



## Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

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### MINUTES

Thursday  
May 6, 2010  
9:00 a.m.

Board of Supervisors Chambers  
701 Ocean St  
Santa Cruz CA 95060

1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am.

Members present:

Dene Bustichi	John Leopold
Tony Campos	Kirby Nicol
Neal Coonerty	Ellen Pirie
Ron Graves	Antonio Rivas
Randy Johnson	Mark Stone
Don Lane	Marcela Tavantzis
Aileen Loe (ex officio)	

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Gini Pineda
Grace Blakeslee	Karena Pushnik
Cory Caletti	Rachel Moriconi

2. Oral communications

**Jack Nelson**, noting the current oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico and other spills throughout the world, asked that the Commission think carefully about decisions that depend on fossil fuel.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Executive Director George Dondero reported that additional materials for Item 20 and add-on and replacement pages for Item 21 were distributed.

**CONSENT AGENDA- (Leopold/Rivas – unanimous)**

**MINUTES**

4. Approved draft minutes of the April 1, 2010 regular SCCRTC meeting
5. Approved draft minutes of the April 14, 2010 Transportation Policy Workshop meeting
6. Accepted draft minutes of the April 12, 2010 Bicycle Committee meeting
7. Accepted draft minutes of the April 13, 2010 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee meeting

**POLICY ITEMS**

*No consent items*

**PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS**

*No consent items*

**BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS**

8. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues

**ADMINISTRATION ITEMS**

9. Approved appointments and reappointments to the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

**INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS**

10. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
11. Accepted correspondence log
12. Accepted letters from SCCRTC committees and staff to other agencies
  - a. Letter to the City of Capitola from the Bicycle Committee regarding the City's Grant application for a Bikeway, Pedestrian and Public Transit Master Plan
  - b. Letter to the City of Capitola from the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee regarding the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan
13. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on SCCRTC projects and transportation issues

## 14. Accepted information items

- a. Article from *Daily Journal of Commerce - Building and Construction News in Portland, Oregon and the Pacific Northwest*, April 7, 2010, titled "STARS rates sustainability in transportation"
- b. Flier from AMBAG announcing workshops regarding the 2035 Regional Blueprint

## 15. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

The Commission adjourned into closed session at 9:10 am.

**CLOSED SESSION**

## 16. Conference with Real Property Negotiator Pursuant to Government Code 54956.8 for acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Property: Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line from Watsonville Junction to Davenport

Agency Negotiator: Kirk Trost, Miller Owen & Trost

Negotiation Parties: SCCRTC, Union Pacific

Under Negotiation: Price and Terms

**OPEN SESSION**

## 17. Report on closed session

The Commission reconvened into open session at 10:09 am. There was nothing to report.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

## 18. Commissioner reports - none

## 19. Director's report

Executive Director George Dondero reported that he and Senior Planner Karena Pushnik attended several meetings with the local press; that Bike Week kicks off May 9<sup>th</sup> and Bike to Work Day is Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup>; and that a Budget and Administration/Personnel Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. He said that directors and deputy directors from the Regional Transportation Planning Agencies in District 5 will meet with Caltrans on May 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss district issues. Mr. Dondero said that he will attend the Tranny Awards on May 19<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento where Gary Richards, who writes the "Mr. Roadshow" column for the *Mercury News*, will be honored as Person of the Year. He added that Mr. Richards was nominated by both Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) and the RTC for the award and will be

recognized by the Commission at the September RTC meeting. He noted that a STARS meeting is planned for June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Deputy Director Luis Mendez added that a frequent reaction during meetings with the press is that of surprise at the variety of things that the RTC does.

20. Caltrans report and consider relevant action items

Aileen Loe, Caltrans District 5, said that the agency participated in Earth Day by picking up litter. She reported road closures on Highway 9 beginning on May 24<sup>th</sup> with full closure extending two miles north from the intersection with Highway 1 from June 7<sup>th</sup> until October. Businesses will remain open and detours will be made available to the public. She added that the Highway 1/Salinas Road interchange project is officially underway.

21. Santa Cruz Branch Rail Acquisition

Deputy Director Luis Mendez delivered the staff report saying that the RTC has been negotiating with Union Pacific to purchase the branch line since 2001. He reviewed the completed array of due diligence work, noting that the documents are available, for public review, on the RTC website. He said that the decision before the Commission today does not include considering commuter rail or a bike and pedestrian trail at this time and that the purchase will preserve an additional transportation corridor parallel to Highway 1. Mr. Mendez pointed out the notice of exemption for environmental review of the project and reported that the resolution being considered by the Commission was revised to include authorization to file the notice of exemption.

