



Memorandum

TO: TRANSPORTATION AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT: STEVENS CREEK CORRIDOR
STUDY QUARTERLY UPDATE**

FROM: John Ristow

DATE: March 17, 2021

Approved

Date

3/30/21

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the status report on the multi-jurisdictional Transportation Planning effort along the Stevens Creek Corridor.

BACKGROUND

The Stevens Creek Corridor begins at Downtown San Jose's Diridon Station, runs through the West San José Urban Villages, the City of Santa Clara, and ends at De Anza College in Cupertino; it also includes County of Santa Clara facilities. With significant development activity in the recent past and continuing, these jurisdictions and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) have been working to find a joint path forward for the corridor and transit along that accommodates various jurisdiction's visions.

Recent transit and complete street corridor planning efforts for the corridor are described below.

In 2009, the VTA Board of Directors adopted the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Strategic Plan, which identifies potential corridors for bus rapid transit; Stevens Creek (operating Route 23) was one of those corridors.

In 2012, the Stevens Creek BRT study began and looked at designing BRT with 30% engineering and environmentally clearing it for construction.

In 2014, the study was completed and the Stevens Creek BRT corridor was downgraded to a rapid improvement of passenger amenities along Route 23 due to changing opinions in the community.

In 2015, the Rapid 523 Improvement project began with the purpose of upgrading passenger facilities (such as bus stops, bus pads, garbage cans) and implementing transit signal priority along Stevens Creek.

In 2018, both the study and construction were completed and VTA initiated the Fast Transit Program, a new approach for speeding up transit for VTA system-wide. This program aims to reap the benefits of smaller, easier to implement projects with low cost improvements.

On August 8, 2017, Council approved forming a multi-jurisdictional group comprised of San José, Cupertino, Santa Clara, and Santa Clara County to discuss key regional issues affecting West San Jose, with a focus on transportation and circulation. Vice Mayor “Chappie” Jones and Councilmember Dev Davis were appointed co-chairs. The first meeting of this multi-jurisdictional elected leaders steering committee occurred on March 25, 2019, and the latest meeting occurred on July 20, 2020.

City of San José staff have been coordinating with staff from the City of Santa Clara, City of Cupertino and VTA regarding transportation and circulation along the Stevens Creek Corridor since a working group was formed for this purpose in August 2017. This group has been discussing how to coordinate transportation planning and project delivery along Stevens Creek Blvd, including streetscape improvements to improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation along the corridor, in addition to the need for high-capacity transit as this corridor has evolved into a major health, education, technology industry, shopping, and housing spine in the South Bay.

As part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Horizon Initiative, a Bay Area wide contest in search of innovative transportation concepts, the three cities on the corridor along with VTA submitted a proposal for a grade separated transit line from Diridon Station west to Cupertino. The proposal was selected among 94 other transportation projects for consideration to be included in MTC’s Plan Bay Area 2050, the regional transportation plan. The submittal is included in the Plan Bay 2050 Blueprint currently undergoing environmental review. Plan Bay Area 2050 estimates \$2.8 billion of future funding to the project. This funding estimate and inclusion in Plan Bay Area will allow the jurisdictions to apply for state and federal funding to progress the project once the Plan is adopted in Fall 2021.

In Fall 2018, staff began developing the West San Jose Multi-modal Transportation Plan. This plan develops a transportation plan for the five urban villages adopted in West San Jose. This plan has been slow to develop due to the inter-jurisdictional transportation issues along Stevens Creek. The plan is getting attention again now that the other work items mentioned in this memo have brought the jurisdictions together to develop a vision for the corridor.

In February 2019, the San José City Council directed staff to “present for discussion various technology and alignment options for connecting the San José International Airport to Diridon Station. The same discussion may or may not include other potential corridors to Diridon Station, depending on staff’s readiness.” Based on this direction staff developed a Request for Information (RFI), with input from VTA, the City of Cupertino, and the City of Santa Clara.

From July 2019 through August 2020, San José, with input from the Stevens Creek corridor partner jurisdictions, released and evaluated an RFI for a grade-separated transit service along the same corridor plus a connection to the San José Airport from Diridon station. As presented to City Council on August 25, 2020, the RFI revealed an emerging market for new transit solutions

that could be built cheaper and more quickly than currently used technologies. While some questions remain about how successful these emerging solutions will be, there is strong reason to believe they can offer a higher level of service than current transit solutions. At the August 2020 presentation, City Council directed staff to continue developing the transit project through both traditional public means with VTA and research the possibility of franchise options that might bring in private operators.

In mid to late 2019, each jurisdiction on the corridor adopted resolutions supporting the development of a joint multi-modal transportation and transit plan for the corridor. San José adopted its version of the resolution on June 4, 2019 (amended on August 6, 2019).

In February 2020, VTA began the Next Generation High Capacity Transit Study. The outcome of this study will guide VTA's investments in high capacity transit routes. This study is considering the Stevens Creek Corridor as a candidate for future investment.

At the July 20, 2020 meeting, VTA presented multiple options to the multi-jurisdictional elected leaders steering committee for next steps to bring a common vision for transportation to the corridor. The committee members voted to support a Joint Vision Study to develop a shared vision through public outreach and create illustrative conceptual designs for exemplary purposes.

In January 2021, VTA reported on the planning activities of the Strategic Plan for Advancing High Capacity Transit Corridors. Initial ranking of the 25 potential high capacity transit routes study put the Stevens Creek Line at number six. When the plan is complete it will recommend to the MTC board the top ten routes VTA should build.

In February 2021, MTC adopted the concept of a grade separated transit line along Stevens Creek Blvd, as proposed by the corridor jurisdictions as part of the Plan Bay Area 2050 Final Blueprint. The final Blueprint is the Preferred Environmental Impact Report Alternative for Plan Bay Area 2050. The final EIR is expected to go to the MTC Commission in Fall 2021. As part of the Blueprint work, a constrained funding analysis was carried out; it showed that funding the Stevens Creek Line was possible with regional funds within the timeframe of Plan Bay Area 2050.

In March 2021, City Council considered the Mayor's budget message, which included funding for a request for proposals (RFP) to progress a mostly privately-funded airport connector transit solution. This airport connector is intended to be the first leg of a larger system that would include the Stevens Creek Line.

ANALYSIS

The Stevens Creek Corridor is seeing continued development activity from beginning to end. This development activity is bringing more people to the corridor to enjoy the shops and restaurants, come to work, go to school, receive health care, and to live. A transportation

environment that accommodates the travel needs of people and respects the visions of the jurisdictions along the corridor is needed. Leadership in all the jurisdictions involved have recognized this and directed staff to work together to come up with solutions and develop a common vision.

The many layers of work focused on the Stevens Creek Corridor will combine to create a shared path forward. The High Capacity Transit Study and New Transit RFI work are evaluating what kind of transit will best serve the corridor and offer options; while the West San José Multi-modal Transportation Improvement Plan will offer multi-modal improvements for the whole area, linking Stevens Creek into the broader San José portion of the area.

CONCLUSION

Staff from various jurisdictions continue working to secure funding and agreements to implement the choice of the elected leaders steering committee from the July 20, 2020 meeting. San José has identified its portion of the needed funding.

Staff is working to finalize recommendations for the West San José Multi-modal transportation plan. The plan will inform the transportation projects throughout the West San José area, including the Stevens Creek Corridor.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

/s/

JOHN RISTOW
Director of Transportation

For questions, please contact Ramses Madou, Division Manager, Planning, Policy, and Sustainability Department of Transportation, ramses.madou@sanjoseca.gov at (408) 975-3283.