

Date: December 21, 2007
Committee Meeting Date: January 9, 2008
Board Meeting Date: February 7, 2008
INFORMATION ITEM

BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee for Transit Accessibility
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

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

VTA'S SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

VTA is committed to creating a greener Santa Clara Valley. VTA's Sustainability Program will strengthen VTA's commitment to the environment through the conservation of natural resources, the reduction of greenhouse gases, the prevention of pollution, and the use of renewable energy and materials.

GOAL:

To proactively reduce the consumption of natural resources, the creation of greenhouse gases, and the generation of pollution in the provision of public transportation services.

VTA's goal and the strategies that follow are designed to improve the sustainability of VTA's operations by achieving the Bay Area Green Business Program's objectives; complying with all applicable environmental regulations and striving to exceed compliance; conserving energy, water and other natural resources; developing and implementing practices that prevent pollution and waste; and acting as an environmentally responsible business within the community.

STRATEGIES:

- 1) Develop and implement public educational programs that promote the environmental benefits of public transit.
- 2) Support sustainable, transit-oriented development along major transit corridors to maximize the use of VTA's buses and light rail system as environmentally friendly alternative to the single-occupant automobile.
- 3) Evaluate the sustainability of VTA's existing facilities. Implement cost-effective sustainable maintenance and operational measures that recognizes life-cycle returns on investments from the efficient use of energy, the reduction of waste, and the conservation of natural resources.
- 4) Incorporate sustainability and green building principles and practices in the planning, design, construction and operation of new VTA facilities.
- 5) Develop procurement strategies that incorporate sustainability criteria compatible with federal and state regulations.
- 6) Establish benchmarks to measure the progress and performance of VTA's sustainability program and report back to the VTA Board of Directors on an annual basis. Among other actions, this report will involve reassessing VTA's fuel, electrical, and water usage on a regular basis.

SUSTAINABILITY- Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.