



Date: September 19, 2007

Committee Meeting Date: October 18, 2007

Board Meeting Date: November 1, 2007

**BOARD MEMORANDUM**

ACTION        DISCUSSION        INFO   X  

**TO:** Transit Planning and Operations Committee  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
Board of Directors

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

**FROM:** Donald A. Smith, Jr.  
Chief Operating Officer

**SUBJECT:** RIDE Task Force Recommendations—Annual Update

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**FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Ridership Initiative to Develop Energy-efficiency (RIDE) Task Force was initiated by a coalition of labor, environmental and community-based groups that were concerned about the decline in ridership on VTA bus and light rail transit services. In September 2005 the Board of Directors authorized the formation of the RIDE Task Force, as proposed by the coalition, appointed two Board Members to serve as co-chairs, and added the Chairpersons of the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA) and Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) to the Task Force.

The Task Force met nine times between October 2005 and August 2006 and produced a Final Report documenting its work and presenting recommendations in four broad goal areas aimed at improving VTA ridership:

- Fare Affordability and Convenience
- Better Information for Riders
- Better Access to System
- Service Improvements

On November 2, 2006 the Board acted to receive the RIDE Task Force's Final Report and directed staff to continue to review and consider the report's recommendations as it develops and implements fare, service, marketing, promotional, and community outreach proposals and plans. Among these recommendations is one to provide the Board with an annual update on the status of the Final Report's recommendations.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Attachment A provides a list of the Final Report's recommendations within each of the four goal areas along with the status of each recommendation. A summary of the status of these recommendations follows:

### **Fare Affordability and Convenience**

All of the Final Report's recommendations relating to fare affordability and convenience have been implemented as a result of the Board's action to approve revisions to the fare tariff in June 2007. No further action is required.

### **Better Information for Riders**

VTA continues to improve print and electronic collateral materials and initiate promotions of bus and light rail services, capitalizing on partnerships with organizations and events throughout the service area. Significant progress has been made on improving VTA's website, trip planning capabilities, and providing real-time passenger information.

### **Better Access to System**

With the adoption of the FY08 and FY09 Budget, VTA more than doubled the resources made available each year to upgrade and improve access to bus stops. In addition, VTA regularly recommends additional improvements to enhance access to and use of transit services as it reviews and comments on development proposals being considered by local jurisdictions.

### **Service Improvements**

With the adoption of the Bus Service Operating Plan, with service changes to be implemented in January 2008, VTA has addressed many of the Task Force's recommendations for transit service improvements. Development of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Strategic Plan this Fall will begin to address the Task Force's interest in expanding "rapid" bus service similar to the Line 522.

Ridership Initiative to Develop Energy-efficiency (RIDE) Task Force  
Final Report Recommendations and their Status  
October 2007

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Status</b>
Continue to review and consider the ridership ideas put forward by the Task Force as VTA develops and implements transit service improvements and marketing, promotion, and community outreach plans.	VTA staff reviews the ideas documented by the Task Force and incorporates them into programs and projects, as appropriate and resources permitting.
Provide the Board with annual updates on the status of efforts to improve ridership.	This report represents the first annual update to the Board.
<b>Fare Affordability and Convenience</b>	
Consider reducing fares paid by those least able to afford them: low-income, youth, seniors, and disabled persons.	Effective September 1, 2007 VTA reduced the price of Day Passes for Adult, Youth, and Senior/Disabled passengers by 4.8%, 11.1% and 11.1% respectively. Effective September 1, 2007 VTA reduced the price of Monthly Passes for Youth and Senior/Disabled passengers by 18.4% and 23.1% respectively. Effective July 1, 2007 VTA initiated Community Bus Single Ride fares of Adult \$1 and Youth and Senior/Disabled \$.50.
Consider reducing the cost of a Day Pass to make it more affordable for people who need to transfer.	Effective September 1, 2007 VTA reduced the price of Day Passes for Adult, Youth, and Senior/Disabled passengers by 4.8%, 11.1% and 11.1% respectively.
Consider expanding the Eco pass program to community colleges and additional businesses and residential organizations.	VTA continues to market Eco pass aggressively to educational institutions, businesses and residential organizations. 13% of the county's workforce participates in the Eco pass program. The current number of Eco pass partners is 93, a 12% increase from September 2006 to September 2007.
Consider extending the Eco pass program to additional regional transit services, such as the Monterey/San Jose Express Service.	VTA added the Monterey/San Jose Express Service to the Eco pass "E" Express option available to participants.
Consider making the discounted Summer Blast Pass a permanent program offered each summer to youth.	Effective September 1, 2007 the Board added the Youth Summer Blast Pass to the fare tariff at a three-month price of \$75.
Consider making the Light Rail Excursion Pass a permanent element of the fare structure.	Effective July 1, 2007 the Board added the 8-Hour Light Rail Excursion Pass to the fare tariff, priced at twice the single-ride fare.

