

Behind-the-fence photos of BART's extension into Santa Clara County

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For those who live near the two South Bay BART stations now under construction — one at the intersection of Montague Expressway and East Capitol Avenue in Milpitas or at Berryessa — BART's extension is airborne dust and dirt, giant piles of both, and growing concrete shapes.

BART doesn't yet look like a railroad being born unless you get a tour from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, like the Business Journal did for the slide show accompanying this story.

VTA is building the 10-mile Phase I BART extension south from the Alameda County line and the new station at Warm Springs/South Fremont.

Passenger service is scheduled to begin in about a year (later this year at Warm Springs), but the third rail that will carry a thousand volts of electricity to power the trains will be energized for the first time this month.

Because the third rail is at ground level — unlike the overhead wires, called “catenary,” that deliver electricity to VTA's light rail trains — BART's right-of-way is restricted and completely grade-separated so that humans don't come in contact with it.

Over the past four years, VTA construction workers have:

- Built bridges and 2.5 miles of trenches so that the BART line's intersections with 13 streets and roads are grade-separated.
- Laid 20 miles of track (separate north- and southbound lines for 10 miles) including a one-mile aerial section.

If voters approve a county transportation improvement measure in November, Phase II of the project will tack on six more miles of track from Berryessa beneath Santa Clara Street to Diridon Station and then north to Santa Clara adjacent to the Caltrain station.

That portion is expected to begin carrying passengers in 2025, the same time as high-speed rail's planned arrival at Diridon.