**From:** VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
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# *VTA Daily News Coverage for Monday, May 13, 2019*

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2. **Caltrain explores SF, San Mateo, Santa Clara sales tax to fund electrification (San Francisco Examiner)**
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## Express lane expansion on way (The Daily Journal)

**Next leg to be established spans from San Francisco International Airport to San Francisco**

The express lanes project in San Mateo County that broke ground in March was always meant to be just one segment of a continuous stretch of express lanes between San Francisco and San Jose.

By 2022, express lanes will be constructed on Highway 101 between Whipple Avenue and Interstate 380 and, if everything goes according to plan, those express lanes will extend north to Fourth and King streets in San Francisco by 2026. Express lanes already exist in Santa Clara County and will eventually connect to the ones being built in San Mateo County.

Express lanes promise speeds of at least 45 mph at all times by charging solo drivers to use them while buses and carpools of three people or more will be able to travel on them for free. The point is to incentivize commuters to carpool and take transit by offering a faster lane on which to travel, thereby reducing the number of cars on the road as well as congestion on the general-purpose lanes, officials claim.

Express lane tolls fluctuate based on traffic volumes and are expected to cost about $1 per mile in San Mateo County.

A study of the 11-mile segment north of Interstate 380 into San Francisco will be completed this month and will include several alternatives, Joe Hurley, director of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority program at SamTrans, said at a meeting May 2

It has not yet been decided if HOV lanes or express lanes will be constructed on that 11-mile segment so Hurley used the term "managed lanes" to delineate that those two options are still on the table.
The plan is for the managed lanes to travel on Highway 101 north of Interstate 380 and through Brisbane before shifting over to Interstate 280 at the Highway 101/280 interchange. Hurley said various constraints on Highway 101 north of the 101/280 interchange prevent that segment from accommodating managed lanes.
A minimum footprint option is to convert the left lane in both directions into a managed lane and a maximum footprint alternative is to widen the highway to allow for the creation of a new lane similar to what's being done to Highway 101 in San Mateo County.
State law only allows general-purpose lanes to be converted to HOV lanes and not to express lanes.
Preliminary estimates for the extension of managed lanes from Interstate 380 into San Francisco has been broken down by county. The minimum alternative in San Mateo County would cost between $176 million and $226 million and the San Francisco segment would cost between $188 million and $578 million. The maximum footprint option would cost $484 million in San Mateo County and between $322 million and $652 million for the San Francisco portion.
The San Mateo County express lanes segment costs $513 million, largely because of the construction of a new lane in each direction. Noting the high cost of that project and the associated freeway widening, Board Member Emily Beach, also Burlingame vice mayor, was thrilled that alternatives are being studied.
"I can't tell you how delighted and tickled I am that [we are] studying minimum footprint alternatives and not just the maximum footprint alternatives," said Beach. "A potential minimum alternative, if we can get performance, talk about tax dollar savings and philosophically what we're trying to achieve, which is to move more people and not cars."
Potential funding sources include the county's transportation half-cent sales tax Measure A and Measure W, State Transportation Improvement Program funding, RM3 bridge toll hikes and Senate Bill 1 gas tax increase, Hurley said. Future toll revenue from the San Mateo County express lanes could also be spent on the expansion of those lanes into San Francisco.
The tentative project schedule is to being the environmental phase this summer with project approval in the fall of 2021. Project design is expected to be complete by spring of 2023 with a groundbreaking in the fall of that year and construction wrapping up in the fall of 2026.
It's common knowledge that Highway 101 is regularly congested and it's only expected to worsen with the expansion of commercial and residential development, Hurley said.
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**Caltrain explores SF, San Mateo, Santa Clara sales tax to fund electrification** (San Francisco Examiner)

The governing board overseeing Caltrain is considering a 2020 sales tax to fund its electrification and expansion efforts.

That tax would go before voters in San Francisco, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, the length of the train's route, with hopes of funding Caltrain service expansion benefitting thousands of peninsula commuters. And early polling shows voters in those counties are receptive to it.

"The poll that we did as an agency was just going out and doing an early indicator of where things sit," said Jeanine Bruins, who sits on the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board of Directors, which oversees Caltrain. She was addressing the body at its regular meeting May 2, where they reviewed the poll's findings.

The 1/4 cent or 1/8 cent sales tax — which one they'd pursue, if any, has not yet been decided — would fund Caltrain's Business Plan, a proposal to plan the transportation system's growth along the peninsula in conjunction with different cities and agencies, ultimately resulting in a "long term service vision" for the corridor to define needed new stations, for instance.

Funding would also go toward Caltrain's operating budget under its soon-to-come electrification plan. Though the plan to convert to electric trains by 2022 is mostly funded through local, state and federal funds already, Caltrain's operating funds mostly come from its farebox, which depends on ridership, officials said.

That's especially challenging as ridership numbers ebb and flow. In 2018 Caltrain's ridership count was "back on the rise" by about 1.5 percent after a recent dip, according to the agency. In budget reports, however, the agency identified ridership and future dependence on farebox revenue as a "challenge."

On that matter there was support from the public: Roughly two-thirds of voters support the sales tax, the poll conducted by EMC Research found.

Despite the strong numbers, any potential sales tax would be a hard lift with voters, said board director Charles Stone, who represents San Mateo County.

"I'd wager at least a days salary that a solid 75 percent or higher of the surveyed public has no idea that Caltrain doesn't have a stable source of revenue other than fares," Stone told his fellow board members. "People probably assume that this is funded somehow through a variety of taxes already. There's a lot of work to be done."

The survey reached 1,416 likely voters to ask them about a potential November 2020 sales tax, and 1,011 likely voters to ask about a potential March 2020 sales tax, conducting roughly 400 interviews in each county, weighted to reflect actual voter population distribution. Those interviews were conducted between March 25 and April 1 this year by phone and online, in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

"Big picture findings, voters in your three-county district have an interest and a willingness to invest in improved public transit, and to reduce traffic congestion," said Sara LaBatt, from EMC research.

That last part was important, she said. Voters responded well when emphasizing Caltrain's role in taking cars off the road, thereby easing traffic.

There was no statistical difference in supporting either a 1/4 cent or 1/8 cent sales tax. The difference in funding, however, is substantial. A 1/8 cent sales tax would rake in $100 million annually for the agency, whereas a 1/4 cent sales tax would raise $200 million annually.

Voters also responded to arguments about improving air quality, as well as increasing Caltrain's speed, frequency and capacity.

While roughly 64 percent of likely voters would support the tax, that support drops significantly — down ten percentage points — when voters are exposed to potential "opposition messaging," the poll found.

At the meeting some joint powers directors voiced concern that the measure is right on the boundary of feasibility.

One expert said they're right to be concerned.

Any potential sales tax would face a harsh lift, said David Latterman, principal at Brick Circle Advisors. He worked on BART's bond measure campaign in 2016, and works with myriad transportation agencies.

"As a transportation person, is it a good idea? Sure. We oughta be paying more for all kinds of public transportation," but, he said, "as a political move it's tough."

The 2020 ballot will be crowded, he explained, as a presidential election will bring out more voters, who tend to skew younger and progressive. That means many cities and agencies will be seeking taxes on the ballot, which may see Caltrain lost in the shuffle.

And Santa Clara and San Mateo county voters tend to be drivers, he said, which may also make Caltrain's prospects dim.

"Could it pass? Sure, I don't think it's going to be easy," he said.

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## Caltrain derails in San Jose, widespread delays reported in both directions (San Francisco Chronicle)

Caltrain continued to experience major delays in both directions midday Monday after a a five-car train left the tracks earlier in the morning just outside Diridon Station in San Jose.

Caltrans spokesman Alex Eisenhart said the derailment occurred at about 9:15 a.m. on southbound train 324. Passengers were on the train but nobody was injured, and the train was close enough to the boarding platform that it was able to be quickly evacuated.

