



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

MINUTES

Thursday
August 5, 2010
9:00 a.m.

Scotts Valley City Council Chambers
1 Civic Center Drive
Scotts Valley CA 95066

1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:07 am.

Members present:

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

Member absent:

Randy Johnson

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Gini Pineda
Kim Shultz	Cory Caletti

2. Oral communications

Jack Nelson said that a recent poll of likely voters in California conducted by the Public Policy Institute showed that 67% support AB 32 and 60% favor a carbon tax. He asked that Commissioners do their part to make AB 32 work.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Executive Director George Dondero said that there was a replacement page for Item 14, a handout for Item 25 and add-on pages for Item 28.

CONSENT AGENDA (Pirie/Lane – unanimous)**MINUTES**

4. Approved draft minutes of the June 3, 2010 regular SCCRTC meeting
5. Approved draft minutes of the June 3, 2010 Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) meeting
6. Approved draft minutes of the June 17, 2010 Transportation Policy Workshop meeting
7. Approved draft minutes of the June 28, 2010 special SCCRTC meeting
8. Accepted draft minutes of the June 8, 2010 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee meeting
9. Accepted draft minutes of the June 17, 2010 Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) meeting

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS

10. Accepted fourth quarter FY 09/10 Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) work program progress report
11. Approved Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network funding (Resolution 01-11)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

12. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
13. Approved Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District claim for State Transit Assistance (Resolution 02-11)

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

14. Approved appointments to the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee
15. Approved fiscal year (FY) 2010-11 Article 8 Transportation Development Act (TDA) payment schedule for Community Bridges (Resolution 03-11)

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

16. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
17. Accepted correspondence log
18. Accepted letters from SCCRTC committees and staff to other agencies
 - a. Letter to Representative Sam Farr from the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee regarding support for HR 4722 – Active Community Transportation Act of 2010
 - b. Letter to SCMTD from the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee regarding early input on bus stop improvements
19. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on SCCRTC projects and transportation issues
20. Accepted information items
 - a. Article from *PubliCola, Seattle's News Elixir*, titled "We Need People Who Ride Bikes, Not Cyclists" by Josh Cohen
 - b. Report from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy titled *California Rails-with-Trails: A Survey of Trails along Active Rail Lines*

REGULAR AGENDA

21. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Gary Milburn, People Power, urged the Commission to acquire the Branch Line swiftly.

Bonnie Morr, UTU, said that the union supports moving forward with the acquisition as soon as possible and that it is a good marriage between bus and rail. She suggested that the Metro run the rail line.

The Commission adjourned into closed session at 9:13 am.

CLOSED SESSION

22. 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

23. Report on closed session

The Commission reconvened into open session at 10:02. There was nothing to report.

24. Commissioner reports - none

25. Director's report

Executive Director George Dondero announced that the RTC released an updated countywide bikeways map. The map is available at local employers, visitor centers, bike shops, chambers of commerce, libraries and the RTC office. Mr. Dondero referred to Item 20a which is an article supporting cycling as a means of transportation while not necessarily being a lifestyle. He said that the RTC policy encourages all modes of transportation.

Mr. Dondero said that the STARS Technical Advisory Committee met in June and July to provide feedback on the development of the STARS credits. Mr. Dondero noted that he was asked to travel to Portland next week to discuss how to apply the credits to the HOV Lanes project.

Mr. Dondero reported that the California Air Resources Board (CARB) will issue greenhouse gas reduction targets for the AMBAG region. The targets will address reductions due to land-use changes. He said that RTC staff is working closely with AMBAG on technical issues including updating the regional Traffic Demand Model and seeking funds to improve baseline data for the region.

Commissioner Rivas suggested bikeways map distribution sites in Watsonville where people shop, including Target and Nob Hill supermarket. He also suggested making presentations to the Cabrillo College board and to high schools or the Pajaro Valley school board. Senior Planner Cory Caletti noted that bikeways maps are distributed in the Watsonville area through the Pajaro Valley Transportation Management Agency and through the south county Community Traffic Safety Coalition.

Deputy Director Luis Mendez thanked the staffs of the public works departments of the cities and the county for their invaluable help with the many bikeways map updates.

26. Caltrans report and consider action items

Dave Murray, Caltrans District 5, noted that the San Lorenzo Metal Beam Guardrail Upgrade project was complete. He introduced Dan Heron who is replacing Jennifer Calate as the Regional Planner for District 5. Mr. Murray announced that Brandy Weiner will be taking his place upon his retirement at the end of the year.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Tavantzis, Mr. Murray said that the Hwy 1/Salinas Rd interchange is in the staging phase.

