

# Public Participation Plan Update

September 1, 2020





# Public Participation Plan

September 1, 2020

Prepared for:



VTA Logo – Updated in 2020

This page left blank intentionally.



**Background - Updated in 2020**

VTA’s 2013 Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for VTA’s public participation activities. The purpose of the PPP is to be a living document that is continuously reviewed and updated as needed, to promote the use of effective methods to inform and provide meaningful opportunities for input by all members of the public. In recognition of the importance of having an inclusive process, this plan has a special focus on reaching traditionally under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations.

**2020 Public Participation Plan (PPP) Updates - Updated in 2020**

While in the process of making updates to this 2020 PPP, VTA was not able to thoroughly reach out to VTA’s updated and robust list of community-based organizations that has been compiled since the 2013 PPP, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and California’s Shelter-In-Place Order. However, VTA will execute various public participation methods, strategies for public engagement and outreach, to encourage public participation and feedback, which VTA will incorporate into the next PPP in 2022.

All sections and exhibits that have been updated throughout this document will be highlighted stating, “Updated in 2020.” Please see below for a list of updates to the PPP in 2020 by page number:

**Updates**

- 1. Background ..... i
- 2. 2020 Public Participation Plan (PPP) Updates ..... i
- 3. Executive Summary, Introduction..... iii
- 4. Table of Contents ..... xv
- 5. Section I: Background and Policies, Introduction and Background ..... 1
- 6. Section I: Background and Policies, Overview ..... 3
- 7. Section I: VTA’s Title VI Coordinator ..... 3
- 8. Section I: Background and Policies, VTA Board of Directors..... 3
- 9. Exhibit 2 – VTA Organization..... 7
- 10. VTA Organization, Low-income, Minority, and LEP Populations ..... 8
- 11. Exhibit 14 – Public Participation Methods – Online Language Translation on VTA Website ..... 33
- 12. Exhibit 14 – Public Participation Methods – Customer Service Department ..... 35
- 13. Section IV: Bart Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension project..... 58
- 14. Appendix B: VTA Title VI Fact Sheets in Various Languages ..... B-1

## **Acknowledgements**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) would like to acknowledge the following organizations and individuals for their contributions and input during the development of the 2013 Public Participation Plan:

- African American Community Service Agency
- African Community Health Institute
- Catholic Charities
- Church of the Resurrection
- Day Worker Center of Mountain View
- Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
- Korean American Community Services, Inc.
- Mexican American Community Services Agency, Inc.
- Milpitas Gurdwara Sahib
- Paulson Park Apartments
- Portuguese Organization for Social Services and Opportunities
- Refugee and Immigrant Forum
- Refugee Transitions
- San Francisco Bay Area Somali Cultural Group
- Santa Clara County Citizenship Collaborative Citizenship Day and Immigrant Pride Day
- Santa Clara County Health and Human Services
- Santa Clara County Social Services Agency
- Second Harvest
- San Francisco Bay Area Somali Cultural Group
- Shreemaya Krishnadharm Bay Area Youth Vaishnav Parivar
- Sikh Foundation
- Services Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)
- Terrace Gardens
- TransForm
- Vietnamese American Voters of Northern California

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **I. Introduction – UPDATED IN 2020**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is an independent special district that provides sustainable, accessible, community - focused transportation options that are innovative, environmentally responsible, and promote the vitality of Santa Clara County. VTA provides bus, light rail, and paratransit services, as well as participates as a funding partner in regional rail service including Caltrain, Capital Corridor, and the Altamont Corridor Express. As the county’s congestion management agency, VTA is responsible for countywide transportation planning, including congestion management, design and construction of specific highway, pedestrian, and bicycle improvement projects, as well as promotion of transit-oriented development. VTA provides these services throughout the county, including Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, and Sunnyvale. VTA continually builds partnerships to deliver transportation solutions that meet the evolving mobility needs of Santa Clara County.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for VTA’s public participation activities. The purpose of this PPP is to be a living document that is continuously reviewed and updated as needed, to promote the use of effective methods to inform and provide meaningful opportunities for input by all members of the public. In recognition of the importance of having an inclusive process, this plan has a special focus on reaching traditionally under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations.

VTA understands the importance of reaching under-represented populations, both as part of its commitment to being a valued community partner and in recognition of the significant proportion of its customer base which is included in these populations. Nineteen percent of Santa Clara County residents live in residences classified as “low-income” households<sup>1</sup>. The typical VTA passenger is from a low-income household, a minority, and is young; and more than half are identified as having a household income of less than approximately \$32,000 (<sup>2</sup>poverty line as defined by VTA for a two-person household). Additionally, VTA’s service population is 22 percent LEP (as compared to nine percent throughout the United States) with more than 19 languages satisfying the Safe Harbor Provision as specified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)<sup>3</sup>. Further underscoring the importance of this plan, 63 percent of riders identify themselves as transit dependent<sup>2</sup>. Not surprisingly, the significance of these populations gives rise to the need for them to be a focal point of public participation.

In 2012, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) issued Circular 4702.1B, providing updated guidance on complying with Title VI, and Circular 4703.1, updating guidance on incorporating Environmental Justice principles into public transportation decisions. In addition to continuing the requirement that all direct and primary recipients document their compliance by submitting a Title VI Program to their FTA regional civil rights officer once every three years, Circular 4702.1B includes the specific requirement that a PPP be prepared. Specifically, the draft guidance requires that a “public participation plan that includes an outreach plan to engage minority and LEP populations” be prepared. This PPP has been prepared to meet both the unique requirements of VTA and comply with this draft FTA requirement.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. Due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area, the threshold used by VTA is double the federal poverty line. Thus, households earning less than twice the federal poverty line, are considered low-income households. The population of Santa Clara County (VTA’s service area) consists of 19 percent living in households earning less than twice the federal poverty line.

<sup>2</sup> 2017 On-Board Passenger Survey, VTA.

<sup>3</sup> Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients’ Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons, USDOT, 2005

## **II. Definition of Public Participation**

Public participation is the process through which stakeholders' concerns, desires, and values are incorporated into decision-making at VTA. Distinct from those processes carried out by staff or elected officials that result in administrative decisions, public participation refers to processes that enable stakeholders to directly affect and/or influence a decision-making process.

Although often primarily consisting of the general public, stakeholders can include a broad range of individuals and interests such as:

- Transit customers
- Individual or groups affected by a transportation project or action
- Individual or groups that believe they are affected by a transportation project or action
- Traditionally under-served and under-represented communities
- Residents of affected geographic areas
- Government agencies
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Public participation is often described as a continuum with many possible combinations of activities that includes methods related to informing, listening to, and engaging stakeholders. These activities typically culminate in the development of agreements and/or expectations related to decision outcomes.

Although this PPP includes methods and discussion for VTA activities that are for informational/outreach purposes only, that is not the main focus of the PPP. Rather, discussion on these methods is provided in the context that they would be carried out in support of activities geared toward engaging stakeholders, which is best aligned with the purpose of the PPP.

## **III. Goals and Approach to Public Participation**

VTA understands the importance of reaching under-represented populations both as part of its commitment to being a valued community partner and in recognition of the significant proportion of its customer base which is included in these populations. The successful implementation of VTA's Public Participation Plan requires that it reflect VTA's existing commitment to effective public participation and that it supports the following goals and guiding principles of the PPP.

### **Goals**

The PPP is intended to result in meaningful outreach and engagement opportunities for the public, including low-income, minority, and LEP populations. In support of this intent, the following goals have been established as the basis for public participation at VTA:

- **Involve stakeholders early and throughout the process** – Early engagement and regular communication has a significant impact on both the quality of input and the legitimacy of a project or proposed action outcome.
- **Increase the participation of under-represented populations** – VTA understands that the paramount concern of the PPP is to involve participants with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural perspectives including those that are identified as being low-income, minority, or LEP populations.
- **Use public participation to improve outcomes** – VTA recognizes the importance of public participation as an input to successful decision making for projects and proposed actions.

- **Provide continuous public education** – Both to inform and engage the public in the short term, while maintaining a longer-term perspective to increase the public’s capacity to understand the transportation system and issues results in increasingly meaningful public participation.
- **Make public participation accessible** – VTA seeks to address physical, geographical, temporal, linguistic, and cultural barriers to the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- **Make public participation relevant** – Public participation is most effective when geared to the specific concerns, interests, and values of affected communities and stakeholders.
- **Meet the requirements of federal funding and oversight agencies** – In addition to supporting VTA’s organizational commitment to LEP, Title VI, and Environmental Justice (EJ), properly conducted public participation is also an important mechanism for maintaining funding opportunities to advance the interests of the community VTA serves.
- **Maintain and create new partnerships** – VTA has a long-standing commitment to being a valued community partner and recognizes the value of CBOs and other NGOs in building trust with the community and reaching low-income, minority, and LEP populations.
- **Function as a “living document”** – The PPP is intended to continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of communities VTA serves through regular updates and actively addressing stakeholder concerns and desires.
- **Maximize input opportunities** – VTA seeks to maximize participation by coordinating with intra-agency departments and interagency partners to combine public participation opportunities when appropriate, avoiding conflicting public participation schedules, providing alternative methods for input, and reducing participant overload and fatigue by having continuous public participation demands focused on the same community. VTA staff should consider meeting annually to discuss and collaborate on public engagement strategies that can be consolidated to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

### **Approach to Public Participation**

In addition to meeting the stated goals of public participation, VTA is resolved to provide an appropriate customer experience for public participation participants. Accordingly, VTA seeks to create circumstances which address the following basic stakeholder needs:

- **Respect** – One of the most basic requirements often associated with courtesy and politeness, participants should be treated in a manner that recognizes the importance and value of their participation.
- **Empathy** – Participants should feel that VTA appreciates their wants and circumstances.
- **Fairness** – VTA has an obligation to provide participants with adequate attention and reasonable answers.
- **Control** – Participants’ input should be considered during decision-making processes and the outcome explained in the context of their input.
- **Informative** – Participants want to know about projects and proposed actions in a pertinent and time-sensitive manner.
- **Accurate** – Participants should be communicated with in an honest and accurate manner.

#### IV. Development of the Public Participation Plan

As shown in **Exhibit ES-1**, the PPP is the product of input from multiple sources:

- **Public input** was provided for the plan through:
  - 18 LEP focus groups with representatives of community-based organizations (CBO) completed by VTA staff during 2011.
  - Four meetings with a CBO Working Group established for the purpose of discussing perspectives on public participation, best practices, expectations and needs, and to provide input on study work products.
  - Four individual CBO interviews selected by the CBO Working Group were completed in 2012.
  - San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District's (BART) survey data collected over the course of 29 community meetings carried out in 2010 and as documented in their PPP.

**Exhibit ES-1 – Public Participation Plan Input**



- **VTA staff input** was obtained through 12 VTA group interviews. These group interviews included staff from each of VTA's divisions. Interviews focused on previous public outreach activities, identification of relevant documents, public participation experiences, and brainstorming on ideas for potential outreach methods and approaches.
- **Existing VTA reports and policies** provided by staff, concurrent with the staff interviews, were used as base material for the purposes of leveraging previous efforts, avoiding conflicting guidance, and as appropriate for incorporation into the PPP.
- **Federal legislation and administrative directives** were used to guide the development of the plan to ensure compliance with current public participation requirements.
- A cursory review of current literature and other organizations' approaches to public participation was carried out during the course of a **Best Practice Review**.

Primary input collected from public sources and VTA staff as part of this project is summarized and discussed in the companion document to the PPP, *Public Participation Plan: Local Community and VTA Staff Input*. Although much of the information contained in that report was used as direct input into the development of the PPP, significant input was also provided by public sources and VTA staff on a broader range of public/customer considerations. While some of the input is beyond the scope of this PPP, this feedback and information is likely valuable to other, future focuses for VTA.

The successful implementation of VTA's PPP requires that it reflect VTA's existing commitment to effective public participation and that it addresses the specific input of the public and its staff.



**Exhibit ES-2** and **Exhibit ES-3** provide a summary of select community and VTA staff input used during the development of the PPP. Major themes that resulted from public and VTA staff input, which were used to direct the overall plan's development, include:

- **Personalize public participation activities** – The selection of outreach/engagement methods has a significant effect on the level of participation amongst low-income, minority, and LEP populations. Careful selection can result in significantly improved participation and results.
- **Actively engage the public on their own terms** – Joining existing CBO and LEP community meetings and events are some of the most effective methods to increase the level of public trust and cooperation, while at the same time accomplishing VTA's public participation objectives. Other examples include engaging VTA riders on the light rail platform or onboard vehicles or visiting major employers.
- **Maintain flexibility** – Neither VTA staff nor the CBO representatives were supportive of a highly prescriptive approach to public participation. The ability to tailor the approach to the audience and unique circumstances was seen as being paramount to the PPP's success.
- **Establish a broad range of public participation techniques** – Both VTA staff and CBO representatives understand the value of having multiple techniques to address the specific public participation needs.
- **Address jurisdictional requirements** – Key funding and regulatory agencies have specific public participation requirements that the PPP needs to recognize and address.
- **Encourage targeted advertising/outreach** – Neither VTA staff nor CBO representatives consider traditional newsprint advertising to be an effective method for reaching for LEP populations. LEP and minority groups are most effectively reached through ethnic media, ethnic retail stores, places of worship/congregation, etc.
- **Recognize constraints** – Financial and resource limitations are considerations that need to be accounted for when developing public participation activities. Examples include cost of translations, cost of print ads, and availability of staff with specific skill sets.
- **Interpretation/translation is essential for LEP populations** – English-only public participation/communication, even when it is indicated that language accommodations can be made, does not encourage LEP individuals to participate.
- **Expand use of non-language-based options** – Graphic-based and/or sound-based communication tools are effective for reaching LEP individuals. Non-language-based tools can be used to reach a broader range of audience and convey meaning under a variety of circumstances.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of public outreach** – In the spirit of continually meeting community needs, there was interest amongst VTA staff and the CBO Working Group participants to expand the techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation and incorporate evaluation opportunities into all public meetings and at the end of all public processes such as the completion of a project.
- **Summarize input and detail its use** – The importance of actively summarizing participant input, both as a method for encouraging continued input and for the purpose of improved decision making, was stressed by both VTA staff and CBO participants. Documenting input received, explaining how it was used and its effect on any resulting decisions to interested public participation participants and applicable decision-making bodies, such as the VTA Board of Directors or the Policy Advisory Boards, is important to creating successful project outcomes.

# Exhibit ES-2 — Summary of Community Input

## Effective Public Engagement

- Is there a meaningful nexus between the information VTA receives from the public and the decisions it makes?
- Distinguish the purpose of public participation between marketing, public relations, and participatory decisionmaking.
- Seek evaluation of engagement effectiveness by community based organizations and community leaders; 360° style evaluations.
- PPP role out: efforts through CBOs, ethnic media, Bill Wilson Center, etc.

## Develop Community Partnerships

- Join agencies that support LEP populations: Refugee & Immigrant Forum, Safety Net Group, etc.
- Attend monthly breakfast at Sunny Hills Methodist Church in Milpitas.
- Collaborate with County Social Services, Second Harvest Food Bank, United Way, 211scc.org.

## Community Outreach

- Get out into the community more; co-sponsor events with CBOs.
- Conduct activities in non-traditional places: ethnic grocery stores, places of worship, ethnic community centers, ESL classes, food banks, etc
- Communications should be more benefit-oriented, people-friendly, more engaging.

## Public Meetings

- Food and refreshments were suggested for public meetings.
- Conduct meetings in non-traditional places: places of worship, ethnic community centers, ESL classes, neighborhood libraries, etc.
- Take notes during meetings, enlist a scribe to post notes during meetings, and use non-English speaking facilitators.
- Ask questions to engage participants.
- Use engagement techniques such as charettes, conversation circles, small focus groups.
- Scope meetings, in advance, to determine language assistance needs.
- CBOs want to be notified about meetings and provided meeting information as soon as it becomes available to the public.
- Use bi/multilingual employees as much as possible and use bi/multilingual ability as a consideration for hiring.
- Translated fact sheets and executive summaries are much more useful than the translation of entire technical documents.
- Provide opportunities for staff public involvement training.

## Meeting Notices/Advertisements

- Notices should be concise & engaging; incorporate images of people, maps, buses & trains (to indicate transit-related) as much as possible.
- Text should be written at 3rd-5th grade level as many LEP parents use their young children to translate for them.
- Utilize ethnic media outlets: community TV & radio, newspapers.
- Post at non-traditional locations: places of worship, ethnic stores, ESL classes, CBO newsletters; HOA & neighborhood newsletters; Second Harvest.
- Place “keeper” information on the backs of notices such as Sharks schedules, H.S. football schedules, farmer’s markets, important County numbers, etc.
- Handout notices on buses, trains, malls and other places people gather.
- Gain public ownership by using phrases like: “We Need Your Opinions; Your Voice Matters.”
- If more than 1 meeting is on a notice, indicate if it is the same meeting in different locations or a series of meetings.
- Customize mailings (variable printing).
- Use County and City mailing lists.
- Use pictograms, photos, etc. as much as possible, limit text.

## Technology

- Collaboration site to post and exchange information with CBOs. Receive requests to translate documents.
- Post meeting notices, reports, and summaries on website.
- Feedback loops: use online discussion boards to ask participant feedback “How Did We Do?” and instruct on how to get involved.
- Post decisions regarding influence of public opinion on fare changes, service changes, etc.
- Geomapping/Community Mapping: allow community to map out preferred meeting locations, locations to post notices, resource locations, etc.

## Social Media

- Currently viewed as one-way communication by VTA; ask and answer questions, query the public to make communication two-way.
- You Tube is a good resource for posting transit-related informational and instructional videos for the CBOs and their clients.
- Videos should contain key English terms but utilize native speakers whenever possible. Review “Putting English to Work” videos.

# Exhibit ES-2 — Summary of Community Input (cont.)

## Education

- Title VI “Notice to the Public” is too formal and wordy; incorporate photos, reduce verbiage, change to “Know Your Rights.”
- Create a “train-the-trainer” so that CBO representatives, etc. can teach their clients how to use bus and light rail services.
- Blue telephone education campaign to let customers know that the phones are for emergencies and for customer service calls.


## Safety/Security/Emergency Management

- All information related to safety, security and emergencies should be moved up to Tier 1 of the Vital Document Plan.
- Deliver safety and security information via email or text messaging to smart phones.
- Communication with LEP customers during emergencies needs to be improved.

## Senior Citizen Concerns

- Difficulty crossing wide streets and large intersections. As a result, some seniors will avoid using transit.
- Want to transition from driving to using public transit but they don’t know how to use transit system.
- Bus stops should be near their homes/residential communities.
- Service hour range should be broad enough for them to get to medical appointments early and return home before bus service ends.
- Need transit to go to places of worship, senior centers, ethnic medical clinics, and ethnic food markets.

## Cultural Competency

- All English notices and advertisements are not welcoming to the immigrant community.
- Utilize small group formats, with facilitators who speak languages other than English.
- Collaborate with County Social Services to follow trends for changing LEP populations entering Santa Clara County.
- Partner with resettlement agencies.
- Be cognizant of the needs of the most vulnerable LEP populations (smaller populations with fewer community resources).
- Conduct outreach and meetings in non-traditional places.
- Utilize ethnic media.
- Use pictures more than words. Some customers may have low-literacy in their primary languages (gender bias and/or lack of educational resources).
- Some customers come from countries that do not have structured transit systems, so navigating VTA’s system and understanding terminology is difficult.
- Notices and Ads should have multilingual (not just English) statements explaining the availability of free language assistance services (for example SFMTA uses:  311: 311: 中文 / Español / Français / 日本語 / 한국어 / Italiano / русский / tiếng Việt / Tagalog / (عبرع)

# Exhibit ES-3 — Summary of Staff Input

## Maintain Flexibility

- Neither VTA staff nor the CBO representatives were supportive of a highly prescriptive approach to public participation.
- Staff wants to have the ability to tailor the approach to the audience and unique circumstances.

## Techniques

- Use a broad range of techniques to encourage meaningful public engagement.
- Techniques should be based on size of group, kind of project and each phase within a project.
- Staff is interested in the PPP establishing a toolbox of methods that staff can use to increase the effectiveness of outreach.

## Authority and Guidance

- Key funding and regulatory agencies have specific public participation requirements that VTA's Plan needs to recognize and accommodate.

## Targeted Advertising/Outreach

- Traditional newspaper advertising may not be an effective method of outreach to attract low-income, minority and LEP customers.
- Use ethnic media outlets.
- Use non-traditional methods such as posting notices/advertising in ethnic retail stores, places of worship/congregation, etc.
- E-mail public notices to non-profit organizations to share info with its constituents.

## Technology

- Update website to consolidate content and improve ease of navigation.
- Update website to increase the availability of two-way communications tools (surveys, webinars, social media applications).

## Recognize Constraints

- Financial and resource limitations are considerations that need to be accounted for when developing public outreach strategies.
- Limitations include: cost of translations, cost of print ads, and availability of staff with specific skill sets.
- Staff has a difficult time determining the languages their documents should be translated to.
- Staff is unaware of interpretation or translation needs until public meetings begin.
- Limited availability of bi/multilingual employees to actively participate in meeting the interpretation and translation needs of the public.

## Non-language Based Options

- Expand the use of graphic-based and/or sound-based communications tools.
- Non-language based tools can be used to reach a broader range of audience and convey meaning under a variety of circumstances.

## Policies on Multi-agency Projects

- Coordinating multiple agency projects, particularly when they may have competing interests, can be a challenge.
- This Plan should serve as a basis for establishing cooperative outreach efforts without reducing public involvement opportunities.

## Training

- Provide training regarding Title VI: Limited English Proficiency and Environmental Justice.

## Monitor and Evaluate

- Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of VTA's public engagement efforts.

## Summarize Input and Detail Its Use

- Summarize public input to encourage continued participation and for the purpose of improving decisionmaking.
- Prescribe expectations for providing public input and provide feedback on how the input affected resulting decisions.

## **V. Use of the Public Participation Plan**

VTA promotes the use of the PPP for its public participation activities. In order to facilitate its use, the PPP is designed to be used either in its entirety or in part depending on the user's specific needs or interests. The main document has been divided into four sections related to the primary functions of the PPP; namely to provide (a) information and context for the PPP, (b) guidance on conducting public participation, (c) a roadmap and identify resources for future public participation activities, and (d) an overview of the BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension project and its associated public participation activities. The following is an overview of the major parts of the PPP:

The **Executive Summary** includes a robust overview of the PPP. This section has been intentionally developed to be more substantial than a typical executive summary for a comparable document, as it is planned to be translated and provided as a standalone document to interested members of the public.

**Section I: Background and Policies** includes additional background material including the goals and guiding principles which form the basis for public participation at VTA. Additionally, this section includes discussion on regulatory requirements, VTA's organization and public participation resources, and Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of VTA's service areas and concentrations of low-income, minority, and LEP populations. This section will be of particular interest to decision-makers or members of the public who are interested in the materials that form the foundation of the PPP.

**Section II: Public Participation Process** includes an overview of the steps related to initiating, scoping, designing, and implementing public participation at VTA. **Exhibit ES-4** provides guidance on the sequence of activities for a basic project or action for which public participation is being carried out. Elements identified as topics for particular emphasis from the perspective of VTA staff and CBO participants are highlighted. **Exhibit ES-5** shows the principle public participation methods that VTA undertakes, including those that should be emphasized based on feedback from VTA staff and CBO participants. Public meetings are given particular attention in this section on account of their prominence as a tool for public participation. Additionally, the requirements for documenting and evaluating public participation activities are included within this section. This section will be of particular interest to the practitioner or VTA Project Manager responsible for putting public participation into action.

**Section III: Continuous Improvement of Public Participation** includes a two-year work plan detailing both programmatic and relationship/partnership activities planned to further bolster low-income, minority, and LEP public participation. Many of these activities are designed to strengthen existing ties to CBOs, which are one of the most effective conduits to communicate with and build trust with low-income, minority, and LEP populations. **Exhibit ES-6** summarizes the major activities included in the two-year work plan. This section also provides references for additional material on topics and methods related to public participation. This section will be of particular interest to the staff responsible for maintaining the PPP and readers interested in increasing their public participation knowledge base.

**Section IV: BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project (SVBX)** provides an overview of the SVBX project and its related public outreach activities. This section is provided in recognition of this project's prominence and extended duration. Public participation for this project is being carried out by a unique group within the VTA organization.