Delays of up to 73 minutes have been reported as Caltrain investigates the derailment and repairs the tracks. Caltrain officials advise checking Twitter and electronic information signs for frequent schedule updates.
Eisenhart said the car that derailed was the last car on the train. He could not specify how many people were aboard or what type of rail car was derailed. He said the car that left the tracks was still standing.
In late February, four Caltrain trains derailed in three days near Diridon station. None of the trains were carrying passengers, and the derailments took place on a stretch of tracks used for maintenance, officials said.
Monday's derailment occurred on a different stretch of tracks, Eisenhart said.
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## Mud, weeds will be dealt with on South Bay's most popular bike trail: Roadshow (Mercury News)

**Q:** My bike commute includes 8-plus miles of the Guadalupe River Trail from downtown San Jose to Gold Street in Alviso. Over the winter there was a lot of flooding on the trail. The water is almost gone, but there are huge swaths of dried or drying mud on the trail, at almost every underpass. Some of these are dangerous for bicycles.
Is there any chance you could get someone to run a street sweeper along that trail, from the San Jose airport to Gold Street? I would really appreciate it.
**Frank Klotz, San Jose**
**A:** So would the next two bikers.
***Like Mr. Roadshow's Facebook page for more questions and answers about Bay Area roads, freeways and commuting.***
**Q:** My wife and I are regular cyclists on the splendid Guadalupe Creek Trail, often doing the round-trip ride from downtown San Jose to Alviso and back. This year an unwanted byproduct of our much-needed winter rains is the unprecedented vegetation that now grows on each side of the trail, encroaching upon it at numerous spots.
Any chance the parks department can whack these weeds?
**Barry Goldman-Hall, San Jose**
**A:** Oh, yes. Crews have been struggling to respond to this year's substantial and late rains. Plus, the maintenance team currently has around four vacancies.
Up first they'll be hiring a power washing contractor to perform scrubbing at the under crossings. This should happen in the next week or so. Then the weeds will be attacked.
Full development will take several more years to close gaps, make connections between trails and extend trail systems.
**Q:** If I'm going 77-78 mph in the freeway fast lane and not impeding traffic, am I considered a "road boulder"? Apparently, some drivers behind me think so, so I always move over. Or is 80 the new 70?

**Barry Hennings, Los Altos**
**A:** I would not label you a road boulder at those high speeds, although some will. But you did right to move over for these speed demons. Get out of their way and keep yourself safe.
**Q:** Why is the center divide being torn down on Highway 101 between Embarcadero  Road and University Avenue in Palo Alto? This section of the center divide is practically brand-new.
**T. Hogan, Palo Alto**
**A:** It's to erect a taller barrier partly for the new Express Lanes that are coming from Highway 85 deep into San Mateo County.
**Q:**  We have red light cameras for good or ill in many cities. Why can't the CHP and Caltrans use them to enforce carpool lanes?
**Gary A.**
**A:** They will. New FasTrak lanes will have cameras and the CHP to keep cheating down. At least we can hope.
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## North San Jose: City could green-light more housing

(Mercury News)

**San Jose is considering updating a policy that right now effectively limits housing development**

As the nation's 10th largest city struggles to meet demand for housing, city leaders are considering a move that would add more homes at a quicker pace in North San Jose. But some people who already live in the area say the city needs to improve traffic and bring in more shops and amenities before it allows more homes to be built.

"We have concerns," said Mike Bertram, a resident of the River Oaks neighborhood and a member of the local neighborhood association. "We have concerns about them opening up that housing without doing the traffic mitigation that they had committed to."

Long eyed as a prime spot for all kinds of growth, the city in 2005 adopted a policy to add more than 25 million square feet of new office and industrial development, 32,000 housing units, almost 3 million square feet of retail and commercial space, and 1,000 hotel rooms to North San Jose in four phases. Long term, the city wants to transform the area — roughly from where Highways 101 and 880 intersect north to Highway 237 — into a walkable, denser mixed-use neighborhood where people can live, work and relax all in one spot.

To reach that goal without completely upending the neighborhood in the process, the city set a series of parameters spelling out what needed to be built or in the works before moving from one phase to the next. The policy said that developers could build 8,000 housing units during the first phase, but they would also need to build some 7 million square feet of industrial/office R&D space to move to the second phase, and so on. The policy also spelled out that both residential and employment developers would need to pay traffic impact fees that would be used to cover transportation improvements like widening Montague Expressway and improving interchanges with Highway 101 as density increased.

The housing units allowed in Phase One are almost all built, but, for a variety of reasons, industrial development, which helps pay for those transportation projects, has stalled. There was a successful legal challenge from the county and surrounding cities — Santa Clara and Milpitas — over traffic concerns, which forced San Jose to increase funding for transportation improvements. The 2008 recession hampered development broadly. And in 2012, the San Jose City Council reduced the traffic impact fee — from more than $12 per square foot to $5 per square foot — for certain industrial projects to address a vacancy rate in industrial space that had soared above 20 percent and entice more development. While that attracted companies like Cisco and Samsung, it also brought in less money from fees than the city originally anticipated.

Additionally, some 1,600 of the housing units for the first phase were supposed to be affordable. But legal challenges to a state law around rent restrictions and the economic downturn contributed to the fact that the city didn’t have a housing program to generate affordable units in place when phase one launched, meaning there were a lack of funds to subsidize affordable housing. So just 390 affordable homes have been built in Phase One.

Now, the city is considering amending its policy to go from a four-phase plan to two phases, effectively allowing another 8,000 housing units to move forward before all the original Phase One requirements are met. The City Council will hear a status report on those possible changes from city staffers on Tuesday and could take a vote on authorizing them as early as this summer.

Getting more housing built is one of the city’s main goals. In 2017, Mayor Sam Liccardo said he wanted to add 25,000 homes, including 10,000 affordable units, within five years.

“Staff anticipates that advancing the housing capacity in North San Jose is one of the most impactful work items that will move the city towards its goal of having 25,000 housing units built, under construction, or entitled by the year 2022,” reads a memo from several city staffers that is set to be discussed at the council meeting.

But the idea of green-lighting more housing in the area now has some people frustrated.

Bertram chose North San Jose two decades ago for its proximity to his job at Lockheed Martin and, at the time, its relative affordability. Back when he and his wife moved into the area, it took Bertram only about 10 minutes to cruise to work. Now, it takes almost half an hour.

And while he likes that the plan calls for new retail, not much has materialized around his home. Instead, he takes his money — and tax dollars — to nearby Santa Clara to buy groceries and go out to eat.

Bertram acknowledges that development in North San Jose is largely inevitable, but he's worried the city is "changing the rules" while hurting the community.

Councilman Lan Diep, who represents the area, doesn't see it that way.

"There's no change in total outcome," he said. "We're just changing the phasing."

Bringing in more housing, Diep said, will help bring in more amenities like grocery stores and gyms and bowling alleys.

While Diep would like to see more affordable housing get built in the area, he said, "we need to make sure we get housing" in general, meaning the city could consider reducing the affordability requirement to encourage developers.

Erik Schoennauer is a land use consultant who worked on projects involving roughly a third of the first 8,000 housing units, including the River View Apartments project.

And while he thinks that building more housing of all types is "the only solution to the housing crisis," he thinks that if the city allows housing without figuring out a way to require the other development, it will just get housing.

For instance, Schoennauer said, the city could boost other projects by requiring housing developments to be mixed use and include office or commercial space, too.

But, he cautioned, the city also needs to be careful not to impose so many requirements that it drives away developers. The fees are high in San Jose, he said, and rents are lower than in nearby cities like Mountain View or Palo Alto. Yet, the city can't reduce fees too much because then there won't be enough money for the transportation projects San Jose is legally required to deliver.

"It's a catch-22," Schoennauer said.

While the path forward still needs to be fleshed out, both residents and city officials say they want to see a North San Jose — or "Uptown," as Diep has been trying to brand the area — that is welcoming and offers enough amenities that people don't need to get into their cars and clog up neighborhood streets and expressways to find places to work and live, shop and play.

"I'm really looking to build a sense of community in Uptown," Diep said, "and trying to focus on the quality of life up there."

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## Fixing BART Doors Is A Daily Project (KCBS Radio) (Link to audio)

Every week, dozens of BART cars are taken out of service because of problems with their doors.
When the doors malfunction — often because of passengers squeezing through closing doors, according to officials — cars are taken to BART's maintenance facility in Concord. There, crews perform tasks, like checking the pressure of doors with a rod stick.
"We need to have as many cars ready as we can, so that means making sure the repairs are done correctly," said the transit agency's spokesman Jim Allison. "If somebody gets their finger caught, if the adjustment is not proper, it won't release."
The temperature of the rubber on the doors also influences whether they perform as needed.
An entire train can get knocked out of service when a rider forces open a door to get into a crowded car, according to Quality Assurance Manager Sandy Miniz. A similar situation played out last month on San Francisco's MUNI trains when a passenger got trapped and dragged on the platform.
"If there's a hundred passengers in one car times 10, you've inconvenienced 1,000 people," said Miniz.
That ripple effect happens because the operator needs to identify the broken door, said Allison.
"The train operator might have to go back through every car to find the one door that's causing the problem," said Allison. "It's an easily preventable problem if people kind of follow the rules and common sense of not forcing their way in."
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## **Staedler: Could the Sharks leave San Jose?** (San Jose Spotlight)

As San Jose prepares for its evolution into Downtown 2.0, it has to deal with the growing pains that come from such a transition.
One of the biggest challenges the city faces is its ongoing relationship with the San Jose Sharks. For decades, the Sharks have been a major stimulus and economic driver for Downtown San Jose. As any frequenter of Downtown can tell you, it’s not hard to distinguish between a night when there’s a Sharks game and when they’re away.
The SAP Center, home of the Sharks, is at the center of change because of its proximity to Diridon Station, the site of a proposed massive Google campus.
The Sharks have made it crystal clear to the city for the last several decades that any development in the Diridon area would require additional parking to be built. The agreement between the two parties requires a set number of parking spaces within a predetermined radius. An unfortunate decision was made when the revised BART plan omitted a 1,300-space parking garage near the new and improved Diridon Station.

