



Regional Transportation Planning Agency - Local Transportation Commission
Monterey County Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways
Monterey County Regional Development Impact Fee Joint Powers Agency
Email: info@tamcmonterey.org

Rail Policy Committee

Monday, August 7, 2023

****3:00 PM****

MEETING LOCATION

Voting members must attend a physical meeting location to count towards quorum

*55B Plaza Circle, Salinas, California 93901
Transportation Agency Conference Room*

Alternate Locations with Zoom Connection Open to the Public

*2616 1st Avenue, Marina, California 93933
Supervisor Askew's Office*

*11140 Speegle St., Castroville CA, 95012
Supervisor Church's Office*

Members of the public & non-voting members may join meeting online at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/654778900?pwd=L2daellZTW5NSDZMQ2RSY1hJVlpGZz09>

OR

By teleconference at: +1 669 900 6833

Meeting ID: 654 778 900

Password: 506977

Please note: If all committee members are present in person, public participation by Zoom is for convenience only and is not required by law. If the Zoom feed is lost for any reason, the meeting may be paused while a fix is attempted but the meeting may continue at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Please see all the special meeting instructions at the end of this agenda

Complete agenda packets are on display at the Transportation Agency for Monterey County office and at these public libraries: Carmel, Monterey, Salinas Steinbeck Branch, Seaside, Prunedale, and King City. Any person who has a question concerning an item on this agenda may call the Agency Secretary to make an inquiry concerning the nature of the item described on the agenda. Please recycle this agenda.

1. Quorum Check, Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum is 7 of the following members: Adams, Askew, Alejo, Chavez, Church, Hawthorne, LeBarre, Medina-Dirksen, Oglesby, Potter, Sandoval and Smith.

If you are unable to attend, please make sure that one of your alternates attends the meeting. Your courtesy to the other members to assure a quorum is appreciated.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any member of the public may address the Committee on any item not on the agenda but within the jurisdiction of the Committee. Under this item, each member of the public is allowed three minutes to address concerns. Comments in items on this agenda may be given when that agenda item is discussed. Persons who wish to address the Board for public comment or on an item on the agenda are encouraged to submit comments in writing to Maria at maria@tamcmonterey.org by 5:00 pm the Monday before the meeting, and such comments will be distributed to the Board before the meeting.

Alternative Agenda Format and Auxiliary Aids: If requested, the agenda shall be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with a disability, as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC Sec. 12132), and the federal rules and regulations adopted in implementation thereof. Individuals requesting a disability-related modification or accommodation, including auxiliary aids or services, may contact Transportation Agency staff at 831-775-0903. Auxiliary aids or services include wheelchair accessible facilities, sign language interpreters, Spanish language interpreters, and printed materials in large print, Braille or on disk. These requests may be made by a person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in the public meeting and should be made at least 72 hours before the meeting. All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate the request.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

Approve the staff recommendations for items listed below by majority vote with one motion. Any member may pull an item off the Consent Agenda to be moved to the end of the **CONSENT AGENDA** for discussion and action.

3.1. **APPROVE** minutes of the Rail Policy Committee meeting of May 1, 2023.

- Maria Montiel

The draft minutes of the May 1, 2023 Rail Policy Committee meeting are attached for review.

3.2. **RECEIVE** update on the Salinas Rail Kick Start project.

- Christina Watson, Michael Zeller

Activities on the Salinas Rail Kick Start project since the last update in May include operations scenario discussions and design coordination efforts with key stakeholders on Packages 2 (Salinas layover facility) and 3 (Gilroy track connections).

3.3. **RECEIVE** update on the planned increase in passenger rail service along the coast corridor between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

- Christina Watson, Alissa Guther

The Coast Rail Coordinating Council Policy Committee met on May 19 in San Luis Obispo. The working group met virtually on June 16 and July 21.

3.4. **RECEIVE** media clippings attached online.

- Christina Watson

4. **PROVIDE DIRECTION** to staff regarding potential field trips, such as a tour of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit system and/or a visit to the Caltrain electric train and the Gilroy Caltrain station.

