

# VTA: Please Preserve our Lifeline Transit Service

"I don't think we're bad at sharing, but I don't remember a time when the VTA came to us and said, 'We really need to increase bus service.' In my recollection, as far back as I can recall, the tendency has been to cut, especially at either end of the county and on the edges." – Palo Alto City Councilwoman Liz Kniss

Make your voice heard at  
**<http://newtransitplan.vta.org/comment>**

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This presentation provides background information on VTA's proposed service elimination in Almaden Valley.  
Almaden Valley Community Association (AVCA) maintains neutrality in policy matters.

# Why are we here today?

**VTA proposes elimination of the only bus route that runs the entire length of Almaden Valley, claiming low ridership. Ridership used to be over 3½ times higher, but fell in lockstep with every VTA service cut.**

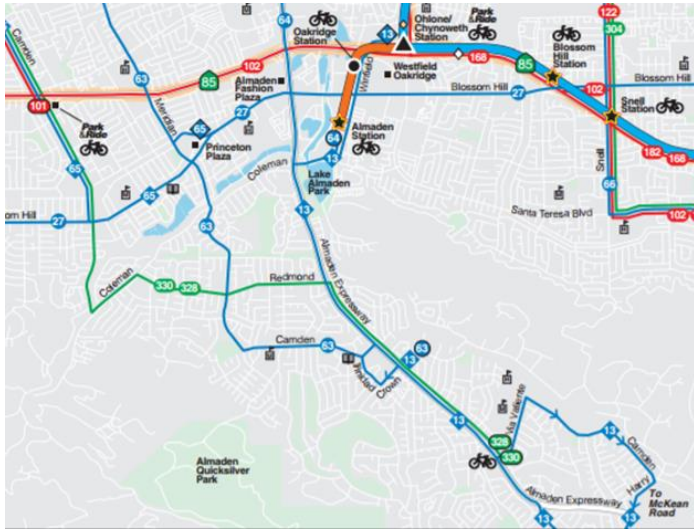
- In 2017, in order to improve service in other areas, VTA almost canceled *all* Almaden Valley transit service. VTA backed off due to public opposition and agreed to a new, improved route.
- Now, VTA is proposing to eliminate this promised **improved** route even before implementation and a chance to build ridership
- Citing budget shortfalls, VTA is cutting Almaden Valley service but increasing service to South County (Morgan Hill and Gilroy), where ridership is similar to Almaden's. Why are multiple South County bus routes explicitly protected from cuts when the only viable route through Almaden Valley is not?
- While Almaden Valley taxpayers have generously supported transit throughout the county, we have already sacrificed enough – VTA has cut over 90% of Almaden Valley service since the 1980s. Why is VTA now targeting the one remaining viable lifeline bus through this Valley, less than 0.2% of its operating budget?
- Losing this remaining service would immeasurably harm transit-dependent riders

# Why should I care about VTA cutting Almaden Valley's remaining transit service?

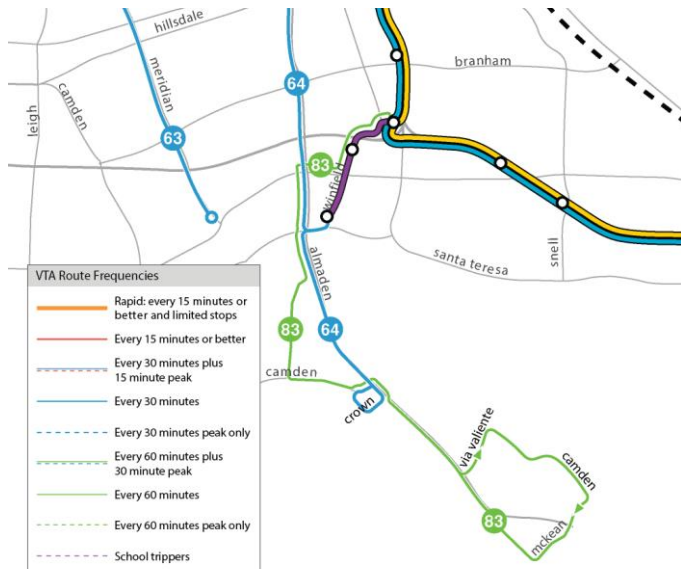
	<p>Without transit service, many senior citizens, people with disabilities and non-drivers will become essentially imprisoned in their own homes.</p>
	<p>Leland, Bret Harte and Castillero will lose all transit service. If parents are not available to drive them, many students may have difficulty reaching school, after-school activities, the public library, jobs and internships to prepare them for adulthood.</p>
	<p>Parents with busy schedules may have to shorten work hours just to get their kids to and from school. Added congestion around schools inconveniences every nearby driver, not just parents.</p>
	<p>Transit riders, including retail industry workers and shoppers, will lose access to Oakridge Mall and other shopping centers.</p>
	<p>Almaden Valley taxpayers contribute about \$17 million to VTA's transit budget annually*, but VTA is not setting aside less than 5% of this amount to provide some of Almaden Valley's most vulnerable residents with basic mobility.</p>

\*0.5% 1976 Sales Tax, 0.25% State Transportation Development Act, 0.5% 2000 Measure A, 0.125% 2008 Measure B, 0.5% 2016 Measure B. Assumes taxpayer contributions to VTA are proportional to population.

