

## COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

Wednesday, February 8, 2012  
1:00 PM

VTA Auditorium  
3331 North First Street  
San Jose, CA

### WORKSHOP AGENDA

#### CALL TO ORDER

1. ROLL CALL
2. INTRODUCTION OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS
3. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

This portion of the agenda is reserved for persons desiring to address the Committee on any matter not on the agenda, within the Committee's jurisdiction. Speakers are **limited to 2 minutes**. The law does not permit Committee action or extended discussion on any item not on the agenda except under special circumstances. If Committee action is requested, the matter can be placed on a subsequent agenda. All statements that require a response will be referred to staff for reply in writing.

#### BUSINESS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS/GENERAL MANAGER

4. INFORMATION ITEM - Receive the final report on the Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) Process and on changes implemented resulting from it.
5. INFORMATION ITEM - Receive Hybrid Bus Ramp Update. (Verbal Report)
6. INFORMATION ITEM – Receive a report on Reduced Rate Fares for Low Income Riders.
7. ANNOUNCEMENTS
8. ADJOURN

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), those requiring accommodations or accessible media for this meeting should notify the Board Secretary's Office 48 hours prior to the meeting at (408) 321-5680 or E-mail: [board.secretary@vta.org](mailto:board.secretary@vta.org) (408) 321-2330 (TTY Only). VTA's Homepage is located on the Web at: <http://www.vta.org> or visit us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/scvta>.

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Date: January 26, 2012  
 Current Meeting: February 8, 2012  
 Board Meeting: March 1, 2012

## **BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
 Committee for Transit Accessibility

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

**FROM:** Chief External Affairs Officer, Greta Helm

**SUBJECT:** Culmination of Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) Process

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### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

VTA values the input, diverse perspective and technical expertise provided by its five advisory committees, which are: Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC); Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC); Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA); Policy Advisory Committee (PAC); and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). These committees provide a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups with a forum for providing input on proposed changes to VTA policy or priorities that potentially impact transit service and transportation projects throughout the county.

In August 2008, General Manager Michael Burns initiated the Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) process to engage advisory committee members in the development of recommendations for improving the existing advisory committee process, in order to maximize each committee's efficiency and usefulness to the VTA Board of Directors and administration. Four high-level objectives guided the ACE process:

- Enhancing communication/input
- Building consensus among stakeholders
- Promoting informed discussion
- Ensuring efficient use of resources

The ACE Task Force, comprised of representatives from every advisory committee, over the course of 17 months developed a set of recommendations for improving communication with the Board, as well as improving and streamlining the advisory committee process in general while still supporting VTA's mission and goals. In January 2010, the Board of Directors approved these recommendations. Several of the changes could be implemented administratively, while others required modification to the respective committee's bylaws, which took additional time to prepare and submit for required Board approval.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Since the vast majority of ACE recommendations have been implemented or are nearing completion, late in 2011 then VTA Board Chairperson Margaret Abe-Koga requested a final report be issued on the status and effectiveness of the recommendations in order to bring the ACE Process to a close.

The detailed listing of all ACE Process-related changes, along with their current implementation status, approximate implementation date, and an assessment of their current effectiveness, are shown on Attachment A. The following is a brief summary of the most significant ones:

- **Advisory committee vote and summary of input on item included on Board memo**

To enhance timely and effective communication with the Board, effective May 2009 the vote and summarized input from advisory committees were included on Board memos and become part of the historical record. This provides real-time advisory committee input and perspective for use by Board members in making informed decisions. In addition, due to timing constraints all standing committee members are provided with a supplemental report that captures the advisory committee vote and input, for use in reviewing the item and making a recommendation to the full Board. To illustrate, Attachment B are the recommendation and advisory committee comments from a recent item considered by the Board.

Both Board and standing committee members have indicated on numerous occasions that they find this information very useful.

- **Clarify duties of the committee and establish mission statement for each committee**

Each advisory committee reviewed and drafted recommended changes to their bylaws, where necessary, to accurately describe their current scope of work, as some have changed over the years. Each committee also drafted a mission statement to describe its overarching purpose that will be included as part of its bylaws. The Board approved the draft mission statements in concept.

