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## 3.15 SAFETY AND SECURITY

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### Introduction

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This section describes the environmental setting and potential effects of the alternatives analyzed in this EIR with regard to safety and security in the SantaClara-Alum Rock Corridor. Specifically, this section discusses existing safety and security conditions within the Corridor and describes the applicable regulations pertaining to safety and security. The assessment of potential impacts and mitigation measures of the proposed alternatives related to safety and security are also described.

### Existing Conditions

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#### Environmental Setting

**Law Enforcement and Protective Services.** Security throughout the VTA system is provided by Protective Services, which is part of the Administrative Unit of the VTA Operations Division. The unit provides security for VTA facilities and security for both bus and LRT service.<sup>1</sup> Protective Services coordinates law enforcement activities with the contracted Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department unit and a private security contractor. In addition, Protective Services is responsible for revenue collection and protection, VTA's lost-and-found program, the vandalism abatement program, employee security systems, and fare inspection on LRT vehicles. Protective Services also provides the Route Stabilization Team, which is staffed with three sheriff's deputies to provide increased security. The plain-clothes undercover unit operates on VTA buses and LRT vehicles to ensure a safe environment for operations and passengers. Also, uniformed patrol officers ride on buses and LRT vehicles and provide surveillance at public facilities, heavily-used LRT stations, and bus transfer centers. The San Jose Police Department and the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department provide general law enforcement and public safety oversight within VTA's service area.

**Fire Protection Services.** Fire protection services for public transit facilities in the project area are provided by the San Jose Fire Department. Please refer to Section 3.5, Community Services, for more information on fire protection services in the project area.

#### Regulatory Setting

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The following regulatory setting includes regulations that would apply to Single Car LRT service under Phase 2 of the proposed project. No regulatory agency would be required to oversee the design and safety features of vehicles under Phase 1 – BRT.

**49 Code of Federal Regulations 659, State Safety Oversight Rule.** FTA created a State-managed oversight program for rail transit safety and security. The program is applicable to all states that have, within their boundaries, a fixed guideway rail system not regulated by the Federal Railroad

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<sup>1</sup> VTA, "Adopted Biennial Budget, Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007," June 2, 2005.

Administration. The rule requires that transit agencies address the personal security of their passengers and employees by preparing a system safety program plan conforming to California Public Utility Commission's (CPUC) system safety program standard (in California, CPUC is granted authority over transit agencies).

**California Public Utilities Commission.** The California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Consumer Protection and Safety Division has regulatory and safety oversight over railroads and rail transit systems in the State. The Consumer Protection and Safety Division's responsibility is divided among three programs: Railroad Safety; Highway-Rail Crossing Safety; and Rail Transit Safety. The Rail Transit Safety program covers light rail, rapid rail, and cable cars. The primary regulation governing light rail transit systems is CPUC's General Order No. 143-B (California Public Utilities Commission, 1991). The purpose of the Rail Transit Safety program and its regulations is to establish safety requirements governing the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of light rail transit systems in California. The safety of patrons, employees, and the public is of primary importance in the application of these regulations.

**Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority Light Rail Operating Rules.** VTA light rail operations are governed by the *Light Rail Operating Rule Book and Historic Streetcar Rules and Programs*.<sup>2</sup> These operating procedures have been adopted by VTA to ensure safe operations for passengers and the general public. Bells and horn signals are available to the operator of light rail vehicles to warn people or vehicles on or near the trackway.

## Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures

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### Approach to Methodology

The analysis of effects related to safety and security was based on a qualitative assessment of whether the police and fire protection coverage necessary for the proposed project would be sufficient to comply with federal, State, and local safety regulations pertaining to system operations and passenger security. An evaluation of whether these conditions would be restricted by particular facilities, features, or aspects of service, is also provided. Mitigation measures are provided to minimize those impacts identified as potentially significant.

### Standards of Significance

Based on significance criteria used by VTA, the proposed project may result in adverse effects related to safety and security if they would:

- Not include signals and gated crossings in specific locations where pedestrian and/or bicycle safety is determined to be at risk; or

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<sup>2</sup> VTA, Light Rail Operating Rule Book and Historic Streetcar Rules and Programs, February 1, 2001.

- Deviate from CPUC standards pertaining to safety, such as clearance for boarding platforms, emergency walkways, public street crossings and rail crossings, and installation of barriers, curbs, and fences.

## **Environmental Analysis**

In order to determine safety and security impacts due to construction and operation of the proposed project, a level of significance is determined and reported in the impact statement. Conclusions of significance are defined as follows: significant (S), potentially significant (PS), less than significant (LTS), no impact (NI), and beneficial (B). If the mitigation measures would not diminish potentially significant or significant impacts to a less-than-significant level, the impacts are classified as “significant and unavoidable (SU).” For this section, SS refers to Safety and Security.