# What happened in 2017?



VTA's Existing Service

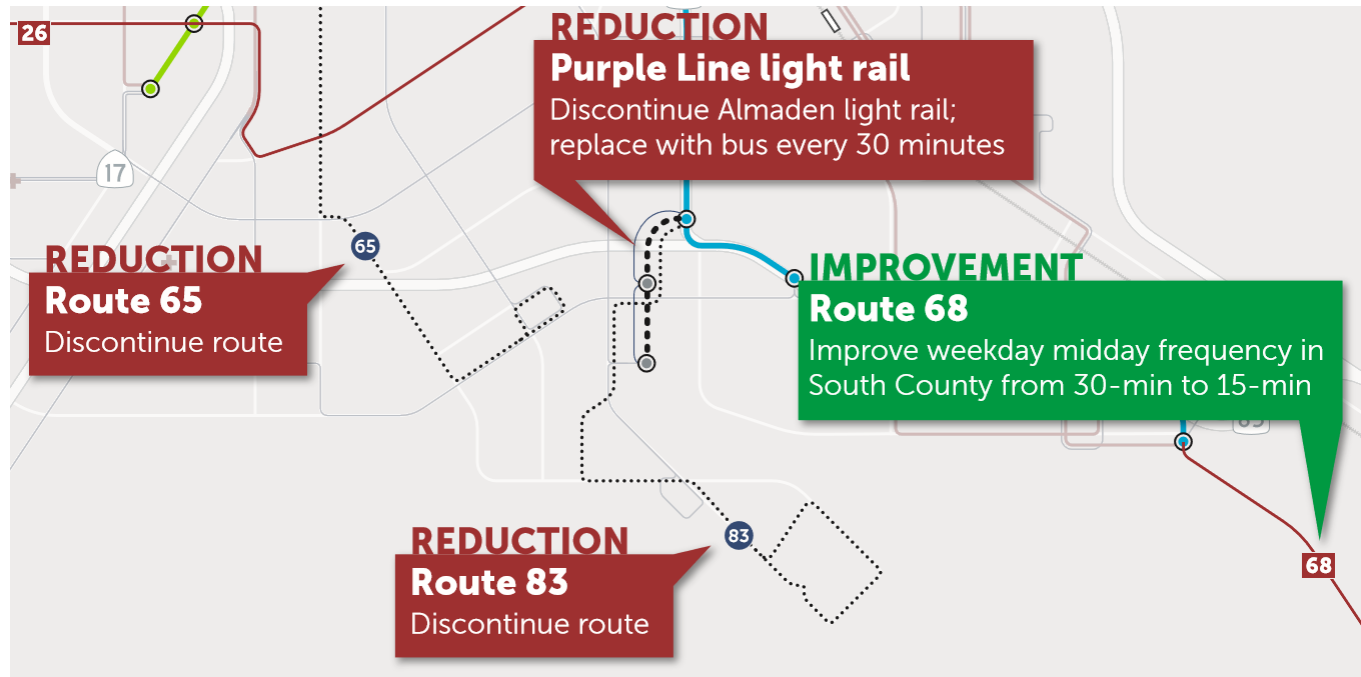


VTA's Final Next Network Plan

(approved in 2017 but never implemented)

- VTA developed its “Next Network” to restructure transit routes for BART to San Jose
- VTA’s principle was to cut outlying routes to make core routes more frequent
- VTA proposed eliminating all existing transit in Almaden Valley
  - Route 13, Almaden Valley’s primary route that operates the length of the valley
  - Route 63, which operates along Meridian Ave and ends at Almaden & Camden
  - Routes 328 and 330, limited-stop commuter routes to Lockheed and North San Jose
- At a public hearing, over 100 constituents explained how they would be hurt by losing Route 13 and pleaded with VTA staff to save it
- Guided by public input, VTA reversed course and approved a new service plan
  - A new Route 83 that replaces current Route 13 and serves more destinations
  - An extension of Route 64 from Almaden Light Rail to Almaden & Camden
  - Eliminate all other routes as proposed

# But now, VTA is not fulfilling its promise to Almaden Valley



- Due to BART construction delays, VTA's Next Network has not yet been implemented.
- Facing a deficit, VTA now proposes overall service cuts to Next Network – *though it plans further increased service in some already well-served areas.*
- Despite its 2017 commitment, **VTA plans to eliminate Route 83** even before implementing it and letting it grow ridership. It is also replacing the light rail shuttle with a less-frequent bus.
- Route 83 would use just one bus, less than 0.2% of VTA's operating budget. Eliminating it would not solve VTA's budget issues, but would immeasurably harm riders.
- Other underserved areas of Santa Clara County, such as Morgan Hill and Gilroy, are explicitly protected from VTA's latest service cuts – Why not Almaden Valley?

# Almaden Valley has already lost over 90% of its service

Almaden Valley			Almaden Valley		
New Almaden	Almaden Expy. & Via Vallente	Almaden Expy. & Blossom Hill	New Almaden	Almaden Expy. & Via Vallente	Almaden Expy. & Blossom Hill
	526	536	115	125	
539	547	557	122	130	140
552	600	610	152	145	155
	615	625		200	210
				210	220
622	630	640		220	230
	642	653	222	230	242
643	651	702		240	251
	700	711	247	255	305
	710	721		310	320
717	725	736	322	330	340
	744	754		345	355
752	800	810	352	400	410
				415	425
			422	430	440
	815	825		445	455
822	830	840	452	500	510
	845	855		515	525
852	900	910	522	530	540
	915	925	552	600	610
922	930	940			
	945	955	622	630	640
952	1000	1010		652	700
	1015	1025		722	730
1022	1030	1040		822	830
	1045	1055	922	830	840
1052	1100	1110		922	930
	1115	1125			
1122	1130	1140	1022	1030	1040
	1145	1155	1122	1130	1140
1152	1200	1210			
	1215	1225			
1222	1230	1240			
	1245	1255			
1252	100	110			

(Schedule continues in next column)

New Almaden	Almaden & McKean	Almaden Expy. & Via Vallente
521	526	532
	552	600
	617	625
625	630	638
	655	703
721	726	734
	741	749
800	805	813
	828	836
	858	906
	928	936
	958	1006
1029	1034	1042
	1108	1116
	1138	1146
	1208	1216
	1238	1246
	122	130
	209	217
233	238	246
314	319	327
	343	351
408	413	421
	435	443
	459	507
	525	533
545	550	558
627	632	639
	730	737
	828	835

Almaden Expy. & Via Vallente	Almaden Expy. & Camden	Almaden LRT Station	Ohlone Chynoweth LRT Station
A	B	C	D
6:38	6:41	6:46	6:54
7:40	7:43	7:48	7:56
8:53	8:56	9:01	9:09
9:53	9:56	10:01	10:09
10:53	10:56	11:01	11:09
12:04	12:07	12:13	12:22
1:09	1:12	1:18	1:27
2:31	2:34	2:40	2:49
3:31	3:34	3:40	3:49
4:30	4:33	4:39	4:48
5:29	5:33	5:39	5:49
6:29	6:33	6:39	6:49



**VTA has already cut service to Almaden Valley by at least 90%, including losses to Routes 63 (Meridian Ave.) and 65 (Redmond Ave.)**

\*Only bus schedules along Almaden Expy corridor shown here.

