

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)

Transportation Policy Workshop

MINUTES

Thursday May 15 , 2008

9:00 a.m.

SCCRTC Conference Room

1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz

1. Introductions

Self-introductions were made.

2. Oral Communications

Tom Hiltner introduced Sam Mendez, currently interning at the Metro. The internship is funded by a Caltrans Transit Professional Development Grant. He will rotate positions in a few months with Erich Friedrich who is the RTC intern funded by the same grant.

Jack Nelson showed a bicycle brake pad and a rear sprocket cassette, to illustrate that bike maintenance is less expensive and less labor intensive than car maintenance.

3. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

Executive Director George Dondero announced that there were add-on pages for Item 4. He also asked the Commission to add Item 6.1 regarding the California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff recommendations for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the need to immediately re-prioritize projects in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP).

County Counsel Rahn Garcia said that the Brown Act allows an item to be added to an agenda after the agenda was posted for the public if there is a need to deal with the item before the next scheduled meeting and if the item was not known prior to the time when the agenda was made public.

Commissioner Pirie moved and Commissioner Spence seconded to add Item 6.1 to the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Dondero announced that there would be no Closed Session on Item 8.

Consent Agenda

No Consent Items

Regular Agenda

4. State Legislative Overview and Proposed Positions on Bills

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi gave the staff report providing an overview of current legislative activity. She said that staff recommends that the Commission take positions on several bills. She introduced state legislative assistants John Arriaga and Steve Schnaidt to discuss the current status of bills before the legislature and the Governor's proposed May revision to the state budget. Since SB 375 is being discussed in Item 6, Ms. Moriconi recommended that the Commission not vote on a position on that bill until after Item 6 was presented.

Mr. Schnaidt provided information and answered questions about several bills including bills addressing HOV lane access issues, dropping the threshold to 55% for voter approval of special taxes, gasoline fees, greenhouse gas emissions, and SB1507 which would prohibit new road construction, including road repair, of a state highway within ¼ mile of a school.

Commissioner Tavantzis moved to oppose SB 1507. Commissioner Nicol asked for a friendly amendment that the motion language state "strongly oppose" SB 1507. Commissioner Tavantzis accepted the suggestion.

Commissioner Pirie asked that the motion be revised to adopt the staff recommendations with the exception of the recommendation regarding SB 375 and to include the change to the recommended position on SB 1507 to "strongly oppose". Commissioner Tavantzis accepted the amendment and Commissioner Pirie seconded the motion. Commissioner Tavantzis asked if the motion should include alerting the local jurisdictions to the proposed bill. The Commissioners all agreed and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Moriconi and Mr. Schnaidt reviewed the add-on pages regarding the May revision to the state budget, and the Governor's proposed strategies to fill the budget gap, which include a plan to privatize the state lottery and borrow against future revenues. The state budget expands the transfer of transit funds to the General Fund and revenues from the fuel

tax are lower because people are purchasing less fuel. The Governor intends to fully fund Proposition 42.

Commissioners criticized borrowing against the lottery and taking money from transit at a time when more people are turning to public transportation.

Steve Schnaidt said that the state is going to run out of money by the beginning of summer.

Les White, SCMTD, said that it is expected that there will be an increase in ridership on the more heavily used routes, resulting in a demand for more buses and drivers which Metro cannot afford due to the reduction in transit funds. He said that at the same time, the MediCal cuts have put an increased burden on Metro to provide service for people needing dialysis. He noted that METRO has been forced to use old buses that had been retired to meet the needs.

5. Proposition 98 on June 2008 Ballot

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi gave an overview of Propositions 98 and 99. In addition to eminent domain provisions, Proposition 98 would phase out rent control, negatively impacting many seniors who live in rent-controlled mobile home parks. She noted that many of these parks are located near transit stops. She said that Proposition 99 is an alternative eminent domain proposition.

Commissioner Pirie moved and Commissioner Tavantzis seconded to approve the staff recommendations that the Regional Transportation Commission adopt an "oppose" position on Proposition 98, which is on the June 3, 2008 statewide ballot.

The motion passed with Commissioner Nicol abstaining, saying that he thinks it inappropriate for the Commission to take a position on this type of legislation.

6. Senate Bill 375 Land Use and Transportation Coordination

Executive Director George Dondero highlighted the key concerns with SB 375 including the impacts on funding eligibility for transportation projects by requiring local agencies to make planning decisions consistent with a regional "sustainable communities strategy" (SCS). He said that the way the bill is written creates a significant increase for exposure to litigation for the Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) and transportation projects. He added

that the bill only addresses new housing development and that while the intent of the bill is laudable, land use and transportation incentives to reduce emissions need to be coordinated with other activities and consistent with AB 32.

John Arriaga said that the bill is a flawed proposal and will probably be put on hold until after the June election.

