

## **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Add-on Agenda Item #5  
February 2, 2017 RTC Meeting

**From:** Brian Peoples

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 9:20 PM

**To:** info@sccrtc.org

**Cc:** Zach Friend; ryan.coonerty@santacruzcounty.us; bruce.mcpherson@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; John Leopold; jimmy.dutra@cityofwatsonville.org; cchase@cityofsantacruz.com; Alex Clifford; Barrow Emerson; rlj12@comcast.net; lmendez@sccrtc.org

**Subject:** Trail Now response to RTC meeting on Feb 2, 2017

RTC,

The following is Trail Now response to RTC meeting agenda for February 2, 2017:

### **Agenda #5: Oral Communications:**

Trail Now would like to welcome the new RTC commissioners. Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commissions (RTC) is one of the most important public organizations within our county. An effective transportation system is key to prosperity for our entire community. This organization will be investing millions into our community over the next 30 years and we believe it is possible to create a world-class transportation system that serves everyone in the community equally. Welcome new commissioners.

At this time, we would like to take a moment to express to the Commission that before the 2017 storms, our community was in a transportation crisis. Now, with so many road closures and infrastructure damage, our community is in a transportation emergency. It is critical that we move quickly to invest in our transportation infrastructure to help improve mobility across the county. The three main corridors (Soquel, Highway 1, Coastal) are the key transit routes for our community. All three of these corridors must be opened and used NOW.

Trail Now believes that this transportation emergency justifies moving forward with using the Coastal Corridor NOW for alternative transportation with the removal of the tracks and allow the property to sit as a gravel vacant lot that is accessible to the public for moving through the community. This vacant lot will remain open to the public to enable mobility across the county until a final decision on the property is determined. Our community is in a transportation emergency and opening up the Coastal Corridor is needed for public safety and economic viability.

It is going on 6 years now that RTC has owned the Coastal Corridor and the facts are very clear, the old railroad must be removed no matter what the future holds. The idea that RTC Staff does not have clear understanding of the mechanisms and policies to remove old railroad tracks is very concerning. Normally, when purchasing a property, the buyer has clear understanding of how they will invest in that property, clear understanding of hazardous materials and clear understanding of any liabilities or risk. In this situation, it is even more concerning since it is the Santa Cruz County taxpayer who is liable - and RTC Staff has no knowledge on the processes needed to use the property NOW. Our community is in a transportation emergency. We need the Coastal Corridor opened up NOW for alternative transportation methods.

Brian Peoples  
Executive Director  
Trail Now

## **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Add-on Agenda Item #19b  
February 2, 2017 RTC Meeting

**From:** Contact Request Form [mailto:admin@sccrtc.org]  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 29, 2017 1:32 AM  
**To:** info@sccrtc.org  
**Subject:** New submission from Contact Form

This Contact Request Form has been submitted by a member of the public to <http://sccrtc.org/contact-us/>.

### **Name**

Becky Steinbruner

### **Subject**

Comment re: RTC Agenda Item #19b Santa Cruz County Project Updates

### **Your Message**

Dear RTC Board,

I am not sure I will be able to attend the February 2, 2017 RTC meeting and would like to submit the following comments regarding Item 19b, Santa Cruz County Project Updates:

The RTC has funded the Aptos Village Traffic Improvement Project with two Surface Transportation Block Grants. I want to point out that the September, 2016 grant for \$650,000 was awarded for Phase I and Phase II of the project, but the County has allocated 100% of that money for Phase I. This seems to be a violation of the terms of the grant application and leaves Phase II of the improvement underfunded. With uncertain future federal funding options, this appears a short-sighted use of taxpayer money that may leave the Phase II Aptos Village Traffic Improvements in peril.

Further, the 2016 RTC traffic study of the Soquel Drive and Spreckles Drive intersection determined that the number of vehicle trips/day is already significantly higher than the number reported by County Public Works in the STBG application for the Phase I/II, and greatly differs from the 2004 Aptos Village Project Traffic Study performed by TJKM (funded by the County), upon which the County is basing its Initial Environmental Studies. My own traffic counts conducted in 2015 and 2016 at the Trout Gulch / Soquel Drive intersection, using the same methods as TJKM and during the same times and dates, are also much higher than the 2004 study results the County Department of Public Works is using. I will gladly provide your Board with that information upon request.

The Aptos Village Project mitigated Negative Declaration did not address the impacts of the phased traffic improvements nor did it include any study of traffic impacts regarding the Rio del Mar and Freedom Boulevard arterials. The Initial Study did not consider the impacts of the increased traffic on Trout Gulch Road due to the proposed Phase I restriction of left turns from Aptos Creek Road onto Soquel Drive. Motorists traveling east from Aptos Creek Road will be routed over the new Aptos Village Way within the Aptos Village Project, and forced onto Trout Gulch Road, which is often gridlocked with existing school and post office traffic. At times, parents dropping off students at Valencia Elementary must wait 30-45 minutes to reach the Soquel Drive intersection, which is also heavily congested.

