



Date: February 29, 2024
 Current Meeting: March 13, 2024
 Board Meeting: N/A

BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
 Technical Advisory Committee

THROUGH: General Manager/CEO, Carolyn M. Gonot

FROM: Chief Planning and Programming Officer, Deborah Dagang

SUBJECT: Equitable VMT Mitigation: Project Update

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The purpose of this item is to provide an update and receive input on the Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program project. This is an information item, and no action is required at this time.
- California recently shifted from focusing on vehicular congestion (Level of Service / LOS) to the total amount of driving (VMT) for transportation analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The use of VMT for CEQA analysis of land use projects became mandatory in July 2020.
- The goal of this project is to develop the framework for an equitable program to reduce the amount of driving (VMT) from land use developments in Santa Clara County, that works across jurisdictional lines and improves travel options. The project is focusing on equity in both the process (study and engagement events) and the outcome (a program framework that supports VMT reduction investments that equity priority communities identify as most beneficial).
- The project commenced in May 2023, and in Fall 2023 the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and its consultant team and project partner (San José State University/Mineta Transportation Institute) conducted the first phase of community engagement activities. The team is now conducting analysis based on this input, and preparing for the second phase of engagement which will take place in Spring 2024.

STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS:

The Equitable VMT Mitigation Program grant project aligns with VTA's business line of *delivering projects and programs* by developing the framework for a program that would fund VMT-reducing strategies such as transit priority measures, pedestrian/bicycle improvements, or Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. It aligns with VTA's business line of *transportation system management* by working toward a more consistent way of managing transportation demand generated by land use developments. This effort also demonstrates *Creativity* by developing innovative options for Member Agencies to use in mitigating VMT from land use projects; it highlights VTA's *Collaboration* with Member Agencies, community-based organizations, developers, and other stakeholders; and it showcases VTA's *Leadership* in working toward the creation of a new type of mitigation program.

BACKGROUND:

Senate Bill (SB) 743, approved by the California Legislature in September 2013, included changes to CEQA and Congestion Management Program (CMP) law related to the analysis of transportation impacts. This law led to a switch from focusing on vehicular delay and congestion (as measured by Auto Level of Service, or LOS), to a focus on the total amount of driving (Vehicle Miles Traveled, or VMT) for evaluating the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA.

The use of VMT for analysis of land use projects under CEQA became mandatory on July 1, 2020, and Caltrans began requiring the use of VMT for projects that increase roadway capacity on the State Highway System on September 15, 2020.

VTA and Countywide Efforts Related to SB 743 Implementation

Over the past several years, VTA staff has been taking a leadership role in helping provide resources and technical assistance to its Member Agencies on the implementation of SB 743, and Member Agencies have been coordinating with VTA and working on their own implementation of SB 743. VTA's efforts in this area have included (a) facilitating a working group of agency staff on SB 743 implementation; (b) preparing base VMT estimates and heat maps using the VTA travel-demand model; (c) developing a countywide web and geographic information systems (GIS)-based VMT Evaluation Tool; and (d) participating in and facilitating discussions on SB 743 implementation at the local, regional, and statewide level.

Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County - Grant Award

In October 2021, VTA submitted a grant application to develop the framework for an Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County under the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant program. VTA was awarded \$562,697 in grant funds, and a Restricted Grant Agreement between Caltrans and VTA was executed on November 14, 2022. The project is required to be completed by February 28, 2025.

DISCUSSION:

Staff is bringing this item to provide an update on the Equitable VMT Mitigation Program project, to share information on recent milestones and upcoming efforts, and to receive input from VTA Committee members.

The goal of this project is to develop the framework for an equitable program to reduce the amount of driving from new land-use developments in Santa Clara County that works across jurisdictional lines and improves travel options. An Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County could help fund and implement projects that enhance travel options, improve access to jobs and services, and reduce the need to drive alone. Ultimately the program will help meet State and local greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals.

Key tasks of the Equitable VMT Mitigation Program grant project include: 1) review of local mitigation practices, needs, and statewide practices; 2) community and stakeholder engagement and consensus-building; 3) identify potential VMT-reducing measures and frameworks to improve equity; 4) analyze VMT program structure, justification, and administration; 5) develop phased approach to implementation; 6) produce draft and final report; and 7) board review and consideration of approval.

