



Newsletter February, 2016

FORMER RTC CHAIRMAN ELLEN PIRIE EXPLAINS HER POSITION ON THE RAIL CORRIDOR

Former Supervisor Ellen Pirie acted as RTC Co-Chairperson during both the purchase agreement and negotiations to acquire the rail corridor. In a recent interview, she explains her rationale as to why she recommended purchasing the property, and why she believes a passenger train is not economically viable for a small community like Santa Cruz County. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiy7X1yF-0Q>



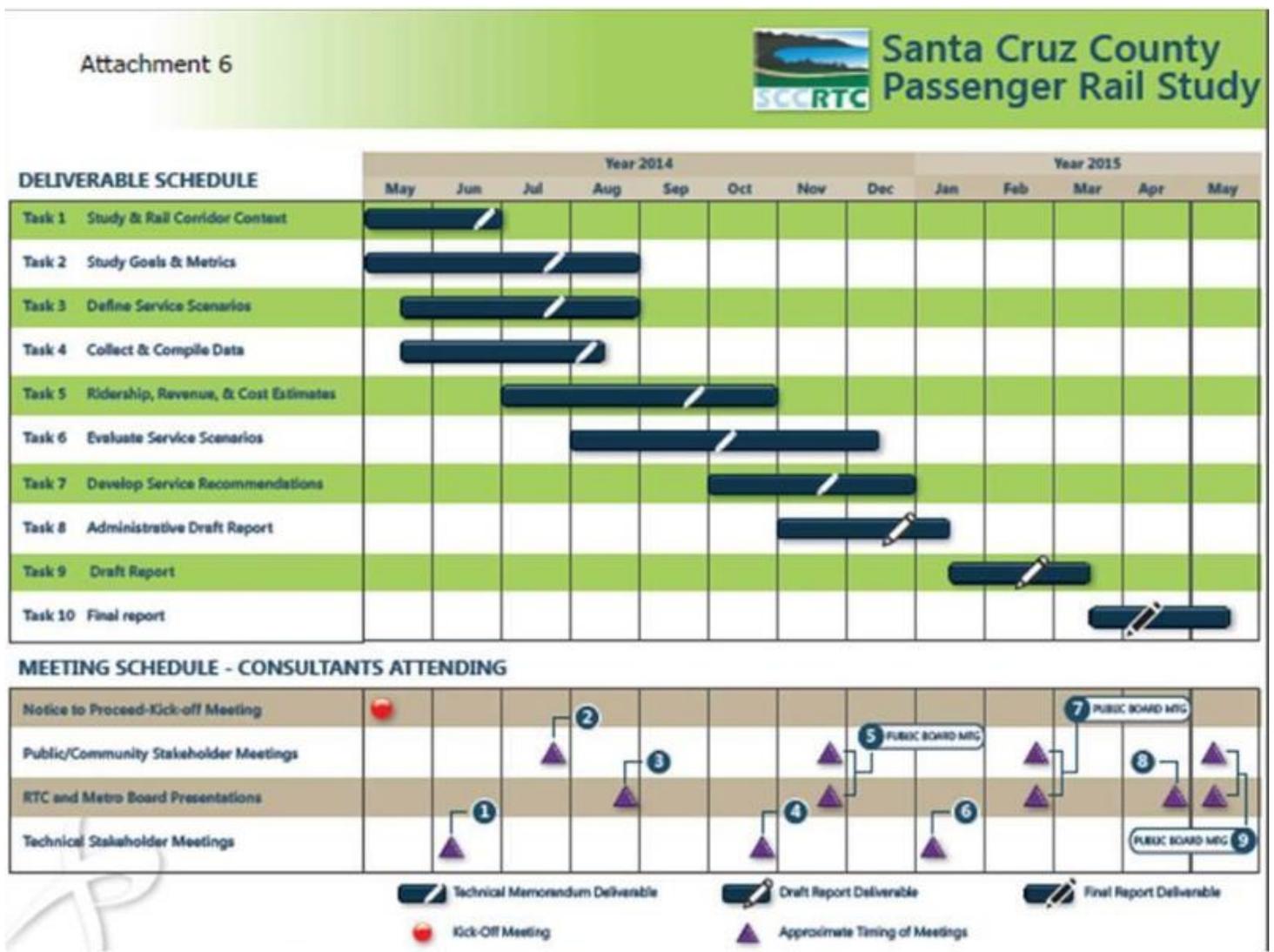
MYTH BUSTER: REMOVAL OF TRACKS WILL DELAY TRAIL FOR DECADES

