

PAM



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS
MANAGEMENT**

November 24, 2003

Attachment 1

**Karena Pushnik
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060-3911**

Subject: Recreation Rail EIR: Changes to scope of EIR based on comment letters received

Karena,

We have reviewed the letters received during the scoping period and have discussed them with you and your staff. Based on our review of the comments received, we believe that the proposed scope of the EIR will cover the concerns raised in the comment letters that relate to requirements under CEQA. In particular, the EIR will cover the following topic areas:

Planning &
Environmental
Process

Environmental
& Corporate
Communications

Community
Relations & Agency
Coordination

Facilitation
& Mediation

Traffic and Safety – The EIR will include an analysis of potential impacts to delay at local at-grade crossings; impacts on congestion on local roadways; and impacts on parking in the areas around the proposed stations. The EIR will also discuss the topic of safety and the potential for accidents and/or derailments along the rail line.

Noise - The EIR will address the potential noise and vibration impacts created by increasing the frequency of trains, including train sounds, horn sounds, and crossing device sounds.

Air Quality – The EIR will include an analysis of the increase in diesel emissions and its potential effects on air quality.

Hazardous Materials – The EIR will include a discussion of the Phase II hazardous materials testing currently underway and will report on the findings of that testing.

Based on our discussion of the comment letters, we would propose that you consider adding the following items to the scope of the EIR:

Aesthetics: Consider adding two visual simulations to show what a proposed station area would look like as well as what a train would look like either at one of the overnight storage areas or along a section of the rail line. Many people commented on the potential aesthetic impact of the project on the surrounding character of the area. The cost of two visual simulations is estimated to be \$6,000.

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Alternatives: CEQA requires that the EIR include a reasonable range of alternatives, and must include a No Project Alternative. We also discussed the possibility of including a Reduced Service Alternative and an Alternative Fuel Alternative. These three alternatives would provide a reasonable range to be studied and, as required by CEQA, each of these alternatives could reduce potential impacts that will be described more thoroughly in the EIR.

We believe that with these revisions, the scope of the EIR would fulfill the requirements of CEQA. Of course, you may consider including additional information that goes beyond what is required under CEQA; however, any additional studies would be considered out of scope, and would require further revisions to our scope and budget.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Bean
Project Manager