



Date: August 23, 2006

Committee Meeting Date: September 13, 2006

Board Meeting Date: N/A

BOARD MEMORANDUM

ACTION DISCUSSION INFO

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

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

FROM: Carolyn M. Gonot *Carolyn M Gonot*
 Chief Development Officer

SUBJECT: VTA Website Improvements

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

VTA Marketing & Public Affairs has begun preparations to improve VTA's website, www.vta.org. Staff will present highlights of the new website during future meetings of the VTA Board of Directors and VTA Advisory Committees prior to the planned May 2007 release date.

The current website generates approximately 1,600,000 annual visits and provides visitors with information regarding VTA public transit services, route schedules and maps, special programs, and capital improvement projects. Through the website, visitors can also submit online comments regarding current service activities.

Past Website Improvements

VTA's last website update occurred in March 2002 with additional, individualized site improvements. For example, in March 2004, VTA created a series of web pages introducing the Tasman East/Capitol Light Rail Extension, which included interactive maps as well as enhanced light rail station profiles. In November 2005, VTA began posting online versions of onboard publications, launched an interactive map of VTA Park & Ride Lots, and introduced a pilot program for teachers to apply online for VTA's Class Pass program. VTA is now initiating a comprehensive review of the website for a complete website update as a result of suggestions received at RIDE Task Force meetings and through comments submitted to VTA by the general public.

Current Website Update Activities

As part of a comprehensive review, VTA is soliciting input from stakeholder groups and has formed a subcommittee including Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA) members for input regarding the needs of the disabled community. We are also seeking the input of local residents and passengers on an ongoing basis through communications to VTA's Customer Service Department.

VTA is committed to developing a website that provides highly accessible, system and program information that is well organized. The goal is to develop a website that encourages visitors to use the website to plan trips using VTA services and gather information about VTA, including current Board and Committee activities. As a result of these priorities, VTA has identified several tasks to assist in the development of website improvements, which include:

- Online customer survey to identify website preferences and suggested improvements;
- Design enhancements to improve the page layout of website content and to improve website navigation; and
- Improved organization of website content categories to provide relevant and useful information for VTA passengers and the general public.

Each of these tasks will require significant public input to create a website that best meets the needs of all community members. Tasks will include a public outreach element to identify suggested improvements that have the broadest impact.

Website Improvement Tasks

Online Customer Survey

VTA administered a twelve-question online survey from June 26 through August 5, 2006. The purpose of the survey was to obtain suggestions to improve website design elements. Nearly 300 individual responses were received, providing specific suggested website improvements. Eighty-two of the 300 respondents volunteered to participate in planned focus groups that will take place during the later part of this year. VTA is particularly interested in obtaining broad community input with representation throughout the county.

Administer Focus Groups

VTA will host three focus groups that will each meet twice to prioritize suggested website improvements. Participating groups will include members of the disabled community, individuals familiar with VTA's website and individuals with limited or no familiarity with VTA's website and services. Participants will be assembled to correspond with the geographic and demographic diversity of Santa Clara County residents and VTA riders.

Design Enhancements

Upon completion of the focus groups, staff will improve design features, including its navigation, direct links to frequently requested web pages, and design of the home page.

Improved Website Content

Utilizing input from focus groups and online survey responses, VTA will better structure content to match visitor interests and create more efficient links to quickly access requested information. A crucial goal is to reduce the number of “clicks” required to access desired information.