said. "I am cognizant that the nature of legislation is dynamic and subject to change at any point — nevertheless, it is important that we be transparent with our community."

Peralez also said many small businesses, especially around the Alum Rock corridor, have suffered "devastating impacts" due to construction and development of major transit projects. The councilman last year asked VTA to study how BART's extension will affect the small businesses in that corridor. Peralez asked VTA officials to bring the results of the study to a council committee early next year, while city officials proposed VTA establish a "construction mitigation fund" to help small businesses affected during the construction period.

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[VTA changes should ease clogged downtown San Jose: Pizarro](#) (Mercury News)

Most buses will be rerouted off busy San Fernando Street starting Dec. 28

If you've driven, walked, biked or taken the bus in downtown San Jose over the past year, you've probably noticed San Fernando Street has become a bit of a zoo. Parking spaces and turn lanes have moved or disappeared, bike lanes and protective barriers have been added, traffic signal timing has been changed and new lane markings zig zag along between Market and 10th street.

Well, when the Valley Transportation Authority starts its [new service changes Dec. 28](#), it will reduce the number of bus routes using the corridor to just three. And even those — the 72, 73 and 181 — will only use the street for a few blocks each. Most of the tweaked routes instead will travel on Santa Clara Street, an already bus-heavy route.

You can certainly make the case that removing buses from a busy street like San Fernando is counter to how public transit should function; and yes, this move will make it easier for people who drive on the street. But it's also a win for cyclists and pedestrians, who will have fewer big vehicles to contend with. Sadly, the changes also mean the end of the free DASH shuttle, which ferried people around downtown between Diridon Station and San Jose State University. It's officially being replaced by a new route called

Rapid 500 — not as fun a name — which will travel primarily along Santa Clara Street and will eventually link up with the Berryessa BART station.

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[Transit Outlook 2020: Funding, election concerns color expectations](#) (Progressive Railroading)

As the United States enters its presidential election year and public transit agencies from coast to coast continue plans for expanding passenger-rail services in 2020, agency leaders remain hopeful that investment in the nation's infrastructure will stand out as a top priority.

While transit leaders push forward with rail projects and remain committed to state-of-good repair efforts, some also face workforce recruitment and retainment challenges.

On the following pages, seven transit agency leaders share their thoughts about challenges and opportunities in the year ahead. They are Jim Derwinski, executive director and chief executive officer of [Metra](#); Nuria Fernandez, CEO and general manager of the [Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority](#) (VTA); Stephen Gardner, senior executive vice president and chief operating and commercial officer of [Amtrak](#); David Genova, GM and CEO of the [Regional Transportation District of Denver](#) (RTD); Robert Powers, GM of [Bay Area Rapid Transit](#) (BART); Scott Smith, CEO of [Valley Metro](#); and Phillip Washington, CEO of the [Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) (LA Metro).

What will be your agency's biggest challenges in 2020, and how will you address them?

Derwinski: Our biggest challenge is the implementation of the positive train control (PTC) safety system by the federal deadline of Dec. 31, 2020. Metra's commuter service operates in the most complicated rail environment in the nation, and for that reason, interoperability is a major issue. Metra has been working closely with its freight partners and Wabtec Corp. to keep this project on schedule, and we are confident we will meet this challenge and make the deadline.

Fernandez: As we move into 2020, the Santa Clara VTA is taking on major initiatives and projects that will change the face of transit in Silicon Valley. Our new transit service plan, which takes effect at the end of 2019, is the most significant transformation of bus and rail service in agency history. When the first phase of the BART Silicon Valley extension opens in 2020, we will be ready to transfer tens of thousands of new passengers commuting to Santa Clara County, [California], via BART through extended and frequent service on both VTA bus and light rail throughout Silicon Valley. We have rearranged our service plan to serve more people more frequently, and to connect to the BART service coming to two stations in Santa Clara County next year. The second phase of the BART Silicon Valley Extension, adding four more stations with a 5-mile underground section of the alignment, moves forward after the Federal Transit Administration awarded a commitment of \$125 million in funding through its Expedited Project Delivery pilot program. One of the most innovative features of VTA's BART Phase II Project will be the single-bore tunnel that holds the trackways and passenger boarding platforms. While the single bore tunneling method has often been used in roadway projects, this will be the first use for transit in the Western Hemisphere.



Stephen Gardner

Gardner: We want to grow our revenue by 4.1 percent, our ridership by 2.9 percent, and improve our customer satisfaction. We have three major planks we will use to drive this performance: technology transformation, station transformations and onboard transformation.

Genova: Like peer agencies around the world, RTD is experiencing an operator shortage. One of the proposals being considered is a temporary service reduction to bring relief to our operators, many of whom are required to work six-day weeks, and to provide the public with a level of service we are confident we can deliver. We will also be opening the N Line, which will serve our north metro area. While we have operated light rail for more than 25 years, this will be the first time we operate a commuter-rail line. Our other three commuter-rail lines are operated by a contractor. Currently, we are testing, staffing and training for the line's opening, using the lessons we learned from implementing positive train control from the ground up on our other lines and applying them to the N Line.



Robert Powers

Powers: We are going to build on our initial progress in replacing critical infrastructure to ensure BART is in a state of good repair. Thanks to Measure RR, a \$3.5 billion bond measure approved by Bay Area voters in 2016, we've been able to address some of our most critical rebuilding needs. This includes replacing track components in key parts of the system that in many cases had been in use since we first opened service in 1972. We're renewing dozens of miles of track, activating new power substations, replacing electrical conduit, installing new platform edge tiles, and much more. Improving safety on the BART system is another high priority. I'm supporting the BART Police Department's aggressive recruiting campaign. Our plan is to add 94 officers over the coming five years. We're also moving forward with station hardening across the BART system. We're raising barriers, fencing in vulnerable elevators and taking initial steps toward replacing all our entry gates to combat fare evasion. This combined approach

of boosting the visible presence of our police officers and hardening stations will be a powerful deterrent against criminal activity.

