

AGENDA: November 3, 2005

TO: Regional Transportation Commission/Rail Trail Authority
FROM: Luis Pavel Mendez, Acting Deputy Director
RE: Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Acquisition Project – Status Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission accept this status report on various elements of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Acquisition Project.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Transportation Commission has been working on acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line for over four years. In December 2004, the RTC approved entering into a non-binding Letter of Intent with Union Pacific to purchase the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line for \$19 million. A number of reports and steps must be completed before the RTC can make a final decision on acquisition of the Branch Line and to obtain the necessary approvals from the relevant funding and regulatory agencies.

A draft Structural Assessment report was prepared by Biggs Cardosa Associates and Systra Consulting and presented to the RTC at its August 4, 2005 meeting. The report recommended additional structural analysis for some structures. At its August 18, 2005 Transportation Policy Workshop (TPW), the RTC approved a revised financial plan and budget to produce the additional analyses recommended in the structural assessment reports. The RTC also directed staff and consultants to conduct the necessary negotiations with Union Pacific to produce the additional analyses and to solicit proposals.

DISCUSSION

Recommended Additional Structural Analyses

Proposals

The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Structural Assessment produced by Biggs Cardosa Associates and Systra Consulting recommended additional analysis of structures at six crossings and three retaining walls. The recommendation includes a service load analysis of the structures and a seismic analysis for one structure.

Proposals for additional structural analysis have been received from HNTB Corporation and Biggs Cardosa Associates. According to the proposals the time necessary to complete the work

is about 2.5 months. Staff and consultants are currently reviewing the proposals, will share the proposals with the Rail Acquisition Task Force and return to RTC at a later date with a recommendation.

Negotiations with Union Pacific

The recommended additional structural assessment work requires obtaining as-built plans, maintenance reports and other information from Union Pacific, and amending the right of entry and confidentiality agreements between the RTC and Union Pacific. In addition, the RTC directed staff and consultants to pursue cost sharing options with Union Pacific. Union Pacific has expressed willingness to share the cost of the additional structural assessment work. Staff and consultants are still negotiating these points with Union Pacific and will return to the RTC with recommendations.

Appraisals

At its May 19, 2005 Transportation Policy Workshop meeting, the RTC received a presentation of the draft preliminary title report for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. The title report has been finalized and it has been provided to the appraisal consultant along with other information required by the appraisal consultant to complete the appraisal. Completion of the appraisal is expected in mid December.

Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Short Line Operator

At its June 2005 TPW meeting, the RTC approved releasing an RFP for a short line operator for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. Release of the RFP was subsequently postponed pending completion of the structural assessment work. Once the structural assessment work is completed, the RFP will be revised and presented to the RTC for approval and release.

Timeline

When the RTC decided to pursue the recommended detailed structural analyses, other elements of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Acquisition project were delayed. In anticipation that proposals for the additional structural assessment will be reviewed by the RTC soon, the RTC will have a better understanding of the extent of the impact on the project timeline. A revised timeline will be presented at a future RTC meeting for your consideration and approval.

SUMMARY

Staff has received proposals for the recommended additional structural assessment work. Consultants and staff continue to negotiate with Union Pacific various details to produce the additional structural analysis. Information on other elements of the Rail Line Acquisition Project is presented. Staff will revise the project timeline and present it to the RTC at a future meeting for consideration and approval.