# Exhibit ES-4 — Public Participation Process

Project Initiation

Identify Project/Proposed Action

**Scope Public Participation**

1. Identify Participating Agencies/ Departments
2. Establish Public Participation Need/Goals/Objectives
3. Identify Stakeholders
4. Confirm Regulatory Requirements

**Design Public Participation**

1. Select Methods
2. Define Interpretation/Translation Needs
3. Resolve Logistics

Implement Public Participation

Participant Evaluation

Day After Reports (Self-Evaluation)

Document Stakeholder Input

Central Depository

Distribute Input Document to Stakeholders

Complete Decision Making Process

Notify Stakeholders of Decision

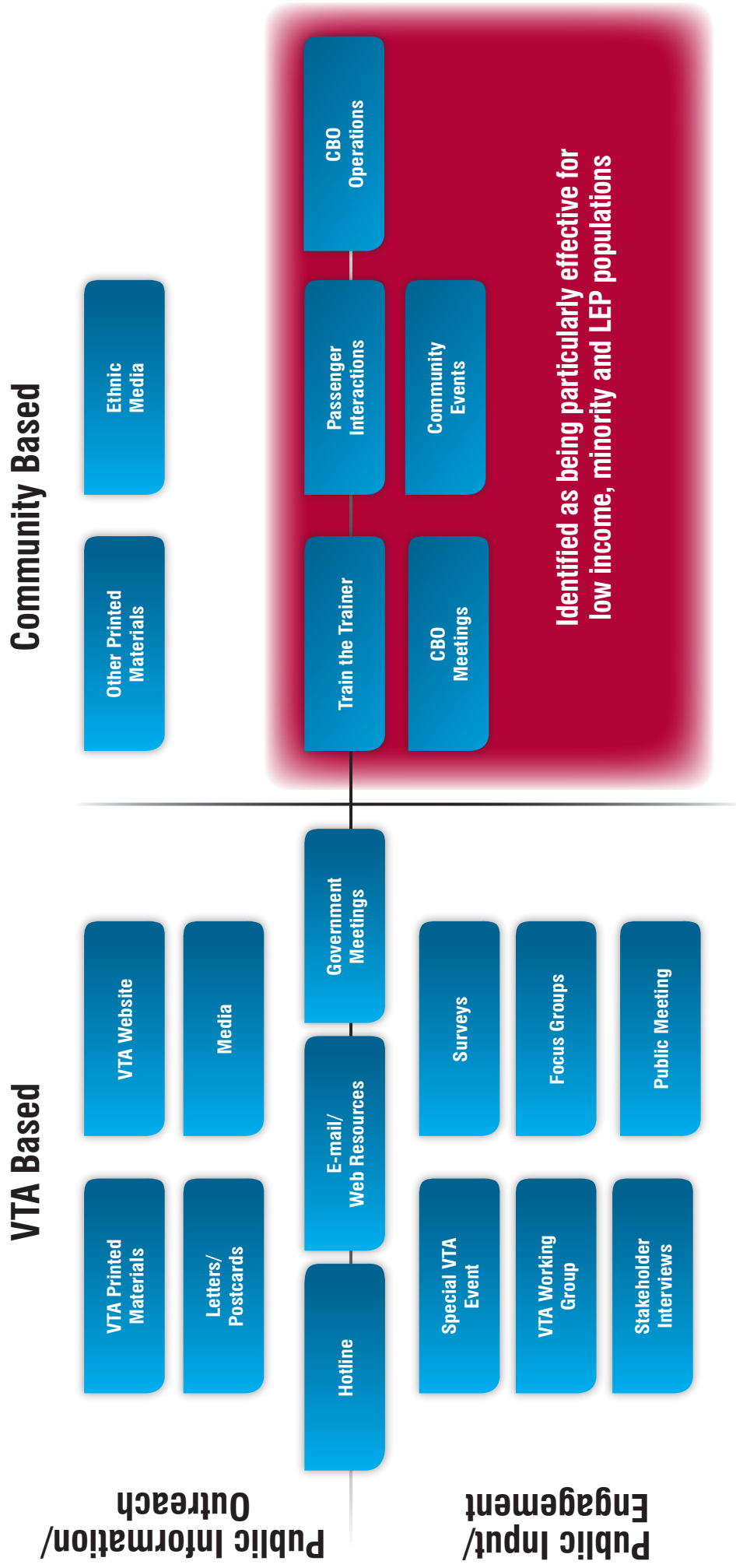
Feedback to Improve Future Public Participation Design

**VTA Staff and CBO participants emphasized increasing importance of the elements**

Project Completion



# Exhibit ES-5 — Public Participation Methods



# Exhibit ES-6 — Two-Year Public Participation Work Plan

## 2012

- P1 Finalize PPP
- P2 Assess VTA website resources for LEP public participation
- P3 Assess CBO LEP distribution network
- P4 Finalize Vital Document Plan
- P5 Develop county-wide CBO partnerships
- P6 Assess VTA staff training needs
- P7 Assess ongoing need for stakeholder oversight
- P8 Determine Performance Measures for PPP

- R1 Attend Refugee and Immigrant Forum meetings
- R2 Attend Safety Net meetings
- R3 Assess CBO training needs
- R4 Address CBO concerns identified during PPP development

## 2013/Months 0-6

- P1 Implement VTA website enhancements for LEP public participation
- P2 Update CBO LEP distribution network
- P3 Assess ethnic media preferences and update vendor list
- P4 Assess public participation interpretation/translation resources
- P5 Implement VTA staff training

- R1 Assess VTA operational interpretation/translation needs
- R2 Implement CBO training

## 2013/Months 7-12

- P1 Update LEP Plan
- P2 Update Vital Document Plan
- P3 Update Public Participation Plan
- P4 Conduct annual evaluation of VTA public participation

- R1 Implement VTA operational interpretation/translation enhancements

## Programmatic

## Relationship/ Partnership

PPP - Public Participation Plan  
LEP - Limited English Proficiency  
CBO - Community Based Organization



**TABLE OF CONTENTS Updated in 2020**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>II. Definition of Public Participation .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>III. Goals and Approach to Public Participation .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
Goals.....	1
Approach to Public Participation.....	v
<b>IV. Development of the Public Participation Plan .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>V. Use of the Public Participation Plan .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND POLICIES .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. Introduction and Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Use of the Public Participation Plan .....	1
Definition of Public Participation .....	2
VTA Overview .....	3
Low-income, Minority, and LEP Populations .....	8
Development of the Public Participation Plan .....	12
<b>II. Goals and Approach to Public Participation .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Goals.....	22
Approach to Public Participation.....	23
<b>SECTION II: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>I. Identify Project/Proposed Action .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>II. Scoping Public Participation .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>III. Designing Public Participation .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Selecting Methods.....	29
Public Participation Methods .....	29
Public Meetings .....	39
Interpretation/Translation Needs .....	42
Resolving Logistics .....	44
Public Participation Techniques to Increase Involvement .....	48
<b>IV. Evaluation of Public Participation .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Monitoring and Tracking .....	51
Performance Measures .....	53
<b>SECTION III: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>I. Public Participation Work-Plan .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>II. Resources .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>SECTION IV: BART SILICON VALLEY BERRYESSA EXTENSION PROJECT .....</b>	<b>58</b>

## EXHIBITS

Exhibit ES-2 – Summary of Community Input.....	viii
Exhibit ES-3 – Summary of Staff Input .....	x
Exhibit ES-4 – Public Participation Process .....	xii
Exhibit ES-5 – Public Participation Methods.....	xiii
Exhibit ES-6 – Two-Year Public Participation Work Plan.....	xiv
Exhibit 1 – VTA Service Area .....	6
Exhibit 2 – VTA Organization.....	7
Exhibit 3 – Distribution of Minority Population in VTA Service Area.....	9
Exhibit 4 – Distribution of Low-Income Population in VTA Service Area.....	10
Exhibit 5 – Distribution of Limited English Proficiency Population in VTA Service Area .....	11
Exhibit 6 – Top Five LEP Languages within VTA Service Area .....	12
Exhibit 7 – Public Participation Plan Input .....	12
Exhibit 8 – Limited English Proficiency Focus Group Locations .....	14
Exhibit 9 – Summary of Community Input.....	16
Exhibit 10 – Summary of Staff Input .....	18
Exhibit 11 – Public Participation Process .....	26
Exhibit 12 – Stakeholder Identification Worksheet.....	30
Exhibit 13 – Methods Worksheet .....	31
Exhibit 14 – Public Participation Methods.....	32
Exhibit 15 – Public Meeting Formats .....	41
Exhibit 16 – Define Translation Needs.....	43
Exhibit 17 – Public Meeting Notice Example .....	47
Exhibit 18 – Summary of Public Meeting Techniques.....	49
Exhibit 19 – Participant Feedback Survey .....	52
Exhibit 20 – Two-Year Public Participation Work Plan .....	56
Exhibit 21 – Resources .....	57
Exhibit 22 – Distribution of Minority Population in SVBX Project Area.....	59
Exhibit 23 – Distribution of Low-Income Population in SVBX Project Area .....	60
Exhibit 24 – Distribution of Limited English Proficiency Population in SVBX Project Area.....	61

## ACRONYMS

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BART	Bay Area Rapid Transit
BRT	Bus rapid transit
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CBO	Community-based organization
CMA	Congestion Management Agency
CMP	Congestion Management Program
EJ	Environmental Justice
ESL	English as a second language
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HOA	Homeowner association
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LLS	Language Line Services
MOE	Measure of effectiveness
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PPP	Public Participation Plan
SVBX	BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project
TRB	Transportation Research Board
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
VTA	Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
VTP	Valley Transportation Plan

This page left blank intentionally.



## **SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND POLICIES**

### **I. Introduction and Background – Updated in 2020**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is an independent special district that provides sustainable, accessible, community - focused transportation options that are innovative, environmentally responsible, and promote the vitality of Santa Clara County. VTA provides bus, light rail, and paratransit services, as well as participates as a funding partner in regional rail service including Caltrain, Capital Corridor, and the Altamont Corridor Express.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for VTA’s public participation activities. The purpose of this PPP is to promote the use of effective methods to inform and provide meaningful opportunities for input by all members of the public. In recognition of the importance of having an inclusive process, this plan has a special focus on reaching traditionally under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations.

The federal government has established several legislative acts and executive orders related to the treatment of low-income, minority, and LEP populations. All agencies receiving federal financial support are required to abide by these key legislative acts and executive orders. Most recently, the FTA has published a requirement that their funding recipients, including VTA, routinely prepare a PPP to meet the specific needs of these populations.

The following sections of this document provide:

- Use of the Public Participation Plan
- Definition of public participation
- VTA’s organizational structure and service area
- Demographics for VTA’s service area
- Summary of input used to develop the PPP
- Goals and guiding principles that form the basis of the PPP
- An overview of public participation for the BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project

#### **Use of the Public Participation Plan**

VTA promotes the use of PPP for its public participation activities. In order to facilitate its use, the PPP is designed to be used either in its entirety or in part depending on the user’s specific needs or interests. The main document has been divided into four sections related to the primary functions of the PPP; namely to provide (a) information and context for the PPP, (b) guidance on conducting public participation, (c) a roadmap and identify resources for future public participation activities, and (d) an overview of the BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension project and its associated public participation activities. The following is an overview of the major parts of the PPP:

The **Executive Summary** includes a robust overview of the PPP. This section has been intentionally developed to be more substantial than a typical executive summary for a comparable document as it is planned to be translated and provided as a standalone document to interested members of the public.

**Section I: Background and Policies** includes additional background material including the goals and guiding principles which form the basis for public participation at VTA. Additionally, this section includes discussion on regulatory requirements, VTA’s organization and public participation resources, and Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of VTA’s service areas and concentrations of low-

income, minority, and LEP populations. This section will be of particular interest to decision-makers or members of the public who are interested in the materials that form the foundation of the PPP.

**Section II: Public Participation Process** includes an overview of the steps related to initiating, scoping, designing, and implementing public participation at VTA. Public meetings are given particular attention in this section on account of their prominence as a tool for public participation. Additionally, the requirements for documenting and evaluating public participation activities are included within this section. This section will be of particular interest to the practitioner or VTA Project Manager responsible for putting public participation into action.

**Section III: Continuous Improvement of Public Participation** includes a two-year work plan detailing both programmatic and relationship/partnership activities planned to further bolster low-income, minority, and LEP public participation. Many of these activities are designed to strengthen existing ties to CBOs which are one of the most effective conduits to communicate with and build trust with low-income, minority, and LEP populations. This section also provides references for additional material on topics and methods related to public participation. This section will be of particular interest to the staff responsible for maintaining the PPP and readers interested in increasing their public participation knowledge base.

**Section IV: BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project (SVBX)** provides an overview of the SVBX project and its related public outreach activities. This section is provided in recognition of this project's prominence and extended duration. Public participation for this project is being carried out by a unique group within the VTA organization.

### **Definition of Public Participation**

Public participation is the process through which stakeholders' concerns, desires, and values are incorporated into decision making at VTA. Distinct from those processes carried out by staff or elected officials that result in administrative decisions, public participation refers to processes that enable stakeholders to directly affect and/or influence a decision-making process.

Although often primarily consisting of the general public, stakeholders can include a broad range of individuals and interests such as:

- Transit customers
- Individual or groups affected by a transportation project or action
- Individual or groups that believe they are affected by a transportation project or action
- Traditionally under-served and under-represented communities
- Residents of affected geographic areas
- Government agencies
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Public participation is often described as a continuum with many possible combinations of activities that includes methods related to informing, listening to, and engaging stakeholders. These activities typically culminate in the development of agreements and/or expectations related to decision outcomes. Although this PPP includes methods and discussion for VTA activities that are for informational/outreach purposes only, that is not the main focus of the PPP. Rather discussion on these methods is provided in the context that they would be carried out in support of activities geared toward engaging stakeholders, which is best aligned with the purpose of the PPP.

## **VTA Overview – Updated in 2020**

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority is the public transit service provider for Santa Clara County as established in 1972 by the Santa Clara County Transit District Act. Since 1994, VTA has also served as the county’s Congestion Management Agency (CMA) responsible for countywide transportation planning and the design and construction of highway, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements.

VTA operates bus, paratransit, and 42 miles of light rail transit services for 15 municipalities within, and the entire Santa Clara County. In addition to the approximately 318-square-mile Santa Clara County service area, VTA also provides service within 29 square miles (approximately eight percent of the total service area) within Alameda County. **Exhibit 1** depicts the VTA service area. Operating under the direction of a 12-member Board of Directors, VTA’s approximately 2,100 employees are structured as outlined in **Exhibit 2**.

The VTA Office of External Affairs is primarily responsible for providing public participation support, including the following specific services:

- Community outreach
- Customer service
- Government relations
- Marketing
- Media relations
- Policy and program management

The VTA Office of Civil Rights, led by the Title VI Coordinator, is responsible for ensuring that public participation meets regulatory requirements for under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and LEP populations.

Both the Office of External Affairs and the Office of Civil Rights are recognized as being key partners for the successful implementation of this PPP. External Affairs is used extensively by staff in the planning and implementation of public participation activities related to projects or proposed actions that they are responsible for carrying out. The Office of Civil Rights meanwhile, monitors and ensures compliance with federal agency policies that affect the public participation activities carried out by VTA. With the introduction of the PPP, the participation and involvement of both of these key groups are seen as essential to its overall success.

VTA’s Office of Civil Rights (Title VI Coordinator – Jaye Bailey) – Updated in 2020  
3331 North First Street, Building B-2  
San Jose, CA 95134-1906  
(408) 952-8901

## **VTA Board of Directors – Updated in 2020**

VTA Board of Directors sets VTA policy. The Board has 18 members and ex-officio members, all of whom are elected officials appointed to serve on our Board by the jurisdictions they represent. Fifteen Directors are city council members and three are County Supervisors. Twelve Directors serve as voting members and there are six Directors who serve as alternates. The ex-officio members are non-voting members and are the three Santa Clara County representatives to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). To view Board Members, please see next page:

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Cindy Chavez, Chairperson  
Glenn Hendricks, Vice Chairperson**

**GROUP 1 (San José)**

City of San José

Charles “Chappie” Jones  
Lan Diep  
Magdalena Carrasco  
Sam Liccardo\*  
Raul Peralez  
Devora “Dev” Davis, Alternate

**GROUP 2 (North West)**

City of Los Altos  
Town of Los Altos Hills  
City of Mountain View  
City of Palo Alto

John McAlister  
Liz Kniss, Alternate

**GROUP 3 (West Valley)**

City of Campbell  
City of Cupertino  
Town of Los Gatos  
City of Monte Sereno  
City of Saratoga

Rob Rennie  
Howard Miller, Alternate

**GROUP 4 (South County)**

City of Gilroy  
City of Morgan Hill

Marie Blankley, Alternate  
Larry Carr

**GROUP 5 (North East)**

City of Santa Clara  
City of Sunnyvale  
City of Milpitas

Teresa O’Neill, Alternate  
Glenn Hendricks  
Bob Nuñez

**GROUP 6 (Santa Clara County)**

County of Santa Clara

Cindy Chavez  
Dave Cortese\*  
Susan Ellenberg, Alternate

**Ex-Officio\*\***

Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Commissioners representing Santa Clara County, Cities of Santa Clara County, and City of San Jose

Jeannie Bruins\*

*\*These individuals also serve on the MTC.*

The Board of Directors generally meets on the first Thursday of the month at 5:30 PM in the Board Chambers, 70 West Hedding Street, San José, California. The meeting schedule can be found on [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org).

Please address all correspondence to:  
Office of the Board Secretary  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
3331 North First Street, Bldg. B-1  
San José, CA 95134-1927  
Telephone: 408.321.5680  
E-Mail: [board.secretary@vta.org](mailto:board.secretary@vta.org).

# EXHIBIT 1: VTA SERVICE AREA

**Legend**

**Transit**

- Existing BART Service
- - - BART Extension
- BART Station
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- VTA Bus Service

**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway

VTA Transit Service Area

County Boundaries

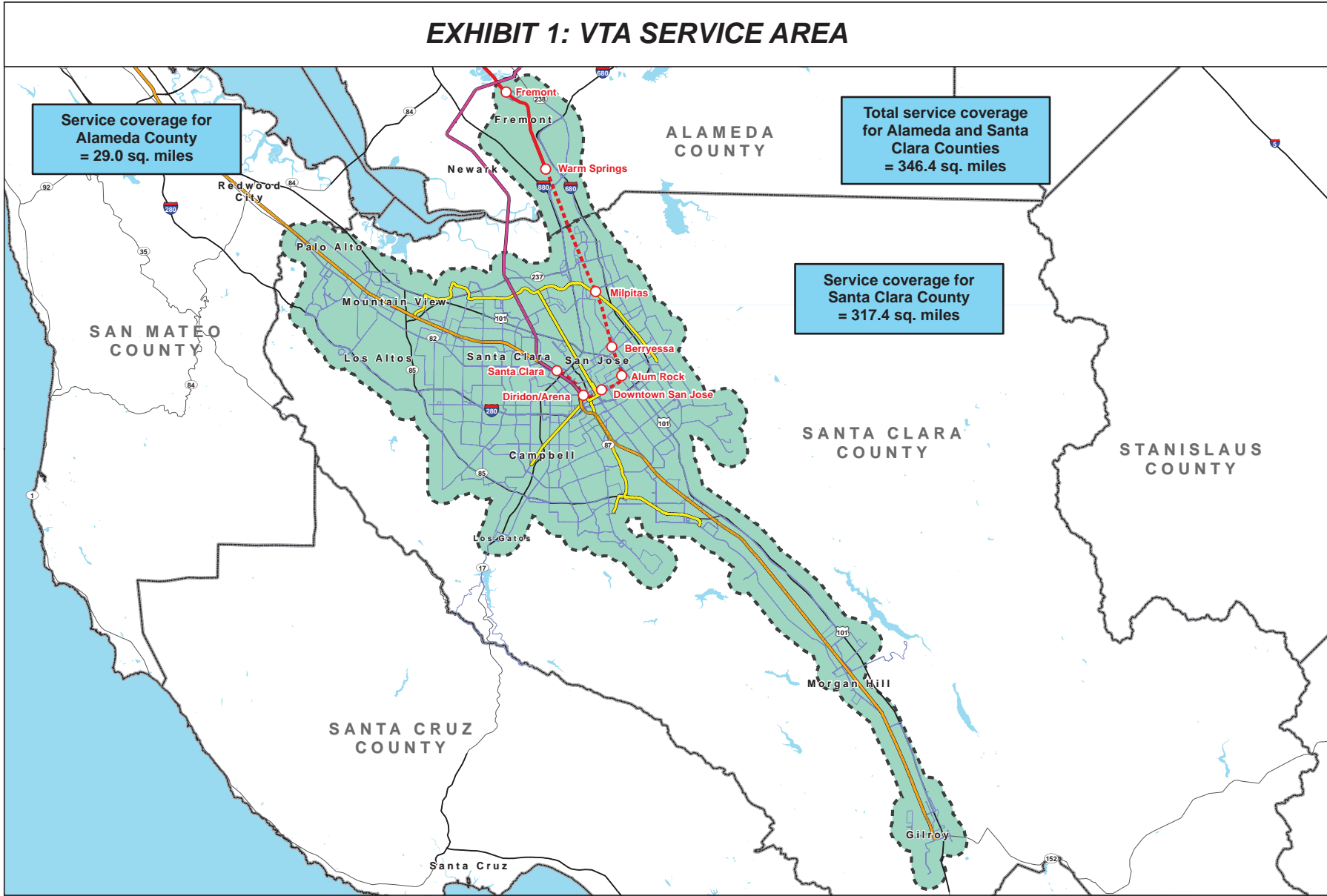
Source: VTA



0 3.5 7 Miles



Kimley-Horn  
and Associates, Inc.





# Exhibit 2 — VTA Organization

VTA Division	Primary Responsibilities
<b>BART Silicon Valley Program</b>	Responsible for the activities required to deliver the BART Project in Santa Clara County. Conducts planning for the project, coordinates with stakeholders, and acts as a liaison between design and construction activities and the local communities. Also responsible for community outreach and stakeholder involvement and overseeing the right-of-way and environmental activities for project implementation.
<b>Employee Relations &amp; Civil Rights</b>	<p>The Employee Relations department provides individualized consultation regarding employee relations issues, managing discipline, grievance and arbitration processes as well as conducting research on labor issues and trends. Additionally, the department is responsible for negotiating and administering collective bargaining agreements with labor organizations.</p> <p>The Office of Civil Rights provides oversight for organizational compliance with Title VI, Environmental Justice, Title VII (EEO), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).</p>
<b>Engineering &amp; Program Delivery</b>	Responsible for design and construction of all capital projects and infrastructure. This includes program and project management, design development, engineering management, project controls, construction management and turnover of various projects that are part of VTA's rail, facilities and highway transportation improvement programs.
<b>External Affairs</b>	Responsible for coordination of activities within the departments of the Board Secretary, Communications, Community Engagement, Creative Services, Customer Service, Digital Communications, Government Affairs, and Marketing & Business Development.
<b>Finance &amp; Budget</b>	<p>Fulfills the Controller and Treasury functions for VTA including financial reporting, accounting, budgeting, investment services, cash management, debt administration, payroll, accounts receivable, accounts payable, real estate, and farebox revenue services.</p> <p>In addition, the Division oversees the Technology Department which strives to provide the highest quality technology-based services and solutions, in the most cost-effective manner, to facilitate the needs of customers within VTA and the customers VTA serves.</p>
<b>Human Resources and Procurement &amp; Contracts</b>	Comprised of Bus and Light Rail Training, Human Resources, Organizational Development & Training, and Procurement, Contracts, & Materials Management.
<b>Operations</b>	Responsible for operating, analyzing, maintaining, and managing VTA's bus and rail transit system and facilities. It also oversees contracted shuttle and ADA paratransit services.
<b>Planning and Programming</b>	Responsible for conducting all Congestion Management Program and VTA transportation and transit planning activities, as well as programming and grants management.
<b>System Safety &amp; Security</b>	Oversees VTA's safety and transit system security and law enforcement functions, which include oversight of the Protective Services Department, management of contracted security services, and administration of VTA's contract with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department for sworn law enforcement personnel.

Updated in 2020

## Low-income, Minority, and LEP Populations **Updated in 2020**

The requirements of Title VI, the Executive Orders on Environmental Justice<sup>4</sup> and Limited English Proficiency<sup>5</sup>, and FTA's draft circulars on Title VI<sup>6</sup> and Environmental Justice<sup>7</sup>, require that VTA routinely identify and account for the number and proportion of low-income, minority, and LEP populations within their service area. These populations are depicted in **Exhibit 3**, **Exhibit 4**, and **Exhibit 5** using the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data<sup>8</sup>. Based on previously conducted analyses<sup>9</sup>, the following socio-economic conclusions can be drawn about VTA's service area and riders:

- Nineteen percent of Santa Clara County residents live in residences classified as “low-income” households<sup>10,11</sup>.
- The typical VTA passenger is from a low-income household, a minority, and young; and more than half are identified as having a household income of less than approximately \$32,000<sup>11</sup> (poverty as defined by VTA for a two-person household).
- The largest percentage of VTA passengers is from the 13 to 24-year-old group (35 percent) and those in the 25 to 34 years of age category make up another 24 percent for a total of 59 percent younger than 35 years old<sup>11</sup>.
- Most riders identify themselves as transit dependent (63 percent)<sup>11</sup>.
- Most riders are not employed full-time (38 percent)<sup>11</sup>.

