



August 5, 2004

City of San Jose  
Department of Planning, Building & Code Enforcement  
801 North First Street, Room 400  
San Jose, CA 95110-9975

Attention: Laurel Prevetti

**Subject: Coyote Valley Specific Plan**

Dear Ms. Prevetti:

Thank you for the comprehensive presentation to Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) staff regarding the Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) on July 16. VTA staff provided numerous comments on the CVSP at this initial meeting, and this letter is intended as follow-up to that discussion.

For a development of this magnitude in which transportation is a critical element, VTA strongly urges the CVSP team to hold additional meetings with VTA to fully explore individual transportation issues in more depth. VTA also encourages the City to consider adding a transportation consultant with transit expertise to the City's project team to evaluate a broad range of transportation options. Indeed, the CVSP provides a great opportunity for the City to establish Coyote Valley as a model for "smart growth" planning in California and throughout the country.

VTA suggests the following as the CVSP process moves forward:

- Consider roadway and transit improvements within the context of the countywide transportation planning process (e.g. Valley Transportation Plan 2030)
- Evaluate a broad range of transit options (rail and non-rail) including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Consider VTA's future transit corridor studies
- Identify potential funding strategies for the Coyote Valley transportation improvements (transit and roadway)
- Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections
- Incorporate Transit-Oriented Development scenarios into the CVSP
- Explore development opportunities through Caltrain's existing and planned activities
- Incorporate VTA's Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program guidelines into the CVSP
- Establish and promote VTA/City of San Jose coordination efforts

These items are addressed in more detail below.

### Transportation/Transit

Transportation and transit issues are key considerations in the CVSP planning process, and VTA is pleased that several transit options are currently under consideration. It will be critical for the overall plan to incorporate excellent connections between transit services in the CVSP area. In addition, it will be extremely important for the City to coordinate closely with VTA to explore potential financing mechanisms to provide for capital and operating funding plans, for example, a Benefit Assessment District.

#### *Caltrain*

VTA is pleased to see a future Caltrain station planned in the vicinity of Bailey Avenue as part of the CVSP, and we look forward to more detailed discussions about this potential station.

VTA encourages the City to incorporate into its development plans a scenario that has a direct connection between the future Bailey Avenue Caltrain Station and the "in-valley transit system". An efficient transit network would include a direct, convenient connection between the Bailey Caltrain Station and Coyote Valley bus service. As your team pointed out at our meeting, the walking distance of 800 to 1,000 feet for transfers between modes, as currently shown on the plans, is not adequate.

In addition, development design should include safe and efficient bike and pedestrian access to the Bailey Caltrain Station to minimize the need to use autos to access the station and thus limit the amount of parking required at the station. Land uses around the future Bailey Caltrain Station should complement the transit function by providing conveniences to passengers. Good pedestrian connections, a visual corridor from housing to the station, and sufficient lighting for passenger security should all be incorporated.

It should be understood that Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) owns the track and railroad right-of-way in the Coyote Valley area, and thus has the final authority on the number of trains, the schedule and direction of train service that Caltrain can operate over their tracks, as well as necessary improvements to allow additional trains. Discussions with UPRR regarding expansion of South County track have shown that development would occur exclusively west of the existing UPRR mainline. UPRR expects to ultimately isolate their freight operations from commuter operations. In the short-term, they strongly discourage pedestrians crossing their track to reach Caltrain platforms. Therefore, a station at Bailey Avenue would most likely be developed west of the UPRR tracks.

Furthermore, under the terms of the Peninsula Corridor (Caltrain) Joint Powers Agreement, VTA, not Caltrain, has the sole responsibility to fund Caltrain capital projects on the UPRR track between Gilroy and Lick. VTA is currently scheduling negotiations with UPRR to reach an agreement on improvements to the corridor between Tamien and Gilroy, which would bring a UPRR commitment to allow a total of 10 commuter round trips (the current commitment is 5). An agreement is expected in late 2004 or early 2005.

#### *Light Rail/Bus*

At our meeting, VTA staff provided comments regarding the "in-valley light rail" system shown on the CVSP maps. In particular, staff asked about the reasoning for selecting light rail for a "circulator" function. We now understand that the City did not intend to imply that the decision for light rail technology had been made. Rather, the in-valley transit system could be, for example, rubber tire technology as a precursor to future streetcar or light rail service. VTA supports further study of the most appropriate technology for the in-valley circulator system, and will work with the City regarding an appropriate alignment and reservation of right-of-way.