I also want to point out that the TIA developer fees for the Aptos Village Project seem to be at a reduced rate, compared to other TIA fees for developments in the County. This seems to me an unfair burden placed upon taxpayers to support the Aptos Village Project developers which include Barry Swenson Builder, Joe Appenrodt, Pete Testorff, and others.

Further, there are components of the Aptos Village Traffic Improvements that appear to be unjustly funded by taxpayers to the benefit of the developers. The Phase I Improvements include moving the westbound Metro bus stop ONLY to make room for the Aptos Village Project's new main entrance street, Parade Street. The new bus stop location will endanger drivers and passengers because of inadequate line-of-sight visibility for re-entry to

## COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Add-on Agenda Item #19b  
February 2, 2017 RTC Meeting

traffic flow. The new site also has zero parking for commuters who wish to get on the bus at this point; Aptos Street is already extremely congested by on-street commercial business parking that has been approved rather than enforcing the usual off-street parking requirements in County Code. Parking within the commercial parking lot across the street (Bay Federal Credit Union area) is already over-taxed and has become very restricted to customers of those businesses. Towing is strictly enforced. This complex is owned by Mr. Appenrodt.

The current proposed new bus stop location has been disputed by Mr. John Hibble, representing the Aptos Chamber of Commerce. He met with Scott and Sheldon on February 11, 2016 to present support for keeping the bus stop in it's current location. He cited the following problems associated with the proposed relocation site, including:

- \*No parking for pick up and drop off of bus passengers.
- \*Bus must pull out into traffic backed up at Trout Gulch intersection.
- \*Limited site lines for west bound automobiles approaching bus stop from eastern railroad trestle.
- \*Bus will block cars wanting to turn right onto Trout Gulch Road.
- \*Bus stop is not centrally located and requires substantial walking to get to Village core and businesses across Soquel Drive through the busiest traffic intersection.
- \*Loading bicycles onto bus must occur in heavy traffic.
- \*Grade Change for passengers to access bus stop from intersection.
- \*Poorly lighted area.
- \*Not the best location for ADA passengers.
- \*Location is directly over PG&E main gas transmission line and utilities.

At the October, 2016 Project walk-through held by County Public Works for prospective bidders and the public, one railroad engineering company's representatives pointed out to County staff that the new proposed bus stop turnout will force existing utility boxes associated with the rail crossing warning signalization to be moved too close to the actual rail line, violating state rail utility setback codes.

The Aptos Village Traffic Improvements Phase II include development of the Parade Street crossing across the railroad tracks. This is also unjustly being funded by taxpayers, to the benefit of the developers. Also, the Public Utilities Commission approval for the new at-grade crossing requires closing the nearby Bayview Hotel main private ingress/egress. This violates the 1876 deeded agreement between Mr. Jose Arano and the Santa Cruz Railroad. The Bayview Hotel property extends beneath the railroad but neither the County nor developer has offered the owner, Ms. Cristin Locke, any remuneration for the illegal taking of her private property. She is pursuing legal action.

I would like the RTC to publicly discuss these issues with Santa Cruz County Department of Public Works staff and conduct an investigation into the apparent problems that I have presented. I respectfully request that the RTC require an updated traffic study of the Aptos Village Traffic Improvement Phase I and Phase II areas to ensure that the proposed improvements funded by taxpayers will correctly and efficiently address the traffic problems in the area. This is important for the sustainability of all commerce in the Aptos Village area as well as the safety of all school children, school staff, residents and merchants in the greater Aptos Community.

Please respond in writing with the RTC action and intentions.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Becky Steinbruner  
Aptos, CA 95003

## **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Add-on Agenda Item #23  
February 2, 2017 RTC Meeting

**From:** Peoples, Brian C  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 29, 2017 7:09 AM  
**To:** info@sccrtc.org  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: Trail Now Newsletter

RTC,  
This is Trail Now Newsletter that is addressing the Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> RTC meeting. Please include it in statements to commissioners.  
Brian

**From:** Trail Now **On Behalf Of** Trail Now  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 29, 2017 6:56 AM  
**To:** Peoples, Brian C (US)  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Trail Now Newsletter



### **“RAIL WITH TRAIL” versus “RAIL-TRAIL**

RTC’s continued use of the term “rail-trail” is confusing to the public and all communications by Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) on the Coastal Corridor should use the term “rail with trail”. According to the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, the terms “rail-trail” and “rail with trail” are defined differently. “Rail-Trail” is defined as a trail developed on an abandoned railroad line (Trail Only), where there is no active rail service. “Rail-with-Trail” is defined as a shared-use path that is adjacent to an active railroad. The RTC continues to incorrectly use the term “rail-trail” when discussing the current plans for the Coastal Corridor. RTC is developing plans for a “rail with trail”.

### **TRANSPORTATION CRISIS TO AN EMERGENCY**

Before the 2017 storms, our community was in a transportation crisis. Now, with so many road closures and infrastructure damage, our community has a transportation emergency. We continue to be dismayed that the RTC wastes time and tax dollars imagining that there will ever be a train. The RTC is currently investing in designs for Segments 7, 8, and 9 as a rail-with-trail. These unnecessarily complex designs squeeze a small trail next to the unused

tracks with a fence separating the two. The north Coastal Corridor to Davenport completely disregards the RTC's local constituents (north coast farmers) by dictating a rail-with-trail. It is going on 6 years now that RTC has owned the Coastal Corridor and the facts are very clear and verified by the RTC's own study: a train is not viable. The Coastal Corridor needs to be opened up NOW to help us with transportation NOW.

