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April 29, 2015

Board of Directors
Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA

Subject: VTA Board Workshop Item 4.2, El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project - Draft
Environmental Impact Report

Dear Chair Woodward and Directors

SPUR is a non-profit, member-supported organization that promotes good planning and
good government. We recently published *Freedom to Move: How the Santa Clara Valley
Transportation Authority can create better transportation choices in the South Bay.*

SPUR recommends a fully-featured Bus Rapid Transit line on El Camino Boulevard, one of
the most important transit corridors in the Bay Area. We can all see that the growth in
auto trips is causing gridlock. A strong local bus transit spine – without buses stuck in
traffic – is essential to livable communities and a thriving Silicon Valley. We may not get
this investment opportunity again.

Based on information disclosed in the project Draft Environmental Impact Report, the
BRT project will produce much-needed benefits:

1. **Noticeably improve the character of streets and neighborhoods.**
    The proposed project includes street reconstruction, safer crosswalks, cyclist
    improvements and landscaping in station areas. With the loss of redevelopment
    funding, these kinds of broad improvements would be difficult to fund without
    this project. Cities through this corridor have General Plan and Specific Plan
    visions for compact, sustainable communities. Rapid bus service provides the
    transportation backbone to achieve these neighborhood visions.

2. **Improve transit dramatically with few impacts to autos.**
    Traffic conditions along the El Camino Real corridor are projected to worsen in
    coming years. For the growing part of the population who doesn't drive, transit is

an unreliable and slow choice, as buses are stuck in traffic. The DEIR states that dedicated lanes reduce travel time through this corridor from 85 to 48 minutes, and allows VTA to offer 10-minute service. The DIER also shows few impacts to autos, and those few impacts would be spread over a large area. Rapid bus service solves a geometry problem on streets: it can move far more people in a smaller amount of space than private autos can.

3. **Use transit funding effectively.**
   High transit speeds also improve cost-efficiency: the DEIR states that a dedicated lane option costs $13 million annually to serve over 18,000 daily riders, compared with $19 million to serve 12,000 daily riders today. These improvements free up transit operating funds for other transit services. A dedicated-lane alternative will be competitive for up to $75 million in Federal Small Starts funding, while the mixed-flow alternatives will not be. Furthermore, The multi-billion dollar BART extension to Silicon Valley will require quality feeder transit to succeed in achieving its ridership and farebox recovery goals.

4. **Grow the South Bay's interconnected high-speed transit network.**
   Where VTA has increased transit speed and express services, ridership has grown. Rapid bus transit routes are key elements of the regional transit network, needed for quick connections with Caltrain, ACE, Capitol Corridor, and the anticipated BART Silicon Valley Extension. BRT on El Camino Real provides a necessary, more affordable transit complement to Caltrain.

Fully featured BRT, with dedicated lanes and frequent service, is the appropriate transit technology to serve this market today and in the future. The El Camino Real BRT corridor was carefully chosen for study by the VTA board in 2009, when the Bus Rapid Transit Strategic Plan showed it has a market for great transit. VTA's 522/22 line is among the highest ridership routes in the region today.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ratna Amin
SPUR Transportation Policy Director