- Christina Watson, Alissa Guther

The Committee tour of the SMART rail system was deferred, and staff wants to hear from the Committee on a possible reschedule of the field trip and/or a trip to Gilroy and San Jose to meet with Caltrain representatives and see the new electric trains.

5. **RECEIVE** update on Pajaro Multimodal Station Project.

- Alissa Guther

Activities on the Pajaro Multimodal Station project include two meetings with Caltrans staff to discuss Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funding allocation and contract schedule.

6. **RECEIVE** report on the 2023 American Public Transit Association Rail Conference.

- Christina Watson

RPC Chair Mike LeBarre, Director of Planning Christina Watson, and Assistant Transportation Planner Alissa Guther attended the 2023 American Public Transit Association Rail Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

7. **ANNOUNCEMENTS** and/or **COMMENTS**

8. **ADJOURN**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Committee meeting

Monday, September 11, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.

**Transportation Agency for Monterey County
Conference Room**

55-B Plaza Circle, Salinas CA 93901

A quorum of voting members is required to be present to hold this meeting.

There will be a zoom link for hybrid participation.

If you have any items for the next agenda, please submit them to:
Christina Watson, Rail Program Coordinator
Christina@tamcmonterey.org

Important Meeting Information

Agenda Packet and Documents: Any person who has a question concerning an item on this agenda may call or email the Agency office to make inquiry concerning the nature of the item described on the agenda. Complete agenda packets are on display online at the Transportation Agency for Monterey County website. Documents relating to an item on the open session that are distributed to the Committee less than 72 hours prior to the meeting shall be available for public review at the Agency website. Agency contact information is as follows:

Transportation Agency for Monterey County
www.tamcmonterey.org
55B Plaza Circle, Salinas, CA 93901
TEL: 831-775-0903
EMAIL: info@tamcmonterey.org

Agenda Items: The agenda will be prepared by Agency staff and will close at noon nine (9) working days before the regular meeting. Any member of the Board may request in writing an item to appear on the agenda. The request shall be made by the agenda deadline and any support papers must be furnished by that time or be readily available.

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee
From: Maria Montiel
Meeting Date: August 7, 2023
Subject: Draft May RPC Minutes

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

APPROVE minutes of the Rail Policy Committee meeting of May 1, 2023.

SUMMARY:

The draft minutes of the May 1, 2023 Rail Policy Committee meeting are attached for review.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:**DISCUSSION:****ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft_RPC_Minutes_May_2023_Meeting

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

TRANSPORTATION AGENCY FOR MONTEREY COUNTY (TAMC)

RAIL POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Draft Minutes of May 1, 2023

55-B Plaza Circle, Salinas, California 93901 - Transportation Agency Conference Room

Alternate location: 2616 1st Avenue, Marina, California 93933 - Supervisor Askew's Office