Advocates of the train publicly stated that "if we pull the tracks, it will take decades to build the trail". To prove these assertions are not correct, Trail Now worked with a company, [Iron Horse Preservation Society](#), which specializes in replacing old railroad tracks with trails. Iron Horse's proposal outlines how a gravel trail could be built in 18 months. The proposal includes the recycle value of the rails and ties (\$1.45 million), and the costs associated with building the gravel trail. Iron Horse's fee for doing the work associated with building the gravel trail and removing the rails and ties would be paid for by the funds received from the recycled materials. You can find the detailed proposal by Iron Horse on our website (www.trailnow.org)

MORE TAXPAYER FUNDED PASSENGER RAIL RESEARCH?

In 2014, RTC initiated a Passenger Rail Study with the intent to provide cost estimates, ridership projections, operating costs and other analyses to determine if use of the rail corridor for a passenger train would have an impact on traffic within the County and be economically viable. The Passenger Rail Study was completed in November, 2015 and the results showed it could accommodate 3% of the current traffic on Highway 1 and cost \$450M over a 30-year period. As a comparison, upgrades to Highway 1 with HOV lanes and Bus Rapid Transit could reduce traffic delay by over 85% and would cost approximately \$675M.

Train advocates suggest that the corridor cannot be used for a world-class trail NOW because the railroad tracks should remain in place while more passenger rail studies are conducted. These organizations suggest that the rail corridor should be used for tourist train excursions while more taxpayer-funded passenger train studies are performed. Trail Now believes that the rail corridor should remain as a potential future mass transit resource, but while such analysis and decisions are determine, we should use the corridor NOW for improved mobility by removing the railroad tracks and building a world-class trail. If it is determined in the future that sections of the corridor should accommodate a mass transit vehicle, such a system could be constructed. In the meantime, Trail Now believes we should use the rail corridor NOW for improved mobility.



SETBACK REQUIREMENTS PREVENTS A CONTINUOUS TRAIL

The new SMART train in Sonoma/Marin is a rail line that is similar to Santa Cruz County's rail corridor. The approved required setback for SMART is 15 feet for trains with speeds below 25 mph and 25 feet for trains with speeds up to 50 mph. It is likely that the Santa Cruz rail corridor will have similar requirements for separation of train and trail. Therefore, the proposed Santa Cruz Rail-Trail Corridor width requirement would be 10 feet train (1/2 Right-of-Way) + 10 feet (trail width) + 25 feet (setback requirement) + 4 feet (fencing & buffer) = 49 feet. With the trail 10 feet wide, the rail corridor would still need to be 49 feet wide to accommodate a train and a trail. The majority of the Santa Cruz County rail corridor is approximately 30 feet wide from the Santa Cruz Boardwalk to Manresa resulting in trail not being continuous. Then again, we can keep reducing size of trail ☺

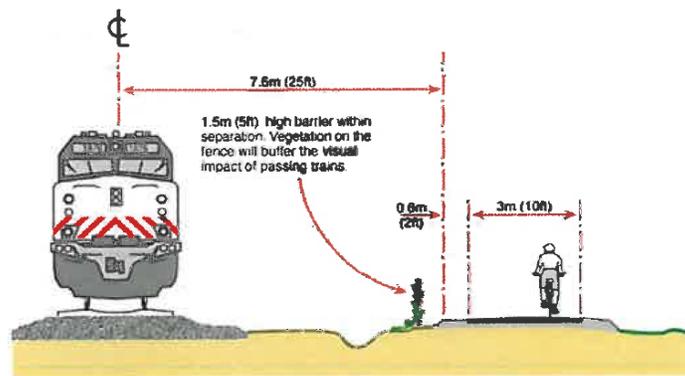
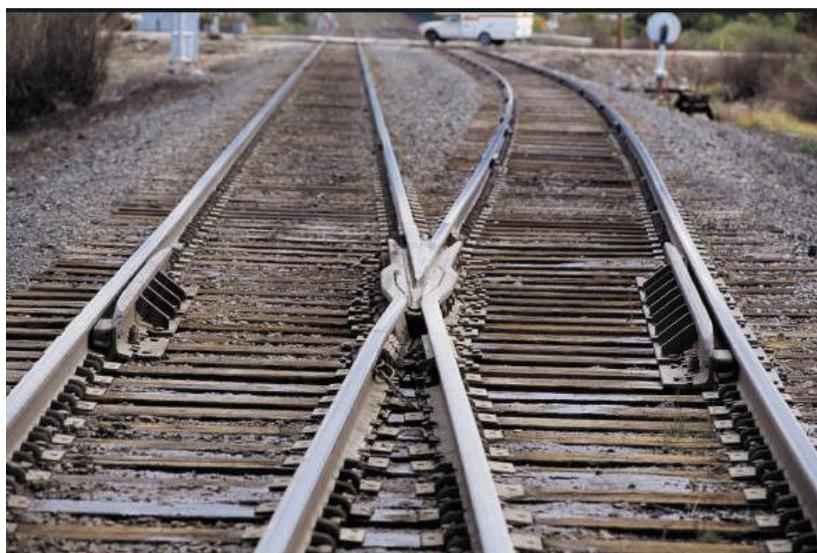


