



DATE: April 21, 2015

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Public Works

TITLE: **El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Receive a presentation from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority staff regarding the El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project.
2. Consider taking a position regarding the City's preferred project design alternative.

BACKGROUND

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is enhanced bus service intended to attract increased ridership by offering shorter travel times, new specialized vehicles, technological improvements, and stations with real-time passenger information. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is proposing to implement BRT improvements along a 17.6-mile stretch of El Camino Real and portions of The Alameda and West Santa Clara Street to replace its existing 522 Rapid Bus service. The project will traverse the cities of San Jose, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Palo Alto.

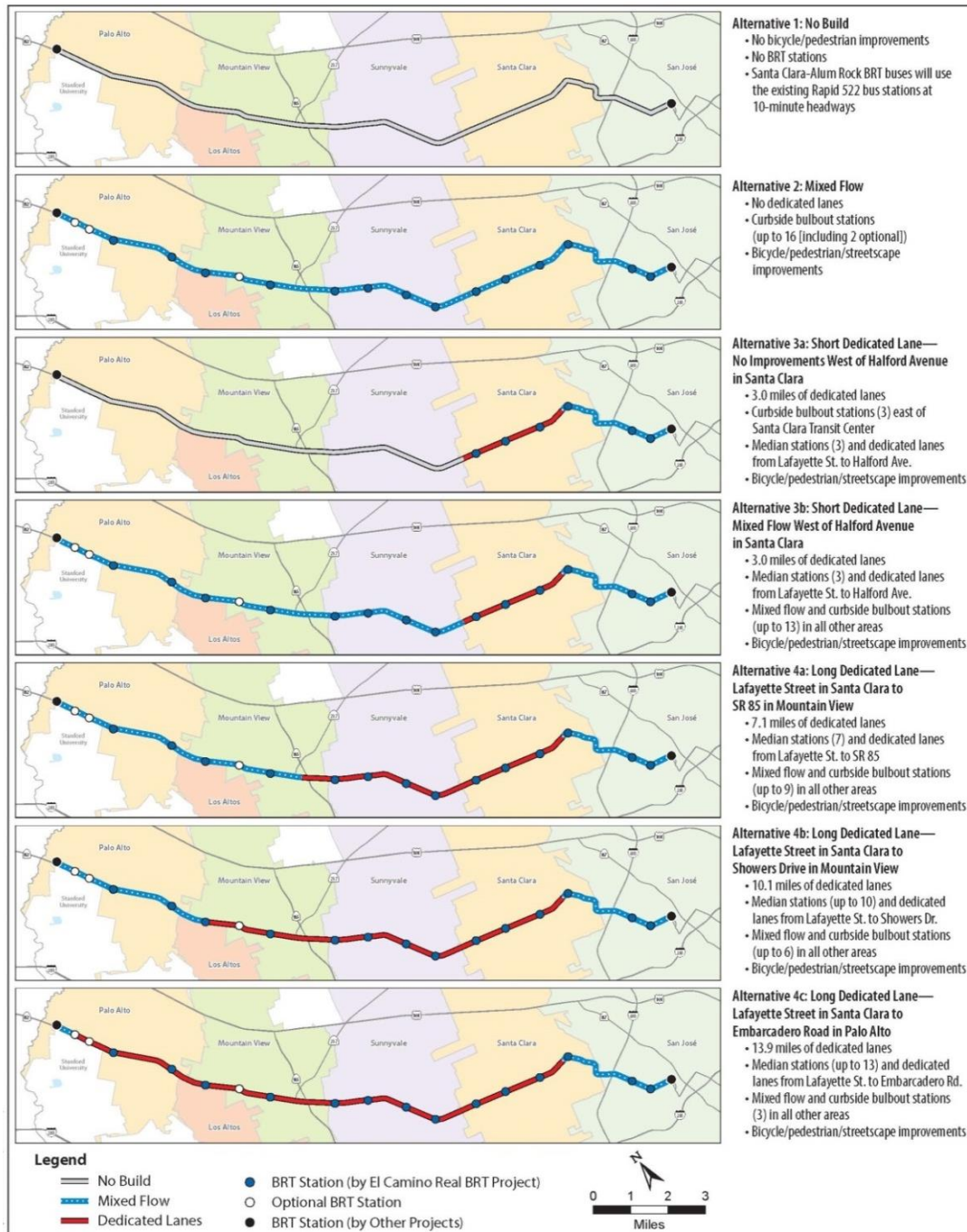
Previous City Review/Input

The City Council reviewed preliminary concepts for the proposed El Camino Real BRT project at Study Sessions in 2011 and 2012. Although the City Council took no formal action at either of these meetings, the Council noted significant concerns about the potential impacts the project could have on the community.

