

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 758 (Eggman) – As Amended April 18, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Transportation: Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority

**SUMMARY:** Creates the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority to oversee the planning and development of a connection between the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) in the Tri-Valley. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes legislative findings and declarations regarding:
  - a) The need for strategic and planned interregional mobility in the Altamont Pass corridor;
  - b) The benefits of connecting the BART District's rapid transit system and ACE to increase interregional mobility, provide much-needed highway capacity for expanded goods movement to the bay area's five seaports, and relieve pressure on Interstate 580 (I-580) given the projected population growth in the Central Valley;
  - c) The growing congestion in the corridor adding to emissions, and shifting commuters to rail transportation between the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area is highly desirable to help offset the effects on air quality produced by growth in auto travel.
  - d) The intent of the Legislature to establish the Authority to plan and help deliver a cost effective connection of BART and ACE in the Tri-Valley to address regional economic and transportation challenges.
- 2) Defines key terms, including:
  - a) "Authority" to mean the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority; and,
  - b) "Connection" to mean a connection between BART and ACE in the Tri-Valley.
- 3) Establishes the Authority for purposes of planning and developing a cost-effective and responsive connection that meets the goals and objectives of the community; and prescribes the Authority's membership, to be composed of one representative; from each of the following entities:
  - a) ACE;
  - b) BART;
  - c) The City of Dublin;
  - d) The City of Lathrop;
  - e) The City of Livermore;
  - f) The City of Pleasanton;

- g) The City of Stockton;
  - h) The City of Tracy;
  - i) The County of Alameda;
  - j) The County of San Joaquin;
  - k) The East Bay Leadership Council;
  - l) Innovation Tri-Valley;
  - m) The Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA); and,
  - n) San Joaquin Partnership.
- 4) Provides for administrative support for the Authority, and authorizes the Authority to partner with LAVTA and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission.
  - 5) Requires the Authority, by July 1, 2018, to provide a project feasibility report to the public and post on its website, detailing the plans for the development and implementation of the connection, including proposed scope, schedule and cost.
  - 6) Directs the Authority to dissolve upon completion of the connection.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Existing law provides for the creation of statewide and local transportation agencies, which may be established as joint powers authorities or established expressly by statute.
- 2) Existing law establishes BART, which is authorized to acquire, construct, own, operate, control, or use rights-of-way, rail lines, bus lines, stations, platforms, switches, yards, terminals, parking lots, and any and all other facilities necessary or convenient for rapid transit service.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** The Altamont Pass serves as the commuter corridor connecting the San Joaquin Valley to the Bay Area. I-580 is the freeway connector and ranks as one of the most congested freeways in the mega-region during peak hours due to high volume of regional and interregional commuter, freight, and recreational traffic. Additionally, San Joaquin County, and other counties in the San Joaquin Valley are some of the fastest growing in the state. Since 1990, the number of people commuting daily from the northern San Joaquin Valley to the Bay Area has more than doubled, growing from 32,000 to nearly 65,000 commuters. Currently, the ACE train brings commuters from the northern San Joaquin Valley from the cities of Stockton, Lathrop and Tracy to the Bay Area. ACE carries nearly 3,000 commuters daily one way or 6,000 round trips.

According to the author, this mega-region, the San Joaquin Valley and Bay Area, represents an important economic region as well as a critical transportation route with roughly 207,000 weekday trips that originated from the San Joaquin Valley and ended in the Bay Area via I-580.

She further notes that because transportation is the major contributor to ozone precursors, increasing auto travel presents a continued threat to air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley/Bay Area mega-region. Finally, she states that as commute times from San Joaquin Valley to the Bay Area can take over three hours due to the stop-and-go-traffic; without exploring viable and efficient public transportation options, commute times will only increase and continue to negatively impact air quality.

In developing the San Francisco Bay Area's Regional Rail Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) focused on three main goals: to identify a vision for an interconnected system of Bay Area passenger rail improvements; to create safe, fast, reliable and integrated passenger and freight rail network that addresses anticipated growth in transportation demand; and a system to enhance the economic vitality of the region while minimizing the impact on the environment. As part of that plan, MTC highlighted the importance of a connection between the Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley, and the ultimately connecting all of northern California.

This bill will establish the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority with the goal of addressing regional economic and transportation challenges by planning and developing a cost effective and responsive connection of BART and ACE, connecting the San Joaquin Valley to the Tri-Valley and Bay Area.

Currently, the first phase of this connection is being undertaken by BART. Specifically, BART is working on the development of the BART to Livermore extension which would extend the BART rail line by 5.5 miles along I-580 from the existing Dublin/Pleasanton Station to a new station in the vicinity of the Isabel Avenue interchange. The project would also incorporate improvements to the local bus system, connections with key activity centers in Livermore and inter-regional rail service.

The original cost estimate for the project was \$1.2 billion in 2010, but will be updated upon completion of the environmental review phase. The project is being funded by a combination of revenue from Alameda County's local sales tax measures, regional bridge tolls, and City of Livermore impact fees, all of which represent roughly 45% of the total estimated cost.

BART is scheduled to release a project-level Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR), as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, for the proposed project this spring. The project-level EIR will build upon the 2010 program-level EIR, which looked at 10 alignment alternatives. The project-level EIR will evaluate the construction of the BART rail extension, including the BART station, associated parking, storage tracks, as well as the operation of new BART and bus services. Additionally, as part of the EIR process, BART must also examine alternatives to the proposed project, including a no build alternative, a Diesel Multiple Unit or Electric Multiple Unit Alternative, an Express Bus/Bus Rapid Transit Alternative, and an Enhanced Bus Alternative.

Following a public review and comment period, one of the options for the project will be selected by the BART Board of Directors as the preferred transit mode for the extension to Livermore, possibly late this year. BART then anticipates the need to prepare a federal-level Environmental Impact Statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, as federal monies may be part of the funding picture. BART's anticipated date for opening the completed extension and new BART station is 2026.

However, the Livermore extension is only the first part to a final connection from BART to ACE. There are numerous options being discussed and explored to make the final connection. In fact, ACE is also undertaking an EIR process at a programmatic and project level to study options for the connection and increasing ACE service as part of its ACEForward initiative.

Some community leaders have expressed concerns that BART is not prioritizing the Livermore extension project. Additionally, as noted, the Livermore extension does not connect BART and ACE. In February 2016, local officials created the Altamont Regional Rail Working Group to focus on potential BART to ACE linkages to better connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley region. The Working Group contains local officials from the area communities, and representatives from BART and ACE. This bill builds upon this Working Group by establishing the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Regional Rail Authority and tasking it with developing a project feasibility report by July 1, 2018, for the connection of BART to ACE. The Authority may, in the future, serve as the project manager for any projects that finalize the connection; however, it is too early to determine what the project, or series of projects, may be and how they would be planned, funded, constructed, and ultimately operated.

*Previous legislation:* AB 2762 (Baker) of 2016 would have created the Altamont Pass Regional Rail Authority for the purposes of planning and delivering a cost effective and responsive interregional rail connection between BART and ACE in the City of Livermore. AB 2762 was held in this committee.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

None on file

##### **Opposition**

Bay Area Transportation Working Committee

**Analysis Prepared by:** Melissa White / TRANS. /