Smith: We are starting construction on two major light-rail projects in 2020. In this environment, maintaining cost, schedules and scope will be more challenging than ever. We must make sure that we have the best people empowered to manage these projects proficiently and effectively. At the same time, we must continue to safely and efficiently operate our transit systems to support the thousands of riders that rely upon them for daily travel.

Washington: One of our most daunting challenges involves our workforce. The LA Metro is experiencing the same workforce shortage that the entire infrastructure industry is facing. There is a dearth of skilled infrastructure professionals that we desperately need to build and operate our system. In LA County, and in cities around the country, a thriving economy has led to a construction boom of epic proportions. Every engineering and construction company is hiring, but there's nobody left to hire. The demand for workers is far exceeding the supply. And when demand exceeds supply, prices (read: project costs) go up. So as LA Metro seeks to build out the largest public works program in America, we have to compete to hire talented workers. Adding to this challenge is the fact that half of all LA Metro employees will be eligible for retirement over the next four to five years. A similar "silver tsunami" is about to hit the transportation infrastructure industry nationwide. So, the demand for a skilled workforce has never been higher, but the supply is shrinking. We see no signs of the economy cooling, so we expect this challenge to persist well into 2020 and beyond.

What are some of your priorities for your agency in 2020?



Jim Derwinski

Derwinski: Our State Legislature just passed the largest capital program for infrastructure needs across Illinois in a decade. Metra expects to receive more than \$1.4 billion from Illinois over the next five years. And when you add the state capital funding to projected federal and local capital funding sources, Metra expects to spend nearly \$2.6 billion over the next five years on capital improvements — an unprecedented amount.

Our focus in 2020 is to begin putting these funds to use to restore our system's infrastructure. Our plan is not just to replace our aging equipment with the same style of rail cars that we've been using for nearly 70 years, but to focus on a newer design that will allow us to increase capacity and passenger amenities. To improve our system's reliability, we also plan to use these capital dollars to replace locomotives that are more than 40 years old. We plan to purchase more remanufactured locomotives that are more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly, and we will explore the feasibility of purchasing alternative fuel locomotives. Next on our list of priorities is to make improvements to the other part of our system that most influences our customers' experience — our stations. We have a lot of changes planned that will make our stations more inviting and safer. But our highest priority has to be

making them all ADA accessible. We also plan multiple projects to replace existing platforms and rehabilitate depots. Lastly, more than half of the 847 bridges on the Metra system are more than 100 years old. Replacing them — as well as replacing railroad ties, worn switches and sections of track — isn't very sexy or exciting, but it's absolutely critical to our ability to provide a safe commute with minimal delays. Thanks to the new state capital program, we are able to look to innovative solutions to the challenges we face, and develop a plan to improve the customer's experience from start to finish. While the funding we received does not solve all of our problems, we're finally on a path to sustainable transit.



Nuria Fernandez

Fernandez: In addition to welcoming BART service to Santa Clara Valley, our top priority is creating excellent customer service not only through communications but by maintaining frequent, on-time, reliable service with broad notifications and communications via multiple platforms so our customers continue to be updated at all times. Our customer service extends to rider experience with operators, fare inspectors and even security officers on our system. VTA will elevate the role of our customer service experience through hiring and training of specialists in rider experience and customer satisfaction. We will develop and deploy a strategy that uses customers' feedback to better predict and influence mobility decisions. We see that the public's choice of mobility is being determined by "time and availability" of options to get from where they are to where they want to go. As the Congestion Management Agency for Santa Clara County, VTA will act as the mobility integrator to work with rideshare, microtransit and other transportation options to provide first/last mile services. We will grow our joint workforce investment mentoring and training program bringing labor and management together to identify and implement solutions that upskill, reskill and build the knowledge and capabilities of our operators and maintenance workers to meet the needs of the future.

Gardner: We have a clear roadmap for fiscal-year 2020, and it's set around four critical ideas that are central to our planning efforts, including: our missions and goals given to us by Congress; our operating pillars, which define our strategic areas of focus; our annual operating plan, which defines our goals; and our values, which help set expectations for how all Amtrak employees should interact with our customers and each other.

Powers: My No. 1 commitment as general manager is to ensure that our riders come first, and our employees have the tools they need to get the job done. To back that up, I launched a public listening tour. I've been hearing directly from both our riders and employees. I've visited stations and operations yards throughout the system. It's essential that the riding public and our employees have a stake in our progress as we continue on the path toward truly becoming a world class transit system. I'm especially mindful that I accepted the general manager position during a critical point in BART's history, with our customer satisfaction rate lower than I find acceptable. We must do better. BART's importance to the

region cannot be overstated. The Bay Area's economy and ability to move relies on our system to perform at optimal levels. BART also has a leadership role to play in addressing the region's housing crisis. New laws give us a seat at the table for shaping the intersection of transportation and land use. I plan to work collaboratively with our regional partners to realize a future of seamless mobility. We must make taking transit easy and enjoyable. If we do that, the customer satisfaction numbers will go up.



