

October 5, 2020

Valley Transportation Authority Board of Directors
3331 North First Street
San José CA 95134

Re: 2021 Transit Service Plans – Strong Support for The 90% Plan

Dear Chair Chavez and Directors:

On behalf of SPUR, I write to provide our comments regarding proposed 2021 Transit Service Plans options and transmit our strong support for “The 90% Plan.” We commend staff for making the best of a very difficult situation and making every effort to preserve the maximum amount of service especially for lower-income riders and riders of color.

SPUR has a long history of advocating for land use, development, parking and transit-first policies that encourage mode shift and increased transit ridership. We acknowledge the severe negative impact of COVID-19 on transit operations, ridership and the fiscal health of agencies and will continue to advocate for future transit operations funding rescue packages at the state and federal levels.

While some employees are able to work-from-home, essential workers must still show up to their job sites every day and depend on reliable and affordable public transit service for their commutes. We fear that steep reductions to the frequency of service will cause an even further decline in ridership and undermine the momentum for more sustainable land use and zoning policies that encourage denser, infill development and, in turn, make transit more feasible and convenient for potential riders.

We believe it is imperative for reasons of racial and social equity, the environment, and sound urban planning that light rail and frequent bus routes continue to operate every 15 minutes on weekdays as they did prior to the pandemic and, therefore, support The 90% Plan proposed by VTA staff.

As staff noted in the memo, much of our state, regional and local planning, development incentives and funding programs are predicated on and favor 15-minute-or-better headways. For example, several state affordable housing loan programs prioritize funding awards for developments with access to “Major Transit Stops” and “High-Quality Transit.” Longer headways will make proposed projects on these lines ineligible. State law also provides a CEQA exemptions for housing within 1/2 mile of a Major Transit Stop or High-Quality Transit Corridor.

We strongly support the 90% Plan for the 2021 service plan as an interim step, with the goal being to restore full service systemwide as soon as possible. To that end, VTA should establish funding contingencies that prioritize full service when financial conditions allow.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Lane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Lane, San José Director
SPUR