That led to two lawsuits from the Sharks in Superior and Federal Courts challenging the environmental clearance.

While I believe that 1,300-spaces might be more than what's needed, a garage of some sort is required for BART/High Speed Rail and for the continued success of the Sharks. A sticking point to this stand-off is both principled and financial. Mayor Sam Liccardo has repeatedly said that the city is planning Diridon and downtown San Jose for people not cars.

But I believe that a middle ground can be reached between all parties without impacting San Jose's general fund.

My solution would entail the city selling garages it owns, including Market Street, 3rd and Santa Clara, 4th Street Garage, and reinvesting the money from the sales into a garage in the Diridon area.

The city could joint venture with the Sharks to develop this garage. It could use the best building practices and have the Sharks oversee the design, construction and operation of the garage. The Sharks have shown a lot of savvy and creative design with their Solar4America Ice on Tenth Street in San Jose.

I suggest building the garage on a property that the city has purchased for the extension of Autumn Street, the former Milligan News site. San Jose does not need the whole site for the extension, and it is diagonally across the street from north side of SAP.

By placing the garage on a planned arterial, a block and a half north of Santa Clara Street, it would not hurt the goals of the mayor and VTA. They can keep the pedestrian-oriented design for the Diridon Station area while maintaining their relationship with the Sharks. A 850-1,000 space garage could easily fit there and mitigate the issues from the Sharks lawsuit.

The Sharks have looked at acquiring property immediately north of the SAP Center for parking, but the site has single-family homes on it. The use of eminent domain on private land for economic development is under fire following a Supreme Court decision in Kelo v. City of New London, which affirmed the city's right to seize private property, but led to stricter eminent domain laws in more than 40 states including California.

My solution avoids this complication and provides the Sharks with certainty. Whether they take my suggestion or not, I hope San Jose can come to terms with the Sharks on this matter soon. If it lingers too much longer, my gut tells me that the Sharks will start to threaten to leave San Jose. It's the next move in the unhappy professional sports team playbook — to leverage their fan base against the city in which they reside.

I'm excited to see San Jose begin to make Downtown 2.0 a reality, but it needs to bring the Sharks along as an ally — not an enemy.

*San José Spotlight columnist Bob Staedler is a principal at Silicon Valley Synergy, a San Jose-based land use and development consulting firm. His columns appear every first Monday of the month. Contact Bob at [bob@svsynergy.com](mailto:bob@svsynergy.com) or follow @BobStaedler on Twitter.*

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**From:** VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 14, 2019 11:15 AM
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# *Daily News Coverage for Tuesday, May 14, 2019*

1. **New Charcot Avenue overpass could ease I-880 woes: Roadshow (Mercury News)**
2. **Santa Clara VTA Speed Policy hopes to encourage cooperation (Mass Transit Magazine)**
3. **SamTrans Tests On-Demand Shuttle Option for Pacifica Neighborhood (KQED.org)**
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5. **Mastercard, Visa to roll out transit payment innovations (SmartiCitiesDive.com)**

## New Charcot Avenue overpass could ease I-880 woes: Roadshow (Mercury News)

**Q:** Of all the eligible projects to receive money from Santa Clara County's Measure B sales tax, the one that will receive $37 million over the next few years is the Charcot overcrossing of Interstate 880 in North San Jose. Looking at all the congested freeways and interchanges, I'm surprised that this project is prioritized by the Valley Transportation Authority. It seems such a weird and misplaced allocation of taxpayer money.

**Robin Roemer**

**A:** Maybe not. The Charcot bridge over 880 could ease traffic woes along Montague Expressway and Brokaw Road, which now serve as the best ways to get onto 880. There will be no ramps, so no merging chaos of an interchange, and hopefully will provide a good connection for people to walk and bike over the freeway, in addition to driving without the stress of on- and off-ramps.

Construction could begin in 2022.

**Q:** Who designed the "fix" to the exit from northbound Interstate 280 onto Lawrence Expressway? It continues to be a messy backup at all hours of the day. Those getting off Lawrence who want to turn right on Stevens Creek Boulevard have to edge their way over three or four lanes and totally clog the system. It would seem that people who want to exit 280 onto Lawrence should have a flyover and not have to contend with everyone else making their way to Stevens Creek. This is a disaster. Unbelievable.

**Marcia H., San Jose**

**A:** But it is easier to make a right turn onto Stevens Creek.

**Q:** In writing about how long it might be before the 101-880 interchange is fixed, you said when man lands on Mars. How about when a woman lands on Mars?

**Sheila Norton, San Jose**

**A:** Point made.

**Q:** A reader named Vince Matthews said, “I can’t even pull out of my driveway and go 20 feet without hitting a pothole.”
I had the same problem with the street in front of my house in Menlo Park. After fuming at the city for a year or so, I took action. I went to the local hardware store and spent 10 bucks on 2 bags of cold patch asphalt. Then I blocked one side of the road with traffic cones a contractor had abandoned, squared up the jagged edges of the pothole with a pickaxe and dumped the asphalt in.
I ran my SUV over the cold patch a few times to compact it and problem solved! Made me feel great every time I drove over the spot without rattling my suspension or raising my blood pressure.
**John Kelley**
**A:** John, I have a few dozen streets where your strategy could help.
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## [Santa Clara VTA Speed Policy hopes to encourage cooperation] (Mass Transit Magazine)

**Santa Clara VTA will ask cities to adopt their own compatible policies that give transit greater priority and to ensure that future growth will not make transit slower.**
**TAMIKO PERCELL**
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is reasserting its commitment to improving the speed of transit with a new policy that calls for something that hasn’t been done before: ask cities throughout Santa Clara County to put transit first.
VTA will ask cities to adopt their own compatible policies that give transit greater priority and to ensure that future growth will not make transit slower.
Over the past 30 years, Santa Clara County has grown by more than 400,000 people, which has led to increased roadway demand and increased congestion. Over that time transit speeds have declined by about 20 percent resulting in transit service that is less appealing and more expensive for VTA to operate. In some locations, traffic signal timing has been changed in ways that makes transit wait for longer periods, which hurts on-time reliability.
As our county becomes more urban and travel demand increases, we need to think about how to move more people in less space which makes transit a crucial component for mobility.
So how do you make transit faster? The solutions fall into two categories: things VTA can do alone and things that require help from cities.
VTA can make its transit routes straighter and more direct— as is proposed in the new transit service plan—and can lengthen the distance between bus stops so that buses spend less time stopped and more time moving. We’re currently analyzing our frequent network (bus lines that offer more frequent

service) to see where stops can be removed or relocated to allow for faster, more reliable service. VTA will also explore ways to make boarding the bus faster, like all-door boarding. And we now allow riders to purchase their fare before boarding the bus right from their cellphone with EZ Fare.

Faster transit requires help from cities because cities control many of the factors that slow buses and trains down like traffic signal timing, how road space is allocated and how cities grow, which affects where congestion occurs. The Transit Speed Policy asks cities to change how they prioritize road space and to focus on moving people instead of cars. That means more green lights for high-capacity, space-efficient modes like transit and bus-only lanes where traffic congestion slows buses down. Making these kinds of changes will mean that cars receive lower priority, perhaps waiting a few more seconds at a red light. But buses can move more people at one time than cars, so efficiency takes a front seat here.

The hope is that this policy will allow us to accommodate future growth without getting bogged down by more congestion. When the amount of service and the appeal of service increases, more people feel inclined to take transit, which is good for moving everyone, transit riders and car drivers alike.

*Tamiko Percell is a transportation planner for Santa Clara VTA*

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## **SamTrans Tests On-Demand Shuttle Option for Pacifica Neighborhood** (KQED.org)

SamTrans has launched an on-demand shuttle program in the Linda Mar neighborhood of Pacifica, a service that replaces a discontinued "flexible" bus line.

The yearlong pilot program is offering point-to-point rides anywhere within the Linda Mar area for the standard fare of $2.25 a ride. Riders will be able to request a trip through the SamTrans OnDemand smartphone app or by calling the SamTrans customer service center, and they can then track the shuttle's location through the app in real time.

“It's a way of getting bus service into more low-density areas that may not necessarily have a large enough population to really pack a fixed bus route,” said SamTrans spokesman Dan Lieberman.

The former Pacifica FLX service ran on a fixed schedule and route -- but with advance notice would pick up Linda Mar riders anywhere with half a mile of its route.

Jason Henderson, a professor of geography and environment at San Francisco State University, said this kind of service isn't necessarily new.

