



Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Assessment

Date: February 6, 2013
To: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
Project Title: El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is the Lead Agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project (proposed project) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) along with the cities of San José, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Palo Alto, are the Responsible Agencies for the proposed project as they have discretionary approval. The EIR's purpose is to identify the significant effects on the environment of the proposed project, to identify alternatives to the proposed project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared as a joint document with the EIR (an EIR/EA). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the Lead Agency for the EA.

The purposes of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) are to notify agencies, organizations, and interested parties that VTA plans to prepare a Draft EIR (DEIR) and to request input on the environmental analysis to be performed. From public agencies VTA is requesting comments on the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to each agency's statutory responsibility with regard to the proposed project. Agencies may need to use the EIR/EA prepared when considering permitting or other approvals for the proposed project. VTA is also requesting interested organizations' and individuals' comments on the scope of the environmental document.

Project History

El Camino Real (State Route 82 or SR 82) is one of the main thoroughfares that run through Santa Clara County. Communities along El Camino Real have considered many land use and capital improvement plans to develop it as a multi-modal, pedestrian-friendly environment to support and better serve the future planned land uses and intensified development in a sustainable manner. In particular, the Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI) and the GBI Task Force are a collaboration of cities, counties, local and regional agencies that have been working to improve the performance, safety, and aesthetics of El Camino Real. In addition, VTA prepared the BRT Strategic Plan in 2009 to establish a framework for BRT implementation in Santa Clara

County, provide direction on related policy issues, and serve as a vehicle to engage cities and stakeholders. VTA has conducted more than 20 meetings with cities, organizations, and the public to date (beginning in March 2011) to specifically discuss the proposed project and collect feedback. Concurrently, VTA has been collecting information and preparing technical analyses to assess the feasibility of implementing the proposed project.

Project Location and Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located along a 17.4-mile portion of the El Camino Real in the cities of San José, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Palo Alto between the HP Pavilion in San José and the Palo Alto Transit Center. Current transit service in the corridor is provided by VTA's local bus Route 22 at 12-minute intervals and limited stop Rapid 522 at 15-minute intervals. El Camino Real in the cities of Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Palo Alto is a state-owned route under the jurisdiction of Caltrans. The portion of the project along The Alameda operates on a City of San José roadway (for the purposes of this NOP and the environmental document, references to the project corridor include the portion of the proposed project along The Alameda). The El Camino Real corridor is centrally located in the cities it passes through, connects to many intersecting local streets, and serves a wide variety of land uses including locally-oriented retail stores, regional shopping centers, civic facilities, and numerous residential and office complexes. In general, traffic volumes are high and trips average 6 to 7 miles in length. The portion of El Camino Real included in the proposed project is roughly parallel to Highway 101 (US 101) to the northeast and Interstate 280 (I-280) to the southwest, and is intersected by San Tomas Expressway, Lawrence Expressway, Interstate 880 (I-880), and State Route 85 (SR 85).

Purpose and Need

El Camino Real extends from The Alameda in San José to Mission Street in Daly City. El Camino Real serves as a major local roadway connecting the communities along the El Camino Real corridor. The proposed El Camino Real BRT Project would make transit and other improvements along a 17.4-mile segment of the El Camino Real corridor in Santa Clara County extending from the HP Pavilion in San José to the Palo Alto Transit Center in Palo Alto. The purpose of the El Camino Real BRT Project is to improve the reliability, frequency, travel time, and travel speed of transit along the El Camino Real corridor; improve passenger amenities, safety, and access; contribute to the implementation of the multimodal goals and objectives of the Grand Boulevard Initiative; and support other local and regional plans that seek to improve and enhance multimodal operations in the El Camino Real corridor.

Preliminary travel demand forecasts for the El Camino Real corridor indicate that traffic volumes are expected to increase between now and 2035. With a projected 40 percent increase in both population and jobs within the corridor and accompanying travel demand, increased congestion and operational deficiencies are likely to occur. In addition, a greater number of intersections

along the corridor will experience a poor level of service compared to existing conditions. This increased congestion will likely lead to a deterioration in transit service reliability and increased transit and transportation travel times. El Camino Real is VTA's highest ridership corridor and serves as a vital and essential component of the regional transit network. With limited options for increasing the capacity of existing transportation facilities in the vicinity, enhancing transit operations on the corridor is necessary to serve future travel demand. The project would be consistent with the goals of the Valley Transportation 2035 Plan (VTP 2035) and the 2009 VTA BRT Strategic Plan as it would improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and viability of El Camino Real as a transit corridor.

