From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
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VTA Daily News Coverage for Monday, February 25, 2019

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The price of growth: Alum Rock businesses at risk of displacement **(San Jose Spotlight)**

From the outside, nothing stands out about the mid-size commercial lot home to about a dozen businesses on the corner of Alum Rock and Foss Avenues.

But inside these businesses, a vibrant Latino presence takes place. Busy shopkeepers toil, taco-truck patrons laugh and cheer at the soccer game during lunch and local neighbors stop in just to say hello.

Situated deep in East San Jose, the neighborhood of Alum Rock feels like a small town, worlds away from the hustle and bustle of Silicon Valley's mighty money-making tech empire. At its heart is Alum Rock Avenue, home to hundreds of Latino-owned businesses, where Spanish banter prevails and the aromas of carnitas and corn tortillas saturate the air.

For 15 years, David Ruiz and Luis Holguin have been at the center of this small enterprise. They operate two businesses inside a small building at 2350 Alum Rock Avenue, Ruiz selling western Mexican wear and Holguin providing money transfers and mobile cell services.

Ruiz, 38, owner of Vaqueros Boots, came to the United States as a kid with his family from Oaxaca, Mexico. His business — bounteous with traditional Mexican cowboy boots, Folklorico apparel, and stacks of sombreros — represents the strenuous effort he's made to provide for himself and his family.

Similarly, Holguin, 46, came with the hope of attaining the American Dream. He still remembers the joy when in his first week of work, he was able to buy himself a television. “It opened my eyes,” he said. “I can pay for more than just rent and food. That would’ve never happened to me in Mexico.”

And over the years, the two associates have grown to be more than just business partners — they’re great friends. “We met here at this lot and and he helped me launch my business,” said Holguin. “We were able to help each other out. We are like family.”

As East San Jose becomes more appealing to developers with San Jose’s BART extension nearing and VTA’s rapid-service line construction along Alum Rock Avenue, some residents worry that these changes will bring dilution and displacement.

The neighborhood has already started to brave these realities. Ruiz and Holguin were notified that the land beneath their businesses was sold to a developer interested in transforming the lot into affordable housing.

“They didn’t tell us anything and we haven’t heard anything, absolutely nothing,” Holguin said. “Now we have to prepare to close.”

“If they would give us an idea, help us feel better about our concerns, or tell us their plans, we would find a way,” added Ruiz. “But right now we know nothing, and they’re keeping us in this state of uncertainty.”

While residents are reluctant to see their communities change, city leaders are focused on solving the region’s housing challenges, exacerbated by rising inequality, homelessness and a declining quality of life.

But local residents and community advocates feel that their voices are being sidelined.

“I’ve been trying to convey to our city leaders that this is taking down local family-owned businesses,” said Jesus Flores, a local business owner and President of Alum Rock Santa Clara Street Business Association. Last November, Flores sent a letter to city leaders addressing displacement concerns, asserting that “each and every one of these new developments will be directly displacing local family-owned businesses.”

To Flores, the distinction between family-owned and small businesses is important to recognize. Unlike small businesses that can have up to 500 employees, family-owned businesses employ a handful of employees. Many owners depend on their businesses to sustain their families, Flores added, and cannot compete with franchises like “the Panda Expresses and Jamba Juices.”

And many businesses in the area, such as Holguin’s and Ruiz’s, depend on one another.

“We understand that there’s a housing crisis, and were not against development,” said Mimi Hernandez, District 5 Neighborhood Commissioner and Co-Chair of local nonprofit Rise UP

Alum Rock! "The developer has not been forthcoming in his transparency with the community or asking us for our feedback."

"This is the part of town that gets disrespected the most," she added. "We're just a working class neighborhood. Developers told us that the city will take care of you, but the city has not taken care of us. These developers feel they can just come in and roll over our neighborhood. We welcome new development, but it breaks my heart. They need to meet us halfway."

About two weeks ago, a small business anti-displacement research study proposed by Eastside Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco was approved. Carrasco is a big ally, Flores said, but it's not enough to address the need for affordable housing while combating gentrification.

"With the investment in mass transit, there's development interest," said Carrasco's chief of staff Frances Herbert. "In California that's our goal, to put in affordable housing, and we're trying to figure out how to do that and keep our local communities in place."

East San Jose nonprofit Somos Mayfair recently held a community meeting discussing the potential displacement from the housing projects. To many in the community, terms such as "gentrification" and "displacement" are new and alarming.

"These projects are supposed to create more opportunities," said Zelica Rodriguez, the nonprofit's associate director. "But without these kinds of community processes, the things that we're seeing are going to speed up. People are leaving San Jose. How do you stop the bleeding?"

As city leaders and community advocates continue to scramble for answers, the future of many East Side businesses hangs in the balance amid growth and future development. For business owners such as Holguin and Ruiz the future could mean leaving the South Bay.

"If this keeps happening, I'll have to leave the city," said Ruiz. "Maybe Modesto, it's an opportunity for me."

"Same for me," responded Holguin. "I'm looking at Stockton, that's an area that's much more economical for us."

Dear Gov. Newsom: Please keep your train promise **(Business Journal)**

With hundreds of thousands of new jobs being created in Silicon Valley while barely tens of thousands of new homes are planned, the need for access to affordable housing is acute. That's emphasized by the nearly 200,000 trips a day on California State Route 152 and Interstate 580/680 flooding into Silicon Valley from the north Central Valley each workday morning.

Those poor souls, the best and brightest recruited from around the world by our tech leaders, are stuck in traffic twice every workday from two-and-a-half hours to sometimes double that time one way for the approximately 150 miles of roadway. They leave home before daylight and return home after dark, missing family time and becoming physically and mentally exhausted.

That growing crisis is what made the promise of high-speed rail in California so attractive. The trip from Fresno to San Jose — 185 miles of tracks for the Valley-to-Valley connection — was expected to be less than one hour, on time, rain or shine.

But it's now in danger given Gov. Gavin Newsom's decision to halt portions of the project. In his first State of the State address, Newsom said he wanted to focus high-speed rail on a Merced-to-Bakersfield run through the Central Valley, putting off any route into Silicon Valley until some undefined point in the the future.

The new governor's move doesn't just put high-speed rail's route into the Bay Area at risk. Caltrain's planned extension from San Jose south to Gilroy could be in jeopardy, too, since both systems would share the same rail corridor.

As he visited Silicon Valley campaigning for his current position, Gov. Newsom — then lieutenant governor and a former San Francisco mayor — promised San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and others of us that he would support high-speed rail. And in Fresno during the campaign, he explicitly endorsed the Valley-to-Valley connection.

Before the governor's surprising announcement earlier this month, Silicon Valley political and business leaders strongly promoted the Valley-to-Valley high-speed rail connection and were proactively preparing a world-class interchange at San Jose's Diridon Station. The vision was to have the station connect three commuter rail lines, BART (by 2028), light rail, buses, bicycle lanes and pedestrian access.

Right now, the Caltrain line from San Francisco to San Jose is being upgraded for electric trains to create a "melded," automatic train controlled service to assure safety when used by both Caltrain and high-speed rail. Funding to extend that electric rail service south to Gilroy, a big step toward the Central Valley, was available.

