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CHAPTER ONE *a vision for tomorrow*



Transportation is the backbone of our economy and the connector of our communities. It binds together our daily activities and is a key input to our quality of life. Our transportation system is a shared resource and we only get out of it what we put into it. Accordingly, the decisions we make about how we travel and how we grow our cities have a profound effect on the future health and utility of our transportation system—and ourselves.



DEFINING THE ISSUES

Decades of sprawling, single-use developments have separated homes from jobs and transit, created a built environment that is unfriendly to transit and pedestrians and made us generally dependant on cars to get around. As a result, many of our communities lack coherent structure, our roadways are congested and we have limited choices about how we move about. This situation shows little sign of improving if we continue to grow as we have. Fortunately, we can learn from our past and start moving toward a more sustainable future. As an agency, and as citizens, we will need to adapt our policies and practices to meet the challenges and opportunities we face.

We need to become more efficient travelers. Over the next 25 years, Santa Clara County will grow by over 500,000 residents and 400,000 jobs—increases of 27.5 and 45.6 percent, respectively. Over the same period, we will only be able to increase

the capacity of our roadway system by 5 to 6 percent. We will need to embrace carpooling, transit, biking, walking and making shorter and/or fewer trips. We will also need to embrace new “green” technologies that will allow us to travel by more energy efficient and environmentally friendly means.

We need to develop new sources of revenue. State and Federal funding sources are shrinking and our funding needs for all transportation modes are growing. We must generate additional revenue through existing and new sources.

We need to grow smarter. We must shorten travel distances and make non-auto modes viable by creating walkable/bikeable communities and locating new growth in urban cores and near transit. We must embrace new technologies that can help us move and grow more efficiently. And we must interconnect our systems so that pedestrian, bike, transit and roadway travel are linked as seamlessly as possible.



VTA MISSION AND VISION

In 2008, VTA adopted new Mission and Vision Statements, Core Values and Strategic Goals. Together, these elements represent a philosophical and structural transformation at VTA. They are designed to meet the evolving mobility needs of Santa Clara County and reflect current economic and environmental realities. The Mission and Vision Statements are presented below. A detailed discussion of all these elements occurs in Chapter 5.

VTA MISSION STATEMENT

VTA provides sustainable, accessible, community-focused transportation options that are innovative, environmentally responsible and promote the vitality of our region.

VTA VISION STATEMENT

VTA builds partnerships to deliver transportation solutions that meet the evolving mobility needs of Santa Clara County.

Overview of VTA

VTA is comprised of multiple agency functions, and has wide-ranging authority to plan, fund and deliver the programs and projects identified in VTP 2035. As a Congestion Management Agency, transit operator, funding conduit, and designer and constructor of transit and highway projects, VTA is at the forefront of transportation in Santa Clara County. In this capacity, VTA partners with the cities, towns and the County of Santa Clara—VTA's Member Agencies—as well as intra-county agencies to develop a practical, multimodal transportation infrastructure and services.

As a special district, VTA occupies a unique position between city government and State government. It is led by a Board of Directors comprised of appointees who are directly elected to local governments within Santa Clara County. VTA has been granted tax authority status and can generate its own revenue by placing tax measures on the ballot.

TABLE 1-1 *VTA's Responsibilities*

RESPONSIBILITY	ROLE
Countywide Transportation Planning	VTA prepares the Valley Transportation Plan (VTP). The VTP is the multimodal, countywide long-range transportation plan for Santa Clara County. This plan is the foundation for the wide array of transportation investments, services and programs that VTA and its partner agencies intend to implement over the next 25 years. It is also the county's input into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which is prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).
Congestion Management Agency	As the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Santa Clara County, VTA is responsible for establishing, implementing and monitoring the Congestion Management Program (CMP).
Transportation Programming	VTA establishes the transportation capital improvement project priorities for local, State and Federal program funding. This includes transit, highway, roadway, bicycle, pedestrian and other capital projects.
Local Transportation Ballot Measure Programs	VTA is responsible for overseeing the ½ cent sales tax established by Santa Clara County voters in 2000 to implement the Measure A Transit Program. VTA also has authority to develop new measures if necessary.
Countywide Transit Planning, Development and Operations	VTA plans, designs and builds new bus and rail projects, and facilities. It also operates, maintains and improves bus, rail and paratransit service within the county.
Highway Planning and Development	VTA plans, designs and builds highway projects and partners with local, regional and State agencies to operate and maintain the local highway system.
Commuter Rail Service and Regional Partnerships	Through a Joint Powers Board (JPB), VTA partners with the San Mateo Transit District and the San Francisco Transportation Agency (SFTA) to jointly plan and fund the Caltrain Commuter Rail service which operates between Gilroy and San Francisco. VTA also establishes regional partnerships to provide the commuter rail service in the Capitol Corridor between Sacramento and San Jose, the Altamont Pass/Sunol Grade Corridor between Stockton and San Jose, and regional bus service between Santa Clara County and the Counties of Santa Cruz and Alameda.

