

POLICY Land Use & Development Review	Document Number:	400.005
	Version Number:	02
	Date:	2/6/2025

1. Purpose:

This VTA Land Use & Development Review Policy establishes a framework for VTA’s comprehensive role in local land use and development processes. By strengthening coordination of land use and transportation strategies with local jurisdictions and the development community, the policy establishes guidelines to promote sustainable development, expand mobility options, and advance equity.

This policy is designed to facilitate vibrant, complete, equitable, and connected communities with a high-quality physical environment that enables multimodal access and creates transit ridership. This policy supports broader livability goals to manage congestion, support transit and multimodal transportation, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), promote safer travel, increase physical activity, and improve public health for all community members, particularly those in historically underserved and marginalized communities.

2. Scope:

The policy applies to all relevant VTA Divisions and staff including consultants and contractors that have a role in planning, coordinating, and engaging in local land use and development processes throughout Santa Clara County.

3. Responsibilities:

VTA’s Planning Division, specifically the Land Use group, is the primary point of contact and leads all land use and development review efforts on VTA’s behalf, including development coordination, engagement, and monitoring between VTA and third parties, such as local jurisdiction staff and the development community.

VTA's Transit-Oriented Communities and Development group leads the planning and development of VTA’s transit-oriented development properties, focusing on creating vibrant, transit-supportive communities. The Transit-Oriented Communities and Development group also partners with the Land Use group on station area plans to develop seamless integration of transportation planning and land use policies, fostering connectivity and accessibility around VTA stations.

In some instances, land use and development review efforts may involve other VTA Divisions. When this occurs, the Divisions will incorporate the principles and strategies established in this policy into all phases of the project.

VTA’s responsibility to help manage the effects of land use developments on the regional transportation system, which underpins this policy, is established by California Statute, Government Code 65088 - Congestion Management Program. Furthermore, given the interdependent relationship between local land use and the countywide transportation network,

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the success of the policy will rely on the ongoing cooperation, responsiveness, and partnership of local jurisdictions.

4. Policy:

Guiding Principles and Strategies

The policy establishes the following set of principles and strategies to support and guide VTA’s work in engaging in local land use and development processes.

Advance Equity

VTA is committed to providing all communities, especially historically underserved and marginalized groups, with equitable access to transportation services.

This principle involves actively addressing disparities in transit access and promoting inclusivity in development. By recognizing vulnerabilities and enhancing the capacity to cope with and overcome adversities, this will foster resilience within the community. By prioritizing equity, VTA aims to create a more accessible transportation system for all. Equity is an overarching principle and is also woven throughout the remaining principles and strategies.

Strategies to achieve this principle:

- Provide safe and accessible accommodations for all, including the elderly and people with disabilities, by following accessible, universal design standards.
- Encourage internal and external partners to actively engage with community members in the planning process, especially those in historically underserved and marginalized communities. The engagement should be inclusive of voices that represent the community by actively seeking input from residents across different socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and abilities so all perspectives are heard. This includes meeting people where they are—through attending community events, providing information in their own languages, and creating opportunities for engagement in familiar and accessible settings.

Build Effective Partnerships

To support sustainable development and transit-supportive policies that maximize mobility options, VTA will continue to build common ground with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders. To maximize the synergy between land use and transportation, VTA and its partners work together at the earliest stage in the land use and development process. To achieve a more equitable and accessible transportation network, VTA will continue to build shared understanding with local jurisdictions, community members, developers, and other stakeholders.



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Strategy to achieve this principle:

- Maintain regular coordination meetings with VTA’s local jurisdictions, to discuss and align on land use and transportation topics.

Increase Ridership and Support Fast, Frequent, Safe, and Reliable Transit Service

VTA is dedicated to increasing ridership and supporting sustainable development by expanding access for all riders by making it easier, safer, more comfortable, and convenient to get to and from transit services in the County. This includes an emphasis on VTA’s existing and planned Frequent Network and other agencies’ rail stations in Santa Clara County.

Key groups in the Planning Division – Land Use, Transit Service Planning, and Transit Capital Planning – will collaborate to improve route design, make transit more attractive and usable for all users, and upgrade infrastructure. VTA staff will also coordinate with local jurisdictions and the development community to work towards these objectives. This integrated approach will boost service quality, align land use with transit accessibility, and incorporate new technological advancements.

