



**Santa Cruz County Regional
Transportation Commission
Transportation Policy Workshop**

MINUTES

Thursday April 14, 2010

6:00 p.m.

Board of Supervisors Chambers
701 Ocean St., Fifth Floor
Santa Cruz, CA

1. Introductions- Roll call was taken

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:13 pm

Members present:

Tony Campos	Ellen Pirie
Ron Graves	Antonio Rivas
Randy Johnson	Neal Coonerty
Don Lane	Marcela Tavantzis
John Leopold	Kirby Nicol

Members absent:

Mark Stone	Dene Bustichi
------------	---------------

2. Oral communications

Any member of the public may address the Commission for a period not to exceed three minutes on any item within the jurisdiction of the Commission that is not already on the agenda. The Commission will listen to all communication, but in compliance with State law, may not take action on items that are not on the agenda

Speakers are requested to sign the sign-in sheet so that their names can be accurately recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Executive Director George Dondero said that a packet of public comments on the acquisition of the rail was distributed.

CONSENT AGENDA

No consent items

REGULAR AGENDA

4. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

The Commission adjourned into closed session at 6:17 pm.

CLOSED SESSION

5. 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

6. Report on closed session

The Commission reconvened into open session at 6:55 pm There was nothing to report.

7. Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Acquisition - **7:00 PM Public Hearing**
(*Luis Mendez, Deputy Director*)

Deputy Director Luis Mendez presented the staff report announcing that the Commission had negotiated a price for the rail line of \$14.2 million dollars, with an agreement to make \$5 million in repairs to the branch line. He said that all public documents related to this project have been posted on the RTC website. He also stated that there would be a list of frequently asked questions with responses posted on the website.

Chair Johnson opened the floor for the public hearing.

Zoey Atthenberg, Greenways to School said that this is one of the most proactive and positive actions that Santa Cruz can take. Youth should not have to ride their bikes in streets full of cars. We all want to reduce carbon and a transportation corridor will help all of us do this. This is a good project that would offer a safe path for youth to commute on their bikes.

Carolyn Jett, Greenways to Schools, supports the purchase of the rail corridor because it will provide youth with a future walking and biking route.

Max Marr, Mission Hill Middle School student, said that the purchase is good because students can get to school easily and safely plus it saves parents from having to drive students to school.

Maxine Schimmel, Harbor High School student, said that she supports the rail trail because her cycling group has over 20 youth riders and currently there are no safe training locations. She believes that the rail right of way will provide that for the group.

Kevin Bice, San Lorenzo Valley High School student, supports the purchase because it will provide a safe route to ride his bike and because it is a way to address environmental issues and build a sense of community. He said it is important that the community not wait for the federal government to step up and address environmental issues in this area.

Kelly Chesus, San Lorenzo Valley High student, is a resident of Boulder Creek without any current real bike path. She would ride her bike if a trail is part of the rail purchase.

Selina Rodriquez, Santa Cruz High student, supports the acquisition and a trail because she doesn't have a driver's license and doesn't plan on getting one. A trail will provide a way for her to continue to get places without a car.

Josh supports the purchase because it addresses his environmental concerns, saying that the trail can take people out of cars.

Joya Casu and Joel Van De Sande, Harbor High and Santa Cruz High students, performed a skit on the impact of cyclists sharing the road with cars, as compared to riding bikes on the rail trail.

Fred Kiffer, Santa Cruz High student, supports the purchase because he would like ways to make it easy for people to drive less and to reduce carbon emissions.

Becca Miller, a bike mechanic at the Bike Church and a Foster Youth Resource Center counselor, supports the purchase so that the trail is available for youth to ride their bikes.

Chuck Huddleston wants the rail acquisition even though he does not plan on riding a bike or taking a train, but rather because he doesn't want the right of way to be lost for transportation purposes and because he believes it's the right decision for the future.

Peter Scott, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, brought a letter of support for the purchase and stated that this is a very positive project with immense potential for transportation uses.

Rosemary Sarka, Roaring Camp and Big Trees Railroads, communicated her 40 years of experience with short line rail operations and support of the acquisition.

Micah Posner, People Power, said that there are a variety of people that support the purchase for a variety of different reasons and this represents true progress. He added that freight rail operations keep trucks off the road and a trail will improve human health.

Bonnie Morr, United Transportation Union and Metro bus driver, said that the project will enhance the environment, that there is an excellent potential partnership with a rail and bus system and that the UTU, which also represents rail across the country supports the project.

Paul Elerick, Santa Cruz Sierra Club, supports the recommendation to purchase the rail line, saying that this will enable the preservation of the transportation corridor to serve multi modal transportation uses, such as walking and biking.