But Gov. Newsom seems to be proposing a shift of more than $3 billion of those funds to a connection between Madera and Merced, which had not been funded in the first phase of the high-speed rail project.

With no added funds projected — not to mention the latest development out of Washington, that President Donald Trump wants to halt nearly $1 billion from going to California as he demands that the state repay $2.5 billion in federal funds already allocated for rail — the San Jose to Gilroy segment would get delayed and could derail our Valley-to-Valley connection.

The governor says he hasn't abandoned the more expansive high-speed rail plan. A clear affirmation of his support for a rail extension from San Jose to Gilroy would help settle the issue.

This isn't the time to change tracks. It's the time to retain funding for that first step, the rail connection to Gilroy — a necessary link for both Caltrain's extension and to bootstrap high-speed rail to Silicon Valley — to protect our environment, employees, commerce and … prove that campaign pledges do matter.

Can America Still Build Big? A California Rail Project Raises Doubts **(New York Times)**

The state's governor has sent an expensive high-speed rail project into disarray. If California can't build it, who can?

FRESNO, Calif. — In a neighborhood littered with derelict warehouses, Miguel Arias pointed to a wide strip of dirt where California's high-speed rail, one of America's most ambitious and divisive infrastructure projects, has been taking shape.

The son of Mexican farmworkers and a newly elected member to the City Council in this sprawling Central Valley city, Mr. Arias is hoping the train will deliver to Fresno the California dream that long ago bypassed the impoverished region.

"We've been feeding the nation for decades and now we have a chance to feed ourselves," Mr. Arias said. "This will be the first step into the middle class."

But California's newly installed governor, Gavin Newsom, in his first major address to lawmakers this month, sent the project into disarray. The governor announced that the project, which was expected to connect the Central Valley to Silicon Valley, would be dramatically scaled back because of exorbitant costs.

For now, the train would begin and end in the Central Valley, the governor said, making no mention of a connection to the coast, where most of the region's people — and opportunities — reside.

Mr. Newsom has since sought to walk back his remarks. But the portion of the rail line to Silicon Valley is still underfunded by at least $9 billion, and the governor's comments have prompted deeper questions about America's ability to think big and work together on complex public works projects, an area that seemed to have bipartisan support during the last presidential election before it was perennially deferred.

If anything, the confusion and recriminations over high-speed rail seem to show that the nation's partisan divide extends to infrastructure. Mr. Newsom's speech led to a spirited Twitter exchange with President Trump, which then devolved into a much more serious — and for California a potentially financially calamitous — dispute over funding. The Trump administration has canceled or is trying to claw back as much as $3.5 billion in federal allocations from California.

For Mr. Newsom, who has been governor less than two months, the rail episode was a searing introduction to the combative national political scene in the Trump era. The California media called the governor's position incomprehensible, critics called the project a train to nowhere and a cartoon mockingly portrayed a high-speed train full of cows.

Mr. Newsom announced this month that the high-speed rail would be dramatically scaled back because of exorbitant costs. He has since sought to walk back some of his remarks.CreditJim Wilson/The New York Times

Mr. Newsom announced this month that the high-speed rail would be dramatically scaled back because of exorbitant costs. He has since sought to walk back some of his remarks.CreditJim Wilson/The New York Times

"He pretty much killed the project with that speech," said Ray LaHood, who served as transportation secretary in the Obama administration. "I was shocked. It was very shortsighted and no vision for rail."

Although California's project has gotten the most attention, other states are considering high-speed rail projects. Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington has proposed an international high-speed line that would connect Vancouver to Seattle and Portland. Private investors are pushing for a train that would link Dallas to Houston. But no other project is further along than California's.

Mr. Newsom campaigned on a vow to tackle the state's extreme inequality. But his high-speed rail position seemed, if anything, to highlight that California's new divide is between east and west, more than north and south.

Of any state in the union, California might seem best positioned to carry out big infrastructure projects: Flush with revenues, the state is controlled by a single political party, and its citizens regularly vote to raise their own taxes for a variety of projects and government services.

"California built the world's greatest water conveyance system, one of the great highway systems, a great university system," said Dan Richard, who stepped down as chairman of the rail project's board of directors on Tuesday. "When did we lose our confidence in our ability to do this stuff?"

Even before Mr. Newsom's comments, the project was troubled by repeated delays and cost overruns. The overall cost, estimated at around $45 billion when financing was approved by voters a decade ago, has now swelled to as much as $98 billion.

California's High-Speed Rail Authority, which is running the project, was established 23 years ago. During that time China has built 16,000 miles of high-speed rail.

The first phase of California's project, 119 miles through the Central Valley, will not be completed until 2022.

Even if it does continue, the project is likely to face more legal challenges and opposition. Though surveys suggest it still has majority support, especially among younger voters, many in the state, particularly in Republican pockets, oppose it.

“I think high-speed rail is dead in California in this form,” said Representative Kevin McCarthy, the Republican who represents Bakersfield. “The governors’s own words rightfully acknowledged, this costs too much and has taken take too long.”

But the project also has some disinterested skeptics who say they are not convinced that it made economic sense in the first place.

“I am a huge fan of infrastructure investment for many many reasons,” said Lawrence H. Summers, who served as Treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton. “But in the case of California high-speed rail, I am very skeptical as to whether the numbers work in terms of the benefits exceeding the cost.”

The places where high-speed rail has been most successful, Mr. Summers notes, in Asia and Europe, are more densely populated and therefore more conducive. America is a largely suburban nation where most commuters drive to work alone. “America is the land of sprawl,” he said.

The need for increased infrastructure investment has been one of America’s few remaining bipartisan issues, although left and right differ over whether public money or private money would finance it. President Barack Obama made reinvesting in roads, bridges and power plants a cornerstone of the 2009 economic stimulus package, and during the 2016 presidential campaign seemingly the only disagreement Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump had on infrastructure was about which of their administrations would spend more on it. The issue unites truckers and train buffs, unions and Wall Street, economists from the left and right.

And yet, when it comes to spending the money — and actually getting things built — very little progress has been made. Following a brief spike during the recession, government investment has hovered around 3.3 percent of gross domestic product for the past few years, which is the lowest since the 1940s. In the meantime, roads, bridges and train tracks have gotten steadily older while proposals for new projects are delayed by political intransigence and legal delays.

America’s short-horizon election cycles, especially in the House of Representatives, are not in sync with the time it takes to build such massive projects, making them politically vulnerable.

In California, high-speed rail had been promoted by Republicans and Democrats alike for decades before the first shovel broke ground in 2015. It was Pete Wilson, a Republican governor, who in 1996 signed the legislation establishing the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Another Republican governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, put the project’s financing on the ballot in 2008. Later, Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, became the project’s biggest booster and funder. In the meantime, polls showed Republican support for the project eroding.

“There are so many obstacles to changing the status quo, and so many litigation opportunities at each stage, that we’re really looking at 20 years of consultants and lawyers and bureaucrats before these projects get started, and it’s almost impossible to maintain political and taxpayer support over that period,” said Jennifer Hernandez, a partner at Holland & Knight who leads the law firm’s West Coast environmental and land-use practice.