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"A lot of big urban public transportation agencies have historically offered — at least since the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, but some before

that — a kind of demand response for seniors, for the disabled, to connect to hospitals, et cetera," Henderson said. "It's a part of the public transit service, but it was tricky because it had to be scheduled, and it's very expensive per rider."
Henderson said point-to-point service is necessary to serve groups like the disabled, the elderly and people in outlying areas with limited transportation access.
"SamTrans and these other public transit agencies have an obligation to provide wheelchair access and have drivers that know how to deal with seniors and can be respectful towards them and helpful," he said. "So, this kind of service is very important, and I'm just glad to see that it's staying within the public realm of the transit system, rather than punting it off."
Elliot Martin, research and development engineer at UC Berkeley's Transportation Sustainability Research Center, says these transportation programs are emerging because transit agencies have long struggled in areas with low ridership, but where service still has to be provided.
"This is a potential means for agencies to provide that kind of mobility potentially better, because technology now enables us to communicate our origins and our destinations better," said Martin. "It also may be a way for these agencies to deliver that service at a lower cost."
SamTrans is not the only Bay Area transportation agency to launch an on-demand transit option. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority and AC Transit have also launched these services in recent years with varying degrees of success.
VTA's on-demand FLEX service pilot program, which started and ended in 2016, didn't catch on.
"At the conclusion of the six-month pilot period, staff determined that ridership levels were not sufficient to extend the program in view of its high operating cost and low farebox recovery," said Holly Perez, a VTA spokeswoman.
However, AC Transit's Flex program has had success since its initial pilot in 2016. According to the transportation agency, that program was launched as an alternative to the elimination of service in areas of low ridership in the East Bay. It's enabled riders in Castro Valley and Newark to book trips from selected bus stops using a computer or smartphone. In March 2018, the board of directors voted to continue the Flex service beyond its initial pilot year.
"During the pilot year, over 700 unique customers tried Flex, completing 23,000 trips and returning 70 percent of the time after taking their first trip," said AC Transit spokesman Robert Lyles.
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## Could Trump’s Tweets Stall High-Speed Rail in California?

(San Jose Inside/Metro)

The $79 billion High-Speed Rail that promises to connect northern and southern California could be stalled in its tracks by a new obstacle: the Trump administration.

The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) has refused to meet with the California High-Speed Rail Authority following a series of tweets from President Donald Trump in which he threatened to pull federal funding for the project, according to a High-Speed Rail 2019 project update report May 1.

“On Feb. 19, 2019, the FRA administrator notified the Authority of the FRA’s intent to rescind the $929 million in federal FY10 grant funds,” the update stated. “The FRA also indicated that it was evaluating taking back the $2.5 billion in ARRA [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act] funds that were awarded to the Authority and which has been fully expended in compliance with federal requirements and deadlines.”

The FRA did not comment on the pulled funding, but a source in the administration told this news organization that the FRA is still reviewing the High-Speed Rail Authority’s response to the notice of pulled funding.

High-speed rail in California has been the subject of controversy for more than a decade, but as the project progresses, the High-Speed Rail Authority has continued to modify plans and attempt to appease critics. The train would run through Santa Clara County, which already has officials in San Jose and South County talking about massive revitalization from a new High-Speed Rail station in Gilroy which would promise a 25-minute commute to the heart of Silicon Valley.

Morgan Hill has had a tumultuous relationship with the rail authority, having lobbied for years—with no discernible result yet—to keep the train route out of the city’s downtown and avoid demolition of long-established businesses and neighborhoods.

The authority released the 2019 project report May 1. The update addresses funding shortages, Gov. Gavin Newsom’s Feb.12 State of the State address and the Trump administration’s hostility toward the rail project.

Each even year, the authority releases a business plan. The last plan was released in 2018. In between business plans, the authority delivers a “project update report” to the state. The report is not voted on, but goes through state senate committees where High-Speed Rail Authority answers questions.

**Political Problems**

Newsom’s address called for a change in the rail plan, when he told Californians the project would shift focus to completing the portion of the project that would connect the Central Valley, Merced to Bakersfield. The announcement did not initially shift plans or the timeline of the project, but

Northern California Regional Director Boris Lipkin said it may affect the project as planning continues.

Since February, there has been radio silence regarding funding and environmental clearances by the FRA. Following the State of the State speech, Newsom engaged with Trump on Twitter in response to tweets that threatened to pull federal funding allocated to the rail project. Lipkin said these weren't empty threats and that the federal government has not engaged with the authority in the months since the address.

The silence from the federal government was addressed in the update report and identified as a risk to the project's completion.

Lipkin told this paper that the federal representatives have not showed up to scheduled meetings with the Authority and are not reviewing federally required environmental projects that would move the rail along.

"At some point, they will become big issues," Lipkin said.

"This disengagement by the FRA represents an unprecedented federal government action to cripple the advancement of a project it has helped fund. On March 4, 2019, Authority CEO Brian Kelly sent two letters to the FRA seeking re-engagement and the restoration of a functional partnership on this project," the update said.

"Those letters have been unanswered by the FRA after nearly two months," according to the report. "The 2018 State Audit recommended that the Authority develop a contingency plan if at any time the ARRA grant requirements could not be achieved. It will not be possible for the Authority to develop or finalize a contingency plan without proactive engagement by the FRA."

**Routes and Rights-of-Way**

While the Central Valley line construction gets increased attention, the authority is continuing work on the preparation for the other lines, including the "valley to valley" line from San Jose through Bakersfield.

The authority has long planned for a single stop in the South County in Gilroy; however, the rail line will run through Morgan Hill and Pacheco Pass. These plans have not changed, but the exact recommended route has not yet been selected.

The NorCal recommended routes are set for release in July, according to Lipkin. Gilroy has remained the South County hub in the recent iterations of the rail plan.

"Positioned in a key location to become a central transportation hub, the city of Gilroy lies approximately 32 miles south of the city of San Jose. At the southern tip of Santa Clara County, Gilroy is not only the first Bay Area stop on the Silicon Valley to Central Valley Line; it is also a gateway north to Silicon Valley and the greater ... Bay Area and provides access to future rail service south into the Central Coast," read the update.

"High-speed rail development in Gilroy is expected to spur increases in transit, additional rail service, and local and regional development. With continued growth in the Silicon Valley, including the new Google facility in downtown San Jose, Gilroy is ideally situated to take advantage of the potential for economic growth."

While the plans in Northern California have not fallen behind the projected timeline, complications with federal funding, getting environmental documents approved by the federal government, and additional focus on the Central Valley line threaten the timing of the work in the Bay Area.

"This plan is really focused on living within our means," said Lipkin.

Merced to Bakersfield is still projected to be finished in 2028, and Lipkin said the authority is focusing more effort into connecting existing transit options to the two hubs, while the rest of the High-Speed Rail is in construction.

The stop in Gilroy is positioned by the authority as a catalyst for more public transportation options in the area.

The update identifies "electrified blended service to Gilroy (High-Speed Rail/Caltrain); Salinas Rail (TAMC), Salinas Rail Kick Start Project; Monterey Branch light rail line, Monterey to Castroville; and Santa Cruz passenger rail to Pajaro," as public transportation benefits that would come with High-Speed Rail in the South County.

**Funding and Timelines**

The portion of the project that would run through Pacheco Pass is a major funding challenge for the project, which has never had all of the money necessary for completion.

"The availability of sufficient funding presents the biggest challenge to the authority and the greatest risk to delivering both the Silicon Valley to Central Valley Line (Valley to Valley) and Phase 1," read the update. "This challenge extends further than the present threat from the FRA, although the FRA's current position compounds the problem."

The project update provides new numbers for the cost of the Central Valley and Silicon Valley lines. The base price for the line that would run from San Jose to Bakersfield is estimated at $31.3 billion with a high projection of $36.8 billion.

Phase one of the High-Speed Rail project, which includes the Central Valley line completion and Silicon Valley line attachment, is now projected to have a base cost of $79.1 billion and a high cost of $98.1 billion.

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## Mastercard, Visa to roll out transit payment innovations

(SmartiCitiesDive.com)

- Mastercard has announced a partnership with mobility data platform Kisio to streamline transit ticketing by embedding Mastercard payment and security technology into Kisio's trip planner.
- Kisio, a subsidiary of public transport operator Keolis, joined Mastercard's City Possible initiative, which seeks collaboration around smart city projects. According to an announcement from both

companies, cities from the network will be invited to join a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) platform that integrates payment and local transit information in the coming months.

- Separately, Visa said it would support India's National Common Mobility Card, an all-in-one payment card that works on public transportation, railways, parking and retail, according to a report in LiveMint.

**Dive Insight:**

Transit agencies around the world have tried to modernize their payment and ticketing platforms to make it easier for riders to adopt them as a mobility option. Mastercard has already been a leader in that space, working with regions like Dallas and Miami-Dade County to roll out a contactless transit fare payment system, which will also come to New York City soon.

The new partnership with Kisio will bring those payment options into a MaaS platform, making it possible for users to plan out trips, get directions and make payments all in one space.

Visa's government-backed payment card also fits into a broader trend of cities trying to help unbanked citizens. Oakland, CA and New York City are among those that have put finance information on their ID cards, which could be used for transit fares and other services, while cities like London have introduced bundled payment cards that can be used for multiple mobility services.

