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BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Citizens Advisory Committee
 Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
 Board of Directors

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

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SUBJECT: Transit Sustainability Policy

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

BACKGROUND:

To help improve system ridership and support and guide the implementation of new services, VTA is developing a Transit Sustainability Policy. System sustainability is a critical component of the long-term fiscal health of VTA, the quality of the services delivered, and the ability to maintain and expand service into the future.

During 2003 and 2004, the VTA Board of Directors and staff worked with a Business Review Team and an Ad Hoc Financial Stability Committee to develop a long-term Financial Stability Strategy, which the VTA Board of Directors adopted in early 2004. Subsequently, this strategy was included in the countywide transportation planning process and adopted by the VTA Board of Directors as part of the long-range goals and objectives for the countywide transportation plan, Valley Transportation Plan (VTP) 2030 in early 2005.

In support of this strategic direction, VTP 2030 included a recommendation to develop a policy framework for guiding future transit system development. The overarching goal of the Transit Sustainability Policy is to produce transit service that is well used, cost-efficient, operationally efficient, supported by local jurisdictions, and that meets market needs.

DISCUSSION:

VTA faces significant challenges in maintaining current service levels while at the same time growing ridership and expanding the system. Developing a sustainable policy framework will be necessary to guide this long-term effort. Developing such a policy framework requires a new approach to service design and implementation and a more robust partnership between VTA, local governments, other government agencies, the business community, and the public.

Transit Sustainability Policy

The objectives of the Transit Sustainability Policy include a common foundation for evaluation and decision-making, improving transit service, investing local governments in service design and delivery, maintaining and improving financial performance, and expanding service to meet market needs.

Using thresholds and criteria for designing service and selecting service for new segments or corridors, the policy will outline the conditions that are needed to support the various transit services found in our system such as Community Bus, local bus, Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit. The policy will also incorporate local policy decisions into VTA actions for bus and rail transit expansion. Lastly, the policy will provide a process for efficiently phasing projects as needs and circumstances change. For example, VTA can plan and implement services that move from local bus, to enhanced bus, then to bus rapid transit as conditions in the corridor change.

The TSP will build on several efforts including the Service Management Plan, the Community Design & Transportation Program, VTP 2030, and VTA's Financial Stability Strategies. The TSP is comprised of two parts:

1. *Service Design Guidelines* that will outline an optimal operating environment and the needed conditions to support various transit modes and technologies. For example, outlining the conditions necessary to support Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in a corridor.
2. *Guiding Policy Framework* that will establish a process for using the Service Design Guidelines to evaluate projects and services, and work with cities and other entities to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place to match the level of transit service warranted or desired.

Applications

The Transit Sustainability Policy will guide the activities utilized in the development and implementation of new projects and services including:

- Comprehensive Operations Analysis;
- Annual Service Plan;
- New corridor studies;
- Bus/Rail integration plans, such as those that would be occurring with the opening of new BRT and rail lines; and
- Update of VTP2030.

Next Steps

The development of the policy is currently paired with work being conducted for the Comprehensive Operations Analysis, including select meetings and workshops. Work products will periodically be brought through VTA committees for review and comment.

A draft schedule of key events is presented below:

Key Event

- | <u>Key Event</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--|--------------------|
| • Case studies and existing conditions analysis | June/July 2006 |
| • Draft transit service design guidelines | September 2006 |
| • Develop draft policy framework | September 2006 |
| • Committee and public review | October 2006 |
| • VTA Board action to adopt policy framework and Service Design Guidelines | December 2006 |

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