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## New rail system connecting Salinas to Bay Area is picking up steam

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With \$70 million in state funding already on the table for the Salinas Rail Extension, the project is now being designed and needs more space. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County Board Members met this week to talk about the project moving forward.

"We're focusing a lot of energy right now on being able to acquire the properties that will enable us to have Lincoln Avenue extended through to the train station, to be able to have safe and signalized access through the train station," said Christian Watson with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County.

The new transportation center and rail service, just off of west Market Street, will provide two round trips daily from Salinas to San Jose. It's mean to give locals who work or play in the Silicon Valley the chance to escape congestion on Hwy 101.

"The farthest I go is to Sand City, Seaside, Los Gatos, Morgan Hill, Los Banos," said Salinas resident Albert Dimes Jr. "I would like for that extension to come through."

Other than traffic relief, Salinas Public Works said the new system is needed to help revive the downtown.

"We also have great facilities downtown with great restaurants and live entertainment and things to do," said Salinas Public Works Assistant Director Don Reynolds. "So it just makes it a destination to itself, it completes the whole picture."

The rail extension will also promote more development in the area, reduce greenhouses gases and create 825 jobs locally and regionally.

"There's jobs created in the construction process as well as in the operations of the trains itself," said Watson.

Transportation officials said they hope to have the rail line up and running by 2020.