



SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY HISTORY

The Beginning

On June 6, 1972, residents of Santa Clara County approved the creation of the Santa Clara County Transit District by a more than two-thirds vote. Four months later, the first transit plan for the County was adopted and VTA, known at that time as "County Transit" was born. Governed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, VTA was supported by a 29 member advisory commission and management services were provided by the County of Santa Clara. The transit district function was incorporated into the county government structure, which at that time encompassed planning and development, aviation, and road operations divisions. The road operations division was responsible for 68 miles of expressways and 79 miles of county roads, and the aviation division was responsible for the county's three general aviation airports

Arrangements were made for the County Transit to buy out the three financially strapped local bus lines and on January 1, 1973, Santa Clara County residents boarded their first publicly operated bus service. Operating with a fleet of 50 buses in serious need of upgrades and repair, VTA obtained federal funds in 1973 to refurbish the older coaches and to purchase 134 30-foot propane powered buses.

Funding

On March 6, 1976, Santa Clara County voters approved a 1/2 cent sales tax to help support VTA. As additional funding was secured, VTA continued to grow. In 1977, VTA's primary Overhaul and Repair Facility was built at the Cerone Yard. Also in 1977, County Supervisors decided to change the bus fleet from propane to diesel and ordered 102 buses. By 1979, three additional bus yards were built and commissioned into service.

Bringing Light Rail to Santa Clara County

Continuing to move forward towards the goal of building a mass transit system crisscrossing the growing urbanized area, the County received \$2 million from the federal government in 1982 to fund the preliminary engineering phase for the County's first light rail line. The construction of the line officially commenced with the construction of the light rail maintenance facility. Completed in 1986, The Guadalupe Light Rail Division, located in downtown San Jose is used to store, clean and repair light rail vehicles.

The second phase of construction and first segment of in-street track to be installed began in 1985. Although the initial tracks only spanned 1.5 miles, they were essential for testing the light rail vehicles as they were delivered. Additional tracks were installed north of San Jose in December 1987. By June of 1988, the two-mile stretch of tracks through the revitalized downtown San Jose opened for service. The entire 21-mile light rail line opened for service April 21, 1991. The County now had its first completed light rail line that ran from the suburban neighborhoods of San Jose, through downtown San Jose and north to the industrial areas of Silicon Valley.

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In December 1999, VTA opened service into Downtown Mountain View and in May 2001 opened service into Milpitas. In June 2004 VTA opened an extension to East San Jose and on October 1, 2005 the latest extension to Campbell opened.

Merger with the Congestion Management Agency

A major event and change for the organization was the January 1, 1995 selection of VTA to serve as the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Santa Clara County. This was accomplished by the signing of a new joint powers agreement by the County of Santa Clara and the 15 cities in the county designating the Santa Clara County Transit District as the CMA. This action coincided with the effective date of new legislation, which reconstituted the Board of Directors of VTA, an event which has commonly been referred to as the “separation” of the Transit District from the County. The composition of the Board of Directors changed from five directors, all County Supervisors to 12 directors, consisting of two County Supervisors, five City of San Jose council members, and five city council members selected from the remaining 14 cities in the County.

With VTA now the designated CMA, the VTA Board became responsible for multi-modal, countywide transportation planning and the integration of transportation and land use planning as well as for transit operations. For the first time, this gave a single policy board the unique opportunity to make and implement transportation policy in Santa Clara County. With representatives of 15 cities and the county, the new Board has adopted a regional approach to transit and land use planning issues.

Recognizing the change that occurred in 1995, the new name of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority was adopted in January 1996. In December 1996, a new corporate identity of VTA, or Valley Transportation Authority, was introduced.

REV 11/7/05