Based on an analysis document in VTA's LEP Plan<sup>9</sup> it has been determined that 22 percent of VTA's service population is LEP (as compared to nine percent throughout the United States) and that more than 19 languages satisfying the LEP Safe Harbor Provision<sup>12</sup> as specified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). Limited English Proficiency is determined by analyzing U.S. Census data to determine language proficiency. Language proficiency is primarily characterized as persons over the age of five years who speak English “very well” or those who speak English less than “very well” (LEP). As reflected in **Exhibit 6**, the top five LEP languages (in terms of total numbers of speakers) are Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Korean. Underscoring the diversity within VTA's service area, 818,021 persons over the age of five years (50.67 percent) do not only speak English at home.

---

<sup>4</sup> Executive Order 12898

<sup>5</sup> Executive Order 13166

<sup>6</sup> Proposed Circular FTA C 4702.1B, Federal Transit Administration (undated)

<sup>7</sup> Proposed Circular FTA C 4703.1, Federal Transit Administration (undated)

<sup>8</sup> 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>9</sup> Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, VTA, June 11, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. Due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area, the threshold used by VTA is double the federal poverty line. Thus households earning less than twice the federal poverty line are considered low-income households. The population of Santa Clara County (VTA's service area) consists of 19 percent living in households earning less than twice the federal poverty line.

<sup>11</sup> 2017 On-Board Passenger Survey, VTA

<sup>12</sup> The LEP Safe Harbor Threshold is five percent or 1,000, whichever is less

### EXHIBIT 3: DISTRIBUTION OF MINORITY POPULATION IN VTA SERVICE AREA

**Legend**

**Transit**

- Existing BART Service
- BART Extension
- BART Station
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)

**Major Roads**

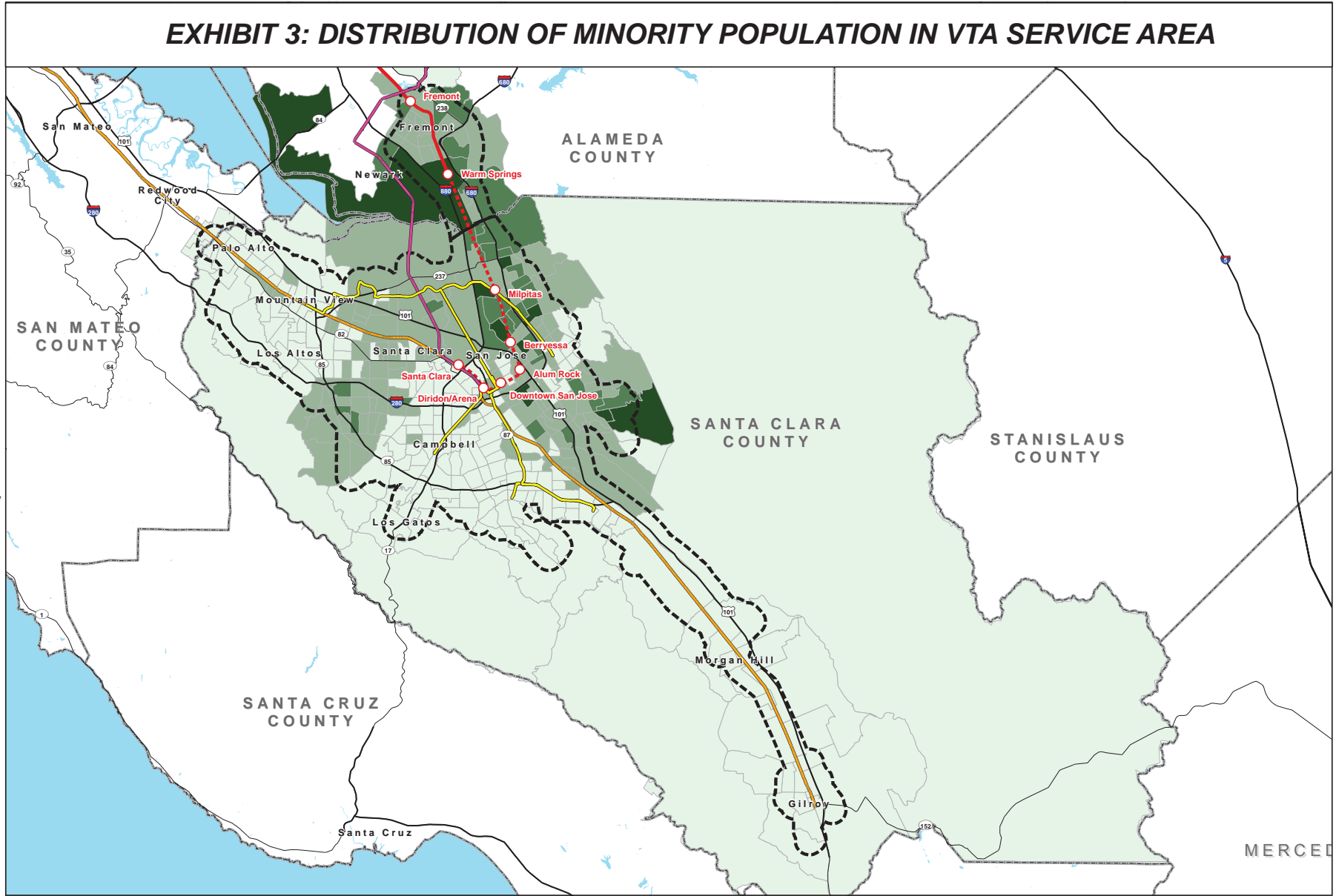
- Interstate
- Highway

**VTA Transit Service Area**

- VTA Transit Service Area
- County Boundaries

**Percent Minority**

- Less than average (≤50%)
- 50% < x ≤ 75%
- 75% < x ≤ 85%
- >85%



Note: Data aggregated by census tract. The population of Santa Clara County consists of 50% minority, where minority is defined according to the FTA Circular, page II-5. Census tracts with a greater than average 50% minority population are identified.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.



## EXHIBIT 4: DISTRIBUTION OF LOW INCOME POPULATION IN VTA SERVICE AREA

**Legend**

**Transit**

- Existing BART Service
- BART Extension
- BART Station
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)

**Major Roads**

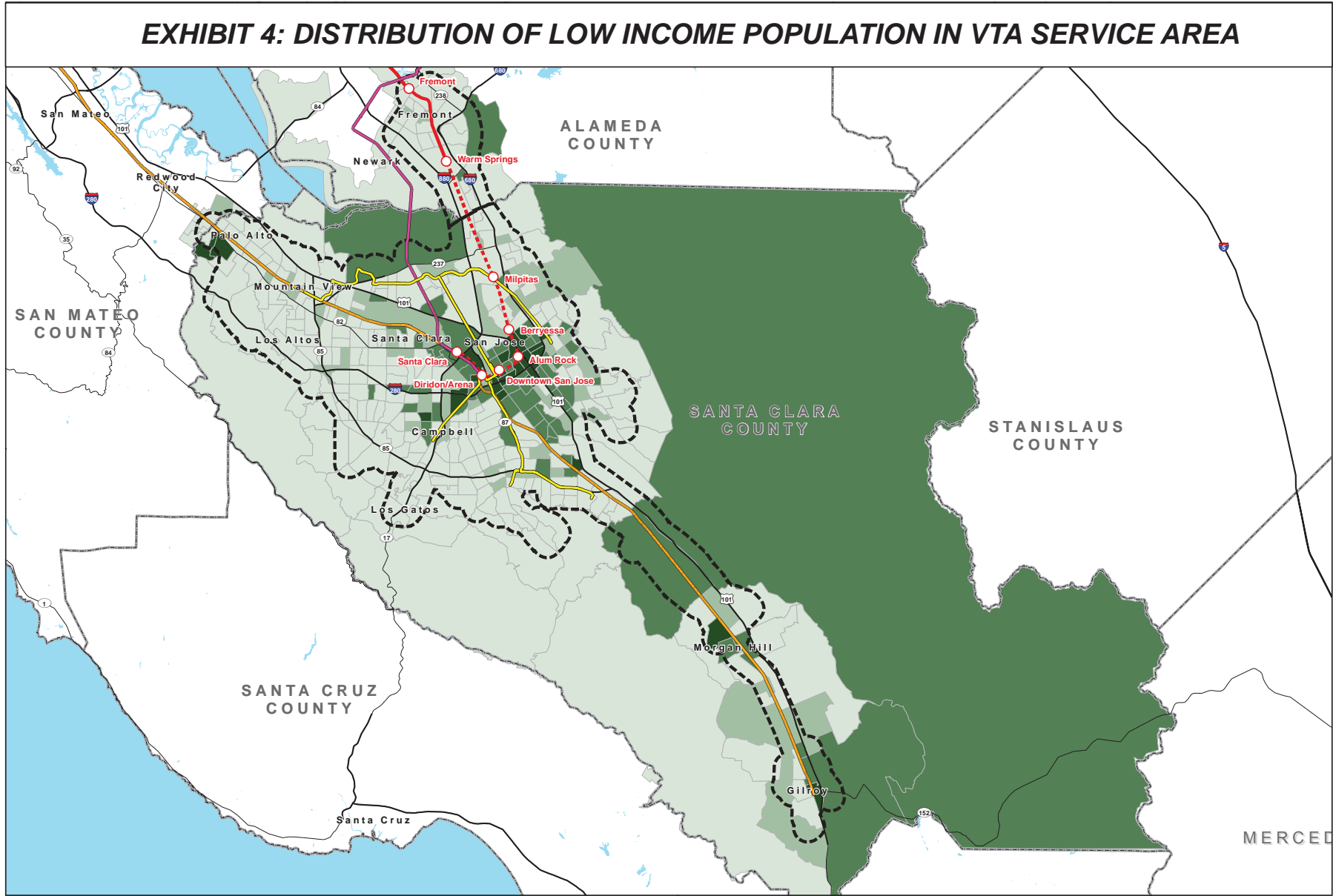
- Interstate
- Highway

**VTA Transit Service Area**

**County Boundaries**

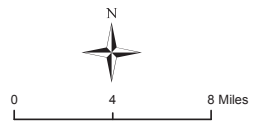
**Percent Low Income**

- Less than average ( $\leq 18\%$ )
- $18\% < x \leq 25\%$
- $25\% < x \leq 45\%$
- $> 45\%$



Note: Low Income percent reflects percentage of persons for whom poverty status is determined based on median household income at or below the Department of Health and Human Services' poverty guidelines. Due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area, the threshold used by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the VTA is double the federal poverty line. The population of Santa Clara County consists of 18% living in households earning less than twice the federal poverty line. Data is presented by census tract for tracts with greater than average low-income population.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.



## EXHIBIT 5: DISTRIBUTION OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POPULATION IN VTA SERVICE AREA

**Legend**

**Transit**

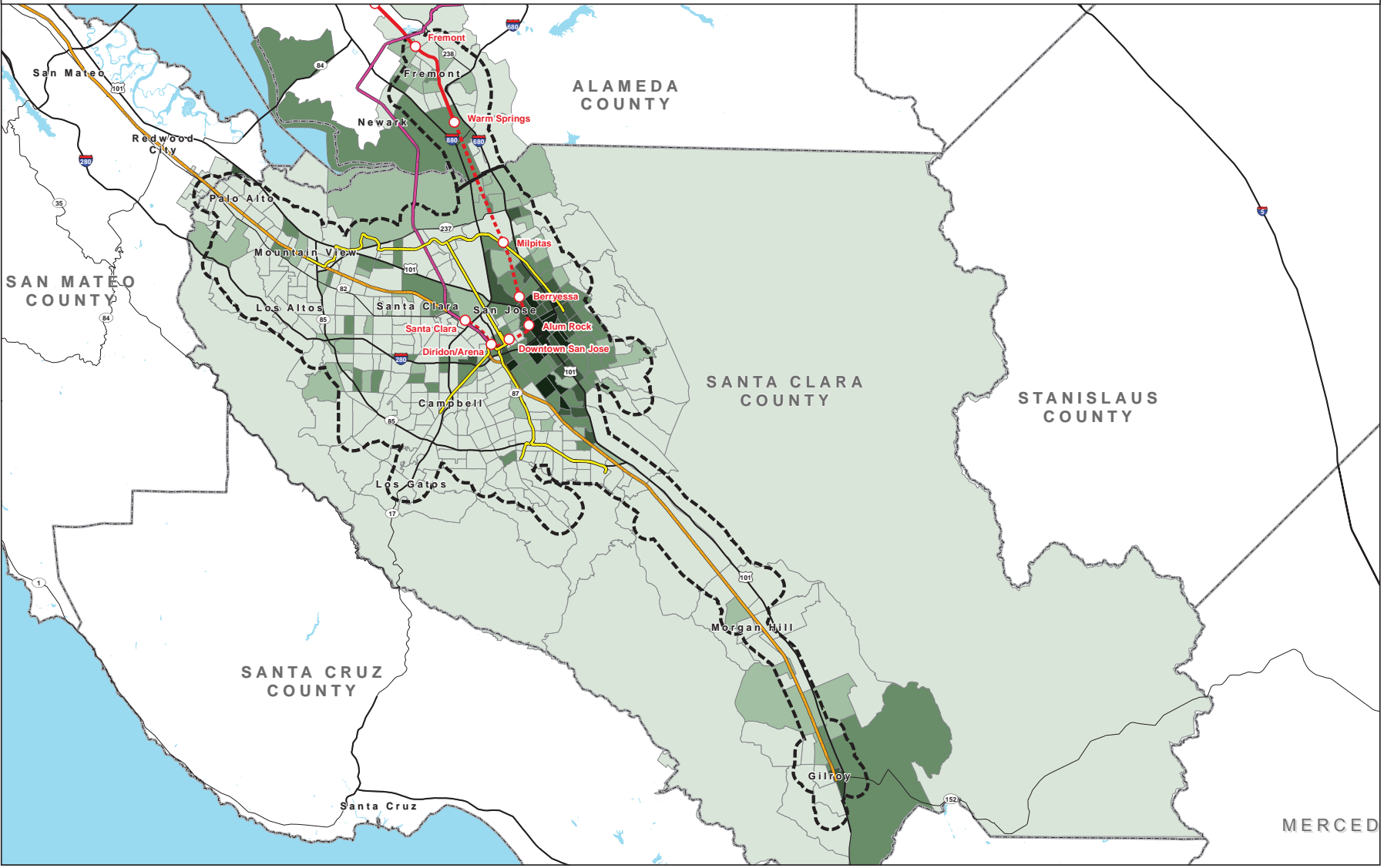
- Existing BART Service
- - - BART Extension
- BART Station
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)

**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway
- VTA Transit Service Area
- County Boundaries

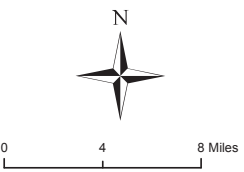
**LEP Percent of Census Tract:**

- Less than avg. ( $\leq 22\%$ )
- $22\% < x \leq 30\%$
- $30\% < x \leq 40\%$
- $40\% < x \leq 50\%$
- $> 50\%$



Note: LEP percent reflects percentage of persons over five years of age that speak english less than "very well". The average percent LEP for Santa Clara County is 22%. Data is presented by census tract.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.





**Exhibit 6 – Top Five LEP Languages within VTA Service Area**

Language	# Persons	Percent
<b>Spanish or Spanish Creole</b>	<b>307,883</b>	<b>19.07%</b>
Speak English “very well”	164,964	10.22%
Speak English less than “very well”	142,919	8.85%
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>119,748</b>	<b>7.42%</b>
Speak English “very well”	60,977	3.78%
Speak English less than “very well”	58,771	3.64%
<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>105,163</b>	<b>6.51%</b>
Speak English “very well”	40,755	2.52%
Speak English less than “very well”	64,408	3.99%
<b>Tagalog</b>	<b>52,873</b>	<b>3.27%</b>
Speak English “very well”	34,652	2.15%
Speak English less than “very well”	18,221	1.13%
<b>Korean</b>	<b>22,952</b>	<b>1.42%</b>
Speak English “very well”	10,902	0.68%
Speak English less than “very well”	12,050	0.75%

Note: Data compares language spoken at home by ability to speak English for the population five years and over.

**Development of the Public Participation Plan**

As shown in **Exhibit 7**, the PPP is the product of input from multiple sources:

**Public Input**

Public input was provided for the plan through:

- LEP focus group meetings with representatives of CBOs completed by VTA staff during 2011.
- Meetings with a CBO Working Group established for the purpose of discussing perspectives on public participation, best practices, expectations and needs, and to provide input on study work products.
- Individual CBO interviews from with groups selected by the CBO Working Group groups were completed in 2012.
- San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District’s (BART) survey data as documented in their PPP<sup>13</sup>.

**Exhibit 7 – Public Participation Plan Input**



<sup>13</sup> *Public Participation Plan*, San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), July 8, 2011.

VTA staff completed 18 distinct LEP focus groups with representatives of CBOs. The following is a list of the organizations that were interviewed and the languages represented (note that some organizations had more than one meeting):

- Refugee and Immigrant Forum (multiple languages)
- Dr. Ahmed Dirie (Somali)
- Santa Clara County Citizenship Collaborative Citizenship Day and Immigrant Pride Day (Amharic, Chinese Traditional and Simplified, English, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese)
- African Community Health Institute (Amharic and Tigrinya)
- Mexican American Community Services Agency, Inc. (Spanish)
- Korean American Community Services, Inc. (Korean)
- Portuguese Organization for Social Services and Opportunities (Portuguese)
- Day Worker Center of Mountain View (multiple languages)
- Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley (Farsi, Chinese, and Iraqi)
- Vietnamese American Voters of Northern California (Vietnamese)
- Terrace Gardens (Vietnamese, Spanish, Chinese Mandarin and Cantonese)
- Refugee Transitions (Burmese, Karen, and Chin)
- SF Bay Area Somali Cultural Group (Somali)
- Paulson Park Apartments (Russian)
- Milpitas Gurdwara Sahib (Punjabi and Hindi)
- Shreemaya Krishnadharm Bay Area Youth Vaishnav Parivar (Gujarati)

As shown in **Exhibit 8**, the groups were geographically dispersed throughout VTA's service area. The purpose of these focus groups was to gather perspectives from LEP populations regarding their transit needs and their experiences with the VTA system.

The project team conducted four meetings with the CBO Working Group established as part of this project to discuss perspectives on public participation, best practices, expectations and needs, and provide input on work products. The typical meeting format included an informational PowerPoint presentation on specific VTA and public participation topics in conjunction with a facilitated discussion followed by an open format in which participants could more freely direct the discussion topics. The meetings were scheduled for two hours every three weeks between January and March 2012.

Organizations represented at the meetings included:

- African Community Health Institute
- Catholic Charities
- Vietnamese American Voters of Northern California
- San Francisco Bay Area Somali Cultural Group
- Refugee Transitions
- TransForm
- Sikh Foundation
- Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
- African American Community Service Agency
- Santa Clara County Social Services Agency
- Refugee and Immigrant Forum
- Santa Clara County Health and Human Services

## EXHIBIT 8: LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS

**Legend**

**Transit**

- Existing BART Service
- - - BART Extension
- BART Station
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)

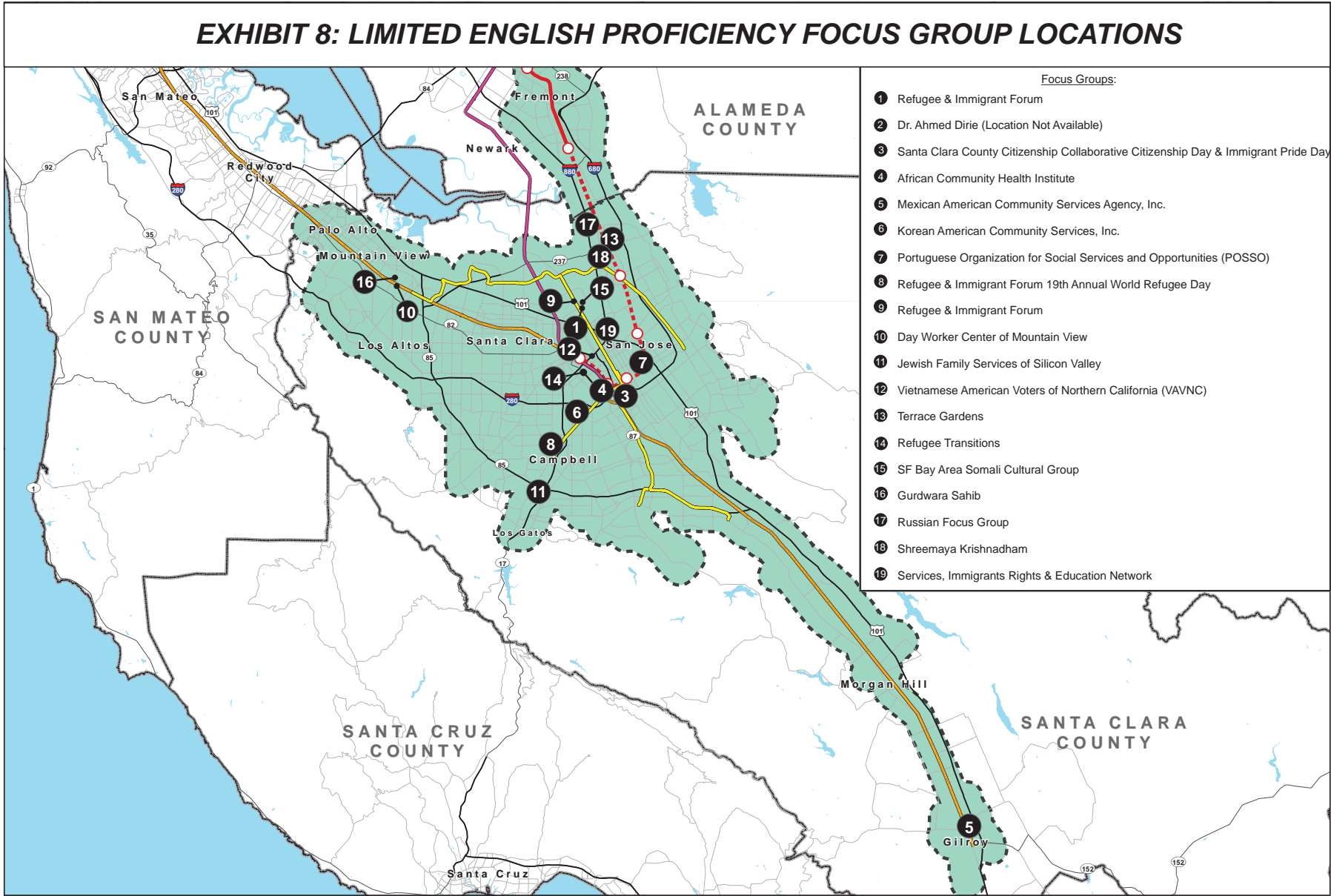
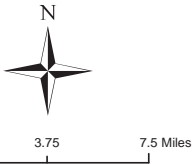
**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway

**Other**

- VTA Service Area
- County Boundaries
- # Focus Group Location

Source: VTA 2011



**Focus Groups:**

- 1 Refugee & Immigrant Forum
- 2 Dr. Ahmed Dirie (Location Not Available)
- 3 Santa Clara County Citizenship Collaborative Citizenship Day & Immigrant Pride Day
- 4 African Community Health Institute
- 5 Mexican American Community Services Agency, Inc.
- 6 Korean American Community Services, Inc.
- 7 Portuguese Organization for Social Services and Opportunities (POSSO)
- 8 Refugee & Immigrant Forum 19th Annual World Refugee Day
- 9 Refugee & Immigrant Forum
- 10 Day Worker Center of Mountain View
- 11 Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
- 12 Vietnamese American Voters of Northern California (VAVNC)
- 13 Terrace Gardens
- 14 Refugee Transitions
- 15 SF Bay Area Somali Cultural Group
- 16 Gurdwara Sahib
- 17 Russian Focus Group
- 18 Shreemaya Krishnadham
- 19 Services, Immigrants Rights & Education Network



Based on feedback from the CBO Working Group, four individual interviews were also undertaken with the following:

- Catholic Charities
- TransForm
- Santa Clara County Social Services Agency
- Second Harvest

The intent of these interviews was to allow for more detailed discussions on topics raised during the meetings and/or to contact organizations that the CBO Working Group believed may have unique input or perspectives.