Public comment was taken.

**Micah Posner**, People Power, said he continues to receive letters supporting the acquisition and that he is ready to help with developing a trail along the right-of-way.

**Sam Storey**, Mayor of Capitola, said that the Capitola City Council unanimously supports the acquisition and that the benefits to the public are great.

**Bill Selvedge** opposed purchasing the branch line given that the state has no money and non-essential expenditures should not be made. He said that the train can not provide public transportation, that a dinner train is wishful thinking and that maintenance will be a burden on taxpayers.

**Piet Canin**, Ecology Action, urged the Commission to purchase the branch line saying that there will be federal funding sources for bike and walking projects and that currently Safe Routes to School funds could be used. He added that there is also potential for private donations.

**Linda Wilshusen** applauded the Commission for taking the step to purchase the branch line and said she wants to work with the Commission and staff in the future.

**Jack Nelson** appreciated the Commission and said that he was excited to be present for a historic moment.

**Bruce Sawhill**, Friends of the Rail Trail, said that hauling freight via train is more efficient than trucking, and that some funding from the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) could be used to develop a trail along the rail right-of-way. He said that the Transportation Funding Task Force indicated broad support for the acquisition and that buses and trains could work easily together.

Commissioner Johnson noted that inherent in questions about building a trail are the issues of the cost per mile to construct a trail and the locations where it is feasible for a trail to be situated along the right-of-way. He noted that there is a lot of support for a trail.

Luis Mendez said that some funds are set aside from funding secured by Representative Sam Farr for the MBSST study which could include trail segments alongside the rail line. In addition the County of Santa Cruz wants to extend the Wilder Ranch bike and pedestrian path four miles and the best alignment is along the rail line right-of-way. He said that the cost of building the existing Wilder Ranch bike and pedestrian path was about \$1million per mile and that an analysis has not yet been done to determine how much of the rail line right-of-way could be used for a trail.

Commissioner Lane moved and Commissioner Rivas seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC):

1. Approve the Executive Director's recommendation to purchase the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line) presented at the RTC's April 1, 2010 meeting; and
2. Adopt the attached resolution certifying that full due diligence was completed in the discovery of hazardous materials and that the State is indemnified against damages and cleanup liability; and
3. Adopt a resolution authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a purchase and sale agreement on behalf of the RTC for purchase of the Branch Line contingent on non-substantive revisions that may still be made to the agreement.

Commissioner Rivas said it was a historic moment. Commissioner Stone noted that a legacy was missed when the San Lorenzo Valley rail corridor went private. Commissioner Leopold said it is clear that the community wants the branch line purchased and that Proposition 116 was supported by 60 % of the voters in Santa Cruz County. He added that the acquisition is probably one of the most studied land purchases in county history and that it brings economic and environmental benefits to the community. Commissioner Coonerty said it

was a great opportunity to acquire a major asset and that there will be a public process to determine future use. Commissioner Pirie said she trusts that the people of Santa Cruz County will make wise decisions regarding how to use the right-of-way. Commissioner Campos thanked staff, complimented Deputy Director Mendez for his diligent work and Executive Director Dondero for bringing the community together. Commissioner Lane appreciated Commissioners who have worked on the project for so long.

Commissioner Johnson summed up opposing arguments saying that while some question if this is the best use of public funds, others feel that it is the opportunity of a lifetime. He said that sometimes it's not just the bottom line that is important in a government decision but also the ancillary benefits to the community, that the corridor is a valuable piece of real estate and while there is a downside in terms of cost, the potential seems to outweigh the risks.

The motion (Resolutions 29-10 and 30-10) passed unanimously.

22. Preliminary recommendations for the final Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi presented the staff report saying that several changes to the draft RTP were recommended based on comments from the public, partner agencies, Commissioners and Commission committees. She said that the 2010 RTP is a minor update to the 2005 RTP, but that work is already beginning on the more extensive 2012 RTP, including a workshop on SB375. She said that comments on the environmental document are included in the final environmental document.

Commissioner Pirie corrected the name of the street for the Varnie road work project and directed staff to change the title to Varnie/Pioneer Rd.

Commissioners discussed the inclusion of a sales tax in 2012 as an assumption in the financial element. While the community may not be ready to approve a sales tax in 2012, eliminating it from the financial element could result in a reduction in funding for projects already underway. Executive Director Dondero noted that in order to synchronize the RTP with other regional plans and align the RTC with other agencies, the Commission is planning to update the RTP in 2012 and can revise the sales tax language at that time.

