

November 9th, 2020

Advisory and Standing Committee Members
Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San José, CA 95134

Dear VTA Advisory and Standing Committee Members,

RE: The impact of VTA service reductions on affordable housing residents and developments

On behalf of the twenty-one (21) undersigned organizations, we write today to share our concerns related to the impact of VTA service reductions on residents of affordable housing and our ability to produce more affordable housing opportunities County-wide. **We urge the Board to do its utmost to mitigate the reduction impacts (by aiming for the 90% service level) and including explicit language indicating that these are temporary cuts in response to COVID-19 that will be restored in the future.**

We understand that the VTA Board is faced with a difficult economic situation caused by the ongoing pandemic and that the Board is not taking the decision to reduce service lightly. This Board is well aware, thanks to your work in the community and VTA staff's excellent analyses, that reductions to public transit services will disproportionately impact lower income workers across Santa Clara County. Those most impacted include a large number of essential employees and first responders who have kept our economy functional in the face of COVID-19. The recent staff recommendations also show that there are ways of limiting the short-term impacts on services. **For this reason, it is crucial that the VTA Board do everything within its power -- including redirecting Measure A Caltrain subsidies, utilizing remaining Federal CARES Act funds, and front loading Measure B funds dedicated to the transit network -- in order to mitigate the worst levels of service reduction and maintain service levels at the 90% option, at a minimum.**

As you are also aware, sustained service reductions will have long-term effects on policies to incentivize affordable housing development that is accessible to transit. Proximity to high frequency bus and rail transit has become a key factor in competitive State affordable housing finance programs including AHSC, density bonus programs, and affordable housing tax credits. Regionally, MTC planning grants tied to high frequency transit are essential to local planning processes that allow jurisdictions to prioritize affordable housing as part of their efforts to promote equitable and sustainable development.

Even if the VTA Board approves the 90% service level option, affordable housing development proposals that are making use of transit-oriented development incentives will be in jeopardy. **While there is some indication that the State of California will permit some flexibility in these areas to account for COVID-specific service disruptions, it is imperative that the Board explicitly clarify that the proposed service reductions are temporary and will be restored after the end of the pandemic. This will provide assurances to the state and assist affordable housing developers working to ensure critical affordable housing projects continue to move forward.**

Thank you to the Board for considering these deep human impacts during an especially difficult time. We greatly appreciate the work of VTA staff to provide guidance and clarity when the future remains uncertain. These service reduction decisions will have significant consequences for Santa Clara County

residents. That is why it is so important that the Board take the full range of both short and long term factors into account when coming to a consensus on how to proceed.

Sincerely,

Silicon Valley at Home
First Community Housing
Reed Community Partners
Housing Trust Silicon Valley
Destination: Home
Affirmed Housing
Abode Services
Core Affordable Housing
Allied Housing
Community Housing Developers
Eden Housing
Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA)
EAH Housing
PATH Ventures
Charities Housing
RCD Housing
Alta Housing
Republic Urban Properties
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH)
Santa Clara County Housing Authority
Jamboree Housing