

Add-on Pages for Item 4

TPW Meeting 08/18/16

From: Shinshu Roberts

Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2016 2:10 PM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: RE Holiday Train

Dear SCCRTC,

Please no train running from Santa Cruz to Capitola. I live along the rail corridor. The trains scare away the birds and other wild life, destroying their habitat. No to mention the noise of the trains themselves and the whistles. Please drop this, yet another, plan to figure out how to make money on the rail line. Make it a hike and bike train for all of us to use and enjoy, not just the tourists.

Lani Roberts

From: christy martin

Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2016 9:17 PM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Polar Express

Copy of comment submitted on cityofcapitola.org:

Hi, I'm writing to encourage you to voice your opposition to the RTC's proposal for the Polar Express train. The Train to Christmastown was incredibly disruptive when it was run through the Westside of Santa Cruz, and the RTC recommendations suggest that the new plan will be better because there are fewer at grade crossings. However, there are still 8 grade level crossings in the proposed Boardwalk -> Capitola route, and the service will disrupt traffic at busy Seabright, 17th Ave and 41st Ave intersections during rush hour. And, even if the horn is calibrated to the lowest allowable FRA level, it will still require a 96 db horn to sound continuously 15-20 seconds before reaching each intersection.

That's equivalent to a jackhammer or helicopter @ 100 feet running through residential neighborhoods 4x per day.

It is extremely disturbing that the RTC is allocating staff resources to support an amusement ride that takes passengers from Point A to Point A. That is not transportation, and city residents should not suffer unnecessary noise and traffic so that a tax payer funded transportation corridor can be used as an amusement ride.

Thank you for your consideration

4-47

From: christy martin

Sent: Thursday, August 11, 2016 4:05 PM

To: john.leopold@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; Don Lane; Ryan Coonerty; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; bruce.mcpherson@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; jimmy.dutra@cityofwatsonville.org; rlj12@comcast.net; dnortondesigns@msn.com; cchase@cityofsantacruz.com; karina.cervantez@cityofwatsonville.org; ebottorff167@yahoo.com; zach.friend@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Cc: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Polar Express impact

In preparation for the upcoming TPW review of the Polar Express proposal, I wanted to express concerns that the published staff recommendation does not include an evaluation of either the financial cost/benefits or the traffic and noise impact. Has the RTC staff evaluated the data in the attached document, and if so, can you please include your financial and noise impact assessment in the public communications?

Thank you,

—Christy Martin

Polar Express Analysis

August 11, 2016

After reviewing the RTC agenda packet, it appears that the RTC staff analysis of the Polar Express Operating Plan does not contain an analysis of either the financials or the traffic and environmental impact. Informal review of the proposed plan, along with the outcry following the 2012 west side Train to Christmas Town service, leads me to believe it will be an unnecessary burden on the community.

Prior to recommending new operating plans, I would urge the RTC to replace subjective terms such as "significantly fewer" with a quantitative assessment of the benefits and impact. This should be the RTC's responsibility in general, but particularly when using tax payer funded resources for recreational services that do not meet transportation objectives. There has been public opposition to "The Tourist Train", but regardless of whether the service is used by locals or tourists, looping holiday and dinner trains are not transportation and do not help improve mobility. They are non-essential amusement rides, and the community impact and allocation of resources for RTC staff oversight should be viewed with even greater scrutiny.

Example areas requiring clarification:

Traffic Impact

The RTC staff report suggests: "From the Boardwalk through Capitola there are significantly fewer crossings than through the west side of the City of Santa Cruz and those crossings are further apart."

Analysis:

- 8 surface crossings along the proposed route
 - o Route includes heavily congested intersections at Seabright, 7th, 17th and 41st Ave
 - o Schedule includes weekday and weekend peak traffic hours
- 4 roundtrip trains will stop traffic 8 times per day at each crossing = 64 new traffic delays per day
- Casual observation of the Hwy 1 or Boardwalk crossings shows the existing Roaring Camp service introduces traffic backups in all directions and it can be assumed that the Polar Express will be more disruptive due to the increased frequency of service

Noise Impact

The RTC staff report suggests: "Therefore, the train horn blasts that are required by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for safety purposes before every crossing will be

significantly fewer than was the case in 2012. IPH/SC&MB Railway has also assured staff that the horn will be calibrated to be at the lower end of the volume range required by the FRA.

Analysis:

- The proposed plan would require horns be sounded 64 times per day as late as 8:30pm
- The FRA requires horns to sound continuously 15-20 seconds before reaching each of the 64 crossings

- The FRA minimum horn level is 96 db

o Equivalent to a jackhammer or helicopter at 100 feet.

(<https://www.chem.purdue.edu/chemsafety/Training/PPETrain/dblevels.htm>)

o Loud enough to require ceasing conversation

- In addition to being a dense residential corridor, the tracks run alongside nursing homes, retirement communities, schools, hotels, and museums, all of which the DOT Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment classify as "Indoor Noise-Sensitive Sites". (https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Noise_and_Vibration_Manual.pdf)

Cost / Benefit Analysis

The published operating plan does not include financials with the projected Santa Cruz county revenue, nor does the staff analysis estimate the cost of RTC resources to establish and supervise the program.

