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transportation

## Commuters ride BART for Livermore extension

LIVERMORE - San Joaquin County residents will soon be able to join a petition already signed by more than 1,000 Tri-Valley residents who want BART to build a Livermore stop as promised about 40 years ago.

Many local residents who often commute on Interstate 580 say they would like to have a Bay Area Rapid Transit station closer to home.

"If there was one, I would use it," said Mountain House resident Pravin Balasubramaniam, who commutes to Concord every day. "I could avoid the traffic."

Linda Jeffery Sailors, a Livermore resident and former Dublin mayor, spearheaded the petition. On Thursday, she presented about 900 signatures to the BART board of directors.

In response, the board pledged to reconvene the Livermore I-580 Corridor Committee, made up of board members. That committee will consider, among other things, whether to further study a Livermore BART extension, officials said.

Sailors said Livermore residents were promised a BART extension decades ago. She began circulating a petition last month, calling attention to the fact that Livermore residents have paid taxes to support the BART system yet have no station of their own.

Voters within the BART district passed Proposition A in 1962, authorizing \$792 million for BART. Property taxes paid off those bonds by 1999, BART officials said.

Taxpayers, including Livermore residents, continued to finance the BART system with a half-cent sales tax the Legislature passed in 1970.

Some Tri-Valley residents were angry when BART began discussing a potential extension to San Jose, a city that is not paying into the BART system.

BART officials said the district's funding source shrunk after a handful of counties dropped out of the BART district. As a result, BART was forced to scale back its plans for certain extensions, including Livermore.

"People are outraged, and I am one of them," Sailors said, adding that a Livermore BART station would help reduce traffic congestion across the Tri-Valley.

Last year, the westbound morning commute along I-580 at Livermore ranked as the second-most-congested spot in the Bay Area, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's transportation planning agency.

That commute only will get more clogged, because the number of commuters coming from the Central Valley is expected to grow by about 90 percent in the next three decades, according to

the MTC.

But BART officials have no plans to extend the train to Livermore any time soon. There is neither the ridership nor the money to support an extension, said Linton Johnson, a BART spokesman.

A BART 2004 study showed that extending BART to Livermore alone would attract about 13,000 riders on an average weekday, yet it would cost \$1.2 billion to build and \$28 million to operate annually.

In comparison, the San Francisco International Airport extension, which is the most recent BART line, has about 28,000 riders on an average weekday, BART officials said.

"Livermore is not a priority because there is not ridership," Johnson said.

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