A summary of select community input is provided in **Exhibit 9**. Complete meeting summaries and detailed discussion of the public input received as part of this project is provided in the companion document to this PPP, *Public Participation Plan Local Community and VTA Staff Input*.

### **VTA Staff Input**

Primary input collected from public sources and VTA staff as part of this project is summarized and discussed in the companion document to the PPP, *Public Participation Plan: Local Community and VTA Staff Input*. Although much of the information contained in that report was used as direct input into the development of the PPP, significant input was also provided by public sources and VTA staff on a broader range of public/customer considerations. While some of the input is beyond the scope of this PPP, this feedback and information are likely valuable to other, future focuses for VTA.

VTA staff interviews were undertaken to solicit information on previous public outreach activities, identify relevant documents, discuss experiences and “lessons learned”, and brainstorm ideas for potential outreach methods and approaches. During the interview process, the project team conducted 12 interviews with representatives from each of the following VTA divisions:

- Operations
- Congestion Management Agency (CMA)
- Engineering and Construction
- Silicon Valley Rapid Transit (SVRT) Program
- External Affairs
- Office of the Board of the Secretary
- Fiscal Resources
- Administrative Services

The interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes and included both a formal interview segment and a more “free flow” discussion format. The project team, in cooperation with VTA staff, prepared interview questions and distributed them to staff prior to conducting interviews. As part of the interview process, staff was asked to provide examples of the public participation materials for the purpose of accurately representing existing public outreach activities and to ultimately provide the opportunity, as appropriate, to share particularly effective approaches and documents across VTA Departments.

A summary of select community staff is provided in **Exhibit 10**. Complete meeting summaries and detailed discussion of the staff input received as part of this project are provided in the companion document to this PPP, *Public Participation Plan Local Community and VTA Staff Input*.

# Exhibit 9 — Summary of Community Input

## Effective Public Engagement

- Is there a meaningful nexus between the information VTA receives from the public and the decisions it makes?
- Distinguish the purpose of public participation between marketing, public relations, and participatory decisionmaking.
- Seek evaluation of engagement effectiveness by community based organizations and community leaders; 360° style evaluations.
- PPP role out: efforts through CBOs, ethnic media, Bill Wilson Center, etc.

## Develop Community Partnerships

- Join agencies that support LEP populations: Refugee & Immigrant Forum, Safety Net Group, etc.
- Attend monthly breakfast at Sunny Hills Methodist Church in Milpitas.
- Collaborate with County Social Services, Second Harvest Food Bank, United Way, 211scc.org.

## Community Outreach

- Get out into the community more; co-sponsor events with CBOs.
- Conduct activities in non-traditional places: ethnic grocery stores, places of worship, ethnic community centers, ESL classes, food banks, etc
- Communications should be more benefit-oriented, people-friendly, more engaging.

## Public Meetings

- Food and refreshments were suggested for public meetings.
- Conduct meetings in non-traditional places: places of worship, ethnic community centers, ESL classes, neighborhood libraries, etc.
- Take notes during meetings, enlist a scribe to post notes during meetings, and use non-English speaking facilitators.
- Ask questions to engage participants.
- Use engagement techniques such as charettes, conversation circles, small focus groups.
- Scope meetings, in advance, to determine language assistance needs.
- CBOs want to be notified about meetings and provided meeting information as soon as it becomes available to the public.
- Use bi/multilingual employees as much as possible and use bi/multilingual ability as a consideration for hiring.
- Translated fact sheets and executive summaries are much more useful than the translation of entire technical documents.
- Provide opportunities for staff public involvement training.

## Meeting Notices/Advertisements

- Notices should be concise & engaging; incorporate images of people, maps, buses & trains (to indicate transit-related) as much as possible.
- Text should be written at 3rd-5th grade level as many LEP parents use their young children to translate for them.
- Utilize ethnic media outlets: community TV & radio, newspapers.
- Post at non-traditional locations: places of worship, ethnic stores, ESL classes, CBO newsletters; HOA & neighborhood newsletters; Second Harvest.
- Place “keeper” information on the backs of notices such as Sharks schedules, H.S. football schedules, farmer’s markets, important County numbers, etc.
- Handout notices on buses, trains, malls and other places people gather.
- Gain public ownership by using phrases like: “We Need Your Opinions; Your Voice Matters.”
- If more than 1 meeting is on a notice, indicate if it is the same meeting in different locations or a series of meetings.
- Customize mailings (variable printing).
- Use County and City mailing lists.
- Use pictograms, photos, etc. as much as possible, limit text.

## Technology

- Collaboration site to post and exchange information with CBOs. Receive requests to translate documents.
- Post meeting notices, reports, and summaries on website.
- Feedback loops: use online discussion boards to ask participant feedback “How Did We Do?” and instruct on how to get involved.
- Post decisions regarding influence of public opinion on fare changes, service changes, etc.
- Geomapping/Community Mapping: allow community to map out preferred meeting locations, locations to post notices, resource locations, etc.

## Social Media

- Currently viewed as one-way communication by VTA; ask and answer questions, query the public to make communication two-way.
- You Tube is a good resource for posting transit-related informational and instructional videos for the CBOs and their clients.
- Videos should contain key English terms but utilize native speakers whenever possible. Review “Putting English to Work” videos.

# Exhibit 9 — Summary of Community Input (cont.)

## Education

- Title VI “Notice to the Public” is too formal and wordy; incorporate photos, reduce verbiage, change to “Know Your Rights.”
- Create a “train-the-trainer” so that CBO representatives, etc. can teach their clients how to use bus and light rail services.
- Blue telephone education campaign to let customers know that the phones are for emergencies and for customer service calls.


## Safety/Security/Emergency Management

- All information related to safety, security and emergencies should be moved up to Tier 1 of the Vital Document Plan.
- Deliver safety and security information via email or text messaging to smart phones.
- Communication with LEP customers during emergencies needs to be improved.

## Senior Citizen Concerns

- Difficulty crossing wide streets and large intersections. As a result, some seniors will avoid using transit.
- Want to transition from driving to using public transit but they don’t know how to use transit system.
- Bus stops should be near their homes/residential communities.
- Service hour range should be broad enough for them to get to medical appointments early and return home before bus service ends.
- Need transit to go to places of worship, senior centers, ethnic medical clinics, and ethnic food markets.

## Cultural Competency

- All English notices and advertisements are not welcoming to the immigrant community.
- Utilize small group formats, with facilitators who speak languages other than English.
- Collaborate with County Social Services to follow trends for changing LEP populations entering Santa Clara County.
- Partner with resettlement agencies.
- Be cognizant of the needs of the most vulnerable LEP populations (smaller populations with fewer community resources).
- Conduct outreach and meetings in non-traditional places.
- Utilize ethnic media.
- Use pictures more than words. Some customers may have low-literacy in their primary languages (gender bias and/or lack of educational resources).
- Some customers come from countries that do not have structured transit systems, so navigating VTA’s system and understanding terminology is difficult.
- Notices and Ads should have multilingual (not just English) statements explaining the availability of free language assistance services (for example SFMTA uses:  311: 311: 中文 / Español / Français / 日本語 / 한국어 / Italiano / русский / tiếng Việt / Tagalog / (يعبرع))

# Exhibit 10 — Summary of Staff Input

<b>Maintain Flexibility</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neither VTA staff nor the CBO representatives were supportive of a highly prescriptive approach to public participation.</li><li>• Staff wants to have the ability to tailor the approach to the audience and unique circumstances.</li></ul>
<b>Techniques</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a broad range of techniques to encourage meaningful public engagement.</li><li>• Techniques should be based on size of group, kind of project and each phase within a project.</li><li>• Staff is interested in the PPP establishing a toolbox of methods that staff can use to increase the effectiveness of outreach.</li></ul>
<b>Authority and Guidance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key funding and regulatory agencies have specific public participation requirements that VTA's Plan needs to recognize and accommodate.</li></ul>
<b>Targeted Advertising/Outreach</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional newspaper advertising may not be an effective method of outreach to attract low-income, minority and LEP customers.</li><li>• Use ethnic media outlets.</li><li>• Use non-traditional methods such as posting notices/advertising in ethnic retail stores, places of worship/congregation, etc.</li><li>• E-mail public notices to non-profit organizations to share info with its constituents.</li></ul>
<b>Technology</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update website to consolidate content and improve ease of navigation.</li><li>• Update website to increase the availability of two-way communications tools (surveys, webinars, social media applications).</li></ul>
<b>Recognize Constraints</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial and resource limitations are considerations that need to be accounted for when developing public outreach strategies.</li><li>• Limitations include: cost of translations, cost of print ads, and availability of staff with specific skill sets.</li><li>• Staff has a difficult time determining the languages their documents should be translated to.</li><li>• Staff is unaware of interpretation or translation needs until public meetings begin.</li><li>• Limited availability of bi/multilingual employees to actively participate in meeting the interpretation and translation needs of the public.</li></ul>
<b>Non-language Based Options</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand the use of graphic-based and/or sound-based communications tools.</li><li>• Non-languaged based tools can be used to reach a broader range of audience and convey meaning under a variety of circumstances.</li></ul>
<b>Policies on Multi-agency Projects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinating multiple agency projects, particularly when they may have competing interests, can be a challenge.</li><li>• This Plan should serve as a basis for establishing cooperative outreach efforts without reducing public involvement opportunities.</li></ul>
<b>Training</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide training regarding Title VI: Limited English Proficiency and Environmental Justice.</li></ul>
<b>Monitor and Evaluate</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of VTA's public engagement efforts.</li></ul>
<b>Summarize Input and Detail Its Use</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summarize public input to encourage continued participation and for the purpose of improving decisionmaking.</li><li>• Prescribe expectations for providing public input and provide feedback on how the input affected resulting decisions.</li></ul>

### **Comparative Review of VTA and BART Best Practices**

In addition to the primary input collected as part of the development of the PPP, input from population-specific surveys conducted by BART and as documented in their *Public Participation Plan* was obtained and reviewed. Approximately 1,350 surveys were collected by BART over the course of 29 community meetings carried out in 2010. These surveys were generally grouped into the following seven topic areas:

- Factors in decision to attend a meeting
- Timing of meetings
- Methods for publicizing participation opportunities
- Community meeting formats
- Input methods other than community meetings
- Methods of keeping participants informed after meetings
- Input on CBO participation

Because VTA and BART have service areas with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics, the results from these surveys are useful to VTA for determining preferences for public participation methods amongst low-income, minority, and LEP populations. Findings from these surveys are referenced and have been incorporated, as appropriate, into the PPP.

### **Existing VTA Reports and Policies**

Existing reports and policies provided by staff concurrent with the staff interviews conducted were used as base material for the PPP in order to (a) leverage previous efforts, (b) avoid conflicting guidance, and (c) incorporate into the PPP, where appropriate. The following documents were obtained and reviewed during the preparation of the PPP and are provided in the companion document to this PPP, *Public Participation Plan Local Community and VTA Staff Input* (which is available separate from this document):

- VTA's Public Participation Plan: Local Community and VTA Staff Input, May 4, 2012
- VTA's Limited English Proficiency Plan, June 14, 2011
- VTA's Vital Document Plan (pending completion)
- Transportation terminology translation glossary (Creative Services)
- Creative Services' protocol for obtaining interpretation or translation services
- Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Program, Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project's Communications and Outreach Plan, May 27, 2011
- BART's Public Participation Plan, July 8, 2011
- Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Program, Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project's Title VI Compliance Review, June 30, 2010
- VTA's Community Outreach, Public Comment Process, May 19, 2011 (updated: November 30, 2011)
- VTA External Affairs' Community Engagement Plan (undated)
- Translations & Desktop Publishing Services Procedure, March 11, 2009
- Public Outreach for Fare or Service Modification Procedure, January 16, 2009
- Community Outreach Guidelines, November 30, 2011
- VTA's Project Communications and Outreach Policy, May 18, 2010
- VTA's Project Communications and Outreach Procedure, May 18, 2010
- VTA's Capital Project Outreach Coordination Work Instruction, October 21, 2010
- VTA's Vital Documents for Title VI LEP Compliance, March 31, 2011

Although some of the information provided in these documents is covered by the PPP, many of these documents still provide useful information or guidance that is not intended to be replaced by the PPP. In addition, several of the community-based transportation plans (CBTPs) were identified as being useful resources for developing approaches to including low-income participants in public participation.

### **Federal Legislation and Administrative Directives**

In 2012, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) issued Circular 4702.1B providing updated guidance on complying with Title VI and Circular 4703.1, updating guidance on incorporating EJ principles into public transportation decisions. In addition to continuing the requirement that all direct and primary recipients document their compliance by submitting a Title VI Program to their FTA regional civil rights officer once every three years, Circular 4702.1B includes the specific requirement that a PPP be prepared. In particular, the draft guidance requires that a “public participation plan that includes an outreach plan to engage minority and limited English proficient populations” be prepared. This PPP has been prepared to both meet the unique requirements of VTA and comply with this draft FTA requirement.

Although, this PPP has been prepared to comply with FTA requirements, its application to other federally funded projects is appropriate (FHWA, NEPA, etc.) given that all federally funded projects must comply with the major federal acts that the PPP is intended to address. However, users of the PPP should be careful to verify that all statutory notification and/or project related requirements are properly complied with. In particular, projects, specific phases of project, or government actions required to comply with under either the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are required to follow a prescriptive process which includes specific legal notifications. The following is an overview of Title VI, EJ, and LEP acts and executive orders which form the fundamental basis for much of the guidance included in the PPP.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifically prohibited all recipients of federal financial assistance from denying equal participation on the basis of race, color, or national origin in all of their programs and activities. VTA is strongly committed to meeting its Title VI regulatory requirements, including ensuring that the level and quality of transportation service is provided without regard to race, color, or national origin. The organization is structured so that oversight and management of policy development, training, regulatory compliance, reporting, and monitoring of all anti-discrimination policies as it relates to Title VI and LEP are centralized in the Office of Civil Rights.

In 1994, Executive Order 12898 established the following principles related to public participation:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on EJ populations
- To ensure the full and fair participation in transportation decisions
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by EJ populations

Environmental Justice is an important consideration for many of the projects and proposed actions VTA considers. Planning documents typically include significant analysis related to identifying and addressing recognized disproportionate impacts as required in the NEPA review process required by this order.

In 2000, Executive Order 13166 (Limited English Proficiency) established the need to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected persons and placed increased emphasis on providing meaningful access to decision-making information. This Executive Order requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with LEP, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. One of the ways in

which recipients of federal funds, such as VTA, are required to comply with this order is the preparation of an LEP Plan. VTA's LEP Plan<sup>9</sup> assesses language (translation) needs in the VTA service area, and reflects progress toward LEP compliance and on-going efforts to fully comply with the federal guidelines. Separately, VTA has also developed a Vital Documents Plan<sup>14</sup> that provides guidance on written translation of VTA documents.

### **Best Practice Review**

A cursory review of current literature and other organizations' approaches to public participation was carried out during the course of a best practice review. Documentation obtained and reviewed during the course of the development of the PPP included reports and summaries of best practices from, amongst others, the Transportation Research Board (TRB), FTA, FHWA, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). This information was used to help formulate the PPP and is the basis for select materials presented to the CBO Working Group during a meeting conducted in support of this document.

## **II. Goals and Approach to Public Participation**

This PPP is a guide for VTA's public participation activities. The purpose of this PPP is to promote the use of effective methods to inform and provide meaningful opportunities for input by the public including traditionally under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and LEP populations.

VTA has a long-standing commitment to reaching these populations both as part of its commitment to being a valued community partner and in recognition of the significant proportion of its customer base which is included in these populations. The successful implementation of VTA's PPP requires that it reflects VTA's existing commitment to effective public participation and that it supports the following goals and guiding principles of the PPP.

---

<sup>14</sup> Vital Documents for Title VI LEP Compliance, VTA, January 24, 2013.

## Goals

The PPP is intended to result in meaningful outreach and engagement opportunities for the public, including low-income, minority, and LEP populations. In support of this intent, the following goals have been established as the basis for public participation at VTA:

- **Involve stakeholders early and throughout the process** – Early engagement and regular communication has a significant impact on both the quality of input and the legitimacy of a project or proposed action outcome.
- **Increase the participation of under-represented populations** – VTA understands that the paramount concern of the PPP is to involve participants with a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural perspectives including those that are identified as being low-income, minority, or LEP populations.
- **Use public participation to improve outcomes** – VTA recognizes the importance of public participation as an input to successful decision making for projects and proposed actions.
- **Provide continuous public education** – Both to inform and engage the public in the short term, while maintaining a longer-term perspective to increase the public’s capacity to understand the transportation system and issues results in increasingly meaningful public participation.
- **Make public participation accessible** – VTA seeks to address physical, geographical, temporal, linguistic, and cultural barriers to the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- **Make public participation relevant** – Public participation is most effective when geared to the specific concerns, interests, and values of affected communities and stakeholders.
- **Meet the requirements of federal funding and oversight agencies** – In addition to supporting VTA’s organizational commitment to LEP, Title VI, and EJ, properly conducted public participation is also an important mechanism for maintaining funding opportunities to advance the interests of the community VTA serves.
- **Maintain and create new partnerships** – VTA has a long-standing commitment to being a valued community partner and recognizes the value of CBOs and other NGOs in building trust with the community and reaching low-income, minority, and LEP populations.
- **Function as a “living document”** – The PPP is intended to continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of communities VTA serves through regular updates and actively addressing stakeholder concerns and desires.
- **Maximize input opportunities** – VTA seeks to maximize participation by coordinating with intra-agency departments and interagency partners to combine public participation opportunities when appropriate, avoiding conflicting public participation schedules, providing alternative methods for input, and reducing participant overload and fatigue by having continuous public participation demands focused on the same community. VTA staff should consider meeting annually to discuss and collaborate on public engagement strategies that can be consolidated to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.



### **Approach to Public Participation**

In addition to meeting the stated goals of public participation, VTA is resolved to provide an appropriate customer experience for public participation participants. Accordingly, VTA seeks to create circumstances which address the following basic stakeholder needs:

- **Respect** – One of the most basic requirements often associated with courtesy and politeness, participants should be treated in a manner that recognizes the importance and value of their participation.
- **Empathy** – Participants should feel that VTA appreciates their wants and circumstances.
- **Fairness** – VTA has an obligation to provide participants with adequate attention and reasonable answers.
- **Control** – Participants’ input should be considered during decision-making processes and the outcome explained in the context of their input.
- **Informative** – Participants want to know about projects and proposed actions in a pertinent and time-sensitive manner.
- **Accurate** – Participants should be communicated with in an honest and accurate manner.

In addition to promoting a positive meaningful experience for participants that reflect VTA’s commitment to effective public participation, several themes emerged from the input activities carried out in support of the PPP. Several major themes were identified through public and VTA staff input and were used to direct the overall plan’s development. These major themes should continue to be considered during implementation of the plan, including the following:

- **Personalize public participation activities** – The selection of outreach/engagement methods has a significant effect on the level of participation amongst low-income, minority, and LEP populations. Careful selection can result in significantly improved participation and results.
- **Actively engage the public on their own terms** – Joining existing CBO and LEP community meetings and events are some of the most effective methods to increase the level of public trust and cooperation, while at the same time accomplishing VTA’s public participation objectives. Other examples include engaging VTA riders on the light rail platform or onboard vehicles or visiting major employers.
- **Maintain flexibility** – Neither VTA staff nor the CBO representatives were supportive of a highly prescriptive approach to public participation. The ability to tailor the approach to the audience and unique circumstances was seen as being paramount to the PPP’s success.
- **Establish a broad range of public participation techniques** – Both VTA staff and CBO representatives understand the value of having multiple techniques to address the specific public participation needs.
- **Address jurisdictional requirements** – Key funding and regulatory agencies have specific public participation requirements that the PPP needs to recognize and address.
- **Encourage targeted advertising/outreach** – Neither VTA staff nor CBO representatives consider traditional newsprint advertising to be an effective method for reaching for LEP populations. LEP and minority groups are most effectively reached through ethnic media, ethnic retail stores, places of worship/congregation, etc.

- **Recognize constraints** – Financial and resource limitations are considerations that need to be accounted for when developing public participation activities. Examples include cost of translations, cost of print ads, and availability of staff with specific skill sets.
- **Interpretation/translation is essential for LEP populations** – English-only public participation/communication, even when it is indicated that language accommodations can be made, does not encourage LEP individuals to participate.
- **Expand use of non-language-based options** – Graphic-based and/or sound-based communication tools are effective for reaching LEP individuals. Non-language-based tools can be used to reach a broader range of audience and convey meaning under a variety of circumstances.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of public outreach** – In the spirit of continually meeting community needs, there was interest amongst VTA staff and the CBO Working Group participants to expand the techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation and incorporate evaluation opportunities into all public meetings and at the end of all public processes such as the completion of a project.
- **Summarize input and detail its use** – The importance of actively summarizing participant input, both as a method for encouraging continued input and for the purpose of improved decision making, was stressed by both VTA staff and CBO participants. Documenting input received, explaining how it was used and its effect on any resulting decisions to interested public participation participants and applicable decision-making bodies, such as the VTA Board of Directors or the Policy Advisory Boards, is important to creating successful project outcomes.

## **SECTION II: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

This section provides guidance on the sequence of activities for a basic project or proposed action for which public participation is being carried out. As depicted in **Exhibit 11**, the process typically begins with the identification of a project or proposed action and is followed by the scoping and design of an approach uniquely tailored to meet the needs of the planned outreach or engagement. Additionally, as shown, inherent to a comprehensive public participation process is the opportunity for feedback on the process and feedback to the participants on how their input given was used to affect outcomes or decisions. It is important to note that although this process may not be appropriate to be strictly applied under many situations (such as a standing meeting which includes public input as an agenda item), it is anticipated that various parts of the guidance may be useful and/or applicable to a variety of circumstances.

The following is an overview of each of the major steps leading up to and included within the scoping of a basic project's or proposed action's public participation, as shown in **Exhibit 11**.

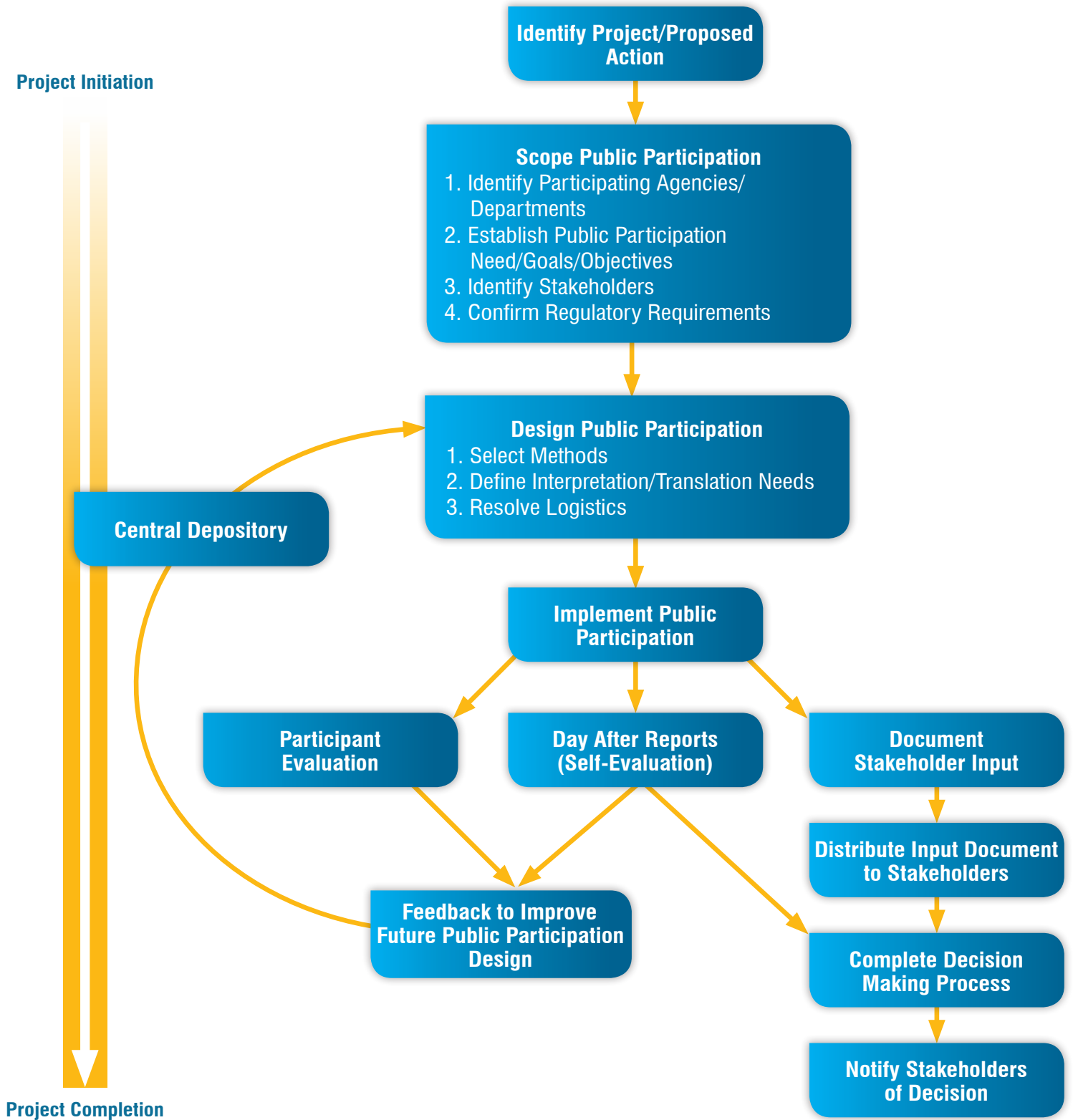
### **I. Identify Project/Proposed Action**

Each project or proposed action, regardless of complexity, should be subject to some basic evaluation to determine the preliminary need for public participation. This evaluation should, at a minimum, consider the level of stakeholder interest, potential impacts, and relevant regulatory/legal requirements to determine the need for public participation. Although this can be accomplished by something as simple as an informal review of the project or proposed action, it is often appropriate to include staff members from the Office of External Affairs and that some form of documentation regarding any determination be prepared. Concurrent with a determination of the need for public participation for a project or proposed action, a project manager or single point of contact for public participation should be identified. Rather than deferring to the Office of External Affairs, each activity should be "owned" by an individual or representative from the appropriate department responsible for the project or proposed action. As part of this process, the VTA Office of Civil Rights is responsible for ensuring that public participation meets regulatory requirements for under-represented communities such as low-income, minority, and LEP populations.