## 1981

- Service until midnight daily
- Weekdays: Every 15 min
- Weekends: Every 30 min
- New Almaden: Every 30 min
- **59** weekday + **30** weekend trips

## 1996

- Service until 9 pm daily
- Weekdays: Every 20 min rush hours, 30 min midday
- Weekends: Every 60 min
- New Almaden: limited service
- **30** weekday + **14** weekend trips

## 2019

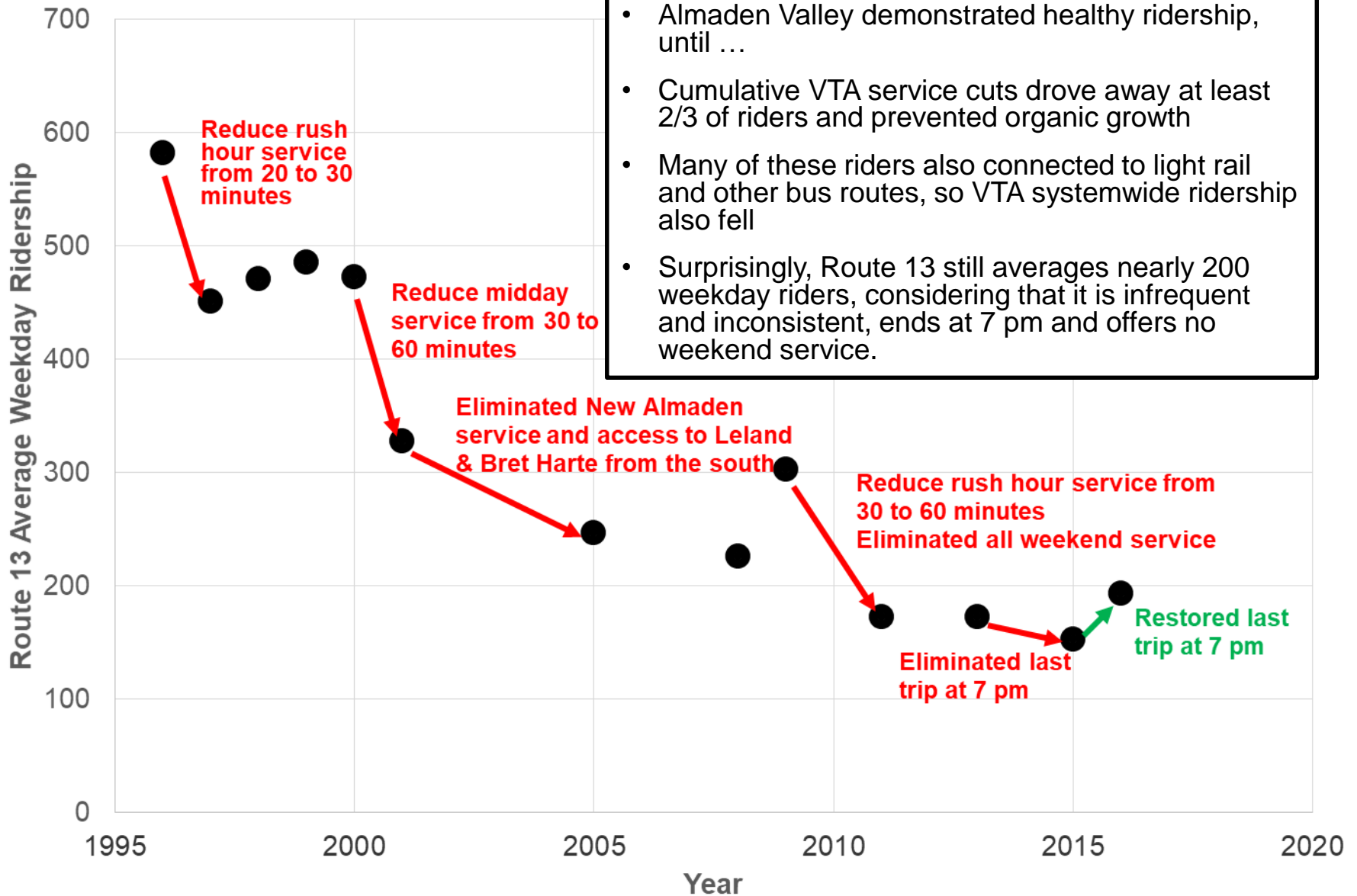
- Service until 7 pm weekdays only
- Weekdays: Every 60-83 min
- No weekend service
- No New Almaden service
- **12** weekday trips

