



Palo Alto Council of PTAs

25 Churchill Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306
www.paloaltopta.org

March 28, 2017

Nuria Fernandez
General Manager
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134-1906

RE: Comments on VTA's Next Network Concepts

Dear Ms. Fernandez,

The Next Network regional transit plan concepts would eliminate the VTA88 which serves Gunn High School in Palo Alto. The Council of PTAs is writing in support of Gunn High School PTSA's request to VTA to *work cooperatively with Gunn High School PTSA representatives and the City of Palo Alto as VTA has done in the past to understand local needs and problems the Next Network concepts might present, including duplication of private operator bus service.* We appreciate and value the existing VTA 88 bus service. Please maintain VTA88bus routes as they run today. If possible, improve headways and add at least one end-of-day run.

Based on a recent survey of students conducted by Gunn PTSA, we believe the proposed changes will lead to a reduction in ridership that may put at risk funding for future school tripper routes. Further, we are puzzled by VTA's proposal to change the route mid-year to coincide with BART implementations. It is not clear to us why these changes should be linked. Loss of bus service mid-year will be disruptive for families and students.

Each year in Palo Alto, district-wide PTAs mobilize hundreds of volunteers to educate and encourage district families to choose alternative commutes. Palo Alto's Safe Routes to School program is one of the most successful in the nation, shifting a majority of Palo Alto Unified School District students to alternative school commute modes, including bicycling, walking, carpooling and VTA bus, PAUSD buses, and City Shuttles, encouraging a new generation of transit users. The VTA88 is a very important part of our transportation mix.

Nearly 100 Gunn High School students per day rely on the VTA88. The current VTA schedule does not serve students who attend after school programs as well as it might. Improved headways and one extra run in the evening might make the VTA88 more attractive to students—providing flexibility to ride the bus home after dark. We believe this change could present an opportunity to improve ridership—one of the Next Network stated goals.

PTA volunteers worked in cooperation with VTA and City of Palo Alto staff to save the 88 line in 2009. We value this service, and we ask VTA to work with us again.

VTA enjoys strong sales tax revenues generated in Palo Alto. Palo Alto already has relieved VTA of coverage responsibility by providing the City of Palo Alto Shuttle to complement VTA routes without impacting VTA ridership. Loss of the VTA88 would pose a significant problem for south Palo Alto and the Gunn students who rely on this bus every day.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,