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Boxer visits Berryessa BART site

By Wes Bowers, The Milpitas Post



Dozens of Santa Clara County economic leaders and area officials joined U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-California, on a tour last month of the newest transit station to be built in the Bay Area.

Boxer toured the site of the new Berryessa Bay Area Rapid Transit Station on Mabury Road Aug. 20.

According to BART and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, the agencies partnering on the project, Boxer was instrumental in securing a \$900-million federal grant for the Berryessa extension project earlier this year.

The Berryessa station is one of two that make up a 10-mile BART extension from Warm Springs in Fremont to a station site in Milpitas.

The other station will be in Milpitas.

The Berryessa station is part of a 16.1-mile Silicon Valley extension that will build stations in Alum Rock, near the HP Pavilion in downtown San Jose, and ultimately in Santa Clara.

The \$2.3-billion project includes annual allocations of the \$900 million grant ranging from \$59 million to \$150 million over the next seven years, \$251 million in state funding and \$1.179 billion from the Measure A sales tax.

The new station is expected to be completed and operational by 2016.

Carl Guardino, president of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, praised Boxer for her efforts to garner federal funding for the BART project.

Guardino said Boxer supported 2000's Measure A, as well as 2008's Measure B.

Measure A, approved by a 70.3 percent vote, authorized a 30-year half-cent sales tax for the

county's infrastructure project. Measure B, approved eight years later, allowed an additional one-eighth sales tax to fund the operating and maintenance costs of the BART extension.

"Senator Boxer crafted Congress and got the country moving again," Guardino said. "Her move was Herculean in getting the federal government to fund highways, byways, transportation and bike trails in Santa Clara County for the next 21 months."

Boxer said not only will the BART extension bring an alternative transportation option to Bay Area commuters, but it will put thousands to work. She added the project has created 25,070 temporary jobs and 7,400 permanent positions.

Once complete, she said an average of 90,000 riders are expected to travel on BART through the county on a daily basis. In addition, Boxer said the project will help eliminate some 3,500 greenhouse gas emissions a year.

The project, she added, is a year ahead of schedule and well under budget.

"BART to Silicon Valley has been a long time coming," Boxer said. "The area is now in for rapid economic development. This extension will improve the county's infrastructure, create jobs for California workers and alleviate congestion on the (Interstate) 680 and 800 corridors."

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed said he was most proud of the funding used for the project that came from local and state resources.

He asserted VTA, BART and local economic leaders would not be in San Jose celebrating the extension if it were not for Boxer's efforts to offer federal dollars. He added the Berryessa station is not the end of the line for county transportation.

"This is only a piece," Reed said. "BART is not going to stop here. Once we get rolling, this will go all the way through downtown and into Santa Clara."

Joe Pirzynski, a Los Gatos Town Council member and vice president of the VTA Board of Directors, said Boxer's tour was a great opportunity for the senator to get an eye-witness update on a project she helped fund.

"VTA comes in on time and under budget as much as we can on projects," he said. "We will continue to do it, until we bring this project into Santa Clara."

The Berryessa station will include a ground-level concourse with a boarding platform 35 feet above ground. A multi-story parking garage will be located near the station as well.

For more information, visit bart.gov.