RESPONSIBILITY	ROLE
Land Use and Transportation Integration	As the CMA, VTA is responsible for linking transportation and land use planning. VTA established the Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program as a partnership with its Member Agencies to implement its goals for land use and transportation integration.
Joint Development	VTA can enter into partnerships with other agencies or private developers to develop its land. VTA may also directly develop and manage its land holdings, and use the surplus revenues for the continued operation and development of the agency.

Table 1-1 explains VTA’s responsibilities and the specific roles VTA plays.

VTP 2035 SETTING: GROWTH, LAND USE AND EFFICIENCY

In 2008, Santa Clara County finds itself in a changing transportation environment. Fluctuating gas prices, climate change issues, dwindling supplies of traditional energy sources, frustration with traffic and a desire to limit urban sprawl are yielding new models for development. Affordable housing, transit access and a renewal in the desire for an urban lifestyle have spurred growth in existing city centers and near transit stations. Transit use has increased over the past three years and new data shows statewide declines in vehicle miles driven.

However, this transition toward a new urban and suburban form is in its infancy. The legacy of the high-tech boom—corporate campuses in

the north and swaths of neighborhoods in the south—still dominate travel patterns. The geographic imbalance of residences and job sites creates heavy morning and evening commutes that are often disproportionate in direction. However, these issues also showcase the county’s strengths and opportunities. Demand to live and work in Santa Clara County remains high and underused industrial sites are seeing new life as redeveloped residential and mixed-use areas.

GROWTH

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projects an increase of 512,900 residents and 427,480 jobs in Santa Clara County between 2010 and 2035—increases of 27 and 46 percent, respectively. These percent increases outpace the entire nine-county Bay Area, which is projected to gain 1,619,000 new residents and 1,553,860 new jobs—increases of 22 and 42 percent, respectively.