Scott Smith

Smith: First of all, building upon the success we've enjoyed recently, including the public's reaffirmation of light-rail expansion with the vote last August. This is the fourth time Phoenix voters told us that they want light rail in our region. We will work hard to continue to earn the public's trust in the way we operate our services and manage finances.

Washington: 2020 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for LA Metro, and for my tenure as CEO. We're trying to secure a P3 to accelerate one of the biggest transportation projects on the West Coast, the Sepulveda Corridor transit project. Some have called this the most ambitious infrastructure project since the Hoover Dam. It has the potential to greatly alleviate one of the worst traffic bottlenecks in the country, the crowded I-405 corridor in western Los Angeles County. LA Metro is also gearing up to launch gender and racial equity action plans, open the Crenshaw/LAX rail line and break ground on our SEED Transportation School of LA.

What are your concerns and/or hopes for the presidential election in late 2020?

Fernandez: Mobility is a necessity no matter who is in the White House. VTA will continue to work with our federal, state and local elected officials to drive home the importance of public transportation as the backbone of mobility for our economies, and our communities to thrive and succeed.

Gardner: Any administration, current or future, will need to seriously consider how to address our nation's infrastructure, transportation and environmental challenges, and we hope Amtrak and intercity passenger rail will be an integral part of this discussion. These challenges are not going away; in fact, they will only get worse if government and industry do not take action to address them head on. Amtrak can play a pivotal role as part of a modern transportation network.



David Genova

Genova: We look forward to maintaining good relationships with our federal partners. The relationships we have built over time are non-partisan, and we hope to collaborate with any administration that is in office and to seize infrastructure funding opportunities that might arise.

Powers: My biggest hope is that infrastructure is made a top priority by both President Trump and the Democratic nominee. Infrastructure was not made a high priority during 2016, but we really need these candidates to not only talk about the need but to also develop policy packages and propose real options to pay for them.

Smith: The winner of the 2020 presidential election should recognize the need for real multimodal transportation systems across the country and commit to adequately funding them. That also includes the importance of maintenance and expansion costs so that we can meet the travel needs of current and future generations.



Phillip Washington

Washington: With respect to the 2020 presidential election, I believe it is both vital and prudent for us — as transportation stakeholders and advocates — to take a 30,000-foot view of our nation’s political landscape as it relates to mobility in America today. First, it is imperative that we — as leaders in the transportation sector — make a fact-based case to all those seeking election or reelection to the White House that a pro-mobility agenda is not only good policy, but also good politics. Good policy and good politics not just in blue states, but in red states and purple states — by that I mean swing states. I believe the American people, without regard to political affiliation, are hungry for someone to tell them the truth about our infrastructure and the tough steps we need to take to fix our infrastructure — like raising the gas tax. It is my hope that during the 2020 presidential campaign and during the 460 congressional campaigns which will be held next year that our nation will have a big conversation about

transportation. I remain optimistic that we can summon the leadership that several past U.S. presidents and Congress have shown — and set America on a strong path to Rebuild America.

What do you consider to be your legislative or government oversight priorities for 2020?

Fernandez: Our primary focus for 2020 will be on the reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. We will work together with the American Public Transportation Association to secure the highest levels of federal surface transportation funds. While working to preserve and possibly increase Capital Investment Grant funding, we are actively participating in the Expedited Project Delivery program at FTA for VTA's Extension of BART to Silicon Valley. In California, we are participating in an industry-wide task force to reform the Transportation Development Act.

Gardner: For Congress to continue to fund Amtrak and intercity passenger rail at increased funding levels to permit network and service expansion, infrastructure renewal and modernization of our fleet. [And,] for Congress to begin the process of reauthorizing surface transportation legislation, including intercity passenger rail, to ensure the right programs and policies are in place to support a modern and improved rail network for the future.

Genova: It is important to us that a surface transportation bill be reauthorized with additional funding for transit projects.

Powers: Congress will need to reauthorize the FAST Act, which is set to expire on Sept. 30, 2020. I am focused on supporting a long term bill (five to six years) so we have funding certainty. In addition, I am supporting increases in funding for both state-of-good repair and capital investment grants in a new surface transportation authorization bill. Not only do we need to address the needs in our core system that have been neglected for far too long, but we also need to address capacity and connectivity issues.

Smith: Surface transportation reauthorization is a top priority. More flexibility to explore different funding construction methods and programs that can help us better manage cost and efficiency.

Washington: My goal for 2020 is to advance my Rebuilding America initiative, which is endorsed by the LA Metro Board of Directors and sets forth five key goals for Congress and the Trump administration to adopt in order to strengthen federal transportation programs.

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When will BART get to San Jose? (Mercury News)

Wasn't BART supposed to open to San Jose three years ago? Then it got pushed out two and a half years. Next, they said, "No, wait, the extension will open late this fall." Now it's pushed out again, to some time as yet unknown.

No one is willing or able to predict the opening date now. To me, this indicates top to bottom incompetence! Which trains should we now expect to roll into Diridon Transit Station first, BART or California High-Speed Rail? BART and VTA should post a group picture on the BART website, in dunce caps, with a 72 point headline reading "THE INCOMPETENTS!"

I feel a little better now, thanks, Gary.

Sam Castellano

Like Mr. Roadshow's [Facebook page](#) for more questions and answers about Bay Area roads, freeways and commuting.

A: You have a legitimate complaint. There have been so many missed deadlines that it's hard to have confidence about when the 10-mile extension from Fremont to Berryessa will finally be carrying passengers. BART and the VTA meet in February. Hopefully, they tell us then when the \$2.3 billion project will be complete.