The first phase of California’s project, 119 miles through the Central Valley, will not be completed until 2022.CreditJim Wilson/The New York Times

The first phase of California’s project, 119 miles through the Central Valley, will not be completed until 2022.CreditJim Wilson/The New York Times

Mr. Richard, who was chair of the High-Speed Rail Authority board for seven years, said the main hurdles for high-speed rail have been the complexities of land acquisition and a time-consuming slew of lawsuits.

The wealthy San Francisco suburb of Atherton joined a walnut farmer and the Kings County Board of Supervisors in a lawsuit arguing that the project should be stopped because it would not meet a stipulation of the project’s financing: that the train would connect San Francisco to Los Angeles in 2 hours 40 minutes. In October a judge ruled that the project could proceed.

A dozen lawsuits have targeted environmental aspects of the projects, including another suit by the town of Atherton that argued, among other things, that the rail authority had conducted an inadequate analysis of where the train should be elevated along the San Francisco peninsula. A court ruled that the analysis had been properly done.

Mr. Richard said California’s strict environmental regulations have become a pretext for anyone who wanted to stop the project.

“The environmental process has become about litigation protection,” he said. “You’re going to get sued so you’ve got to go out and basically do process upon process, study upon study to make sure that somebody cannot find some toehold for litigation.”

Mr. Arias, the City Council member whose district is filled with homeless encampments, toxic landfills from old, shuttered factories and the stench of carcasses being rendered into tallow, sees high-speed rail as a social ladder for thousands of families, and a way for young people to connect with the thriving economy of the San Francisco Bay Area through jobs and education. It is also, he argues, an environmental salve that could reduce automobile traffic in a region of the state that suffers from serious air pollution.

Fresno ranks second among big cities in the nation, after Detroit, for concentrated poverty — poor residents living in extremely poor neighborhoods — according to the Brookings Institution.

“This is extremely personal,” Mr. Arias said as he drove his electric car through his district. “When people speak so critically of high-speed rail — calling it a boondoggle or whatever — they are not seeing the depressed neighborhoods every day that would benefit from it.”

"To take that away would be unconscionable," he said.

Transbay Terminal — yet another problem. Train space might be too small **(SFGate.com)**

The Transbay Transit Center may not have enough room in its underground rail station to handle Caltrain service.

San Francisco's Transbay Transit Center may have a new problem on its hands — not enough room in its $700 million underground train station to handle the projected Caltrain rail service when, or if, it arrives.

"That's what we are looking into now: what level of projected future service we will have and how much the station will accommodate," said Caltrain spokesman **Seamus Murphy**.

At issue is the two-story-high, three-block-long train "box" that sits under the terminal. It was built as part of a plan to bring both Caltrain's Peninsula rail service and California high-speed trains directly into the terminal via a 1.3-mile tunnel to the Caltrain station at Fourth and King streets.

High-speed rail appears to be on life support after Gov. **Gavin Newsom** seemed to say in his State of the State address that California would concentrate on the Central Valley portion, leaving the connections to San Francisco and Los Angeles. And because the Trump administration has cut funding and even asked for the return of money already spent, it may never arrive in San Francisco.

That isn't stopping San Francisco officials from moving ahead on building the tunnel. Their argument: Even without high-speed rail, Caltrain ridership alone justifies the $6 billion tunnel.

And indeed, Caltrain expects to see its ridership more than quadruple over the next 20 years to 250,000 riders a day, once it converts from diesel to electric trains.

But now there are questions over whether there is enough room in the underground station to handle the 12 to 16 trains per hour Caltrain may need to run into the city to handle all those new passengers.

"Our initial analysis shows that at least 10 trains per hour can be accommodated in the terminal," Murphy said. Meaning that Caltrain could be two to six trains short on platform space.

And that's without high-speed rail, if it ever comes.

"There is still optimism that the final analysis will show opportunity for additional capacity, but it's too early to say for sure," Murphy said.

But the goal remains on track.

“Bringing rail to the transit center will realize the center’s full potential as a multi-modal, 21st century transit hub and connect the Bay Area,” Transbay spokeswoman **Christine Falvey** said.

Whatever the case, Supervisor **Aaron Peskin**, who is also chairman of the County Transportation Authority, said San Francisco is committed to getting the tunnel built, even as federal and state funds are evaporating.

“We’ll find the money somewhere,” Peskin said.

Falvey offered a timeline.

“If funds are available, we can start construction three years from now and finish 10 years from now,” she said.

The question of adequate space for trains is the latest challenge facing the terminal.

Bay Area planners’ dream of the $2.2 billion terminal becoming the Grand Central Terminal of the West has taken a serious hit now that the Los Angeles-to-San Francisco high-speed rail plan has been scaled down, making the transit center pretty much a local bus station — although one with a very nice park on top.

And that bus station isn’t even open. Just six weeks after it opened, workers discovered cracks in two key beams, causing officials to close the terminal until repairs are made. There’s still no date set to have it up and running again.

World rail infrastructure market - February 2019 **(Railway Gazette)**

USA: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority has awarded a joint venture of Mott McDonald and PGH Wong Engineering a $125m engineering services contract covering Phase II of the BART Silicon Valley extension.

Chicago Transit Authority has selected a Walsh Construction Co, Fluor and Stantec Consulting Services joint venture for Phase One of a project to modernise the Red and Purple metro lines.

NJ Transit has awarded WSP USA a $160m contract to design the Route 440 extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail network.

Argentina: The Ministry of Transport has awarded a consortium of Alstom (58%) and POSE (42%) a €90m contract to modernise signalling on sections of the Roca commuter network in Buenos Aires.

Australia: The NSW state government has awarded Lendlease a A$476m contract to build Victoria Cross station as part of the second phase of the Sydney metro. Lendlease will pay A$200m for the right to develop a 40-storey commercial building above the station.

China: CRRC Shandong has delivered a tunnel cleaning machine for the Chongqing metro Loop Line.

France: Oc'Via Maintenance has ordered a Track Circuit LifeCheck diagnostic system from Ertms Solutions for a vehicle which will inspect UM71 audio-frequency track circuits and the legacy Crocodile warning system on the 80 km Nîmes-Montpellier bypass.

Italy: RFI has awarded Ansaldo STS a €65m contract to reconfigure and upgrade signalling across the network.

RFI has awarded Alstom a €14m contract for Ertms High Density works in Roma, Ansaldo STS a €14m contract in Milano and Bombardier Transportation a €11m contract for Firenze.

Netherlands: ProRail has awarded VolkerRail a €11m contract to remodel Lelystad Opstelterrein passenger rolling stock depot to increase capacity.

Poland: AŽD Praha is to supply signalling and ESA 44-PL electronic interlockings for the modernisation of the 67 km Slonice – Szczecin Dabie route. The 201m zloty project is being co-funded with 166m zloty from the EU's Connecting Europe Facility. Completion is scheduled for late 2020.

PKP-PLK has awarded Plasser & Theurer a 81m zloty contract to supply two Dynamic Tamping Express 09-3X machines and one Unimat 09-4x4/4S Dynamic tamper.

