



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Transportation Policy Workshop

MINUTES

Thursday June 17, 2010

9:00 a.m.

SCCRTC Conference Room
1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz

1. Introductions

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Members present:

Dene Bustichi	Ellen Pirie
Tony Campos	Andy Schiffrin (Alt)
Randy Johnson	Marcela Tavantzis
Don Lane	Kirby Nicol
John Leopold	Dave Murray (ex-officio)
Donna Ziel	

Members absent:

Antonio Rivas	Ron Graves
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Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Gini Pineda
Kim Shultz	Rachel Moriconi
Cory Caletti	Ginger Dykaar

2. Oral communications

Jack Nelson made an analogy between the degree of foresight that BP exhibited in its plans to drill for oil in the Gulf of Mexico (resulting in the present catastrophe), and the environmental document prepared for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Executive Director George Dondero said that additional materials for Item 9 were distributed.

Deputy Director Luis Mendez said that a claim against the Commission for an automobile incident required immediate action from the Commission to meet a legal deadline. A written staff report regarding this claim was distributed and Luis Mendez added that the information was received too late to provide the required notice for this meeting of the Commission and asked Commissioners to add the claim to the meeting's agenda as an urgency item.

Commission Alternate Schiffirin moved and Commissioner Tavantzis seconded to add the urgency item to the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously and the item was designated as Item 7a.

4. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

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

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

6. Conference with Labor Negotiators Pursuant to Government Code 54957.6

Commission Negotiators: George Dondero and Yesenia Parra

Bargaining Units: RTC Association of Middle Managers (RAMM) and
Community of RTC Employees (CORE)

OPEN SESSION

7. Report on closed session

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

Commissioner Leopold departed the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA (Schiffirin/Lane – unanimous)

- 7a. Rejected claim from Margaret Khouri for motor vehicle incident.

8. Approved side letters for Memoranda of Understanding extensions

REGULAR AGENDA

- 8a. Santa Cruz Branch Rail Acquisition – Administration, Coordination and License Agreement

Deputy Director Luis Mendez presented the staff report saying that staff has been negotiating with Sierra Northern Railway for the operation of the rail line. Commissioners received a draft agreement.

Commissioner Campos moved and Commissioner Nicol seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) authorize the Executive Director to enter into an Administration, Coordination and Lease agreement with Sierra Northern Railway on behalf of the RTC for operation of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line contingent on non-substantive revisions that may still be made to the agreement.

Bill Comfort asked if the Commission was protected from having to either repay the California Transportation Commission or subsidize the short line operator if the short line operator decided to discontinue operating the line.

George Dondero said that the operator has the right to abandon the project but that there are other operators interested in running the line.

The motion passed by a 7-2 vote with Commissioners Bustichi and Johnson voting "no".

9. Early mitigation planning for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County

Senior Planner Kim Shultz reported that the Federal Transportation Act (SAFETEA-LU) requires Regional Transportation Plans to be developed in consultation with resource agencies to provide for environmental mitigation strategies for transportation projects. Early mitigation planning not only provides for more comprehensive mitigation but can also facilitate the permitting process. The Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County received a grant to develop the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP) to improve wildlife habitat and water quality and has begun to explore establishing an early mitigation effort with the RTC that would benefit a range of transportation projects throughout the county.

Mr. Shultz introduced Jim Robins, IWRP, and Karen Christensen of the RCD to make a PowerPoint presentation illustrating the benefits of a Santa Cruz County early mitigation partnership. Using the Elkhorn Slough project as an example, they explained how a partnership involving state and local agencies streamlined the mitigation process by fostering collaboration among stakeholders. In addition, the IWRP has acted as a hub to leverage funds for their partners.

Commissioners discussed how the strategies worked, project flow and the timing of public comment on projects.

Commission Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Pirie seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) authorize the Executive Director to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with local, state, and federal agencies responsible for coordinating watershed-based resource conservation with early mitigation planning for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County.

The motion passed unanimously.

10. Certification of the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report* (FSEIR) and adoption of the *2010 Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP)

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi gave the staff report saying that RTC prepared an update of the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* as mandated by the state. She said that the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report* is a program level report covering the Regional Transportation Plans for Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito Counties and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for AMBAG. Ms. Moriconi noted changes made since the initial release of the documents including an update to a vehicle miles traveled graph so that it only includes estimates from the current travel demand model.

Commissioner Campos moved and Commissioner Pirie seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) adopt a resolution to:

- a. Certify the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report* for the *2010 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan* as compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- b. Accept the Findings of the *EIR*, adopt a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" for significant environmental impacts identified in the *EIR*, and adopt a Mitigation Monitoring Program; and
- c. Adopt the *2010 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan*.

Commissioners discussed discrepancies and the margins of error in the model evaluation for the validation of traffic. Executive Director Dondero said that the RTC's goal is to help AMBAG to reduce the margin of error.

Jack Nelson commented on the vehicles miles of travel (VMT) chart on page 10-23 saying that it showed increases but did not show that from 2005-2035 there is a 41% increase which the environment cannot sustain. He compared the chart to one on page 10-16 which indicated that actual numbers showed VMT fluctuations of lesser proportions and asked if population growth was the determining factor in determining a 41% increase. He asked the Commission

to look at sustainable alternatives instead of projected VMT when planning for future transportation projects.

Tad Stearn, PMC, and Randy DeShazo, AMBAG, said that population growth built on past trends was a part of developing the model and that VMT may be growing due to a variety of reasons including where jobs are concentrated and the distance between jobs and housing. Rachel Moriconi noted that the blueprint that AMBAG is developing will modify and improve the model.

Commission Alternate Schiffirin expressed concern that there was not a list of findings in the resolution. After discussion the Commission decided to accept the findings made by AMBAG and to specify that the RTC concurs with these findings.

The motion (Resolution 48-10) passed unanimously.

11. Next meetings

The meeting adjourned at 11:22 am.

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 5, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the Scotts Valley City Council Chambers, 1 Civic Center Drive, Scotts Valley, CA.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

ATTENDEES

Jim Robins	RCD/IWRP
Karen Christensen	RCD
Bill Comfort	
Jack Nelson	
Mike Keogh	
Randy DeShazo	AMBAG
Tad Stearn	PMC