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VTA Light Rail Running Bus Bridge Downtown Due To Mechanical Issue (SFGate)

The green and blue lines of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's light rail system are running a bus bridge between two stations in downtown San Jose early Wednesday morning. According to VTA spokeswoman Stacey Henler Ross, an issue with an overhead wire at First and Devine streets is forcing passengers to ride a bus bridge between the Convention Center and Civic Center stations as of 6:45 a.m.

Henler Ross said the mechanical issue should be fixed within a few hours, but an exact time of restoration wasn't immediately available.

The cause of the mechanical issue wasn't immediately known.

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From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Friday, December 13, 2019 2:58 PM
To: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: Dec 13, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Friday, December 13, 2019

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Silicon Valley Leadership Group appeals to business leaders on \$100B transit ballot measure (San Jose Spotlight)

A trio of Bay Area planning and business leaders are ramping up efforts to promote a years-long initiative to get a \$100 billion tax measure for transit investment on the ballot in Nov. 2020, as opponents of the measure start to push back.

The measure, called FASTER Bay Area, is backed by The Silicon Valley Leadership Group, the Bay Area Council and nonprofit urban planning thinktank SPUR, and would increase sales taxes in the nine county Bay Area by 1 percent to raise \$100 billion over 40 years for transportation projects.

Before the measure can appear on ballots across the region, the state legislators in both the Senate and Assembly would have to agree in a two-thirds vote to allow residents to cast their own vote. Sen. Jim Beall, (D-San Jose) has agreed to author the legislation that state leaders will vote on next month.

"We're going to know by Jan. 31 whether or not this is dead after three years of work, or if it has legs," Carl Guardino, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, said Tuesday morning during a presentation at the Silicon Valley Capital Club hosted by San Jose-based law firm Hoge Fenton.

If approved by state leaders, residents across the nine counties would also need to approve the ballot measure by a two-thirds majority for it to go into effect.

Tax dollars from the measure would fund a slew of transit and transportation projects to better coordinate connections between the region's various independent transit systems and increase how often buses and trains run, aiming for a maximum 12-minute wait time in most places. The initiative proposes creating new transit lines and swings the idea of a new nine-county rapid bus network running in new express lanes across the region.

"We have been pushing for this for a long time because all these regional systems do not function together," said Teresa Alvarado, San Jose director for SPUR, in an interview Tuesday. "If we're going to convert our car culture into transit riders, it has to compete on cost, on time, on safety, on convenience, on all these factors and right now it's not."

Gladwyn D'Souza, a spokesperson for [No New Mega Tax](#), a group that opposes the ballot measure, agrees that the current system isn't working. But he and the group, made up of what he describes as environmentalists, good governance advocates and anti-tax people, says the responsibility to fix the transportation issues should fall more prominently on large employers' shoulders.

“The businesses that are putting these projects together are the cause of the problem,” D’Souza said. “They are the ones attracting the jobs in this area, driving the price of housing up so people have to move to Tracy and commute here. Then they are trying to put together this grab bag of projects so the public takes on the problem of trying to fix this mess.”

Business leaders Tuesday morning sat in a window-lined room on the top floor of 50 West San Fernando to hear Guardino pitch the positives of the initiative, which he said would not only require investment from individual taxpayers, but employers as well.

Already, companies with 100 or more employees must create what’s known as a transportation demand management program to help reduce the traffic impact of their employees commuting to work. The programs may include shuttles or free transit passes, or the company can pay a fee to offset traffic improvements in the area and are generally reviewed as part of a city’s approval process for new office and commercial buildings.

Guardino said backers of the measure want to expand the TDM requirements to generate billions from area employers when the ballot language is drafted. “We are seriously considering how do we require that in this measure,” he said.

Attendees at Guardino’s presentation asked about accountability, and he said the initiative will have accountability because the projects would be delivered within a decade with full funding already locked in place. Advocates of the measure are also “insisting that it include not only the measures that are going to streamline the process, but also that these (transit) systems have to be coordinated,” he added. Indeed, a lack of coordination is another area that gives D’Souza pause. That’s a major structural change that would need to happen before members of the No New Mega Tax group would consider supporting additional resident taxes for transit, he said. Today the Metropolitan Transportation Commission helps oversee transit in the nine county Bay Area, but D’Souza says the governance hasn’t been effective and that billions of dollars have already been wasted.

“In order for these things to happen, you need some change to occur at MTC,” he said. “MTC is made up of about 40 major transit organizations and none of them agree with each other.”

Many of the details of the ambitious initiative are still being hammered out.

But the would-be measure already comes with lofty promises and projections, including that, if implemented, the projects completed would eventually attract hundreds of thousands of more riders onto transit. That would take a significant bite out of the approximately 73 minutes a day Bay Area commuters on average are stuck in traffic, according to the leadership group.

Some San Francisco leaders have raised red flags about the measure, including supervisors Shamann Walton and Aaron Peskin, who said in October they were concerned about the governance of Caltrain, an integral train line that connects San Francisco and the South Bay, [according to the San Francisco Chronicle](#).

Others have criticized the measure for the greater impact it could have on low-income residents. The groups backing the measure say that could be addressed through rebates and discounted transit rides that would increase equity, however.

Now, it’s up to state leaders to decide if the additional tax and transit funding would be good for the Bay Area.

If the initiative indeed “has legs,” that carry it to the Nov. 2020 ballot, more specifics about how the money would be used, safeguards for low-income residents and students and other systematic changes will be nailed down by the time voters show up at the polls, Guardino said.

“What’s interesting about California law is that you only get 75 words on your ballot question,” he said. “But you can have pages of legally binding requirements that support the ballot question and that’s what we’ll have.”

