

Santa Clara Valley  
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*Solutions that move you*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*For the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan*

*May 2018*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *For the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan*



**Our Vision:** *Santa Clara County will be served by a countywide bicycle network that is safe, convenient, and connected, enabling people of all ages and abilities to easily bike to work, school, shopping, transit, and elsewhere.*

We all know bicycling is a fun, healthy, green way to get around. People of all ages are hopping on a bike to commute to work, run errands, ride to school, or catch a train. In Santa Clara County, bicycling is a viable year-round transportation solution. Over the last decade, we have seen a steady increase in bicycling and strong public support for better bikeways. VTA, the cities, and the County have played a large role in this shift toward bicycling. Together, we have funded and built over

800 miles of on-street bikeways and nearly 200 miles of bicycle paths in the county. In the last ten years, we have reconfigured nine freeway interchanges to provide better bicycle access and constructed several new bicycle bridges to open up new areas for bicycling.

VTA is looking to the future and setting a course for what bicycle travel can be ten years from now. The Countywide Bicycle Plan proposes a network of connected, high quality bikeways that are designed using

innovative, cutting-edge solutions to get people where they want to go safely and conveniently. The Countywide Bicycle Plan provides the framework to meet the multi-modal objective we outline in our 25-year transportation plan, the Valley Transportation Plan: “to facilitate the creation and support of an integrated multi-modal transportation system that serves all socio-economic groups efficiently and sustainably”.

To make this vision a reality, it will require support from



Photo credit: Richard Masoner

*Bicycle commuting in Santa Clara County has increased in the last decade.*

multiple partners, including VTA, local elected officials, city/county transportation staff, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee members, major employers, developers, law enforcement, members of the public, and advocacy groups. If we all work together to implement key bikeways, we will see dramatic changes in how people travel in Santa Clara County. We can improve bicyclist safety, increase mobility, and meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

### Current Bicycling Conditions

Conditions for bicycling in Santa Clara County are improving. At the same time, many challenges to comfortable cross-county bicycling remain. Santa Clara County was built to serve the automobile. As a result, land uses are separate, destinations are far apart, and major arterials often are the only way to travel from one neighborhood to another. Bikeways stop and start, and they dead-end at major barriers. Heavy congestion on arterials makes it difficult to reallocate roadway space to

### COUNTYWIDE BICYCLE PLAN GOALS

-  Develop a comprehensive and continuous countywide bicycle network
-  Ensure that bicycling is safe and convenient for all
-  Pursue innovative solutions
-  Improve transit connectivity

bicyclists. Many of the easier bikeways have been built, leaving the more expensive, difficult segments still to be completed. The Countywide Bicycle Plan aims to address these remaining segments, prioritizing bikeways where bicyclists experience a high level of traffic stress and where there is a history of collisions.

The last Countywide Bicycle Plan was completed in 2008. Many things have changed since then to support a new vision for bicycling in Santa Clara County. We are seeing construction of new developments and major transit stations, a cultural shift toward mainstreaming bicycling, greater emphasis on low-stress bikeways, and new innovative designs. The Countywide Bicycle Plan responds to these cultural and institutional shifts.

In addition, there are great local examples of bicycle planning and design already underway throughout Santa Clara County. Nearly all jurisdictions have adopted and updated bicycle master plans in recent years and participate in Safe Routes to School Programs. Furthermore, a handful of jurisdictions currently have full-time staff devoted to bicycle and pedestrian projects. The Countywide Bicycle Plan

builds on these local successes, outlining opportunities to provide funding and technical support to local agencies.

