

10 San Jose Light Rail

OVERVIEW: TRANSIT SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) operates the Guadalupe Corridor light rail line, which spans much of the City of San Jose. The 21-mile corridor consists of 34 stations, beginning in the high-tech Golden Triangle area in northern San Jose. It continues south through downtown and a number of residential neighborhoods, separating into two branches at Ohlone-Chynoweth station. The branches terminate in the Almaden residential neighborhood and in the Edenvale Industrial Area, both in southern San Jose. The North Line portion of the light rail system began operating in December 1987, and the corridor was completely operational by April 1991. In 1997, the system had an average daily ridership of 21,948 passengers.

Currently under construction is the Tasman Corridor, which runs 12 miles in an east-west direction north of Guadalupe Corridor. When complete, it will link San Jose with the cities of Mountain View, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale, which comprise the industrial heart of Silicon Valley. The corridor is expected to open in the year 2000.

STATION AREA PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Although land use planning in San Jose has been historically developer-driven, the City has become more proactive about land planning since the development of the light rail system. Specific plans, supportive zoning regulations, and transportation demand management guidelines are examples of strategies used by the City to encourage transit-supportive development. Two types of station area planning are currently taking place along Guadalupe Corridor.

- *Joint Development.* High-density residential projects are being planned and developed at joint development sites in the southern portion of the line. These will replace portions of park-and-ride lots owned by VTA. Park-and-ride lots were targeted by VTA as potential joint development sites because they are only partially utilized for parking by light rail users (many lots are only 30 percent full at their peak). Guadalupe Corridor's first high-density residential projects are in the development and construction stage at two stations: Almaden and Ohlone-Chynoweth. Residential joint development is being planned for four other stations: Capitol, Blossom Hill, Kurtner, and Tamien. VTA, in preparing for the completion of the Tasman Corridor, recently completed Station Area Concept Plans, which examines the potential for transit-supportive development around three stations along the corridor.
- *Housing Initiative and Neighborhood Specific Plans.* VTA does not own land adjacent to rail stations along the North First Street portion of the Guadalupe Corridor. Thus, joint development is not possible. In this area, the City of San Jose and its redevelop-

ment agency have primary responsibility for the development of TODs. The City promotes transit-supportive development in two primary ways: through the Housing Initiative and neighborhood specific plans. VTA plays an advocacy role in these projects by reviewing development applications.

THE HOUSING INITIATIVE

The Housing Initiative program was established in 1989 and approved by City Council in 1991. The goal of the program is to encourage high-density housing along the Guadalupe Corridor from the Metro/Airport station (south of the City's high-tech area) to its southern terminus. An initial residential market study found that market demand exists for up to 9,400 high density housing units for the next 10 years in the study area, and over 386 acres which could yield up to 10,000 units above existing General Plan designations. The City has implemented the study's recommendations in a variety of ways since program approval:

- A Transit Corridor Residential General Plan land use designation;
- A height limit increase from 45 feet to 90 feet for residential developments within the Transit Corridor Residential designation;
- Specific plans for transit-oriented neighborhoods in the Jackson-Taylor, Midtown, and Tamien areas (described below);
- General Plan amendments on 13 sites that create opportunities for development of up to 2,200 new residential units; and
- City Council approved rezonings for high-density housing near transit stations.

NEIGHBORHOOD SPECIFIC PLANS

Both joint and transit-oriented development are supported by specific plans focusing on residential neighborhoods near the Guadalupe Corridor. The Midtown Specific Plan, Jackson-Taylor Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (and subsequent Residential Strategy), Tamien Station Area Specific Plan, and Communications Hill Specific Plan each incorporate transit-supportive policies. The City is currently working on the Rincon South Specific Plan, which focuses on the high-tech area in northern San Jose.