### **II. Scoping Public Participation**

During the scoping phase, many of the important decisions that ultimately influence the success of a public participation process are made. As scoping often represents one of the first tangible steps in a public participation process, it is important that those responsible for the outreach or engagement use it as an opportunity to form a common understanding of the expectations, approach, methods, and timing of the process. The misalignment of expectations and resources at this early stage can have significant implications as the process becomes more external to VTA. A well-executed transparent scoping exercise that includes appropriate stakeholder input can have a material impact on public support for the overall public participation process and any actions or decisions that may result.

# Exhibit 11 — Public Participation Process



### **Identify Participating Agencies/Departments**

The nature of a specific project or proposed action dictates the appropriate participating agencies and/or internal VTA departments for inclusion in the public participation process. Simple, short-term projects or proposed activities may only involve one or two internal departments or divisions while long-term, complex capital projects will likely require the involvement of multiple external agencies and numerous internal divisions. Well-informed internal departments/divisions can assist in effective notification and execution of the public participation process.

### **Establish Public Participation Need/Goals/Objectives**

At this stage, the preliminary need defined previously, is further refined and the accompanying goals and objectives for the public participation process are developed. Given the dynamic nature of public participation and the interrelationships of other scoping tasks, it is likely that this may happen concurrently with the identification of stakeholders and confirmation of regulatory requirements. In particular, during this task, the differences among project interests may begin to result in competing and/or different definitions of the particular project's or proposed action's public participation needs, goals, and objectives.

To fully establish a project or proposed action's public participation needs, goals, and objectives, the potential impacts may need to be described both in terms of their geographic impact and/or severity and appropriate stakeholders and decision makers informed and engaged. At this initial stage, it is important to define the decision-making process that will utilize the public participation. Typically, this requires defining how the following decision-making steps will be undertaken:

- Problem definition
- Establish evaluation criteria
- Alternative identification
- Alternative evaluation
- Preferred alternative selection

With an understanding of the decision-making process established, the needs, goals, and objectives can be more clearly defined and the overall public participation process can begin to take shape and a preliminary schedule determined.

### **Identify Stakeholders**

Although often primarily consisting of the general public, stakeholders can include a broad range of individuals and interests such as:

- Transit customers
- Individual or groups affected by a transportation project or action
- Individual or groups that believe they are affected by a transportation project or action
- Traditionally under-served and under-represented communities
- Residents of affected geographic areas
- Government agencies
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Stakeholder groups will vary depending on the geographic location and nature of a specific project or proposed action. The number of and level of involvement and interest of stakeholder groups will likely vary depending on their particular interests and their associated impacts. To appropriately establish a project or proposed action's stakeholders, the potential impacts may need to be described both in terms

of their geographic impact and/or severity as it may not be initially clear which communities or areas may be impacted. Particular attention needs to be given to the identifying minority and low-income populations that may be disproportionately impacted as provided for under federal requirements related to EJ. **Exhibit 12** provides a basic worksheet that can assist in the identification of stakeholders. As shown on **Exhibit 12**, there are several sources that are often appropriate to consult during the stakeholder identification process, including:

- GIS/Census Data – VTA has extensive GIS capabilities that are useful for assisting in the identification of stakeholders based on unique identifiers including income, race, and language spoken. This analysis is typically carried out as part of most projects.
- Local knowledge – VTA staff, given their strong familiarity with the community they serve can be an excellent resource for helping to identify stakeholders that should be specifically targeted as part of a public participation effort.
- Depending on the location of a project, it may be appropriate to engage other agencies, stakeholders, or CBOs. Additionally, decision-makers can often help identify groups or individuals that should be specifically targeted as part of a public participation effort.
- Ridership survey/ridership observations can also be useful in identifying stakeholders. This is particularly important as the impacts of a project/proposed action can often affect people who do not necessarily reside in the area of the project/proposed action (the typical output of GIS analysis).

### **Confirm Regulatory Requirements**

Because VTA's service area spans multiple jurisdictions, and projects and proposed actions can include numerous federal, state, regional, and local agencies, the regulatory requirements of a particular project or proposed action are likely to vary depending on location, scope, and duration. Care needs to be taken to confirm anticipated requirements to ensure both that these agencies are appropriately recognized as stakeholders, and to make sure that their public participation requirements are appropriately addressed during the course of the public participation process.

It is anticipated that there may be situations where a partner agency may have conflicting or different public participation guidance; under these situations it may be necessary or appropriate to develop an approach to public participation that differs from the guidance provided in the PPP. However, public participation should still be carried out in a manner consistent with the stated goals and approach to public participation outlined in the PPP.

### **III. Designing Public Participation**

Following the scoping of a project or proposed action's public participation, it is next necessary to select the public participation methods, determine interpretation and translation needs, and address any logistical issues that may be necessary to meet the stated public participation goals and objectives. Each of these design considerations should be determined based on the specific needs of the various stakeholders and be planned in the context of their associated concerns and interests as identified during the scoping task.

## Selecting Methods

While the selection of public participation is somewhat unique for each action, the following factors should be considered in the design of a public participation process and selection of the most appropriate engagement method(s):

- Number and type (business, resident, etc.) of stakeholders
- Geographic coverage of stakeholders
- Available budget and resources
- Communication and language requirements
- Cultural and/or stated preferences
- Importance of the project or proposed action to stakeholders
- Nature of the issues or concerns that various stakeholders consider to be most pertinent

Building on the Stakeholder Identification Worksheet provided as **Exhibit 12**, **Exhibit 13** provides a basic worksheet to assist in matching stakeholder needs to the methods discussed in the next section.

## Public Participation Methods

This section provides an overview of the principle methods VTA uses for the purposes of public outreach and engagement. Additionally, in recognition that VTA and BART have service areas with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics, the results from their PPP survey has been used to help represent preferences for specific public participation methods amongst low-income, minority, and LEP populations. The following is an overview of the four quadrants of methods (**Q1 – Q4**) shown in **Exhibit 14**, to categorize the application of major public participation applications:

- **(Q1) VTA-based public information/outreach** – These methods, which are unilaterally carried out by VTA, include the primary tools for advertising and making information available to the public and other interested parties. These methods are well established and are commonly used by most governmental agencies with responsibilities similar to those of VTA.
- **(Q2) VTA-based public input/engagement** – These methods, which are unilaterally carried out by VTA, include many of the most commonly used techniques for soliciting input and engaging the public. As shown, three of the methods are consistently used as both methods for outreach and engagement. Included among these are public meetings which are one of the most commonly used public participation methods. It is worth noting that several of these techniques were given negative preferences by VTA survey participants representing low-income, minority, or LEP populations.
- **(Q3) Community-based public information/outreach** – These two methods, both of which often require partnering with CBOs or other community interest groups, are broadly considered to be effective methods to reach low-income, minority, and LEP populations.
- **(Q4) Community-based public input/engagement** – These three methods require the highest level of cooperation with CBOs as VTA must typically take on a participant role rather than a lead role for them to be successfully applied.

# Exhibit 12 — Public Participation Plan

## Stakeholder Identification Worksheet

Project manager/  
Public Involvement Lead: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Project/Proposed Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential Impacts: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stakeholder Identification Methods

#### Geographical Information System/Census Data

Analysis Area	Stakeholder/Stakeholder Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP

#### Local Knowledge/VTA Staff Input

Data Source	Stakeholder/Stakeholder Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP

#### Agency/Community Based Organization Input

Organization	Stakeholder/Stakeholder Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP

#### Ridership Survey/Ridership Observations/Other Data

Data Source	Stakeholder/Stakeholder Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Minority	<input type="checkbox"/> LEP



# Exhibit 13 — Public Participation Plan

## Methods Worksheet

Stakeholder/Stakeholder Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Low Income

Minority

LEP

Geographic Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Communication and/or language requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural and/or other stated preferences: \_\_\_\_\_

Importance of project to stakeholder/stakeholder group: \_\_\_\_\_

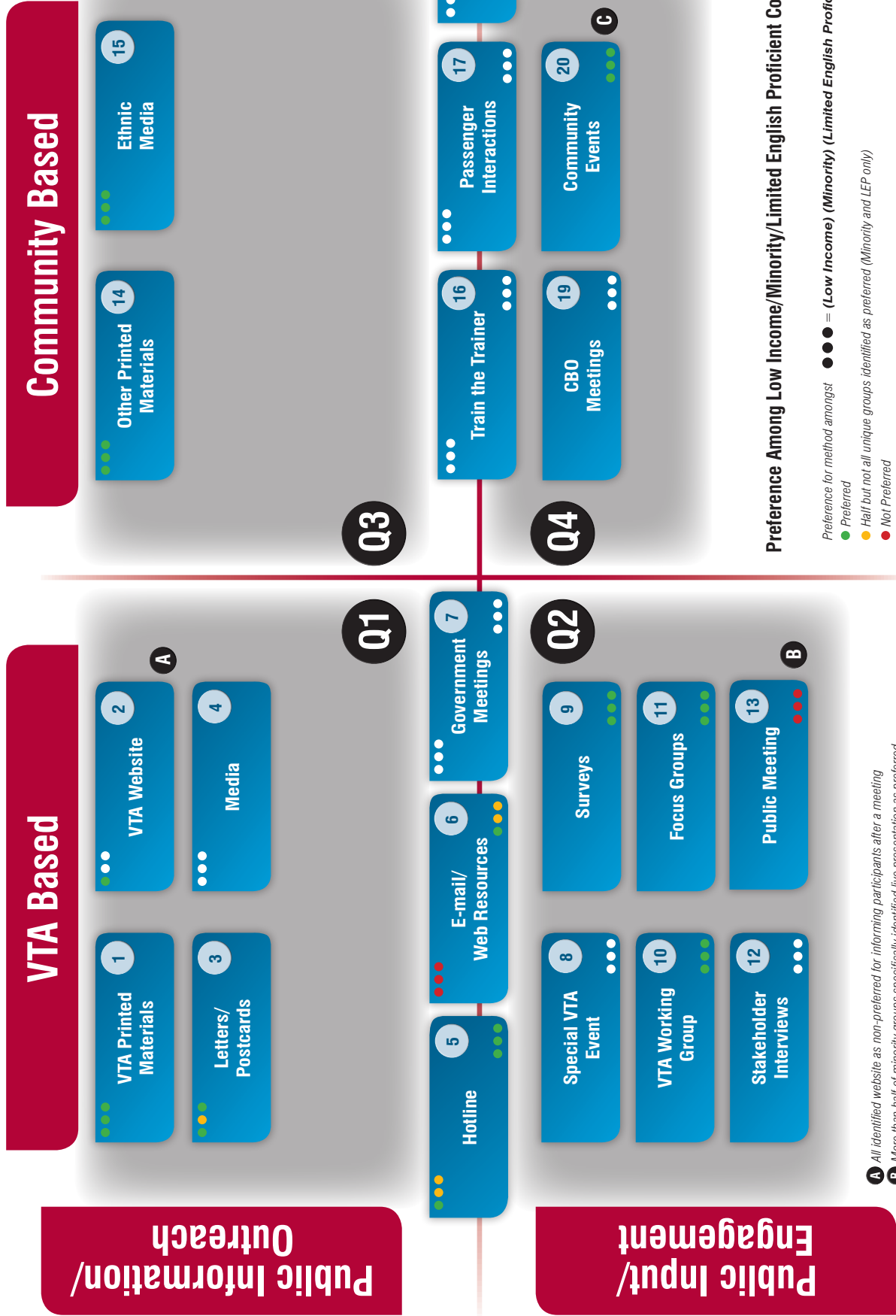
Nature of issues or concerns for stakeholder/stakeholder group: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Methods

Method	Considerations

# Exhibit 14 — Public Participation Methods



Preference Among Low Income/Minority/Limited English Proficient Communities

- Preference for method amongst
  - Preferred
  - Half but not all unique groups identified as preferred (Minority and LEP only)
  - Not Preferred
  - Not evaluated
- = (Low Income) (Minority) (Limited English Proficient)

- A** All identified website as non-preferred for informing participants after a meeting
- B** More than half of minority groups specifically identified live presentation as preferred
- C** Only region's CBO's scored highly, environment, political, and urban/regional planning identified as "non"-preferred

SOURCE: BART Public Participation Plan, July 8, 2011



All of these methods, applied under the right circumstances, can be highly effective in achieving a desired outcome. Based on input from the CBO Working Group, and in consideration of the best practices for reaching and encouraging participation by low-income, minority, and LEP populations, increasing emphasis is being placed on utilizing community-based methods. In particular, the community-based public input/engagement methods (**Q3 and Q4 in Exhibit 12**) were identified by the CBO Working Group as being highly desirable and effective and support the stated interest of several CBOs that VTA continue to increase its prominence as a key community partner. These methods also support one of the major themes that emerged from the CBO Working Group and that underlies the PPP's development, namely:

**Actively engage the public on their own terms** – Joining existing CBO and LEP community meetings and events are some of the most effective methods to increase the level of public trust and cooperation, while at the same time accomplishing VTA's public participation objectives. Other examples include engaging VTA riders on the light rail platform or onboard vehicles or visiting major employers.

The following is an overview of the principle methods VTA uses for the purposes of public outreach and engagement:

### **(Q1) VTA based public information/outreach**

#### **1. VTA Printed Materials (Q1)**

Print materials such as newsletters, flyers, and posters can be used to publicize outreach information and participation opportunities. These materials can be displayed at gathering locations such as churches, schools, food pantries (such as Second Harvest), local libraries, supermarkets, and other public areas. Bulletin boards, information kiosks, and other VTA station facilities are also effective locations to display outreach information and to promote participation opportunities.

#### **2. VTA Website (Q1) Updated in 2020**

The VTA website ([www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org)) is a communications tool that provides information about VTA routes and schedules, projects, programs, and policies. Informing the community of the content available on the VTA website is an important element of public outreach. The information and participation methods available on the website should also be available in alternative locations and formats to accommodate users who do not have access to, or who prefer not to use the internet site. Although not currently utilized as a method for public input/engagement, the website could be modified to provide this opportunity. The VTA website includes access to GovDelivery, an e-mail subscription management system that provides access to information by delivering new information through e-mail and wireless alerts, to provide ongoing communication with stakeholders.

Online Language Translations on VTA website:

- The website [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), which was updated within the last couple of years, provides web visitors with transportation information assistance in over 20 different languages, in addition to English. A Google Translate widget is placed at the bottom of VTA's website for reference.
- VTA's website content is also be ADA-accessible and is compatible with screen-reading devices for individuals with visual impairments.

### **3. Letters/Postcards (Q1)**

The use of direct mailings (postcards, letters, newsletters, etc.) is typically costly, but can be one of the most effective methods for reaching specific geographic areas or demographic groups. The effectiveness of direct mailings was confirmed by BART's PPP development process in which low-income, LEP, and minority survey respondents all responded favorably to the use of postcards and letters distributed by mail.

### **4. Media (Q1)**

Public participation opportunities and outreach information can be publicized through a variety of radio, television, and newspaper media that serve both English-speaking and language-specific audiences. These outlets can be effective in reaching targeted groups, particularly with the use of local newspapers. Survey results and community input received during BART's PPP process indicated that the majority of minority and LEP community members are likely to learn about events through ethnic media sources. VTA maintains a comprehensive inventory of print, television, radio, and internet media contacts that includes Spanish and Asian language media outlets.

### **(Q1) VTA-based public information/outreach and (Q2) VTA based public input/engagement**

The following methods, depending on how they are applied by VTA, can either be used for the purpose of public information/outreach or input/engagement:

### **5. Hotline (Q1 or Q2)**

Hotlines can serve both as a source for information and a method to receive comments or input. Common hotlines take the form of a dedicated phone number for a construction project, so that the affected traveling public or local residents can find out the status of ongoing activities, or as a method for the public to get information or connect with people knowledgeable about a project or proposed action. In its simplest form, VTA materials for a project or proposed action always include contact information, although, this is often not a number dedicated for that sole purpose.

Consideration should always be given to utilizing VTA's established Language Line Services (LLS) or resolving a method for interpretation needs in conjunction with the establishment of a hotline to facilitate communication with LEP individuals. The LLS allows users to call the LLS number when a customer is unable to speak English. The professionally trained and tested LLS interpreters listen to the customer, analyze the message, and accurately convey its original meaning to the VTA staff member, then respond to the customer in his/her own language.

### **6. E-Mail/Web Resources (Q1 or Q2)**

VTA currently uses e-mail, as well as social media (Facebook and Twitter) to notify the public of upcoming participation opportunities. Informational materials and videos can be posted online for advance review. Webcast meetings and public participation methods that allow remote viewing and participation are additional methods for consideration. Webcast meetings may include opportunities for web participants to ask questions or make comments through e-mail or other web-based applications. While cell phone ownership within VTA's service area is widespread, these devices are not necessarily smart phones with internet service. As a result, text messages may be the most effective means of sharing VTA information on mobile devices. VTA also uses GovDelivery, an e-mail subscription management system that provides access to information by delivering new information through e-mail and wireless alerts, to provide ongoing communication with stakeholders.

## **7. Government Meetings (Q1 or Q2)**

VTA provides updates on its plans and projects to federal, state, and local elected officials through regularly scheduled government meetings throughout the service area. These meetings include city and town council, planning commission, and other regulatory agency board meetings. These regularly scheduled meetings are predictable, well publicized, and provide an opportunity to post applicable information on meeting agendas in advance of the meetings for public review and consideration.

## **8. Customer Service Department Updated in 2020**

VTA's Customer Service department keeps our customers moving in Santa Clara County by responding to their inquiries, comments or concerns in a timely manner. The Customer Service Department receives, tracks and addresses customer inquiries and comments for all programs and services VTA provides (ex. trip planning, Fare and Clipper Card and Mobile Payment, lost and found information).

VTA's Customer Service Information call center is open from Monday through Saturday. The Downtown San Jose office location is open Monday through Friday to assist customers. Automated information is available 24 hours a day through VTA's interactive voice response system by contacting 408-3212300 and VTA's website [vta.org](http://vta.org). Assistance can also be requested via email at [customer.sevice@vta.org](mailto:customer.sevice@vta.org).

### Language Line Services

To ensure individuals who have limited English proficiency have meaningful access to VTA information, employees, programs and services, language line services are utilized through VTA's Customer Service Department. When contact is made from a customer who is not fluent in English, if VTA's Customer Service Department does not have an onsite interpreter or is not able to contact a staff member who is fluent in that particular language, VTA will contact the language line for support. This provides interpreters for customers to speak with VTA staff in all safe harbor languages through VTA's service center, Downtown Customer Service Center as well as face to face interactions with members of the public when necessary.

## **(Q2) VTA based public input/engagement**

### **9. Special VTA Event (Q2)**

Special events to announce, highlight, or kick-off its outreach about a policy, program, project, or activity is an effective outreach method. These events can be region-wide or focus on a specific station or geographic area. When well publicized, these timely and relevant events have the potential to attract persons for whom the traditional outreach methods have not been effective.

### **10. VTA Working Group (Q2)**

The development of a working group can be used to assist VTA in receiving feedback on projects and proposed actions. Working groups are particularly effective when they are representative of a cross sampling of interests and concerns. Meetings can create an opportunity to have a meaningful exchange of ideas and can be used as an opportunity to build trust and work toward consensus on a particular issue. VTA has used working groups comprised of members of CBOs and other citizens active within the community to effectively get input and conduct project development. Ideally, working group participants serve as a conduit to the community or group they represent, facilitating feedback and serving as a focal point for information and input on issues and concerns.

## **11. Surveys (Q2)**

Public surveys can be an effective method to get input from a broad representation of the public, often without requiring the public to make a significant accommodation to participate. Public surveys can be conducted by telephone, in print, and online to collect opinions or information on specific topics or issues. Although telephone surveys can be effective, they are often costly to conduct while print surveys can be more easily distributed to a larger group. However, depending on the method of distribution and collection, print surveys can have a very low response rate. Typically, the easiest to implement and least costly, internet surveys need to be used carefully as they have the opportunity for abuse given the anonymous nature of the Internet. Regardless of the method, consideration needs to be given to interpretation and translation requirements for participants. Depending on the type of data being collected, methodologies that provide statistically valid results could be considered.

Best practices for surveys require that attention be given to who is invited to participate as the sample population can affect the results, questions are appropriately translated, they are created without inherent bias, be consistently applied, and certain statistical measures are achieved prior to conclusions being drawn. To increase the response rate from low-income, minority, and LEP populations, public notification of the availability of these surveys is typically provided in multiple languages.

## **12. Stakeholder Interviews (Q2)**

Typically, VTA staff meets with an individual or small group of stakeholders to collect information or gain insight on a particular perspective related to a project or proposed action. Often, as part of a series of interviews, staff may have standard questions in addition to allowing for some time for free form discussion regarding the specific stakeholder's knowledge base, interests, or concerns. VTA often uses interviews to solicit input from stakeholders that represent groups or communities, including decision-makers, to identify key issues, concerns, and groups or communities which should be targeted as part of a public participation campaign.

## **13. Focus Groups (Q2)**

Focus group meetings typically consist of small, targeted groups of participants whose discussions are led by an unbiased facilitator. Focus groups typically provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions about projects, plans, or issues that may impact a specific group or community. Low-income, minority, and LEP communities should be proactively included in these groups.

While there are several approaches to identifying participants for focus groups, several types of CBOs can be good resources for identifying low-income, minority, and LEP participants, including faith-based, geographically specific resource such as tenant associations, neighborhood and community, education, social services, recreation, environmental, political, and youth- and senior-oriented organizations.

## **14. Public Meeting (Q2)**

Public meetings are typically used to both communicate information and receive feedback on a project or proposed action. Typically, broadly advertised and open to all stakeholders, these meetings are a commonly used method for public participation. There are several different formats for public meetings that can be used to best accommodate the audience, topics, and input required. The appropriateness of the selected format can significantly impact both the quality of the participants experience and the extent and quality of information shared and input received. Given the prominence of public meetings as a method utilized by VTA, a separate section is devoted to discussing it in greater detail.

### **(Q3) Community-based public information/outreach**

#### **15. Other Printed Materials (Q3)**

Coordinating with community partners' publications is often a cost-effective method for distributing information that is of interest to their respective groups. Local service providers and CBOs often regularly communicate with community members through their newsletters to provide information about local services and activities of interest. Notices and flyers can also be provided to schools, with students taking the notices home to their parents. Many local service providers and CBOs prepare their publications and notices in multiple languages, which can facilitate reaching low-income, minority, and LEP populations.

#### **16. Ethnic Media (Q3)**

Similar to traditional media relations, the service area's ethnic media plays an important role in communicating with and receiving feedback from various ethnic groups. Many minority- and LEP communities rely on ethnic media as a primary source of information. Ethnic media has been found to be a particularly effective method for reaching select low-income, minority, and LEP populations. However, given the significant diversity within Santa Clara County, this can require coordination with multiple outlets. VTA maintains a comprehensive inventory of ethnic print, television, radio, and internet media contacts that includes Spanish and Asian language media outlets.