Equity Emphasis of Project

When we think about development happening in one area and mitigation measures (i.e., transportation improvements) potentially happening in another location, it is important to consider equity, especially for people and neighborhoods with the greatest needs. As a result, this project is focusing on equity in both the process (study and engagement events) and the outcome (a program framework that supports VMT reduction investments that equity priority communities identify as most beneficial). The project's equity approach will be refined over the course of the project as we continue to engage with community members and stakeholders.

Project Team and Partnership with San José State University/Mineta Transportation Institute

The team working on this project includes VTA staff, a consultant team, and researchers and students from San José State University/Mineta Transportation Institute (SJSU/MTI). The consultant team, which was selected through a Request for Proposals (RFP) released in November 2022, includes Fehr & Peers (statewide experts on SB 743 implementation and VMT mitigation); four subconsultants (three of which hold Small Business Enterprise / SBE certification); and two Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who are supporting an equitable engagement process and providing advice on the equity framework for the project. VTA has also partnered with SJSU/MTI researchers and graduate students who are conducting a literature review, technical analysis, and stakeholder interviews to support the overall VTA project effort.

Project Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

VTA formed a TAG at the onset of the project with the purpose of sharing information and providing guidance to the project team. The TAG roster is comprised of staff from all 16 local jurisdictions, SJSU/MTI, VTA, Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). To date the TAG has met three times, to discuss the goal and objectives; the equity framework; and the preparation for and summary of Phase I community engagement. The TAG is expected to meet three to four more times to provide advice at key project milestones.

Community Outreach and Engagement

VTA and the Consultant/CBO Team are conducting an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process to ensure that the team reaches a wide spectrum of the community, particularly residents of Equity Priority Communities. This engagement process will help the project team learn about community member needs and lived experiences, identify and prioritize potential VMT-reducing measures, and get input on the equity framework and other key aspects of a potential VMT mitigation program.

The project team is using a variety of engagement techniques and tools to ensure that information is understandable to non-technical audiences and to engage people from a variety of backgrounds, including people for whom English is a second language. These techniques include tabling at pop-up events, focus group discussions, virtual community meetings, short explainer videos, web surveys, and presentations at meetings with cities, CBOs, and other organizations.

The community engagement for the project is divided into three phases. The following is the current engagement timeline (subject to change):

- First Phase: Broad and Diverse - September to December 2023
- Second Phase: Filter and Refine - March to June 2024
- Third Phase: Confirm - October to November 2024

During Phase I, printed materials at pop-up events and at the virtual community meeting were made available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese; the Community Web Survey was available in 11 languages; and the project team had Spanish, Vietnamese and/or Mandarin interpreters at most public-facing events. The project team plans similar multilingual engagement in Phases II and III.

Key Take-aways from Phase I Engagement

During Phase I engagement, more than 700 community members actively engaged with and provided input on the project. This included more than 300 members of the public who participated in exercises at pop-up events, more than 350 respondents who completed the project's Community Web Survey, representatives of 15 CBOs who participated in focus groups, and staff from 15 of the 16 local jurisdictions who participated in focus groups and TAG meetings. In addition, the project's three short explainer videos have together attracted more than 1,000 views on YouTube, and VTA social media posts garnered hundreds of additional views.

Community input during Phase I included over 730 pieces of individual feedback. Sample community feedback topics included transit's time and financial burden; lack of efficient bike/ped routes; safety concerns; need to accommodate kids and pets when traveling; and using a car reduces time and stress - but not everyone is able to drive. In terms of strategies to solve transportation challenges, Frequent & Fast Transit was the highest rated, with Biking and Walking Paths second-highest, and Many Things do to Close-By (i.e., bringing housing, jobs, and services closer together) third-highest.

Local jurisdiction staff input during Phase I included over 250 pieces of individual feedback. Sample topics included interest in the most effective VMT mitigation; the need to educate staff and elected officials; and concerns about land use projects with VMT that is hard to mitigate.