In a bid to reverse declining ridership, transit agencies have sought out new platforms, apps and especially payment options to demystify the process. Apple, for example, has partnered with three cities to institute contactless payment. Others have embraced apps like Transit, which can plan multi-modal trips that include ride-sharing and driving, or simply built their own bundled mobility apps.

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**From:** VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2019 3:58 PM
**To:** VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
**Subject:** From VTA: May 15, 2019 Media Clips

# *Daily News Coverage for Wednesday, May 15, 2019*

1. On these housing vs. jobs choices, San Jose went with housing (Silicon Valley Business Journal)
2. $8 billion in offices, retail and housing to be built next to Levi's Stadium (SF Chronicle)
3. Viva CalleSJ: San Jose 'open streets' event returns Sunday (Mercury News)

## On these housing vs. jobs choices, San Jose went with housing (Silicon Valley Business Journal)

More housing, even if it comes at the possible expense of jobs, was the theme of Tuesday's San Jose City Council meeting.

The council voted to rejigger the formula by which it balances commercial and residential development in North San Jose so it can continue to develop housing there even though the pace of office development is severely lagging.

Separately, the council then rejected a city staff recommendation to save a piece of industrial land near Santa Clara University and voted to allow the university, which owns the parcel, to build a 290-unit apartment development there, which it hopes will stanch the loss of faculty and staff for itself and two Catholic high schools because of a paucity of affordable housing.

Leading both efforts was Mayor Sam Liccardo, who rarely makes a public speech in which he doesn't bemoan San Jose's jobs-housing imbalance — unique among major U.S. cities — which he blames for a city budget that's light on business-generated tax revenue and heavy on municipal service-consuming neighborhoods.

In North San Jose, Councilmember Lan Diep's district, the new plan will allow the city to fast-track development of 8,000 new housing units. Twenty percent, or 1,600, of those units will be designated affordable.

Without Tuesday's unanimous vote, San Jose would have had to wait for 3.4 million square feet of industrial construction before beginning the housing because the overall housing quota in the first phase of a four-phase development plan for the area has already been achieved. Each phase calls for 7 million square feet of industrial development and 8,000 housing units.

By condensing four phases into two, however, the city can get the next tranche of housing in the pipeline, said Chris Burton, deputy director of San Jose's economic development office.

However, the original plan also called for 20 percent of each phase's housing to be affordable and the city failed to keep that commitment in Phase 1. Only 390 units were affordable of the 7,937 that were built — less than 5 percent

Now that Phases 1 and 2 have been combined into the new Phase A, the city is far behind on the new goal and does not have a plan to erase the affordable deficit.

"That seems like quite a burden on residential developers coming in," Diep complained to Burton. "The idea is we want impose more fees or whatnot on housing developers. But do you have an idea of how we're going to go about doing that?"

"We are still developing policy ideas," Burton replied. "We don't have them formulated and solidified yet to share with you, but we're looking at different policy options to add."

Liccardo urged that the issue of how to meet the affordable goal be postponed.

"I'm hoping that there will be a day soon when this market will normalize and we'll actually see more housing getting built and I think we can make a better decision," he said.

**Santa Clara project**

Liccardo and other council members fretted about the Santa Clara project from the dais, but only Diep voted against it.

"It's the larger existential problem that we have as a city where we are housing the workforce of Santa Clara, Milpitas and all these other surrounding cities," Diep said.

The university plans to set aside 20,000 square feet of the project to a business incubator, which might create jobs in San Jose as well.

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## $8 billion in offices, retail and housing to be built next to Levi's Stadium **(SF Chronicle)**

Related Santa Clara, one of the largest projects in the Bay Area, will create over 9 million square feet of offices, housing, hotels and retail on 240 acres next to Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers.

Developer Related Cos. plans to start construction next year on the $8 billion project, previously known as CityPlace Santa Clara, which survived dueling lawsuits between Santa Clara and its neighbor, San Jose. The first phase will open in 2023.

In a battle over Silicon Valley's future growth, San Jose sued Santa Clara in 2016 and alleged that the project, which includes 5.4 million square feet of office space and 1,680 housing units, would lead to more housing demand and additional traffic in San Jose.

In response to San Jose's lawsuit, Santa Clara sued to block Santana Row, a large office project planned in San Jose. The two cities settled both lawsuits last year, allowing both Related Santa Clara and Santana Row to be built in exchange for payments to both cities to fund transit improvements.

The amount of housing was limited because the site was previously used as a landfill, and required additional environmental approvals, according to Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor. She said other parts of the city will add more housing, such as the adjacent Tasman East area, where 4,500 units are planned.

The project will replace an underused golf course at 5155 Stars and Stripes Drive, she said. Legal challenges aren't fully resolved: David's Restaurant, a tenant on the existing site, is fighting a city eviction and use of eminent domain.

Stephen Eimer, a Related executive vice president, said the developer was attracted to the site because of its proximity to transit from the Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority and Amtrak and Altamont Corridor Express trains. VTA light rail trains will connect to Caltrain stations in Mountain View and San Jose and a soon-to-open BART station in Milpitas. (The project website confusingly notes that BART is coming to the city of Santa Clara in 2025. While technically true, that station is six miles away from the stadium area and will not offer convenient transit connections.)

The project will generate $17 million in annual taxes and fees and create 25,000 jobs. It includes 170 affordable housing units. An additional 700 hotel rooms are planned.

It will be one of the largest new shopping centers in the region, with 1 million square feet in retail space. Department stores were originally planned, but as consumer spending has shifted online, much of the focus will be on food.

"The vision for retail has changed since they first presented," Gilmor said.

The project will include a food market similar to San Francisco's Ferry Building, Eimer said. Restaurant tenants are expected to sign on by early next year.

"We're partners with some of the world's best restaurateurs," he said.

The project is reminiscent of Related's biggest project, the $25 billion Hudson Yards in Manhattan, which also includes a mix of housing, office and retail among multiple skyscrapers.

The difference will be height. Hudson Yard's tallest building is nearly 1,300 feet, while Related Santa Clara will rise up to 219 feet above sea level, or about 12 stories.

Eimer said the project's mix of different elements and pedestrian-friendly nature is unusual for Silicon Valley, and reflects the desire of both companies and residents to be near entertainment and food. A new 30-acre public park will also be built.

The project is being designed by prominent architecture firms Foster + Partners, which designed Apple's new circular campus, and Gensler, whose clients include Nvidia and Facebook.

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## Viva CalleSJ: San Jose 'open streets' event returns Sunday **(Mercury News)**

Viva CalleSJ, San Jose's popular "open streets" event, returns this Sunday with a new spring edition. For several hours, about six miles of streets through downtown and East San Jose will be closed to vehicle traffic but open to cyclists, runners, walkers and skateboarders.

Of course, nobody told Mother Nature, so the last legs of this week's unusual May rain still may be lingering when the opening ceremony takes place at Emma Prusch Farm Park at 9:30 a.m., with Mayor Sam Liccardo and former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, now an executive at Lyft, kicking things off.

"Open streets" events have been taking place in other U.S. cities and parts of the world for years, and San Jose started its fall event in 2015. But Neil Rufino, deputy director of San Jose's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Dept., says there has long been a desire to increase Viva CalleSJ's frequency.

"We've always had a goal to have this seem like part of a lifestyle effort, more of a program than a one-off special event," he said

The event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., is recycling the "Downtown and East Bound" route from the program's first year, with Market Street (and later South First Street) closed from St. James Street south to Keyes. Story Road will be closed from Emma Prusch Farm Park's site on King Road west to First Street, and Willow Street will be closed from First Street west to Highway 87. There'll be several places along the route where vehicle traffic can cross, and activity hubs with food trucks and live music at public spaces along the way.

St. James Park will have a Pokemon Go scavenger hunt. Plaza de Cesar Chavez will host an "international village" and include activities aimed at older adults. Hands-on arts and crafts activities will be held Parque de los Pobladores in the arty SoFA District, and Emma Prusch Farm Park will be the site of the Silicon Valley Bikes festival as well as other performances.

Rufino says the family-friendly event, which draws about 100,000 people of all ages, is a good way for people to get to know their neighbors and explore parts of San Jose they might not normally get a chance to. “Being more physically active is part of the event,” he said, “and we also want people to support all the businesses along the route, too.”

You can get more information at www.vivacallesj.org.

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**From:** VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
**Sent:** Thursday, May 16, 2019 12:27 PM
**To:** VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
**Subject:** From VTA: May 16, 2019 Media Clips

# *VTA Daily News Coverage for Thursday, May 16, 2019*


1. Highway 87 paving will begin next week: Roadshow (Mercury News)
2. Big new mega village will be launched in Santa Clara (Mercury news)
3. Caltrain grade crossing elimination back on Palo Alto City Council's agenda (Business Journal)
4. Caltrain hits, kills woman in South San Jose (Mercury News)
5. A woman of influence: Sarah Hersom aims to reshape Bay Area traffic (Business Journal)
6. In Shift to Electric Buses, China Is Ahead of US (Transport Topics)
7. FTA has more than $423 million in available bus grants (Mass Transit Magazine)


## Highway 87 paving will begin next week: Roadshow

(Mercury News)

**Q:** Highway 87 from Taylor Street to Highway 85 is an embarrassing disgrace, especially as it usually the first road out-of-town visitors encounter as they leave San Jose International Airport. Is there any hope that this section of 87 will be repaved in the near future?