## VTA Proposal

- No service for entire length of Almaden Valley

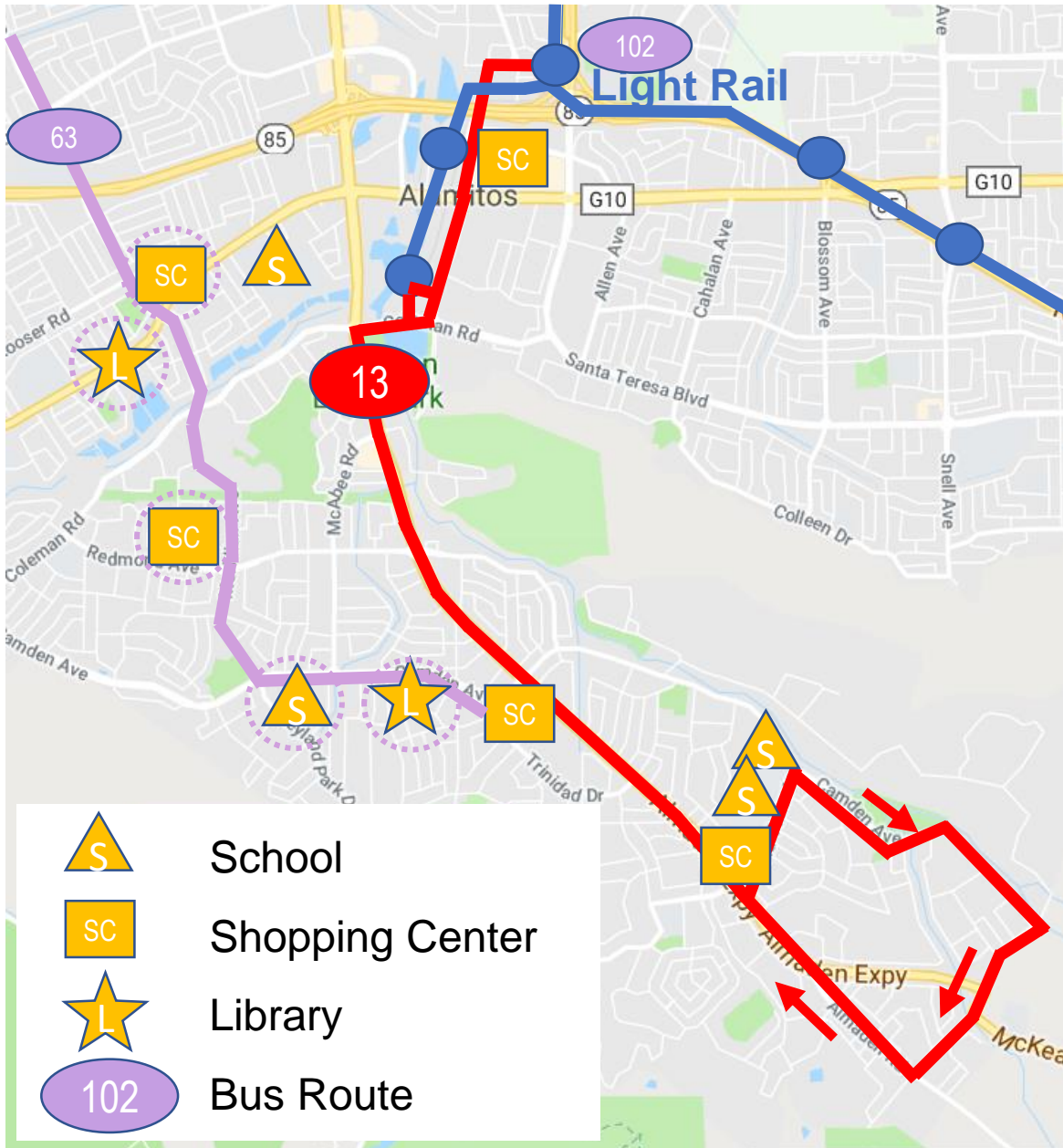


# These past service cuts have driven away ridership



- Almaden Valley demonstrated healthy ridership, until ...
- Cumulative VTA service cuts drove away at least 2/3 of riders and prevented organic growth
- Many of these riders also connected to light rail and other bus routes, so VTA systemwide ridership also fell
- Surprisingly, Route 13 still averages nearly 200 weekday riders, considering that it is infrequent and inconsistent, ends at 7 pm and offers no weekend service.

# Current Route 13 – A Lifeline Service



Despite past VTA service cuts, Route 13 still provides valuable lifeline service operating the length of Almaden Valley

