

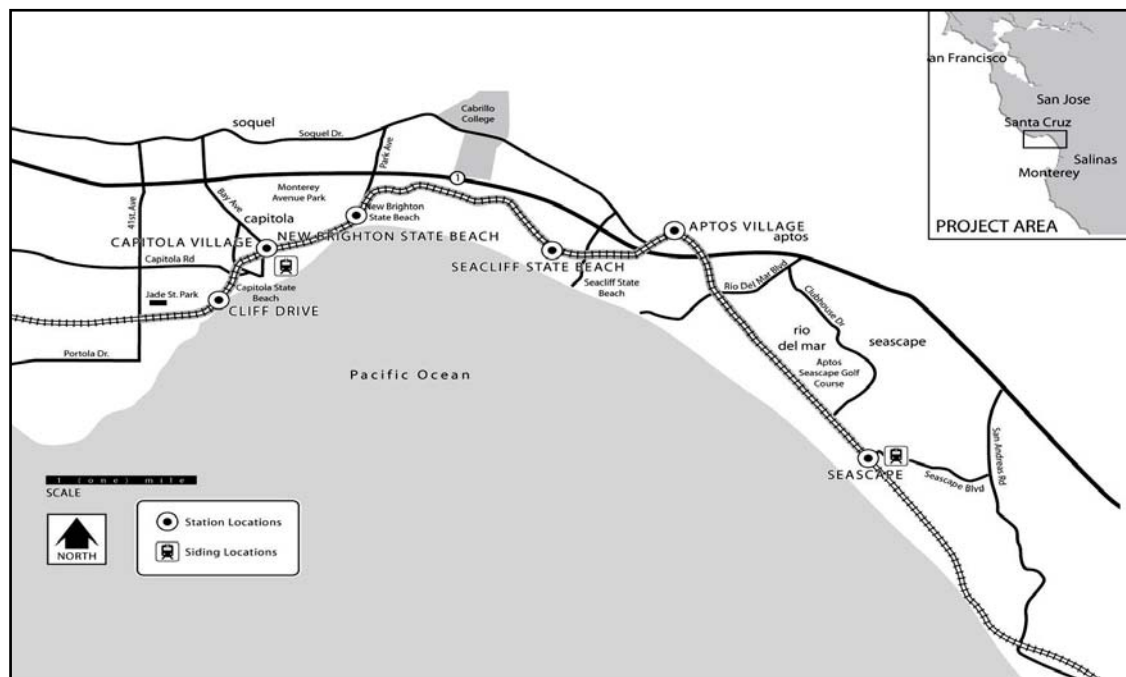
Recreational Passenger Rail – Environmental Review

Between Capitola and Aptos with an extension to Seascapes

Fact Sheet

Why: The Recreational Passenger Rail segment between Capitola and Aptos with an extension to Seascapes is being considered as a low cost minimum operating scenario for passenger rail in Santa Cruz County using the existing tracks. Both the Recreational Rail project and the Environmental Impact Review (EIR) process are consistent with policies in the 2005 Regional Transportation Plan to encourage private transit service for visitor-serving trips and to use the existing rail line to minimize visitor impacts on local streets and highways. Implementation of a passenger rail service, such as recreational rail, no longer appears to be a requirement for receiving voter-approved Proposition 116 funding for acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line which extends the length of the county from the Watsonville Junction to Davenport.

What: The Recreational Rail project consists of passenger rail service between Capitola and Aptos with an extension to Seascapes to enable residents and visitors to travel to/between attractions in Santa Cruz County without their cars. After considering four alternatives, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission selected the segment between Capitola and Aptos-Seascapes for further study through an environmental impact report at a noticed public hearing in May 2003. Recreational Rail project alternatives propose service between 11:00 am and 8:00 pm for 48-120 days in the summer peak visitor season. Six station platforms are envisioned (see map below). Current plans are for a self-propelled diesel or clean fuel powered vehicle to traverse the track with four to nine round trips per day.



Environmental Review:

A Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report was released in February 2005 for recreational rail service and the station platforms. A public hearing to receive oral testimony was held in March 2005 and the comment period closed April 5, 2005. At the March public hearing, the Regional Transportation Commission approved a plan to complete the response to comments (final Environmental Impact Report), but wait to certify it as complete when there is resolution of the traffic and noise mitigation measures. The Regional Transportation Commission will take findings and mitigations into consideration before deciding to pursue the project.

Funding: State Proposition 116 Funds

- Preliminary Capital Cost Estimates - \$1.475 million
- Rolling Stock (trains) - \$0.9 million
- Operating Subsidy - \$0

Originally the California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff indicated that passenger rail service would be a necessary component of accessing the \$11 million available for Santa Cruz County in voter-approved Proposition 116 funds. Recently, CTC staff indicated that the RTC may submit a Proposition 116 application to preserve the transportation corridor. For this reason, the Recreational Rail is now lower priority project.

Related Information:

Right-of-Way Acquisition: The Regional Transportation Commission is negotiating with Union Pacific to acquire the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right-of-way. There is a tentative agreement on the sale price for the property and appraisals and investigations are underway. Acquisition of the right-of-way is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2005.

Platform Construction: Basic concrete platforms would be constructed at the station locations. Shelters will be considered and lighting would be downcast and unobtrusive. Local communities may participate in the design of each station with input and funding contributions to incorporate enhancements which express the community's character.

Contract Operations: In an open bid process, proposals will be solicited from private entities to operate the service at no cost to the community. Two companies have already expressed interest.

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