### Cross County Bicycle Connections

The Countywide Bicycle Plan refines the Cross County Bicycle Corridors (CCBCs) defined in the 2008 plan to account for recent changes in the county. CCBCs are a network of bikeways that connect all jurisdictions and provide access to jobs, schools, transit, recreation, services, and homes. The updated CCBC network focuses on three key principles: coverage, access to destinations, and low-stress connectivity. VTA updated the CCBC network with public input and a series of collaboration meetings with city and county staff to ensure alignment with local priorities and local bicycle plans.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan identifies approximately 950 miles of CCBCs. These include existing and proposed segments of on-street bikeways and off-street bike paths. Of these, approximately 450 miles have been built. Of the existing, planned, and proposed CCBCs, 30 percent are off-street bicycle paths and 70 percent are on-street bikeways. Using criteria including crash history, projected bicycle rider-

ship, access to transit, schools, and low-income and minority communities, VTA prioritized 350 miles of CCBCs. VTA will take an active role in implementing priority CCBCs, including setting high design expectations and potentially aligning funding to support delivery.

### Bicycle Superhighways

In recent years, prominent bicycling regions throughout the world have used the concept of bicycle superhighways to support cross-jurisdictional bicycling. Bicycle superhighways accommodate high volumes of bicycle commuters who travel long distances (4+ miles). They provide a route separated from automobile traffic. Bicyclists using them typically experience less delay due to consistent speeds, fewer at-grade street crossings, and shorter waits at intersections.

The exemplary bicycle paths in Santa Clara County, including the Guadalupe River Trail, Coyote

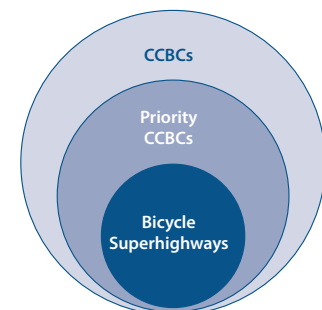




Photo credit: VTA

*Bicycle trails, like the Guadalupe River Trail shown here, are a key aspect of the CCBC network.*

Creek Trail, San Tomas Aquino/Saratoga Creek Trail and Stevens Creek Trail, currently act as bicycle superhighways. These paths provide convenient, long-distance, unbroken bicycle travel. They pass over or under major roadways, freeways, and rail lines. This is a starting point for moving forward with local jurisdictions to establish a network of connected bicycle superhighways. VTA has identified a subset of priority CCBCs as potential bicycle superhighway corridors (including both on-street and off-street bikeways).

### Across Barrier Connections

A bicycle trip is only as good as its weakest link. Even the most exceptionally designed bikeway will fail if it has gaps. Just as a motorist does not expect an expressway to narrow suddenly to a two-lane dirt road, a bicyclist should not find a cycle track suddenly leads them to a freeway interchange where they need to weave across one or more lanes of high-speed motor vehicles. Santa Clara County's bikeways are often severed by freeways, waterways, and railways.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan identifies over 300 locations where bicycle connections across barriers are needed, 50 of which have been completed since 2008. These Across Barrier Connections

