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September 17, 2012

Valley Transportation Authority
Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board
San Jose City Hall, Wing Room 118 San Jose City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA

Re: City Hall Santa Clara-Alum Rock Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station

Dear Chairperson Rose Herrera, Vice Chairperson Sam Liccardo, and other members of the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board:

SPUR is an urban policy civic organization focused on good planning and good government. We are writing to share SPUR's perspective on the issue of a City Hall / 6th Street BRT Station Location. We think that there should be a BRT station in front of City Hall for eastbound travel and directly across the street for westbound travel. We think this alternative should proceed to Preliminary Engineering.

The City of San Jose has significant policy goals to encourage the shift away from automobile use toward transit and other alternative modes. The City's updated General Plan (Envision 2040) proposes to reduce driving from 80% to 40% of trips by 2040. Accomplishing this will require achieving 20% of trips on transit, 15% on bikes, 15% walking, and 10% via carpool/vanpool. These aggressive goals are a reflection of the City of San Jose's deep commitment to a future that is more transit-oriented than today. Deciding to locate a BRT station directly in front of City Hall, instead of one block further east, provides an opportunity to put these goals into action.

The following reflects SPUR's perspective on the benefits of a BRT station at 6th Street in front of City Hall:

- **A City Hall station would be a public demonstration of San Jose's commitment to prioritizing transit.** Placing a BRT facility in front of City Hall would underscore the City's stated commitment to its mode shift goals and to prioritizing transit. City Hall is a highly visible landmark and the City of San Jose is one of the largest employers in downtown. As such, it is important for the City to take a leadership role in prioritizing transit access. This symbolic leadership is particularly crucial when private sector employers will also be asked to help their employees shift towards transit and other commutes modes to help achieve the City's overall goals.
- **A City Hall station would best integrate BRT with major destinations.** According to VTA's analysis, San Jose City Hall and San Jose State are "the two largest travel generators on the eastern edge of Downtown San Jose." From the perspective of a rider, one block away is not the same as directly in front of City Hall. Adjacency is far more important than proximity in transit. One block can make a difference, particularly for patrons who are not ordinarily accustomed to riding transit. Further, placing the BRT station directly in front of a final destination is a more important consideration than the potential transfer point to other bus lines on 7th street.

- **The security of City Hall’s plaza would best be served through increased activation and use.** The longstanding principle of “eyes on the street” as a way to improve safety applies to the plaza in front of City Hall. Placing the transit facility in front of City Hall would result in hundreds of riders daily crossing the plaza in front of City Hall on their way to the MLK library and other destinations. The additional presence of pedestrians would activate the large space and would contribute to improved security.
- **City Hall is a lower cost station.** The station at City Hall requires no property acquisition or payments to property owners and thus is less costly. According to VTA, “There is no fiscal impact for the BRT station west of 6th in front of City Hall as the block between 6th and 5th is red curbed.” The alternative at 7th Street could cost between \$300,00 to more than \$1 million for no additional transportation benefits.
- **A City Hall station would connect to the planned bike sharing program at City Hall.** While 7th Street is planned as a bike lane, having a BRT station at City Hall would facilitate multimodal connection between transit and a bike sharing pod at City Hall. This link is a more fundamental multimodal connection than to the planned bike lane given that users of the bike share pod will need to arrive at the pod prior to using the bikes while transit riders with bikes can more easily access 7th Street on their own.

Overall, we understand the challenges of bringing a major transit line through downtown San Jose and applaud both VTA and the City of San Jose for working collaboratively to implement this project. We are supportive of the City’s interest in having a well-designed station and are encouraged that “VTA is willing to consider a unique design for the City Hall Station shelter.” We also understand that the City of San Jose has a stated commitment to shift citywide travel modes and to better integrate transportation and land use. Given these goals, it is SPUR’s recommendation that VTA move forward to Preliminary Engineering with a BRT station in front of City Hall. It is in these small decisions that a city makes progress towards its long-term vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on the important question of station location in downtown San Jose. We look forward to an ongoing collaborative relationship with the City of San Jose and VTA in the implementation of the Alum Rock BRT project and other infrastructure projects citywide. Please feel free to follow up with me if you have any additional questions.

Regards,



Egon Terplan
Regional Planning Director
SPUR

cc. Councilmember Xavier Campos, Supervisor Dave Cortese, Supervisor George Shirakawa, Hans Larsen, Manuel Pineda, Michael Burns, Ken Ronsse, Chris Augenstein, Kevin Connolly, Leah Toeniskoetter