



Date: September 6, 2023
 Current Meeting: September 13, 2023
 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 Introduction

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The purpose of this item is to introduce to the Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program grant project. This is an Information item, and no action is required by VTA Committees 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.
- In 2022, VTA was awarded \$562,697 through a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant to develop the framework for an Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County.
- The goal of the 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 identified as most beneficial).
- Since the project commenced in May 2023, VTA has been working closely with its consultant team and project partner (San José State University/Mineta Transportation Institute) to document existing needs and VMT mitigation practices, coordinate with local jurisdiction staff, and prepare for community engagement activities.

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 facilitates the funding and implementation of VMT-reducing strategies such as active transportation improvements, transit signal priority efforts, 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. The bill directed the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop alternative metrics to replace the use of vehicular Level of Service (LOS) for evaluating the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA. OPR determined that the primary metric to replace the use of LOS in CEQA will be VMT.

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 Sustainable Communities Competitive 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 introduce the Equitable VMT Mitigation Program grant project and to share information on recent milestones and upcoming efforts.

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, justification, and administration; 5) develop phased approach to implementation; 6) draft final program report; and 7) board review and approval.

Equity Emphasis of Project

When we think about development happening in one area and mitigation measures (i.e., transportation improvements) 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 identified as most beneficial). The equity definition and approach will be refined over the course of the project as we engage with community members and stakeholders.

Consultant Procurement and Project Kickoff

A Request for Proposals (RFP #S22229) was released on November 23, 2022, to solicit bids from qualified firms to perform the aforementioned tasks. A contract was awarded to a team led by Fehr & Peers, statewide experts on SB 743 implementation and VMT mitigation, on April 28, 2023. The consultant team also consists of four subconsultants (three of which hold Small Business Enterprise / SBE certification) and two Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide guidance on the equity framework for the project, support an equitable engagement process, and advise the team on CEQA and economic feasibility. The project kicked off officially in early May 2023.

Partnership with San José State University/Mineta Transportation Institute (SJSU/MTI)

VTA applied for the Caltrans planning grant with SJSU/MTI as a sub-recipient. SJSU MTI will conduct technical analysis and engage Master of Urban Planning students to help establish a preferred equity framework for the project among Equity Priority Community residents, local jurisdictions, CBOs, and other stakeholders. A Fall 2023 SJSU graduate urban planning class taught by Dr. Serena Alexander will be closely involved this work, with VTA staff serving as mentors to provide project information and answer student questions.

Formation of a 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). The first TAG meeting was held on August 14, 2023, to discuss the general project scope, goals, objectives, the beginning of the equity framework, and preparation for the community engagement process. The TAG is expected to meet five to seven more times to discuss key milestones of the project.

Community Outreach and Engagement

VTA and the Consultant/CBO Team have planned an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process to ensure that the project 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 strategies, and get input on the equity framework and other key aspects of a potential VMT mitigation program.

The project team will be 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 will include explainer videos, web surveys, pop-up events, focus group discussions and/or virtual community meetings, and presentations at meetings held by CBOs and other organizations. VTA staff will provide updates to VTA Board Committees at several points during the project and will present the draft project recommendations and report to VTA Board Committees in Fall 2024.

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 November 2023
- Second Phase: Filter and Refine - January to April 2024
- Third Phase: Confirm - October to November 2024

Currently, the project team is preparing materials and scheduling events for the first phase of engagement to understand transportation needs, lived experiences and discuss potential VMT-reducing strategies with the community. 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.

CLIMATE IMPACT:

This grant project is identified as an implementation action in VTA's draft Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) which will be finalized in late 2023. 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. 8714

Equitable VMT Mitigation Program for Santa Clara County: Project Introduction

VTA Committees

September 2023

Summary

- This item is an introduction to the Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program grant 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.
- Staff has been working with the consultant team and Mineta Transportation Institute to document existing needs and practices, coordinate with local jurisdiction staff, and prepare for community engagement.
- More information at www.vta.org/EquitableVMT

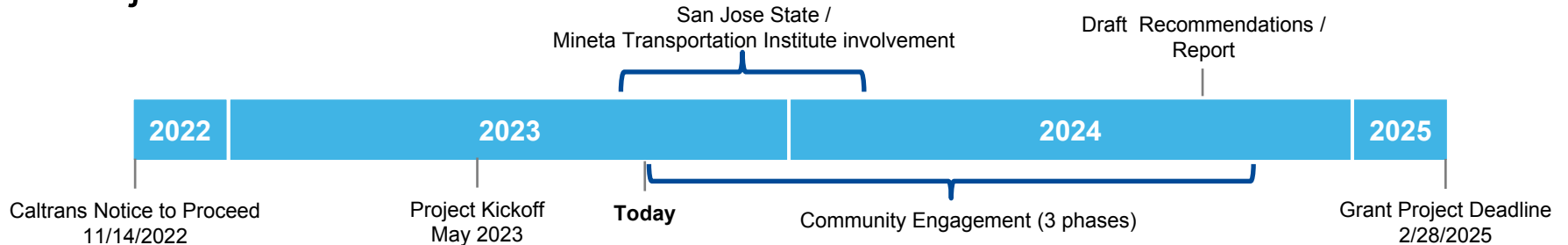
Countywide Efforts to Implement Senate Bill 743