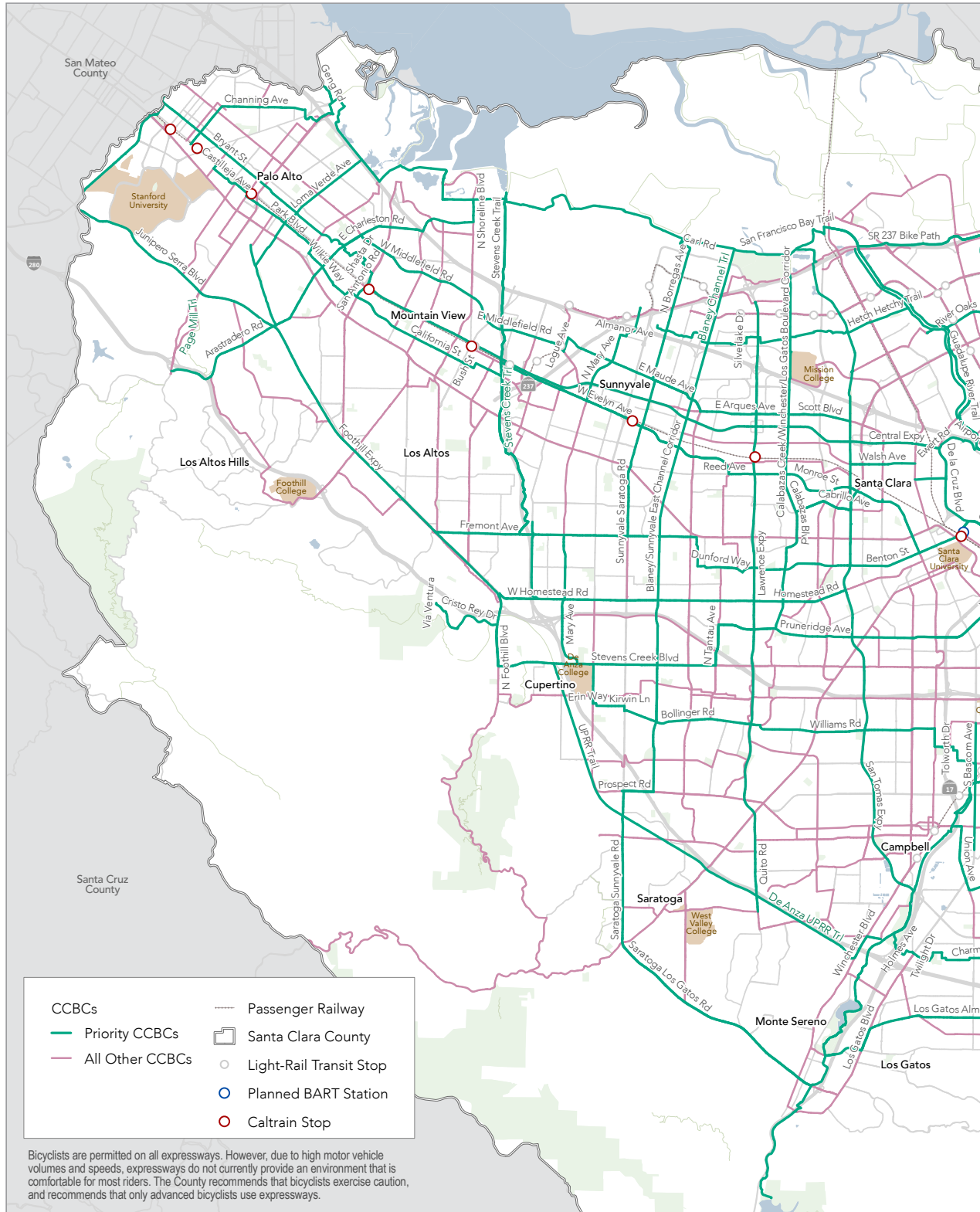
(ABCs) range in scale, from restriping a roadway bridge to provide bicycle lanes, to constructing a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge, to rebuilding an existing freeway interchange. The plan flags 39 ABCs as priority locations to improve bicycle access by creating new connections across barriers.