	JUN 22	JUL 22	AUG 22	SEP 22	OCT 22	NOV 22	DEC 22	JAN 23	FEB 23	MAR 23	APR 23	MAY 23
L. Alejo, Dist. 1 (L. Gonzalez, J. Gomez)	A	N	P(A)	A	C	P(A)	N	P(A)	P	C	P	P
G. Church, Dist. 2 (M. Vierra , L. Gray)	P(A)	O	P(A)	P(A)	A	A	O	A	P	A	P(A)	P(A)
W. Askew, Dist. 4 (Y. Anderson, E. Mora)	P(A)		P(A)	P(A)	N	P(A)		P(A)	P(A)	N	P (VC)	P(A) (VC)
M. Adams, Dist. 5, (C. Courtney)	P(A)	M	P(A)	P(A)	C	P(A)	M	E	A	C	P(A) (VC)	E
M. LeBarre, King City, Chair (C. DeLeon)	P	E	P	P	E	P	E	A	P	E	P	P
C. Medina Dirksen, Marina (B. Delgado)	A	E	P	P	L	P	E	P	P	L	A	A
E. Smith, Monterey (K. Barber, M. Garcia, A. Renny)	A	T	P	P	L	A	T	P	A	L	P	A
A. Sandoval, Salinas, (A. Rocha)	P	I	P	P	E	P	I	P	P	E	E	P
G. Hawthorne, Sand City (J. Blackwelder, K. Cruz)	P(A)	N	P(A)	P(A)	D	P(A)	N	A	A	D	A	A
I. Oglesby, Seaside (D. Pacheco)	P	G	P	P		P	G	P	P		P	P
A. Chavez, Soledad (F. Cabera, D. Wilcox)	P		P	A		A		P	P		P	P
D. Potter, At Large Member, Vice Chair (J. Barron)	P		P	P		P		P	P		E	P
M. Twomey, AMBAG (H. Adamson, P. Hierling)	P(A)		P(A)	P(A)		P(A)		A	P(A)		P(A)	P(A) (VC)
J. Xiao, Caltrans District 5	P		P	P		P		P	P		A	P (VC)
C. Sedoryk, MST (L. Rheinheimer/ M. Overmeyer)	P(A)		P(A)	P(A)		P(A)		E	P(A)		P(A)	P (VC)
STAFF												
T. Muck, Executive Director	P		P	P		P		P	P		E	P
C. Watson, Director of Planning	P		P	P		P		P	P		P	P
M. Zeller, Director of Programming & Project Delivery	P		P	P		P		E	P		P	P (VC)

M. Montiel Admin Assistant	P		P	P		P		P	P		P	P
L. Williamson, Senior Engineer	P		P	P		P		P	P		P	P (VC)
D. Bilse, Principal Engineer	A		P	P		P		A	P		P	P (VC)
A. Guther, Assis. Transp. Planner	E		P	P		P		P	P		P	E
T. Wright, Community Outreach Coordinator	A		P	A		P		A	P		E	A
J. Strause, Transportation Planner	-		P	A		A		A	A		A	A
A. Hernandez Assis. Transp. Planner									P		A	A
Emily Belding Transportation Intern									P		P	A

P = Present A = Absent P(A) = Alternate Present E = Excused (VC) = Video Conference

1. QUORUM CHECK AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair LeBarre called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. A quorum was established.

OTHERS PRESENT

Andrew Easterling	City of Salinas	Michael Gomez	Public
Roland Lebrun	Public	Shannon Simonds	Caltrans
Matt Schoeder	SCCRTC	Josh Pulverman	Caltrans

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

3. CONSENT AGENDA

M/S/C Alejo/Potter /unanimous

3.1 Approved minutes of the April 3, 2023, Rail Policy Committee meeting.

3.2 Received update on the Salinas Rail Kick Start project.

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

4. CALTRANS 2023 STATE RAIL PLAN

The Committee received a presentation from Caltrans Division of Rail and Mass Transportation staff and provided feedback on the 2023 State Rail Plan.

Christina Watson, Director of Planning, introduced Josh Pulverman, Integration and Network Planning Branch Chief with the Caltrans Division of Rail and Mass Transportation (DRMT), who reported that they released the draft 2023 California State Rail Plan on March 10, with a deadline for comments of May 10. He noted that the Rail Plan outlines a long-term vision to guide incremental services planning to support development of a statewide network, a 10-year service and capital plan representing phased goals for advancing the network design, and a 5-year capital program supporting near term funding and programming needs.

Chair LeBarre asked what “open loop” means. Mr. Pulverman replied that is it a seamless transfer between operators, being planned via the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP). Lisa Rheinheimer, Monterey-Salinas Transit, added that it is contactless fare payment that enables passengers to pay with credit card or cell phone regardless of transit agency or operator.

Committee Member Chavez asked why the City of Soledad station was not included in the 2023 plan. Shannon Simonds, Caltrans DRMT, replied that not all stations are shown on the map and noted that it is definitely still part of the plan. She noted that Caltrans can help to fund project development and delivery.