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I-880 express lanes from Oakland to San Jose could open in a year: Roadshow (Mercury News)

Q: Gary, any idea when the Interstate 880 toll lane project will be completed? What did the project cost? And how long will it take to recoup the cost with tolls?

Richard Rowell, Fremont

Like Mr. Roadshow's [Facebook page](#) for more questions and answers about Bay Area roads, freeways and commuting.

A: I-880 express lanes are scheduled to open late summer 2020. The project cost is \$139 million. The express lanes are intended primarily to improve traffic flow for buses and carpools, which travel free in that lane, and to offer a reliable commute for toll-paying drivers. Toll revenue is used to pay for lane operations and maintenance, rather than to recoup construction costs.

Q: I find it difficult to get concerned about the pushing back of opening dates for BART service to San Jose when the people of Livermore have paid extra taxes on BART since its inception in the 1970s, but San Jose is going to get service first.

Midge Lewis, Castro Valley

A: The original plan was to build a nearly 5-mile BART extension along I-580 to a station in the vicinity of the Isabel Avenue/I-580 interchange, incorporating a bus to BART transfer. Those plans have been scrapped. Santa Clara County voters approved three sales tax increases since 2000 to pay for the \$2.3 billion extension from Fremont to Berryessa, which may open next year.

Q: I was traveling on 880 south from Oakland at 7:30 p.m. on a rainy night. It was well after carpool hours and I was traveling in the (carpool) lane.

The new express lane signs have been installed, but all the signs have a bright orange banner across them saying that the lane is still under construction. Having passed Dixon Landing Road but before the 237 interchange (with the carpool lane flyover), I passed under one sign that did not have the orange banner. I just thought it had lost its "under construction" sign in the bad weather. Then I saw a sign looming at me that said "Express Lane – Toll \$4.70 and Fine \$490." I started to move to the right. I had seen the huge backup for the right-hand exit to 237 (two lanes as well as the McCarthy Boulevard exit that allow cars to enter 237) but thought it was just heavy traffic.

I managed to move out of the express lane. The person behind me also moved. The car in front of me moved right and then (I'm guessing), deciding they could not make the exit to 237, came flying back across the freeway in front of me and across the gore point onto the flyover. As we drove under the flyover, there were just carpool signs, and cars started to move back into the carpool lane.

Why would Caltrans create an express lane only 200 feet long on a busy freeway?

Barbara Waaland, Scotts Valley

A: Things will change. When 880 work ends, express lane users will be able to go from Oakland to 237.

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Castro Street's car-free future (Mountain View Voice)

City prepares plans for walkable downtown after closing road at train tracks

At what some describe as a make-or-break juncture for downtown Mountain View, the city is pressing ahead with plans to steer Castro Street toward a pedestrian-friendly future.

At its Tuesday, Dec. 10, meeting, the City Council approved a new set of studies for closing off Castro Street at the Caltrain tracks and potentially closing off sections of the street to traffic and creating a pedestrian promenade.

In 2016, city leaders decided [closing off Castro Street](#) was the best option available to preserve the character of downtown while performing needed upgrades to the train crossing. As Caltrain prepares to launch faster and more frequent train service, Mountain View and other Peninsula cities have been urged to prepare grade separation projects, removing locations where auto traffic crosses over the train tracks.

The most obvious way to accomplish this, tunneling Castro Street under the train line, was expected to cost \$120 million, and city officials decided it would be too expensive and disruptive. Instead, they favored a cheaper alternative to block off Castro Street at Central Expressway and build a new underpass for pedestrians and cyclists. Vehicle traffic heading into downtown would instead be routed along Shoreline Boulevard to Evelyn Avenue.

Now three years later, the plan remains controversial among downtown residents and business owners. Skeptics have warned that if plans are poorly implemented, it could ruin the charm of Mountain View's downtown.

Those concerns popped up again on Tuesday night, as council members reviewed a new environmental study for their multifaceted plans for the Castro area. The study, a mitigated negative declaration, essentially served as an official report affirming that the disruptive impacts caused by the Castro Street project would ultimately be balanced out. Barely anyone at the meeting disputed the study's findings, but the report still elicited many familiar concerns that fiddling with the layout of Mountain View's successful downtown carries big risks.

Councilwoman Alison Hicks, who previously worked as a city planner, did not mince words to describe what's at stake.

"I see the grade separation and underpass, it could potentially wreck the walkability of the downtown, or be an opportunity to make it much better," she said. "As we change the traffic situation ... how will that interface with the most popular walkable block in the city?"

Public works Director Dawn Cameron fielded questions about the project as best she could, although she pointed out that many aspects are still undetermined. By next spring, city engineers expect to be one-third finished with the design for the project. Part of the uncertainty is that Mountain View is still negotiating an agreement with Caltrain and the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), which is expected to be signed by March. Once that three-way deal is finished, the grade separation project can move into its final design, with plans to begin construction in 2022. In any event, the city will eventually face a hard deadline to close off Castro Street because the train service will become so frequent that cars will no longer be able to cross, Cameron said.

For the project, Cameron pointed out the city should be able to make use of \$60 million in VTA funding collected under the 2016 Measure B sales tax initiative. She said that Mountain View is well ahead of Palo Alto and Menlo Park in preparing its grade separation infrastructure.

"VTA said to us that since we're so far along, they'll consider us first in line for the funding," she said. "They've committed to funding this grade separation, but they haven't committed to the timing."

