

## VALLEY'S 1<sup>ST</sup> TRANSIT VILLAGE?

By: Dennis Wyatt

Cambay Group is offering to build a station for Valley Link — the budding rail system that will connect South San Joaquin County to the Dublin BART station — in exchange for being able to create the 209's first transit village from the ground up.

The offer would cover the cost of the station the Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Regional Rail Authority wants to build on River Islands as the initial South County terminus to the BART link.

River Islands Project Manager Susan Dell'Osso noted BART's decision to turn over efforts to extend rail service to the east has given the Tri Valley-San Joaquin effort \$632 million or roughly a third of the cost needed to cover the 62 miles to the Dublin station. Environmental work is expected to be completed next summer.

Dell'Osso believes the congestion relief project could realistically be up and running in five or so years.

What River Islands would like to do is build a transit village on roughly four acres to provide housing for around 2,000 people along with shop and restaurant space built around the station along with a public gathering area.

Unlike other transit villages being pursued or in various stages of development throughout the Bay Area and Sacramento, a River Islands project would literally be from scratch as it would entail using raw land.

It also would have another feature that can't be matched by any existing transit village in California: It would be on the door step of a planned 350-acre business park that could ultimately generate 16,800 jobs.

"We can see it (the BART connection) leading to a reverse commute," Dell'Osso said.

The Valley Link plan is to have shorter trains departing every 15 minutes during commute hours departing to and from the Dublin BART station. BART trains depart from Dublin every 30 minutes.

River Islands pursuing

'Grade A' business park

Cambay Group has purposely designed its 4,800-acre project that will be surrounded by a universally accessible 18-mile linear park overlooking the San Joaquin River and various water connections so it would be positioned to lure "Grade A" style business park tenants much like the Hacienda Business Park in Pleasanton or the Bishop Ranch Business Park in San Ramon where Chevron Oil is headquartered.

Every time a home closes escrow at River Islands at Lathrop, \$5,000 is paid into an account designed to lure employers to the planned community's envisioned 350-acre business park.

That fee — along with the housing mix and lifestyle Cambay Group is creating — could be the key to help Lathrop do what no other Northern San Joaquin Valley city has done. And that is to create a large business park devoted exclusively to research and development, office headquarters and laboratory space.

The goal is to create 16,800 jobs to balance the 11,000 homes being built.

Dell'Osso noted the business park has been restricted by the city at River Islands' insistence to purposely prohibit distribution and other firms that generate truck traffic.

River Islands will offer the 209 region's largest concentration of executive-style homes with 990 lots atop a 300-foot wide levee with access to the 18-mile continuous greenbelt park with commanding views of the San Joaquin River as well as apartments, and single family homes built around numerous lakes.

The strategy of Cambay Group is to develop a desirable community with easy access by passenger rail to the Bay Area to serve as an enticement for firms that want to move out of the high cost Bay Area to take advantage of a pool of 80,000 workers — many of whom are in the tech fields — that commute each day from the Northern San Joaquin Valley to San Jose, the Silicon Valley, and San Francisco.

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The first phase of Valley Link aims to have commuters from Lathrop and Manteca to be able to hop aboard a station at River Islands to cover the distance to the Dublin BART station by rail. The 62-mile trip by vehicle today can take as long as 100 minutes. It would take significant pressure off the Altamont Pass/Interstate 580 corridor that has over 65,000 vehicles daily that is expected to grow by 60 percent over the next 20 years. That is in addition to the 14,000 trucks per day that travel the corridor. A second phase would extend Valley Link to Stockton as well as connect with the Altamont Corridor Express between Lathrop and Manteca.

Initial preliminary plans call for service to start from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station with stops at Isabel to the west of Livermore and Greenville Road in Livermore. The future extension currently calls for two more stops in Tracy — one at Coral Hollow and the other in downtown — as well as River Islands.

Dell'Osso noted parking for valley commuters who do not live on River Islands who will catch a Valley Link train at River islands would be provided on land just on the east side of the tracks that is not part of the planned community.

ACE project to Ceres

is moving forward

The Valley Link project is in addition to efforts now underway extend Altamont Corridor Express service south to Ceres by 2023 and ultimately to Modesto using money the California Legislature set aside as part of the gas tax hike deal. The ACE extension will bring rail service to downtown Manteca Ripon and Modesto as well as Ceres in the first phase. Ultimately ACE stops would be added in Turlock, Atwater and Merced.

The rail connection of BART and ACE — the purpose of created by Assembly Bill 758 — will feature either diesel or electric multiple unit technology.

Within Tracy the Valley Link system will utilize Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The trains will travel through the Altamont Pass on the historic Transcontinental Railroad right-of-way that's now owned by Alameda County. It would then connect to BART by traveling down the Interstate 580 median.

Beyond providing a much sought after commuter link by many who live in the 209 and work in areas served by BART between Dublin/Pleasanton and San Francisco, the BART to ACE link would also connect 500 miles of commuter and intercity rail lines with more than 130 stations in the Northern California metroplex.

It would ultimately be feasible to catch a train in Merced and — with connections that are station-to-station or very short shuttle runs — travel to downtown San Francisco, downtown San Jose, San Francisco International Airport, Stockton, Sacramento, Lawrence Livermore Lab, Levi's Stadium, and the Oakland Coliseum among other destinations.

You could step on a train in downtown Manteca, Lathrop-Manteca, Ripon or River Islands to access that 500-mile network that includes 130 stations making mass transit a viable alternative to commute to jobs, travel to reach entertainment venues, shop, attend school, and other purposes.

Agencies involved with the Tri Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority are the cities of Manteca, Lathrop, Stockton, Tracy, Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin and San Ramon, the Town of Danville, Mountain House Community Services District, San Joaquin and Alameda counties, Livermore Amador Transit Authority, BART, and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (ACE).