Serbia: During a visit by Russia's President Putin on January 17, Infrastruktura Železnice Srbije and RZD International signed contracts for infrastructure works worth US$230m. These include the second stage of rebuilding the 40 km Stara Pazova – Novi Sad section of the Beograd – Budapest line for 200 km/h, constructing a traffic control centre and planning modernisation of the 210 km from Valjevo to Vrbnitsa and Montenegro.

Singapore: ST Engineering is to supply telecoms for Circle Line Stage 6 and the Thomson Line.

Thailand: ST Engineering is to supply platform screen doors for Bangkok metro stations.

UK: Transport for London has awarded a joint venture of Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure and VolkerFitzpatrick a £196 m contract to build an extension of the Gospel Oak to Barking line which will enable London Overground services to serve the Barking Riverside development area.

Network Rail has awarded multi-disciplinary framework contracts for renewals and enhancements in its Southern region during Control Period 6 (2019-24) to J Murphy & Sons (Anglia), BAM Nuttall Limited (South East) and Geoffrey Osborne Ltd (Wessex). The scope includes station, buildings and civils, electrification, power, signalling, telecommunications and track works. Story Contracting and Amco-Giffen have similar contracts covering the Scotland & North East region.

Santa Clara's 1960s Experiment In Mass Transit **(Silicon Valley Voice)**

Today, when we think about mass transit the goal is getting people out of their cars. But a half-century ago, Santa Clara attempted to establish an intra-city bus system with the goal of keeping people shopping — and paying sales tax — in town.

In 1960, the City Council started discussing a city-subsidized bus system that would be provided by San José City Lines — the bus system was taken over by what was then the Santa Clara County Bus System in 1972.

The hope was that businesses and the Chamber of Commerce would help subsidize it, with the city underwriting the enterprise, according to a Sept. 27, 1960 report in the Santa Clara Journal.

“The Council had indicated interest in the plan but it referred the proposal to the city’s merchant groups and the Chamber of Commerce for joint financing ideas and route revisions.”

“Some businessmen may seek a ‘free ride,'” said Council Member Jim Viso at a Council meeting, “but far-sighted, aggressive merchants will cooperate.”

Viso also observed that, “If each Santa Clara family spends $15 more monthly in Santa Clara stores, sales taxes will pay for the bus plan.”

The plan rolled out sometime in late 1960 — no contemporary news reports announcing the fact could be found — and it was clear that by Spring of 1961 the buses were running on two routes. But the results weren’t encouraging.

“Three near-empty buses crisscrossed Santa Clara today in search of customers,” Santa Clara Journal reporter Linn Brown wrote on Dec. 15, 1960. One problem affecting the new system was that people didn’t know where the bus routes went.

But the situation was just as bad four months later when reporter Dick Flood wrote in the Santa Clara Journal, “Less than one out of 10 persons given free bus tickets in a Chamber of Commerce test program bothered to use them.”

From the start the enthusiasm of the intended beneficiaries of the bus system — retailers — notably cooled when they were asked to share the costs as well. In January 1961, the Journal reported that, “A survey of Santa Clara merchants today revealed apathy and disinterest in helping to support two new bus lines here.”

A January 1961 Journal editorial said, “One can only come away… sickened by the bold display of selfishness by the majority of the city’s merchants.

“Practically everyone wanted these bus routes, but no one more than the merchants,” the editorial continued. “Yet now that money is involved, no one is willing to pay for his pleasure and the city is left to underwrite the program almost entirely.”

The City’s tab for the mass transit experiment was about $2,000 a month for a service that was collecting $300 to $400 a month in fares. In April 1961, the Council started talking about discontinuing the service.

In July of that year a strike by San José City Lines employees put the nail in the coffin. Council Member Maurice Dullea moved to cancel the service if the strike wasn't resolved by July 25.

On July 18, 1961 the City Council voted to continue the bus operation but only on a month-to-month basis — a "noble experiment that has proved a failure" Council Member Robert Simons called it. The bus service was to continue until voters could vote on it in a special election, the July 19, 1961 Santa Clara Journal reported.*

On Dec. 20, the Journal reported that Santa Clara's year-long experiment was "screeching to a halt." On Nov. 18, 1961 the Council had voted to shutter the service that had cost $47,500 in City subsidies.

An irony of all this is that during these discussions the wrecking ball was at work demolishing Santa Clara's downtown. This "urban renewal" eliminated the City's retail core altogether and sent Santa Clara's neighbors the sales tax revenue that the bus system tried to keep at home.

*Also on the agenda July 18, 1961 was the difficulty the City was having selling its bonds for its share of the San José sewage treatment plant because of its "less-than-best" credit rating and Eichler Homes' rezoning request for 21 acres on Pomeroy Avenue.

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
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VTA Daily News Coverage for Tuesday, February 26, 2019

1. **Tech Leaders Still Bullish on Bay Area (ABC 7 News)**
2. **Silicon Valley tech boom continues, but residents are exiting costly region (Mercury News)**
3. **Governor would appoint 'transportation czar' if Frazier bill passes (DailyRepublic.com)**
4. **Bay Area Public-Private Partners Explore Transit Data Mashup (GovTech.com)**

Tech Leaders Still Bullish on Bay Area **(ABC 7 News)**

(Link to video)

Silicon Valley tech boom continues, but residents are exiting costly region **(Mercury News)**

Tech employment growth in Silicon Valley outpaces Seattle, L.A., NYC, Boston; matches Austin

The technology boom still fuels the Silicon Valley economy, and at a pace that tops or equals all of the innovation region's rivals — but more people continue to exit the costly and traffic-choked region every month than arrive, according to an economic report released Monday.

"It's really remarkable that the tech job market is so strong in this area," said Brian Brennan, a senior vice president with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

Silicon Valley's technology industries during 2017 set the pace for employment growth nationwide and outpaced Seattle, Southern California, Boston and New York City, and was equaled only by the Texas city of Austin, the report from the Silicon Valley Competitiveness and Innovation Project showed.

However, amid traffic jams and soaring home prices, a growing number of people appear to have defected, according to the report.

"A net average of 165 residents left Silicon Valley each month in 2017, an increase from the net average of 42 per month who departed in 2016," the report stated. "The last two years are a sharp reversal from 2015."

During 2015, Silicon Valley gained 1,962 net new residents each month, the report for that year determined.

“The last two years we speculated that our region’s ability to sustain its post-recession growth may be eroding,” the report’s authors wrote. “This year’s update does not settle the speculation.”

Why? Silicon Valley’s tech sector added jobs during 2017 at a robust annual pace of 5 percent, a tech job growth matched only by Austin, which also grew at 5 percent.

Silicon Valley raced well ahead of the tech job growth of 2 percent in Seattle, 1 percent in Southern California, 3 percent in Boston and a nearly invisible 0.5 percent in New York City, the report found. The report is a joint effort of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Tech growth slowed in Seattle, Southern California and New York, stayed the same in Boston.

“Silicon Valley’s innovation industries continued to grow at the same rate in 2017 as in 2016, though at a slower pace than in 2015,” the report stated.

