

October 21, 2005

Keith Boyle
Community Development Department
Planning Department
250 Main Street
Watsonville, CA 95067

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Watsonville Vista 2030
General Plan Update

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Watsonville Vista 2030 General Plan Update. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) staff has reviewed the Draft EIR and find it to be generally consistent with the SCCRTC's regional policies, programs and projects as expressed in the 2005 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

SCCRTC staff has the following comments for your consideration:

1. Section 4.2.2 on Page 4-4: In the Transit Alternatives in the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Major Transportation Investment Study (MTIS) section, the bus alternatives from the MTIS are described and the last paragraph states that a preferred alternative was not selected and that each of the various alternatives are still under consideration. The MTIS was completed and a program of projects was selected by the SCCRTC in 1999. The selected program of projects includes, the following transit projects: \$124 million in funding for bus service improvements over a 15 year period and \$15 million for acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line from Union Pacific for future transportation purposes. SCCRTC staff suggests that it is not necessary to include the specific alternatives that were considered in the MTIS except as a historical reference and recommends including the selected program of projects.
2. Section 4.2.3 first paragraph: The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is currently owned by Union Pacific Corporation.
3. Section 4.2.3 on Page 4-5: In the Watsonville to Santa Cruz Union Pacific Branch Rail Line section, staff suggests adding that the SCCRTC entered into a Letter of Intent with Union Pacific to purchase the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and is working on various studies needed to make a final purchase decision.
4. Section 4.2.3 on Page 4-5: The MTIS Rail Service Alternatives section lists the rail service alternatives considered in the MTIS. SCCRTC staff recommends adding that these alternatives were not included in the selected program of projects resulting from the completion of the MTIS.

5. Section 4.2.5 on Page 4-7: Paragraph 2 states that the SCCRTC's Bicycle Committee was involved in an updated 2005 Bikeway Plan. As far as SCCRTC staff knows, a 2005 Watsonville Bikeway Plan has not been produced.
6. Section 4.4 (pages 4-17 to 4-28): SCCRTC staff recommends adding a General Plan Policy to investigate and implement park and ride lot facilities, including shared use lots, to reduce vehicle trips and more efficiently use the existing and future transportation system. This can be included as mitigation for impacts T-1 and T-7. *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* policy 2.4.9 supports park and ride lot development where appropriate, including links with express bus service to key employment and education centers and other alternative transportation modes.
7. Section 4.6, impacts T-1 (pages 4-30) and T-7 (pages 4-36): Staff would like to acknowledge that the DEIR identifies several essential measures for addressing LOS levels in Watsonville. The *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* encourages increasing mobility by providing an improved and integrated multi-modal transportation system. The General Plan policies and implementation measures noted in the DEIR which encourage transit use and infrastructure, promote ridesharing and reduce total vehicle trips support *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* policies 1.3, 2.3 & 3.4. As such, staff supports implementation measures that address efficient use of the transportation system, reduce vehicle trips and help improve the LOS for the entire roadway network. The later policies and implementation measures can be included as mitigation measure for impacts T-1 and T-7.
8. Section 4.6, impact T-5 (pages 4-35): The *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* goals and policies 1.3.1, 1.3.2 and 3.5 support Transportation Demand Management policies. Staff suggests that the City of Watsonville identify specific Transportation Demand Management strategies to support reduced parking requirements that achieve less demand. For example, SCCRTC staff recommends adding language to Implementation 4.3.13 Parking on Page 4-18 stating that the City of Watsonville will investigate, develop and implement shared use parking measures to reduce parking needed and to more efficiently utilize present and future parking.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Watsonville Vista 2030 General Plan Update. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Grace Blakeslee of my staff at 460-3219.

Sincerely,

Pat Dellin
Acting Executive Director

Cc: SCCRTC Commissioner Tony Campos
SCCRTC Commissioner Antonio Rivas
SCCRTC
Caltrans Development Review