During the same meeting, the City Council also commissioned a new study to explore transforming a section of Castro Street into a pedestrian plaza. When complete, the study is expected to provide a variety of options for improving the pedestrian experience, which could involve a full or partial closure to vehicle traffic. The study is expected to focus on the 100 block of Castro, between Evelyn Avenue south to Villa Street.

After screening different planning firms, city officials decided to hire the San Francisco-based Gehl Studio for the study, at a cost of \$265,000. The work plan for the study is expected to include up to three public meetings next year, and the City Council is expected to review a draft report by Gehl by in June.

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[Milpitas Councilmember Anthony Phan joins Assembly race \(San Jose Spotlight\)](#)

Another Milpitas politician is yearning to go to Sacramento.

Milpitas Councilmember Anthony Phan filed papers Wednesday to run for an open California Assembly seat in District 25, a contest that has now garnered interest from every single member of the Milpitas council — except Bob Nunez.

But Phan, 26, told San José Spotlight in an exclusive interview that he's got what it takes to influence policy at the state's Capitol, pointing to his accomplishments during one term on the council. He was elected in 2016 and would face re-election in 2020.

"I looked at the list of candidates running and I asked myself would I vote for any of them and I had a hard time answering that," Phan said. "I didn't think their platforms touched on the issues that matter the most to residents — which is jobs, transportation and housing. I was not compelled by the campaigns that are being run right now so I decided to throw my name in the race."

Phan, who runs his own land use consultancy firm, said he brings a "wealth of experience in local government" to the table and would support bold statewide solutions to Silicon Valley's most pressing problems, similar to San Francisco Democrat Sen. Scott Wiener and his landmark housing policies. Locally, he said, Milpitas passed legislation to restructure the public hearing process, compel housing developers to put aside affordable housing and make it easier to build.

"Despite the controversies you might read about, we have done a lot of good things in Milpitas that I'm very proud of," he said, adding that in Sacramento, he would push for legislation that compels other cities to do their fair share to produce housing. "That's the bold leadership that we really need to address this housing crisis and it can't be on the weight of just a few cities to tackle everyone else's problem."

Other contenders in the race include South Bay attorney and West Valley Mission Community College District Trustee [Anne Kepner](#), [Santa Clara County Board of Education Trustee Anna Song](#), Santa Clara Unified School District [Trustee Jim Canova](#), Milpitas Councilmember [Carmen Montano](#), San Jose [policy advisor Alex Lee](#), former Ohlone College trustee Bob Brunton and [newcomer Natasha Gupta](#).

The 25th Assembly district encompasses Fremont, Newark, Milpitas, San Jose and Santa Clara.

Phan began his political career as a far-left progressive, loyally aligning himself with labor unions and their interests. In recent years, however, he has shifted to the right — embracing business-backed groups, including the California Apartment Association. It's a change he acknowledges — though he prefers to call himself a "pragmatic realist" — and says he shed his "idealistic" values in an attempt to reach compromise with other lawmakers.

And some might wonder if Phan is serious about his run for Assembly, given his bids to explore running for Santa Clara County supervisor and county assessor in recent years.

"The difference between this time and all the other times when I was exploring is that I have actually filed the paperwork — that's as much a commitment as you really need," he said. "Every time I have indicated interest in running for one position or another, I do the research and I fully assess the workload and I ask myself at the end of the day, 'Do I really want to do this?' and clearly I didn't for the other positions. With this, my heart is in it."

In Milpitas, four out of five councilmembers — including Mayor Rich Tran — announced running for the Assembly District 25 seat only to later pull out. Only Montano remains in the race.

Phan and Tran had a public [falling out last year](#) after a controversial mailer linking the mayor to Vietnamese communism emerged and was linked to a PAC run by Phan. Phan later apologized, and the pair have mended the relationship — for now.

Still, Tran had endorsed Montano and Song, and says he won't be endorsing anyone else.

“I will not be endorsing any other candidates because I think two is good enough and we’re getting close to March,” Tran said Wednesday. “Anthony understands that our relationship has moved forward a lot and he knows that if there’s anything I can do support him, then I will.”

Tran added that he believes his colleague can become a formidable contender in the crowded race.

“Anthony understands how to win campaigns and he’s very well connected to his network and he can raise money,” the mayor said. “So I think any candidate who has those qualities, they’ll be competitive and certainly, ones to consider.”

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Op-Ed: Councilman Diep, Why Are You Misleading Constituents? (San Jose Inside Dec. 3)

Councilman Lan Diep, we reached out to you, our District 4 representative, to help fight against San Jose’s [Charcot Avenue Extension](#)—a project suggested by bureaucrats decades ago that, for the longest time, no one cared enough about to actually pursue.

And why would anyone? The [project](#) will widen a residential street next to an elementary school and put almost 14,000 cars next to 900 young children playing and learning. It will cut through the community, wall off homes and school playground on both sides of the road with massive 6-foot-plus sound barriers, and increase air pollution at the school more than 2.5 times. Yet, here we are.

Traffic engineers awash with VTA Measure B money are rushing to pour concrete down in our neighborhood to make room for more cars causing more congestion—paving over our playground and ball field.

[We asked you to help](#). Your response is a [lengthy letter seemingly intended to mislead us](#).

The city’s traffic study shows building the extension will lead to people driving more. Yet, you falsely write “this project is not going to increase traffic”.

You talk of “pedestrian lanes” as if people were cars.

You say “there will be crosswalks to ensure the safety of the students and residents.” Do we really need to point you to the countless reports of people dying in crosswalks every day? No crosswalk can “ensure” the safety of our children.