### **(Q3) Community-based public information/outreach and (Q4) Community-based public input/engagement**

The following method, depending on how applied by VTA, can either be useful for CBO-based public information/outreach or input/engagement.

#### **17. Train the Trainer (Q3 and Q4)**

"Train the Trainer" is a recognized approach to reach target groups that might otherwise be very difficult to reach. Typically used as a teaching mechanism, this approach can also be used to disseminate or collect information as in the case where a CBO representative might assist in the implementation of a survey or collect information on a particular topic. Typically, it involves training or educating an individual who might more easily interact with or reach a particular segment of the population. This can be effective to overcome situations where individuals might be weary or untrusting of individuals outside their immediate group. It can also help in situations where language barriers might exist.

#### **18. Passenger Interactions (Q3 and Q4)**

Interacting with passengers on VTA's system, either onboard or while they are waiting on a platform or at a bus stop, can provide a valuable opportunity to collect information from system users. These interactions can either be formalized through the use of a script or survey or be more informal. Depending on the nature of the contact, it can be used to gather either quantitative or qualitative data. This method can also be effective to reach users who might not otherwise be inclined or able to attend a more formal public participation process.

#### **19. CBO Operations (Q3 and Q4)**

The ongoing activities of CBO groups, such as a food bank's delivery operations, provide VTA with an opportunity to expand its accessibility to segments of the service area population. Because the recipients or targets of these CBO activities are presumably not readily able to participate in other, more mainstream public participation activities, collaboration with these groups' activities improves VTA's outreach capabilities. Although CBO operations are often best suited to the delivery of information (as described under **14. Other Printed Materials**), their operations can also provide a unique opportunity to

gain access to and engage select low-income, minority, and LEP populations when carefully coordinated with the host CBO.

#### **(Q4) Community-based public input/engagement**

##### **20. Community Events (Q4)**

In conjunction with a community organization's event, VTA can host an information table that provides materials about VTA services and or specific information about a project or proposed action that attendees at the event may find of interest. Depending on the audience and information desired to be shared or input received, VTA can bring staff and/or resources necessary to best communicate with attendees. These events can range in scale from large city-wide events to localized activities. Many community events can assist VTA in reaching specific audiences such as seniors, youth, families with children, and commuters in addition to targeting low-income, minority, or LEP populations. Depending on the meeting format, VTA may be able to solicit public input at these meetings utilizing a survey or through informal discussion with attendees. Care needs to be taken to appropriately match VTA subject matter to community events so that they result in effective engagement.

##### **21. CBO Meetings (Q4)**

Attending regularly scheduled CBO meetings can afford VTA an opportunity to share information and get input, develop meaningful community relationships, and continually improve and update its understanding of both its customer and the broader community's needs. By participating in meetings that include multiple government and/or CBO organizations with a common focus, VTA can connect with individuals representing a broad range of low-income, minority, and LEP populations as part of an overall strategy to reaching these groups. Specifically, the Refugee and Immigrant Forum and Safety Net (attended monthly by the VTA Community Outreach Manager) were identified by the CBO Working Group as being of particular importance.



## **Public Meetings**

Public meetings are given particular attention within the PPP given their prominence as a tool for public participation. Interviewed staff indicated that the open house public meeting format is an effective way to communicate with the attending public. This format typically includes a formal presentation and formal public comment, followed by staff being available to answer questions and record comments on a one-on-one basis. All public meeting comments are captured in the Day After Reports<sup>15</sup>.

Although no formal surveys have been completed, interviewed VTA staff indicated that participants at public meetings appear to be a reasonable representation of the local and/or affected population of a project or proposed action, with the exception of the LEP participants which appear to be underrepresented. Interviewed VTA staff had a variety of opinions to explain the apparent underrepresentation, including that LEP individuals are often uncomfortable with participating in a meeting where English is the primary language and a lack of awareness of meetings. CBO Working Group participants indicated that English-only public participation/communication, even when it is indicated that language accommodations can be made, discourages LEP individuals from participating. In addition, while VTA has a policy of providing free language assistance at VTA meetings if requested ahead of time, without being made aware of a meeting by someone who is bilingual or having an advertisement in their language, an LEP individual may not be aware of the opportunity to attend the meetings.

Additionally, very few of the LEP Focus Group participants indicated that they had ever attended a VTA-sponsored public meeting. Most indicated they did not know about them and had language barriers that would limit participation if they did attend. None of the interviewees were aware that VTA would provide free language assistance at VTA meetings if requested ahead of time. The primary method of receiving VTA information for LEP focus group participants has been through CBO members who have active relationships with VTA.

These findings underscore the likelihood that the provision of language assistance may not in itself be enough to encourage LEP participation at public meetings. Although, this does not diminish the need for VTA to continue to provide language assistance, it does underscore the need to consider multiple methods to reach LEP persons during public participation outreach and engagement. Depending on the circumstances, it may be desirable to conduct the meeting in the native language of the predominant ethnic group in that community. It is often desirable to provide multiple methods at public meetings for LEP participants to provide input (such as small group vs. large group formats, interactive formats, or interactive hands-on activities) so that even if the meeting is not run in their native language, they feel comfortable providing input.

In response to these considerations, a broader variety of public meeting formats in conjunction with community-based methods for notifying the public of upcoming public meetings, in addition to using other outreach and engagement methods identified as being preferred by low-income, minority, and LEP populations (such as those identified as **(Q4) Community-based public input/engagement**) should be considered. Both the CBO Working Group and VTA staff indicated that appropriately trained staff are essential to successful public meetings particularly when dealing with multicultural and/or language considerations.

---

<sup>15</sup> VTA staff reports detailing public participation activities and recorded public comments.

Although, there are many different formats and variations for public meetings **Exhibit 15** provides an overview of some of the principle public meeting formats. A brief overview of each of these public meeting formats is provided below:

### **Public Hearings**

Public hearings are the most formal of public meeting formats. During these events, people present official statements of position and have their comments recorded. Depending on the number of attendees wishing to speak, appropriate time limits are established. These meetings are beneficial in that all those in attendance can hear each person's comment and perspective. Because of this, these meetings can also be easily dominated by organized groups. As a result of the formality of the process, only limited interaction among meeting participants is possible.

### **Public Comment Meetings**

These meetings are similar to public hearings except that comments offered are not necessarily required to be recorded and are, therefore, considered to be less formal. As is the case for public hearings, these meetings are beneficial in that all those in attendance can hear each person's comment and perspective. Public comment meetings like public hearings can also be dominated by organized groups and similarly, because of the format, only result in limited interaction among meeting participants.

### **Briefings**

Briefings are information meetings during which attendees can informally ask questions of project representatives. Primarily, briefings are most useful for providing information to the public but limit the opportunities for the public to provide comment or interact with other participants.

### **Panels**

Panel meetings/discussions are personal, interactive, and largely informal. As the case for briefings, panel discussions are also useful for providing information to the public but limit the opportunities for the public to provide comment.

Symposiums are a variant of panels that includes several individuals or experts who speak to an audience about a specific topic. While this setting is less intense when there are conflicting viewpoints, symposiums, like panels, are generally not conducive for receiving public comment.

### **Large Group-Small Groups**

These meetings result in increased interaction as a result of the use of small group discussions. For this meeting format, the entire group first meets, then is divided into small groups of five to 10 people to complete an assignment. Finally, the entire group reconvenes to hear reports from the small groups.

This meeting format generally accommodates a large number of attendees and, due to the large group meeting component, increases the likelihood that all attendees can hear everyone's comments. Conversely, the conversations which take place in the small groups are not available to other attendees.

The Open Space meeting format mimics that of the large group-small group format in that the meeting attendees gather both as an overall group and as small groups. The primary difference is that with the open space format, the small groups are defined by topics/issues expressed by attendees. In other words, individuals are enabled to take personal responsibility for their issues by forming and guiding a smaller group discussion amongst people with similar views. This meeting format is useful for generating a lot of ideas; however, because of the personal focus on issues, there is limited ability for broad and direct implementation of issues.

# Exhibit 15 — Public Meeting Formats

Format	Considerations	Interaction between Participants/ Public Comment Opportunity
<b>Public Hearings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anyone can make comment</li> <li>• All can hear other comments</li> <li>• Easily dominated by organized groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interaction among participants</li> <li>• Comments captured verbatim</li> </ul>
<b>Public Comment Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less formal version of Public Hearing</li> <li>• Anyone can make comment</li> <li>• All can hear other comments</li> <li>• Easily dominated by organized groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interaction among participants</li> <li>• Comments captured (non-verbatim)</li> </ul>
<b>Briefings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question and answer period provides clarification</li> <li>• Useful for public to obtain information, not to give feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interaction among participants</li> <li>• Minimal comment opportunity</li> </ul>
<b>Panels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive and personal</li> <li>• Useful for public to obtain information, not to give feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interaction among participants</li> <li>• Minimal comment opportunity</li> </ul>
<b>Large Groups - Small Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased interaction</li> <li>• Accommodates large number of attendees</li> <li>• Increases likelihood that all can hear other comments (in large group setting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good interaction amongst participants, although small group discussions are not heard by all (they are from large group settings).</li> <li>• Comments captured (non-verbatim)</li> </ul>
<b>Workshops/Charrettes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally for smaller groups (large groups can be broken up into smaller groups which can report back to the larger group)</li> <li>• Useful for specific, complex tasks</li> <li>• Time consuming if there are multiple tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly interactive, although not all participants may hear others comments</li> <li>• Comments captured (non-verbatim)</li> </ul>
<b>Open Houses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual arrival/departure times</li> <li>• One-on-one conversations</li> <li>• Limits public from hearing what everyone else says</li> <li>• Limits ability for consistent messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited interaction among participants</li> <li>• Comments captured (non-verbatim)</li> </ul>

### **Workshops/Charrettes**

Workshops typically begin with an educational presentation designed to orient participants to the issue being discussed. Subsequently, they can explore a variety of techniques including break-out or discussion groups and interactive design activities using special tools/methods identified for the workshop or cooperatively with professionals involved in the project or proposed action. Participants often share their comments and input orally during the process.

Workshops often include the use of tools that promote interaction and may include electronic or show-of-hands polling, mapping exercises, discussion questions, priority setting methods, and other techniques to promote dialogue and discussion in addition to any design activities.

Charrettes, which are a form of workshops, often involve multiple meetings over the course of some specified period of time, sometimes allowing participants the opportunity to help develop a solution or design using an iterative approach. Often the design team will be available between meetings for participants to drop in on to discuss ongoing activities.

### **Open Houses**

This format provides opportunities for participants to receive information at their own pace by visiting a series of information stations that may include table-top displays, maps, photographs, visualizations, and other tools. Individual questions are responded to by staff and technical experts. Some open houses include a short educational presentation and comment period at a designated time. Participants are often given comment cards so they can provide written comments. Staff may be assigned to take verbal comments and transcribe them to provide a written record.

### **Interpretation/Translation Needs**

CBO Working Group participants agreed that given the number of languages that meet the Safe Harbor Provision, as specified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)<sup>16</sup>, language interpretation and translation are of particular importance. Regarding the five-language threshold currently in use by VTA, it was pointed out by several participants that these language groups actually need the least additional support considering the CBO resources already locally available to them. Other smaller language populations (examples included Somali, Burmese, Farsi, etc.) were described as having more limited resources, and as a result are more reliant on VTA for interpretation/translation. It was also noted that refugee trends change based on geopolitical activities and, as a result, it is often difficult to forecast future needs. As such, CBO representatives strongly advocated for VTA to stay in regular contact with both local government and CBO providers of refugee services to stay abreast of language and dialect trends. CBO participants also indicated that they can help to distribute information provided by VTA, particularly items that are translated into the language of their target audience.

As part of its efforts to provide useful guidance on written translation, VTA prepared a Vital Documents Plan<sup>17</sup>. **Exhibit 16** summarizes the major categories of translation as provided for by the Vital Document Plan. As shown, Tier 1 documents are the primary documents which have the broadest translation needs. Although Tier 2, which cover the majority of documents that are typically the focus of outreach and engagement, are only required to be translated in accordance with the five-language threshold, in addition to any target groups that might be identified from analysis carried out in support of a project or proposed action. It is important to note that the languages listed under Tier 1 were identified using American Community Survey data as part of the development of the VTA's LEP Plan. As documented in

---

<sup>16</sup> Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons, USDOT, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Vital Documents for Title VI LEP Compliance, VTA, January 24, 2013.

# Exhibit 16 — Define Translation Needs

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Description	Civil rights documents	Service to our beneficiaries	Large, technical documents
Translation Accommodations	5% or 1,000 of population likely encountered	5 language threshold of VTA service area	Upon request

1. Spanish or Spanish Creole  
 2. Vietnamese  
 3. Chinese  
 4. Tagalog  
 5. Korean  
 6. Japanese  
 7. Russian  
 8. Persian  
 9. Portuguese or Portugese  
 10. Hindi  
 11. Non-Khmer, Camobian  
 12. French (incl. Patois)  
 13. Gujarati  
 14. Arabic  
 15. Serbo-Croatian  
 16. Italian  
 17. Hebrew  
 18. Urdu  
 19. German

**Public Participation Activities are primarily covered under Tier 2**

Items That May Require Translation Under Tier 2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited English Proficient (LEP) Plan</li> <li>• Applications to participate in programs, benefits, and services                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Paratransit Services</li> <li>2. RTC Card</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Instructional or informational ridership brochures                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take One</li> <li>2. Clipper Card</li> <li>3. Traveling Tips</li> <li>4. Mobility Options Program</li> <li>5. Securement Requirements for Mobility Devices</li> <li>6. Safety and Security Awareness Program</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Bus and Route Schedules</li> <li>• Notices of Service or Fare Changes</li> <li>• Notices of Service Disruptions                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Platform Retrofits</li> <li>2. Bus Bridges</li> <li>3. Re-routes Due to Events</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Safety and Emergency Notices                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bus Bridges</li> <li>2. Re-routes Due to Emergencies</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notices of Denials, Losses, or Decreases in Benefits                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right of Way Relocations</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Public Outreach                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Participation Notices and Minutes</li> <li>2. Community Outreach Documents</li> <li>3. Documents that require Public Comment/Public Hearings</li> <li>4. Customer Comment Card (Blue Card)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Service and Construction Notices</li> <li>• VTA's BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project (SVBX) Documents</li> <li>• Project Fact Sheets</li> <li>• Promotional Events</li> <li>• Documents designed to help raise awareness about available programs and services to ensure equal access</li> </ul>

that plan, it is anticipated that there may likely be additional languages that exceed this threshold, so under instances where Tier 1 distribution is necessary, the most recent version of the LEP Plan should be referenced for guidance. Effective interpretation/translation requires:

- Individuals with the appropriate skill set to provide interpretation and translation services to ensure meaningful access by persons who have limited English proficiency. In addition to third party vendors, VTA maintains a list of qualified staff who can assist with interpretation and translation services.
- Verification of meaning and tone of translations.
- Continuity in the use of transportation terminology.

VTA's LEP Plan is a valuable resource for understanding LEP needs and resources within VTA's service area. In addition, it documents progress toward LEP compliance and on-going efforts to fully comply with federal guidelines. The following are some of cost-effective methods identified in the LEP Plan for meeting the needs of the LEP communities it serves:

- VTA will continue to build relationships with LEP organizations and persons. VTA is considering creating a position for an LEP community liaison. The liaison will collaborate with the LEP community to ensure that they are informed about VTA projects, activities, and services; particularly proposed major service changes, fare changes, and construction projects that may impact their communities.
- VTA is also exploring the use of external resources for its LEP outreach efforts such as community center newsletters, markets, restaurants, places of worship, schools, and public libraries located in culturally distinct neighborhoods or enclaves.
- VTA will continue to use community-based organizations as resources to connect with LEP communities.
- VTA will continue to use ethnic media such as newspapers, radio, and television to advertise meetings, proposed fare or service changes, and other activities or projects.
- VTA will continue to use its bilingual/multilingual employees to provide oral and written translation services among others, all in an effort to meet the needs of LEP populations.

As documented in VTA's LEP Plan, VTA provides the following language assistance at no cost to the public that can be used to facilitate public participation:

- Customer service language line
- Translated documents and public notices according to VTA's Vital Document Plan (the document is still in draft form; however, measures have been taken to increase the number of languages VTA translates in meeting advertisements and other types of marketing collateral)
- Oral interpretation services at meetings upon request
- Translated meeting documents upon request

### **Resolving Logistics**

Although the following discussion primarily addresses logistics related to public meetings and meeting notifications, the following basic concepts can be applied to a variety of situations:

- Proactively plan the outreach or engagement method
- Address potential barriers to participation
- Effective notification of stakeholders
- Consider the specific needs of low-income, minority, and LEP populations
- Partner with CBOs to determine the best way to notify and accommodate target groups

The logistics for public meetings should be proactively planned to encourage the broadest participation within an effective meeting environment. In an effort to attract the target audience, meeting times should be selected that are most convenient to the anticipated attendees. A convenient meeting time is important to making meetings accessible to low-income, minority, and LEP survey participants. Public participation methods can be scheduled at varying times of day and on different days of the week. BART PPP survey data indicated that the majority of survey respondents who represented low-income, minority, and LEP populations preferred meetings to be held on weekends. Weeknights after traditional work hours were also identified as being acceptable.

The selected meeting location should be thoroughly vetted for primary considerations including ADA access and requirements, proximity and ease of access from public transportation, the availability of (free) parking, and the public's perceived safety of the venue. Additionally, care should be taken to consider any cultural concerns or perceived bias that may result from the selected location.

As a practical matter, many adults with childcare responsibilities can only participate in typical public meetings if accommodations for children are made. If practical, childcare services can be made available on-site and provided by a community partner staff or volunteers who are screened to work with youth and have appropriate training. Bilingual childcare providers may also be needed, depending on community interpretation needs. Alternatively, the meeting format can be designed to accommodate children by allowing their parents to stay in close proximity to their children and still participate. The provision of coloring books, puzzles, or other similar items can assist in promoting a workable meeting.

Some projects and possible actions may require more meetings than others. The number of meetings will depend on the project. It is also important that meetings are held in different venues since it is unlikely that no one location is ideal for all community members. Meeting locations can be rotated to ensure access for as many community members as possible.

An over-arching consideration for all meetings should be that they be primarily convenient and accessible to the low-income, minority, and LEP population.

### **Meeting Notifications**

Effective public meetings begin with effective notifications announcing and inviting the targeted attendees. CBO Working Group participants made several specific recommendations related to outreach based on their personal experience with VTA programs and/or their experience in conducting outreach to LEP individuals, including:

- Ethnic radio/television ads, news, and talk shows are effective methods for reaching LEP individuals.
- Ethnic retail, shopping, restaurants, places of worship, and services targeting minority groups that may function as gathering spots are good locations to post information for LEP individuals. Examples identified by CBO participants included Mi Pueblo, Antioch Baptist Church, Second Harvest food distributions, Viet Vote classes, etc.
- The monthly Refugee Forum meetings are an effective way to reach multiple refugee providers and to maintain awareness of CBO needs and interests.
- The monthly Safety Net meetings are an effective way to reach low-income organizations and to maintain awareness of community needs and interests.
- Social media was identified as an effective tool to reach young LEP individuals.

During the course of the CBO Working Group meetings, participants were asked to provide feedback and their perspectives on select VTA and MTC advertisements. In conjunction with these discussions, participants engaged in an exercise to collectively design an advertisement for a public open house specifically targeting their constituents. This iterative exercise was carried out over several meetings resulting in the example provided as **Exhibit 17**. In addition to this example, the CBO Working Group also made the following observations regarding overall advertisement design:

- In general, the group recommended that text be used sparingly. Many of their constituents have limited reading skills (including in their native language), so excessive text can be an impediment to understanding the message being conveyed.
- Advertisements should be sensitive to reading levels as some refugees have had only limited education opportunities in their native countries. A 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level was recommended by several participants as a good target.
- Engage the reader through use of an active first-person voice; example phrases the group suggested included things such as “we need your help” and “we need to hear your voice.”
- Use photos to communicate the purpose of the advertisements; pictures of buses, people in a public meeting setting, etc. can help to communicate the purpose.
- Maps showing the locations of public meetings are very helpful, however, translating the names of streets/addresses can create unnecessary confusion given that participants will mostly likely require the English street names to navigate and identify locations and landmarks.
- Advertisements provided in English only are not welcoming to the immigrant community. Even if the specific language an individual speaks is not represented, it is still more inviting to see some effort at translation than none at all.
- When it is necessary to convey a technical point, try to make it relevant to commuters’ daily lives.
- Put something on the flyer/advertisement that will cause it to be kept for another reason (examples suggested included High School football schedule, Sharks schedule, City Hotline numbers, Farmers Market locations, etc.).
- Use variable printing to customize to the target area (examples cited included Publishers Clearing House and campaign mail). Additionally, the advertisements can be customized with pictures of a local bus stop or station.
- In general, the group indicated they were fine with typical legal notices that appear in the newspaper, given that they do not consider the major English newspapers to be a useful method for reaching their constituents and they understand the need to meet legal requirements for meeting notices.
- The group advocated the use of symbols to help identify languages (flags or country outlines), and in lieu of some specific words (examples included international symbols for phone, mail, email, etc.) to facilitate communication. It was noted that care needs to be given when using flags to convey languages given that they may also be seen as conveying a particular political message.



# Exhibit 17 — Public Meeting Notice Example

**Help Customize the Santa Clara-Alum Rock Stations**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) wants your help to plan the rapid transit stations along the Santa Clara-Alum Rock line so that they will reflect the local neighborhoods. Public meetings are scheduled for:

- Tuesday, June 21, 6 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.**  
Mexican Heritage Plaza  
Theater Lobby  
1704 Alum Rock Avenue
- Thursday, June 23, 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.**  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library  
150 E. San Fernando Street
- Thursday, June 23, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**  
Roosevelt Community Center  
901 Santa Clara Street

All meeting locations are accessible by VTA. For information or for assistance in American Sign Language Interpretation or translation in other language, please contact us at the numbers below:

5 Non-English languages

Multiple information and contact formats

Symbols

Project photo

Route map with meeting locations

Simplified assistance information

First-person introduction

First-person simplified text

Simplified schedule

Locations not translated

### **Public Participation Techniques to Increase Involvement**

Utilizing techniques important to communities of concern may encourage greater engagement in the transportation decision-making process by low-income, LEP, and minority populations. While several other sections include discussion and guidance on methods and techniques for creating meaningful input opportunities, this section focuses on summarizing those specific to public meetings.

It is important to note that there are many resources on this subject, many of which can be identified through an internet search. Agencies throughout the United States are regularly developing new approaches to meet this need. Accordingly, the practitioner is encouraged to both consider innovative approaches and options beyond those presented. In addition to this discussion, **Section III: Continuous Improvement of Public Participation** includes a section on resources which identifies internet sites with additional techniques discussion. Although this section is intended to be representative of techniques that are particularly well suited to engaging low-income, minority, and LEP populations, it is important to note that most have been demonstrated to be effective for broader audiences as well.

**Exhibit 18** provides example techniques for creating meaningful input opportunities during public meetings.

### **IV. Evaluation of Public Participation**

“When done well, public participation improves the quality and legitimacy of a decision and builds the capacity of all involved to engage in the policy process. It can lead to better results in terms of environmental quality and other social objectives. It also can enhance trust and understanding among parties.”<sup>18</sup>

Although there are many definitions for what good public participation is, they commonly share the major descriptors included in this definition. In particular, three important attributes included within this definition, namely: **quality**, **legitimacy**, and **capacity** are consistently found among definitions. The following is an overview of these attributes<sup>19</sup>:

- **Quality** refers to the desire that:
  - The concerns, interests, and values of all who are interested or might be affected are considered.
  - The range of potential actions and effects be considered and analyzed using the best available means.
  - The process responds to any new information that comes available.
- **Legitimacy** refers to the simple idea that process should be seen as fair and legal.
- **Capacity** requires that we inform the public in the short term. But it also requires a longer-term perspective on education. The thought being that as the public better understands the transportation system and issues, they will have increasingly meaningful participation in future decisions.