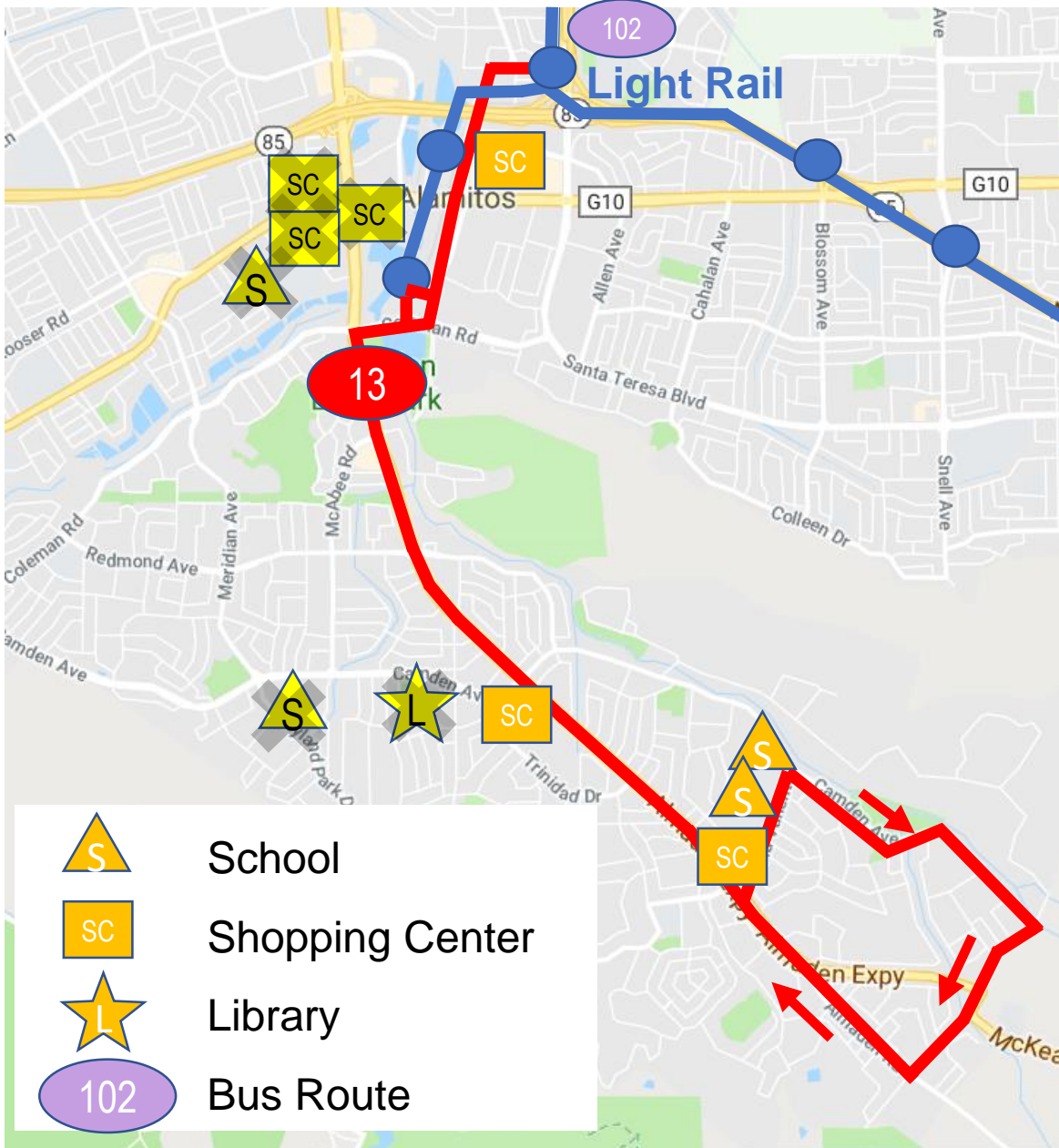
## Destinations and Connections

- Light Rail
- Express Bus 102
- Oakridge Mall
- Almaden Center (Safeway)
- Leland High School (*no service from south*)
- Bret Harte Middle School
- Via Valiente Plaza
- Harry Rd

Route 63 provides a similar lifeline service to the northwest corner of Almaden Valley, but VTA has already decided to eliminate it



# Current Route 13 – Deficiencies Limit Ridership



## Limited Service

- Infrequent (60-83 minutes)
- No evening or weekend service (last bus at 7 pm)
- Inconsistent frequency (60, 63, 69, 72 or 83 minutes) makes it impossible to coordinate schedules with other routes

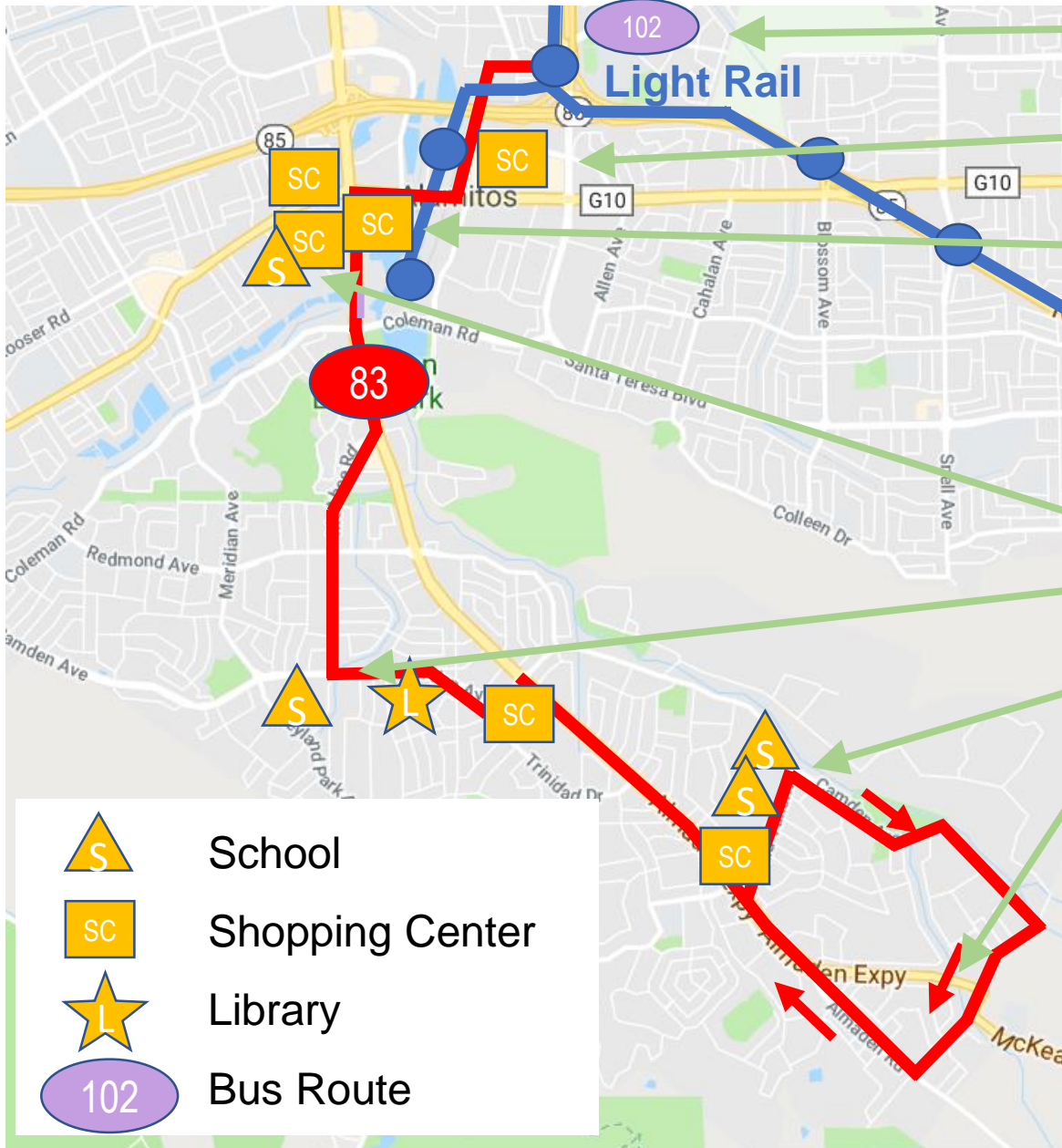
## Misses Primary Destinations

- Almaden Fashion Plaza and other large shopping centers at Almaden & Blossom Hill
- Castillero Middle School
- Almaden Library

## Duplicates Almaden Light Rail Shuttle

- Unnecessary, time-consuming diversion into Almaden Station when riders connect to light rail at Ohlone-Chynoweth Station

