



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

Minutes

**Thursday, February 18, 2016
9:00 a.m.**

**RTC Office
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA**

1. Introduction

Chair Friend called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present:

Zach Friend	Ed Bottorff
Don Lane	Cynthia Chase
Randy Johnson	John Leopold
Jimmy Dutra	Dennis Norton
Greg Caput	Mike Rotkin (alt.)
Andy Schiffrin (alt.)	Virginia Johnson (alt.)

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Jennifer Rodriguez
Rachel Moriconi	Cory Caletti

2. Oral communications

Jack Nelson, Campaign for Sensible Transportation (CFST), stated that the Santa Cruz County community has a moral obligation and needs to be a self help county, not a self destructive county. Mr. Nelson passed out flyers stating CFST's position on several transportation issues.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Replacement pages for Item 5 were distributed.

CONSENT AGENDA

No consent agenda items

REGULAR AGENDA

4. Revised 2016 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Proposal to the California Transportation Commission (CTC)

Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner, presented her staff report. She reported that, due to a drop in oil prices, the CTC has revised the STIP plan and over \$4 million of STIP funds that the RTC previously programmed toward Santa Cruz County projects could potentially be cut. After working with local jurisdictions to present a new project list to the CTC, recommendations were made to postpone STIP funding for projects including: the Highway 1/9 intersection; the Highway 1 41st Avenue-Soquel Avenue Auxiliary Lanes; and the Chanticleer Bike/Pedestrian Bridge. Ms. Moriconi stated that second tier recommendations were made, depending on the action of the CTC, to shift or substitute programmed funds to backfill projects.

Commissioners discussed: the decision of state and local project priorities made by the CTC; projects that have received STIP advances and the CTC honoring funding targets for counties; disbursement allocations of state funds to cities and the county; the formula used for disbursement allocations in consideration of reserved funds; the RTC having a clear vision of how much and how many buckets there are in the proposed investment plan, and taking emergency action to redirect those funds; the likelihood of additional cuts to transportation funding after the initial recommendation from the CTC in April; substituting funds from the Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) for previously programmed STIP funded projects; the Commission Chair to send a letter to state legislature, advocating the need for transportation funding; the importance of passing the ballot measure to have our own source of funding to complete local transportation projects; allocations to Watsonville and the shifting of STIP funds from projects; operational costs not being impacted by the lack of STIP funding; and the Commission taking a formal action in June after the CTC makes their final decision in May.

Jack Nelson, said that he is an advocate for putting a price on fossil fuels to generate revenue for transportation projects and to encourage good behavior. Mr. Nelson noted that Governor Brown is supporting a carbon tax.

Commissioner Norton moved and Commissioner Alternate Rotkin seconded the motion to approve **Resolution 10-16** to

1. Revise projects previously approved for State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, as recommended by staff and project sponsors; and
2. If the CTC proposes to delete funds or delay projects that otherwise will be ready to be delivered in FY16/17:

- a. Reduce STIP funds to the Highway 1/Harkins Slough Road Interchange project by \$1.5 million; and
- b. Substitute Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds for STIP funds.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin requested a friendly amendment to the motion for the Commission to direct the RTC Chair to write a letter to legislature indicating the seriousness of the problem and urging them to take action in the short term to correct it. The amendment was accepted by the makers of the motion. The amended motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Friend, Lane, Leopold, Caput, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner alternates Johnson, Schiffrin, and Rotkin voting "aye".

5. Excursion Operations on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

George Dondero, Executive Director, presented the staff report. He noted that previous independent operators on the rail line have been well received by the local community.

Mr. Dondero introduced **Carl Arnett**, owner of Santa Cruz Rail Tours, LLC, who presented his proposal to run a trolley car, named Daisy, along the rail line. Mr. Arnett said his goal is to promote rail visibility and access by operating on weekends, with 3-4 roundtrips daily between Santa Cruz and Davenport. Daisy will accommodate 5 passengers at a time and the tour will include a narrative on the history of the Santa Cruz Railway. Flaggers would be provided at rail road crossings as appropriate.