- Jackson-Taylor Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (December 1987); Jackson-Taylor Residential Strategy (October 1992). The Jackson-Taylor neighborhood, located immediately north of downtown, is primarily residential with an industrial area that bisects part of the neighborhood. Primarily focusing on residential revitalization, it supports transit through policies calling for pedestrian and bicycle linkages with light rail and amenities to improve transit stops. However, the plans do not have a strong transportation element.
- Communications Hill Specific Plan (April 1992). Communications Hill is located approximately 2 1/2 miles south of downtown, adjacent to the Curtner and Capitol light rail stations. Primarily an urban design plan, the Communications Hill Specific Plan provides the framework for an urban neighborhood on the hill. The neighborhood is

linked to light rail, bus, and CalTrain – the heavy commuter rail line – through a system of existing and potential transit routes, access roads, and pedestrian/bicycle paths. Shuttle busses are also proposed to further enhance the connection with LRT stations and bus stops.

- Midtown Specific Plan (December 1992). The Midtown Specific Plan covers a 210-acre industrial and commercial services area near the downtown segment of the Guadalupe Corridor. The goal of the plan is to create a mixed-use community with high-density commercial and residential uses oriented to transit, while maintaining some industrial and service commercial uses. The Circulation chapter contains recommendations for a potential multi-modal facility, which includes both heavy commuter rail and light rail facilities; vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation policies; and a transportation systems management plan.
- Tamien Station Area Specific Plan (March 1995). This plan was prepared with the specific intention of creating a transit-oriented community around the Tamien LRT station (along Guadalupe Corridor) and the Tamien CalTrain station. Land use, urban design, and circulation policies are delineated by subarea, and focus development in a manner conducive to transit use. Residential densities range from 25-55 units per acre, and maximum heights vary between 35 and 65 feet depending on use, with 90-foot height limit allowances for landmark buildings. Pedestrian friendly linkages to transit stations, created through street trees and other improvements, are called for as well.

Each specific plan includes policies that facilitate the implementation of the plan. Implementation policies vary depending on the scope of the plan. For example, the Midtown Specific Plan, the ultimate development of which may require land use changes, focuses on ways to ease the transition to new uses. Many of the implementation policies in the Tamien Station Area Specific Plan, however, deal with mitigating potential interface incompatibilities between new residential and mixed uses, and existing residential and industrial uses.