Corresponding changes to the BPAC, CAC, CTA and TAC bylaws on each committee's duties and responsibilities were approved by the Board in June 2010. In addition, requested revisions to the PAC and BPAC bylaws to incorporate their respective mission statements are scheduled for Board consideration in early 2012, with those for the remaining committees following soon thereafter.

Advisory committee members have indicated that updating each committee's duties and defining a mission statement is very helpful for current as well as future members.

- **Board chair coordination meetings with advisory committee chairs/vice chairs**

Instituted during 2009, meetings between the VTA Board Chairperson and the advisory committee leadership are done to provide the defined recurring opportunity to communicate the priorities and concerns of the Board to the advisory committees, and for dialogue between the Board leadership and that of the advisory committees on current

issues, recommendations and future events.

Both Board Chairs and advisory committee leadership have expressed that these meetings are very productive, beneficial and necessary.

- **Convert existing CAC positions to one voting position each from CTA and BPAC**

The ACE Task Force recommended converting two existing vacant positions on the CAC that represent Bicyclists and Pedestrians to one voting position each from the BPAC and the CTA. This change provides an on-going connection between these advisory committees, enhancing communication and consensus building between the stakeholder groups. The Board approved this change in June 2010.

The membership of the affected advisory committees have indicated that this change has been very beneficial for increasing communication, collaboration and consensus-building between the committees as well as the stakeholder groups they represent.

- **Review meeting frequency more efficiently utilize committee and staff resources**

All advisory committees agreed that if the agenda does not warrant a full meeting, every effort would be made to cancel the meeting, or hold a workshop if there are items that need to be discussed but no action will be taken (workshops do not require full Board Office support).

The BPAC agreed to reduce its meeting schedule from twelve (12) to ten (10) meetings and/or workshops per year (the committee does not convene at least two months out of the year). The CTA agreed to reduce its meeting schedule from twelve (12) to four (4) meeting per year. For both of these committees, if and when meetings are held depend on the urgency and timing of the item(s) moving to the Board or other external body for review, as well as other business considerations. Both committees adopted the revised meeting schedule in early 2010.

Although the CAC, PAC and TAC did not formally reduce their scheduled number of meetings, each, as the agenda and workload has warranted, taken the opportunity to either cancel meetings or convert them to workshops. For example, during 2011 the CAC cancelled two meeting and the TAC and PAC one each.

Both advisory committee members and staff have indicated that the reduced meeting schedule and ad hoc cancellation/conversion to workshop have proven workable without diminishing the affected committee's input and has resulted in a more focused use of the committee members' time, thereby making their input more relevant. However, the CTA has expressed its desire to revisit the four meetings per year and potentially augment it slightly; this request is currently being reviewed. One potential solution being considered is to hold a small number of workshops in addition to the four regular meetings; based on the committee's request, a CTA workshop is scheduled for February 8, 2012.

- **Hold joint workshops between advisory committees on items of mutual interest**

This time and cost-saving measure was implemented during 2010. The most recent

example of a joint workshop was on May 9, 2011 to review and discuss VTA's Recommended FY 2012 & 2013 Biennial budgets. Staff will be working with the advisory committee leadership to identify workshop meeting opportunities in 2012 and beyond.

Both advisory committee members and staff have indicated that these workshops are very beneficial and productive. As a result, both parties have encouraged the committees' leadership and staff to look for additional opportunities to review and discuss jointly major issues and initiatives of common interest.

- **Consolidated VTA Work Plan that includes Board, standing and advisory committees**

This planning and integration tool was implemented during 2009 as a means to ensure that the advisory committees, through their leadership, have involvement early in the development process of an item or initiative. It also provides the opportunity to identify linkages between committees and items of common interest. One additional benefit of the Consolidated Work Plan is that it is a tool for identifying opportunities for joint meetings. This document is reviewed periodically with the Board Chairperson as well as the advisory committee leadership, and staff reviews it at least monthly.

Recent Board chairpersons, advisory committee leadership and staff have all indicated that this is a very worthwhile tool.