Local jurisdiction staff expressed particular interest in access to vehicles and mobility services (such as bikeshare, scootershare, and e-bikes), and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and incentives.

Next Steps

Currently, the project team is conducting analysis and preparing for the second phase of engagement. This second phase will include conversations on prioritization of VMT-reducing projects that could be funded by a potential program, as well as aspects of the program structure and administration. Information regarding engagement events will be posted to the project website (vta.org/EquitableVMT). Interested community members are encouraged to sign up for email updates on the project website.

VTA anticipates presenting the draft project recommendations and report to Committees in Fall 2024 before bringing the final report for adoption in late 2024/early 2025.

CLIMATE IMPACT:

This project is identified as an implementation action in VTA's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) which was adopted by the VTA Board of Directors in February 2024. The development of an Equitable VMT Mitigation Program would help achieve the State's long-term climate goals of 80% below 1990 GHG emissions levels by 2050. Eligible VMT-reducing measures implemented through such a program would contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions in Santa Clara County.

Prepared By: Rob Swierk
Memo No. 8895

Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County: Project Update

VTA Committees

March 2024

Summary

- This is a Discussion Item to receive an update and provide input on the Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program project.
- The project goal is to develop the framework for an equitable program to reduce the amount of driving from land use developments in Santa Clara County, that works across jurisdictional lines and improves travel options.
- The project team has completed Phase I community engagement and is conducting technical analysis and preparing for Phase II.
- Staff welcomes committee input on both technical aspects and community engagement contacts.
- More information at www.vta.org/EquitableVMT

Countywide Efforts to Implement Senate Bill 743

- SB 743 mandated switch from Level of Service (LOS) to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in environmental analysis; mandatory in 2020

Activity	VTA	Cities/County
Adoption of VMT policies		✓
SB 743 Working Group	✓	✓
Base VMT estimates & heat maps from travel model	✓	
Develop web-based VMT Evaluation Tool	✓	
Documentation and Technical Assistance	✓	
Equitable VMT Mitigation Program project	✓	✓

Project Goal and Objectives

- Develop the **framework for an equitable program to reduce the amount of driving (VMT)** from land use developments in Santa Clara County, that **works across jurisdictional lines** and **improves travel options**

Equitable program framework

- Process – study and engagement events
- Outcome – framework that is beneficial to equity priority communities

Reduce the amount of driving

- Fund projects, programs, services, or operations and maintenance efforts

Work across jurisdictional lines

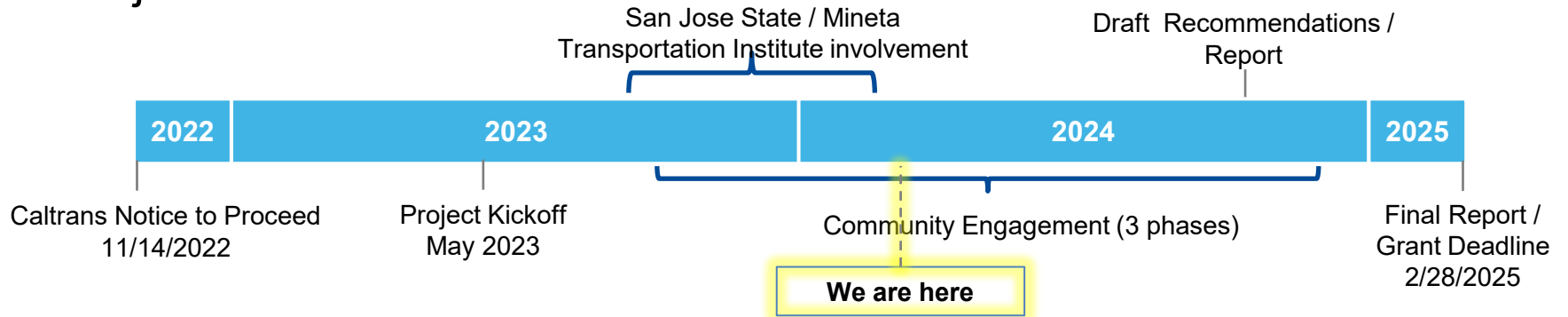
- Multiply local efforts to reduce VMT
- Help meet state environmental laws and goals

