



**MEMORANDUM**

Public Works Department

**DATE:** November 27, 2019

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** James Lightbody, Project Manager  
Dawn S. Cameron, Assistant Public Works Director  
Michael A. Fuller, Public Works Director

**VIA:** Daniel H. Rich, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Shuttle Study Preliminary Analysis

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**BACKGROUND**

On December 4, 2018, the City Council allocated \$100,000 for a Shuttle Study that would examine the services offered by the Mountain View Community Shuttle, the MVgo shuttles (operated by the Transportation Management Association (TMA)) and Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) bus service, identify gaps in service, and explore opportunities to fill those gaps. Council specifically directed that the Study address service needs for senior citizens and students, as well as strategies for first- and last-mile connections. Figure 1 shows transit services in the City as of January 1, 2020, when planned VTA route modification will be implemented.

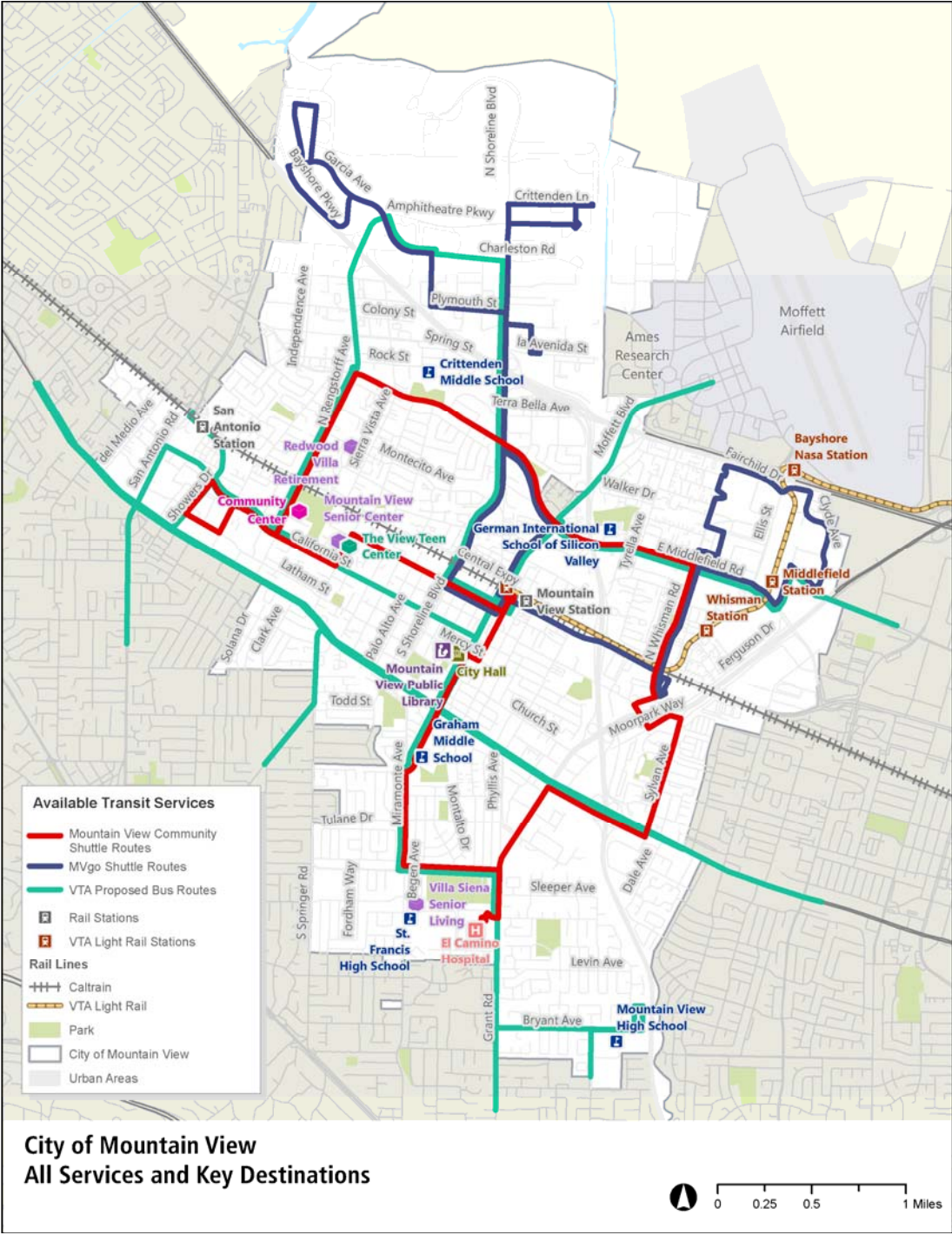
Staff selected Transportation Management and Design, Inc. (TMD) to conduct the Study through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, and the project got under way in June 2019. The first phase of the project included an analysis of potential transit markets, an evaluation of existing transit services, interviews with key stakeholders, and a community survey. This memo summarizes the first phase work.

**MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY SHUTTLE**

A key component of the Shuttle Study is an evaluation of the Mountain View Community Shuttle. In 2015, the City partnered with Google to launch the Community Shuttle pilot program (Phase 1) to provide daytime transit options for Mountain View residents. During Phase 1, the free shuttle service was fully funded and operated by Google. The Community Shuttle provides connections between residential

neighborhoods and key destinations in Mountain View as well as connections to the regional transportation network.

Figure 1: Transit Services in Mountain View



The current fleet consists of six all-electric, 16-seat vehicles, each equipped with a wheelchair lift, exterior bicycle racks, and free on-board WiFi. The shuttles operate in a bidirectional loop every day between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., with 30-minute frequency on weekdays and 60-minute frequency on weekends and holidays. Trips in the clockwise direction are considered the Gray route, while counterclockwise is the Red route. In 2017 and 2018, a real-time tracking and mobile app component was added for riders to see where the shuttles are at any given time.

The Community Shuttle Phase 1 pilot program was set to expire in 2019. In June 2019, Google committed to a five-year funding extension to continue the program into Phase 2. Phase 2 will transition the operations from Google over the next year and allow the City to study the next steps for the program while providing current service levels.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study to-date has included work by staff and the TMD consulting team to carry out the following tasks:

- Analysis of 2017 American Community Survey<sup>1</sup> data to identify key areas that have residents with a higher propensity for transit use. Demographic predictors include low-income households, zero-vehicle households, youth (18 years and under), and seniors (65 years and over).
- Analysis of existing transit services in terms of service coverage, ridership, and hours of service. Planned changes in VTA service were also evaluated.
- Small-group stakeholder interviews, including members of the Environmental Sustainability Task Force and senior and youth groups organized by the Senior Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Committee, respectively.
- A community survey conducted for 30 days in August. The survey was primarily conducted through the City website with links to social media. Paper surveys were also distributed at several key locations. The survey addressed current transit use, preferences for transit and shuttle improvements, and key desired destinations needing good transit service. Over 600 responses were received.

The consulting team has prepared an evaluation of existing and potential future transit characteristics in Mountain View. Their report is posted and publicly available at

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<sup>1</sup> The American Community Survey is an annual survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau.

[https://www.mountainview.gov/depts/pw/transport/mountain\\_view\\_shuttle\\_study.asp](https://www.mountainview.gov/depts/pw/transport/mountain_view_shuttle_study.asp).

The following is a summary of key conclusions from the initial analysis and community outreach:

- Potential transit users are most concentrated in the area near Rengstorff Avenue and California Street, including youth and lower-income residents. Senior residents are also located along Rengstorff Avenue north of Central Expressway.
- VTA service cuts will create some new service gaps (e.g., along Middlefield Road) that can be partially filled by the Community Shuttle; however, hours of service for the Community Shuttle are more limited than current VTA service.
- The Community Shuttle is performing well and is popular in the community:
  - Daily ridership exceeds 600 riders and carries more riders per hour of service than VTA routes, including El Camino Real service.
  - The route serves most of the main activity centers and important destinations identified in the survey and stakeholder interviews.
  - Seniors and students benefit from, and are supportive of, the Community Shuttle.
- The stakeholder interviews and the survey reflect a desire for the Community Shuttle to operate longer hours and provide more frequent service.
- Caltrain is the most frequently used transit service by Mountain View residents, with over 30 percent of respondents using it on a weekly basis. VTA and light rail are used by 20 percent of respondents. However, seniors were most likely to use the Community Shuttle than VTA, while students use both VTA and the Community Shuttle.
- MVgo routes provide good service from Caltrain to employment areas, but only in the peak commute period.
- First-mile connections for Mountain View residents to access Caltrain need improvement to reduce existing and future park-and-ride demand.

Potential service improvements identified in the Study to date include:

- Extension of the Community Shuttle hours, particularly earlier in the morning to help commuters and students. Seniors also requested later evening service.
- More frequent Community Shuttle service.
- Potential Community Shuttle route adjustments to reduce service overlaps with VTA and better serve some destinations—route adjustments would need to maintain current 30-minute frequency.
- Improve transit connections to Caltrain and other regional services.
- Strategies for improved first- and last-mile services.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

In the next phase of the Study, the consultant team will evaluate potential service modifications, including an estimate of operating and capital costs. Study results and recommendations will be presented to the City Council by mid-2020.