

Date of Hearing: June 21, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
Laura Friedman, Chair  
SB 548 (Eggman) – As Amended April 5, 2021

**SENATE VOTE:** 36-0

**SUBJECT:** Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority: transit connectivity

**SUMMARY:** Designates the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority) as a rail transit district for limited purposes and authorizes it to operate transit connectivity between the Bay Area Rapid Transit's (BART) system and the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) commuter rail service. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Exempts the Authority from having to comply with local building ordinances.
- 2) Removes the reference to the requirement that the transit connectivity be located in the Tri Valley Region.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Creates the Authority for purposes of planning, developing, and delivering cost-effective and responsive transit connectivity, between BART and ACE in the Tri-Valley region.
- 2) Grants the all powers necessary for the planning, design, development, and construction of the connection between BART and ACE.
- 3) Generally exempts the state, a city, a county, a rapid transit district, or a rail transit district whose board of directors is appointed by public bodies, from complying with applicable local building and zoning ordinances.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** San Joaquin County places in the top 10 nationally for its percentage of residents with a commute over 90 minutes long. The State Rail Plan envisions reducing the congestion in the region by connecting its cities with intercity rail.

In line with that vision, AB 978 (Eggman) Chapter 747, Statutes of 2017, established the Authority with the mandate to plan and deliver transit connectivity between BART and ACE in the Tri-Valley region and required the Authority to author a project feasibility report by October of 2019. The Authority has called the proposed project "Valley Link" and will connect ACE at North Lathrop to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station in a 42-mile stretch of rail line.



According to the feasibility report required under AB 758, “The Interstate 580 (I-580) freeway serves the Altamont Pass Corridor and ranks as one of the most congested freeways in the megaregion during peak hours due to a high volume of regional and interregional commuter, freight and recreational traffic. More than 86,000 commuters currently travel this route on a daily basis –and this number is expected to increase by up to 75 percent from 2016 to 2040.” Since 2015, San Joaquin County has had the second fastest population growth in the state. Commuters crossing regional boundaries in the area has increased by 78 percent. Northern San Joaquin Valley commuters to the Bay Area have doubled from 1990 to 2013, with nearly 16% of the workforce in the area making the commute.

The proposed 42-mile line will have seven stations and has the goal of serving 26,000 to 28,000 daily riders by 2040, potentially resulting in the reduction of 33,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually. Three of the proposed stations are within disadvantaged community geographic areas. One of those communities, Tracy, has 84% of its residents commute out of Tracy for work.

The feasibility report recommended establishing the Authority as the entity to deliver the Valley Link transit connectivity, including planning, designing, financing, constructing, operating, maintaining and leasing, developing, or disposing of land, facilities, or equipment, necessary to deliver and operate Valley Link. The Authority estimates the project will cost between \$1.8 and \$2.5 billion. On April 30, 2021, the Authority completed their environmental impact report.

Existing law exempts rail transit districts from having to comply with local building codes in order to expedite construction, in part because these projects go through multiple jurisdictions. Existing rail transit districts include: The Sonoma-Marín Area Rapid Transit District (SMART), BART, San Diego Metropolitan Transportation System (MTS), and Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT). This bill defines the Authority as a rail transit district for this exemption only.

According to the author, “the Valley Link project is a project of significant importance that will improve connectivity within the Northern California Megaregion, connecting housing, people, and jobs. This bill follows up on the enabling legislation (AB 758) passed in 2017 and is needed to help pursue project implementation that is fast, cost-effective and responsive to the goals of the communities that Valley Link will serve.”

In addition, this bill authorizes the Authority to operate the line they construct. The feasibility study drafted by the authority suggests they are looking at someone else to operate the line once completed.

The Train Riders Association of California (TRAC) are opposing this bill out of concern that “There is no justification for the need for yet another agency when the region already has more than it needs.”

The Authority, writing in support of this bill, argues “The project will meet an urgent need to connect housing and people to high paying, prevailing wage jobs throughout the Bay Area. More than 93,400 Bay Area workers are now commuting daily through this corridor - commuting an average of more than 78 minutes each way. The project will provide access to jobs and job training sites but will also create more than 22,000 jobs with an economic impact of \$4.85 billion. The project’s 74 daily round trips will serve an estimated 33,000 daily riders in 2040 - a reduction of 99.4 million vehicle miles traveled per year and 32,220 to 42,650 metric tons of GHG emissions annually.”

*Previous legislation:*

AB 758 (Eggman) Chapter 747, Statutes of 2017, created the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority to oversee the planning, development, and delivery of a connection between the Bay Area Rapid Transit and the Altamont Corridor Express in the Tri-Valley region.

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 Assembly Transportation Committee.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Bay Area Council  
 City of Dublin  
 City of Lathrop  
 City of Livermore  
 City of Manteca  
 City of Pleasanton  
 City of San Ramon  
 City of Tracy  
 Dublin Chamber of Commerce  
 Innovation Tri-valley Leadership Group  
 Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority  
 Livermore Valley Chamber of Commerce  
 Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce  
 San Joaquin County Supervisor Robert Rickman  
 San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission  
 Town of Danville  
 Tri-valley San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority

**Oppose**

Train Riders Association of California

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