Improve travel options

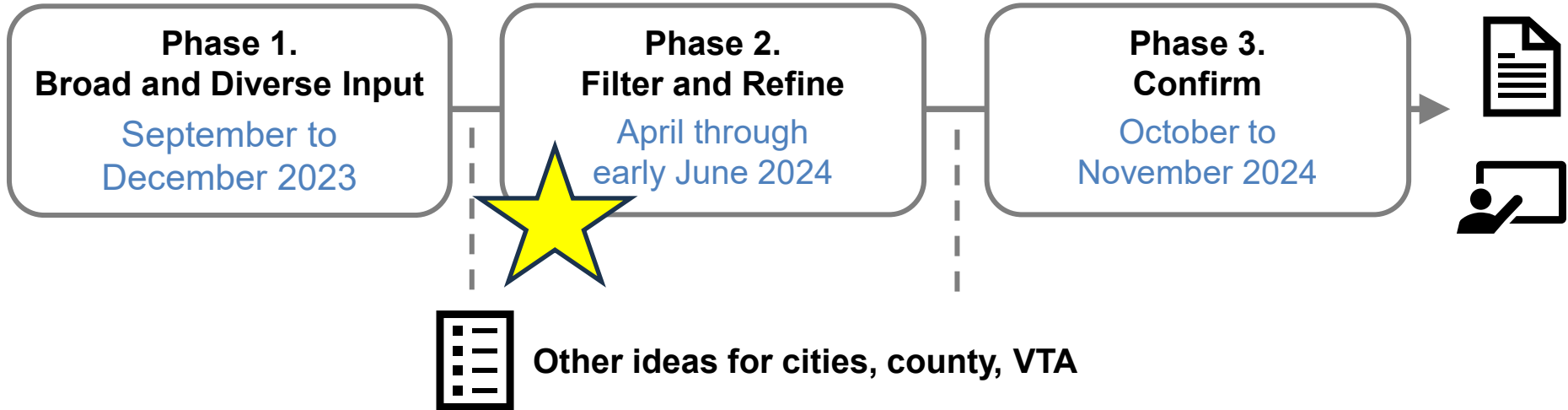
- Identified by equity priority communities as most beneficial at reducing VMT

Project Funding and Timeline

- Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant (Fiscal Year 2022/23)
- Project Timeline

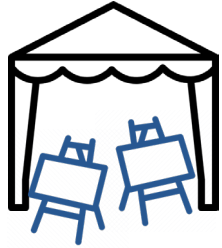


Phases of Community Engagement



How are we engaging with people?

(throughout the project; subject to change)



Pop-Up Tabling
at Community
Events



In-Person
Workshops
Hosted with
Community
Organizations



Community Survey
Trade-off Exercises



Virtual Community Meetings
Community Organization and
Agency Staff Focus Groups
Presentations to Organizations



Presentations to VTA
Committees & Board



Presentations at
City/County meetings
(upon request)

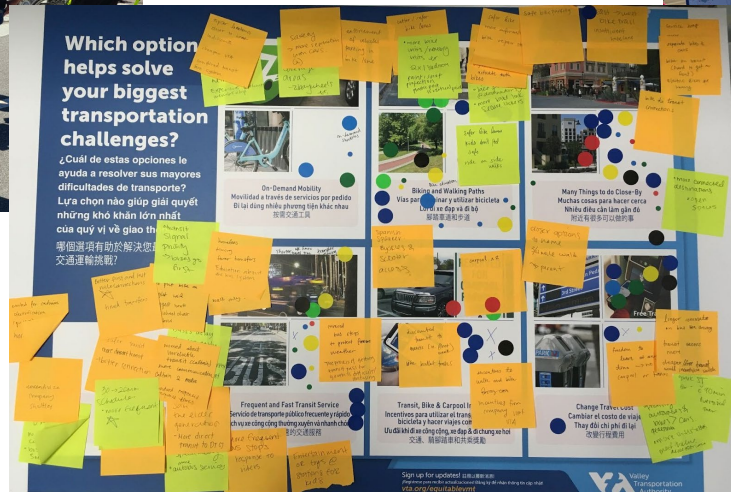
Phase I Engagement



Pop-up at Viva CalleSJ
in San José Japantown
9/10/2023



Pop-up at La Ofrenda
Festival in Gilroy
10/28/2023



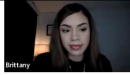
Sample of input exercises from Pop-Ups

Phase I Engagement

What is the project about?

