

Date: December 21, 2007

Committee Meeting Date: January 9, 2008

Board Meeting Date: February 7, 2008

**BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**TO:** Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
Board of Directors

**THROUGH:** Michael T. Burns  
General Manager

**FROM:** John H. Ristow  
Chief CMA Officer

**SUBJECT:** VTA Sustainability Program

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**FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Fiscal Year 2008 and 2009 budgets approved by the VTA Board of Directors included a total of \$3 million for “green sustainability facility improvements”. The purpose of this project was to assess and implement improvements at VTA facilities to address issues of environmental concern and energy efficiency.

An interdepartmental VTA team led by Environmental Programs and Resource Management and the Facilities Maintenance Sections are responsible for identifying and implementing the green sustainability facility improvements. Since beginning the project in July 2007, the team has initiated certifications of VTA as a Green Business with Santa Clara County and with the U.S. Green Building Council; replaced 10 high-emission vehicles with 10 hybrid vehicles for protective services and construction staff; collected data on VTA’s baseline energy, water/sewer, and solid waste use; and is researching various sustainable actions including installation of solar power facilities. The team is also working with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and PG&E to conduct facility audits that identify no-cost, low-cost, and capital investment projects.

**DISCUSSION:**

In order to guide long term implementation of sustainability practices, VTA needs to develop a goal and strategies for the program. With an established goal and strategy, VTA can more consistently consider sustainability in the procurement of products, and in the planning, design, construction, and operation of VTA’s facilities. One of the major challenges in considering sustainability is cost. In many cases, sustainable products or sustainable project features cost more initially than conventional products or technologies. In the case of major capital projects,

sustainable features such as renewable energy, energy-efficient lighting or drought-resistant landscaping may have a cost-effective return on investment. However, if the initial cost exceeds the project budget, these features can be difficult to incorporate. In other cases, the cost may be greater. For instance, the cost of 30% recycled content paper is currently 20% higher than virgin paper. Having an approved Sustainability Program would be the first step in changing VTA's practices and procedures to consider the environmental benefits and the operational efficiencies of sustainability in the planning process.

The proposed Sustainability Program policy goals and strategies are included as Attachment A and will be considered for approval at the February Board of Directors meeting.

Prepared by: Tom Fitzwater, Manager of Environmental Planning and Resource Management