

Mayor Chuck Reed and Members of the Council
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

re: VTA and plans for BART

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

The San Jose Neighborhoods Commission is very concerned by changes the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Staff have made to the planned Phase II Extension of BART. At issue are the recently announced postponement and relocation, or even elimination, of the future Alum Rock Station and also the elimination of the Santa Clara Station. These are major policy decisions that should only be made by the full VTA Board in an open process and with the full engagement of the community.

The Neighborhoods Commission charter limits us to corresponding with you, our Mayor and Council. Accordingly, at our November 12th meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to express our concerns to you and to request that you forward them on our behalf to the VTA Board.

There has not been adequate time for the Commission to become properly informed on the details of these changes to the long-standing plans, and so we do not make specific recommendations. But that is at the heart of our concern: the Public also has not had time to become properly informed. The neighbors in the Five Wounds Community of San Jose have been working with City Planners and VTA Staff for many years now on how to best accommodate the planned station in their midst, and they have jointly developed plans, recently adopted by Council, for a grouping of Urban Villages centered on the Alum Rock BART Station. The neighborhood has been working on details for new developments, traffic improvements, public plazas, and recreational trails. This shared vision is now in doubt, given the changes abruptly announced by VTA Staff, without even so much as a public review by the VTA Board.

The eastern gateway neighborhoods of San Jose near the proposed Alum Rock Station and neighborhoods from across the city are all wary now of the various plans they've worked on with the City, given that virtually every major planned development is centered on a transportation node of one sort or another. If the VTA Staff can arbitrarily and abruptly move or eliminate any of these transit nodes without proper and thorough public involvement, it becomes ever harder for the public to be welcoming of these planned developments in our neighborhoods.

We respectfully request that you relay our concerns to the VTA Board. Changes of such magnitude as the moving or elimination of major transit nodes should not be rushed. The VTA Board needs to adopt and follow a policy to assure an open and public process and the full engagement of the affected neighborhoods.

Thank you,

// signed Nov. 25, 2014 //

Dr. Lawrence Ames, Chair, San Jose Neighborhoods Commission.