Based on hiring plans by local tech companies, the innovation economy doesn’t seen likely to wither any time soon in Silicon Valley.

About 50 percent of the tech companies surveyed in connection with the study said they intend to increase their employee presence in Silicon Valley between now and 2025, according to Brennan.

Just 9 percent of the tech companies that responded to the survey plan to reduce staffing levels in the coming years.

“This absolutely surprised us. We did not expect this outcome,” Brennan said. “The tech employers we surveyed are still bullish on Silicon Valley. That says a lot about the strengths of this region.”

Despite the rosy findings in the report, the leadership group is alarmed by the implications of the outward migration to other areas of the country from Silicon Valley, which lost a net average of 3,051 residents per month during 2017.

“We are bleeding people to other states,” Brennan said.

That was nearly offset by a huge net flow into Silicon Valley each month of 2,887 residents from other countries. The result was a net out-migration from Silicon Valley of 162 people a month.

The trends mean the pressure has intensified on Silicon Valley in particular, and California in general, to tackle the housing crunch and traffic woes that hound the Bay Area and Golden State.

"If the innovation economy is going to continue to expand in Silicon Valley, we can't just sit on our hands, we have to address these issues," Brennan said. "We can't just wait for the economy to tank, or for people to run away to other states to deal with our housing and transportation issues."

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Governor would appoint 'transportation czar' if Frazier bill passes (DailyRepublic.com)

How the proposed state Office of Transportation Inspector General would be funded has yet to be determined, but the top official would be appointed by the governor with Senate confirmation.

Assemblyman Jim Frazier, D-Discovery Bay, introduced Assembly Bill 380 last week, but not all the details were immediately available.

"Mismanagement at the Department of Motor Vehicles, cost overruns and poor contract management at the High-Speed Rail Authority and the final cost of the Bay Bridge are examples of why we need truly independent oversight over the tens of billions of dollars the state spends each year on transportation," Frazier said in a statement after introducing the bill.

The bill has specific language that states the "governor shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the Senate, the Transportation Inspector General to a six-year term. The Transportation Inspector General shall not be removed from office during that term, except for good cause."

Frazier's office, however, followed up with a statement indicating "the funding for the office and position is to be determined."

The legislation would eliminate the Independent Office of Audits and Investigations and the position of Inspector General that was created with the passage of the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 – Senate Bill 1. Both were designed to provide independent oversight over the state Department of Transportation, but both falling under the Caltrans umbrella.

Frazier wants the oversight to be more independent.

The inspector general would have oversight on all state transportation funding and not just those projects controlled by Caltrans. That would include oversight of the High-Speed Rail Authority. Frazier twice has unsuccessfully tried to create an oversight agency that would watch over spending of that project.

"It's long past time that California had truly independent oversight over transportation spending," Frazier said in last week's statement. "California taxpayers are tired of reading about appalling waste and mismanagement at transportation agencies and on major infrastructure projects with no accountability."

Frazier represents the 11th Assembly District, which in Solano County includes Fairfield and Travis Air Force Base, Suisun City, Rio Vista and the unincorporated communities of Birds Landing, Collinsville, Cordelia and Elmira.

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Bay Area Public-Private Partners Explore Transit Data Mashup **(GovTech.com)**

Interline and the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission are working to create a single platform where people can find all the information they need to travel seamlessly using multiple transit operators.

In California's Bay Area, there are more than 30 public transit operators serving small communities and big cities, such as San Francisco and Oakland. As a result, residents who use public transit to commute or get around on the weekend can often find themselves using three or four different transit operators.

This can create information challenges for everyone, sometimes forcing riders to consult several different resources to figure out the best option for travel, whether there are any delays and how much they can expect to pay in fares. A project from this year's Startup in Residence (STiR) cohort, however, wants to change that.

STiR, which is managed by the San Francisco-based nonprofit City Innovate, works to bridge gaps between the public and private sectors with partnerships aimed at creating tech solutions for governmental challenges. Ultimately, the partnerships produce public-sector benefits while private companies get a chance to work within the complex government technology market. The partnership aimed at streamlining public transit info in the Bay Area includes Interline, a transportation software firm, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the regional transit authority that oversees the disparate public transportation operators in the Bay Area.

Nearly all of these agencies provide open data in a format called GTFS, according to Nisar Ahmed, a senior program coordinator with MTC. GTFS data is already used by many companies and developers in popular apps such as Google or Apple maps. The idea is for Interline to help MTC create a platform to improve and make more efficient its regional transit data access.

"We are hoping if we can produce one regional GTFS feed, we can pull in additional data that can help riders who are transferring from service to service with better information," said Ahmed.

Interline has some experience with this type of work, said Drew Dara-Abrams, the firm's co-founder. One of Interline's foundational products is a platform called Transitland, which currently aggregates GTFS feeds from roughly 2,500 transit operators globally. So far, Transitland users have been primarily private companies.

Dara-Abrams said the company has recently worked to repurpose Transitland and other components for better use by government agencies. This project is part of that effort, with an intense focus on the needs of MTC. The STiR project also gives both stakeholders an opportunity to examine some other facets of public transportation with the potential to make more improvements.

“The challenging and exciting part of this project is automating these systems and providing one single transit feed for the entire Bay Area," Dara-Abrams said. "We’re working through a lot of these questions with our government partner, not just questions of how to do it but the way that fares and transfers should be handled."

The ultimate goal is to help MTC — as well as other regional transit authorities in the country with a similarly complex network of operators — set up a cloud-hosted system that aggregates and improves upon all of the transit feeds in its region.

“We’d love to find a pattern that works here in the Bay Area that we could take to other places,” Dara-Abrams said. “There’s always going to be some amount of customizations necessary, but there are other regions around the world and in the U.S. that have a different amount of transit providers.”

That’s really one of the main incentives for a startup to participate in STiR. Government agencies share problems, and a product that a company builds for one, can generally be tweaked and scaled to fit another, eventually providing solutions for public-sector agencies across the nation.

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From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2019 4:42 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: February 27, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Wednesday, February 27, 2019

1. **Palo Alto seniors chafe at VTA's planned bus cuts (Palo Alto Weekly)**
2. **Taxing Uber and Lyft rides is L.A. County's latest idea to free up congested roads (LA Times)**

Palo Alto seniors chafe at VTA's planned bus cuts **(Palo Alto Weekly)**

Residents, leaders suggest city is unfairly targeted by San Jose-dominated transit agency

A controversial plan by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to save money by reducing bus service in Palo Altohas left some riders and city leaders fuming and questioning the agency's commitment to the northern part of county.

These concerns and frustrations spilled out during a Tuesday night hearing of the City Council's Policy and Services Committee on the VTA's proposed transit plan, which the agency plans to roll out later this year as part of an effort to reduce costs. The plan calls for reducing the service on Route 22, which currently runs all night but which under the new plan would not operate between 1-4 a.m. The change will impact about 120 people who ride the bus during the late-night hours, including about 40 who use it for shelter.

The plan also calls for eliminating or reducing service on several VTA Express routes; and reducing service on Routes 88, 88L and 88M, which will now more closely hew to the schedule of Gunn High School. By contrast, route 522 on El Camino Real would see greater bus frequency.

For the VTA, the moves represent good business. The agency has been gradually reducing its coverage area and turning its buses away from areas where ridership is particularly low and where the agency's subsidy on a per-rider basis is especially high. Concurrently, it's been putting more resources into dense, geographically central areas, where it can generate more revenue. The shift away from a "coverage" model to a "ridership" model calls for fewer routes but more frequency on those routes, said Adam Burger, the VTA's senior transportation planner.

Burger said under the agency's current transit plan, 70 percent of the routes are "ridership-purposed" while 30 percent are "coverage-purposed." In its 2017 bus plan known as Next Network, which was never implemented, the agency was moving toward an 83/17 balance. The new plan would move it to 90/10.

Burger also highlighted the significant difference in how much it costs the VTA to operate some of the routes with low ridership, including those that serve the Gunn High area during hours when school is not in session. For some of the agency's most efficient routes, he said, the VTA's subsidy per boarding amounts to about $6. For the least efficient ones, the subsidy can be as high as $94.

The VTA's shift toward a more sustainable business model accelerated over the past year, as the agency found itself facing a $50 million budget shortfall. About half of the gap is expected to be filled with revenues from Senate Bill 1, according to the VTA. Even so, the agency still has a budget gap of about $25 million, which prompted the agency's board of directors to achieve about $14.7 million in savings from service cuts.

Carol Lawson, the VTA's fiscal resources manager, told the committee on Tuesday that the agency does not have a dedicated local revenue source for capital expenditures, requiring the agency to use the same pool of funding for capital and operating costs. In the past, those expenses were funded from the agency's board surpluses and its reserves. By now, those reserves have been completely depleted, she said.

Despite the financial pressures, Burger said the VTA's staff still make sure to serve some of Santa Clara County's most vulnerable riders.

"As staff, we do our best to minimize people losing access to the extent possible," Burger told the committee. "But we are faced with a budget reality and some pretty firm directions from our board of directors. We are doing our best to balance both of those."

But about two dozen residents, many of them residents of senior-living community Channing House, attended the hearing to assert that the VTA's best isn't good enough. Some chafed at the district's proposed service reductions in Palo Alto and nodded disapprovingly when VTA staff disclosed to the committee that one of the VTA board's directions for the new plan was to "protect south county." Burger explained that this referred to areas that would have no transit services at all if the VTA moves its buses away.

Barbara Bowden, a Channing House resident, called the VTA's proposed service reductions "unconscionable." If anything, the agency should be increasing bus service so that the residents of the senior-living complex wouldn't have to drive.

"It just seems unconscionable that we pay more in taxes and get less in service," Bowden said.

Patty Irish, a member of the Stevenson House board of directors and also a resident of Channing House, noted that Palo Alto already has a large — and growing — senior population.

"For a lot of seniors, it isn't even a choice about whether they can use a car," Irish said. "A lot of seniors have to give up their cars and they need public transportation."

College Terrace resident Pria Graves urged VTA staff to preserve the late-night service 22 line. She and her husband use the line frequently, she said.

"I realize we're the outliers, but we shouldn't be. We should all be on buses, rather than in our individual cars," Graves said.

Some on the council shared the residents' frustrations. Councilman Greg Tanaka repeatedly pointed to a VTA route map, which showed a density of routes in San Jose and a relative paucity of them in north county. Noting that Palo Alto provides roughly 7 percent of the sales tax revenues that the VTA relies on, Tanaka said he believes the city doesn't seem to be getting a "fair share for transit."

Tanaka attributed that to the city's lack of representation on the VTA board, which includes among its 12 voting members 10 council members and two Santa Clara County supervisors. Of the 10 council members, five are from San Jose. Palo Alto, by contrast, has no representation. The north county has one rotating seat, which is currently occupied by Mountain View City Councilman John McAlister.

Tanaka asked whether the city can "opt out" of the VTA and likened its treatment of Palo Alto as "taxation without representation." Palo Alto, he argued, should not be spending its money to subsidize bus services in San Jose.

"We have to fix the representation issue," Tanaka said. "We can't be outvoted by San Jose every day. We have to figure out how to keep dollars here in Palo Alto to serve the people in Palo Alto."

Councilwoman Liz Kniss, a former VTA board member and chair of the Policy and Services Committee, also signed off on a letter to the VTA, questioning the agency's decision to cut services.

The letter highlighted Palo Alto's role as a major employment center and noted that many employees come from other communities within the VTA service area.

"We have been working with large employers in our community to be innovative around the way that their employees get to and from work in Palo Alto," Kniss' letter states. "Our goal is to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips by continuing to expand available transit services in our community and not to contract them.

"While we broadly understand VTA's financial situation, we also do not want to constantly be subject to service reductions every time VTA needs to make a cut."

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Taxing Uber and Lyft rides is L.A. County's latest idea to free up congested roads **(LA Times)**

Transportation officials are considering a tax on Uber and Lyft rides in Los Angeles County, saying the Bay Area tech companies don't pay their fair share to maintain public streets and exacerbate congestion in a traffic-choked region.

The ride-hailing fee is in the early stages of discussion at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, along with more than a dozen other strategies to manage congestion and fund transportation projects before the 2028 Olympic Games.

Metro's board of directors is scheduled to vote Thursday on whether to approve a study of the ride-hailing tax. The directors also will consider approving a study on congestion pricing, which would analyze the effects of converting more carpool lanes to toll lanes, taxing drivers on the number of miles they travel, or charging a fee for motorists to enter certain neighborhoods.

Once heralded as possible partners for transit agencies, Uber and Lyft have instead become fierce competition. A study of travel patterns in major U.S. cities last year found that 60% of customers would have gone by foot, bike or transit — or just stayed home — if the ride-hailing services had not been available.

Elena Markusic lifts her heavy luggage into the trunk of an at Union Station in Los Angeles. Transportation officials are considering a tax on Uber and Lyft rides in Los Angeles County. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

The rise of Uber and Lyft is one of many factors contributing to L.A.'s plummeting transit ridership, which has fallen 20% in the last five years despite the billions of dollars spent on new rail lines. Ridership is now at its lowest level in more than a decade, driven by a shift to driving instead of using Metro's sprawling bus network.

Uber and Lyft "are using public roads, and the profit is going to their companies," Phil Washington, Metro's chief executive, said at a recent meeting. Drivers spend a significant amount of time on the road with one or no passengers in their cars, he said, which has "no mobility benefit."

If designed correctly, Metro's tax on Uber and Lyft could nudge cost-conscious commuters to carpool or take public transit instead of riding alone with a driver, said Metro's Chief Innovation Officer Joshua Schank. Discounts and penalties also could help Metro improve transit service for riders who use wheelchairs and live in low-income neighborhoods, he said.

The earliest such a tax could be assessed would be late next year, and it would require another vote by Metro directors. If all goes according to plan, Metro officials hope to start a congestion pricing pilot program at the same time.

Several major urban areas have imposed fees on ride-hailing services, including Chicago and Washington, D.C. New York City has two: an 8.875% sales tax added to each ride that benefits city and state coffers, and a fee that raises funds for the subway. (Passengers riding alone pay $2.75 — the price of a subway fare.)