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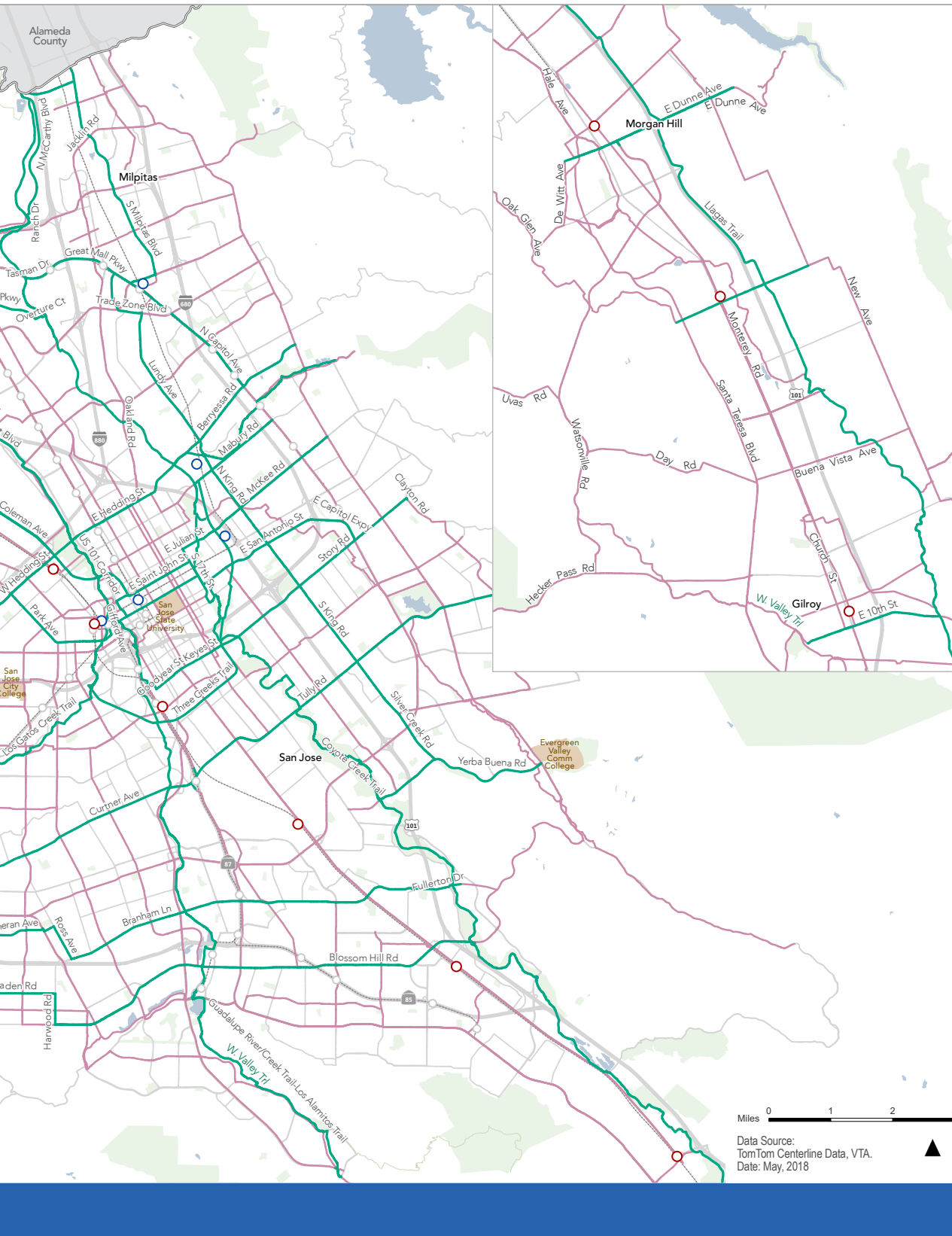
## PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Countywide Bicycle Plan reflects the feedback from and addresses the concerns of the community. Over **700 people** provided input during the planning process. VTA conducted **community workshops** and held **non-traditional public outreach events**, such as the "Roving Bicycle Exhibit" where information about the plan was posted at libraries and government centers. In addition to these in-person events, VTA hosted an **interactive web map** and communicated with the public via **social media**. This outreach helped VTA define the vision, goals, and purpose of the Countywide Bicycle Plan, as well as understand the bikeway locations, infrastructure designs, and bicycle amenities desired by the community.

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### Cross County Bicycle Corridors



## Education and Encouragement Programs

Bicycle education and encouragement programs help make bicycling mainstream. They expand the number and diversity of people choosing to bicycle. VTA proposes the agency's first large-scale foray into countywide education and encouragement programs, in collaboration with the County Department of Public Health. The Countywide Bicycle Plan includes three types of programs: safety education and training, promotional programs and events, and bicycle maps and wayfinding. For each program, the plan identifies VTA's potential role. Three example programs are described below.