Commissioners also discussed the revisions regarding greenhouse gas emissions in Chapter 6 and the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) projections provided by AMBAG.

**Jack Nelson** said that the RTC should drop a sales tax as an expectation. He said that he doesn't think the RTP really plans for multi-modal transportation and that greenhouse gas emissions should be addressed now, not in 2012.

Commissioner Rivas moved and Commissioner Pirie seconded to approve staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Review and approve preliminary staff recommended changes for the final 2010 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP);
2. Review revised Chapter 6 on Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
3. Review comments received on the Draft 2010 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); and,
4. Inform staff of any additional changes that should be made for the final document, scheduled for adoption at the June 3, 2010 meeting

The motion passed unanimously.

23. 2010 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) amendments and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) update

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi said that after the Commission adopted the RTIP at its January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, project sponsors and California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff recommended some amendments. Among them are combining road improvement projects to more effectively use available funds, postponing a request for additional funding for the Soquel Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project and shifting previously programmed funding for the rail line acquisition from Right of Way to engineering and construction.

Commissioners discussed the level of control the RTC has over various funding sources, prioritizing funds for local roads projects and possible impacts to other projects already underway. Commissioners expressed concerns regarding the possibility of the Commission acting as the lead agency for the Highway 1 Auxiliary Lanes construction due to the CTC's more restrictive process when funding projects through local agencies.

Commissioner Pirie moved and Commissioner Rivas seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Adopt a resolution amending the *2010 Regional Transportation Improvement Program* (RTIP), as requested by project sponsors.

The motion (Resolution 31-10) passed with Commissioner Leopold voting "no".

Commissioner Bustichi departed the meeting.

24. FY 10/11 requests for Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding from the Community Traffic Safety Coalition, the Ride 'n Stride Program, and the Bike to Work Program

Senior Planner Cory Caletti said that funds for this annual TDA request are included in the FY 10/11 budget and that the claim reflects a 14% reduction in apportionments due to declining sales tax revenues. The Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) is a community based coalition that brings various agencies together to address bicycle and pedestrian safety issues. The Ride 'n'

Stride Program is an elementary school-based bike and pedestrian education program. The Bike to Work Program has been sponsoring events and providing incentives to increase bicycle use for 23 years.

Responding to questions from Commissioner Johnson, Piet Canin, Ecology Action, said that Bike to Work is tracking email lists from events to measure if the Bike to Work event has a direct impact on long term bike use.

Commissioner Lane moved and Commissioner Coonerty seconded to approve the Bicycle Committee and staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Review the proposed FY 10/11 work plans and budgets for the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency's Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) and Ride 'n Stride Programs, and for Ecology Action's Bike to Work (BTW) Program; and
2. Adopt resolutions approving claims for FY 10/11 funds for the CTSC, Ride 'n Stride and BTW Programs.

The motion (Resolutions 32-10 and 33-10) passed unanimously.

25. Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District FY 10-11 Claim for Article 4 Transportation Development Act Funds and annual report

Senior Planner Karena Pushnik presented the staff report saying that the SCMTD's claim is consistent with RTC Rules and regulations and the FY 10-11 RTC budget. She said that the funds can be used for either operations or capital projects.

**Les White**, SCMTD General Manager, commented that ridership is increasing while sales-tax revenues continue to decline.

Commissioner Tavantzis moved and Commissioner Leopold seconded to approve the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) and staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) adopt a resolution approving the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District's FY 10/11 Transportation Development Act (TDA) claim for \$4,974,478 and to receive the annual report.

The motion (Resolution 34-10) passed unanimously.

26. Adjourn to special meeting of the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

The Commission adjourned to the SAFE meeting at 11:58 am

## 27. Next Meetings

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 20, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 3, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main St, Watsonville CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

**ATTENDEES**

Robert Fontville	Kleinfelder
Elizabeth Hughe	Parson
Eduardo Montesno	UTU
Les White	SCMTD
Donna Hall	
Jack Nelson	
Larry Detloff	
Bruce Sawhill	FORT
Katie LeBarron	HAS
Grant Norris	
Theresia Rogerson	HAS
John Presleigh	County Public Works
Linda Wilshusen	
Steve Wiesner	County Public Works
Bill Selvedge	
Micah Posner	People Power
Sam Storey	City of Capitola
Piet Canin	Ecology Action