Strategies to achieve this principle:

- Make transit connections easy, convenient, and seamless through investments in the existing and planned Frequent Network, including Frequent Network routes connecting to other agencies’ rail stations, passenger information, and waiting facilities.
- Promote high-quality design for access improvements utilizing industry best practices and design principles.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to transit, including connections between trail systems, bus stops, and rail stations.
- Implement safety amenities at VTA bus stops and stations, such as ample lighting, comfortable benches, shelters, and signage, to create a welcoming and secure environment for passengers.
- Protect and enhance transit investment by improving or maintaining travel time of transit operations.
- New access across light rail should be provided via grade separation to safeguard the traveling public and maintain efficient operations. VTA generally will not support new at-grade crossings of light rail. This approach prioritizes safety and aligns with California Public Utilities Commission’s policies.
- Preserve and enhance existing bus stops in proposed development project plans. VTA generally will not support the removal of key bus stops or loss of geographic coverage to transit by planned development projects.



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Support Transit-Supportive Development in Close Proximity to Transit

To provide convenient transit access, incentivize ridership, and enhance safety and operations, VTA is committed to facilitate equitable transit-supportive development in close proximity to transit. VTA will utilize VTA’s Community Design and Transportation Manual as a key tool in this effort. This approach will improve communication, coordination, and understanding between VTA, local jurisdictions, and the development community regarding development near transit services and/or directly adjacent to VTA facilities.

Strategies to achieve this principle:

- Encourage new growth and development within a walkable distance of the existing and planned Frequent Network and other agencies’ rail stations to enable pedestrian-friendly, compact, mixed-use communities that are well-connected, and expand a range of opportunities (including but not limited to economic, educational, and social) along high-quality transit.
- Support local jurisdiction and developer efforts to intensify land uses and maximize densities to support transit ridership.
- Generally, discourage growth and increased density in areas far from the existing or planned Frequent Network, other agencies’ rail stations, and multimodal travel options. Such development patterns encourage single-occupancy vehicle trips and conflict with sustainability and mobility objectives.
- Leverage the VTA Development Review Program to engage in local land use planning efforts (e.g., placemaking, specific, area, urban village, general plan, long-range, and individual development planning processes) at the earliest planning stage and on an ongoing basis.

Prioritize Sustainable Travel Behavior

To reduce emissions, decrease VMT, support Vision Zero safety goals, and improve public health, VTA will advocate for active transportation and high-quality transit improvements. By prioritizing sustainable and equitable transportation options, VTA aims to lower environmental impacts and foster healthier communities.

Strategies to achieve this principle:

- Implement VTA Community Design and Transportation Manual and Complete Streets principles.
- Invest in strategies that shift access from single-occupancy vehicles to greater levels of walking, bicycling, and transit access.

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- Encourage carefully considered Transportation Demand Management measures such as parking strategies, ridesharing, teleworking, and financial incentives that promote sustainable travel and maximize transit ridership.
- Promote the use of multimodal measures to analyze impacts of local development decisions on transit and non-motorized modes of transportation, e.g., transit delay analysis and pedestrian / bicycle quality of service analysis.

5. Definitions:

Complete Streets refers to streets that are for the safe travel of all users, where designs are context sensitive, and incorporate a balanced network approach, prioritize the safety, comfort, and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders (including access and operations) of all ages and abilities, while still providing safe accommodations for motorists and other roadway users. Additionally, Complete Streets integrate green infrastructure and sustainable practices such as permeable pavements and street trees to support environmental health and contribute to livable, vibrant communities.

Frequent Network refers to VTA’s core bus and light rail routes that provide service every 15 minutes or better on weekdays, and every 30 minutes or better on weekends.

Transit-Supportive Development refers to development that supports higher numbers of employees or residents per acre, generates a high number of trips that can be served well by transit, reflects a site design that reinforces safe, convenient, and direct access to transit, encourages the use of alternative modes, and maintains transit speed and reliability.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) refers to policies and programs to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles on the road and encourage people to use transportation systems more efficiently. Examples of TDM measures include transit fare incentives, teleworking, ridesharing, parking pricing, and micromobility options.

Vision Zero refers to an international strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.

6. Summary of Changes:

- Added equity as a Guiding Principle and wove equity throughout.
- Combined Guiding Principles and Strategies into one section and added additional language to strengthen each.
- Removed sections and language more focused on procedures.
- Removed list of interrelated policies, standards, and guides.



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7. Approval Information:

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Date Approved: At February 6, 2025 Board Meeting