

**From:** [Tu, John](#)  
**To:** [Downtown West Project](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: VTA Comments on Downtown West - Google [SJ1728]  
**Date:** Friday, March 6, 2020 10:37:39 AM  
**Attachments:** [SJ1728 Dev Application VTA Final Comments 11062019.pdf](#)

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Best,  
Tong (John) Tu

Planner IV (Supervising Planner) | Planning Division | PBCE  
City of San José | 200 East Santa Clara Street  
Email: [john.tu@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:john.tu@sanjoseca.gov) | Phone: (408)-535-6818  
For More Information Please Visit: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning>

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**From:** Torney, Lola <Lola.Torney@vta.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 6, 2019 4:46 PM  
**To:** Lapustea, Florin <Florin.Lapustea@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Cc:** Moody, Doug <doug.moody@sanjoseca.gov>; Banwait, Manjit <Manjit.Banwait@sanjoseca.gov>; Tom, Vivian <Vivian.Tom@sanjoseca.gov>; Trejo, Liana <liana.trejo@sanjoseca.gov>; Haywood, Scott <Scott.Haywood@VTA.Org>; Dagang, Deborah <Deborah.Dagang@vta.org>; ron.golem@vta.org <ron.golem@VTA.org>; Jill Gibson <jgibson@vtabsv.com>; Kim, Jason <jason.kim@vta.org>; Rood, Timothy <timothy.rood@sanjoseca.gov>; Tu, John <john.tu@sanjoseca.gov>; Han, James <James.Han@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** VTA Comments on Downtown West - Google [SJ1728]

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Hello Florin,  
Please see the attached letter for VTA's comments on the Downtown West – Google project.  
Please let me know if you have any questions!

~Lola Torney

**Lola Torney** | She/Her  
Transportation Planner III  
Bicycle and Pedestrian Program

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
3331 North First Street, Building B  
San Jose, CA 95134-1927  
Phone **408-321-5830**



November 6, 2019

City of San José Department of Transportation  
200 E. Santa Clara St., 8th Floor  
San José, CA 95113

Attn: Florin Lapustea  
By Email: [florin.lapustea@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:florin.lapustea@sanjoseca.gov)

Subject: Development Application for Downtown West – Google

Dear Florin,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Downtown West development project plans ("the Plans") filed by Google LLC on October 10, 2019. VTA has reviewed the Plans and has the following comments:

#### DISC Integration

The Plans do not reflect the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (DISC) design efforts. VTA strongly recommends the Downtown West project incorporate and complement the DISC, especially the fundamental design aspect to close Cahill Street east of the existing station and accommodate the updated Diridon Station entrance(s) and plazas.

The DISC is a public agency partnership and cooperative agreement between the City of San José, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, California High Speed Rail, and VTA to recommend a concept layout for an expanded and redesigned Diridon Station area. The DISC represents a unified vision and strategy for the future Diridon Station, which will provide the most high-capacity transit connections in the Bay Area. Key to the DISC effort is community engagement, coordination, and partnership with stakeholders, such as Google, to ensure a functional and balanced framework for shared land use and transportation goals. The DISC's primary goal is to develop a world-class center of transit and public life that provides smooth connections between modes and integration with the surrounding neighborhoods. As such, the comments included in this letter will use the DISC as the organizing framework for reviewing the Plans as well as apply a transit-first approach.

The DISC design will include a proposed expansion of the heavy rail corridor, relocation of the station concourse, and enhancements to bus, Light Rail, bicycle, and pedestrian connections to the station. One major component of the DISC is the closure of Cahill Street east of the existing station to accommodate the updated Diridon Station entrance(s) and plazas; as stated previously, the Plans do not reflect the DISC design. While incorporating the DISC design will have an extensive impact on the Plans, the DISC should drive the land uses that will ultimately serve the Downtown West project. VTA strongly supports the City, as one of the four Partner Agencies of the DISC process, ensure that the Google development both reflects and integrates the key objectives determined during the DISC process and

Partner requirements. VTA looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the City, Caltrain, the California High Speed Rail Authority, and Google through the DISC process to bring a unified proposal to the residents of the City of San José.

