



2001 Gateway Place, Suite 101E
San Jose, California 95110
(408)501-7864 svlg.org

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August 10, 2020

To: Adam Burger, VTA SR 85 Transit Study Project Manager
From: Jason Baker, VP Housing, Transportation & Community Development, Silicon Valley Leadership Group

Subject: Shuttle Ridership Data on SR 85, Potential for High Level Demand Study

Summary

To address the need to provide relief on State Route 85, the VTA State Route 85 Transitway Alternatives Analysis Report studied proposed transit solution alternatives and alignments. In response to VTA's request, the Leadership Group has obtained and aggregated data from member companies and partners that provide shuttle service along the 85 corridor. The Leadership Group hopes to continue being a constructive partner with VTA and the Cities along the 85 corridor in discussion of critical investments into transit solutions.

Background

The VTA State Route 85 Transitway Alternatives Analysis Report notes that data regarding shuttle ridership was not obtainable for study. While thorough in the analysis of the potential alignments, the report concluded that there was insufficient demand for bus ridership on SR 85. The report did not include ridership of shuttles and provided only point in time estimation of shuttle counts through Streetlight data.

To facilitate a more thorough understanding of existing conditions, the Leadership Group is responding to VTA's request to provide aggregated SR 85 shuttle ridership numbers from companies who have employees who travel on shuttles on the 85 corridor. The Leadership Group has obtained information from a number of companies, though certainly not all may have responsive information. We are happy to provide this information in response to the request, and are willing to coordinate efforts with VTA and employers to understand future transit and shuttle ridership demand that may help with the decision-making process regarding SR 85.

Data suggests that more shuttle ridership would be expected than initially presented through the transit ridership projections outlined in the SR 85 Transitway Alternatives Analysis Report. Provided below are Northbound and Southbound daily average trips from 2018 and 2019, with total daily average riders at a high of more than 5600 riders in 2019. This data would be a significant addition to the projected transit ridership on the corridor.

Data

Table 1: Aggregated Average Daily Ridership of Select Companies on SR 85

Year	NB	SB	Totals
2018	2573	2518	5091
2019	2873	2771	5644

The data presented in Table 1 is a snapshot of shuttle users pre-Covid 19, represented as average annualized daily travel. The data is likely an undercount. We reached out to member companies and received data from those who comprise a significant proportion of shuttle rider volume. We have confidence that pre-Covid 19 ridership along SR 85 is higher than the data obtained.

Table 2: Preliminary Percentage of SR 85 Northbound Shuttle Ridership by City*

City	Percentage of Total Riders
San Jose	39%
Cupertino	12%
Los Gatos	12%
Sunnyvale	17%
Mountain View	9%
Saratoga	9%
Santa Cruz/Scotts Valley	2%

*not all respondents provided locational data

Most member companies who responded to this data request provided pickup location data where shuttles currently pick up. Leadership Group staff have aggregated this data and categorized it by city as SR 85 Northbound shuttle ridership. As shown in Table 2, nearly 4 in 10 shuttles begin in San Jose. Park and Ride lots located in San Jose are utilized by companies as shuttle stops. A notable percentage of shuttles continue along the corridor, with Northbound pickups nearing 10% as far north as Mountain View.

Discussion

Shuttles originating within and traversing San Jose comprise a significant amount of shuttle volume along the corridor - as shown by the high percentage of shuttles along park and ride lots within San Jose in Table 2. This generalized location data depicts a need along the length of the 85 corridor for commuter options, especially along the segments between Ohlone-Chynoweth to Blossom Hill.

Further, discussions with member companies have borne the sentiment that SR 85 is not currently utilized as extensively for shuttle routes. Employers have pointed out that more company shuttles might use the corridor if congestion did not significantly impact travel time. Instead, member companies are currently pushed to re-route service, or reduce shuttle service and identify other solutions. New transit facilities likely would draw more usage, if travel times and reliability improve on the 85 corridor.

Recommendations

The long term health of the 85 corridor, and our regional transportation network by extension, is dependent upon a well-considered solution that prioritizes transit and shuttle users.

Implementation of a dedicated transit facility along SR 85 that could be used by shuttles would likely allow for more reliable, faster travel, suggesting a higher level of future demand may exist by both shuttle and transit riders. The Leadership Group does not have a position on any particular alternative or policy at this time, but encourages a solution that accommodates increased reliability and improved travel times for both transit and shuttles that does not result in widening for additional general purpose lanes.

The Leadership Group also recommends that both the SR 85 Policy Advisory Board and the full VTA Board consider that the utility of SR 85 transit lanes serves well beyond the defined study boundary, in the context of the regional transportation network. For example, North Bayshore in Mountain View, poised for revitalization with mixed-use developments that is inclusive of housing, retail, and commercial uses, is not currently considered within the catchment area of transit service or VTA's cost-benefit analysis. The Leadership Group recommends a high-level travel demand study to highlight to the VTA Board the critical need for transit and shuttle-supportive infrastructure in service of the communities along SR 85 and points beyond. We are happy to coordinate, with employers and municipal partners, such a study of places within reach of SR 85 that show potential for demand of high-quality transit service and usage of dedicated lanes, if called on to do so by VTA.