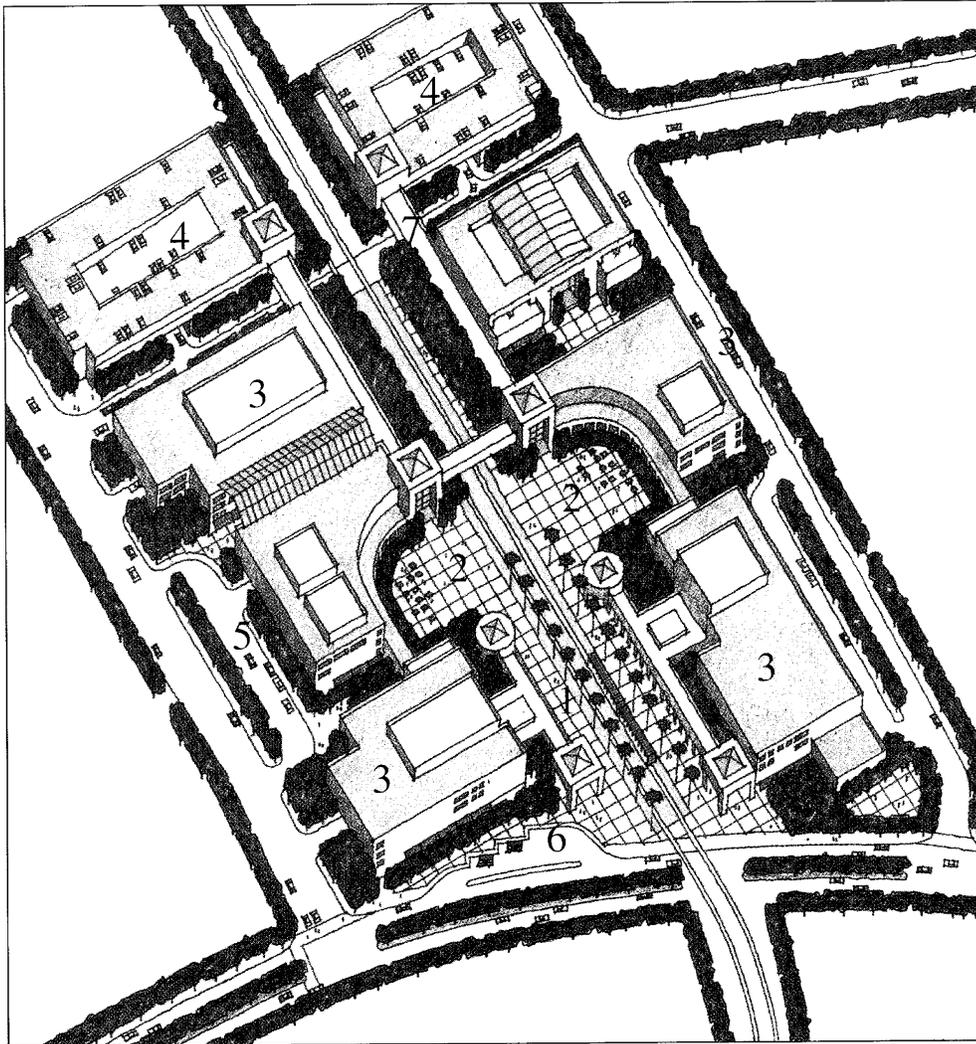
These specific plans are incorporated into San Jose's General Plan. Along with the Housing Initiative, the plans provide a framework for transit-supportive development but not include their own implementation tools. Rezoning and transportation demand management policies are some of the tools that are used to implement each specific project.

TASMAN CORRIDOR STATION AREA CONCEPT PLANS

This study was intended to foster collaboration between VTA and local jurisdictions. VTA selected three future stations for this study, each representing characteristics common to other stations within the system. Middlefield station, located near the western terminus of Tasman Corridor in the City of Mountain View, is within an aging light industrial area in the process of change and intensification. Hostetter station, at the eastern terminus of the Corridor in northeast San Jose, is adjacent to a residential neighborhood and along an auto-oriented commercial strip. Baypointe station, located at the juncture of the Guadalupe and Tasman corridors in north San Jose, is within a newly developing employment center that

includes a major undeveloped site. The Concept Plans envision the following for each station area:

- *Middlefield Station.* This station is located in an area with potential for revitalization through infill and intensification of existing light industrial land. The concept plan for Middlefield Station calls for conversion of some industrial land to residential uses, intensifying the area immediately adjacent to the station. Redevelopment of industrial properties to an FAR of up to 1.5 can create a concentration of employment within walking distance of transit. Finally, uses adjacent to the transit right-of-way should be re-oriented to face the station, resulting in a more positive station environment.



The concept plan for the Middlefield station area purposes revitalization through infill and intensification of existing industrial land.

- *Hostetter Station.* The future station is adjacent to neighborhoods typifying those developed in the 1950's and 1960's, lacking a strong sense of identity. The land use pattern of the area requires traveling by car to reach many community services. The vision for the station area is to create a focus and amenity for the neighborhood, and provide a viable alternative to the automobile. The concept is for the station area to become a neighborhood center with amenities such as a common green and local-serving commercial uses with second story apartments or condominiums.
- *Baypointe Station.* This station represents an opportunity to create a transit-oriented community on a vacant site within the fastest growing high-tech employment center in Silicon Valley. In addition to Baypointe station, two existing stations on Guadalupe Corridor are adjacent to the site. Objectives for this station area are to improve transit ridership and the jobs/housing balance; promote pedestrian linkages to transit; and create a mixed-use commercial center serving both employees and residents.