**Donald Barnett, San Jose**

**A:** Is next week good enough? On Monday, Caltrans will begin a summer-long job to repave the freeway between Capitol Expressway and Curtner Avenue. Work will be done at night and may close two lanes.

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## Big new mega village will be launched in Santa Clara

(Mercury news)

**Project would create 25,000 jobs**

A vast village of offices, hotels, shops, restaurants, a movie complex, a food market, open spaces, and homes is about to get underway in Santa Clara and could eventually accommodate tens of thousands of jobs, officials said Wednesday.

When complete, the new village would dramatically reshape the north side of Santa Clara and potentially bring 25,000 jobs to Silicon Valley. The early stages of construction will begin this month on the 240-acre project, located near Tasman Drive and Lafayette Street.

“This is going to create a wide range of jobs,” said Steve Eimer, an executive vice president with Related Cos., the principal developer of the huge project, currently dubbed Related Santa Clara.

All told, the project will include 5.4 million square feet of offices, 700 hotel rooms, 1,680 residential units and 1 million square feet of retail, food, beverage, and entertainment spaces.

The first phase of the project is expected to consist of a 440,000-square-foot office building, a 430-room hotel, and some residential units. A hotel operator hasn’t been picked for the first hotel. The second hotel will operate under the Equinox brand, according to Eimer.

The development is expected to begin site preparation during May, and construction should start sometime in 2020.

“We can provide something for everyone,” Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor said.

One major challenge for the project: the potential for mammoth new traffic jams in the vicinity U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 237, which already are choked with vehicles. Light rail is in the area, but the development is at a considerable distance from Caltrain and theoretical future BART stops.

The development would also sprout in a city that’s been on the receiving end of criticism for decades of failing to approve enough housing to accommodate the steadily expanding workforces of an array of tech titans.

The project will also contain a city center that could effectively serve as a new downtown district for Santa Clara, whose traditional downtown is relatively inactive.

“The central part of the development will feature the project’s restaurant, retail, and entertainment space, and will serve as the main gathering area for visitors, shoppers, and workers,” Related stated in a development overview.

The principal designer of the development, Foster + Partners, also helped design the Apple Park complex in Cupertino that features the tech titan’s iconic “spaceship” campus, according to Mark Guberman, a partner with the London-based architecture and design firm.

The developers emphasized that employment opportunities will range well beyond positions for highly skilled technology workers.

“There will be tech jobs in this project, and there will also be sales-related jobs, food, beverage, and hotel employment,” Eimer said. The project could generate $17 million yearly in taxes.

Newmark Knight Frank, a commercial real estate firm, will scout for tenants for the office portion of the project.

A series of office buildings will be perched on the perimeters of the development and will likely be designed to appeal to big tech companies that in recent years have demonstrated a relentless hunger for elbow room in the form of mega campuses, large chunks of land, or both.

The first phase of the development is expected to be open to the public by 2023, Related executives estimated.
“Related’s Santa Clara development is a unique mixed-use destination, on a scale and scope never before seen in Silicon Valley,” said Phil Mahoney, executive vice chairman with Newmark Knight Frank.
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## **Caltrain grade crossing elimination back on Palo Alto City Council's agenda** (Business Journal)

For the second time in a month, Palo Alto City Council is scheduled to wrestle today with how the community will cope with more and faster passenger rail service along the Caltrain corridor that could tie up traffic at four grade crossings in town.
It could result — after years of debate — in finally abandoning the idea of putting the railroad in a multibillion-dollar tunnel beneath the city as well as refinements to the idea of a shorter tunnel south of the city’s main Caltrain station downtown.
The city’s staff asked for direction April 22 on what to include in a work plan to come up with Palo Alto’s preferences in doing away with the grade crossings at Charleston Road, Meadow Drive, Churchill Avenue and Palo Alto Avenue. Councilmember Alison Cormack said she was ready to abandon the tunnel idea then.
Simply rebuilding each of the grade crossings, which are places where cars and trains cross each other’s routes on the same level resulting in auto traffic having to wait as trains pass through, costs about $100 million each.
A tunnel that would place the railroad below ground level from near the city’s southern border with Mountain View north to Channing Avenue, eliminating two grade crossings, could cost between $2.8 billion and $3.4 billion, according to a 2017 study. But construction would require moving the railroad tracks temporarily onto land now occupied by Alma Street, a major north-south corridor, and closing it at either end of that project.
On April 22, the council voted to devise a new business tax for the fall 2020 ballot that could be a source of funding for these kinds of transportation projects. Last week it voted to more than double the “transportation impact fee” charged to developers of new office developments in the city that might also provide revenue.
Caltrain’s new business plan, still under development, coupled with the addition of California high-speed rail, could result in grade crossings being blocked for as much as 45 seconds every three minutes during peak commute times during the day, according to city planners.

## **Caltrain hits, kills woman in South San Jose** (Mercury News)

**Northbound train hit woman near Capitol Station**

A woman was hit and killed Wednesday morning by a northbound Caltrain in South San Jose, according to the transit agency.
At about 7:40 a.m., a woman on the tracks near the Capitol Station was hit by train No. 227, according to Caltrain. At 8:10 a.m., Caltrain said all trains "are currently stopped in the area so that emergency personnel can investigate the scene."
Caltrain said the person was an "adult female" but did not immediately provide an age.
There were approximately 304 passengers on the train, and no reported injuries onboard, Caltrains said. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority provided a bus bridge for riders from the Capitol Caltrain Station to the San Jose Diridon Station.
The San Mateo County Sheriff's Transit Police Bureau, who patrols the Caltrain corridor, is investigating the fatal incident. The Santa Clara County Medical Examiner will make a determination on whether the woman's death was intentional or an accident.
"No matter what the circumstances, it is always regrettable when a life is lost," the transit agency said in a statement. "Caltrain reminds everyone to be safe around train tracks."
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## A woman of influence: Sarah Hersom aims to reshape Bay Area traffic (Business Journal)

Some people speak of feeling the earth move under their feet when something really important happens to them. If they live anywhere near Sarah Hersom's project sites in the Bay Area, it may just be her work shifting thousands of tons of rock in massive underground projects.
Encouraged by her father to study engineering, Hersom almost blundered into civil engineering as her calling. Now, working as a licensed civil engineer for HNTB Corporation, she has a leading role in reshaping how traffic flows for millions of Bay denizens as engineering manager on VTA's BART Silicon Valley Phase II extension to San Jose.
This gargantuan project, involving thousands of workers and countless hours of painstaking planning and execution if it's going to work at all, is at least partly dependent on the bright young engineer with a 1-year-old she likes to play with when she gets home from reshaping the earth all day.
**Advice you would give your 18-year-old self:** "Aim high, confidently pursue your passions, you will never have it all figured out, and don't be afraid to fail!"
**Little-known fact:** "When not at work, you can find me playing with my 1-year-old daughter or training for my next marathon."
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**In Shift to Electric Buses, China Is Ahead of US** (Transport Topics)

Plodding down DeKalb Avenue in Brooklyn is a bus moving under the power of an eerily quiet motor. It looks newer than most buses on the route, with a vivid digital display facing the driver and doors that part with a futuristic pneumatic swoosh. Commuters trundling aboard at rush hour don’t seem to realize this is one of the few electric buses—300 last year, to be exact—in America.

In China, an electric bus wouldn’t be unusual at all. Out of almost 425,000 e-buses worldwide at the end of last year, some 421,000 were in China. The global e-bus fleet grew about 32% in 2018, according to a Bloomberg report released May 14, with the vast majority hitting the road in China. Europe had only 2,250 electric buses, by Bloomberg’s count.

China’s municipal e-bus fleet is projected to rise to more than 600,000 by 2025, according to Bloomberg, at a time when the United States is expected to have nearly 5,000. “There’s no industrial policy in the U.S. for e-buses,” said Nick Albanese, a New York-based analyst at Bloomberg. “So unless the U.S. manages to become a big exporter of e-buses, China will continue to stand apart.”

China takes a typically top-down approach to its manifest destiny of vehicle electrification: Establish national mandates, subsidize manufacturers and nurture policy competition among its cities. At least one U.S. presidential candidate is pushing for all new buses nationally to be zero emissions by 2030, but today the United States on a federal level is using none of China’s policy tools. The European Union will require some new buses to be emissions-free by 2025; climate-conscious California, meanwhile, will require all new buses to be zero emissions starting in 2029. Bloomberg estimates that 18% of China’s bus fleet already was electrified at the end of last year.