# New Route 83 corrects many current Route 13 deficiencies

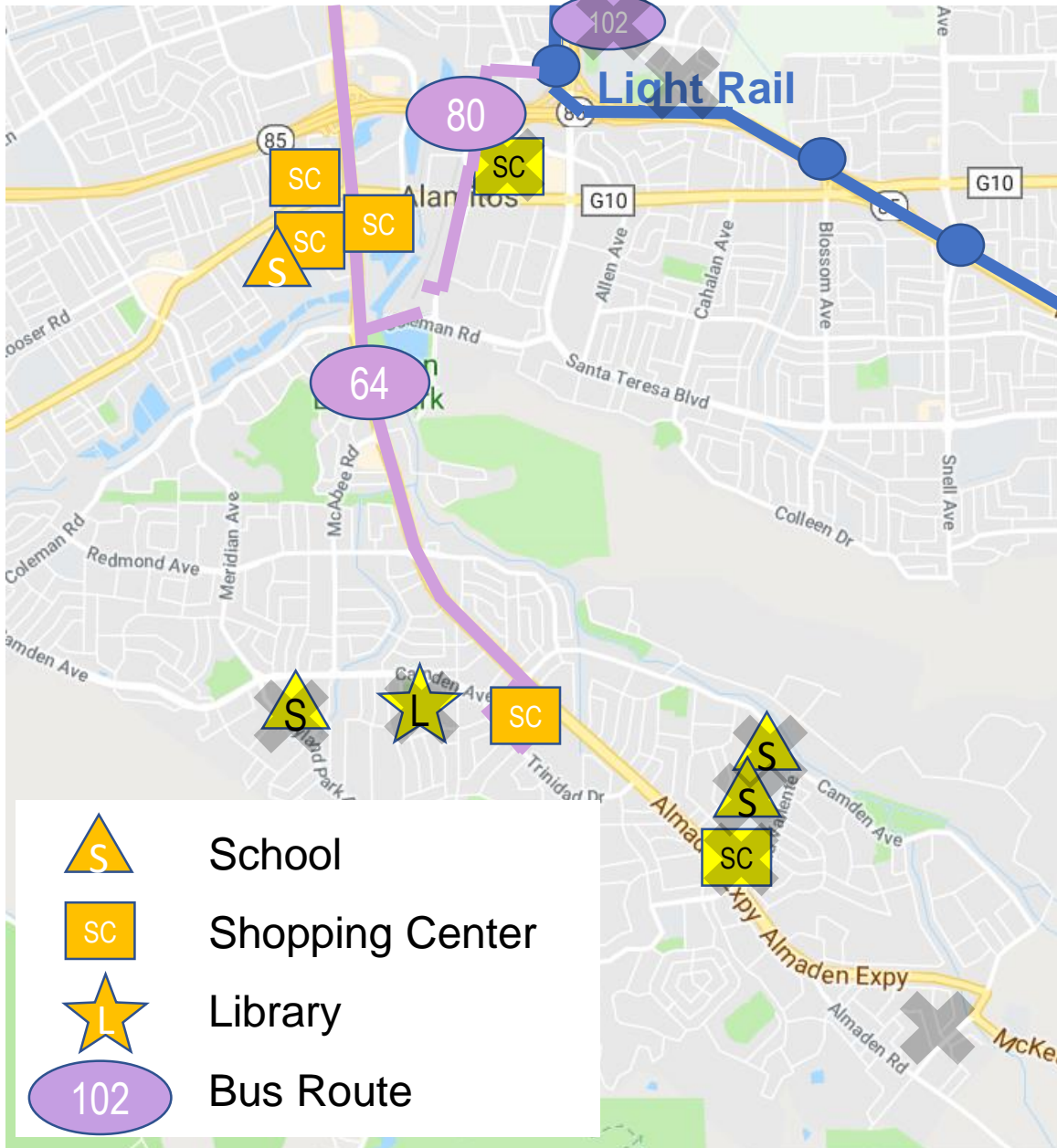


- Retains connections to **Light Rail** mainline and **Express 102**
- Retains service to **Oakridge Mall**
- Replaces time-consuming diversion into Almaden Light Rail Station with new service to **Almaden Fashion Plaza** and other shopping centers at Almaden & Blossom Hill
- Closer to **Pioneer High**
- New service to **Castillero** and **Almaden Library**
- Retains service to **Bret Harte** and **Leland High**
- Retains service to **Harry Rd.** that has no other transit options

*Route 83 serves many more key destinations than Route 13*

*In its 2017 Next Network plan, VTA committed to operating this service every 60 minutes*

# VTA's 2019 New Transit Service Plan – Not good enough



- Extend Route 64 to Almaden & Camden “without the need for an additional bus”
- Replace Almaden Light Rail shuttle with Route 80 bus

**Thousands of Almaden residents lose transit access**

**Route 64 misses key destinations**

- Light Rail\*
- Express Bus 102
- Oakridge Mall
- Castillero Middle School
- Bret Harte Middle School
- Leland High School
- Via Valiente Plaza
- Almaden Library

**Route 64 is slower**

- 20 minutes longer to Downtown San Jose than light rail

**Route 80 has low ridership potential**

- Only 1 mile long



# VTA's Route 63 Meridian Ave. proposal to skip Almaden Valley does not save any buses It just lowers ridership and strands people

Route 63 Summary Analysis of Bus Requirements		Downtown San Jose to Almaden Valley	Downtown San Jose to Blossom Hill Rd (no Almaden Valley)
Weekdays	Service Frequency	30 min	30 min
	Round Trip Time (Driving only, no breaks)	102 min	86 min
	Round Trip Time (Driver only gets 5 minutes each way for break and traffic delays)	112 min	96 min
	Buses needed (Round Trip Time/Frequency*)	4	4 <b>(No Savings)</b>
Weekends	Service Frequency	60 min	60 min
	Round Trip Time (Driving only, no breaks)	91 min	74 min
	Round Trip Time (Driver only gets 5 minutes each way for break and traffic delays)	101 min	84 min
	Buses needed (Round Trip Time/Frequency*)	2	2 <b>(No Savings)</b>