Committee Member Alejo thanked Caltrans for their help in securing \$2.3 million in pre-construction funding for the Pajaro/ Watsonville station and asked what that funding would accomplish. Executive Director Muck replied that it will fund the update to the state environmental review for the station and federal environmental review that will make the station eligible for federal grant funding. He noted the environmental phase includes conceptual design and public engagement.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND/OR COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

None

6. ADJOURN

Chair LeBarre adjourned the meeting at 3:43 p.m.

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee

From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning, Michael Zeller, Director of Programming & Project Delivery

Meeting Date: August 7, 2023

Subject: **Salinas Rail Kick Start Project Update**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE update on the Salinas Rail Kick Start project.

SUMMARY:

Activities on the Salinas Rail Kick Start project since the last update in May include operations scenario discussions and design coordination efforts with key stakeholders on Packages 2 (Salinas layover facility) and 3 (Gilroy track connections).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The capital cost of the Monterey County Rail Extension project, Phase 1, Salinas Kick Start project (the Salinas station and improvements in Santa Clara County), is estimated at \$81 million. The Kick Start project is proceeding with secured state funding under the adopted state environmental clearance.

On June 29, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) approved a 20-month extension to the deadline for allocating the State Transportation Improvement Program funding for construction of the Salinas Layover Facility; that funding must now be allocated no later than February 28, 2025. TAMC is asking for a similar extension to the remaining Traffic Congestion Relief Program funding allocated to right-of-way acquisition, scheduled for consideration at the August CTC meeting.

DISCUSSION:

The Monterey County Rail Extension Project will extend passenger rail service from Santa Clara County south to Salinas. TAMC is pursuing a phased implementation of the Project. Phase 1, known as the Kick Start Project, includes Salinas train station circulation improvements, a train layover facility in Salinas, and track improvements at the Gilroy station and between Salinas and Gilroy. The Kick Start Project has wrapped up construction of Package 1, improvements at the Salinas train station. The layover facility (Package 2) and track improvements (Package 3) are now in final design.

Property Acquisition for Package 2: Salinas Layover Facility

On December 4, 2019, the Transportation Agency Board approved Resolutions of Necessity on portions of four parcels and one full parcel needed for the Salinas layover facility. All of these property acquisitions have been completed. TAMC staff continues to oversee the team of Bender Rosenthal and Nossaman for Union Pacific property rights negotiations, however this work is on hold pending Union Pacific's review of the design plans.

Final Design for Package 2 and Package 3: Gilroy Station & Track Improvements

HDR Engineering prepared the 100% plans, specifications and estimates for stakeholder review on September 1, 2022, and has gathered stakeholder input on those plans. The current design schedule anticipates Union Pacific review of the designs - which includes the California Public Utilities Commission permit for changes to grade crossings in Gilroy - wrapping up in the fall of 2024. The schedule shows utility relocation concluding in spring 2024, property acquisition concluding with a Right-of-Way certification in early 2025, and going out to bid in early 2025. Construction of the two packages is expected to overlap starting early 2025, ending in fall 2026.

Since the last report to this Committee in May, TAMC staff have had the following meetings regarding the designs and operations negotiations:

- Caltrain and Caltrans re: operations & maintenance agreement - May 11, June 15, July 26
- Union Pacific Railroad re: potential conflict with High-Speed Rail plans at Gilroy - June 9
- City of Gilroy re: track improvements and stormwater plan - July 20
- Amtrak re: Salinas ADA platform project - July 20

ATTACHMENTS:

None

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee

From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning, Alissa Guther, Assistant Transportation Planner

Meeting Date: August 7, 2023

Subject: **Coast Corridor Rail Project Update**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE update on the planned increase in passenger rail service along the coast corridor between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

SUMMARY:

The Coast Rail Coordinating Council Policy Committee met on May 19 in San Luis Obispo. The working group met virtually on June 16 and July 21.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The Coast Rail project capital and operation costs are under evaluation.

DISCUSSION:

The Coast Rail Coordinating Council (CRCC) is a multi-agency advisory and planning organization focused on improving the rail corridor between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area along the California Central Coast. Members of the Council include all regional transportation planning agencies along the Central Coast – all of which have a strong interest in improving rail service and the rail infrastructure along the Central Coast’s portion of the California Coast Passenger Rail Corridor.