Commissioners discussed: their excitement and support for the local use of the rail line; making sure there is proper approval from Iowa Pacific, and all safety requirements and considerations are met; the expected start date and the length of commitment to operate on the rail line; publicizing methods for the excursions; the ticket price associated with the cost of riding; the intensity of the intersections that will be crossed and the impact it will have on local traffic; Daisy being a good option to ease the local public into operations on the rail line in a low impact way; different strategies and benefits of the potential starting location at either the Depot or on Almar; the Commission having flexibility in the lease agreement; being prudent initially and expanding to other locations once it is confirmed that everything runs well; taking additional risks during a sensitive time in public policy versus tourism advantages; the excursions being a way to fulfill our state grant requirements for the use of the rail line; and being able to receive experience in responding to public complaints about operations on the rail line, before the anticipated campaign for the proposed transportation ballot measure.

Jack Nelson, said the trolley is a good way for people to see the rail line.

Barry Scott, stated the trolley on the rail line is very different from the North American Railcar Operators Association (NARCOA) motorcars, previously on the rail line.

Jim Swafford, Golden Gate Railroad Museum (GGRM), stated there have been negotiations between GGRM and Santa Cruz Rail Tours, and their operation schedules would fit well with each other. Mr. Swafford noted that GGRM has agreements for their train to run up to 8 times a year and Mr. Arnett has already been informed that the track might not be available during times of maintenance.

Commissioner Alternate Rotkin moved and Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin seconded the motion, authorizing the Executive Director or his designee to approve licenses and agreements for the motorcar operated by Santa Cruz Rail Tours, LLC. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Friend, Lane, Leopold, Caput, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner alternates Johnson, Schiffrin, and Rotkin voting "aye".

Alex Catchpoole and **Mary Joy Lu**, owners of Rail Explorers, presented a video along with their proposal, to operate rail bikes along the north end of the rail line. The eco-tourism business would operate guided, pedal-powered, family friendly, accessible, excursions that would run between Wilder Ranch State Park and Davenport Beach up to 4 times a day. Mr. Catchpoole and Ms. Lu stated there are many benefits of Rail Explorers operating in Santa Cruz County, which include: economic returns from the tourism attraction to the local community and state; employment opportunities; and rail preservation.

Commissioners discussed: departure times and the number of rail bikes grouped in each excursion; the energy needed to propel the rail bikes and the protocol if someone can't pedal for the entire 9 mile excursion; how the excursion groups will cross the roads together using flaggers; the RTC's share of the proposed revenue from each ticket; Rail Explorers' contribution to improvements along the rail line; recommended meetings with Davenport North Coast Association, the Coastal Commission, Iowa Pacific, Supervisor Coonerty, and the Santa Cruz County Planning Department; the projected service start time and running a pilot beforehand to work with the community; and appreciation for accessibility options.

Jim Swafford, stated GGRM would see the practicality of having time separation between scheduled runs and the need to have those strictly enforced. Mr. Swafford said he looks forward to meeting with Rail Explorers to discuss the details.

Barry Scott, asked about guided drivers and what happens at grade crossings.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Dutra seconded the motion, authorizing the Executive Director or his designee to approve licenses and agreements for the rail bikes operated by Rail Explorers. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Friend, Lane, Leopold, Caput, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner alternates Johnson, Schiffrin, and Rotkin voting "aye".

6. The meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

Next meetings

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean St., 5th floor, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, March 17, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Rodriguez,
Staff

Attendees:

Barry Scott	Coastal Rail Santa Cruz
Jack Nelson	Campaign for Sensible Transportation
Terry Corwin	Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Jim Swafford	Golden Gate Railroad Museum
Robert Gilbert	University of Santa Cruz
Veronica Torres	University of Santa Cruz
Zhani Cohen	University of Santa Cruz
Carl Arnett	Santa Cruz Rail Tours
Mary Joy Lu	Rail Explorers
Alex Catchpoole	Rail Explorers
Alex Clifford	Santa Cruz Metro
Mike Edwards	Iowa Pacific
Paul Elerick	
Howard Cohen	
Eric Child	