-----Original Message-----

From: julia@cruzio.com [<mailto:julia@cruzio.com>]

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 2:02 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: I support the Polar Express!

Dear SCCRTC,

I am very happy to lend my voice in support of the 2016 holiday excursion train from the Santa Cruz Boardwalk to Capitola. Too often, it seems as if professional naysayers overwhelm county residents like me. The holiday trains are great good fun, and I hope the SCCRTC will continue to allow their operation.

All aboard!

Julia Sauer

Boulder Creek

-----Original Message-----

From: Melinda Powers

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 6:05 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Tourist train

I will not support a tourist train running from Watsonville to Capitola. This train will run through residential neighborhoods creating safety, environmental and noise problems. It is another boondoggle trying to be forced upon us! No to trains- yes to trail!!!

Melinda Powers

Seascape resident

-----Original Message-----

From: Elena N. Cohen [<mailto:elenancohen@gmail.com>]

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 6:26 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Concern about additional taxpayer-funded tourist train

I am concerned about the increased noise, pollution, traffic and cost of an additional taxpayer-funded tourist train that you are considering and request that you do not support it.

Thank you for your attention.

Elena N. Cohen

Santa Cruz

-----Original Message-----

From: Michele Claussen

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 9:15 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: No Holiday Train!

We have Roaring Camp to take our kids on a wonderful train experience already, we do NOT need costly, noisy, trains to add to our already overly congested streets through Capitola and surrounding areas. Please support the Trail Now proposals, or this will be a tragic missed opportunity!

Thank you,

Michele Claussen

-----Original Message-----

From: Landeck, Tim

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 10:56 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: No Tourist Train

Please vote NO for a tourist train from the boardwalk to Capitola. We don't need it and don't want it. Please instead support a bike and hike path.

Thank you

Tim Landeck

Watsonville

From: Robert Bixby

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 11:17 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Cc: info@trailnow.org

Subject: Rail planning

Dear Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

I understand there is a vocal group that wants to convert the rail corridor to a trail only. I strongly oppose this concept. We continue to lose valuable and irreplaceable rail corridor across the country. In Santa Cruz County we have a continuously worsening traffic situation with limited options for improvement. Alternative travel routes have dramatically impacted neighborhood roads in many areas of the County. It would be a tragic loss of an incredibly valuable transportation corridor to make the rail line a trail. In addition, converting the corridor to a trail would have the greatest economic impact on the majority latino population

4-50

of south county. There is a very large percentage of the south county population that commute to Santa Cruz for work and it would be an outstanding option to someday have an alternative form of transportation for this commute path.

The assertion that having a holiday train would negatively impact the County is unfounded and short sighted. We have a strong tourist economy that supplies many jobs to local residents. The winter holidays do not have nearly the impact that the summer holidays have. With declining retail tax revenues during the holidays, tourism represents a welcome alternative tax source.

Robert Bixby,

Former member Transportation Systems Management Taskforce, Santa Cruz County
Former Chairman, Transportation Management Association of Santa Cruz County

-----Original Message-----

From: Kelley Filbin

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 1:30 PM

To: info@scrtc.org

Subject: No Polar Train please!

We residents of Santa Cruz County would prefer NOT to have a holiday train. Thanks for listening to those that will be most impacted by this idea.

Best,
Kelley

-----Original Message-----

From: Bruce Sawhill

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 1:51 PM

To: info@scrtc.org

Subject: Polar Express

Dear Commissioners:

I urge you to vote in favor of approving operation of the Polar Express. The Capitola City Council has voted unanimous support. If anyone were to be aggrieved by the prospect of the Polar Express, it would be Capitola.

While I do not believe tourist trains are the highest, best and ultimate use of the tracks, I see no harm in running them in the meantime until we can get an electric rail transit system up and running.

Best,
Bruce Sawhill, PhD
Santa Cruz, CA

From: Pamela Simmons

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 1:59 PM

To: info@scrtc.org

Subject: Polar Express and the Rail with Trail

Dear RTC, Commissioners and Staff:

Thank you for all the work you are doing regarding the Polar Express and Rail with Trail issues.

I am very much in support of the Polar Express and also the Rail with Trail design. I can't think of a nicer way to use the space. Please count me as "in" for the Polar Express.

Pamela D. Simmons

4-51

-----Original Message-----

From: Martin Engel

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 2:37 PM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Cc: Brian Peoples; Dr. Judy

Subject: Tourist Train?

Dear SCCRTC officials:

What are you thinking?

In what way will a Tourist Train benefit the taxpayers of Santa Cruz County?

Is this new venture of benefit to the RTC as a bureaucratic budget (and headcount) expansion?

Are you embarking on the amusement park business on the public dime?

Are you determined to utilize disintegrating, insecure tracks to operate any train project or program that you can seduce into participating?

Are you personally, either collectively or individually, going to benefit from this train project in any way? If so, is that legal?

Has the California Public Utility Commission approved of this Tourist Train operation on tracks that lack appropriate seismic analysis and safeguards?