Figure ES-5: Rail-with-Trail Typical Setback

DUAL TRACKS REQUIREMENT PREVENTS CONTINUOUS TRAIL

A passenger train system running along the rail corridor will require dual-track sections to enable north and south direction trains to pass one another. There are no sections from the Santa Cruz Boardwalk to Manresa that would allow for two tracks and a trail.



RTC AND FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION TRENDS NOT ALIGNED

RTC's primary investment strategy has been centered on passenger rail service rather than on investments in Highway 1 or Bus Rapid Transit. The RTC legislative efforts have primarily been on applying for funding related to the State Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program rather than any of the highway transportation funding programs. For example, RTC changed the Santa Cruz County Master Transportation Plan by incorporating passenger rail service and eliminating Highway 1 upgrades and Bus Rapid Transit.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is issuing requirements that vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communications technology be incorporated into new vehicles. "Safety is our top priority, and V2V technology represents the next great advance in saving lives," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "This technology could move us from helping people survive crashes to helping them avoid crashes altogether – saving lives, saving money and even saving fuel thanks to the widespread benefits it offers." By warning drivers of imminent danger, V2V technology has the potential to dramatically improve highway safety and efficiency. A 2012 Columbia University Study showed highway capacity could increase by 273% with V2V systems, essentially creating "cartrains" along the highway. V2V technology has the potential to be fused with existing vehicle safety features to further improve the effectiveness of many crash avoidance safety systems currently being developed and implemented in the vehicle fleet and serve as a building block for a driverless vehicle.

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed a new 5-year federal transportation act called Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), authorizing funding for highway systems. Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) announced initiatives to accelerate the development and adoption of safe vehicle automation and vehicle technologies – with the goal to building a common multistate framework for connected and autonomous vehicles. Federal transportation strategies are moving towards leveraging vehicle technology to help reduce traffic congestion. As a suburb of the Silicon Valley, we are hopeful that Santa Cruz County would align itself to vehicle technology and modern transportation strategies.

NEXT RTC MEETING:

Thursday, Feb 4th; 9 am

Watsonville City Council Chambers

275 Main St., Ste 450

Please submit comments (info@sccrtc.org) on Agenda Item #22 (2016 Legislative Program and Funding Updates) asking that RTC align their investment strategy to current transportation trends.

STICKER CAMPAIGN

Trail Now logo is available as a 4" x 4" sticker that is printed on both sides for placement on bumpers, inside windows or other media that individuals can use to express support. Also available are sticker holders that retail stores can place on their count for customers. Stickers are free. Please ask for holder and stickers (Brian@Trailnow.org)



DONATIONS AND SUPPORT

We are a grass-roots effort with limited resources. We need volunteers to help us with social media communication (Twitter), event planning, website development and fund raising. Beginning in the Spring, we are planning to have a presence at the Santa Cruz Farmer's Markets and need volunteers to staff our Trail Now booth. If you have the interest, time or expertise, please let us know!

We are also reaching out to our supporters for donations. We use funds for promotional stickers, business posters, renting of conference rooms for Neighborhood Meetings, advertising in local media, TRAILNOW.ORG webpage development and marketing programs. Any amount is appreciated. Donations are not tax deductible.

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