Project Description

VTA is proposing to provide BRT improvements along 17.4 miles of El Camino Real (refer to **Figure 1. El Camino Real BRT Project Map**). This would potentially include exclusive, BRT-dedicated lanes, mixed-flow lanes (lanes for BRT and vehicular travel) and 16 median or curbside BRT stations (refer to **Table 1. El Camino Real BRT Project Proposed Stations**) to provide improved bus service with rail-like amenities. The proposed project would support the development of a balanced multi-modal corridor consistent with local planning. BRT is defined as high-quality, high-speed form of bus transit that provides services and amenities similar to light rail but at a much lower cost. BRT uses specialized vehicles that operate on city streets and in dedicated lanes rather than on a fixed guideway, like rail. Overall, BRT is designed to improve the speed, reliability, and identity of bus transit. The BRT project would accommodate buses that allow boarding level with the curb, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, augmented landscaping, street lighting, and intersection improvements. The project will also provide a signal system where buses are given priority at traffic signals over general vehicular traffic, offer more frequent service with a reliable 10-minute time between vehicles, and reduce bus travel times. Under the proposed project, Rapid 522 would be replaced with BRT and Route 22 would continue to operate on El Camino Real, but at 15-minute headways. Various locations and lengths of exclusive BRT lanes are under consideration in the various alternatives (described under Alternatives), but all of the scenarios use the same alignment along El Camino Real from the HP Pavilion to the Palo Alto Transit Center.

In segments of dedicated lanes, stations would be located in the median, typically in a farside split platform configuration (station platforms would be located after intersections in the median allowing passenger loading on the right side). In mixed-flow segments, the stations would be curbside bulbouts, extending the sidewalk into the parking or curb lane (refer to **Figure 1. Artist Depiction of a Representative BRT Curbside Station** and **Figure 2. Artist Depiction of a Representative BRT Median Station**).

Table 1. El Camino Real BRT Project Proposed Stations

City Jurisdiction	Proposed Station
Palo Alto	Palo Alto Transit Center (existing) California Arastradero
Los Altos	Showers
Mountain View	Castro
Sunnyvale	Bernardo Hollenbeck Fair Oaks Wolfe
Santa Clara	Flora Vista Kiely Scott Santa Clara Transit Center
San José	Taylor/Naglee Race/Julian Arena (this station to be constructed by the Santa Clara-Alum Rock Project)

Alternatives

The El Camino Real BRT Project alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR/EA include the following:

- *No Build* – VTA would not undertake any improvements to El Camino Real; Route 22 would continue to run in the El Camino Real corridor. Under the No Build scenario, Rapid 522 buses would be replaced with Low Floor BRT style buses in 2014.
- *Mixed Flow Only Option* – No dedicated bus-only lanes with only mixed-flow lanes and full bulbout stations in all other areas.
- *Short Dedicated Lane-No Build North of Santa Clara Option* – Dedicated bus-only lanes from Lafayette Street in Santa Clara to Halford Avenue in Santa Clara (2.97 miles), mixed-flow lanes and full bulbout stations east of Lafayette Street, and no project improvements west of Halford Avenue.
- *Short Dedicated Lane-Mixed Flow North of Santa Clara Option* – Dedicated bus-only lanes from Lafayette Street in Santa Clara (2.97 miles) to Halford Avenue in Santa Clara and mixed-flow lanes and full bulbout stations in all other areas.
- *Long Dedicated Lane Option* – Dedicated bus-only lanes from Lafayette Street in Santa Clara to Showers Drive in Mountain View (10.3 miles) and mixed-flow and full bulbout stations in all other areas.

Probable Environmental Effects

Based on a preliminary review of the project site and in consideration of the proposed project activities, VTA has determined that potential impacts related to cultural resources, land use and development, traffic and transportation, and visual and aesthetic conditions may occur as a result of project implementation. VTA will prepare a DEIR pursuant to Section 15060(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines. In accordance with NEPA and the FTA Environmental Impact and Procedures (23 CFR part 771), an EA will be prepared as a joint document with the EIR (an EIR/EA).

Scoping Meetings

The 30-day scoping period for the proposed project begins on Wednesday February 6, 2013 and ends on Friday March 8, 2013. VTA is holding four (4) environmental scoping meetings for the El Camino Real BRT Project. Each of these scoping meetings will have the same format and content.

Thursday, February 21, 2013

8:30 am – 10:30 am (Presentation begins at 8:45am)
Santa Clara City Council Chambers
1500 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Thursday, February 21, 2013

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm (Presentation begins at 5:45 pm)
Santa Clara City Council Chambers
1500 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Thursday, February 28, 2013

8:30 am – 10:30 am (Presentation begins at 8:45am)
Mountain View City Council Chambers
500 Castro Street, Second Floor
Mountain View, CA 94041

Thursday, February 28, 2013

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm (Presentation begins at 5:45 pm)
Mountain View City Council Chambers
500 Castro Street, Second Floor
Mountain View, CA 94041

If you are unable to attend these scoping meetings, you can find project information and presentations online at <http://www.vta.org/brt>.