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

ALMADEN STATION

Almaden station's park-and-ride lot is the site of VTAs first joint development project. The 250-unit multi-family residential complex is 80 percent market rate and 20 percent affordable, with a density of 47 dwelling units per acre (du/a). The project also includes recreational areas and a pedestrian/bicycle connection to Los Alamitos Creek Trail. The project will open in July 1998.

OHLONE-CHYNOWETH STATION

Ohlone-Chynoweth station's park-and-ride lot is the site of a mixed-use project with 195 units of townhouses, along with a child-care center, retail space and pedestrian plaza adjacent to the light rail station, and community recreational facilities. 100 percent of the units will be affordable. Groundbreaking is planned for Spring 1999.

TASMAN EAST

Among the major high-tech developments in North San Jose is Cisco Systems, which is constructing a number of buildings in the vicinity of North First Street. One portion of the project currently under construction is located on Tasman Drive, east of North First Street. The office/research and development campus is along the future Tasman Light Rail Corridor, near the northern terminus of the Guadalupe Corridor. The following are project specifications:

- Site Area: 160 acres
- Total Building Area: 3.3 million square feet
- Number of Buildings: 15 to 19

- Height/Setback: Not more than 90 feet in height/setbacks consistent with I Industrial district standards.

FACTORS INFLUENCING STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORTIVE POLICIES FOR JOINT DEVELOPMENT

Directly applicable to joint development projects along Guadalupe Corridor is a General Plan amendment passed by the City of San Jose in December 1995 allowing high-density residential uses within 2,000 feet of rail stations. Called the Transit Corridor Residential, the designation would apply to park and ride lots earmarked by VTA for joint development. In addition to high density residential uses, neighborhood commercial uses are encouraged within projects located in areas deficient in neighborhood serving commercial uses. Development within the Transit Corridor Residential land use category would occur under the Planned Development zoning district. Two types of residential development are possible within Transit Corridor Residential areas:

- Urban Transit Corridor Residential. Sites located in the Downtown Core or within 2,000 feet of rail stations in other intensely developed areas. Uses should be either wholly residential or allow commercial uses on the first two floors. Densities should be a minimum of 45 dwelling units per acre.
- Suburban Transit Corridor Residential. Intended for suburban areas within 2,000 feet of rail stations. Commercial uses are allowed at the street level within residential projects, or as neighborhood serving commercial in freestanding buildings with certain provisions. Densities should be a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre.

The type of environmental review conducted depends on the funding obtained for a project. For example, Almaden utilized local funds, which only requires project-level review done by the developer. Ohlone-Chynoweth, however, was funded by federal monies, which requires VTA to conduct environmental review for Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) approval as well as project-level review. According to VTAs joint development manager, the environmental review process had a neutral affect on development.

The permit-approval process at the city level remains the same as for non transit-oriented projects. No incentives were offered to developers of either project. Developers leased VTA-owned land at fair market value at an interest rate of 8 percent.

CITY-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANNING

San Jose's General Plan includes various strategies in support of transit-oriented development. Examples are: growth management policies, with an emphasis on infill development; "sustainable city" policy, which coordinates land use and transportation; "intensification corridors" along rail lines with height bonuses and incentives for mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development; and the above-mentioned Transit Corridor Residential land use designation. As a whole, these policies create a structural planning framework for the entire city

in which station areas become the focal point for new development. This approach makes station-area planning part of a comprehensive land use planning strategy.

SPECIFIC PLANS

Specific plans, such as the Tamien Station Area Specific Plan, are also used to facilitate development along the Guadalupe Corridor. The San Jose Planning Department is currently working on the Rincon South Specific Plan, which covers the northern, high-tech oriented portion of North First Street. Most specific plans approach station-area development as a traffic-reductions strategy. Thus, station-area plans include provisions for increasing density near stations, requirements for transit use for business around stations, and requirements for bicycle and pedestrian facilities that promote non-auto travel.