The CRCC Policy Committee met on May 19; the next meeting is planned for August 18 in Santa Cruz; the working group met on June 16 and July 21 via videoconference. **Web attachment 1** is the updated meeting schedule.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

1. [Coast Rail Coordinating Council meeting schedule](#)

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee
From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning
Meeting Date: August 7, 2023
Subject: **Media Clippings**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE media clippings attached online.

SUMMARY:**FINANCIAL IMPACT:****DISCUSSION:****ATTACHMENTS:**

None

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

- [April 18 2023 article in Trains, "Privately operated overnight train proposed in California"](#)
- [April 24, 2023 California State Transportation Agency news release, "Governor Newsom Announces \\$690 Million for Public Transportation Projects"](#)
- [April 24, 2023 report on KSBW, "State awards millions to expand green energy transportation on Central Coast"](#)
- [April 24, 2023 report on KION, "Santa Cruz Metro gets \\$38.6 million in state funding for multiple transit-related and housing projects"](#)
- [April 24, 2023 article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, "Santa Cruz County housing, transit projects get millions in state funding"](#)
- [April 25, 2023 CCJPA news release, "Capitol Corridor Awarded \\$42 million from California State Transportation Agency"](#)
- [April 25, 2023 TAMC news release, "California Transportation Agency Awards \\$2.274 Million Grant to TAMC for the Pajaro-Watsonville Multimodal Station Project"](#)
- [April 26, 2023 article in the Monterey Herald, "TAMC gets \\$2.274M grant for Pajaro-Watsonville station project: Proposed Pajaro station part of Monterey County Rail Extension project"](#)
- [June 7, 2023 article in Mass Transit, "Caltrain begins testing of first electric trains"](#)
- [July 3, 2023 item on KION, "Multiple Transportation Projects in Monterey County get state](#)

approval to move forward"

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee

From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning, Alissa Guther, Assistant Transportation Planner

Meeting Date: August 7, 2023

Subject: **Potential field trips/ tours**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

PROVIDE DIRECTION to staff regarding potential field trips, such as a tour of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit system and/or a visit to the Caltrain electric train and the Gilroy Caltrain station.

SUMMARY:

The Committee tour of the SMART rail system was deferred, and staff wants to hear from the Committee on a possible reschedule of the field trip and/or a trip to Gilroy and San Jose to meet with Caltrain representatives and see the new electric trains.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Field trips include costs associated with event planning, mileage, meals, and van rentals. The agency travel budget has sufficient funds for this purpose. If train travel is part of the trip, each elected official must pay for their own ticket per state law.

DISCUSSION:**SMART Field Trip**

Staff attempted to arrange a tour of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) system for the Rail Policy Committee, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), and Caltrans District 5 staff in late March. Only three elected officials confirmed their availability for the date, so the tour was deferred until a larger group is available, as the tour entails a significant level of effort for staff of both TAMC and SMART. The trip would require a multi-day commitment to accommodate the travel between Salinas and Larkspur or San Rafael (a 3-hour drive each way), as well as a ride north on the SMART train, a visit to the operations center, and a ride back south on the SMART train. Staff would arrange a hotel near the southernmost train station.

The SMART map and train schedule are online as **web attachments 1 and 2**. **Attached** is a draft itinerary of the rescheduled trip for discussion purposes.

Caltrain Field Trip

At the April RPC meeting, another tour was suggested to visit the Gilroy train station and the Caltrain electric trains at the Diridon station in San Jose, and meet with elected officials on the Caltrain Joint Powers Board. This trip would require an all-day commitment to accommodate travel and meetings with elected officials in Gilroy and in San Jose. The trip would start at the TAMC office in Salinas early in the morning, travel via van to Gilroy and then San Jose and return in the evening, via train and/or van.

The Caltrain field trip will be primarily by van or bus, but may include a trip on Caltrain, if schedules allow. The current Caltrain schedule is online as **web attachment 3**.

