

Equitable VMT Mitigation Program

Reducing Driving from Development Projects



New Developments
Generate Driving



Equitable VMT
Mitigation Program



Transportation
Solutions for the
Community

Project Goal

The goal of this project is to develop the framework for an equitable program to **reduce driving** (mitigate vehicle miles traveled / VMT) from land development projects and **expand travel options** for people to get around Santa Clara County in a way that:

- Works across jurisdictional lines
- Improves social equity

An Equitable VMT Mitigation Program could generate millions of dollars in the coming 25 years to improve access to jobs and services as well as reduce the need to drive alone. Ultimately the program would help meet State and local environmental goals.

Background

New development projects, like housing or office buildings, can lead to an increase in the number of miles driven in an area. State environmental law requires local jurisdictions to work with developers to reduce the extra driving generated by a development (mitigate excess VMT) if it's above a threshold. This program could provide options to help reduce the extra driving and expand travel choices. Reducing driving helps improve our communities by producing:

- Better air quality
- Less noise
- Safer streets

Since mid-2023, VTA has been working closely with the cities, towns and the County of Santa Clara on this project. This framework is the initial step in developing a program. Program details and legal agreements would be established in a future implementation phase.

To view quick explainer videos, watch recordings of community meetings, or read the final report, please visit the project website at: www.vta.org/EquitableVMT



Community Engagement Process

Engagement with community members, local jurisdiction staff, and community-based organizations was a critical part of the project process. The project team held three phases of community engagement:

- Phase 1 - Fall 2023 - gathered broad and diverse input about travel needs and types of improvements
- Phase 2 - Spring 2024 - focused on filtering and refining input through deeper discussions
- Phase 3 - Fall 2024 - aimed at confirming the program framework

The project team held more than a dozen in-person events and more than 25 online events, ran a community survey, and gave presentations at 15 meetings of VTA Board Committees. Materials were provided in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese at all community events, and the project team provided interpreters at key events. More than 1,000 people participated in these events and the survey.



Alviso Day on the Bay in San Jose, 10/14/2023



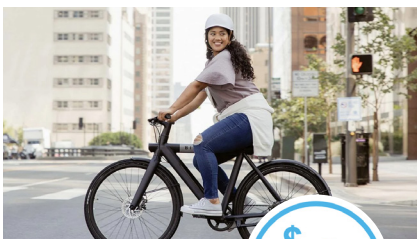
Spanish language workshop in Gilroy, 7/11/2024



SV Youth Climate Action Summit in Cupertino, 8/3/2024

What Could a Program Fund?

Through a robust community engagement process in 2023 and 2024, the project team identified the biggest transportation challenges people face. The following are three categories of projects (mitigation actions) that could be funded by this program, along with specific examples the team discussed with the community.



Financial Incentives



Example Project:
E-Bike Subsidies

For lower-income residents to purchase an e-bike



Capital Projects



Example Project:
Bus Speed Improvements

Speed and reliability improvements serving equity priority communities



Services



Example Project:
Enhanced Vanpools

For service, health care, manufacturing, agriculture workers, etc.

How Did Community Input Shape the Program Framework?

Through the community engagement process, the team gathered valuable feedback on how to tailor mitigation actions funded by this program to meet community needs. Many of these considerations would NOT have been included without input from the community.

Feedback about VMT Mitigation Actions		
Financial Incentives	Capital Projects	Services
Offer education courses	Plan with the community in mind, make projects context-sensitive	Consider ways to advertise program and raise awareness
Partner with community orgs for marketing and support	Plan at the network or community scale	Partner with community orgs for marketing and support
Allow multiple subsidies per household, cover full cost if possible	Consider safety and Complete Streets best practices	Consider affordability and cost
Share info on supportive programs (such as Guaranteed Ride Home)	Prioritize equity communities and vulnerable road users	Ensure services are convenient to use, with minimal barriers to access
Ensure equitable access (multiple languages and variety of platforms)	Include universal street design, beyond basic accessibility	Ensure equitable access (multiple languages and variety of platforms)

How Would A Program Work?

VMT mitigation programs can be set up in several different ways. The project team recommends starting with a VMT Exchange. In an exchange, developers can pick a VMT mitigation action from an approved list and either pay for someone else to implement that action or do it themselves.

Over time, the program could evolve into a VMT Bank. In this case, a central entity establishes a price for each mile of travel reduced. Developers pay when their projects have impacts, and money is put together to implement VMT mitigation actions.

As an example, a developer may propose an office development or a manufacturing building in an area that has a higher amount of driving but that still meets a city's goals to attract jobs and revenue. The city and developer would first try to reduce the amount of driving at or near the project site, for instance by adding secure bicycle parking or paying for transit passes. But if a greater reduction is needed, the developer could pay for transportation improvements across a larger area through the VMT mitigation program.

Next Steps

This framework is the initial step in developing a program. Next steps will likely include:

- VTA staff will bring the Equitable VMT Mitigation Program report to VTA Committees and the VTA Board in early 2025, to review and potentially accept the framework.
- Cities, towns, and the County can decide whether to opt in to an implementation phase. The next phase would focus on determining the details of the program and developing agreements between local jurisdictions and the program sponsor (who could be VTA, or another entity). A review team would likely be set up to help administer and monitor the program.

Sign up on the project website (www.vta.org/EquitableVMT) for updates and opportunities to weigh in if you would like to see a program like this explored further.

What Would a Program Like This Mean For...



Cities and the County?

A VMT mitigation program would provide another option for reducing VMT from land development projects, helping with environmental review and local housing and job production goals.



Developers?

Contributing to a program could streamline the environmental review process, reducing uncertainty and saving time and money.



Lower-income Households and Other Members of Equity Communities?

Transportation improvements could be targeted towards these community members, helping them get to work, school, shops and other places they need to go.



The General Public?

A program like this could help all community members by providing more transportation options, reducing noise pollution, and reducing pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to car crashes.



The Environment?

Reducing the amount of driving helps reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, improve local air quality, and meet our climate goals.