- 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 grant project	✓	✓

Project Funding and Timeline

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



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

Equity Approach

- Strive for equity in both process and outcome
- Based on research and policy work by San Jose State University, UC Berkeley, and others
- Use Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) equity priority communities (EPCs) to start – considers race, income, English proficiency, seniors, people with disabilities, and other factors
- Consider different subpopulations: low and high VMT generation, EPCs and non-EPCs
- Equity approach may evolve over study and community engagement

Consultant / CBO Team Procurement

- VTA issued RFP in November 2022 for Consultant / Community-Based Organization (CBO) services
- Prime consultant: Fehr & Peers
- Sub consultants:
 - *Urban Planning Partners *(CEQA expertise)*
 - *Strategic Economics *(economic feasibility expertise)*
 - *Ann Cheng Consulting *(VMT reduction, equity expertise)*
 - Mariposa Planning Solutions *(equitable engagement expertise)*
 - Carry the Vision *(CBO based in Gilroy)*
 - Catalyze SV *(CBO with San Jose/ countywide focus)*

* = certified Small Business Enterprise (SBE)

Partnership with SJSU / MTI

- San José State University / Mineta Transportation Institute (SJSU/MTI) was a grant sub-recipient
- SJSU/MTI including students is conducting geospatial analyses and participating in community engagement to help develop the **equity approach** for the program
- VTA staff serving as mentors to SJSU Fall 2023 graduate Urban Planning course
- Research findings and student contributions will be incorporated into project final report in 2024

Project Technical Advisory Group

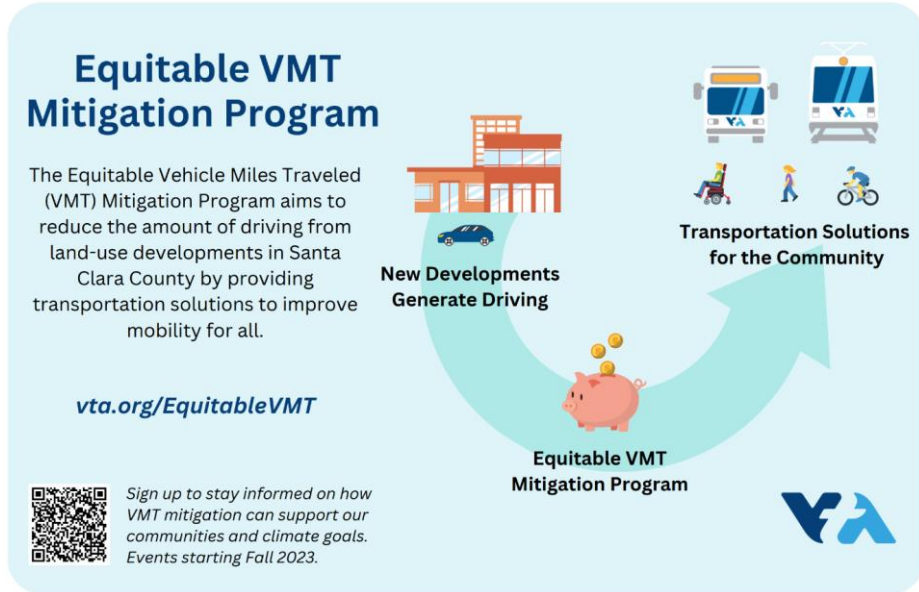
- TAG members: 16 jurisdictions, SJSU/MTI, VTA, Caltrans, and MTC
- TAG meets 6 to 8 times over the course of 20 months
- Roles and responsibilities:
 - Review and discuss major project deliverables
 - Guide project team on technical approach and community engagement
 - Support community engagement process and help spread the word
 - Share updates on SB 743 implementation

Community Engagement: Three-Phase Approach

- Phase 1: Broad and Diverse *(Sept – Nov 2023)*
 - Transportation needs, barriers, and opportunities
- Phase 2: Filter and Refine *(Spring 2024)*
 - Feedback on potential mitigation strategies
- Phase 3: Confirm *(Fall 2024)*
 - Feedback on draft report and recommendations

Community Engagement: Guiding Principles

- Communicate using understandable and non-technical terms
- Multilingual
 - Translation of public-facing materials and interpreting at key events
 - Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese - other languages upon request
- Paper surveys and boards with voting exercises to complement online surveys



Equitable VMT Mitigation Program

The Equitable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program aims to reduce the amount of driving from land-use developments in Santa Clara County by providing transportation solutions to improve mobility for all.

vta.org/EquitableVMT

Sign up to stay informed on how VMT mitigation can support our communities and climate goals. Events starting Fall 2023.

New Developments Generate Driving

Equitable VMT Mitigation Program

Transportation Solutions for the Community

The flyer features a circular diagram with a piggy bank at the bottom, a car and building in the middle, and a bus and person in the top right. The VTA logo is in the bottom right corner.

Flyer distributed at Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action Leadership Summit in July 2023

Recent Activities and Next Steps

- Project intro and explainer videos
- Tabling / pop-up events - Viva CalleSJ on September 10th, Valley Transportation Plan Open House on September 27th, other locations October and early November
- Community survey
- Group discussions – focus groups and/or virtual community meeting
- Presenting at events held by CBOs and other organizations

- More information at www.vta.org/EquitableVMT