Steve Schnaidt said that the League of Cities and Self-Help counties have made several suggested amendments and that the bill is probably stalled until August.

Commissioners discussed whether it would be better to directly oppose the bill, whether the Commission should define specific amendments, and the problems inherent with a top down approach from the state regarding land use.

Executive Director Dondero said that he will be at the CalCOG meeting in Sacramento on Monday and can bring Commission concerns to the meeting. Commissioner Campos volunteered to do the same at the CSAC meeting on Wednesday.

Commissioner Tavantzis said that she preferred language saying that the RTC "oppose the bill unless amended consistent with the suggestions made by CalCOG, CSAC and the League of Cities" instead of coming up with a specific list of amendments.

Mr. Dondero said that staff could break the bill into pieces and bring it back to the Commission in June for further discussion. He said that it is important to have positions ready when the bill is taken up again in Sacramento. Mr. Arriaga will help coordinate the positions taken by CalCOG, CSAC and the League of Cities.

Jack Nelson said that the Commission seems to be concerned about local autonomy issues, but that all state mandates are not bad. He cited the California Coastal Act as an example and said that the underlying principle of SB375 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Commissioner Johnson made the point that the word "sustainable" is nebulous.

Rick Longinetti said that what is needed is the kind of vision for density that Boulder Creek had and that this kind of density can be built around transit.

Aileen Loe, Caltrans District 5, said that the dialogue that the Commission is having is critical and that the state, with the blueprint process, is trying to provide some kind of leadership to help find new ways of doing business in a positive manner.

The Commission approved by consensus that staff return in June with more information regarding SB 375.

6.1 CTC Staff Recommendations for 2008 State Transportation Improvement Program

Senior Planner Rachel Moriconi said that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff released its recommendations on Friday and that it is not recommending 8 out of the 10 proposed projects in the RTC's Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The CTC's rationale seems to be that if a county has any unmet highway needs, it is not recommending projects that do not address these unmet highway needs. She said that in discussions with Caltrans it was determined that the unmet highway needs for Santa Cruz County were not ready for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and should not interfere with funding in other areas.

Executive Director George Dondero said that this is a statewide issue and that there were a billion dollars in requests beyond what the state could fund.

Ms. Moriconi said that without the funding some of the RTC's programs would be severely cut back or eliminated and that projects for local jurisdictions would be delayed. She said that the funding request for the HOV Lanes project was approved but that the CTC is recommending putting the project out until FY11-12. Since the environmental document is ready for release this calendar year, receiving funding three years from now will result in cost increases.

Ms. Moriconi said that although funding for the Rail Acquisition Project is also affected, it may be possible to make arrangements with Union Pacific to continue negotiations. She asked the Commission for direction to determine project priorities and recommended that returning the HOV Lanes project to the 2008 STIP be the top priority in order to avoid the cost increases that will impact other projects.

Mr. Dondero agreed that continuation of the HOV lane environmental document should be the top priority and suggested

that the second priority is to get the rail money to carry over to next fiscal year, due to the current stage of negotiations.

Commissioners discussed the various projects that were unfunded by the CTC. It was noted that the Rail Acquisition Project has the Coastal Conservancy loan as a contingency.

Commissioner Pirie moved and Commissioner Nicol seconded to make programming funding for the HOV Lanes project in FY 08-09 the first priority. The motion passed unanimously.

After further discussion, Commissioner Pirie moved and Commissioner Campos seconded to make obtaining the requested funding for the Varni, Carlton and Freedom roads projects as the second priority. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioners Pirie, Tavantzis, Bustichi and Nicol departed the meeting at 11:10 am.

Senior Planner Moriconi discussed other impacts and said that the state budget dictates when money is actually available.

Commissioner Stone noted that the state's prioritization of projects according to its own criteria conflicts with SB45 which gives regions the ability to program their share of the STIP.

Closed Session

Chair Campos removed Item 7 from the Closed Session and rescheduled it for the TPW meeting on June 19th.

7. Annual Performance Review for Executive Director Pursuant to Government Code 54957 – N/A
8. Conference with Real Property Negotiator Pursuant to Government Code 54956.8 for Acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Property: Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line from Watsonville Junction to Davenport – N/A
 - a. Agency Negotiator: Kirk Trost, Miller, Owen & Trost
 - b. Negotiation Parties: SCCRTC, Union Pacific
 - c. Under Negotiation: Price and Terms

Reconvene to Open Session

- 9. Report on Closed Session – N/A
- 10. Next Meetings / Adjournment

The meeting adjourned 11:14 am.

The next SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 5, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Watsonville, CA

The next Transportation Policy Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, June 19, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. at the SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

ATTENDEES

Donald Hagen	
Mark Griffin	AMBAG
Les White	SCMTD
Jack Nelson	
Tom Hiltner	SCMTD
Sam Mendez	SCMTD
Rick Longinetti	