**TRAIN INFRASTRUCTURE WOULD BE REPLACED FOR PASSENGER TRAIN**

Trail Now has recommended that RTC look at how other communities converted old railroad tracks into "commuter lines" and their "success". A great example is the WES Commuter Rail running between Beaverton and Tigard in Oregon. The project was sold to the public as a "low-cost" commuter rail project that would cost just \$80 million. The line is 14.7 miles from the Beaverton Transit Center to Wilsonville's transit center. When construction started, the cost ballooned to \$125 million. When WES began operations, the final cost to taxpayers was over \$160 million. Further capital projects have added several million more to the cost, including Positive Train Control, purchasing additional rolling stock (because the originally purchased rolling stock had reliability issues, not because of capacity constraints), and so on.

In the end, virtually nothing of the old railroad structure was used. It is almost entirely brand new construction. Every station is 100% brand new. The equipment is brand new. The rails are brand new. The ties are brand new. The ballast is brand new.

The primary point is that any thought that a passenger train will exist on the Coastal Corridor must acknowledge that everything will have to be replaced. The conclusion is unavoidable: The risks are too great to try and build a passenger train system on the Coastal Corridor. The sooner the RTC communicates this to the public, the sooner we can move forward with using the Coastal



**ATTENDING LOCAL EVENTS**

Trail Now is actively attending local events to help educate the public on the train vs. trail debate. This past weekend, we attended the UCSC Hack-a-Thon. At the event, we educate students on the facts and ask them to sign the petition. If you have an event or would like to help host a booth, please let us know.

**NEXT RTC MEETING**

Next RTC meeting is on Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9 am at the Watsonville City Council Chambers 275 Main St., Ste 450 Watsonville. If you have time, this would be a good meeting to attend to learn more about the RTC plans and voicing your opinion at the meeting is very influential.

**WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?**

Here are some easy things you can do to help build a world-class rail-trail NOW:

1. Purchase Trail Now shirts and stickers at BLOWOUT WETSUIT REPAIR (3055 Portola Dr, Santa Cruz).
2. Donate to Trail Now (<http://www.trailnow.org/donate>) to help stop the train and build a trail NOW.
3. On Facebook, "LIKE", and ask your friends to "LIKE" Trail Now. This is not just sharing, but inviting your friends to like.
4. Sign up and invite your friends to sign up for our Trail Now Newsletter.
5. Sign the petition and ask your friends to sign for a Trail Only  
<https://www.change.org/p/santa-cruz-county-rtc-help-build-a-world-class-rail-trail-in-santa-cruz-county-by-removing-train-tracks>

**Corridor for alternative transportation solutions.**



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Subject: Trail Now response to RTC meeting on Feb 2, 2017

RTC,

The following is Trail Now response to RTC meeting agenda for February 2, 2017:

### Agenda #23: City of Santa Cruz Rail with Trail Project:

We continue to be dismayed that the RTC wastes time and tax dollars imagining that there will ever be a train. The RTC is currently investing in designs for Segments 7, 8, and 9 as a rail-with-trail. These unnecessarily complex designs squeeze a small trail next to the unused tracks with a fence separating the two. As Trail Now has long predicted, the cost of rail-with-trail is much, much more than rail-trail. This is a huge reality check. The cost of rail-with-trail is substantially underestimated and when actual contractor bids are completed, the rail-with-trail will cost millions more than a rail trail.



The current plan for a rail-with-trail along Segment 7 is well represented by the photo we have been sharing with the public and supporters, illustrating a real-life example of the proposed Segment 7 design. Segment 7 will have retaining wall that will definitely be a graffiti target. This is not a world-class rail-trail.

Santa Cruz County leads America in bicycle accidents. A big contributor is the poor designs of our infrastructure. A great example is the Santa Cruz Wharf Roundabout, considered to be one of the most dangerous roundabouts in America for bicyclist. The poor design of the roundabout will continue to be a major risk to the Santa Cruz County residences and visitors. Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission continues their legacy of promoting poor designs of bicycle resources with their development of a "rail-with-trail" for Segment 7.



We recommend that no further tax dollars are invested in designing Segment 7 or 8 & 9 until the Unified Corridor Investment Plan is completed. Until this determination is completed, it makes no sense to build a trail to accommodate a train. The train has no funding from Measure D and a new tax measure would be required. Trail Now will strongly oppose any future tax measure that supports a train.

Finally, Trail Now will continue to inform the public of the realities of the current plan, its cost overruns, and the poor quality of the trail being proposed. Spending millions on an inadequate trail to provide for a future train is simply wrong—especially since more studies are still being conducted on "Best Use" for the Coastal Corridor.

Brian Peoples  
Executive Director  
Trail Now