\* Rounded up - cannot operate a fraction of a bus

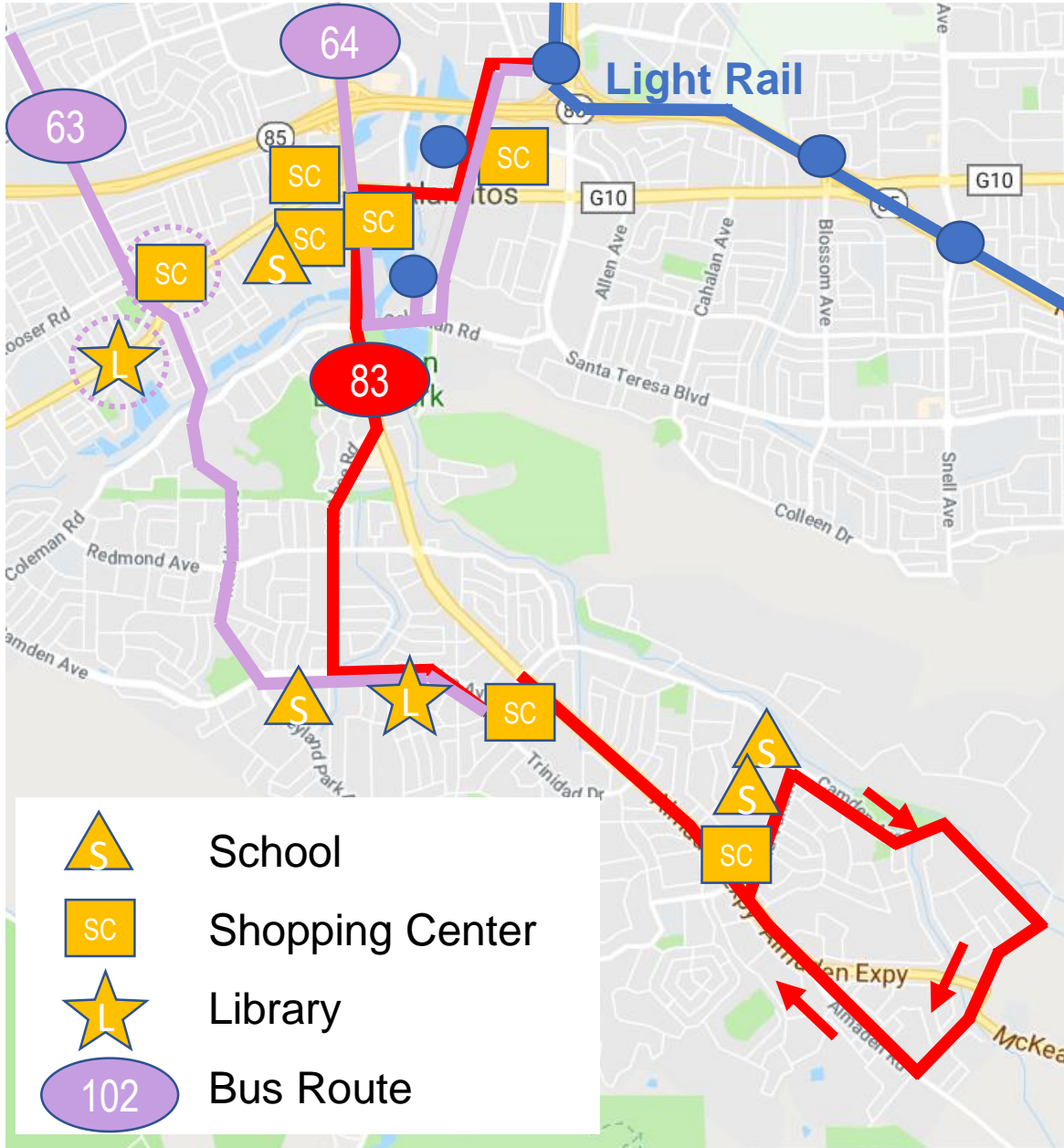
# VTA is open to ideas, particularly ones that do not cost any more than their current plan

- Route 83 deserves to be implemented to address the current deficiencies of Route 13 and its resulting “low” ridership
- VTA’s 2019 New Transit Service Plan has **already committed** the two following resources for Almaden Valley:
  1. Route 64 extension to Almaden & Camden only, “without the need for an additional bus”\*
  2. Route 80 Almaden Shuttle bus to replace light rail shuttle (1 bus circulating every 30 minutes during the following hours: 6 am-10:30 pm weekdays, 8 am-10 pm Saturdays, 8 am-8 pm Sundays)
- Can VTA come up with a better plan to help Almaden Valley? VTA is open to suggestions, particularly ones that don’t cost more than their current plan. Is there ...

**A Winning VTA Solution for Almaden**  
**Dramatically improves service using only the limited**  
**resources VTA has already committed to Almaden Valley**

\*From “Seeking Input on Proposed Service Changes for Almaden Area of San Jose”, [www.vta.org](http://www.vta.org), February 6, 2019

# “A Winning VTA Solution for Almaden”



**Route 64** Extend to Ohlone-Chynoweth Light Rail to cover Almaden Shuttle  
*Net Buses needed:* 0 (enough time in schedule currently)

5:30 am-12 midnight weekdays (30 min)  
 6:30 am-12 midnight Saturdays (30 min)  
 7 am-11 pm Sundays (30 min)

**Route 83** Use bus service hours designated for Route 80 (Almaden Shuttle)  
*Net Buses needed:* 0

6 am-10:30 pm weekdays (60 min)  
 8 am-10 pm Saturdays (60 min)  
 8 am-8 pm Sundays (60 min)