Why do buses matter? They’re big, and they’re in almost constant use compared with passenger cars — and that means hefty greenhouse gas emissions. Bloomberg estimates that 500 barrels of diesel are displaced each day for every 1,000 e-buses on the road.

In our third episode of RoadSigns, we ask: How does AI change trucking's back office? Hear a snippet from host Seth Clevenger, above, and get the full program by going to RoadSigns.TTNews.com.

American cities are just starting to tiptoe into the e-bus market. Of the Metropolitan Transportation Agency’s 5,700 municipal buses in New York, just 10 are fully electric now and 15 more are on the way, according to a spokesman. The biggest city in the United States has been more successful at incorporating hybrid buses, which number 1,700. The agency’s announcement of its initial e-bus rollout came alongside news that it also had ordered 110 new compressed natural gas buses for use in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

The approach for many U.S. municipalities is to consider e-buses only when existing vehicles reach the end of their useful lives. An average bus lasts about 12 years, according to Bloomberg’s Albanese, and so only about 5,000 new buses are added across the United States each year.

By 2030, e-buses should be cheaper upfront in most countries, according to Bloomberg. For now, however, cost can be a deterrent. E-buses are cheaper to maintain than diesel models, but many U.S. transit agencies have separate budgets for acquisition and maintenance. California-based e-bus manufacturer Proterra Inc. is trying to address this issue with a battery-leasing program meant to lower upfront costs and enable transit agencies to tap their maintenance budgets for batteries, just as they would for diesel fuel.

The strongest hope for the United States to catch up to China in e-buses comes from its strength in technology. North America already is home to multiple electric-bus manufacturers focused on winning domestic orders. By the time electric buses reach cost competitiveness, these companies could have an edge of their own. The e-bus race won’t be settled on scale alone.

“While Chinese companies get more support, the best electric vehicles have been engineered and manufactured by American companies,” said Ryan Popple, CEO at Proterra and a former executive at Tesla Inc. “I like that matchup.”

So far, China enjoys most of the advantages. It “single-handedly” created the global e-bus market, Albanese said, and its centralized government can implement strong policies with speed. China also is home to some of the world’s biggest battery makers, giving domestic bus manufacturers easy access to the costliest component of electric vehicles.

China in 2009 began prioritizing the electrification of its public-transit system, part of its strategy for dealing with widespread urbanization while reducing fossil-fuel imports. That set in motion a series of comprehensive policies, regulations and subsidies that birthed a new industry. A decade later, the results are tangible: China is by far the world’s single biggest market for electric vehicles of all types, and Shenzhen is the global leader in e-buses, followed by Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou.

These factors have most benefited BYD Co., which evolved from a manufacturer of batteries for brick-size cellphones and digital cameras in the 1990s into a colossus that sells as many as 30,000 electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids every month in China. BYD buses are used in about 300 cities globally, Chairman Wang Chuanfu said in an interview, and the company is aiming to double bus sales in Europe every year for the next three years. BYD’s hometown of Shenzhen alone has about 16,000 e-buses, according to Bloomberg.

China’s strategy is complete electrification of its bus fleet. “It’s not like the approach taken by other countries, to only buy electric buses as additions,” Wang said.

The newness of China’s cities — without entrenched bureaucracies that may resist change — also is an edge. “You don’t run into incumbent bias when you’re building out a new fleet,” Popple said. Plus, emerging Chinese cities are building transit routes with blank slates, Albanese notes, while many U.S. transit agencies face the prospect of integrating vehicles with charging requirements into established lines.

In China, with help from government policy, electrified public transport came first.

“In the West, it’s quite the opposite. The subsidies are primarily to private vehicles, not public transportation,” BYD’s Wang said. “We propose to governments that they need to learn from China’s example of a staged transition.”

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## FTA has more than $423 million in available bus grants

(Mass Transit Magazine)

**Projects would replace, rehabilitate, lease or purchase buses and related equipment, including storage and maintenance facilities are eligible for the funding.**

FTA has more than $423 million in available bus grants

Projects would replace, rehabilitate, lease or purchase buses and related equipment, including storage and maintenance facilities are eligible for the funding.

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the opportunity to apply for approximately $423.3 million in Fiscal Year 2019 competitive grant funding for transit bus projects. The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program is authorized to improve the condition of bus infrastructure by funding the replacement and rehabilitation of buses and related facilities.

"This significant transit investment will help communities throughout our country modernize their bus fleets and create more efficient, cleaner transportation options," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao

Projects eligible for this funding opportunity include those that would replace, rehabilitate, lease or purchase buses and related equipment. Other eligible projects involve purchasing, rehabilitating, constructing or leasing bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance.

"Transit buses provide a vital service for millions of Americans every day," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. "This program is an excellent opportunity for communities to enhance the safety and reliability of their buses and improve mobility for their residents."

FTA will award the grants to eligible recipients, including fixed route bus operators, states and local governmental entities that operate fixed route bus service, and Indian tribes. Projects will be evaluated by criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. As required by law, the program allocates a minimum of 10 percent of its funding to rural bus needs. The application period will close on June 21, 2019, at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time. Federal public transportation law (49 USC § 5339(b)) authorizes FTA's competitive Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program through FY 2020. In the previous round of grants, the FY 2018 Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program funded 107 projects in 50 states and territories totaling $366.2 million.

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**From:** VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
**Sent:** Friday, May 17, 2019 11:10 AM
**To:** VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
**Subject:** From VTA: May 17, 2019 Media Clips

# *VTA Daily News Coverage for Friday, May 17, 2019*


1. Opinion: How BART extension connector would strengthen Bay Area (Mercury News)
2. Major California housing bill from Sen. Scott Wiener put on hold until 2020 (San Francisco Chronicle)
3. Feds, high-speed rail trade barbs as Trump administration revokes critical $1B grant (Business Journal)
4. FRA cancels $929 million in California high-speed rail funds (Progressive Railroading)


## Opinion: How BART extension connector would strengthen Bay Area (Mercury News)

**When neighborhoods and groups feel left out, public consensus erodes, partisan bickering explodes, and the entire region suffers**

The latest wave of research – from the Cleveland Federal Reserve, the International Monetary Fund, and others – is demonstrating what seems to be a bit of common sense: economic growth is stronger and more sustainable when prosperity and opportunity are shared.

So why is there a debate about whether the region should complete the Eastridge to BART Regional Connector Capitol Expressway Light Rail Project?

The connector is the last portion of the Capitol Expressway Transit Improvement Project and will extend light rail from the Alum Rock Light Rail Center to the Eastridge Transit Center. The project was first approved by voters in 1996 and has had a long road to actual implementation. The Eastside community – a nearly majority immigrant area with higher poverty rates and higher transit needs than the rest of Santa Clara County – has been patiently paying taxes and eagerly waiting its turn.

After all, the connector will have the ability to connect residents to jobs, entertainment, the airport, universities, and more. Imagine the small businesses on the Eastside being able to more quickly connect with their suppliers; imagine high school students more easily being able to access college courses at Ohlone Community College; imagine residents being able to take BART to jobs at NASA, Lockheed Martin, Apple, Facebook, and so many other employers; imagine getting to enjoy a game at Levi Stadium without the hassle and environmental burden of driving.

Such are the benefits for residents of Eastside San Jose. But there are positives for the region as well. In research conducted with my colleague

Chris Benner (UC Santa Cruz), we looked at the experience of 11 metropolitan areas and showed that when civic leaders have each other's backs politically, regions can make the tough decisions needed to move forward as a whole. When neighborhoods and groups feel left out, public consensus erodes, partisan bickering explodes, and the entire region suffers. Ensuring high quality access to the transit system for these Eastside residents is also living up to a promise made long ago — and it's also just a start to achieving equity.

In recent research on regional development, our team at USC's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity found that equitable implementation of transit requires prioritizing investment that will close racialized gaps fostered in the past, fostering partnership through the planning and development process in the present, and taking into account how the investment will impact the place in the future.

Critical to equitable implementation is including the perspective and well-being of communities that have typically faced barriers to opportunities, as is often the experience of communities of color like those on the east side of San Jose. It's also crucial to plan ahead so that investment brings local benefits to local people and doesn't just trigger yet another wave of Bay Area displacement.

As we all know, mass transit options help people become less dependent on cars and thereby reduce pollution. But, if done thoughtfully and strategically, transit can also reduce inequalities connecting residents to opportunities as well as decision making processes. Transit has the unique potential to make regions more efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable—all at the same time—and with the Eastside BART connector, Santa Clara County could show us all how it's done.

*Manuel Pastor is a professor of sociology and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California*

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## **Major California housing bill from Sen. Scott Wiener put on hold until 2020** (San Francisco Chronicle)

State lawmakers dealt a sharp setback Thursday to a San Francisco senator's efforts to spur denser housing around public transit and in residential neighborhoods, shelving until 2020 a high-profile bill that would curtail local governments' ability to block certain apartment and condominium projects.

