

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)  
River Oaks Administrative Offices:  
3331 North First Street  
San Jose, CA 95134  
via mail, Nov. 3, 2014

re: Relocation or elimination of the proposed Alum Rock BART Station

Dear VTA Board of Directors,

I am writing on my own behalf to express my grave misgivings about the recently announced decision to relocate the Alum Rock Station on the future BART extension from 28th St. to 23rd St., or possibly even to eliminate the station entirely.

I can understand the need to modify plans as they evolve, or as budgets and conditions change. I understand and agree with the reasoning for eliminating the station in Santa Clara— it will be adequately served by the to-be-electrified CalTrain line, and the San Jose Airport would be better served by a People-mover or other direct link from the Diridon Station. However, I don't understand why the Alum Rock Station should be moved or eliminated.

The 28th St. location for the Alum Rock BART Station has been planned for years. The location has been communicated to the Public throughout the Envision 2040 General Plan Update process. The Public in the vicinity in turn has worked with BART, other transit officials, and City Planners on concepts for an "Urban Village" that not only accommodates but actually embraces the BART Station. These Urban Village designs were then brought before City Council and adopted. The 28th St. location for the Alum Rock Station is to be well-served by the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) that is presently being built. The 28th St. location is also has a Park-n-Ride lot conveniently located immediately adjacent to an interchange on Freeway 101, so as to serve those members of the community whom are not well-served by other public transportation. There are even plans to convert part of an abandoned rail corridor into a multipurpose trail (the "Five Wounds Trail") that would also serve this BART Station.

And then last month we learn that for some reason it has been decided to delay, eliminate, or move the station to 23rd St. The first the community hears of this is when we find out that the right-of-way for the 28th St. alignment is to be offered up for sale: there was no other public outreach or involvement.

From what I understand, a station at 23rd St. would not be able to accommodate a Park-n-Ride lot. Also, it is further from the freeway exit, and so there would be increased congestion on Santa Clara St., an already quite busy urban street. Where would the South County Park-n-Ride BART customers go? – to the Diridon Station (which already is going to be quite well utilized, given the planned High Speed Rail (and possibly a baseball stadium!) in addition to the existing CalTrain service to SF), or to the Berryessa Station (which is further up the congested Freeway-101 and not nearly as conveniently located close to an interchange)?

What is the reason for this abrupt change to the Alum Rock Station? Is it because the 28th St. Station is perceived as being too close to the Berryessa Station? If that's the reason, it is spurious: as shown in Fig. 1, the distance from Berryessa to 23rd (dotted line) is virtually the same as the distance to 28th St. And it's a fair distance from there to the next station (Downtown) as well. Furthermore, the Berryessa – 28th separation is not all that small: it is more than the separation between the Embarcadero and Civic Center Stations in San Francisco (see Fig. 2), and there are two other stations (Powell and Montgomery) in between as well!