William Miller ties his shoes as he waits for an Uber at Union Station in Los Angeles. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

As in those cities, riders in Southern California would probably see the ride-hailing tax added to their bills, rather than absorbed by the companies.

Uber and Lyft don't share detailed ride data with local officials, so how much the tax could raise is unclear. But Metro's rough estimates suggest a 20-cent fee on each trip could bring in $401 million over a decade, while a $2.75 fee could raise $5.5 billion.

In statements, Uber and Lyft said they support policies that apply to all types of traffic congestion, including personal cars and commercial vehicles. In New York, Uber has said it will spend $10 million to advocate for policies that would reduce single-occupancy driving, including congestion pricing.

But Uber would "caution against singling out specific services in ways that could limit choice and raise transportation costs," spokesman Davis White said.

Lyft supports "comprehensive congestion pricing" as a way to reduce traffic, spokeswoman Kaelan Richards said. For riders, "cost and convenience are key factors when deciding to choose Lyft over their personal vehicles."

Whether fees change rider behavior depends on their size and how they are applied, said Juan Matute, deputy director of UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies. A fee charged by the mile, as a flat rate or as a percentage of the cost of the total ride could each have a different effect.

A large fee could limit options for low-income riders, he said, while wealthier riders could pay and continue to use a ride-hailing service. A flat fee for all rides could limit short trips, and prompt Uber and Lyft to nudge customers toward scooters, bicycles or other devices, he said.

If directors approve the study on Thursday, Metro will examine how a fee would affect low-income riders, traffic and transit ridership, as well as assess how extensively the companies operate in Los Angeles, mimicking an analysis done by transportation officials in San Francisco in 2017.

In that study, researchers found that, in 2016, Uber and Lyft were responsible for 20% of the miles driven across the Bay Area city, and up to 26% during rush hour in the city's most congested areas. The majority of the pick-ups and drop-offs — an average of 170,000 a day — were in dense, transit-rich neighborhoods, including SoMa and the Financial District.

"You can stand on the street corner and count the number of Ubers and Lyfts that are on the street, and see the problems they're creating," said Sunny Angulo, chief of staff to San Francisco Supervisor Aaron Peskin. "One of the ways we're trying to mitigate that is by investing in our public infrastructure, and discouraging people from being really dependent on these services."

Peskin is drafting a measure for the November election that would levy a 3.25% fee on rides with one passenger, and a 1.5% fee on shared rides. The tax would require support from twothirds of voters and would raise an estimated $30 million a year for public transportation and pedestrian improvements, Angulo said.

Short of capping the number of vehicles allowed in San Francisco, which is prohibited by state law, it’s the best step the city can take, she said.

A bill signed into law last year grants San Francisco the authority to levy the per-ride tax, pending voter approval. In Los Angeles, Metro’s study would determine whether the agency needs to pursue similar legislation.

The push to fund more projects by the Summer Olympics, an initiative called “28 by ’28,” includes 20 projects that are slated to be finished within the decade, including the Wilshire subway extension to West Los Angeles and light-rail lines through South L.A. and Van Nuys.

Metro would need to find $26.2 billion to finish eight other projects by 2028. Those include several highway improvements, a rail line to Artesia and a Sepulveda Pass transit line.

To raise money, Metro also is considering a fee on bicycles, electric scooters, and other devices that can be rented per trip. Agency estimates show a $1 daily fee for each device could collect $580 million over a decade.

Some Metro directors, including Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, have begun advocating to disentangle the Olympics projects from the discussion over congestion pricing, saying the ideas would be more palatable to the public if they are framed as a way to manage traffic, rather than raise new revenue.

From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 28, 2019 12:14 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: From VTA: February 28, 2019 Media Clips

VTA Daily News Coverage for Thursday, February 28, 2019

1. **In 'unprecedented' partnership, Facebook-funded trains could one day cross the bay (Mercury News)**
2. **Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao Addresses Autonomous Tech, Infrastructure at AASHTO Briefing (Transport Topics)**
3. **Corporate Shuttles Thrive in the Bay Area's Traffic Jam (Bloomberg Businessweek)**

In 'unprecedented' partnership, Facebook-funded trains could one day cross the bay **(Mercury News)**

Details are far from finalized, but the public got its insights into the project beginning last week

In an unprecedented partnership for the Bay Area, Facebook and a private investment firm are teaming up with a public transit agency to potentially deliver a dream commuters have held for decades: a new southern crossing to connect the East Bay and the Peninsula.

The proposed transit connection, which estimates indicate could cost nearly $2 billion to build, would use an existing — but now-defunct — freight corridor to whisk commuters past stop-and-go traffic on the Dumbarton Bridge that regularly leaves motorists slogging at speeds that average under 20 mph. The Cross Bay Transit Partners, a collaboration between Facebook and the Plenary Group, a private-investment firm specializing in infrastructure projects, began gathering input on the plan with public meetings late last week and two more events are planned for Thursday and Saturday.

While the details are far from finalized, the idea is to reopen the old rail corridor for passenger service, said Dale Bonner, the executive chairman of the Plenary Group, speaking on behalf of Cross Bay Transit Partners. He said the group is months away from selecting potential station sites or even determining what type of service — train, bus or some other mode of transportation — might be offered. A map on the group's website, however, illustrates one possibility, a rail connection between the Union City BART station and Redwood City Caltrain station.

"It's one of the potential outcomes we'll be exploring," he said.

Traffic is photographed on west bound 84 at the toll plaza for the Dumbarton Bridge on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2019 in Fremont, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

For commuters, though, any relief would be welcome. Daniel Murray, for example, who works on the Stanford Campus but lives in San Leandro, spends at least two hours traveling to his job. To do so, he rides his bike to BART and then hops on a Dumbarton Express bus, which picks up passengers at the Union City BART station. The trip across the bridge adds the most time and uncertainty to his commute, he said.

"When it rains or if there is an accident, which often happens at the foot of the bridge, it could take me four hours to get home," Murray said. "Sometimes I drive, and it's worse."

That's time away from his two young kids, he said, and added pressure on his wife, who commutes to San Francisco, to drop off and pick up their children at daycare. If he had a more predictable way to cross the bay, he said, "That'd be huge."

Commuters board a Dumbarton Express bus at the Union City BART station on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2019 in Union City, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

And traffic congestion is only expected to get worse. Regional forecasts show the southern parts of Alameda County and the Peninsula will add an estimated 290,000 residents and 190,000 jobs by 2040, according to a 2017 study of the corridor funded by Facebook and led by the San Mateo County Transit District. But the report also predicts that people will continue to find relatively more affordable housing in the East Bay and continue commuting to jobs in and around Silicon Valley, adding even more cars to an already-choked roadway. When that happens, buses will also be ineffective, the study's authors warned.

The report recommended establishing a new train service along the Dumbarton Rail Bridge — a more than a century-old bridge that runs parallel to Highway 84 — to connect to BART and other rail lines, enhancing bus service on the Dumbarton auto bridge and exploring bicycle and pedestrian connections to a new or rehabbed Dumbarton rail bridge. Bonner said his group will be evaluating which of these alternatives to include in an environmental review it expects to complete within 12 to 18 months.