For the purposes of this analysis, the proposed project includes the implementation of BRT and Single Car LRT in the Santa Clara-Alum Rock Corridor in two phases. Phase 1 includes the implementation of BRT service and Phase 2 includes the implementation of Single Car LRT service. Potential safety and security impacts associated with Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the proposed project, including project options, would be largely similar. Therefore, the analyses for the two project phases are discussed together. Areas in which the effects of the two phases differ are detailed within the discussion of each significance threshold.

Potential impacts associated with the extension of transit services in the Capitol Expressway Corridor were analyzed in the Capitol Expressway Light Rail Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (FSEIR) dated January 2007, which is incorporated herein by reference. Potential impacts of the proposed project not analyzed in the Capitol Expressway Light Rail FSEIR are described below, as necessary.

*SS-1. The proposed project would undergo a safety review through the final design and construction phases of the project and would meet or exceed California Public Utilities Commission standards. (LTS)*

Pedestrian activity could increase along the Corridor as a result of implementation of the proposed project due to the increase in transit service. Under Phase 1 of the proposed project, the design of BRT vehicles is not required to comply with any federal, State, or local regulations. As discussed above, Phase 2 - Single Car LRT is required to comply with CPUC standards pertaining to light rail transit systems.

Although it is uncommon, accidents can occur in which vehicles or persons crossing the LRT tracks are struck by LRT vehicles. These types of accidents occur under existing LRT operations and may occur with the same frequency under the proposed project. Other than the normal precautions taken to prevent these accidents (use of crossing gates, warning bells, flashing signs, pavement markings at crossings, light rail horn blowing, fencing, no-trespassing signs, etc.), it is unlikely that these accidents could be entirely prevented or avoided.

Under Phase 2 of the proposed project, the LRT alignment would share the Vasona Corridor LRT alignment west of the SR 87 undercrossing. The mid-block crossing would enter the median of West San Fernando Street at the same location that the Vasona Corridor LRT alignment crosses West San Fernando Street. The railroad gate would need to be shifted slightly to the east for Single Car LRT operations. No new or modified crossing gates are proposed along the Corridor.

For shared portions of the alignment from West Santa Clara Street/Almaden Boulevard to near Alum Rock Avenue/King Road, LRT would operate within the outside (curb) lanes of the roadway, shared with automobile traffic. Numerous driveways exist along this portion of the Corridor and access to and from the roadway would require crossing the trackway. Railroad gates would not be necessary for these driveway crossings since light rail would be in the travel lane, functioning as a large vehicle in the travel stream. Also, the traffic volumes entering and exiting the driveways are minimal. Rather than gates, these crossings would have passive warning signs indicating to motorists the presence of the LRT tracks and to look both ways for on-coming trains. Once the light rail alignment enters semi-exclusive median operations near King Road, crossing the tracks would be allowed only at existing and proposed signalized intersections.

Single Car LRT operations would meet or exceed CPUC requirements for safety. Although CPUC does not regulate bus service, a similar level of safety would be provided for the BRT stations. Under operation of both BRT and Single Car LRT, passenger safety would be provided at each new station by railings along station platforms, fencing between the tracks adjacent to station platforms in semi-exclusive operations, crosswalks at the station platform areas, and by providing waiting areas at crossings. Pedestrian signal activation push buttons would be included at all intersections and added within the median where station platforms would be located within the median. Pedestrian countdown heads would also be added to inform pedestrians of the time available to cross the street before the signal changes. Additional information regarding pedestrian safety is provided in Section 3.2, Transportation.

With implementation of Single Car LRT operations, the project would conform to CPUC General Order 143-B, along with any waivers approved by the CPUC. The alignment classification is both shared and semi-exclusive with at-grade crossings. According to Table 1 of the CPUC General Order 143-B, the speed of the shared portion of the alignment is restricted to the legal speed of the roadway traffic, not to exceed 35 miles per hour. For the semi-exclusive portion of the alignment, the speed restriction is also the speed of the parallel traffic, not to exceed 35 miles per hour. At at-grade crossings, the right-of-way would be controlled by traffic signals. No other active signing or crossing gates are proposed.

The safety of the Santa Clara-Alum Rock Corridor would be addressed in detail as the project moves through the final design and construction phases. Under Single Car LRT operations, a key part of the safety review would be the Diagnostic Field Review and Evaluation conducted by VTA, CPUC, the City of San Jose, and Caltrans. At that time, a hazards analysis would be prepared. The hazards analysis would address protection of all forms of travel in and along the

Corridor, including automobiles, transit vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact on safety because the alternatives would be designed and constructed to meet CPUC requirements.