27. Highway 1 Projects – Progress Report

Senior Planner Kim Shultz reported that the RTC is making progress toward construction of the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project. 65% design level plans were submitted to Caltrans; permit applications to state and federal resource agencies were submitted in June; and a Highway Aesthetics Community Advisory meeting to gather public input was held June 15th. The construction cooperative agreement with Caltrans will be presented to the Commission at the August Transportation Policy Workshop.

Mr. Shultz said that the RTC continues to develop the Sustainable Transportation and Access Rating System (STARS) credits and will determine how they might apply to the Hwy 1 HOV Lanes project. He added that a draft EIR is scheduled to be released in summer 2011.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Leopold regarding the status of the lawsuit filed against Caltrans over the Auxiliary Lanes project, Mr. Dondero said that the administrative record is assembled and that the court is expected to schedule a hearing in the next few weeks.

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

1. Accept the progress report for the period April 2010 through June 2010 for the Highway 1 HOV Lane project and the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project; and
2. Authorize out-of-state travel for the Executive Director to attend a Sustainable Transportation and Access Rating System (STARS) planning meeting in Portland, Oregon.

The motion passed unanimously.

28. Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line) acquisition

Deputy Director Luis Mendez reviewed the CTC conditions necessary to complete the Branch Line purchase, saying that two conditions were already completed and three more could be satisfied today. The one remaining condition is to execute an agreement with a short line operator.

In addition, Caltrans legal counsel informed RTC staff that the RTC must obtain an opinion from a Caltrans-approved bond counsel in order to ensure that the tax-free status of the bonds used for the purchase would not be threatened since the project funded will be used by a private entity.

Mr. Mendez also noted that a budget amendment is necessary to carryover FY 09-10 funds and shift funds within the rail/trail authority budget.

Ed Davidson said that he hoped that any cessation of freight service along the Branch Line would not close access to Big Trees Railroad's freight customers and that the agreements Big Trees has with Union Pacific is carried forward. He also said he did not think that the recreational rail dinner train to Davenport is feasible as a business operation.

Bill Comfort referred to a letter he previously submitted to the Commission. He described potential problems if reimbursement to the state becomes necessary. He said that the RTC is in a weak position for future negotiations, and that the RTC could be blackmailed into subsidizing a recreational rail line if it failed to be profitable for the operator. He advised postponing approval of the staff recommendations until the operating agreement with Sierra Railroad is finalized.

Mike Keogh said that it was unwise to proceed with the purchase without a contract with Union Pacific or Sierra Railroad and without resolution of the CTC conditions. He said that funding for local roads could be jeopardized.

Rosemary Sarka, Roaring Camp, said that she was highly supportive of the acquisition and that Roaring Camp is ready and available to provide passenger rail service if the need should arise. She said that she foresees minimal risk for a recreational service operator and envisioned destination packages that could include whale watching, festivals or hiking excursions.

Commissioner Stone recognized the value that Big Trees and Roaring Camp bring to the community.

Commissioners discussed the agreement with the CTC requiring recreational rail service on the Branch Line. The line would have to be preserved for multi modal transportation if the recreational rail were not successful.

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

1. Adopt a resolution for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line) Acquisition project to fulfill California Transportation Commission (CTC) conditions to initiate recreational rail service, continue freight service as long as it is required by the STB and reimburse the State in accordance with the Master Agreement, if the Branch Line is no longer used for the original purpose approved by the CTC; and
2. Adopt a resolution amending the fiscal year (FY) 2010-11 budget for the rail/trail authority section of the RTC budget to carryover funds from FY

2009-10 and move funds within the rail/trail authority budget to help complete acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line).

Commissioners discussed rail banking, the CTC requirement to continue freight service if required by the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the process to appeal to the STB if the common carrier for freight could no longer provide the service, and reimbursement of funding to the state if the project is no longer needed for the approved purpose.

The motion (Resolutions 04-11 and 05-11) passed with Commissioner Bustichi voting "no".

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

There were no agenda items this month.

30. Next meetings

The meeting adjourned at 12:07 pm

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 2, at 9:00 a.m. at the Capitola City Council Chambers, 420 Capitola Ave., Capitola, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

ATTENDEES

Mark Greenfield	
Rosemary Sarka	Roaring Camp
Jack Nelson	
Eduardo Montesno	UTU Local 23
Bonnie Morr	UTU Local 23
Mike Keogh	
Ed Davidson	
Bill Comfort	
Gary Milburn	