

DOWNTOWN EAST VALLEY TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**Quarterly Status Report
March 2005**

For more information, please call VTA Planning & Development at (408) 321-5744.



Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

Conceptual Engineering

Staff is currently reviewing the final draft for the Final Conceptual Engineering (CE) Report for the Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project and anticipates completion to coincide with approval of the Final EIS/EIR. The final CE submittal will include documentation of the approved project (with selected design options); engineering plan, profile, and cross-sections; urban design concepts, with cross-sections and renderings that illustrate urban design features; station plans, including Eastridge Mall Transit Center; structural plans, elevation and cross-sections; utility and right-of-way plans; park-and-ride and storage facility plans; traffic volumes (existing, 2010 and 2025); and cost estimates. The final CE submittal is intended to provide comprehensive documentation of the project development planning process to the 10% design level.

Environmental Review

VTA submitted the administrative draft Final EIS/EIR to FTA for review on October 29, 2004. Preparation of the Final EIS/EIR required more time than expected because of the large number of comments received. Approximately 350 comments were received from 48 commentors, including 61 from the County, 60 from VEP Homeowners Association, 19 from EPA and 16 from Caltrans.

On November 2, 2004 FTA requested the Final EIS (FEIS) illustrate a funding plan that uses federal funds before the FEIS is released for public circulation. VTA proposed a solution to use federal Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) funds for pedestrian improvements in the Ocala Station area and include a funding table showing this in the Preferred Project description portion of the FEIS to satisfy FTA's concerns.

On January 3, 2005, FTA concurred with this approach but FTA noted that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) must agree to the adequacy of the archaeological findings and impacts in the FEIS before FTA can release the document for circulation. VTA staff and consultants have completed the technical work related to archaeology and have submitted documentation to SHPO. On January 18, 2005 a meeting with VTA, FTA and SHPO occurred to discuss the findings, and any remaining concerns of SHPO. The outcome of the meeting was FTA requiring VTA and SHPO agree on a draft treatment plan to be included in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the two agencies before FTA releases the FEIS. This is a new requirement of FTA. Other projects have gone through the entire environmental process before such agreements have been completed. VTA is preparing a draft treatment plan and has drafted an MOA. We expect that the draft treatment plan will be complete in March 2005 and FTA will release the FEIS for public review in April 2005. We will bring the FEIS to the VTA Board for approval on May 5, 2005.

On August 5, 2004, the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board (PAB) approved staff recommendations regarding preferred design options and phasing for the Capitol Expressway Corridor Light Rail Alternative based on conceptual engineering work, environmental technical studies, and public and policy-level input. The approved project description is summarized below.

The Recommended Light Rail Alternative would extend 3.1 miles south from the terminus of the Capitol Avenue Light Rail Transit (LRT) Line at the existing Alum Rock Station to the Nieman Boulevard Station. The Recommended Light Rail Alternative would include four new light rail stations, located near Story Road, Ocala/Cunningham Avenue, the Eastridge Transit Center, and Nieman Boulevard. The alignment of the Recommended Light Rail Alternative is shown in Figure 1.

Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

The Recommended Light Rail Alternative could be constructed in two phases: an initial phase terminating in the vicinity of the Eastridge Transit Center, and a subsequent phase terminating in the vicinity of Nieman Boulevard. The initial phase, Phase 1A, light rail would be constructed between the Alum Rock Station and the Eastridge Transit Center, a distance of approximately 2.3 miles. Phase 1A includes new light rail stations at Story Road, in the vicinity of Ocala and Cunningham Avenues, and at the Eastridge Transit Center. An expanded park-and-ride facility would be constructed at the Eastridge Transit Center. Existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes between Story Road and the Eastridge Transit Center would be removed under Phase 1A; no change to the existing HOV lanes south of the Eastridge Transit Center would occur under Phase 1A.

Light rail continuing from Eastridge Transit Center to Nieman Boulevard, a distance of 0.8 mile, could be constructed in a subsequent phase, or included as one project with Phase 1A, and is referred to a Phase 1B. Under Phase 1B, a new light rail station would be constructed north of Nieman Boulevard. Existing HOV lanes south of the Eastridge Transit Center to Nieman Boulevard would be removed under Phase 1B.

Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

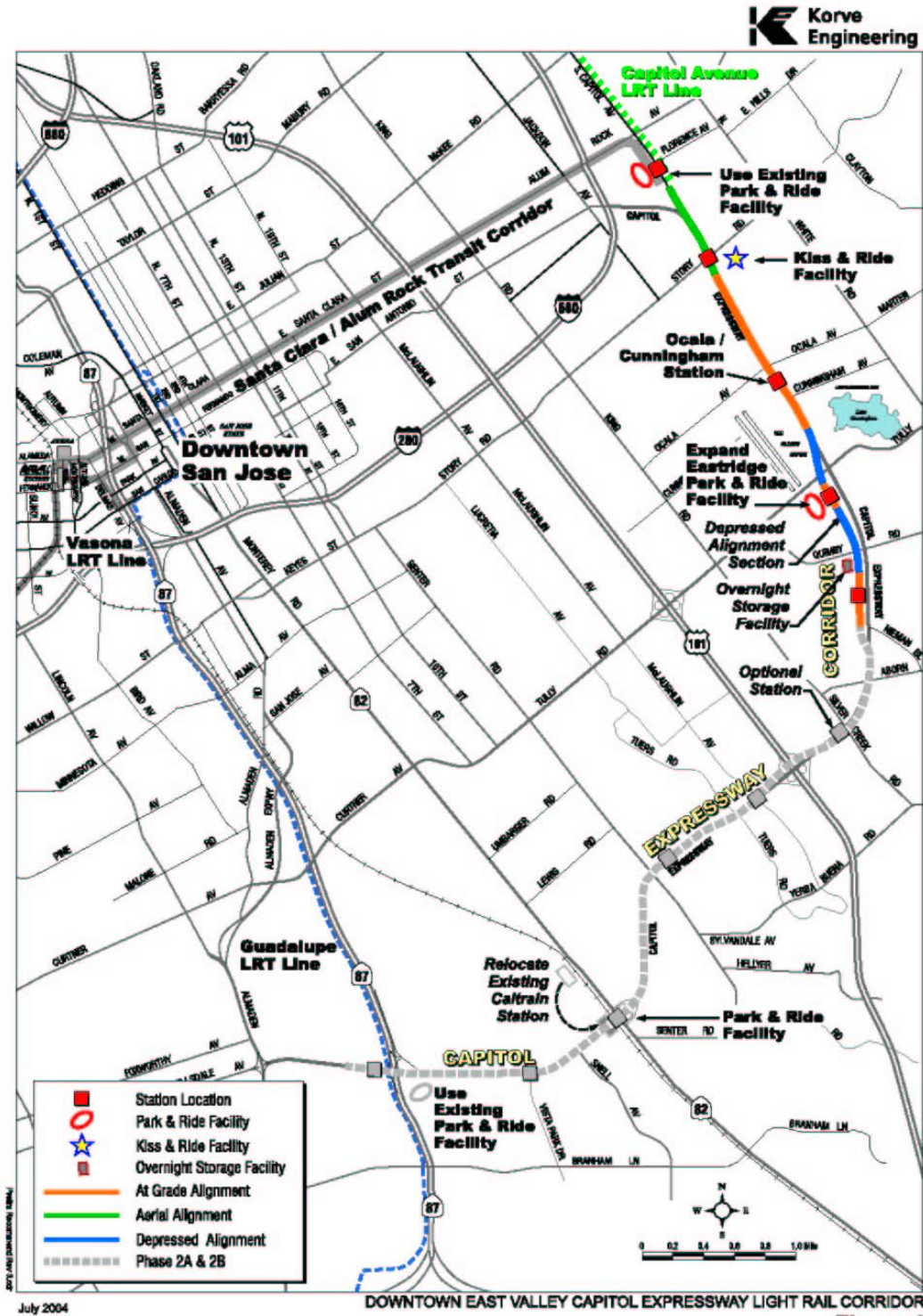


Figure 1
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Source: Capitol Expressway Light Rail Corridor Final Staff Recommendations Report Regarding Project Options Considered in the Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/EIR), July 2004

Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project

On the segment from Nieman to Route 87, all project level decisions, including design options and project phasing would be deferred until land use and transportation decisions associated with the *U.S. 101 Central Corridor Study*, and the *Evergreen Smart Growth Strategy* have been further developed and approved.

Notice of Availability of the Final EIS/EIR and VTA Board Approval

Upon release of the Final EIS/EIR from the FTA, VTA staff will send out a notice to the Downtown East Valley mailing database. A notice will also be published in the San Jose Mercury News, La Oferta, and Thoi Bau.

Preliminary Engineering (PE)

On January 30, 2004, the VTA Board approved a mid-year budget adjustment to add eleven million dollars for PE for the Capitol Expressway Light Rail segment to Eastridge and on June 3, 2004, the Board approved an additional \$5 million for PE for the further extension to Nieman.

Subsequent to a solicitation and selection process, on September 2, 2004, the VTA Board authorized the General Manager to enter into an agreement with Rajappan & Meyer, Consulting Engineers, for Preliminary Engineering for the Capitol Expressway Light Rail Extension. The contract was executed on November 1, 2004.