Recommendation	Status
<b>Better Information for Riders</b>	
Complete implementation of an improved VTA website, real-time passenger information, and the Google transit trip planner.	VTA's new <b>website</b> will be implemented in late October 2007. Improvements include a more prominent focus on transit service information, interactive maps, enhanced accessibility features, and easier navigation and use. VTA will issue an RFP in October 2007 to procure a <b>real-time passenger information</b> system that will provide passengers with the location of buses/LRVs and estimated arrival and departure times via telephone, Internet and displays at key locations. VTA's <b>Google transit trip planner</b> was launched October 1, 2007 (accessed through vta.org)
Market and promote activities aimed at the transit dependent, youth (to instill a transit culture early), and at making transit socially desirable, "the right thing to do."	VTA enhanced outreach to promote use of the Class Pass program, worked with schools to provide subsidized transit passes for low-income students, and implemented partnerships with retail outlets marketing to youth (e.g., Summer Blast Pass). Also made more presentations to senior organizations regarding transit options and the Golden Getaway program.
Take better advantage of times and locations when traffic congestion occurs or parking is limited to promote transit as an alternative.	In 2007, VTA implemented several promotions and partnerships to encourage the use of light rail and bus service to attend major events, such as the San Jose Grand Prix, 4 <sup>th</sup> of July events, San Jose Jazz Festival, Tamale Festival, San Jose Giants games, art & wine festivals, San Jose Sharks games and San Jose State University events.
Review print and electronic materials to include information to facilitate transit use, including connections between bus and light rail lines and with connecting regional transit services.	VTA's new website will have interactive maps that will show all connecting routes and transit services and provide direct links to connecting transit systems. VTA continues to provide community organizations with VTA information and art to include in their print and electronic materials.
Collaborate with others (e.g., hotels, events, visitor and convention bureaus, chambers) to promote transit to their customers.	VTA implemented a new, more flexible Convention Pass program, which has resulted in an increase in sales. VTA is working with major employers to provide express bus options, and with the Convention & Visitors Bureau to enhance Line 23.

Recommendation	Status
<b>Better Access to System</b>	
<p>Increase funding made available to improve safe and accessible paths of travel for seniors and disabled people at bus stops, transit centers and light rail platforms.</p>	<p>VTA increased funding from \$250,000 per year (FYs 06 and 07) to \$660,000 per year (FYs 07 and 08) to improve access to bus stops. \$660,000 will pay for 15-20 bus stop improvements at locations previously prioritized by the CTA.</p> <p>VTA will raise the remaining 13 light rail station platforms on the Guadalupe Line from Children’s Discovery Museum south to provide level boarding throughout the system, easing access for seniors and disabled persons. Construction is scheduled to begin January 2008 and conclude April 2009.</p>
<p>Consider increasing the number of bus stop benches and shelters at higher-use bus stops and transit centers.</p>	<p>VTA maintains a supply of bus benches and installs them at locations with high ridership, or where requested, providing there is enough space to do so and meet regulatory requirements.</p> <p>VTA contracts with Clear Channel Outdoors to provide and maintain 564 shelters throughout our service area. With implementation of the COA, staff is looking at relocating shelters from lower-use to higher-use bus stops.</p>
<p>Continue to work with cities to determine the need for curb cuts, sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian traffic signals to facilitate safe and accessible paths of travel to bus stops, transit centers, light rail stations, and light rail platforms.</p>	<p>VTA regularly reviews environmental documents, general plan changes, zoning amendments and site development permits and provides comments and recommendations to the land use authority on improving access to existing and planned transit services. In FY07, VTA provided input on approximately 80 development proposals.</p>
<p>Develop a program to increase the number of bike racks located at high-volume bus stops, transit centers and light rail platforms.</p>	<p>VTA has a program underway to increase the number of bike racks available on its system. The plan is to provide at least one bike rack at every transit center, park-and-ride lot, and light rail station, in addition to working with cities to provide bike racks at high-volume bus stops.</p> <p>VTA is also evaluating a plan to convert single-user bike lockers to an electronic card key system that would allow multiple users of a locker at key high-use locations.</p>

Recommendation	Status
<b>Service Improvements</b>	
Explore additional opportunities to implement “rapid” bus service, similar to the Rapid 522 service.	VTA will begin to implement a Bus Rapid Transit network in five corridors beginning this Fall with a BRT Strategic Plan. The Plan will develop implementation strategies for future BRT corridors. In addition, a BRT project for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock corridor incorporating the existing 522 and future 523 is moving forward as part of the Downtown East Valley project.
Work with Valley Medical Center and other hospitals throughout the County to address a need for late-night transportation for their patients, when transit service is not available.	VTA staff met with Valley Medical Center representatives during the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) outreach process. In January 2008, the frequency of service on Lines 62 and 25 serving VMC will increase. The demand for late night service is too low to warrant transit service. VMC may pursue a taxi voucher program to meet this limited need.
Work with San Jose State University staff to better define and justify the transit needs of its students, including providing direct bus service from Northeast San Jose to Downtown San Jose, and providing a non-stop bus from the Fremont BART station to Downtown San Jose.	The Bus Service Operating Plan to be implemented in January 2008 includes direct service between the Fremont BART station and Downtown San Jose during peak commute hours (Line 181). The plan also reroutes Line 64 to provide direct service between Northeast San Jose (McKee and Capitol) and Downtown. Service to/from Berryessa will be provided by light rail with a transfer to Line 22, 23, or 522. Combined, these three lines will provide 14 buses per hour in this corridor.
Continue to reallocate resources from low-productivity transit services to improve transit services that are likely to attract greater ridership.	The Bus Service Operating Plan approved by the Board on August 30, 2007 is the product of the 18-month COA effort. The new plan places more resources and emphasis on high-productivity routes and market opportunities by finding savings within the system.
Work with connecting transit services to coordinate schedules and connections, and fare structures.	VTA regularly works with staff from SamTrans, BART and CalTrain to coordinate schedules to the maximum degree possible. The COA looked at connecting transit services when developing the recommended Bus Service Operating Plan.