Additionally, due to the importance of the advisory committee process, VTA management has subsequently implemented several changes related to the advisory committee process. These include:

- In November 2011, instituting the Advisory Committee Coordinator staff position. The primary purpose of this position is to provide dedicated service and expertise to advisory committee leadership, members and appointing authorities, and to serve as a point of contact, especially on committee administrative matters such as membership, appointments, bylaws, elections, new member orientation, etc.
- Given that the needs of VTA, the Board and its advisory committees may change over time, VTA has committed to periodically review the advisory committee process so that each committee's efficiency and usefulness to the VTA Board and administration is maximized.

Prepared By: Stephen Flynn, Advisory Committee Coordinator  
Memo No. 3318

## VTA Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) Process

### Listing and Status of Major Recommendations

RECOMMENDED CHANGE	STATUS	WHEN IMPLEMENTED	EFFECTIVENESS
A. Advisory committee vote and summary of input on item included on memo considered by Board	Implemented	May 2009	Board members have affirmed usefulness in decision-making process.
B. Advisory committee vote and summary of input on item included on report provided to standing committee considering item	Implemented	May 2009	Standing committee members have affirmed usefulness in decision-making process.
C. Board chair meets quarterly with advisory committee chairs/vice chair to coordinate, collaborate and provide forum for dialogue	Implemented	March 2009	Both Board and advisory committee leadership have indicated positive benefits of process.
D. Add to CAC one voting position each from BPAC and CTA	Implemented	June 2010	CAC, CTA and BPAC all have indicated positive benefits regarding communication and collaboration.
E. Consolidated VTA Work Plan that includes Board, standing and advisory committee items	Implemented	Late 2009	Board, committee leadership and staff have indicated usefulness of this tool, especially for identifying items of interest early in the development process.
F. All advisories look for opportunities to cancel meeting/convert to workshop as agenda warrants to save time and cost.	Implemented	Spring 2010	Working well. CAC cancelled 2 meetings during 2011 and TAC and PAC 1 each.
G. Reduced meeting schedule for BPAC (combined maximum 10 regular meetings & workshops per year) and CTA (4 meetings plus workshops as needed).	Implemented	Spring 2010	Working well. Committee members and staff have indicated that the reduced meeting schedule and ad hoc cancellation/ conversion to workshop have proven workable without diminishing committee input. CTA has requested a slight increase in the number.
H. Joint workshops	Implemented	Spring 2010	Working well. Used in May 2011 to review and discuss VTA's Recommended FY 2012 & 2013 Biennial budgets.
I. Move BPAC meetings from Auditorium back to B-104 to save sound system costs and labor	In Progress	Scheduled for February 2012 meeting	Will result in reduced meeting cost.

<b>RECOMMENDED CHANGE</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>WHEN IMPLEMENTED</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>
J. Meeting minutes modified to ensure clarity, completeness and consistency while minimizing cost	Implemented	Late 2009	Working well. No issues raised with the quality or completeness of the meeting minutes.
K. Deleted legacy VTA ex-officio position on TAC	Implemented	June 2010	Working as intended.
L. Clarify duties of the committee and establish mission statement for each committee	In Progress	Starting April 2012	BPAC and PAC initial mission statement, along with clarified BPAC duties, scheduled for April 2012 Board consideration. Others will follow soon thereafter.
M. Annual orientation and training for new advisory committee leadership	Implemented	January 2009	Positive feedback received from individuals participating. 2012 session scheduled for 2/7/12.
N. Orientation for new advisory committee members  [NOTE: Orientation of CAC and CTA members historically had been performed]	Implemented and performed on an as-needed basis	November 2012	Positive feedback received from new members. Orientation for new CTA members scheduled for 2/3.

## 2011 Transportation System Monitoring Program Report

(Considered by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee at their September 2011 meetings)

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### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION:**

The Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed this item on September 7, 2011 and unanimously recommended the VTA Board of Directors to accept the findings from the 2011 Transportation Systems Monitoring Program (TSMP) report. The Committee posed questions related to clarification on the figures and tables presented in the handout. The Committee also expressed support for continuing the TMSMP reporting.