At that point, he said, the group will determine whether to build, operate and maintain the new system, which he estimated would cost upwards of $1 billion. In the 2017 study, a proposed "rail shuttle" with trains running every 15 minutes was estimated to cost nearly $2 billion to build and $41.1 million per year to run.

But if it happens, it will be the first project of its kind in the Bay Area and one of only a few in the state and the nation, said Randy Rentschler, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the region's transportation planning agency.

The Dumbarton Rail Road Bridge is photographed on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2019 in Fremont, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

Private companies built the Bay Area's first streetcar lines, he said, but haven't been keen to partner with public agencies in the last half-century, as transit agencies morphed from private to public.

There are small examples of such partnerships in the form of free buses, such as the Emery Go-Round in Emeryville, or Salesforce's naming grant at the Salesforce Transit Center, that will help fund operations and maintenance. But nothing on this scale, he said.

"It's completely different in its concept," he said. "It would be an unprecedented partnership."

PUBLIC MEETINGS

There will be two more public meetings this week — Thursday in Fremont and Saturday in Menlo Park — to solicit input on the proposed transit connection between the Peninsula and East Bay. But don't worry if you can't make them. There will be more opportunities for public input as the project progresses.

Fremont:
Thursday, Feb. 28, 6:30-8 p.m.: Centerville Community Center, 3355 County Drive.

Menlo Park:
Saturday, March 2, 10:30 a.m.-12 noon: Menlo Park Senior Center, 110 Terminal Avenue.

More info can be found at www.CrossBayTransit.com.

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Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao Addresses Autonomous Tech, Infrastructure at AASHTO Briefing **(Transport Topics)**

Widespread adoption of autonomous vehicle technologies depends largely on public trust, according to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao.

Autonomous technology can take a variety of forms in transportation, from lane-departure warning systems and automated brakes to truck platooning. Automated technologies have, however, raised public concern over security and privacy.

Chao, who delivered remarks at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' legislative meeting Feb. 27, said she has urged manufacturers and Silicon Valley technology leaders to educate consumers in an effort to dispel apprehensions.

"The promise of automated vehicles will never be realized if the public does not have confidence in the safety, security and privacy of these new emerging technologies," Chao said.

"It is even more important that automated vehicle manufacturers put safety first and embrace transparency, which will build consumer trust."

Chao said the department's approach to autonomous technologies emphasizes cooperation, collaboration and transparency. She said such technologies could improve safety, noting that 37,000 people died on America's roads and highways in 2017.

Another priority for Chao is smoothing out the permitting process for road and bridge projects. She noted that too many construction projects are over budget and behind schedule. Chao discussed the benefits of the administration's push to streamline the permitting and approval process through concurrent permitting review sessions among government agencies.

"The goal here is to make every dollar invested in infrastructure go further without compromising outcomes," Chao said. "The status quo is not an option."

Chao identified infrastructure as an issue that lawmakers from both sides of the aisle should be able to work together on. President Donald Trump's proposed infrastructure package would rely significantly on nonfederal funds to reach $1.5 trillion over 10 years. Of that amount, $200 billion would come from federal funds.

Last year, Congress did not address Trump's infrastructure proposal or retired Rep. Bill Shuster's draft plan in which the Pennsylvania Republican proposed a fuel tax increase. The federal fuel tax has stagnated at 24.4 cents a gallon for diesel and 18.4 cents a gallon for gasoline since 1993.

Although a federal infrastructure package has yet to advance, Chao mentioned the success of several of DOT's funding programs, including the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants and the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) grants.

"It's important to know significant investment in infrastructure is already taking place," Chao said.

She told the crowd of state department of transportation leaders, many of whom are representing new gubernatorial administrations, that they offer an important voice. Several federal representatives, including Deputy Federal Highway Administrator Brandye Hendrickson and former Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, also attended the event. Chao encouraged the state leaders to collaborate with one another and consider DOT a partner.

"I want to let you know what a great journey you're embarked upon. You'll make friends for the remainder of your lives," Chao said. "We want to help you build the infrastructure that you think best suits the needs of your communities."

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Corporate Shuttles Thrive in the Bay Area's Traffic Jam **(Bloomberg Businessweek)**

Ride-sharing and Big Tech buses are picking up the slack for lackluster public transportation.

Each workday, software engineer Edoardo Conti rides Facebook Inc.'s shuttle bus from his San Francisco neighborhood to the company's headquarters in Menlo Park. At an hour or more in crawling traffic, it's a tedious ritual. But were it not for the shuttle, the carless Conti says he might not have taken a job at Facebook at all.

The Bay Area has a mishmash of lackluster public transit options, including trains that don't service many of the places people live and work and buses that are slow and often overcrowded. So private options have emerged: ride-hailing services Uber and Lyft; scooter and bike rentals such as Bird, Lime, and Jump; and corporate shuttles from the likes of Facebook, Genentech, and Google that ferry workers to their campuses. A Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority study counted more than 100 shuttles operating in the area daily.

While a recent report found car ownership in San Francisco grew 6 percent from 2012 to 2017, researchers suggested that part of that rise could have been spurred by buyers intending to use vehicles for ride-hailing, along with population growth and an influx of affluent workers. Over the same period, the number of car-free or "car-light" households—ones with fewer cars than drivers—increased in San Francisco by 10 percent. Other cities with heavy Uber and Lyft use also saw jumps in car-light households. "San Francisco public transportation is inconvenient or kind of gross," Conti says. Without these new sharing options, he says he'd "probably move to New York."

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From: VTA Board Secretary <Board.Secretary@vta.org>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 4:52 PM
To: VTA Board of Directors <VTABoardofDirectors@vta.org>
Subject: VTA Correspondence: Santa Clara Train Station to Mineta San Jose Airport Connectivity

VTA Board of Directors:

We are forwarding you the following:

From	Topic
Member of the Public	Santa Clara Train Station to Mineta San Jose Airport Connectivity

Thank you.

Office of the Board Secretary
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 N. First Street
San Jose, CA 95134
408.321.5680
board.secretary@vta.org

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Solutions that move you

VTA Board,

As you weigh-in on the reported efforts by the City of San Jose to create an RFI to connect Diridon Station to SJC, please also consider the alternative or, maybe, an additional link between the Santa Clara train station and SJC.

My back of the envelope modeling, published last month and at the following link, suggests that creating a tunnel using The Boring Company's techniques, could be done without subsidy, from the Santa Clara Train Station to SJC.

https://winchesterurbanvillage.wordpress.com/2019/01/14/a-practical-application-for-a-boring-company/

We should also look at the economics of creating a second tunnel for bike/pedestrian traffic between the Santa Clara train station and SJC.

Again, my ask is that as an RFI is created, we should not just consider Diridon to the Airport, but the Santa Clara train station to the Airport, as it may be much less expensive and still provide much of the same connectivity (since BART, Caltrain and ACE also make stops there).

Thank you for your consideration,

Ken

--

Ken Pyle
Managing Editor