



Published September 28th, 2022

CCTA updates council on its programs, projects and vision for the future

By Vera Kochan

"Connecting Communities" was the theme for Contra Costa Transportation Authority Executive Director Tim Haile's Sept. 14 town council meeting update.



Overseeing the use of Measure J funds (the one-half cent sales tax for transportation improvements), Haile touched on the many areas that have kept CCTA busy such as sidewalk improvements for pedestrians; smoothing traffic flow on major streets; investing in a better bus network; focusing on safe routes to schools; expanding the ferry system between West County and San Francisco; investing in safe bicycle routes; improving BART's service and stations; completing Contra Costa's highway system and improving air quality; implementing a smart transportation infrastructure; and enhancing transit options for seniors and the disabled.

CCTA is developing an electric readiness program
Photo courtesy CCTA

By leveraging local funding from Measures C/J (\$1.4 billion) and State/Regional/Federal Funds (\$4.2 billion), CCTA is able to invest the combined \$5.6 billion into some of the many projects CCTA has overseen, namely the fourth bore construction of the Caldecott Tunnel; I-680 improvements (express and auxiliary lanes); bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Treat Boulevard and San Pablo Dam Road; widening of Kirker Pass Road and Vasco Road; Highway 4 improvements; BART extensions in Pittsburg and Antioch; a Richmond train station; and expanded and improved bike/pedestrian trails.

"One thing that's been our mantra is that it's time for a change," stated Haile. "The big message we got from the public is transportation is broken." To that end, CCTA is looking into developing a more cohesive Countywide Safety through a Connected Signal System. This would install modern traffic controllers in all 19 cities and towns in Contra Costa County. It should create a proactive approach to safety by identifying "close call" situations and preventing future tragedies. CCTA would also install bicycle detection software; prioritize potential corridor clearing for emergency vehicles; develop transit vehicle priority; create a smart infrastructure; and control/smooth traffic flow.

CCTA is also leading an effort to build a better transportation system. Haile acknowledged that some roads can never be widened to create more traffic lanes, and as such creating alternative transportation methods, especially in and around Moraga, are vital.

Clean Corridors is a high priority with CCTA, since Gov. Gavin Newsom's latest mandate demands that by 2035, all passenger vehicles sold must be electric, and by 2050, all transit vehicles must also comply. CCTA is developing an electric readiness program and is looking for grant funding to upgrade the county's infrastructure.

CCTA is also working on an Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan that makes transportation options available to seniors and the disabled for doctor visits, shopping trips, etc., whereby individuals don't have to take several modes of transportation to get to their destination.

Always looking for innovative ideas, in 2018, CCTA acquired the former Concord Naval Weapons Station in Concord, Calif., using it as a testing facility (calling it GoMentum).? It is currently experimenting with vehicular transportation and technology options. A new concept called Glydways, that closely resembles Disneyland's People Mover ride, could be a mobility alternative of the future.

Lastly, CCTA is working to Innovate 680. The concept involves six projects along one fully connected corridor: completion of the Express Lane; use of existing Park & Ride lots; addition of data-gathering ramp meters; a personalized mobility options app; enable buses to travel on dedicated shoulder lanes to bypass congestion; and addition of automated driving systems for more accessible travel options for the elderly and disabled.

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