

April 21, 2015

City of Mountain View City Council
City Hall
500 Castro Street, 3rd Floor
Mountain View, CA 94041-2010

Re: El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit Project - Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Mayor John McAlister and Councilmembers,

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 supporting 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 a livable Mountain View and a thriving Silicon Valley. We may not get this investment opportunity again.

Based on information disclosed in the project Draft Environmental Impact Report, BRT 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 would provide the transportation backbone necessary for these neighborhood visions to come to fruition.

2. Substantially improve transit 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 and Capitol Corridor, the anticipated BART Silicon Valley Extension. BRT on El Camino Real provides a necessary, more affordable transit complement to Caltrain.

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. Fully featured BRT, with dedicated lanes and frequent service, is the appropriate transit technology to serve this market today and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ratna Amin
SPUR Transportation Policy Director