Bruce Sawhill, Friends of the Rail Trail, said moving freight on rail is more efficient than moving it using trucks and that freight trucks wear out roads more than cars. He supports the purchase of the rail not just for pedestrians and cyclist but also to secure our energy for the future.

An actor playing "Arnold" performed a skit to illustrate that the Proposition 116 funds are available only for rail projects and that he supports the purchase.

Dave Wright, Friends of the Rail Trail and Aptos resident, thanked the staff and the Commission for all their work. He discussed the endorsement for this project of about 150 organizations under the Go for Health initiative dating back to 2005. He stated that this project is good for young people's health and would play a role in addressing obesity in young adults, which has been documented as a problem in Santa Cruz County.

Neal Conner, a Santa Cruz resident who works in Moss Landing, said he looks forward to the day when he can ride the train to Watsonville and then ride his bike to work in Moss Landing.

Mia Duquet, Friends of Rail Trail, feels the rail trail will benefit the tourist economy, local property values and will also give people a healthy way to enjoy our beautiful coast. She said that she hopes there is a connection to the state's High Speed Rail system.

Jacob Morr currently doesn't ride his bike because he would have to travel through Mission Street. He said he would ride his bike once the rail trail is complete because it would provide a safer route and also thinks this purchase will relieve traffic jams and is a forward thinking proposal.

Rich Persoff said that the community is relying on the Commission to oversee transportation projects. He stated that, although he favors healthy and low traffic options, this project has several problematic legal issues and that the rail property does not have a clear title. He said that although an unbroken rail corridor would be a great gift for our grandchildren, he is concerned that it is a broken rail line and a useless project.

Bill Comfort said that the Commission should have the courage to go back to the California Transportation Commission and discuss the losses based on the business plan. He added that the Commission should concentrate on the goal of preservation and spend the money on the full 31 miles of trail right of way, without committing the \$5m for structure upgrades.

Mike Keogh said that the community needs assurance from the Commission that in fact the purchase is for a continuous rail from Watsonville to Davenport. He stated that contractual revisionary rights would take effect if the right of way was not used for rail purposes, that there is no clear title for the rail, and if that is the case the easements would automatically revert to landowners.

Johnathan Kibrick supports the purchase because he sees it as a full county-wide corridor for non-auto transportation purposes, that auto-oriented transportation is over prioritized, and that every dollar invested in transportation sees a two to three times return in a health benefit.

Larry Detloff grew up in Los Angeles and remembers the Red Pacific rail line that took people all over. It was abandoned for buses and cars which created grid lock. He supports the purchase because it is good for the future.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, thanked staff and consultants for eight years of due diligence and endorsed the purchase because of its green transportation options. He said that the Santa Cruz Bike Coalition also supports the project and urged the Commission to take the next steps to move forward.

Wilson Fieberling, Former City of Santa Cruz Public Works Director, RTC Bicycle Advisory Committee member and 83 year old, supports the purchase, saying that if the opportunity to purchase the rail is lost, the whole corridor will be lost.

Reed Searle said that he supports the project because it will address greenhouse gases.

Jack Nelson said that RTC is doing the right thing by purchasing the rail corridor, that it's a win-win proposal and that he has confidence in the due diligence work. He added that as a young man he would ride his bike for eight miles because it was on a trail that did not include exhaust from vehicles.

Mary Odegaard supports the project because it will eventually include a trail, and will allow for freight traffic to be taken off the streets and freeways. This will provide a trail for cyclists who are currently sharing the road with big trucks on Mission Street which is dangerous and very scary. She also wants passenger train service.

Marc de Sousa, Santa Cruz resident, excited about the purchase and supports the project.

Erica Murphy, lives in Santa Cruz and works in Watsonville, is excited to support the purchase and the future of a bike trail.- She believes a bike path is needed to allow bicycle commuting to and from Santa Cruz to Watsonville.

Patrick Dolder, Capitola resident, supports the purchase. He currently rides his bike to South County every day, and indicated that his friends will not use their bike to commute to downtown Santa Cruz due to the perceived lack of safety. This corridor will give people more access to areas like campgrounds and will leave a legacy for his kids and grandkids.

Lee Otter, California Coastal Commission staff, examined other trails as well as the due diligence work of this purchase and this project will protect transportation choices, will attract green business, create recreation opportunities and will be part of the overall coastal plan. This is a sensible and prudent thing to do. The California Coastal Commission strongly supports the Executive Director's recommendation to purchase the rail corridor.

Nat Robinson believes that there is money to be made with this purchase and that the Commission can charge rent to potential small vendors. The corridor will connect where people stay and where people want to spend money.