---

<sup>18</sup> Dietz and Stern, *Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making*, 2008

<sup>19</sup> Transportation Research Board, *NCHRP 407: Effective Public Involvement Using Limited Resources*, 2008

# Exhibit 18 — Summary of Public Meeting Techniques

Technique	Description
<b>Know the community and determine their important issues and concerns</b>	In advance of the meeting, determining the composition of the community and identifying key stakeholders and their primary issues and concerns will help plan for a more effective and focused meeting.
<b>Emphasize the importance to participants</b>	Demonstrating the relevance to participants encourages participation and interest.
<b>Partner with community leaders and/or community-based organizations</b>	Partnering with known/trusted individuals or organizations can increase the interest and willingness to participate.
<b>Hold public meetings at several locations</b>	Multiple locations/venues will reduce the potential for transportation or other access considerations to hinder participation.
<b>Consider non-traditional meeting days and times in consideration of the communities varied work schedules</b>	Multiple times with broad variation, including consideration of weekend events will reduce the potential for work conflicts to prevent participation.
<b>Select meeting locations that are accessible to public transportation options</b>	Access to public transportation needs to consider from the perspective of connectivity to target populations (directness), options (bus, light rail etc. ), and frequency of schedules.
<b>Holding meetings at Faith Based Institutions and/or Schools</b>	Churches and schools are widely considered to be "safe" meeting venues. These locations are often widely recognizable and easily accessible.
<b>Consider amenities</b>	Refreshments, day care, and reimbursement of travel expenses can help eliminate barriers to participation.
<b>Use of multiple methods/formats</b>	Using multiple methods can allow participants the opportunity to find a comfortable manner to participate. Select methods and techniques that result in meaningful input.
<b>Branding</b>	Slogans, logos, and/or media campaigns can create awareness and interest in a project or other action. Project specific materials can establish and reinforce a consistent brand, and welcome participation and engagement from multiple parties.
<b>Use of Video and Other Visualization Techniques</b>	GIS Maps, a looping video, or static photos depicting before and after are effective at conveying specific project conditions and are often highly effective even with limited verbal or written communication.
<b>Minimize the use of technical jargon; "speak in plain language"</b>	Develop presentations that avoid unnecessary use of technical jargon or acronyms, focus on providing the information in a manner that is understandable to a diverse audience.
<b>Write in plain language and translate documents in advance</b>	Prepare documents that either will or may need to be distributed widely using plain language and in a concise manner to improve understanding. Anticipate translation needs and prepare them well in advance of the meeting to allow for adequate review time.

# Exhibit 18 — Summary of Public Meeting Techniques (cont.)

Technique	Description
<b>Use of Public Participation Games</b>	Games like “Strings and Ribbons” can allow participants to interact with minimal use of written material and give each participant the same influence.
<b>Electronic or “color dot” voting</b>	Either using electronic voting systems, colored dots, or other mechanisms can allow for immediate feedback. Electronic voting, in particular allows for participants to voice their true opinions without the pressure of a group dynamic.
<b>Electronic Technologies</b>	Electronic communications can be used to assess the population segment that is more comfortable participating remotely or in the comfort of their home. Multiple languages can be used to maximize the audience.
<b>Use of “I Speak” Cards</b>	Use of VTA’s two-sided bilingual cards invite LEP to identify their language needs, and can be used to assist LEP participants in communicating their need for interpretive and translation services.
<b>On-call translators</b>	Having translators available either on short notice or to participate by phone can address unanticipated communication needs.
<b>Staff Training</b>	Training staff to anticipate the needs of low-literacy or LEP participants or to understand cultural considerations can improve the experience for participants.

VTA understands the importance of regularly evaluating its public participation to ensure it's "done well" and uses several evaluation techniques to continually improve its effectiveness. Currently, VTA methods to address participant concerns and desires include capturing direct feedback, the use of comment cards, internal reviews, workshops, and self-evaluation and debriefs based on information included in the Day After Reports<sup>20</sup>. The ability to provide feedback to VTA regarding the effectiveness of public participation was identified by the CBO Working Group as an important consideration relevant to VTA's overall public participation program.

This section seeks to address how VTA ensures that its public participation maintains consistency with the goals and other guidance provided in the PPP.

### **Monitoring and Tracking**

VTA's monitoring and tracking of its public participation effectiveness includes the following: self-evaluation, participant evaluation, and third-party evaluation.

#### **Self-evaluation**

VTA plans to continue to use its Day After Reports in conjunction with debriefs and other methods to regularly identify opportunities for improvement. Additionally, VTA publishes monthly summaries of its public participation activities for review by VTA's board and other interested parties.

#### **Participant Evaluation**

Expanding on its existing use of direct feedback, comment cards, and other methods, VTA has developed a consistent participant feedback method for all public outreach and engagement activities in the form of a survey, as recommended by the CBO Working Group. Feedback collected as part of this survey will be maintained in an established central depository (common location to be determined by VTA staff) to facilitate annual evaluations of the overall public participation process activities for the purpose of supporting the goals of the PPP, including the following goal:

**Function as a "living document"** - The PPP is intended to continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of communities VTA serves through regular updates and actively addressing stakeholder concerns and desires.

As depicted in **Exhibit 11**, standardized participant feedback can serve both the immediate need to solicit input on the project or proposed action and address the longer-term desire to continually improve VTA's public participation processes. **Exhibit 19** shows the initial survey that has been developed to gather input on the public participation process (does not include project specific questions). The survey is intended to be flexible enough that it can, as needed, be incorporated with other project specific questions, eliminating the potential situation that participants could be asked to fill out multiple surveys.

---

<sup>20</sup> VTA staff reports detailing public participation activities and recorded public comments.

# Exhibit 19 — Participant Feedback Survey



## Your Opinion Counts!

VTA wants your input. Please fill out this survey. Thank you!

1. **Was today's event beneficial and the information provided helpful?** (circle one)

Yes / No

2. **Are you satisfied with your opportunity to provide input today?** (circle one)

Yes / No

3. **Were you satisfied with the following?** (circle all that apply)

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| a. Availability of language assistance | Yes / No |
| b. Time of today's event               | Yes / No |
| c. Location of today's event           | Yes / No |
| d. Transportation availability         | Yes / No |
| e. Other?                              |          |

4. **Do you have any recommendations to improve future events?**

---

---

5. **How did you find out about this event?**

---

---

*Your response to these optional and confidential questions will help VTA better meet your needs.*

6. **What is your preferred language?**

**If not English, how well do you speak English?**

- Very well
- Well
- Not well
- Not at all

7. **What is your race?**

- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino or Spaniard
- Native American
- Asian Indian\*
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Other

*If other, fill in below*

8. **What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?**

*(For example: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Jamaican, Cambodian, Haitian, Lebanese, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)*

*\*Also considered an ethnicity.*





Following are important considerations that will need to be addressed during the implementation of this survey:

- A unique identification system for all VTA public participation events needs to be established.
- Opportunities for participants to provide feedback anonymously (and situations where staff are not in the immediate area during their completion) need to be established.
- Multiple options for participants to provide feedback (phone, web, and mailer) should be considered.
- Procedures for database maintenance and timely publishing and analysis of feedback need to be established.
- The use of random, one-on-one follow-up phone calls to attendees to ensure the integrity and usability of the survey should be considered.

### **External Evaluation**

In conjunction with efforts to expand participant feedback opportunities, VTA is planning to include annual outside evaluation and feedback on its public participation. One of the options being considered is the use of a CBO Working Group (similar to the one used during the development of the PPP) to assist in that review and providing feedback.

### **Performance Measures**

VTA is committed to, as part of its regular evaluations of its public participation process, using identifiable measures of effectiveness (MOEs) for the purpose of evaluation. In conjunction with the planned review of participant feedback tools, VTA will also consider the establishment of a system of MOEs that can be used consistently and over time to track the needs and desires of public participation participants in addition to measuring other aspects of public participation. As part of this review, both quantitative and qualitative MOEs will be considered, including the following examples:

#### **Quantitative**

- Number of participants attending activities
- Number of participants from a specific geographic area
- Number of participants providing input including the language it is provided in
- Use of web/internet tools (number of hits, surveys completed, etc.)
- Participation of low-income, limited English proficient and minority persons at VTA meetings, public hearings, working groups and other decision-making forums
- Minority representation on VTA decision-making bodies
- Number of requests for interpretation and translation services
- Number and variety of language line calls
- Attendance of VTA staff at community and CBO events
- Number and percent of participants that indicate satisfaction with public participation and its outcome
- Information provided by CBO and other NGO partners regarding the extent of distribution of VTA information

#### **Qualitative**

- Participant's input on the usefulness and value of processes
- Relevance of public input received
- Effect of input on decision-making
- Participants' perception of their impact on decision-making
- Effectiveness of notification activities

Given the nature of the data and data sources required for many of these MOEs, it is recognized that an overly heavy reliance on quantitative data will likely not provide an accurate assessment of the success of any public participation effort. Although, increases in the number of participants, particularly amongst traditionally underrepresented populations is recognized as an important focus, it can be difficult to accurately measure the number of participants who might belong to a specific target group. Additionally, the quality of input and how it used to affect decision-making is often as important as the quantity of input that is received and as such, solely focusing on numerical participation can be misleading.

Part of the challenge with many of the quantitative MOE data requirements is that they may require that a participant self-identify. For example, it is typically not possible to ascertain if someone is low-income without specifically asking or surveying the individual. Not only may participants be reluctant to be forthcoming with this type of information, it could also create an obstacle and level of discomfort that could affect both current and future interest in participating in public participation activities. As such, it is often necessary to use inferences and anecdotal data to help augment collected data when trying to determine the effectiveness of a public outreach effort, particularly when targeting a specific group. The following are examples of how inferences or anecdotal data can be developed:

- CBO representatives working with target groups are good resources to determine if the clients they represent are being reached. They can ask their clients if they are aware of a project/proposed action or if they have participated in a particular public participation process. This information can provide valuable insight for VTA regarding the effectiveness of a particular public participation effort. As such, this underscores the importance of working cooperatively with CBOs when targeting traditionally underrepresented populations.
- By holding an event in cooperation with a particular organization, VTA can logically infer that participants are likely a good representation of that organization's socio-economic demographic or that group's membership. For example, if working with a food bank it would be reasonable to assume that VTA activities would be reaching low-income participants or if putting on an event with a particular ethnic civic group that its members are likely representative of that ethnicity.
- By holding an event at a particular location or advertising at a particular location, or with a particular media outlet or media format, VTA can reasonably infer that a particular audience may be being reached. For example, by advertising at schools or on particular radio stations, it is likely reasonable to assume that students may be reached.

In addition to the types of data described above, carefully crafted surveys can also help determine whether target groups are being reached and the perceived quality of a process amongst participants. However, care should be when using surveys to so that they do not become a distraction or impediment as discussed above.



### **SECTION III: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

This section includes information and resources to support the stated goal that the PPP “function as a living document” and that it “continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of communities VTA serves through regular updates and actively addressing stakeholder concerns and desires.” Specifically, it includes the basis for a Two-Year Work Plan of public participation supporting activities and it includes information on additional resources that can be used to learn more about public participation and the underlying federal legislation and administrative directives that form its basis.

#### **I. Public Participation Work-Plan**

In support of VTA’s desire to continually improve the effectiveness of its public participation, the basis for a two-year work plan, including both programmatic and relationship/partnership activities designed to further bolster public participation with low-income, minority, and LEP populations, is included as part of the PPP. Many of these activities are designed to strengthen existing ties to CBOs which are one of the most effective conduits to communicate with and build trust with low-income, minority, and LEP populations. **Exhibit 20** provides top level descriptions of activities included in the two-year work plan. It is anticipated that these descriptions will be further refined following the adoption of this plan and that they will be completed prior to the next FTA Triennial Review and Title VI Program Submittal.

#### **II. Resources**

The hyperlinks and resources provided in **Exhibit 21** provide additional information and tools for public participation as well as additional information on the underlying regulations of the PPP (Title VI, EJ, and LEP). The emphasis on electronic documents reflected below, is done in recognition that regulatory requirements are continually and regularly updated and that many agencies are now favoring electronic delivery of their resources. With the availability of multi-media materials including webinars, there are an increasing number of training opportunities that previously would have required significant cost or effort by the participant.

The companion document to this PPP, *Public Participation Plan Local Community and VTA Staff Input*, includes additional resources pertaining to public participation in **Appendix B**. This list of materials includes an exhaustive list of all current VTA Public Participation documents as provided by VTA staff. Additional links are also provided to other applicable electronic sources.

# Exhibit 20 — Two-Year Public Participation Work Plan

## 2012

- P1 Finalize PPP
- P2 Assess VTA website resources for LEP public participation
- P3 Assess CBO LEP distribution network
- P4 Finalize Vital Document Plan
- P5 Develop county-wide CBO partnerships
- P6 Assess VTA staff training needs
- P7 Assess ongoing need for stakeholder oversight
- P8 Determine Performance Measures for PPP

- R1 Attend Refugee and Immigrant Forum meetings
- R2 Attend Safety Net meetings
- R3 Assess CBO training needs
- R4 Address CBO concerns identified during PPP development

## 2013/Months 0-6

- P1 Implement VTA website enhancements for LEP public participation
- P2 Update CBO LEP distribution network
- P3 Assess ethnic media preferences and update vendor list
- P4 Assess public participation interpretation/translation resources
- P5 Implement VTA staff training

- R1 Assess VTA operational interpretation/translation needs
- R2 Implement CBO training

## 2013/Months 7-12

- P1 Update LEP Plan
- P2 Update Vital Document Plan
- P3 Update Public Participation Plan
- P4 Conduct annual evaluation of VTA public participation

- R1 Implement VTA operational interpretation/translation enhancements

## Programmatic

## Relationship/ Partnership

PPP - Public Participation Plan  
LEP - Limited English Proficiency  
CBO - Community Based Organization



# Exhibit 21 — Resources

Topic	Item	Description	Link
<b>Public Participation</b>	Federal Transit Administration: Civil Rights Education	The Federal Transit Authority routinely offers webinar training materials on key topics, including civil rights and other public participation related topics	<a href="http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325_7756.html">http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325_7756.html</a>
	Federal Highway Administration: Transportation Planning Process Resource Guide	Includes best practices for public involvement as well as public involvement strategies that have been effective with traditionally underserved populations.	<a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/resource_guide/">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/resource_guide/</a>
	US Department of Transportation: Transportation Planning Capacity Building	Designed to assist the practitioner in coordinating a full public involvement program. Includes a focus on techniques.	<a href="http://www.planning.dot.gov/PublicInvolvement/pi_documents/toc-foreword.asp">http://www.planning.dot.gov/PublicInvolvement/pi_documents/toc-foreword.asp</a>
	National Transit Institute: Public Involvement in Transportation Decisionmaking course	Link to Public Involvement in Transportation Decisionmaking course.	<a href="http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=86">http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=86</a>
	National Highway Institute: Public Involvement in the Transportation Decisionmaking Process course	Link to Public Involvement in the Transportation Decisionmaking Process course.	<a href="http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/training/course_detail.aspx?num=FHWA-NHI-142036&amp;cat=&amp;key=public%20involvement&amp;num=&amp;loc=&amp;sta=%25&amp;typ=&amp;ava=&amp;str=&amp;end=&amp;tit=&amp;lev=&amp;drl=">http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/training/course_detail.aspx?num=FHWA-NHI-142036&amp;cat=&amp;key=public%20involvement&amp;num=&amp;loc=&amp;sta=%25&amp;typ=&amp;ava=&amp;str=&amp;end=&amp;tit=&amp;lev=&amp;drl=</a>
<b>Title VI</b>	VTA Title VI Overview	Provides Title VI information specific to VTA.	<a href="http://www.vta.org/titlevi/index.html">http://www.vta.org/titlevi/index.html</a>
	Federal Transit Authority: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	Provides links to current Title VI Circular Reports and related training information.	<a href="http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12328.html">http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12328.html</a>
	Federal Highway Administration: Office of Civil Rights	Provides background on Title VI and links to current United States Department of Justice material on Title VI.	<a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/tvi.htm">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/tvi.htm</a>
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	Environmental Protection Agency: Environmental Justice	Provides background on Environmental Justice and links to current information on Environmental Justice including Plan EJ 2014, EPA's road map for advancing environmental justice across the agency and federal government.	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/">http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/</a>
	Federal Transit Authority: Environmental Analysis and Review	A "clearinghouse dedicated to providing all the necessary information to guide transit agencies, resource agencies, and the public through the environmental review process".	<a href="http://www.fta.dot.gov/13835_5222.html">http://www.fta.dot.gov/13835_5222.html</a>
	Federal Highway Administration: Environmental Justice	Provides background on transportation and environmental justice and links to case studies, best practices, and training resources.	<a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/</a>
<b>Limited English Proficiency</b>	Limited English Proficiency: A Federal Interagency Website	Provides background and links to multiple agencies regarding Limited English Proficiency.	<a href="http://www.lep.gov/">http://www.lep.gov/</a>
	Federal Transit Authority: Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons	Link to a Word document providing guidance for public transportation providers.	<a href="http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/LEP_Handbook.doc">www.fta.dot.gov/documents/LEP_Handbook.doc</a>
	Federal Highway Administration: Office of Civil Rights	Provides background on Limited English Proficiency and in addition to links to programs, memorandums, and presentations.	<a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/lep.htm">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/lep.htm</a>
	Federal Highway Administration: How to Engage Low-Literacy and Limited-English-Proficiency Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking	Discussion on engaging Limited English Proficiency populations with low literacy.	<a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/low_limited/lowlim04.cfm">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/low_limited/lowlim04.cfm</a>

This page left blank intentionally.

## SECTION IV: BART SILICON VALLEY BERRYESSA EXTENSION PROJECT - UPDATED IN 2020

The SVBX project is a 16-mile extension of BART's commuter rail service into northeast Santa Clara County and, consequently, into VTA's service area. The first phase, from the BART Warm Springs Station in Fremont, through Milpitas, to near Berryessa in San Jose is ten miles in length and includes two new stations, the Milpitas Transit Center and the Berryessa Transit Center, offering amenities such as bus centers to directly connect to VTA bus service, bicycle and pedestrian connections and storage, 1500 parking spots and places for the public to gather. The extension project also includes changes to the existing bus route network. Passenger Service began on June 12, 2020. The future phase of the extension project includes a 5.1-mile subway tunnel through downtown San Jose and four additional stations.

Given its prominence in the VTA service area, the following summary provides an overview of the BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project (SVBX) and its related public participation activities.

In response to the requirements of FTA related to the evaluation of significant system-wide service changes and the need to evaluate proposed improvements at the planning and programming phases, VTA prepared the *Title VI Compliance Review*<sup>21</sup> to document their evaluation of the BART extension project's potential discriminatory effect. The number and proportion of low-income, minority, and LEP populations within the general BART extension project area are depicted in **Exhibit 22**, **Exhibit 23**, and **Exhibit 24**.

VTA also previously prepared a *Communications and Outreach Plan*<sup>22</sup> for the BART extension project. This plan is described as "an evolving document that is updated quarterly to reflect relevant project activity and correlating communications and outreach efforts." Consistent with VTA's *Project and Communications Outreach Procedure*, capital projects such as the BART extension project are required to develop project communications and outreach procedures containing the following four components:

- Stakeholder Identification
- Communication Methods, Tools, and Timing
- Strategies for Identified Stakeholder Groups
- Implementation and Adherence to the Plan

Public participation related to the SVBX Project has been carried out at the multiple project stages including preparation of the early corridor studies in the mid-1980s, the alternatives analysis in 2001, and in support of receiving final environmental clearance in 2010. Because this BART extension project overlaps with VTA's service area, it is important to coordinate the public participation efforts to ensure a thorough and consistent approach to effectively engaging the public.

---

<sup>21</sup> Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Program, Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project, Title VI Compliance Review, VTA, June 30, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Program, Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project, Communications and Outreach Plan, VTA, May 27, 2011.

## EXHIBIT 22: DISTRIBUTION OF MINORITY POPULATION IN SVBX PROJECT AREA

**Legend**

**BART Alignment**

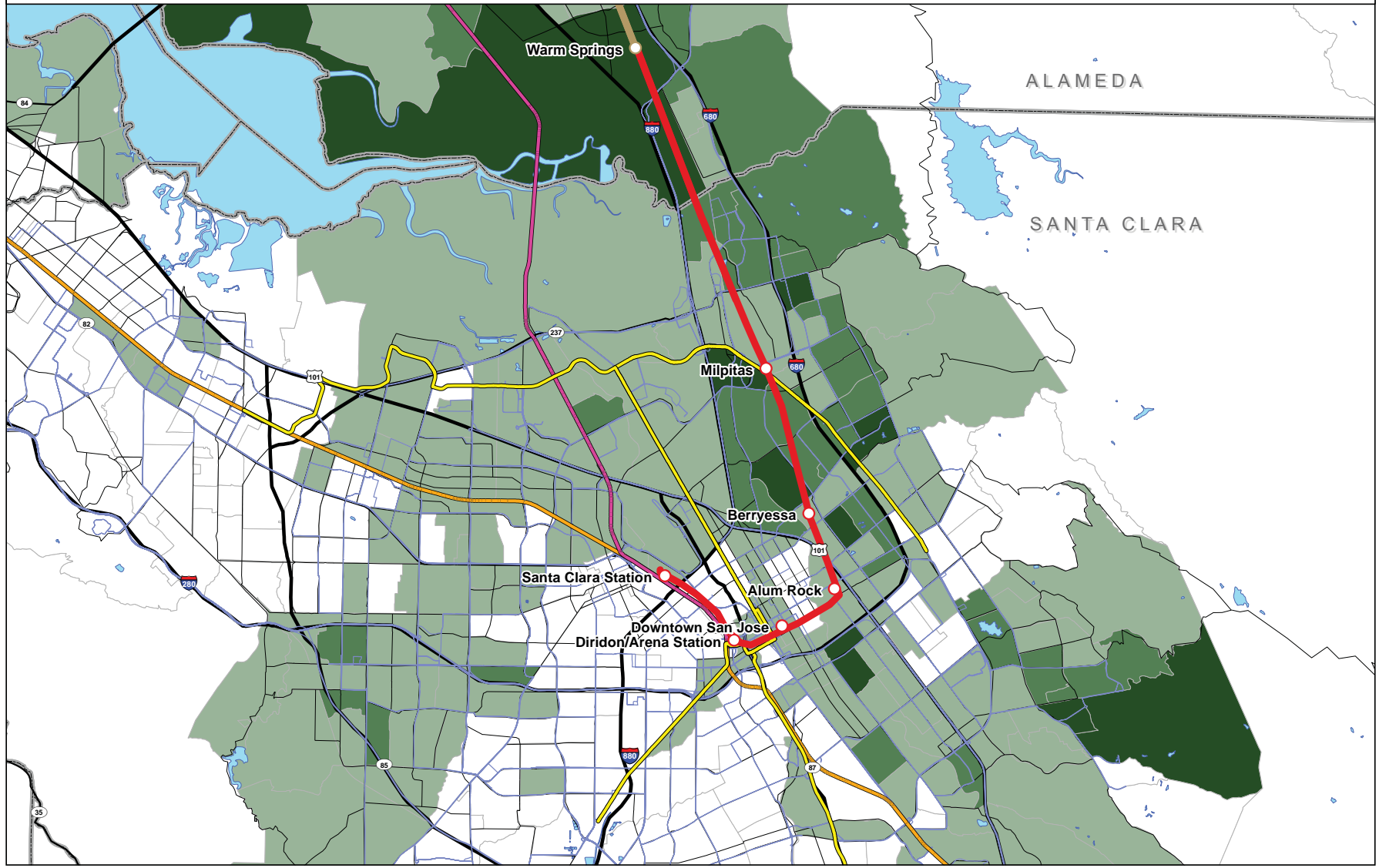
- Baseline
- SVBX Project
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- VTA Bus Service

**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway
- Local Roads

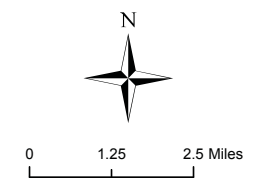
**Percent Minority**

- Less than average ( $\leq 50\%$ )
- $50\% < x \leq 75\%$
- $75\% < x \leq 85\%$
- $> 85\%$



Note: Data aggregated by census tract. The population of Santa Clara County consists of 50% minority, where minority is defined according to the FTA Circular, page II-5. Census tracts with a greater than average 50% minority population are identified.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.