For that matter, any and all train usage needs not only CPUC endorsement, but the FRA also needs to be informed of these operations.

It is our considered opinion that it is reckless and mindless to pursue this endeavor.

Please terminate this project before economic or physical damage is generated.

Respectfully,

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Engel

La Selva Beach

-----Original Message-----

From: Johanna Bowen

Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 9:09 PM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Do Not Approve the Polar Express

I am amazed that this is under consideration at all.

With the surface road congestion that already exists in Live Oak there will be dangerous backups on streets like 41st at the RR track near Brommer/Jade. When the track was in use I regularly saw people drive around the RR gate to get going before the train could pass safely. There is no excuse for tax payer monies to be expended on an unnecessary tourist train at the holiday season.

At the present time there are many more people walking these tracks and crossing the RR trestle in Capitola.

Are you trying to "kill off" any pedestrian use of the tracks in order to promote the RR (Ridiculous Rail) plan???

Johanna Bowen

Live Oak Resident

From: Michelle Miranda
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2016 8:15 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Trail decision

Hello,

I am opposed to a train/trail from Santa Cruz to Capitola. If we ever get a train it needs to be a truly utilitarian commuter conveyance running from Monterey through Santa Cruz to Silicon Valley and San Francisco. We do not need another short train route tourist attraction funded by our tax dollars.

What we do need is a walking trail with a parallel bike trail from Santa Cruz to Capitola and even to Aptos. It is well documented that younger generations cannot afford cars. They walk and bike to work and college. We can provide a safe dedicated byway for locals and tourists alike to enjoy. Santa Cruz is good at this and we need to do more.

Michelle Miranda
Santa Cruz

-----Original Message-----

From: Cara Lamb
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2016 8:35 AM
To: Regional Transportation Commission
Subject: Polar Express

Greetings,

I have just looked at the agenda for the August 18 meeting, and read about the Polar Express. I think this is an excellent idea. It's disappointing that the trains used are old, loud, and smelly, but use of the tracks by these trains helps us look at what having trains is like, figure out what problems we need to deal with to have permanent train service, all while offering a form of entertainment to the public that is not usually available. I hope you will ignore the organized opposition of the Trail Now folks and make sure the Polar Express happens.

Thank you!

Caroline Lamb

-----Original Message-----

From: Brian Brunelli
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2016 8:41 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Polar express

Please pull up the train tracks and use the corridor for a bike path. The Polar Express will create more traffic jams in the county. The train is an absolute boondoggle. Thanks.

Brian Brunelli

From: Robert Jones
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2016 3:23 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Rail issues

RTC,

I'm extremely disappointed in the RTC regarding the several steps and attitudes re: the rail corridor.

1. The approval of the Polar Express from Santa Cruz to Capitola is poorly advised. Has an environmental assessment been made considering noise, traffic disruption, pollution and safety been conducted? (And don't drag out some ancient EIA that was done for a different ill-advised project). Is this just another way to shore up the failing economics of rail corridor ownership? Per the RTC, the corridor will be self-sustaining economically yet the November tax measure contains a huge taxpayer subsidy for maintenance. You broke your pledge. For shame.

2. The Trail Now economic/feasibility rail corridor study was conducted by a nationally-recognized firm in the business and is a quality product. Despite this, at least one member of the RTC (Caletti) has dismissed it outright and has worked to deny it a fair hearing. Of course, no other corridor utilization study by the RTC is forthcoming. November voters need to see what their options are before a huge tax commitment. The only reasonable and COST EFFECTIVE plan is to remove the tracks and build a world-class trail. The RTC should make valid feasibility/economic arguments for ITS plan (i.e., the RTC is not unbiased in this matter) and let the public decide how its money should be spent.

Robert Jones
Aptos

From: Ken Maus
Sent: Tuesday, August 16, 2016 11:30 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Cc: lmendez@sccrtc.org
Subject: Yes, Polar Express

Hello

Please keep the rails in place. Many of us want to see trains running again.

The Polar Express will be great for children of all ages to experience during holidays.

Making off highway rail transit from Santa Cruz to Watsonville available would provide a wonderful transportation alternative in the future.

Thank You,
Ken Maus
Jo Maus
Capitola Ca

From: Mark Mesiti-Miller

Sent: Wednesday, August 17, 2016 11:43 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Subject: Polar Express Operating Plan and License

Greetings Commissioners,

I strongly support the proposed Polar Express Operating Plan and License and urge you to promptly approve the Plan and License allowing the operator to move ahead with the work necessary to provide this valuable holiday excursion service. Not only will 25,000 to 35,000 riders get to enjoy this magical experience, allowing this use is estimated to generate some \$63,000 in revenue for the RTC. In this era of dwindling revenue, this significant amount of revenue can surely be put to good use by the RTC.

Furthermore, this proposed service will support other sectors of our community's tourism industry at a time of year fewer tourists are visiting our area. Accordingly, the economic benefits of this service will be many multiplied throughout our business community and generate visitor taxes for funding public works as well.

Please support this proposal.

Best regards,

Mark Mesiti-Miller

33 year resident of Santa Cruz

4-55