



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

Minutes

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

**SCCRTC Conference Room
1523 Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz, CA**

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

1. Introductions

Members present:

Zach Friend	Ed Bottorff
Don Lane	Cynthia Chase
Randy Johnson	John Leopold
Jimmy Dutra	Dennis Norton
Greg Caput	Dene Bustichi (alt.)
Ryan Coonerty	Bruce McPherson

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Karena Pushnick
Cory Caletti	

2. Oral communications

Commissioner Caput noted that a request from Amelia Conlen would be coming before the Commission requesting funding for Open Streets.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

No consent agenda items this month

REGULAR AGENDA

4. Polar Express Operating Plan and License

Executive Director George Dondero noted that this item was heard by the Capitola City Council the previous Thursday night and the Council supported the Polar Express Operating Plan by a unanimous vote. Commissioner Bottorff expressed appreciation for giving the City of Capitola the opportunity to consider this item before the RTC made its final decision.

Kevin Busath, Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay (SC&MB) Railway noted that they are negotiating a lease agreement with the State for the North Pole set location.

Brian Peoples said that he opposes the SC&MB Polar Express proposal due to noise, pollution, traffic impacts, and use of public funding. He added that the RTC's charge is to reduce congestion not to add amusement park rides and should be focused on passing the ballot measure.

Tom Haid said that he lives along the track in Live Oak and that it is very noisy and dirty. He noted that he could not find one neighbor who wanted this proposal to pass. This is wasteful spending of tax payer money and promotes a Christian Holiday. He would prefer a trail not a train.

Christine Martin a Santa Cruz resident asked about what impact analysis was done. She said there would be 64 train crossings per day with the four round trips of the Polar Express. This is an opposition to mobility. She noted that the horn noise required is equivalent to a jack hammer. She also asked what the benefit trade off of disturbing the community along the route was with this train event.

Eric Child, Santa Cruz resident does not see where tax payer dollars are being committed to this event. He said that we are a tourist town. This is a tourist attraction and will bring in funds to this community. Polar Express is very successful. Interrupting traffic would be the same with a trail. This is a win win for Santa Cruz. One of the benefits is that the rail line will be improved.

Dianna Adamic said that the horn noise is unbearable and that traffic is a major issue. She is a resident in the west side and it already takes her up to 1 hour to get to Capitola on a regular day. The Polar Express is a religious train and does not support her religion. Santa Cruz needs a train that supports the whole community and invests in something that is going to last, like an electric train. She noted that many communities have quiet transportation options.

Deputy Director Luis Mendez noted that the Polar Express will not be subsidized with any funds from the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and that the RTC would receive revenue generated through their ridership. Executive Director George Dondero also noted that the Polar

Express is not the same as the Christmas Town train, that it is a recognized book well known worldwide.

Commissioners discussed the disappointment in moving the event from Watsonville and how Watsonville was described in the operating plan; the need to ensure Watsonville residents are well informed about the job opportunities Polar Express will bring to the community; benefits to the community from revenue generated by rider spending in the community; clarified that tax payer dollars have not been requested or allocated to the Polar Express. They noted that this is a good opportunity for the community to see what it will be like to have trains running through their communities. They also reminded the community that the Santa Cruz & Monterey Bay (SC&MB) Railway has made a commitment to keep the train horn as low as the Federal Railroad Administration will permit.

Commissioner Lane moved and Commissioner Norton seconded to approve:

1. The passenger rail service operating plan (Attachment 1) for Polar Express operations from the Santa Cruz Boardwalk to the Capitola area for the 2016 holiday season; and
2. A passenger service license for Santa Cruz & Monterey Bay (SC&MB) Railway to operate Polar Express from the Santa Cruz Boardwalk (milepost 19.7) to just past Capitola (milepost 14.0) on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line for the 2016 holiday season.

The motion also included the request that SC&MB Railway reach out to the City of Watsonville to fill job openings and work to make low cost tickets available to low income families and to families in Watsonville.

The motion passed with Commissioners Norton, Lane, Johnson, Coonerty, Friend, Leopold, McPherson, Chase, Bottorff and Commission Alternate Bustichi voting "aye" and Commissioners Caput and Dutra voting no.

5. Review of items to be discussed in closed session. Commissioners adjourned to closed session at 10:03 am.

CLOSED SESSION

6. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION. Significant exposure to litigation pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (d) of Government Code Section 54956.9: one potential case

OPEN SESSION

7. Report on closed session

The Commission reconvened to public session at 10:17 am and there was no closed session report.

8. Meeting adjourned at 10:18 am. Next meetings

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 1, 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, September 15, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra, Staff

Attendees:

Kevin Busath	Iowa Pacific
Mark Westerfield	Iowa Pacific
Mike Edwards	Santa Cruz & Monterey Bay Railway
Howard Cohen	
Pamela Cox	
Diana Adamic	
Roland Reuben	
Eric Child	
Tom Haid	
Christine Martin	
Eric Friedrich	AMBAG