

# VTA unanimously puts Santa Clara County transportation tax measure on November ballot - Silicon Valley Business Journal



Self-confessed car lover and tax hater [Johnny Khamis](#) of the San Jose City Council was for it. So was County Supervisor [Joe Simitian](#), who thinks BART scarfs up too much county money and doesn't serve his Palo Alto constituency.

In the end, every member of the [Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's](#) board voted Thursday night to put a 30-year, half-cent sales tax measure on the November ballot to support BART's extension to San Jose, increase Caltrain capacity, repair potholes, improve highway interchanges, and create more bus stops.



The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority board voted unanimously to put a... [more](#)

Vicki Thompson

It will take two-thirds of the public's votes to enact the tax — which is expected to raise around \$6.5 billion — a high but historically surmountable hurdle in a county that has shown itself willing in the past to tax itself in search of transportation solutions.

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"We all realize at some point we have to get in this boat together and start paddling," said board chair [Cindy Chavez](#), another county supervisor.

The only public opposition at the meeting came from some transit and environmental groups who said the

package of projects doesn't go far enough to get people out of cars, reduce greenhouse gases and help low-income residents get around. That opposition was met by a letter signed Wednesday by members of the Transportation Justice Alliance, a coalition of other environmentalists and groups representing low-income communities that helped craft the VTA proposal, which asked the board "to adopt the framework, funding amounts, and resolution for the half-cent 30-year sales tax proposal."

The latest polling, paid for by the [Silicon Valley Leadership Group](#) headed by [Carl Guardino](#), who will also lead the pro-tax campaign, shows 69 percent of likely voters would support the measure. That's more than the necessary supermajority but, with a 4.2 percent margin of error, is far from a lock.

"There were \$48 billion worth of (project) requests and less than \$6½ billion in funding," said San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo. "We're going to need a lot of effort. We need more than this ballot measure, but we need this ballot measure."

Here are the projects the tax would fund:

- BART Phase II, \$1.5 billion
- Bicycle/pedestrian program, \$250 million
- Caltrain capacity improvements, \$300 million
- Caltrain grade separations, \$700 million
- County expressways, \$750 million
- Highway interchanges, \$750 million
- Local streets and roads, \$1.2 billion
- SR 85 Corridor, \$350 million
- Transit operations, \$500 million

*Jody Meacham is a reporter for the Silicon Valley Business Journal.*