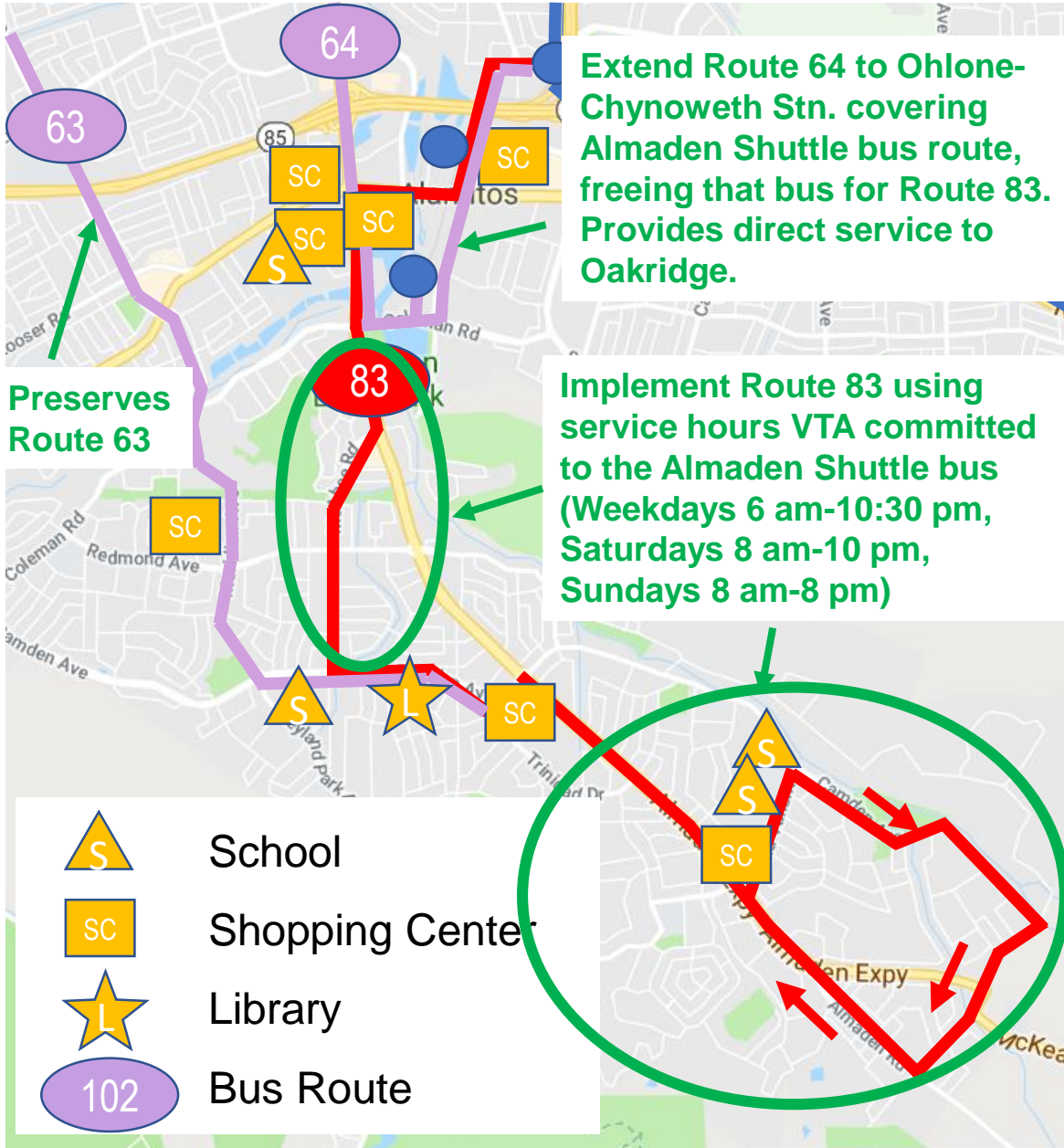
**Route 63** Continue to operate to Almaden & Camden  
*Net Buses needed\*:* 0 (enough time in schedule currently)

6 am-9 pm weekdays (30 min)  
 8 am-7 pm Saturdays (60 min)  
 9 am-6 pm Sundays (60 min)

\*4 buses weekdays, 2 buses weekends. Our analysis shows that ending Route 63 at Blossom Hill Rd. is *unlikely to save any buses* if VTA is to operate the route reliably.<sup>14</sup>



# “A Winning VTA Solution for Almaden” Benefits



- Preserves and enhances lifeline service to Almaden Valley using the resources VTA has already committed in its new transit plan.
- Thousands of residents keep access to transit service
- **Route 64:** Makes Almaden Shuttle bus more useful by incorporating it into Route 64, so riders from Willow Glen can access Oakridge Mall directly
- **Route 83:** Serves key Almaden Valley destinations. Expands service hours (from 7 pm to 10:30 pm weekdays) and restores weekend service (8 am-10 pm Saturdays, 8 am-8 pm Sundays)
- **Route 63:** Preserves service on Meridian Ave. to northwest Almaden Valley. Our analysis: ending Route 63 at Blossom Hill Rd. is unlikely to save *any* buses if VTA is to operate the route reliably.

# VTA: Please implement Route 83, a lifeline transit service Part of the “Winning VTA Solution for Almaden”

- Past VTA service cuts caused our massive ridership losses, “justifying” further service cuts and resulting in a continuing downward spiral. Ridership has been and can be much higher.
- After public opposition to VTA’s plan to cut all Almaden Valley service in 2017, VTA instead approved a new Route 83, a redesign of current Route 13 serving more destinations.
- Faced with a budget deficit, VTA now proposes elimination of Route 83 before implementation and a chance to build ridership – yet budget is not a constraint for VTA’s plans to further increase service on other routes, including ones already well-served.
- VTA has already eliminated over 90% of Almaden Valley service. *Why is VTA now targeting that one remaining viable bus that uses less than 0.2% of VTA’s operating budget (less than 5% of Almaden Valley’s \$17 million tax contribution through sales taxes)?* Almaden Valley taxpayers deserve to keep at least a tiny sliver for a bus that serves the length of our valley.
- Transit is an essential service for students, seniors, people with disabilities and non-drivers. Other underserved areas of Santa Clara County, such as Morgan Hill and Gilroy, are explicitly protected from VTA’s latest service cuts – but not Almaden Valley. *Why?*
- Can we still have “**A Winning VTA Solution for Almaden**” only with the very limited resources VTA has committed to Almaden Valley under its 2019 New Transit Service Plan?
- Yes! Our proposal preserves and enhances lifeline service to Almaden Valley, making sure that seniors, people with disabilities, students and other residents keep access to transit.
- **VTA, please work with us to make transit better using at least the service you have committed to us. Please implement Route 83 and make a good-faith effort to build ridership in Almaden Valley.**