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee met on September 7, 2011 but did not discuss the 2011 Transportation Systems Monitoring Program report as the Committee did not have a quorum.

The Technical Advisory Committee met on September 8, 2011 and unanimously recommended the VTA Board of Directors to accept the findings from the 2011 Transportation Systems Monitoring Report. The Committee asked questions related to clarification on the findings presented in the handout.

The Policy Advisory Committee met on September 8, 2011 and unanimously recommended the VTA Board of Directors to accept the finding from the 2011 Transportation Systems Monitoring Report. The Committee asked questions related to clarification on findings presented in the handout and how to improve current conditions on the areas monitored. Member Wasserman inquired about bridges in Santa Clara County in bad condition.

### **STANDING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION:**

The Congestion Management Program & Planning Committee met on September 16, 2011 and unanimously recommended the VTA Board of Directors to accept the findings from the 2011 Transportation Systems Monitoring Report. In the presentation that described Santa Clara County's pavement conditions, Member Moylan suggested that a reasonable target be set for the county. Member Moylan also recommended that additional explanations be added to the report on sections that compare Santa Clara County with other counties to clarify the data being shown, and that the median scores be presented instead of average scores. The Committee also commented that key findings from the report be highlighted and communicated to the general public to address specific issues of the county's transportation system infrastructure needing attention.



Date: January 24, 2012  
 Current Meeting: February 8, 2012  
 Board Meeting: N/A

## **BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
 Committee for Transit Accessibility

**FROM:** Executive Policy Advisor, Jim Lawson

**SUBJECT:** Analysis of Reduced-Rate Fares for Low-Income Riders

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**Policy-Related Action:** No

**Government Code Section 84308 Applies:** No

## **INFORMATION ITEM**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Board Chair Yeager and Board Members Abe-Koga and Liccardo have asked to have the Transit Planning and Operations Committee consider the wide range of possible implications of reducing fares for low-income riders, in response to a question posed by the group People Acting in Community Together (PACT). PACT describes itself as "... an inter-faith, multi-ethnic grassroots organization that empowers everyday people to create a more just community."

PACT suggested that a reduced fare for low-income riders could benefit those most in need in our Valley, while boosting ridership for VTA. VTA understands PACT's concern and the stated desire to find creative ways to address the needs of the less-fortunate in our community.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The Directors would like to request a study of the impact of decreased fares on ridership and revenues. Understanding that there is a complex and sensitive relationship between fare price, ridership and revenues, the study may include but is not limited to the following:

- Information regarding price elasticities and the impact a reduction in price could have on revenues and ridership;
- Survey data, obtained in collaboration with the County, addressing the question of potential changes in monthly or annual transit fares and the expected impact on low-income residents;

- The potential impact to VTA's Service plan of a reduced-fare option, including capacity, cost and longer-term implications;
- A review of industry standard practice for offering lower transit fares for low-income people and how those programs are managed, funded and administered;
- Examination of the regulatory, legal, regional and federal policy issues, including Title VI implications as applied to fares;
- Analysis of potential discount fare implementation strategies, including on a trial basis; and
- Investigation into whether the County of Santa Clara has any capacity to expand the number of UPLIFT passes that it currently provides.

The Directors' intent is not to have VTA staff responsible for the task of determining who would be eligible for a reduced fare, but to leave that determination to the experts -- Social Services at the County of Santa Clara and other related groups with expertise in the matter.

VTA has requested a consultant to determine a scope of work to study the suggestion, and to determine the cost of such a study.

Attached is a memo from Directors Sam Liccardo, Margaret Abe-Koga, and Ken Yeager further detailing their request.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact of lower fares for low income riders will be addressed as part of the analysis. The cost of the consultant study would be paid for out of the VTA Transit Fund Operating Contingency.

