1. Introductions

Commissioner Nicol called the meeting to order at 9:03 am. Self-introductions were made.

Members present:
Dene Bustichi
Greg Caput
Norm Hagen
Randy Johnson
John Leopold
Kirby Nicol
Lynn Robinson
Andy Schiffrin (Alt)
Mark Stone
David Terrazas (Alt)

Members absent:
Eduardo Montesino
Ellen Pirie

Staff present:
George Dondero
Luis Mendez
Gini Pineda
Rachel Moriconi
Ginger Dykaar
Karena Pushnik
Yesenia Parra
Cory Caletti
Tegan Speiser

Federal legislative assistants Carolyn Chaney and Chris Giglio joined the meeting via phone.
2. Oral communications

Jack Nelson said that he attended Earth Day festivities last Saturday and noted several electric vehicles displayed, including the Nissan Leaf which he said is on the road to being a zero emissions vehicle.

Deputy Director Luis Mendez said that the rail acquisition commemoration may be postponed to September 17th or later.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas - None

CONSENT AGENDA (Leopold/Schiffrin unanimous)

4. Monterey Bay Area 511 Traveler Information Plan project schedule

Commission Alternate Schiffrin asked for a memo containing the dates of the public meetings on the project.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Federal legislation update

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi introduced federal legislative assistants Carolyn Chaney and Chris Giglio of Capital Edge.

Ms. Chaney reviewed the continuing resolution that will take the federal budget through the end of September, noting that funding for high speed rail has been cut along with reductions in funding for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Chris Giglio reported on the conflicting 2012 budget proposals from the administration and the House Republicans in which the President has indicated support for high speed rail and new starts rail projects and the House is proposing decreases in rail funding and increases in highway funding.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin asked if TIGER Recovery Act grants could be used for rail renovation. Ms. Chaney said they could be used for track rehabilitation, but that they are a highly competitive funding source. She added that higher priority is given to multi-agency programs or unique projects. Mr. Giglio confirmed that receiving STIP funds would qualify as multi-agency collaboration.

Ms. Chaney continued with an update on the federal transportation reauthorization bill, saying that Chairman Mica of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is pushing for a 6-year bill consisting of less than half the funding contained in the previous SAFETEA-LU transportation bill, although the administration has requested more funding. In the Senate, Senator Boxer is trying to increase the TIFIA (Transportation Infrastructure
Finance and Innovation Act) loans which leverage local money for surface transportation projects, emphasizing that infrastructure is an important economic development tool. Ms. Chaney added that a reauthorization bill will probably not be passed prior to the November elections and said she would follow up on the RTC’s filing with the Surface Transportation Board to determine if it will be a 30 or 90 day filing.

6. Consolidation of Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (Santa Cruz Metro)

Executive Director George Dondero said that the item was put on the agenda at the request of Commissioner Bustichi. He said that issues to discuss might include commission expectations of a merger in addition to possible cost saving, protecting Metro’s ½ cent sales tax, and deciding whether to hire a consultant or to use staff to research the pros and cons of a merger.

Commissioner Stone said that he is concerned about threshold questions like preserving the Metro’s sales tax revenue and offered, if the Commission is interested in moving forward, to connect with counsel from both agencies and then work on a timeline and process before investing staff time.

Commissioners raised several issues including that mergers of planning agencies and transit agencies have happened in other areas; that there are possible benefits to coordinating transit operations and planning; that Metro is in the middle of cutbacks and negotiations; that funding to both agencies could be at risk; that the governing board of a merged agency should be representative of all citizens; that there are concerns about funding to other programs; that there are assumptions of cost savings and efficiencies given the goals of the two agencies; and that a merger wouldn’t fix the transit district’s current financial difficulties. It was noted that the many agencies in the region coordinate planning to try to eliminate duplication of efforts.

**Bonnie Morr** said that transit is part of multiple projects that the RTC oversees and supported a holistic approach.

Commissioners discussed whether to hire a consultant, if both boards would have to agree to a merger, and if enough cost savings and/or efficiencies would be realized by a merger.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved to request the RTC chair to meet with the attorneys for both agencies and return as soon as reasonable with a report on the potential effects of the proposed consolidation on the funding sources for the two agencies. Commissioner Terrazas seconded.

Commissioner Robinson asked for a friendly amendment to include the Metro chair in discussions with the legal counsels. Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin added that his motion includes the Metro Chair.
The motion passed unanimously.

7. Next meetings

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 am.

The next regular SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. at the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean St., Fifth Floor, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, May 19, 2011 at 9:00 am at the SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

ATTENDEES

Angela Aitken  SCMTD
Mike Keogh      
Bonnie Morr    UTU
Jack Nelson    
Daniel Dodge  City of Watsonville