## EXHIBIT 23: DISTRIBUTION OF LOW INCOME POPULATION IN SVBX PROJECT AREA

**Legend**

**BART Alignment**

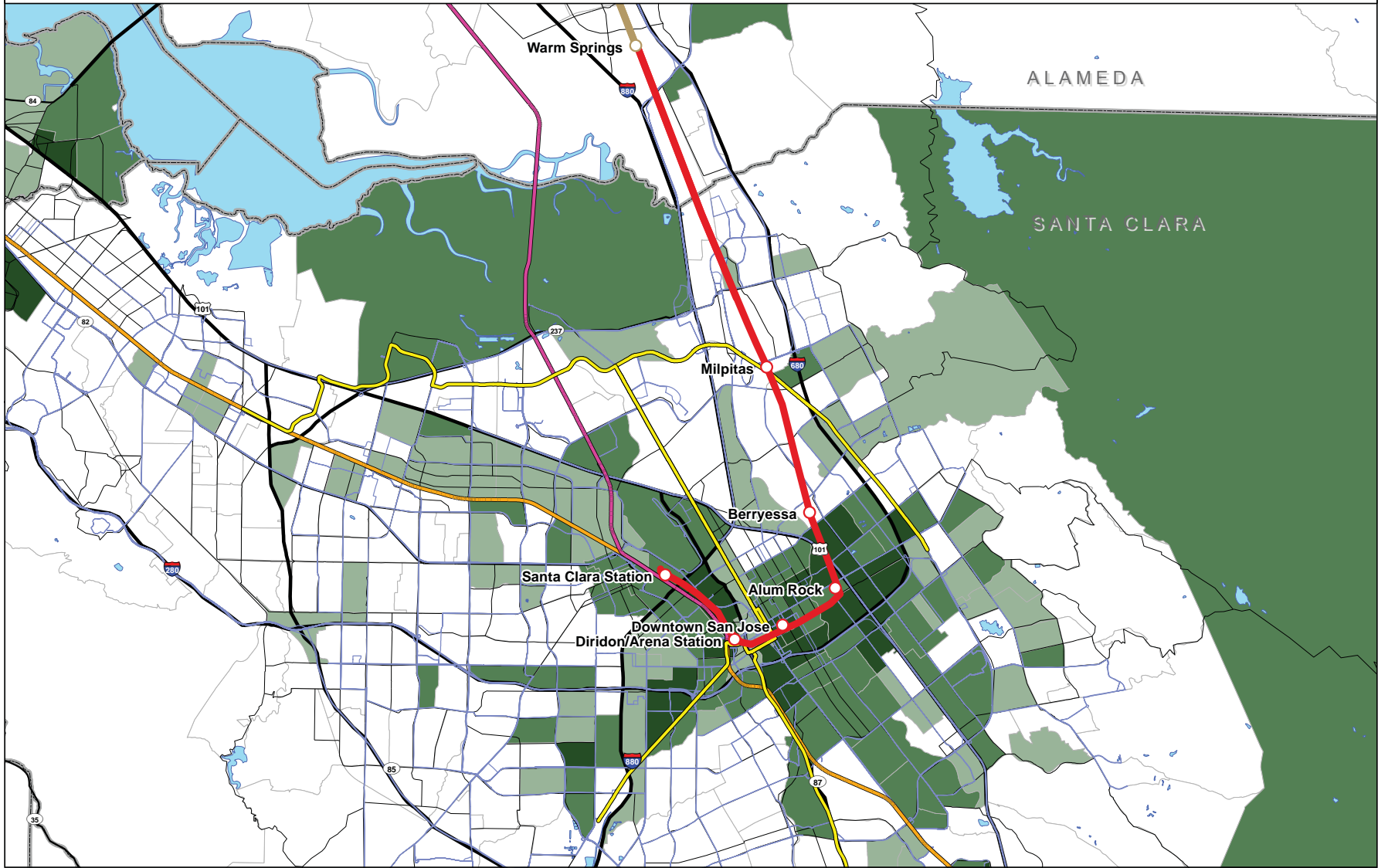
- Baseline
- SVBX Project
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- VTA Bus Service

**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway
- Local Roads

**Percent Low Income**

- Less than average ( $\leq 18\%$ )
- $18\% < x \leq 25\%$
- $25\% < x \leq 45\%$
- $> 45\%$



Note: Low Income percent reflects percentage of persons for whom poverty status is determined based on median household income at or below the Department of Health and Human Services' poverty guidelines. Due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area, the threshold used by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the VTA is double the federal poverty line. The population of Santa Clara County consists of 18% living in households earning less than twice the federal poverty line. Data is presented by census tract for tracts with greater than average low-income population.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

N

0 1.25 2.5 Miles

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.



## EXHIBIT 24: DISTRIBUTION OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POPULATION IN SVBX PROJECT AREA

**Legend**

**BART Alignment**

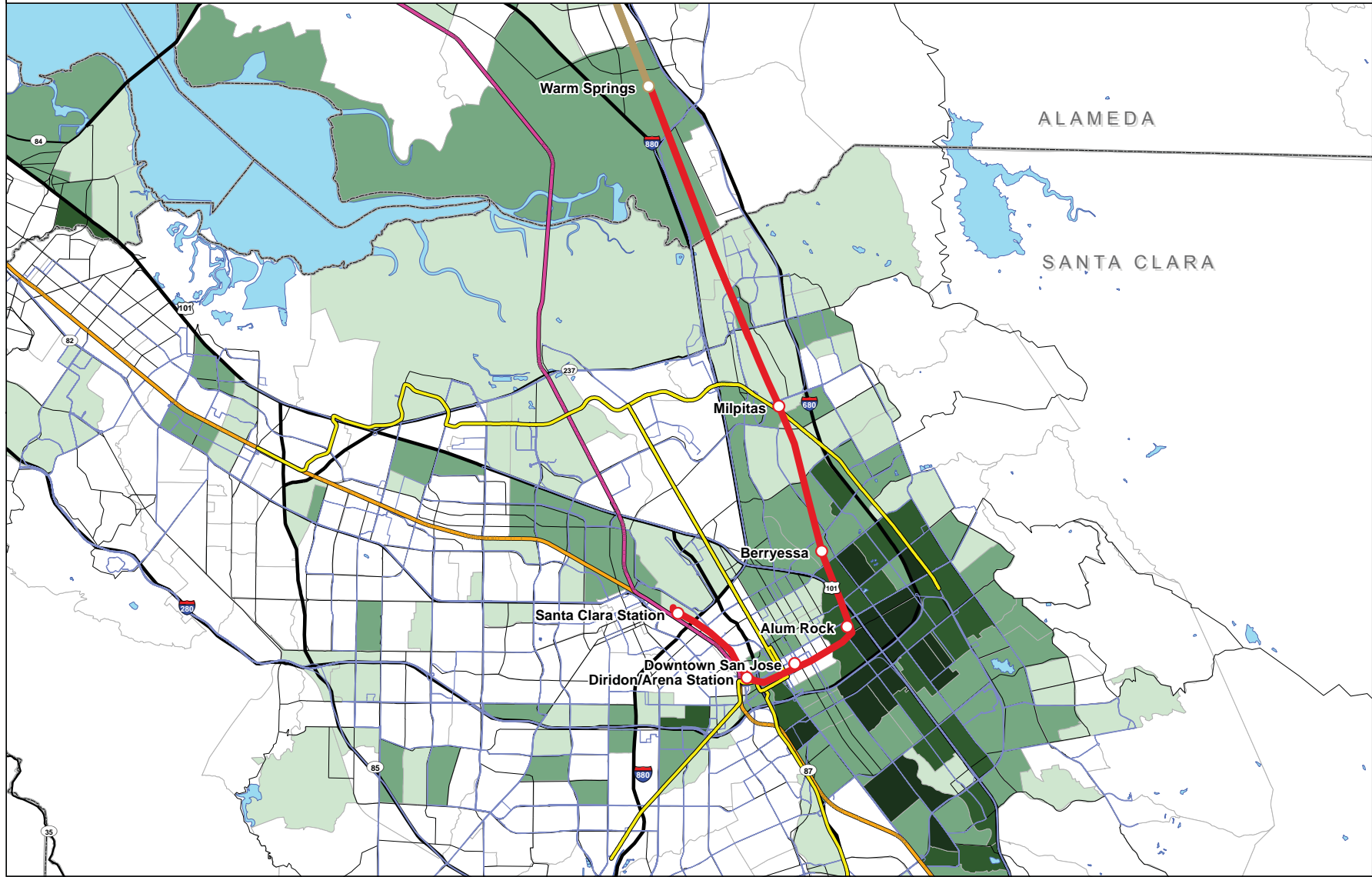
- Baseline
- Project
- VTA LRT
- Caltrain
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- VTA Bus Service

**Major Roads**

- Interstate
- Highway
- Local Roads

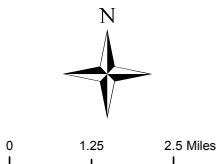
**Percent LEP**

- Less than average ( $\leq 22\%$ )
- $22\% < x \leq 30\%$
- $30\% < x \leq 40\%$
- $40\% < x \leq 50\%$
- $> 50\%$



Note: LEP percent reflects percentage of persons over five years of age that speak english less than "very well". The average percent LEP for Santa Clara County is 22%. Data is presented by census tract.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.





## **Appendix A: Vital Documents Plan**

## VITAL DOCUMENTS PLAN

January 24, 2013

A vital document (paper or electronic) conveys information that is critical for the recipient or customer to access or obtain VTA services and/or benefits or it is required by law. The translation of vital documents ensures full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process to persons who have limited English proficiency (LEP).

Department of Justice (DOJ) guidance states that “classification of a document as ‘vital’ depends upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the LEP person if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner. The determination of what documents are considered ‘vital’ is left to the discretion of individual components, which are in the best position to evaluate their circumstances and services within their language access planning materials.

### **Documents that may be considered ‘vital’ may include, but are not limited to, certain:**

- Administrative complaints, release, or waiver forms;
- Claim or application forms;
- Public outreach or educational materials (including web-based material);
- Written notices of rights, denial, loss, or decreases in benefits or services, parole, and other hearings;
- Forms or written material related to individual rights;
- Notices of community meetings or other case-related community outreach;
- Notices regarding the availability of language assistance services provided by the component at no cost to LEP individuals;
- Certain consent orders, decrees, Memoranda of Agreement, or other types of pleadings or litigation materials, within the discretion of the component.”<sup>1</sup>

Department of Justice guidance also recommends that discretion be used to identify and prioritize vital documents or text to be translated. Agencies should ensure that translations are completed by qualified translators.

VTA’s Vital Documents Plan was created in consultation with staff, BART, and the Community Based Organizations’ Working Group.

VTA provides written translations of “Tier 1” vital documents (see list below) for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. Written translations of “Tier 2” vital documents will be provided for those languages that meet the 5 language threshold in VTA’s service area; and “Tier 3” vital documents will be translated upon request, in whole or in part. The language groups for translation are identified using U.S. Census data, American Community Survey (ACS) data, County School District data, Passenger and/or Community Surveys, and Language Line (translation service) usage reports.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice Language Access Plan: March 2012

Vital documents include, but are not limited to the following:

**Tier 1: Civil Rights Documents**

Tier 1 documents are translated into each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered in VTA's service area.

- Notice to Public: Title VI and Other Civil Rights Obligations
- Title VI Complaint Form
- Online Title VI Complaint Form
- Notice advising LEP persons of free language assistance
- ADA accessible document formats
- Safety and Emergency Notices
  1. Bus Bridges
  2. Re-routes Due to Emergencies
  3. Safety and Security Awareness Program

**Tier 2: Service to Our Beneficiaries**

Tier 2 documents are translated into each eligible LEP language that meets the 5 language threshold of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered in VTA's service area.

- Limited English Proficient (LEP) Plan
- Applications to participate in programs, benefits, and services
  1. Paratransit Services
  2. RTC Card
- Instructional or informational ridership brochures
  1. Take One
  2. Clipper Card
  3. Traveling Tips
  4. Mobility Options Program
  5. Securement Requirements for Mobility Devices
- Bus and Route Schedules
- Notices of Service or Fare Changes
- Notices of Service Disruptions
  1. Platform Retrofits
  2. Bus Bridges
  3. Re-routes Due to Events
- Notices of Denials, Losses, or Decreases in Benefits
  1. Right of Way Relocations
- Public Outreach
  1. Meeting Notices
  2. Community Outreach Documents
  3. Documents that require Public Comment/Public Hearings
  4. Customer Comment Card (Blue Card)
  5. Public Participation Notices and Minutes
- Service and Construction Notices
- VTA's BART Silicon Valley Berryessa Extension Project (SVBX) Documents
- Project Fact Sheets
- Promotional Events
- Documents designed to help raise awareness about available programs and services to ensure equal access

### **Tier 3: Large, Technical Documents**

Tier 3 documents are translated upon request, in whole or in part.

- Environmental Documents
- Construction Documents
- Congestion Management Documents
- Planning Documents
- SVBX Documents

### **Safe Harbor Provision:**

“A ‘safe harbor’ for recipients regarding translation of written materials for LEP populations. The Safe Harbor Provision stipulates that, if a recipient provides written translation of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent (5%) or 1,000, whichever is less, of the total population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered, then such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient’s written translation obligations.”<sup>2</sup>

### **VTA’s Top 5 Languages Compiled from US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey:**

1. Spanish: 142,919
2. Vietnamese: 64,408
3. Chinese: 58,771
4. Tagalog: 18,221
5. Korean: 12,050

Language Category: Persons over the age of 5 years who speak English “less than very well.”

---

<sup>2</sup> FTA Circular 4702.1B: October 1, 2012.

**Appendix B: VTA Title VI Fact Sheets in  
English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese  
Updated in 2020**



# FACT SHEET: Title VI

## What is Title VI?

Title VI is a federal regulation that requires that no person in the United States of America shall, because of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal assistance.



## Who is Protected Under Title VI?

Title VI protects everyone regardless of race, color, or national origin. It has two administrative directives; environmental justice protects low-income and/or minority communities, and limited English proficiency (LEP) protects individuals whose primary language is not English. Limited English proficient individuals have limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still have Limited English Proficiency in areas such as reading or writing.

## Does Title VI only Protect U.S. Citizens?

No, Title VI protects all persons in the United States whether or not they are U.S. citizens.

## How Does the Community Benefit from Title VI?

Free language line assistance is available to customers in their primary language. Customers can call (408) 321-2300 to request assistance.

The Language Line can be used for:

- Bus and light rail trip planning information.
- Information on how to purchase a Clipper® Card.
- Free language assistance at VTA meetings.
- Free interpreters and/or translation of documents.



## How Does VTA interact with the Community regarding Title VI?

VTA seeks our customers' input when considering changes to bus routes, fares or improving our bus stops and services. Our customers' input enables us to make decisions that serve our community's interest. Scheduled VTA meeting dates, times, and locations are advertised in (a) VTA Take-One (VTA's on-board newsletter), (b) VTA's website: [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), (c) local mainstream and ethnic newspapers, (d) community centers, (e) libraries, and (f) neighborhood markets, among others.





## Título VI (Spanish)

### ¿Qué es el Título VI?

El Título VI establece que ninguna persona de los Estados Unidos será excluida de participar en cualquier actividad o programa que reciba asistencia financiera federal, ni de obtener los beneficios de dichos programas o actividades, ni será discriminada en ellos, por causa de su raza, color o nacionalidad.

### ¿A Quienes protege el Título VI?

El Título VI protege a todos sin considerar raza, color u origen nacional. Tiene dos directivas administrativas; la justicia ambiental protege a las personas de bajos ingresos y/o minorías, y a los de proficiencia limitada en inglés (LEP) cuyo primer idioma no es el inglés. Estos últimos tienen limitaciones en leer, hablar, escribir o comprender inglés. Los individuos LEP pueden ser competentes en ciertos tipos de comunicación, como hablar o entender, pero pueden estar limitados en las áreas de lectura o escritura del inglés.

### ¿Protege solamente a los Ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos el Título VI?

No, el Título VI protege a todas las persona de los Estados Unidos sin importar si son o nó ciudadanos estadounidenses.



### ¿Cómo Beneficia a la Comunidad el Título VI?

Hay asistencia de traducción por teléfono para ayudar a cualquier persona que desee hablar en su idioma primordial. Los pasajeros pueden llamar al (408) 321-2300 para recibir ayuda. La línea de traducción puede usarse para:

- Planear su viaje en autobús o tranvía.
- Adquirir información acerca de cómo comprar la tarjeta Clipper®.
- Asistencia en su idioma en reuniones públicas de VTA.
- Proveer intérpretes y/o traducciones de documentos.



### ¿Porque busca VTA opiniones de sus pasajeros/clientes?

VTA desea recibir sugerencias de sus pasajeros en cuanto se refiere a cambios en las rutas de autobús, tarifas, o mejorar las paradas de autobús y de nuestros servicios. Las opiniones y sugerencias nos ayudan a tomar decisiones que interesen a nuestra comunidad. Se publican los horarios, fechas y lugar de las juntas de VTA en (a) *VTA Take-One* (una publicación mensual que va dentro de los autobuses y tranvías) (b) Sitio de red mundial de VTA: [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), (c) periódicos en varios idiomas y medios de comunicación local, (d) centros comunitarios, (e) bibliotecas, y (f) tiendas locales, aparte de otros lugares.







## 第六章 (Chinese)

### 第六章規定為何內容？

第六章為聯邦規章，內容規定，在接受聯邦財政資助的任何項目或活動中，任何人不得因種族、膚色或原住國等原因而被剝奪參與活動或享有應得利益的權利，也不應遭受任何其他方式的歧視。

### 哪些人受到第六章規定的保護？

任何人，無論其種族、膚色或原住國如何，均受第六章的保護。第六章有兩個行政指令：「環境正義」(Environmental Justice) 指令為低收入和少數族群提供保護；「英語能力有限者」(Limited English Proficiency, LEP) 指令旨在保護英語非主要語言的英語能力有限者。英語能力有限者指在英語說、讀、寫以及理解方面能力有限的個人。英語能力有限者可能具備某些形式的英語溝通能力(例如可對話或聽懂)，但在讀寫方面有些困難。

### 第六章規定是否只保護美國公民？

不是。所有美國居民，無論是否為美國公民，均受到第六章規定保護。



### 第六章規定如何惠及社區？

客戶可獲得以其主要語言提供的免費語言專線協助。客戶可致電 (408) 321-2300 要求協助。客戶可透過語言專線取得：

- 1 公車及輕軌鐵路行程規劃資訊。
- 1 如何購買 Clipper® 卡的資訊。
- 1 有關 VTA 會議的免費語言協助。
- 1 免費口譯員服務和 (或) 文件翻譯服務。



### VTA 如何與社區溝通有關第六章規定內容？

在考慮變動公車路線、車費或改善公車停靠站和服務時，VTA 都會徵詢客戶的意見。客戶的意見可使我們作出符合社區需求的決定。若要了解已排定的 VTA 會議日期、時間和地點，請查看或查詢：(a) “VTA Take-One” (VTA 放在車上的通訊)；(b) VTA 網站：[www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org)；(c) 地方主流和各族裔報紙；(d) 社區中心；(e) 圖書館；(f) 社區商店及其他來源。







## 제6장 (Korean)

### 제6장이란 무엇입니까?

제 6장은 미국에 거주하는 어느 누구도 인종, 피부색 또는 출신국가를 이유로 연방정부의 원조를 받는 프로그램이나 활동에 참여하지 못하도록 배제되거나 그 혜택을 거부당하거나 또는 그 밖의 차별을 받지 않도록 하는 연방규정입니다.

### 제6장이 보호하는 대상은 누구입니까?

제6장은 인종, 피부색 또는 출신국가와 상관 없이 모든 사람을 보호합니다. 제6장의 행정적 지침은 두 가지입니다. 환경 정의(Environmental justice)는 저소득층 및/또는 소수계층을 보호하며, 제한적 영어 구사력(LEP, Limited English Proficiency) 지침은 주요 사용 언어가 영어가 아닌 사람들을 보호합니다. 영어 구사력이 제한적인 사람은 영어로 읽고 말하고 쓰고 이해하는 능력이 제한적인 사람을 뜻합니다. 영어 구사력이 제한적인 사람은 말하기나 이해하기 등 특정 유형의 의사소통은 가능할 수 있지만 읽거나 쓰기와 같은 영역의 구사력은 제한되어 있을 수 있습니다.

### 제6장은 미국 시민만 보호합니까?

아니오. 제6장은 미국 시민권에 관계 없이 미국 내의 모든 사람을 보호합니다.



### 제6장은 지역사회에 어떤 혜택을 줍니까?

고객이 주로 사용하는 언어로 전화 언어지원이 무료로 제공됩니다 (408) 321-2300으로 지원을 요청하면 됩니다. 전화 지원은 다음에 대해 사용할 수 있습니다.

- 1 버스 및 경전철 여행 계획 정보
- 1 클리퍼 카드(Clipper® Card) 구입 방법에 대한 정보
- 1 VTA 회의 시 무료 언어 지원
- 1 무료 통역 및/또는 문서 번역



### 제6장과 관련하여 VTA가 지역사회와 어떻게 교류합니까?

VTA는 버스노선 및 요금의 변경을 고려하거나 버스 정류장 등을 개선할 때 고객의 의견을 수렴합니다. 고객 여러분의 의견은 올바른 결정을 내리는 밑바탕이 됩니다. VTA 회의의 날짜, 시간 및 장소는 (a) VTA의 차내 신문인 VTA 테이크-원(VTA Take-One), (b) VTA 웹사이트: [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), (c) 주요 지역 신문 및 특정 민족이 운영하는 신문, (d)커뮤니티 센터, (e) 도서관 및 (f) 동네 슈퍼마켓 등의 장소에 공지됩니다.





# Muïc VI (Vietnamese)

## Muïc VI laø gì?

Muïc VI laø moät quy ñònh lieân bang yêu cầu raêng khoảng ngòoai naos ù Hoa Kỳ, vì lý do chúng ta, maou da, hoặc nguồn gốc quốc gia bò loaii troø tham gia, bò tồ choái cauc quyén löi, hoặc bò phaân bieät ñoái xù bòi baát kyø chõng trình hoặc hoaii ñoäng naos nhaân trõ giuip taoi chính lieân bang.

## Muïc VI Baùo Veä Nhõng Ai?

Muïc VI baùo veä moï ngòoai baát keä chúng ta, maou da, hoặc nguồn gốc quốc gia. Muïc VI cò hai hõuung daân haonh chính; công baeng veä môi trõoong baùo veä nhõng công ñoäng cò löi tồc thaáp va/ hoặc thieâu soá, vaø khoảng thaonh thaõo tieáng Anh (limited English proficiency, LEP) baùo veä nhõng ngòoai maou ngoân ngõ chính khoảng phaui laø tieáng Anh. Nhõng ngòoai khoảng thaonh thaõo tieáng Anh (LEP) cò khaù naeng haïn cheá khi ñoic, noùi, vieát hoặc hieäu tieáng Anh. Nhõng ngòoai LEP cò theá thaonh thaõo tieáng Anh ñoái vòu cauc daing giao tieáp nhaat ñònh (ví dụ nhõ noùi hoặc hieäu), nhõng vaãn laø Khoảng Thaonh Thaõo Tieáng Anh trong cauc lönh võic nhõ ñoic hoặc vieát.

## Cò phaui Muïc VI chæ Baùo Veä công daân Hoa Kỳ không?

Khoảng phaui, Muïc VI baùo veä taát caù moï ngòoai tại Hoa Kỳ baát keä hõ laø công daân Hoa Kỳ hay không.



## Quyén Löi của Công Ñoäng theo Muïc VI?

Cò ñoõng daây trõ giuip ngoân ngõ mieãn phí daonh cho cauc haonh khauc baeng ngoân ngõ chính của hõ. Cauc haonh khauc cò theá goi soá (408) 321-2300 ñeä yêu cầu trõ giuip. Ñõoong Daây Ngoân Ngõ cò theá sõu duing cho:

- 1. Thoang tin hoaiç ñònh chuyeán ñi cho xe buyùt vaø xe ñieän.
- 1. Thoang tin veä cauc thõc mua Theù Clipper®.
- 1. Trõ giuip ngoân ngõ mieãn phí tại cauc buoi hoip của VTA.
- 1. Mieãn phí thoang dòch vieän vaø/hoặc thoang dòch cauc taoi lieäu.



## Cauc Thõc VTA tõng tauc vòu Công Ñoäng theo Muïc VI?

VTA ghi nhaân vù kieán ñoùng gòup của haonh khauc khi xem xeit cauc thay ñoái veä tuyeán xe buyùt, giâu veø hoặc caui tieán cauc beán xe buyùt vaø cauc dòch vù. Yù kieán ñoùng gòup của cauc haonh khauc cho pheup chùng toái ñõa ra cauc quyét ñònh nhaem phuic vù löi ích của công ñoäng. Ngaøy, giõu va ñõa ñieám cauc buoi hoip của VTA ñeä leán lòch ñõoic ñaeng trong (a) "VTA Take-One" (baun tin trên xe của VTA), (b) trang maing của VTA: [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), (c) bauc chí chính doang va của cauc công ñoäng ngòoai thieâu soá, (d) cauc trung taám công ñoäng, (e) cauc thõ vieän, va (f) cauc chõi trong khu phoá, trong soá nhõng nguồn cung caup thoang tin khauc.









**Office of Civil Rights**  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
3331 N. First Street, Building B  
San Jose, CA 95134  
408-952-8901  
[www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org)

Jaye Bailey  
Chief Employee Relations Officer  
408-321-5581

Mark Scott Greene  
Human Resources Analyst  
408-321-5916

Gail Gauvin  
Associate Human Resources Analyst  
408-321-7531

Omar Pizano  
Management Aide  
408-321-5595