Prepared by: Colleen Valles  
Memo No. 3426



Date: November 17, 2011

**TO:** Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
Transportation, Planning, and Operations Committee

**FROM:** Margaret Abe-Koga, Chair, Ken Yeager, Vice-Chair, Sam Liccardo, Past Chair

**SUBJECT:** Reduced-Rate Fares for Low-Income Riders

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Direct Staff to return to the Transit Planning and Operations Committee (TP&O), with an analysis of the fiscal and ridership impacts of the following potential changes to the fare schedule:

- a) Offering reduced-rate fares for low-income riders. To facilitate the analysis, we should start by assessing two proposals:
  - a. reducing the price of cash fares, day passes or monthly pass by 50% for recipients of food stamps; and
  - b. offering a \$25 monthly pass for General Assistance recipients.
- b) Offering a reduced-rate annual EcoPass to an entire group of residents categorized by income.

Such an analysis should include:

- Information regarding price elasticities of demand that would inform the Committee/Board about whether and how much a reduction of price could reduce revenues or impact ridership.
- Any survey data, obtained in collaboration with the County, informing the question of what changes in monthly or annual prices might substantially increase ridership among General Assistance recipients.

- Whether a pilot project, perhaps starting with a limited geographic or organization-focused community, would help inform VTA’s decision-making going forward while addressing acute needs of a specific low-income population.
- Whether the County of Santa Clara has any capacity to expand the number of UPLIFT passes that it currently provides to indigent residents served by its Department of Social Services.

### **DISCUSSION:**

A recent meeting organized by People Acting in Community Together (PACT) and several San José faith-based communities raised a commonly-posed question: whether the Valley Transportation Agency should offer a reduced set of fares for lower-income riders. We appreciate the sincere effort of PACT’s members to seek ways to improve the mobility and quality of life of our Valley’s poor. This call comes a time when we most need to remove obstacles that our residents might encounter in finding jobs and obtaining critical services.

Public forums like these—with elected officials making 60 or 90-second responses—necessarily create ample opportunity for sound bites and empty promises, but little space for discussion. We need to fully investigate the complex interaction of prices, ridership, and revenues to properly assess the impact of changes on the transit-dependent residents that VTA serves.

Understanding that impact requires some work. Obvious challenges stand in the way of reducing fares in a transit system that already has one of the nation’s lowest rates of fare-box return in the United States. VTA’s riders pay for only 14% of the cost of operating the buses and light rail that they use. Since VTA primarily serves people of very modest means, there remain relatively few well-off riders who might pay a sufficiently high price to subsidize a reduced cost for the majority. Given the lack of sources to subsidize an already-heavily subsidized fare, a significant reduction in revenues would result in service cuts and layoffs. Reductions in bus routes and frequency, of course, will harm the very transit-dependent people we seek to serve.

This raises, then, one very important question: to what extent could we reduce fares for some clearly-identified, low-income segment of our population without reducing revenues? The assumption underlying the proposals presented in the PACT forum was that a reduction in fares for low-income or indigent residents will increase ridership. While that is likely true, and while that undoubtedly creates an important benefit, that doesn’t tell the entire story.

The net impact on *revenues*—positive or negative--will dictate VTA’s ability to provide service to its transit-dependent customers, so it is this net impact that we need to better understand. A reduced fare may produce some additional revenue from new riders, but it will accompany a drop in revenues from existing riders who will pay less.

Resolving the question of the impact on net impact necessarily raises complex questions about the price elasticity of demand for transit services, and the price sensitivities of particular subsets of transit consumers. Past surveys—such as the extensive marketing analysis performed by a consultant for VTA in 2008, and an additional survey conducted with the help of County Social Services in September of 2011—suggest that price does not pose nearly as great a barrier to increasing ridership as does the lack of convenient routes, bus frequency, and travel time, even

for very low-income riders. We recognize PACT's desire for more probing questioning, which we also encourage.

We do not want VTA staff to take on the very bureaucratic and expensive task of determining and verifying which riders do or do not have incomes to qualify for any proposed discount program. We agree that it would be best for VTA to "piggyback" on whatever classifications the County already uses to qualify residents for particular benefits. We identify General Assistance and Food Stamps recipients as relevant categories of residents for the focus of this analysis, but there may be other, more suitable classifications to best address the need. We leave that question to the VTA and County to assess.

All of this, of course, constitutes merely the start of the inquiry, and we look forward to exploring the issue further with VTA staff and the community.