Ed Davidson does not support the purchase. He feels there is no feasible rail activity that will go on tracks and that no feasibility study has been done. He asked why the State issued bonds for passenger rail for a rail line that will not have passengers? He stated that it is not a "scenic trail" and that the plan shows the trail going through Pajaro through the South County industrial region, the dump and peoples back yard but not the coast.

Joan Hoglund, a parent, said that this is something youth want and it's the future of the county. She reiterated the middle and high schools that were represented through the first speakers.

Cathy DeLuca transportation planning student of San Jose State, supports the purchase because once the right of way is gone it is impossible to get back. Safety is critical so that residents can continue to ride bikes.

Mark Dure-Smith noted that the purchase is an amazing opportunity.

Steve Pethoe, Santa Cruz resident, supports the purchase because driving in Santa Cruz contributes to the already horrible grid lock and adds to the danger. He noted that there are over 60 rail trail systems in the United States, that this is not new technology, that the price for the rail is "dirt cheap," and that in his opinion, it is a "no brainer."

Annette Jackson emphasized the number of commuters in this town. Many of these commuters are parents who feel that they have no other alternatives but to drive their kids to school. She posed the questions- Does widening Highway 1 reduce traffic? Does it promote health and safety? Is it costly? Does it address pollution?

Janet Fogel, Scotts Valley resident and president of cycling club, although no one knows what exactly we will get with this purchase and it's very complex, she believes it's the right thing to do, and that all the young people and parents want it.

Bonnie Hawley, State Parks Director, said that the Parks Board voted unanimously to support this project. This project will provide access to state parks and beaches, many of them are within a ½ mile of the rail corridor.

Ed Porter strongly supports the acquisition and believes this is a unique corridor and a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Tom Kennedy, born in Santa Cruz and works as an educator, said that he trusts that the work that staff has done in guaranteeing that this is a continuous corridor is correct. He said that this is a huge investment in our youth and economy. Santa Cruz is a hub for sustainable tourism, a hub for getting youth involved in green business, and will be an inspiration for the rest of the country.

Yasamine Torbati, new Santa Cruz resident, said Santa Cruz's progress attitude is what drew her to the area. People see the rail-trail as an extension of an organic culture, "take it and ride with it."

Jim Danaher said that this has been a long process and thanked the staff for the effort. This is a historic point he looks forward to having a congested rail trail, predicting that another bike/ped lane will be needed in ten years.

Richard Barrick, lives in Santa Cruz and works in Watsonville, stated that driving gets him down and cycling is a great high. This trail will allow him to ride more often to work. He also was interested in a bike/train combination commute.

Richard English, Aptos resident, read report on rail project and his understanding is that it is only a rail project not a trail project which would mean that the hopes of many residents will not be realized at the beginning of this purchase. He is less optimistic that this project will really connect Santa

Cruz with Watsonville and is also concerned that it will be many years before this project pays for itself.

Anthony Von de Muhil, licensed health care professional, thanked the staff and Commission for all the hard work. He said he owns a home 2 blocks from rail. He discussed the amount of accidents on freeways compared to those on a commuter train. This project will create a corridor that is safe for cyclists and pedestrians and take commuters off Highway 1 for their own safety.

Jane Mio, Seabright resident since 1972, supports the acquisition because it will become more useful than the current use. She said the current rail corridor is used as junk yard, prostitution and for drug dealing.

Celia Scott, former Mayor of Santa Cruz, thanked staff and the Commission for bringing this project to fruition; youth are very interested in the rail; we are at the point that we need to "use it or lose it" and urged the Commission to make a positive decision on May 6th.

Lawrence Docents sees two separate issues: purchasing the rail and taking care of it. He feels that too little time has been spent on the issue of taking care of the trail. Before the purchase of the rail, he urges the Commission to be careful and asked if the Commission is ready to be responsible because the County Supervisors are not capable of responsibility.

Phil Kaplan, instructor at Cabrillo College, said that the hiking class is one of the most popular at Cabrillo and that the purchase of the rail trail will offer many Cabrillo students other outdoor opportunities.

Dennis Norton, Capitola City Councilmember, noted that any project that can survive public scrutiny for 10 years has something going for it. Its time to make the purchase- this is a landmark purchase that we can pass on to future generations.

Mark Bryant opposed to the purchase feels the Commission is rushing through this purchase and asked that the decision be put off for 1 year. He also asked that the County acquire the lot at the corner of Ocean and Water Streets for extra parking spaces for those doing business at the county building.

Chair Johnson closed the public hearing at 8:34 pm.