State Sen. Scott Wiener promised to press on with his bill, SB50, after the Senate Appropriations Committee declared it would hold the measure for the rest of the year. The delay could give the Democrat more time to build support or make further changes to the deeply divisive legislation.

“It was the time to take a breath. We took a breath,” said state Sen. Anthony Portantino, a Democrat from La Cañada Flintridge (Los Angeles County), who chairs the committee. “It doesn’t mean we’re not going to focus on solving the housing crisis in California. It just means that this isn’t the right fix at this time to do that.”

Wiener crafted SB50 to try to satisfy critics who killed his previous attemptto override local development controls before it got out of its first committee last year. He said he was disappointed that the Appropriations Committee had held the bill after it received nearly unanimous support in two previous panels, and that Portantino had not offered any amendments that might have allowed the bill to advance.

But Wiener also said he was not done fighting and would look for a way to revive SB50 this year, suggesting the Senate had “opportunities to reverse course.”

“There’s momentum behind this bill,” he said. “It’s not over.”

SB50 would override some local zoning by requiring cities to allow buildings at least four or five stories tall within a half-mile of major transit stops, such as BART or Caltrain stations. It could also remake suburban California by removing density limits in wealthy communities with good schools and access to jobs. That raised the possibility of apartments and condominiums in what have historically been single-family neighborhoods.

While labor and business groups backed Wiener’s bill, it faced enormous resistance from local governments, which worried about losing control over how their cities grow. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors formally opposed SB50, as did many communities on the Peninsula and in the East Bay suburbs. Advocates for affordable housing also raised concerns about the potential for gentrification pushing more low-income Californians out of their homes.

An earlier deal that Wiener reached to exempt counties with fewer than 600,000 people from several of the measure’s provisions had allowed SB50 to pass a tough committee vote last month. But critics still panned the bill as a one-size-fits-all approach.

Portantino said he would prefer legislation that provides financial incentives to cities to build more. He disagreed with how SB50 would supersede local governments’ decision making and its expansive definition of public transit, which includes bus lines that run frequently. He questioned whether that would undermine the bill’s environmental goals of getting more people out of their cars.

“We’re trying to expand light rail. We have to be cognizant of not creating a disincentive,” Portantino said. “If you’re a community out there and you’re considering light rail, do you say the price of light rail is losing local land-use authority? That could be a steep price for some small cities.”

While local governments contend that market forces beyond their control have caused California’s housing shortage, Wiener blames overly restrictive zoning as the biggest impediment to more construction. He chided Portantino for standing behind "a system of almost pure local control."

"The system that he's advocating for has failed," Wiener said, noting that the state's net housing growth last year was down by nearly 10% from 2017. "The proof is in the pudding."

He could get a boost from Gov. Gavin Newsom, who lightly scolded opponents of SB50 at an event in San Francisco.

The governor did not endorse the bill — and has declined to do so in the past — but said California must "get serious about increasing supply" of housing.

"This is serious stuff, and I admire and applaud Sen. Wiener for his doggedness and leadership," Newsom said. "Those who oppose it, I appreciate, but what are they promoting as an alternative to address this issue with the kind of certainty and aggressiveness that is required at this moment?"

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## **Feds, high-speed rail trade barbs as Trump administration revokes critical $1B grant** (Business Journal)

The battle between the Trump administration and California's high-speed rail project has reached the he-said-she-said stage.

In its 25-page letter Thursday to the California High-Speed Rail Authority revoking a nearly $1 billion construction grant and further endangering the slow-moving project, the Federal Railroad Administration said the project under construction is not what it agreed to partially fund back in 2010.

The FRA went on to detail dozens of instances where it says the authority failed to file adequate reports to fulfill the grant's requirements. "There is nothing in the FRA's long working relationship with CHSRA to suggest that CHSRA would likely be able to initiate and complete the necessary corrective actions," wrote the agency's administrator, Ronald Batory.

The rail authority foreshadowed that possibility two weeks ago in a project update report to the California Legislature and signaled its legal strategy for the lawsuit Gov. Gavin Newsom promised Thursday to keep Washington's money flowing.

The rail authority labeled "the FRA's lack of engagement" on the project as "a major risk" in several areas including environmental clearances, funding to complete the first construction segment in the Central Valley, development of an operational contingency plan and certification of work and operations.

Loss of the grant would be a major blow to the project, said CFO Russell Fong, but it might be possible to make up the deficit with high-speed rail's share of revenue from California's cap-and-trade market if they continue to run above projections. Budgeted at $500 million a year, cap-and-trade produced $767 million for high-speed rail in 2018.

Unlike those Democrats, Fresno's Republican Assemblyman Jim Patterson said Thursday's letter is "the beginning of the end" for California bullet train ambitions.

The Trump administration and the rail project have been in full feud mode since February when Newsom said in his State of the State speech that there was only enough money on hand to build an operating railroad between Merced and Bakersfield 171 miles apart in the Central Valley.

It was the fifth time since voters approved almost $10 billion in state Proposition 1A bonds for the project in 2008 that the initial operating segment — though not the total project — had been redefined.

But it was the first under the Trump administration, which immediately announced that it would try to "claw back" $2.5 billion in federal grants that had already been spent and said it planned to revoke the $928.6 billion awarded in 2010 but unspent so far.

High-speed rail CEO Brian Kelly wrote letters in March to both Batory and FRA program delivery director Jamie Rennert urging them to reconsider.

"The FRA's threat to terminate funding under the FY10 Agreement on two weeks' notice is a sharp departure from the productive, collaborative relationship previously enjoyed by the FRA and the CHSRA," Kelly wrote to Rennert.

Nevertheless, the grant reporting inadequacies in the funding revocation letter date back to the Obama administration, which awarded all of the federal funding.

Beginning in the third quarter of 2016, the FRA's letter said quarterly budget reports were inadequate and the FRA has rejected those quarterly reports since Q2 2017. Quarterly reports on state spending have been inadequate since Q4 2016 and rejected since Q2 2017. Annual deliverables reports on program management plans, work plans and the financial plan in the Central Valley have been either inadequate or rejected since 2016.

"Indeed, since 2014, CHSRA has not submitted a single satisfactory and acceptable (project management plan)," Batory's letter says.

The federal disengagement issue in high-speed rail's May project update primarily concerns how to expedite environmental reviews for construction north of Madera to Merced and south of Shafter to Bakersfield, segments added to the Central Valley as a result of Newsom's redefinition of it after taking office this year.

**Infrastructure priorities**

Ever since President Trump, who then was pressing for a huge federal infrastructure program, asked states in February 2017 to submit a list of infrastructure projects to be speeded up, high-speed rail has been on California's list.

That summer the rail authority suggested a mechanism to accomplish that: Let California do the federally required environmental clearance work under NEPA — the National Environmental Policy Act — at the same time it does environmental work to comply with state law. The state already builds highways with what's known as "NEPA reassignment."
That permission was never granted, adding cost and delaying the project, the rail authority's report to the legislature said. "The FRA's environmental staff would not provide direction, participate in meetings, review documents nor act on critical decisions. These inactions have affected documentation progress in nearly all project sectors."
In an interview earlier this month on the report, project COO Roy Hill told the Silicon Valley Business Journal that "we need to reengage with the FRA, which we've had a really good relationship with in the past. We had positive engagement and we achieved great things because we were very much on the cusp of signing the assignment agreement, which would have allowed us to have NEPA."
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## **FRA cancels $929 million in California high-speed rail funds** (Progressive Railroading)

The Trump administration yesterday formally canceled nearly $929 million in previously awarded federal funds to California's high-speed rail program.

In a May 16 letter to California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Chief Executive Officer Brian Kelly, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) said it was terminating its agreement to obligate $928,620,000 in funding to California because the state had not made "reasonable progress on the project."

The FRA announced the agreement termination after rejecting an appeal from state officials to reconsider the agency's announcement in February that it intended to cancel the agreement.

Additionally, the FRA said it was considering "all options" to seek the return of $2.5 billion in federal funds that the state has already received for the project.

FRA officials announced their intention after California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in February that the state would scale back its planned $77.3 billion plan to build a Los Angeles-to-San Francisco high-speed rail line due to cost hikes and project delays. Instead, the state would focus on a shorter route in the Central Valley, Newsom said.

Following that announcement, President Donald Trump said he wanted the federal government to seek the return of the project's federal funding.

In a statement yesterday, Newsom said the federal government's action is "illegal and a direct assault" on the state.

"Just as we have seen seen from the Trump administration's attacks on our clean air standards, our immigrant communities and in countless other areas, the Trump administration is trying to exact political retribution on our state," said Newsom. "This is California's money, appropriated by Congress, and we will vigorously defend it in court."

Meanwhile, the CHSRA earlier this month released a draft supplemental environmental report on the Merced-to-Fresno segment of the high-speed rail line. The document was issued to meet requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The authority is accepting public comment on the document through June 20.

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