Highlights of the PE effort to date include:

- Initiation of pedestrian access studies at Story Road, Ocala and Eastridge stations and layout of the station areas
- Initiation of design criteria, especially for urban design
- Utility and survey base mapping

Public Involvement

Staff is updating the Capitol Expressway Fact Sheet and continues to update the Downtown East Valley web site on an ongoing basis. A meeting is scheduled in to discuss urban design elements with the community on March 9 2005, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Hank Lopez Community Center. In addition, staff attended SNI meetings in February to introduce the PE effort and notify the community of the upcoming public meeting.

Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor

Conceptual Engineering (CE)

Conceptual Engineering (CE) for the Single Car Light Rail and Enhanced Bus alternatives, including design options, continues to move forward and is near completion. The final CE report is in preparation and the technical appendices have been updated to incorporate minor design modifications that have been made over the past several months to support the completion of environmental technical studies. The final CE submittal will include documentation of the approved project (with selected design options); engineering plan, profile, and cross-sections; urban design concepts, with cross-sections and renderings that illustrate urban design features; station plans, including elevation and cross-sections; utility and right-of-way plans; replacement parking lots; traffic volumes (existing, 2010 and 2025); and cost estimates. The final CE submittal is intended to provide complete documentation of the project development planning process to the 10% design level and is anticipated to be completed after the preferred alternative is selected by the VTA Board of Directors.

On August 5, 2004, VTA staff gave a presentation to the PAB on the Preliminary Staff Recommendations Report for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor and a combined decision-making/public involvement plan for the selection of a preferred alternative and design options. The Preliminary Staff Recommendations Report identified the Enhanced Bus Alternative as the preferred alternative. In the discussions during the presentation, the PAB expressed concern regarding moving forward with staff's recommendation, the decision-making process, and planned community outreach schedule and requested a revised strategy for the September PAB meeting.

At the September 30 PAB meeting, staff presented a modified process and strategy that would continue to move the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor project forward with a side-by-side comparison of some of the elements of the Enhanced Bus and Single-Car Light Rail Alternatives. The modified decision making process included the following steps:

Step 1 – Circulate Draft EIS/EIR when released by FTA

- No “Preferred Alternative”
- Side-by-side comparison
- Expanded Citizens’ Guide
- 2 public hearings

Step 2 – PAB recommendation/VTA staff recommendation

Step 3 – Circulate Final EIS/EIR with No “Preferred Alternative”

Step 4 – VTA Transit Operations & Planning Committee

Step 5 – VTA Board of Directors

Environmental Review

The Administrative Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) was submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on July 2, 2004. FTA responded with comments on November 5, 2005. VTA staff and consultant have incorporated FTA's comments into a revised Administrative Draft EIS/EIR, which was sent to FTA on January 6, 2005. FTA sent a second round of comments on February 9, which are responding to. We are also in the process of working with SHPO to get concurrence on the map of historic properties that will be impacted by either of the Santa Clara/Alum Rock alternatives.

Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor

VTA anticipates public circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR in the summer of 2005. The SHPO review, given their workload with other VTA projects is the critical path.

Staff is preparing a comprehensive Citizens Guide that will explain the differences between the Enhanced Bus and Single-Car Light Rail alternatives and provide a side-by-side comparison matrix of specific features including environmental impacts. This Citizens' Guide is meant to be a "user friendly" reference that assists the general public in understanding the formal Draft EIS/EIR document. Staff is also preparing for the production and distribution logistics for the Citizens' Guide, including a corridor walk by staff to deliver these guides to businesses and residents along the corridor, and promote the environmental public hearing.

In addition, staff is also developing presentation materials for the Draft EIS/EIR public hearing, including a PowerPoint Presentation. A draft of this presentation will be presented to the PAB prior to the environmental public hearing for review.

Public Involvement

Staff continues to update the project website (www.dtev-vta.org) to include current project calendar information.

Preliminary Engineering (PE)

The RFP issued for PE for the Capitol Expressway Light Rail extension was written to allow VTA the flexibility to increase the scope of work for the General Design Consultant selected to include Preliminary Engineering on the Preferred Alternative for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor. Therefore, once the decision is made regarding the Preferred Alternative (i.e., Enhanced Bus or Single Car Light Rail), funds for PE are appropriated, successful negotiation of the additional scope with the design consultant and the approval of the VTA Board of a contract amendment, PE for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor could be initiated.

Monterey Highway Bus Rapid Transit

Conceptual Engineering

CE work specifically related to the Monterey Highway BRT project is still on hold as VTA investigates numerous BRT features, for example, communications, effective BRT-related roadway improvements, type of vehicle technology, and station improvements, as part of the Line 22 BRT project development. A presentation regarding BRT was presented at the August 13, 2004, VTA Board of Directors Workshop.

Environmental Review

Until the CE work progresses to approximately 65%, it is not possible to determine what type of environmental document (for example, a Categorical Exclusion/Exemption, Environmental Assessment/Initial Study, or EIS/EIR) will be necessary for the Monterey Highway BRT project.