

**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

Submitted Electronically

February 16, 2017

Mr. James Unites
Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North 1st Street
San Jose, CA 95134

Re: VTA's Transit Service Redesign Draft Plan (Next Network)

Dear Mr. Unites,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes to VTA's bus network as part of the Next Network plan. Our report *Freedom to Move* recommended that VTA make transit great in places it works best—focusing transit to serve anchors of activity and making transit frequent, productive, appealing and easy to use. We are also strong proponents of controlling transit costs.

SPUR is a vocal supporter of Next Network and VTA's overall move towards a ridership-focused transit network. Over the past year, we have hosted public forums on the Next Network, wrote two blogs on this initiative (sent to thousands of SPUR members)¹, submitted two comment letters on the initiative, and attended multiple VTA public meetings on the topic. We appreciate:

1. The high level of outreach that VTA staff and Jarrett Walker & Associates have done in analyzing VTA's existing network and proposing the Next Network.
2. The high quality, user-friendly website (<http://nextnetwork.vta.org/>) that VTA created to communicate the draft plan.
3. The addition of better east-west connections in the county to create more of a grid network.

¹ See here: <http://www.spur.org/news/2016-03-29/shaping-our-transit-destiny-four-questions-south-bay> and <http://www.spur.org/news/2016-12-06/vta-s-big-move-grow-transit-ridership>

The following comments primarily focus on service changes in San Jose with connections to future BART service and regional destinations.

1. We recommend that VTA to maintain the DASH circulator service at 10-minute peak-hour frequencies (or better) on weekdays. We encourage VTA to keep DASH as a free service rather than a revenue service. VTA could consider reducing the number of stops that it makes based on the number of boardings at each stop, as some of the stops are very close together. This circulator service is well-used during peak hours and is an important first/last-mile connection for downtown San Jose. The quality of the pedestrian environment in downtown has greatly improved in recent years but deficits remain. Additionally, turning DASH into a revenue service—especially without making changes to parking prices in downtown—could negatively affect transit ridership on regional rail and increasing driving. For example, a traveler that uses a Clipper Card to travel two Caltrain fare zones will pay \$5.20 in each direction. If that traveler also must pay \$4 per day on DASH, his or her total travel costs are over \$14 for one day. For many downtown parking lots, it then becomes less expensive to park than to take transit. This is true even for Caltrain riders that use a monthly pass. In addition, we believe that the availability of a circulator service will only grow more important as VTA starts construction on BART in downtown, which will disrupt the pedestrian environment.
2. We support the creation of new Route 60 at 15-minute peak hour frequencies on weekdays and 20-minute peak hour frequencies on weekends. We think that this will improve transit service to Santana Row/ Valley Fair, a regional and local destination that continues to add jobs, amenities and housing.
3. However, we also recommend that VTA maintain the airport connector shuttle (Route 10) or continue to operate the segment of new Route 60 between North 1st Street and the airport as a free service. The draft plan subsumes Route 10 into Route 60.
4. We encourage VTA to extend school-oriented service countywide to 7am-8am and 2pm-5pm in order to better accommodate after-school activities. This would apply to Route 288, Route 88, Route 246, and Route 282. We encourage VTA to monitor ridership over the next year to determine if additional changes in service are warranted.
5. We encourage VTA to move forward with bold fare integration efforts, as described in our previous letter from November 2016. ² This will help expand the usability of the Next Network and our regional transit network.

² [http://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR Comments-Next Network-11-16-16-final.pdf](http://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR%20Comments-Next%20Network-11-16-16-final.pdf)

We know that transit has not enjoyed consistent success in Santa Clara County and that VTA's service has not been able to keep up with population growth. Transit will be more successful and more usable to more people when it is frequent and reliable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Teresa Alvarado", enclosed within a rectangular border.

Teresa Alvarado
San Jose Director