North San Jose Development Policy and Deficiency Plan

The City has adopted policies that address North San Jose, an area dominated by high-tech office and research/development parks. The North San Jose Area Development Policy and the Deficiency Plan for North San Jose both contain policies geared toward reducing trips made by single-occupant vehicles and facilitating transit use. The policies are implemented through the development permit process.

- North San Jose Area Development Policy. This document addresses the area north of I-880 and Berryessa Road in San Jose, as well as the cities of Milpitas, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto. Policies relevant to transit-oriented development include Transportation Demand Management and Floor Area Ratios.
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM). The goal of the TDM program is to reduce the number of people who travel alone to or from work during the after-noon peak travel period. The goal is to increase the percentage of commuters using alternatives other than driving alone to 35 percent by the year 2000. At the time the document was adopted (March 1988), only 17 percent of commuters in the policy area used an alternative travel mode.
- Floor Area Ratio. Existing development in the policy area was assumed to have an average FAR of .35. This policy increases the FAR to a cap of .40 for vacant commercial and industrial land within 2,000 feet of a transit station. Uses that support the prevailing industrial use, and both internalize trips and encourage ridesharing or transit use, are exempt from the FAR cap. FAR bonuses are also possible for qualifying projects.
- Deficiency Plan for North San Jose. The plan is part of the Santa Clara County Congestion Management Program. The plan examines transportation conditions in the study area, determines the improvements necessary for deficient portions of the transportation system, and proposes an action plan.

Projects subject to the Deficiency Plan are either discretionary projects within the plan area or projects outside the plan area generating more than 100 AM or PM peak

hour trips that impact facilities within the plan area. Actions supporting transit-oriented development include:

- Providing bicycle storage facilities at transit centers, such as park and ride lots, rail transit facilities, and major transit transfer stations.
- Improving pedestrian circulation to provide direct access from buildings to transit stops, adjoining sidewalks, and neighboring land uses.
- Identifying possible shuttle transit service opportunities for existing employment centers in the deficiency plan area.
- Site placement requirements designed to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. New buildings should be oriented parallel to streets and have entrances oriented toward light rail stations, bus stops, and/or sidewalks with access to transit facilities. Preferential parking for carpools and vanpools should be provided, and parking areas should be located to the side and rear of buildings.

A combination of these requirements are incorporated within development permits for major office and research/development projects. Project approval depends on developer compliance with such requirements. When implemented, the policies create a more transit-friendly environment where alternatives to the automobile become more viable.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS USED

OHLONE-CHYNOWETH STATION

An element of the Ohlone-Chynoweth Concept Plan involved the redesign of station facilities to ensure adequate transit parking and operating facilities. This required a reconfiguration of the existing park-and-ride lot, for which VTA obtained a \$250,000 grant from the FTA. As part of the redesign, existing bus bays will be relocated and the remaining portion of the park-and-ride lot will be improved.

TASMAN EAST

The Development Permit for the Cisco Systems project requires a range of transportation management measures.

- *Congestion Management.* In accordance with the North San Jose Deficiency Plan, a fee of \$362 per PM peak hour trip is required, totaling approximately \$1.3 million. Site design requirements include parking preference for high occupancy vehicles, bicycle facilities, building placement, pedestrian circulation, and transit stop improvements.
- *Trip Reduction Strategy.* The project must be in compliance with the City's Transportation Demand Management Ordinance, which includes the following transit-related elements: transit subsidies for all employees; and either participation in a shuttle

service to the River Oaks station, establishment of a shuttle service to existing LRT and CalTrain stations until the Tasman Corridor is built, or participation in the CalTrain Shuttle Program.

- *North San Jose Deficiency Plan Improvements.* Pedestrian/bicycle circulation systems shall be provided that connect the project to light rail stations.
- *Regional Transit Improvements.* The project owner shall build or allow for construction of regional transit improvements as determined by the City and VTA. Improvements include bus stops and/or duckouts, and a light rail station.
- *LRT Redesign Funding.* The project owner shall fund the redesign of Tasman East LRT facilities in the project area.