In February 2013, the VTA released the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the El Camino Real BRT project. In response to the Notice, staff submitted a letter to the VTA in March 2013 requesting the scope of the environmental review include a more robust analysis of alternatives, infrastructure impacts, surrounding land uses, integration with existing and planned

transportation facilities, traffic and circulation, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, construction impacts, and Heritage tree and air quality impacts.

The VTA released the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA) for the El Camino Real BRT project in late October 2014. The document evaluated the following seven BRT project alternatives.



The City Council reviewed the results of the DEIR/EA and heard public comment regarding the proposed BRT project at its December 16, 2014 meeting. The Council authorized the Mayor to send a letter (Attachment 1) to the VTA noting concerns and/or requesting additional information regarding the following elements of the environmental analysis:

- The methodology used for the traffic impact analysis.
- Tree impacts.
- Impacts on pedestrian and bicycle circulation and parking.
- The VTA's efforts to coordinate with Caltrans (the owner of El Camino Real north of I-880) regarding the project.
- A lack of consideration of local land use planning documents/studies (e.g., 2030 General Plan, El Camino Real Precise Plan, San Antonio Precise Plan) or policies.
- Construction impacts.
- Potential impacts to neighborhoods or communities of concern.

ANALYSIS

VTA staff will be presenting the project status and findings of the DEIR/EA to a joint meeting of VTA advisory committees on April 22 and to a workshop of the VTA Board of Directors on May 1. Based on those discussions, the VTA will decide how to proceed with the project. Options include selecting one of the BRT alternatives in the environmental document or working with cities to improve the existing transit service on El Camino Real.

In past conversations, VTA staff has indicated that the selection of any Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the BRT project will be a VTA decision, but that the decision will be influenced by the cities along the proposed El Camino Real BRT corridor and Caltrans (the owner of El Camino Real north of I-880). As the owner of the roadway, Caltrans must approve any changes made to the street resulting from the BRT project. Caltrans has indicated they, too, will consider local positions.

VTA will present the results of the DEIR/EA for the El Camino Real BRT project and provide a status update to the Mountain View City Council at its April 21, 2015 meeting.

Provided below is a summary of the results from the presentations VTA staff has made to other city councils along the proposed BRT corridor:

- City of Palo Alto (January 12, 2015)—Opposed dedicated lanes in Palo Alto. Requested VTA implement suggested alternatives first.
- City of Santa Clara (January 26, 2015)—Although the city council had previously demonstrated some interest in the dedicated lane configuration, the council indicated that it wanted to “wait and see” which BRT lane configurations other cities were supporting before taking a position on any alternative. The mixed-flow BRT alternative appeared to have the most council support.
- City of Sunnyvale (February 24, 2015)—Does not support the dedicated lane alternative in Sunnyvale. The council indicated support for the mixed-flow alternative, but noted concerns with the bulb-out design and encouraged VTA staff to review alternative design options.
- City of Los Altos (March 10, 2015)—Opposed the dedicated lane alternative until further information is provided.

If, after hearing from VTA and the public, the Council wishes to take a formal position on a preferred alternative, it can do so.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact directly associated with taking a position on BTR.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not take a position (support or oppose) on any alternative.
2. Provide other direction to staff.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to the City's standard agenda posting requirements, notices regarding the Council's consideration of the El Camino Real BRT project were sent to VTA and neighboring cities' staff. A notice was also posted on the City News section of the City's website.

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LF/7/CAM
901-04-21-15CR-E

Attachment: 1. Letter to VTA on DEIR