The [experts from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District analyzed the city’s air pollution study](#) and scolded San Jose for using an outdated model, for deviating from standard practices recommended by the state, for underestimating exposure rates. Our region’s leading experts worry that cancer rates and fine particle exposure have been significantly underestimated by the city.

Yet, you write that consultants studied the issue “extensively” and deemed that there would be no negative health impact. We understand that the consultants took a long time and charged a lot of money, but that doesn’t mean the result is high quality work.

Equity, the idea that we need to take special care of our most vulnerable, is not mentioned in the city’s 204-page draft environmental report. Not once. So how can you say, equity “was given close attention?” You say you “hope” this project will alleviate bumper-to-bumper traffic. “Hope?” The health of our children is too important to risk for something we are not sure will work.

You write that the “design team has responded to community input.” This is laughable. We have asked for a pedestrian overpass instead of a road. The team insists on putting cars next to the school. We’ve asked to evaluate a location away from the school. Denied. Banning trucks next to the school? Denied. We asked for narrower lanes to slow them down. Denied. A full traffic signal at the crosswalk? Denied. A raised crosswalk? Denied. Air pollution monitoring on the school site? Denied. Fifteen mile-per-hour speed limit?

Denied. Denied. Denied.

We've been advised that if we protest long enough, if we make enough noise, we will probably get one, two or maybe even three of the things we asked for. That staff not agreeing to them now is a negotiating tactic. This is infuriating. For staff to hold back on safety improvements just so they have a better negotiating position later on is reprehensible. The safety of children is not a bargaining chip. And that brings me to my last and most important point.

You write that "every effort is being made to ensure that the students' quality of life is not diminished" and that "the city made it a priority to protect students and the environment." No it isn't, and no you have not made it a priority.

If you were to truly make the children a priority and expand every effort, then you—and city staff—would call for canceling the project or at least changing it to a bike-friendly and pedestrian-safe overpass. But you don't. Instead of fighting with us and for us, you seem set to confuse and mislead. Our children deserve better.

Clémence Tiradon is the Orchard School PTA president and the mother of a second grader and a future kindergartner. Along with a core group of parents and other community representatives, she has been engaging in the protest against the city's Charcot Avenue Extension for over a year and a half. Opinions are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of San Jose Inside.

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DESTINATION: SANTA CLARA

Famed New York developer gets ready to transform old golf course into mega live-work-play project

When [Gary Gillmor](#) became the first elected mayor in Santa Clara in 1969, he envisioned the city one day becoming a major destination to live and do business. Now, 50 years later, Silicon Valley's largest-ever private development nears groundbreaking as it aims to fulfill Gillmor's grand vision of Santa Clara. "That's why I'm really excited about this project: it's come full circle," said [Lisa Gillmor](#), [Gary Gillmor](#)'s daughter, a fourth-generation Santa Clara and the current mayor of Silicon Valley's fourth largest city. An \$8 billion development by New York-based Related Companies, the project — once called CityPlace but renamed earlier this year to Related Santa Clara — represents a big bet on the future of the city of Santa Clara and the South Bay. The 240-acre project sits on the site of a city-owned golf course at 5155 Stars and Stripes Drive in North Santa Clara, which closed at the end of October. Eight years after being conceived, it's now moving for construction to start in 2020.

A glimpse at Santa Clara's future

When construction on Related Santa Clara gets underway next year, it will become the largest private mixed-use development west of the Mississippi River. That's the boast coming from Related Companies, a company known for grand, audacious projects. It recently opened the first phase of the \$25... [more](#) All told, Related Santa Clara has the capacity to create up to 6 million square feet of office space along with another

3.2 million square feet for residential, retail, restaurants and hotels.

To put Related Santa Clara into perspective, the biggest comparable live-work-play project now being developed is Market Park in San Jose. Market Park will total 5.23 million square feet in size if fully built. The largest office complex in Silicon Valley is the 2.8-million square-foot Apple Park in Cupertino.

Here's a breakdown of some of the primary people and companies involved in building the 240-acre mixed-use project just north of Levi's Stadium

- **Developer:** Related Companies — Key players: [Stephen Eimer](#), local managing partner of Related Santa Clara; [Kenneth Himmel](#), president and CEO of Related Urban

- **Broker:** Newmark Knight Frank — Key players: [Phil Mahoney](#), [John Yandle](#) and [Joe Kelly](#)
- **Architects:** Foster + Partners and Gensler
- **Engineering:** WSP USA

Beyond its grand scale, what makes Related Santa Clara significant, the project's developers and city officials say, is that it will essentially create a town unto itself.

"You can literally live 24/7 within walking distance of your job, of the place you work out, the place you live, things you enjoy, a great recreational environment, and not have to get in your car or public transit," said [Stephen Eimer](#), executive vice president of Related Urban, the mixed-use development division of Related Companies, and the local managing partner of Related Santa Clara. "It's a 'game changer' in a big way."

The project will feature a "city center" with a global food market and spaces for retail and entertainment; residential that includes a mix of serviced apartments, market-rate and affordable rental units; and a new 35-acre park that Santa Clara will design and construct.

The project is the result of a public-private partnership between Related and the city that started in 2012. It survived a lawsuit from the city of San Jose, as well as concerns from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority for not doing enough to address safety and transportation concerns. Related had to put the project on hold as a result of the litigation, but will begin foundation work on its first phase in spring 2020.

Room to grow

The largest part of Related Santa Clara will be its office component. The project is entitled to build up to 5 million square feet of campus office space on the northwest and northeast parts of the project site — enough room for at least one future tech company headquarters.