#### Transit-Supportive Land Uses for a Regional Intermodal Station

VTA supports the project's creation of a walkable, legible "mixed-use urban destination adjacent to a new intermodal transit station...acknowledging the fundamental importance of transit infrastructure" (Page 1.01). VTA also supports the general mix of uses and density levels throughout the project area. While these concepts are compatible with the DISC vision for a signature, intermodal transportation hub and destination for the Bay Area that will be a gateway to the City of San José and the region, VTA recommends a finer-grained approach. VTA recommends that the buildings/public realm immediately framing the station area within a one- to two-minute walking distance (approximately 220-440 feet) support tourism and doubles as a high-quality passenger waiting area. While the presence of office buildings is welcome, the character of the "Core" should not be dominated by office use to the extent that it creates a desolate public realm after business hours. VTA recommends a combination of varied and active along ground floors framing the station. Activities within this immediate station zone should support a 24-hour character reflective of uses that are visible and accessible, such as restaurants with evening hours, public event spaces, and buildings containing residential, hotel, or civic uses. This will always provide station users with an increased sense of safety and comfort through "eyes on the street." VTA notes that Page 2.08 depicts a general direction to include "retail, cultural, arts, education, and other active uses" along the ground floors of buildings and VTA recommends defining these uses and their hours of operation in order to respond to the concerns noted above.

#### Public Realm and Station Views

VTA supports the concept of a public plaza extending from the station along multiple blocks between Cahill Street and the Los Gatos Creek Trail. As the Plans are updated to reflect the DISC and the location of the station, there is increased opportunity to reinforce clear station view corridors. Currently, the Plans provide a clear line of sight from the east side of the station. Connections to the north along Cahill Street from Santa Clara Street contain active ground floors, but south of the station along the same street lacks active ground floors. VTA recommends including active ground floors south of the station along Cahill Street.

#### Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations

VTA appreciates the project applicant's efforts to break up larger blocks with "pedestrian midblock passages." VTA recommends Google develop a sheet showing the pedestrian circulation and improvements, with attention to access to transit, access to Los Gatos Creek Trail, and access after major events at SAP Center. VTA also recommends the Plans include block dimensions and additional public realm sections like Pages 3.09 and 3.10 to better understand the "people-centric" experience of Downtown West.

The Los Gatos Creek Trail will be a major active transportation commute route – for employees and residents of Downtown West and for people traveling through the area. Several thousand bicyclists and

pedestrians should be expected each day. The Los Gatos Creek Trail could become a major asset for transportation demand management and reducing VMT. VTA recommends Google work directly with City of San José's Trails Program to ensure the design supports the city's vision for Los Gatos Creek Trail laid out in the 2008 Los Gatos Creek Trail Reach 5 Master Plan and subsequent planning efforts, available at <https://sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9360>.

The Los Gatos Creek Trail Master Plan indicates on-street portions of the trail on Autumn Street and on South Montgomery Street between San Fernando Street and Santa Clara Street. The proposed site plan for Downtown West severs South Montgomery Street, but proposes "Protected Bikeways and Trails" along Autumn Street. This section of Autumn Street and the proposed "Protected Bikeways and Trails" along Santa Clara Street between Autumn Street and the Guadalupe River Trail should be designed and signed to provide continuity to trail users and to reduce delay for through bicyclists while still providing safe, comfortable pedestrian movement. Cross Sections 3.10.3 and 3.10.4 (Page 3.10) and 3.09.2 (Page 3.09) support this vision with street trees, wide sidewalk and separated bikeway in both directions. VTA recommends the City and Google seek opportunities to provide an off-street Class I path adjacent to Los Gatos Creek between San Fernando Street and Santa Clara Street, in addition to the on-street segment along Autumn Street. Additionally, the Los Gatos Creek Trail Master Plan proposes an at-grade crossing of Park Street/South Montgomery Street/Autumn Street. VTA recommends the Downtown West project should make improvements to this intersection that facilitate that crossing, with a focus on safety and minimizing wait times for trail users.

VTA supports the non-at-grade, pedestrian/bicycle "potential" connection over tracks to Lenzen Avenue and recommends the City or project applicant consider extending the connection over additional UPRR tracks to the Market Center (private property).