As discussed at our meeting, the "Coyote Valley Light Rail Extension", which is not well defined but is envisioned as an extension of VTA's existing Guadalupe light rail line from the Santa Teresa Station into Coyote Valley, will be studied as part of VTA's "New Light Rail Corridors" study. This study will be initiated in 2004 and completed in 2005, and will result in a priority list of new light rail corridors in Santa Clara County. Please note that VTA does not expect all the corridors studied to be included in the VTP 2030 priority list. It may be many years before funding is actually available for such projects. Therefore, it should be assumed that a bus system and Caltrain may likely be the primary transit modes serving Coyote Valley in the near-term future. There are numerous examples the City can review for a "branded" transit system that provides for the specific needs of a community. The bus system could use smaller vehicles and be environmentally friendly. The DASH service in Downtown San Jose, Stanford Marguerite shuttle and the Santa Barbara State Street trolley are just a few of many examples.

A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system operating on Monterey Highway is another future project VTA is considering, which could potentially serve the Coyote Valley. With unique vehicles, permanent architecturally pleasing stations, traffic signal priority and frequent service, the BRT system could operate on major arterials in the Coyote Valley and then travel the BRT corridor to connect to job sites and the Bailey Caltrain Station. BRT systems can be very flexible and easily implemented as the area develops, and are substantially less costly to build, operate and maintain than rail systems.

### *Roadway Improvements and Transportation Modeling*

The planning process for the CVSP should include forecast modeling of freeway, highway and local roadway approaches to the development and identify potential transportation improvements needed based on this modeling. The proposed land uses appear to differ significantly with what is currently included in the countywide transportation model maintained by VTA. When the revised land use changes become more firm, City staff should coordinate with VTA on updating the VTA model to incorporate the new land uses. In addition, City staff should coordinate with VTA on the inclusion of proposed future transportation (roadway, bike/pedestrian and transit) improvements resulting from the modeling of the planned development into the countywide transportation planning process (VTP 2030).

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections

The CVSP should address bike connections from Coyote Valley to other major destinations such as San Jose to the north and Morgan Hill to the south. The Coyote Creek Trail, Monterey Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard are all regional north-south bicycle corridors. Coyote Creek Trail and Santa Teresa Boulevard are designated as trail/bicycle corridors in both the Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan and the Countywide Bicycle Plan. Monterey Highway is included in the Countywide Bicycle Plan as part of the Cross-County Bicycle network. Non-motorized access between the CVSP area and the three regional north-south corridors should be designed and implemented to be as bike and pedestrian-friendly as possible.

VTA has also developed Bicycle Technical Guidelines (copy enclosed), which we encourage the City to use in developing on-street bicycle facilities and bicycle parking for the CVSP.

### VTA's Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program

VTA encourages the City to incorporate the CDT design guidelines and planning tools (copy enclosed) into the development of the CVSP. The CDT program establishes an active partnership between VTA and local cities to broaden the range of viable transportation choices and to make the most efficient use of resources within Santa Clara County. Calling out the CDT Program would bring forth a more public vision for a partnership between City of San Jose and VTA.

In addition, VTA strongly encourages the City to maximize the potential for transit-oriented development in the CVSP area. VTA encourages the City to achieve higher densities around station areas. The current CVSP development scenarios call for a minimum residential density of 10 dwelling units per acre. This may be too low to support an efficient high-capacity transit system. Higher densities around the station area could potentially generate the ridership needed to sustain high-quality service at a low cost, while allowing more users direct access to the transit system.

VTA/City Coordination

VTA requests continuing and more in-depth participation with the CVSP team as the CVSP moves forward. The CVSP "Transportation Issues Sub-Committee", which includes staff from City Planning, Public Works, and Department of Transportation, is a good start and further meetings of this group should occur regularly.

In the past few years, VTA has conducted planning activities that may be useful to the City. For instance, in June 2001, VTA conducted a double track conceptual study of the Gilroy Caltrain corridor. The study included a number of track configurations for the corridor between Tamien Station and Gilroy. The study also included capacity information in the event that a reverse commute is required (i.e. morning southbound movement to the Coyote Valley).

In addition, VTA conducted a study in 2003 that included BRT, circulator bus, streetcar, and light rail technology options as part of the Downtown East Valley Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor planning process. Information generated from this effort may also be useful to the CVSP team. Documents from this effort that we feel may be useful are enclosed for your information and use.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your on-going work on the Coyote Valley Specific Plan. We look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the aforementioned in-depth meetings. If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 321-5779.

Sincerely,



Julie Render  
Deputy Director, Transit Planning & Development

cc: Sal Yakubu, City of San Jose

Enclosures:

- Downtown East Valley Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor Key Issues Study Guide I (December 2002), II (January 2003), III (February 2003), Information Packet (March 2004) and Evaluation Report (May 2003)
- Community Design & Transportation: A Manual of Best Practices for Integrating Transportation and Land Use (2003)
- Tamien to Gilroy Double Track Conceptual Study (June 2001)
- Bicycle Technical Guidelines: A Guide for Local Agencies in Santa Clara County (September 1999)