¿De qué se trata el proyecto?
Dự án này nói về cái gì?
本項目有關何事?

Reducing driving from development projects	Reducir los niveles de conducción vehicular desde los proyectos de desarrollo	Giảm việc lái xe từ các dự án phát triển	減少開發項目的驅動力
Improving transportation options	Mejorar las opciones de transporte	Cải thiện các lựa chọn giao thông	改善交通選項
Improving equity, especially for communities that need it the most	Mejorar la equidad, especialmente para las comunidades que más la necesitan	Cải thiện tính công bằng, đặc biệt là đối với các cộng đồng cần nó nhất	提高公平性，特別對最需要平等的社區



Bittany

Virtual Community Meeting
10/16/2023



Project Concept Diagram

Web Survey of Community Travel Needs, Challenges, Preferences

VTA Equitable VMT Mitigation Program / Web Survey of Community Travel Needs, Challenges, Preferences

Web Survey of Community Travel Behaviors

We need your input! Please respond to the survey before Friday December 8, 2023.

Over the next year, VTA will be developing the framework for an [Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled \(VMT\) Mitigation Program](#) for Santa Clara County. As a key part of this process, VTA is requesting input from community members like you to learn how we travel. The survey will ask you how you travel in Santa Clara County and around the region, for what purpose, and what challenges you face when traveling. Your input will help us identify ways to improve travel options in Santa Clara County and help us shape the project recommendations in Spring and Summer 2024. As a thank you for completing the survey, VTA is giving out five Clipper cards pre-loaded with \$50 in Clipper cash that can be used on VTA, Caltrain, BART or other transit services. Complete the survey and add your email address for a chance to win.

This survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Draft or partial responses will be saved if the survey is open on your screen. Thank you in advance for your time!

[Regular Trips](#)

Phase I Community Survey

Phase I Engagement Summary

Event Type	Participants
Pop-Ups (6)	323
Virtual Community Meeting (1)	23
Community Web Survey (1)	>350 responses
Local Jurisdiction Web Survey (1)	14 respondents from 13 jurisdictions
CBO Focus Groups (2)	16 participants representing 15 organizations
Local Jurisdiction Focus Groups (2)	31 participants representing 15 of 16 local jurisdictions in Santa Clara County
Technical Advisory Group Meetings (2)	33 participants in TAG #1; 31 participants in TAG #2
Explainer videos (3)	324 views of VMT Project Introduction 346 views of What is VMT and Why Does it Matter? 218 views of Why It's Important to Reduce VMT

Community Input on VMT Reduction Categories



- What strategies best solve your biggest transportation challenge?



- **Frequent & Fast Transit (389)**
- **Biking and Walking Paths (288)**
- **Many Things to do Close-By (242)**
- Change Travel Costs (107)
- On-Demand Mobility (72)
- Transit, Bike, Carpool Incentives (70)

VMT Reduction Prioritization Process

Categories (Phase I)

- 6 broad categories of VMT reductions
- Balancing community and local jurisdiction staff input

Measures (Phase II)

- Sample Actions
 - Transit priority roadway treatments
 - E-bike purchase incentives
 - Vanpools for non-office workers
- Cost per VMT reduced
- Equity consistency evaluation
- Feasibility considerations

Questions for Discussion & Next Steps

- Suggestions for prioritizing VMT reduction measures?
- Where should we focus VMT reduction?
- Who should be the sponsor (if a program is formed)?
- Who else should we be talking with?

Next Steps:

- Phase II engagement events – April through early June 2024
- Draft recommendations / Committee Item – Fall 2024