SUMMARY OF TOOLS USED

Table 10-1 summarizes the implementation tools used by VTA and the City to encourage transit-oriented development around San Jose’s light rail stations selected for this case study.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR SEATTLE

The San Jose case study, like San Diego, shows the importance of having a set of policies that are applicable to various types of TOD’s along with active public sector involvement in promoting such projects.

- **Supportive Land Use Policies.** Both joint and transit-based development in San Jose are supported by a solid framework comprised of the General Plan, specific plans, and Housing Initiative policies. San Jose has been successful in implementing transit-supportive projects because of both its policy base and the implementation of those policies.

Table 10-1.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS FOR TOD AT SAN JOSE LIGHT RAIL STATIONS

	Almaden	Ohlone-Chynoweth	Tasman East
Station Area Market Development Strategies	Residential project with pedestrian and bicycle connection to Los Alamos Creek Trail	100% affordable residential mixed-use project	Located near light rail stations along both Guadalupe and (future) Tasman corridors
Non-rail Infrastructure Investments	None	Design/construction of common area	Bicycle facilities, pedestrian connection to light rail
Shared Parking/Parking Management	n/a	n/a	Preferential parking for high occupancy vehicles
Expedited Permits and Reviews	Permit process: same as for other developments	Permit process: same as for other developments	Permit process: same as for other developments

	Reviews: project EIR done by developer	Reviews: categorical exclusion done by VTA to obtain fed. funds; project EIR done by developer	Development Permit: includes congestion management and trip reduction requirements; light rail improvements
Rezoning	General Plan amendment: Transit Corridor Residential	General Plan amendment: Transit Corridor Residential	Consistent with Industrial district zoning
Land Assembly	n/a	n/a	n/a
Direct Public Investments in Projects	none	FTA funding for station redesign	none
Local Transit Service Design	Pedestrian access to rail station	Retail space and pedestrian plaza adjacent to station	Bike lockers at transit facilities, bike lanes, transit signal preempts

Transit-supportive non-residential development, applicable to downtown and the northern, high-tech portion of the Guadalupe Corridor, has been more the result of conditions imposed within development permits. The conditions focus on a reduction in automobile use and encouraging the use of other transportation modes. Projects may be transit-oriented in their density, but parking requirements are not changed, and projects do not necessarily create the pedestrian amenities or mixture of uses that can help make the station area into an urban center.

- Joint Development. VTA, as the region’s transit authority, promotes joint development through a marketing program that utilizes flyers and brochures highlighting TOD projects. The City facilitates joint development through the Transit Corridor Residential land use designation, specifically designed for higher density residential projects along the southern portion of the City’s rail system.

REFERENCES; ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

City of San Jose. Communications Hill Specific Plan. April 1992.

City of San Jose. Jackson-Taylor Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Adopted December 1987.

City of San Jose. Jackson-Taylor Residential Strategy. Adopted October 1992.

City of San Jose. Midtown Specific Plan. Adopted October 1992.

City of San Jose. San Jose 2020 General Plan. Adopted August 1994.

City of San Jose. Tamien Station Area Specific Plan. Adopted March 1995.

City of San Jose, Departments of City Planning and Public Works. Deficiency Plan for North San Jose. Adopted December 1994.

City of San Jose, Departments of City Planning and Public Works. North San Jose Area Development Policy. Adopted March 1988.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. Station Area Concept Plans: Tasman Corridor Light Rail Project. February 1996.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. Station Area Specific Plan. February 1996.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

City of San Jose Planning Department

Prevetti, Laurel, (408) 277-4576, 5/12/98. (Residential Transit-Oriented Development)

Jeff Roache, (408) 277-4576, 5/14/98. (High-Tech Transit-Oriented Development)

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Tom Roundtree, (408) 321-5782, 5/11/98. (Joint Development)

Julie Render, (408) 321-5779, 5/12/98. (Transit-Oriented Development)