VTA appreciates the project applicant including a bicycle circulation page in its filing. VTA requests that any future Plans distinguish between Class I shared-use paths and Class IV separated bikeways since these are very different and require different treatments. VTA also recommends Google show how buses and bicyclists are accommodated at bus stops on all street sections with separated bikeways and buffered bike lanes.

#### Light Rail Crossings

VTA requests that the project address pedestrian safety at the existing Light Rail crossing at Delmas Avenue north of San Fernando Street. VTA's Pedestrian Access to Transit Plan provides short-term recommendations and is available here: <https://www.vta.org/programs/pedestrian-program>.

VTA notes that changes to existing Light Rail crossings, or the creation of a new crossing requires the review and approval of the California Public Utilities Commission. VTA policy advises against new crossings of Light Rail. VTA also looks forward to working with Google to identify potential vehicle access points around the at-grade Light Rail tracks to eliminate the possibility of queuing and other safety concerns on the Light Rail tracks.

### Bus Circulation

VTA appreciates coordination with City plans to make Santa Clara Street a transit-priority corridor through improvements such as converting the outside lanes to “public service lanes,” or lanes that would only serve transit and emergency vehicles. Plan sets and parking accommodations should incorporate this design.

VTA recommends that these plan sets include accommodations for all future bus operations in this area. VTA looks forward to working with Google through the DISC process to achieve this.

### Housing

VTA applauds Google’s efforts to include residential land uses in the Plans, acting as a regional partner in the Bay Area’s efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and to increase housing supply near transit-oriented communities (TOCs). VTA encourages Google to build as many housing units as possible, especially below market-rate housing.

### VTA Parcel Land Use

The proposed land use for the VTA Parcel as shown on Page 3.05 is only residential. VTA notes that the land use should reflect the potential for hotel use as well and be illustrated as such. VTA will continue to work with Google on its interest to include hospitality use as part of the site.

### Construction Accommodation

The DISC and Google construction timelines are currently not aligned. VTA’s BART Silicon Valley (BSV) Phase II Extension received environmental approval and a Record of Decision (ROD) from the FTA in 2018. The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) presents the project’s documentation and assumptions. Additionally, VTA has provided Google and its project contractors information related to the BSV Project’s requirements to continue collaboration on such as circulation and access for all modes during construction and at opening day, ventilation and emergency egress, utilities, design of buildings and underground structures in proximity to the BART tunnel, and construction management plan elements. VTA would like to ensure that the final approved Downtown West project incorporates the BSV Project Requirements. As the Google design is refined, we will be able to provide additional feedback to the City on any items we do not see being incorporated. VTA recommends Google refer to the components of the 2018 Final BART SEIS/SEIR during the construction period, such as haul routes and street closures. This document can be found here: <https://www.vta.org/projects/bart-sv/phase-ii>.

Additionally, the newly created West Post Street (just south of the VTA parcel) will require coordination with VTA’s final circulation strategy for the construction period and size of the Construction Staging Area.

### Page-Specific Comments/Questions

- Page 1.01 – Development Program – VTA understands the need to include parking in this project proposal. VTA recommends the parking allocation be spread out throughout the site,

away from the "Core," and be hidden from view of the public realm as much as possible. VTA recommends Google utilize the vehicle parking information found in the City of San José Downtown Design Guidelines and Standards, available at:

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/85045>.

- Page 2.05 - Central district will include "civic uses with authentic district character" - this description does not describe anything. Commend the application for a "people first" approach to public realm space planning
- Page 3.09 – Provide proposed cross section lane widths
- Page 3.09 and 3.10 - Cross section 3.09.4 (six lanes) Bird Avenue becomes cross section 3.10.4 (three lanes) S. Autumn Street. Provide more information about what this transition will look like
- Page 3.11 - Bullet point three notes to "strengthen desire line north of [VTA] alignment from San Fernando as a multi-use path as a key connection between the station and downtown." Provide more context to what this segment refers to
- Page 3.14-3.22 - Does the Google application include any utility relocations planned as part of the BART Program?

VTA looks forward to our continued collaboration the DISC partners and Google in the review of the Plans. VTA looks forward to ongoing coordination on the Downtown West development to ensure a "transit first" perspective for circulation and land use decisions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 408-321-5830.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lola Torney', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lola Torney  
Transportation Planner III

SJ1728