Photo credit: Richard Masoner



Photo credit: VTA



**Safe Routes to School:** Nearly every city in the county and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department coordinate Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs. SRTS programs encourage youth and their families to walk or bike to school to improve safety, health, air quality, and the environment. VTA will continue to fund and support Safe Routes to Schools efforts in the county.

**Open Streets Events:** Viva CalleSJ is a free annual event in which several miles of San Jose roadways are closed to vehicular traffic, allowing people to bicycle, walk, skate, play, and explore the streets in a safe and fun environment. These one-day events help build a culture and inclusive community around bicycling. They connect residents to other bicyclists in the area and demonstrate local support for safe streets. VTA will continue to provide in-kind advertising space, bus re-routing services, and booths for open streets events throughout the county.

**Bicycle Maps:** Bicycle maps highlight primary bicycle-friendly routes and show bikeway types (e.g., bicycle lane, bicycle route, bicycle path) and roadway types (e.g., arterial, residential street). VTA produces a countywide bicycle map. The reverse side of the map includes safety tips and information about combining bicycling with transit. VTA continues to update, and distribute at no cost, online and printed versions of the Countywide Bicycle Map in English and Spanish.



## Plan Implementation

The Countywide Bicycle Plan sets the foundation for a network of CCBCs and ABCs that are safe, convenient, and connected. This network is supported by education and encouragement programs that enable people of all ages and abilities to bike to work, school, shopping, transit, and elsewhere. Achieving these goals will require collaboration with a variety of partners, all of which are critical to the Countywide Bicycle Plan's success.

The cost of implementing this vision is high: approximately \$747 million for the priority CCBCs and ABCs and approximately \$1.8 billion for the entire plan. VTA's revenue stream to fund bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs is not enough to cover the cost, with only \$226 million anticipated for the ten-year plan horizon.

We will need to get creative. Not all of the cost must be borne by funds dedicated to bicycle infrastructure. Many CCBCs and ABCs can be addressed by incorporating quality bicycle infrastructure into other transportation projects, including street repaving, freeway interchange recon-

struction, grade separations, and new roadway connections. New developments, particularly larger ones, can build new bicycle infrastructure as mitigations, or pay into a fund to construct transportation improvements.

VTA influences bicycling in the County in many ways: through funding and policy decisions; technical assistance to local jurisdictions; and coordination of bicycle improvement efforts across local jurisdictions. VTA's role in implementing the Countywide Bicycle Plan consists of:

- » Promoting plan recommendations to local jurisdictions, elected officials, and other stakeholders
- » Seeking opportunities to construct CCBCs and ABCs and requesting that new developments construct CCBCs or ABCs
- » Partnering with local jurisdictions to fund, design, and construct selected projects
- » Leading the vision and development of bicycle superhighways.
- » Developing and delivering the countywide education and encouragement program, in collaboration with County Public Health.

VTA will work with stakeholders to solve problems, fill gaps, build bridges, and connect communities through the key projects included in the Countywide Bicycle Plan.

## Where Do We Go from Here?

The Countywide Bicycle Plan lays out a vision for the future. It is one where people of all ages are able to safely, comfortably, and conveniently bicycle anywhere they want to go. It is VTA's hope that the county's bikeways become part of people's mental map of Santa Clara County. They will provide an efficient, safe way for people to bike to work, transit, and shopping. They will become a community asset, facilitating friendly, casual interactions with neighbors and strangers. Friends and coworkers will make plans to meet on bike. More people will find that bicycling is competitive with driving. People will discover that linking a bike and transit trip is fast, convenient, and fun. Everyone will have the opportunity to bike at least occasionally, and many people will be able to bike often. In collaboration with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders, we will realize this vision for Santa Clara County.



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