FIGURE 1-1 Bay Area Growth in Jobs

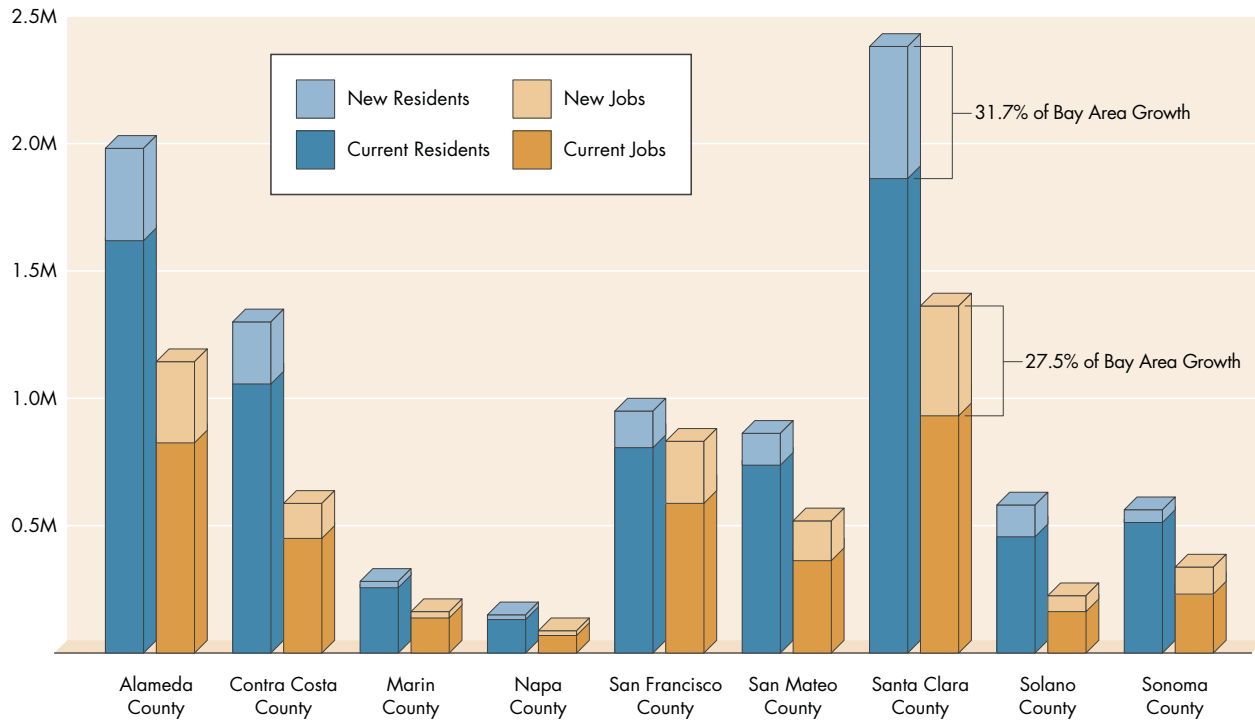
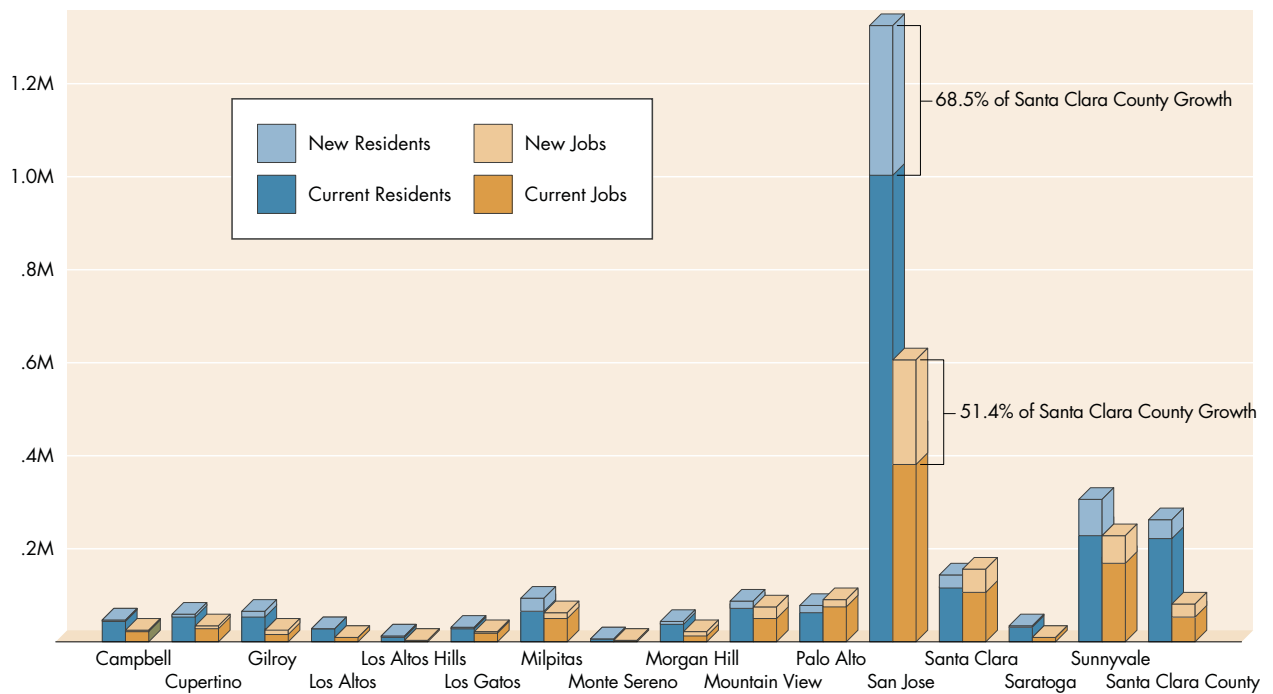


FIGURE 1-2 Santa Clara County Growth in Jobs



This growth will increase roadway demand at a rate greater than our ability to add capacity to the transportation system. It will not be possible to build our way out of traffic congestion. Rather, solutions must be found in a smarter built environment and more efficient traveling.

LAND USE

At a very basic level, we need to make our trips shorter and easier. Residences need to be closer to jobs and services and be accessible by multiple modes. This will require partnering with Member Agencies to develop a built environment that supports these objectives. Many cities in Santa Clara County have taken great strides toward these objectives in recent years by building residences near job sites and transit, establishing mixed use districts and by intensifying land uses in urban cores and transit corridors. These trends present great hope for the future and must continue. However, more needs to be done if we are to sustain and improve our quality of life and mobility over the next 25 years.

EFFICIENCY

In addition to smarter, more convenient land uses, improvements in mobility will largely be driven by improved roadway and transit efficiency and the development of a truly

interconnected multimodal system. Increases in carpooling, transit and non-auto modes like bicycling and walking will take cars off our roadways and control congestion. VTP 2035 supports these developments through projects like new carpool lanes, new metering lights, signal synchronization, new and enhanced transit services, new bicycle trails and dynamic congestion pricing.

MOVING FORWARD

Maintaining and improving the quality of our mobility over the next 25 years will be challenging. The arrival of new residents and jobs will bring opportunity and vibrancy to our communities, but will increase the demand on the transportation system that connects them. Over the next 25 years, we will be able to craft new and exciting strategies and projects, but continual State and Federal funding shortfalls means that we cannot build everything we need if we rely only on those traditional sources. VTP 2035 acknowledges these challenges and creates a framework for developing the best, most cost-effective programs and projects for Santa Clara County. It lays out sensible policies and the framework for a comprehensive plan. It is, in short, a roadmap to a promising future.