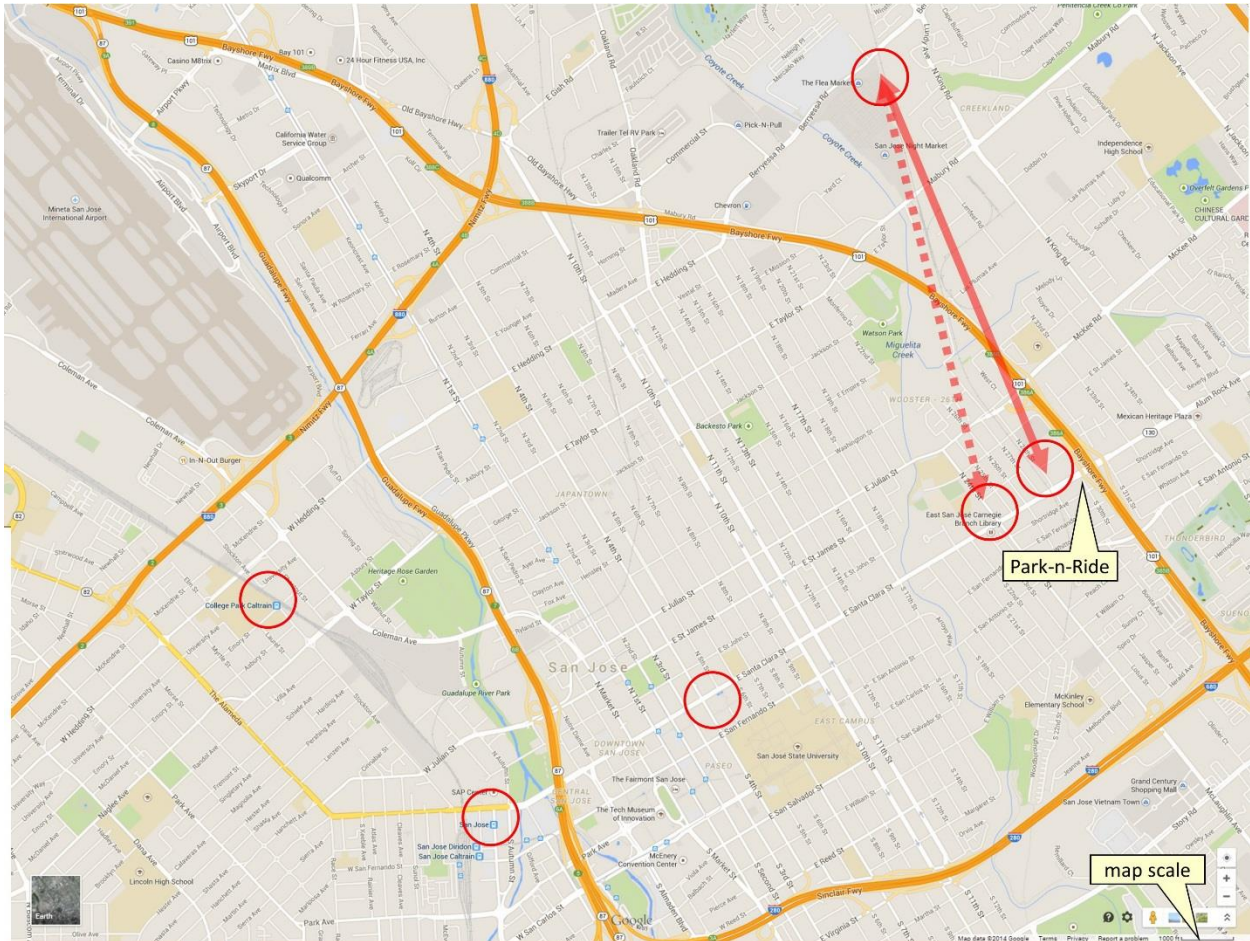


Fig. 1: Berryessa to 28th and 23rd in San Jose

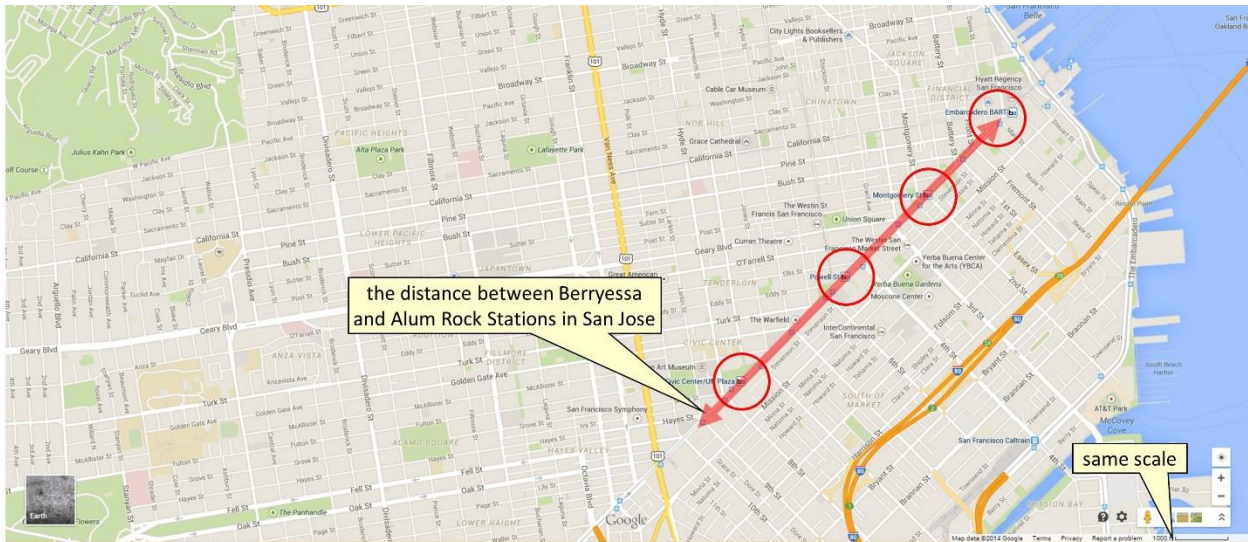


Fig. 2: Embarcadero to Civic Center in San Francisco

If there are valid reasons for changing the long-standing plans, they should be explained to the public so that we can understand and adapt to those changes. These change-of-plans are not even mentioned on the official VTA/BART webpage. I feel that it is quite inappropriate to spring such substantial changes on the public, and especially inappropriate to go so far as offering the land for sale before even informing the public.

The Alum Rock Station plans at 28th St. have been worked on and reviewed by the public and City officials for years. Plans for surrounding developments have gone through the review and adoption process. If changes are needed for some as-yet unexplained reason, those changes should go through the appropriate public and official review cycle, and not just sprung upon an unsuspecting public. (And, while I support the idea of eliminating the Santa Clara Station, that too is a change from what has previously been presented to the public, and so that change to the plan should also go through a deliberate and public process.)

Writing as a resident and transit-minded individual, I urge you to cancel the proposed relocation or elimination of the Alum Rock BART Station, or at the very least to delay any action until there has been a full and public review.

Thank you.

Dr. Larry Ames

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[Chair, SJ Neighborhoods Commission; Chair, District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG).]

cc: VTA: Clerk, Secretary, Communications

City of San Jose: Mayor and City Council; City Manager; Dept. of Transportation;  
Planning Dept. – Urban Village planners

Five Wounds Urban Village: Terry Christensen, Joan Crosby, Davide Vieira

Community: SJ Neighborhoods Commission; D6NLG; Citizens for a Livable San Jose;  
Save Our Trails; Cmte for Green Foothills; Greenbelt Alliance

Transportation Advocates: Adina Levine, Andrew Boone, Maria Noel Fernandez, Jean Dresden,  
Scott Lane, Steve Kline, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition