

SVEL Highway Expansion Opposition Talking Points

Background: The VTA is pushing a \$431 million plan to build new express toll lanes. This long term project will be planned on 101, 85, 280, 680, and 237.

Highway expansion will only worsen our car dependency.

- *VTA claims building more lanes will “reduce (improve) corridor travel times and congestion delays.*
- The reduction in traffic is short lived. Many studies and real world examples show that building more lanes encourages more driving, and traffic ends up the same, or even worse, as before.
- What actually helps traffic? Getting cars off the road by building infrastructure that makes it possible to walk, bike, or take public transit.

This \$431 million should fund public transit off the bat, instead of a convoluted plan that may never result in money for public transit.

- *VTA claims Revenue collected from the express lanes will be used to support transportation improvements and transit projects within the corridor.” (from SVEL Strategic Plan)*
- No previous HOV lane conversion projects have ever contributed to transit funding.
- With an estimated cost of \$431 million, how long will it take until the tolls collected can pay even off the cost of the construction?
- Wouldn't the money be better spent improving public transit off the bat?

This project will destroy our environment and communities along the proposed new lanes.

- *VTA claims project will have “No Significant Impact” on our environment. They claim vehicles will travel at faster speeds, theoretically resulting in better fuel economy, because of reduced traffic.*
- Induced demand that will only increase the number of cars on the road and increase carbon emissions.
- In fact, the VTA is using a loophole to avoid meeting vehicle miles traveled mitigation (VMT) requirements, by expanding in areas that have grandfathered exemptions to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- VTA documents in fact indicate that VMT mitigation would double the cost of this project.

Emphasizing larger highways over public transit is unjust.

- *VTA claims “Low income groups that are unable to afford FasTrak can still access the express lanes in carpools and by using public transportation.”*
- What examples of public transportation would that be - infrequent VTA buses that are subject to the same traffic congestion as cars?
- Serious plans for transit justice would provide more frequent service and more coverage to underserved communities.

See more:

- [How highways make traffic worse, by Vox](#)
- [Induced Demand & Roadway Widening: Everything You Always Wanted to Know \(and Weren't Afraid to Ask\), by Ray Delahanty | CityNerd](#);
- [More Lanes are \(Still\) a Bad Thing, by Not Just Bikes](#)
- “Silicon Valley Express Lanes Strategic Plan (2025–2035)”, Santa Clara Transit Authority, April 2026, https://santaclaravta.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?MeetingID=4586&ID=9954
- [Statement from Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action](#)

How To Give Public Comment

Option 1: Go in person or via zoom:

Date: September 3 at 5:30pm

Location: 70 West Hedding Street San Jose, CA 95110 or by Zoom

The meeting will be streamed through Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81869662646>

“Persons who wish to address the Board of Directors during the meeting are encouraged to visit VTA’s website, bit.ly/vta-board-agendas for instructions. Those who are attending in-person are requested to complete a speaker card located at the public information table and hand it to the Board Secretary’s staff prior to the meeting or before the item is heard.

Speakers are asked to limit their comments to one (1) minute. The amount of time allocated to speakers may vary at the Chairperson’s discretion depending on the number of speakers and the length of the agenda.”

Please include in your public comment:

1. Your name and background (e.g. local transit user, advocate, DSA member, etc)
2. [optional] any transit that you rely on

Option 2: Send an email:

Persons wishing to address the Board of Directors on any item on the agenda or not on the agenda are encouraged to submit their written comments by 12:00 p.m. on September 3, 2026 to board.secretary@vta.org.

Example Public Comments

Example 1

Good evening board of directors. My name is Olivia Chang and I am a Palo Alto resident and daily transit user. I am giving public comment in strong opposition to the proposed SVEL highway expansion plan that is being discussed in a workshop on Sept 18.

Adding more lanes does not reduce congestion — in fact, the VTA itself explains in the proposal that expanded lanes would result in increased vehicle miles traveled, locking us into further car dependency and polluting our air and water.

Additionally, the plan states the revenue collected from tolls will fund public transit *at some point in the future*— why not just fund public transit off the bat, instead of this expensive plan that makes it harder to build and incentivize future transit use?

We all know the consequences of government inaction on the climate crisis. I strongly urge the board to reconsider this plan and invest in affordable public transit, not plans that lock us into car dependency. Thank you.

Example 2

Hi, my name is Dustin Hunt, I'm a resident of Campbell and a local user of transit - I rely on the light rail to get to and from work, and as a result am very vested in the future of transit in the South Bay. And while it's not an agenda item today, I really want to express disappointment that VTA is planning highway expansions along the 101 and the SR-85 - not that toll lanes are being added, but that lane additions are being planned along these highways.

Studies have shown time and time again that expanding highways does not work for relieving congestion, and eventually induce demand for far more vehicle trips - approximately an additional 450 million Vehicle Miles Travelled, per your environmental analysis for phases 4-6 of SVEL. San Jose is targeting carbon neutrality by 2030, and VTA by 2045 - this project, as written now, is not compatible with these goals, nor is it compatible with VTA's mission.

With the existential threat of climate change looming, we cannot continue to accept business-as-usual highway expansions. This plan can and should certainly be revised to only include HOV conversions, not lane additions - you can still meet the project's revenue-generation goals without making the same, frankly embarrassing mistake that has been made countless times in this country.

Example Written Comments