Commissioner Ellen Pirie thanked all the speakers and clarified that the purchase of the rail line is being done through the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission not the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

Commissioners thanked the public for their input and thanked the staff for all their due diligence work. The community was encouraged to have their friends and neighbors who were unable to attend the public hearing to contact the

RTC with their thoughts on this project. Commissioners commented that the community working together is what propels projects forward. Staff was asked how they would respond to key questions that were raised. Staff replied that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was being prepared with responses that would be posted on the RTC website.

Commissioner Johnson asked RTC legal consultant Kirk Trost about the next steps. Mr. Trost said that the most critical steps in the next couple of weeks will be for staff to continue to work with the staff of the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and Caltrans. Caltrans is the recommending body to the CTC for the funding of this project. He stated that the FAQs mentioned earlier that will be posted to the RTC website, will address the questions regarding the acquisition and the concern regarding the continuous corridor. He gave a brief response to that concern specifically, stating that the corridor is not fully composed of fee simple title. There are easements, congressional land grants and places on the corridor with no clear title. However, a line of railroad is subject to federal jurisdiction. If at any time the railroad is no longer used for passenger or freight transportation and is abandoned, the RTC has the right under federal law to "rail bank" the line, which will preserve the line as a continuous 31 mile corridor for any and all transportation uses throughout the life of the line for as long as the Commission chooses to use it for transportation purposes. Given this, the Commission is guaranteed a continuous corridor for transportation use for the life of the line.

Mr. Trost also responded to a question regarding the funding of this project. He said that the project is being funded through two sources: Proposition 116 funds and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds. The statute for receiving the Proposition 116 funding only requires the preservation of the rail line and does not actually require the operation of freight or passenger rail service. The CTC staff has requested a passenger rail business plan; this does not mean that it must be implementable within a certain period of time. It only requires that the RTC have a plan for future passenger use which can include commuter, recreation or any kind of passenger use. The CTC must take action to program the Proposition 116 funds for this project by the end of this fiscal year. This does not mean that the RTC must close the deal by this time.

8. The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 6, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean St., 5th Floor, Santa Cruz

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

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra
 Administrative Services Officer

ATTENDEES

Mike Keogh	
Bill Comfort	
Jonathon Kibrick	
Rosemary Sarka	Roaring Camp
Ed Hutton	
Rich Persoff	
Robert Jones	
Tarik Sabankaya	
Dylan McCommons	
Morgan Smith	
Ole Christensen	
Gary Harrold	People Power
Paul Elerick	Sierra Club
Joan Hوجلund	People Power
Nathaniel Robinson	
Mathilda Rand	People Power
Bonnie Morr	UTU
Donna Hall	
Larry Detloff	
Michele Whizin	People Power
Raphie Palefsky-Smith	People Power
Ayde Colin	People Power
Sahara Ray	People Power
Cody Boaz	People Power
Dylan deFalco	People Power
Richard English	
Mia Duquet	Friends of the Rail Trail
Piet Canin	Ecology Action
Neil Conner	
Jacob Martin	
Bruce Sawhill	Friends of the Rail Trail
Casey Denning	
Steve Perez	
Joe Nehls	
Maxine Schimmel	
Richard Snow	

Paul Hempstead
Phil Kaplan
Kevin Bice
Kelly Chesus
Tawn Kennedy
Nellie Heiman
Kari Heiman
Sam Story
Jack Nelson
Linnea Nelson
Wilson Fieberling
Celia Scott
Paul Barsamia
Annette Jackson
Doug Vazby
Richard Berrick
Patrick Dolden
Ursula Ehrhart
Reed Searle
John Wright
Daniel Shockley
Peter Pethoe
Mary Odegaard
Marc de Souza
Erica Murphy
Lucy O'Dea
Rob Straka
Ariel Kellison
Joel van de Sande
Jacheon Yi
Becca Miller
Ian Pye
Caitlin Sadowski
Jessica Oltmanns
Ari Warren
Carolyn Jett
Yasi Torban
Dave Glasebrook
Chuck Huddleston
Max Marr
Selina Rodriguez
Josh
Joya Cazel
Fred Kiffer
Zoe Attenberg
Tobin Ortenblad
Peter Scott
Micah Posner

City of Capitola

CFST
People Power

David Wright
Jacob
Patrick Dolden
Lee Otter
Nat Robinson
Ed Davidson
Cathy DeLuca
Mark Dure-Smith
Janet Fogel
Bonny Hawley
Ed Porter
Yasamine Torbati
Jim Danaher

Friends of the Rail Trail

Friends of State Parks

Anthony Von der Muhll
Jane Mio
Dennis Norton

People Power