Agency Response to this NOP

This NOP is being circulated pursuant to the California Public Resources Code Section 21153(a) and the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 1508. Comments on the proposed scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR/EA can be submitted in writing and must be received no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, March 8, 2013 at the email or postal address listed below.

Email: ECBRT@vta.org

Mail: VTA Environmental Programs and Resources Management
Attn: Christina Jaworski
3331 N. First Street, Building B-2
San José, CA 95134

If you have any questions regarding this NOP, please contact Christina Jaworski at (408) 321-5751.

Figure 1. El Camino Real BRT Project Map

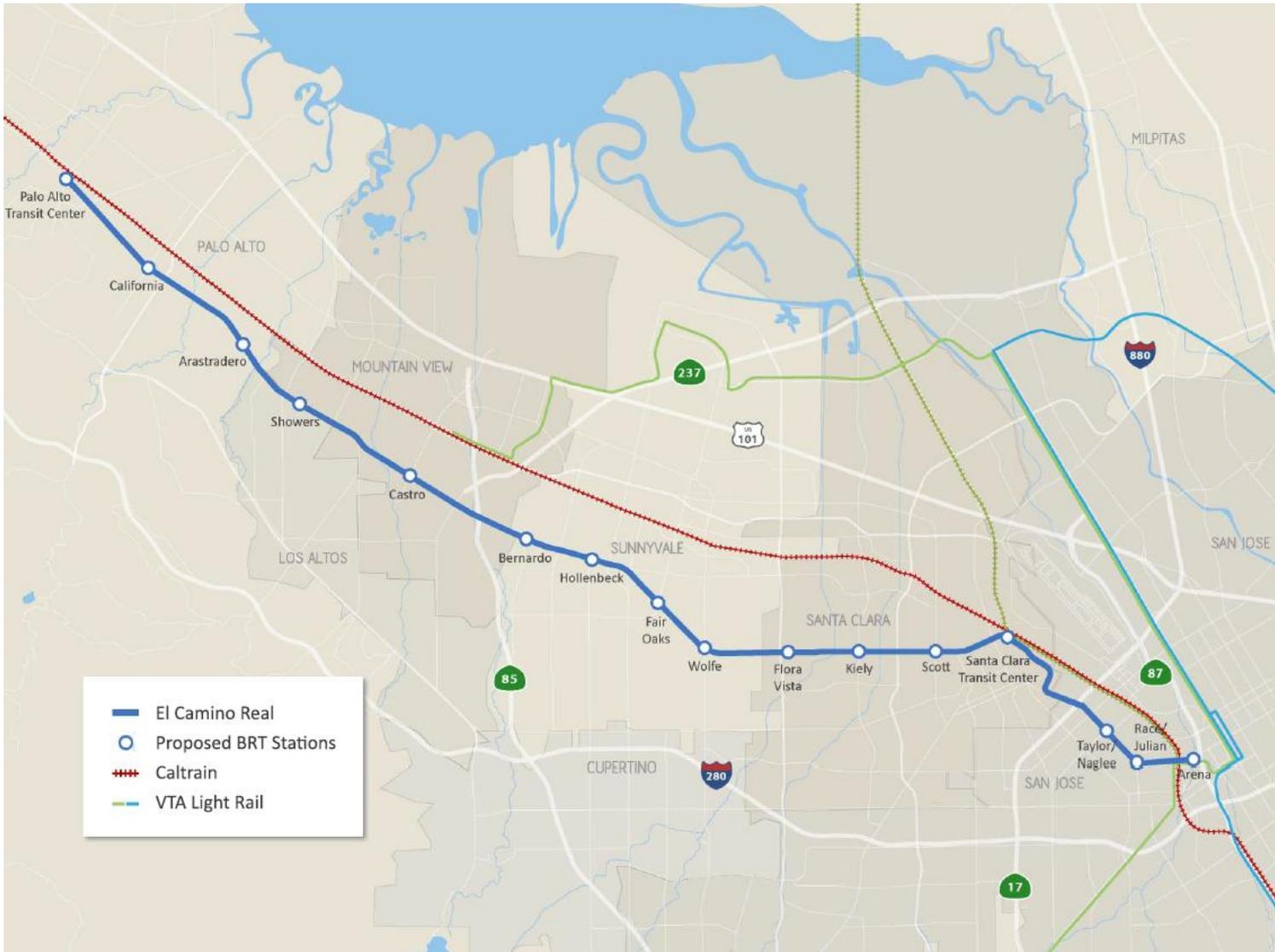


Figure 2. Artist Depiction of a Representative BRT Curbside Bulbout Station



Figure 3. Artist Depiction of a Representative BRT Median Station