"A very important factor in the minds of these tech tenants is being able to grow their businesses and expand in the same location as their primary location so they don't have to [get] up and move after two or three years," Eimer said. "We're maybe one of the only entities that can handle that kind of expansion requirement."

While Related has plotted out the area south of its campus office space in several phases — with buildings along Tasman Drive set to rise first, after the City Council votes on a development area plan in the first part of 2020 — the two areas targeted for single commercial tenants could start construction at any time.

Related is rounding out its office offerings with a 440,000-square-foot multitenant building called the Gateway Office that's aimed at medium-sized businesses, as well as 300,000 square feet of space called the Loft Office that's devoted to startups and co-working.

[Stephen Ross](#), chairman and founder of Related Companies, said the project creates a more attractive office environment than what you see in other parts of Silicon Valley.

"Today, every corporation, their future is dependent upon the ability to recruit," he told the Business Journal in an exclusive interview. "You drive around and see these millions and millions of square feet [of commercial space], but they're almost isolated buildings and it's not a place that really attracts people to want to say, 'Hey, I want to be there.'"

An imbalance remains

The project got its start in 2012, when local construction executive [John Elwood](#) asked Mayor Gillmor (back then a City Council member) and then-Santa Clara city council member [Kevin Moore](#) if they'd ever thought of developing a "really great center" on the golf course on Stars and Stripes Drive.

Gillmor and Moore were intrigued, and after an initial meeting with [Roger Torriero](#), a development consultant with Related, the company sent a team from New York to pitch ideas.

Gillmor was skeptical at first, but “the fact that they [Related] were building a city on top of a working railyard [Related’s 28-acre, mixed-use development in Manhattan called Hudson Yards] led me to believe that it could be entirely possible that they could build this in Santa Clara,” she said.

Now that the groundbreaking is just months away, the mayor said city officials are working out a “tremendous amount of details” for the project, which she said is “unlike anything anywhere around Santa Clara” and is the largest mixed-use project west of the Mississippi River.

But if there’s one thing she wishes Related’s project had more of, it’s housing, especially because the city has one of the worst jobs-housing imbalances in Silicon Valley. Because parts of the project are being built on top of a former landfill, environmental regulators limited development of residential units to 1,680 units, 168 of which will be affordable.

When the City Council unanimously voted to approve the project in June 2016, the city did not have an affordable housing ordinance; it does now, requiring 15 percent of rental developments with 10 or more homes to be considered affordable for at least 55 years.

“Are we satisfied [with the number of residential units at Related Santa Clara]? No,” Gillmor said. “Could we have gotten more? Probably not. Were we limited in number? Yes.”

Related is looking to add more housing units in the Tasman East neighborhood, a 45-acre industrial area directly east of Related Santa Clara’s city center. The City Council has approved 1,430 new residential units for the neighborhood, and developers have proposed building an additional 2,700 new units. One of them is Related California, which has proposed 1,650 new units in two developments.

Yet, even with this additional housing, some in the local community maintain it’s not enough: “I don’t think that creates a net neutral housing-job balance,” said [Kirk Vartan](#), general manager of A Slice of New York, an employee-owned pizza restaurant on the Santa Clara-San Jose border, and co-founder of Catalyze SV, which pushes for greater affordability and sustainability in new developments.

One aspect of the project Vartan does applaud is a futuristic transit concept that Related is exploring with Uber Elevate, a division of the ride-hailing company that’s working on flying cars. Related Santa Clara could be the first development in Silicon Valley to welcome self-piloted aircraft, though the cars are still in the nascent concept stages.

“There’s no traffic in the air,” Vartan said. “It’s like uncharted territory, the ‘new frontier.’”

Location, location, location ... and traffic

In the near term, one of the draws Related officials see to its project is the location — across the street from Levi’s Stadium and the Santa Clara Convention Center, while being close to State Route 237, Highway 101 and I-880. But the project’s proximity to those already-packed highways, Vartan said, would increase traffic along them.

An existing light-rail station gets riders to the Mountain View Caltrain station in 30 minutes or into downtown San Jose’s Diridon Station in 40 minutes. When BART’s Milpitas station opens next year, light-rail riders will need between 20 and 30 minutes to make the trip. Another commuter rail station provides direct access to Amtrak’s Capitol Corridor and the Altamont Corridor Express. Related has agreed to pay up to \$20.1 million of the \$23.4 million needed for a multimodal improvement plan. It will also fund nearly \$52 million in intersection and freeway improvements.

Al Guido, president of the San Francisco 49ers, said the team welcomes the large new development, despite some short-term construction impacts.

“The planned mix of hotels, entertainment venues, retail, food and beverage destinations, residential and office spaces, and services will be loved by our fans and should contribute to the ability of Levi’s Stadium to continually attract large-scale events in the decades to come,” he said.

A boon for city coffers

With a 99-year ground lease, Related and Santa Clara agreed on a structured rent plan that starts at \$750,000 a year and grows over time to the point where Santa Clara eventually expects to see between \$9 million and \$14 million a year.

The city also will benefit financially in other ways: Related will pay \$1 in traffic impact fees for every square foot of office space it creates until 3 million square feet of office space is permitted for construction. All of these taxes, fees and lease revenue will go into the city's general fund, and Gillmor estimates Related's payments will eventually comprise 15 percent of it.

Eimer said he believes Related Santa Clara will show how large-scale, mixed-use projects can be developed in an otherwise suburban-dominated environment.

"A more urban, a bit more dense-clustered environment of mixed use allows for a higher quality-of-life environment," Eimer said. "I think this [Related Santa Clara] will become a bit of a model for continued redevelopment over the coming decades for the South Bay."