Staff will present tour options and request input from the Committee on the tours.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SMART Trip Planning

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

1. [SMART train map](#)
2. [SMART train schedule](#)
3. [Caltrain schedule](#)

SMART Field Trip Draft Itinerary

Transportation: Carpool or Vanpool

Hotel: Embassy Suites San Rafael

Tour: October 2023, Exact Dates TBD

Day 1

Drive, carpool, vanpool, or bus from TAMC office in Salinas to San Rafael (est. 3-4 hours)

Day 2

Ride SMART

8:28am (or 9:32am) – depart from Marin Civic Center station

9:31am (or 10:35am) – arrive Rail Operations Center @ Airport station

SMART staff will meet us at the platform at Marin Civic and give a talk during the train ride to the Rail Operations Center, a trip that takes about 1 hour.

Tour of Rail Operations Center

10-12 people in group, tour of facilities with a short presentation/ Q&A

Lunch

Order in deli delivery for group

Ride SMART

12:45pm (or 1:17pm) – depart from Airport station

1:51pm (or 2:23pm) – return to Marin Civic Center station

Drive, carpool, vanpool, or bus to Salinas, est. 3-4 hours

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee
From: Alissa Guther, Assistant Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: August 7, 2023
Subject: Pajaro Multimodal Station Project Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE update on Pajaro Multimodal Station Project.

SUMMARY:

Activities on the Pajaro Multimodal Station project include two meetings with Caltrans staff to discuss Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funding allocation and contract schedule.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Pre-construction work will begin in 2024 with state-secured funding for environmental review. In April 2023, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) approved a \$2.3 million grant to cover the cost of California Environmental Quality Act and National Environmental Policy Act documentation. This documentation will allow TAMC to pursue further state and federal funding for the design update and right of way work. The total estimated cost of pre-construction work for the Pajaro Multimodal Station Project, which includes environmental review, design, and right of way, is \$19.5 million.

DISCUSSION:

The Monterey County Rail Extension Project will extend passenger rail service from Santa Clara County south to Salinas. TAMC is pursuing a phased implementation of the Project. Phase 2 is the Pajaro/Watsonville Multimodal Transit Hub. The proposed Pajaro/Watsonville station will be the connection point for Santa Cruz County to new passenger rail service on the Coast mainline tracks between Salinas and the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as a hub on future round-the-bay service.

After a successful application to the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), TAMC received \$2.3 million to fund environmental review documentation. The schedule for allocation of funds, a request for proposals and a contract to begin this work is as follows:

October 2023	California Transportation Commission (CTC) approval of funding allocation
November-December 2023	Request for Proposals
February 2023	Contract to TAMC board for approval

TAMC Staff has had the following meetings regarding the TIRCP funding allocation:

- July 6, 2023: Meeting with Caltrans TIRCP coordinator

- July 9, 2023: TIRCP introduction webinar for grantee agencies

Staff will provide a verbal update on all activities at the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

Memorandum

To: Rail Policy Committee
From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning
Meeting Date: August 7, 2023
Subject: **American Public Transit Association Rail Conference Summary**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE report on the 2023 American Public Transit Association Rail Conference.

SUMMARY:

RPC Chair Mike LeBarre, Director of Planning Christina Watson, and Assistant Transportation Planner Alissa Guther attended the 2023 American Public Transit Association Rail Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenses related to staff training are included in the Travel and Training item in the adopted Agency budget.

DISCUSSION:

Attached is a summary of the sessions attended. Chair LeBarre, Christina and Alissa will report on the conference at the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Trainings - APTA Rail

WEB ATTACHMENTS:

Memorandum

To: Board of Directors
From: Christina Watson, Director of Planning
Alissa Guther, Assistant Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: August 23, 2023
Subject: **APTA Rail Conference – June 2023**

From June 11-14, 2023, Christina Watson, Director of Planning, and Alissa Guther, Assistant Transportation Planner, attended the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Rail Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with TAMC Board Chair Mike LeBarre.

We attended the following sessions:

- **Opening General Session: Welcome to Pittsburgh**, in which we learned that Pittsburgh uses a tax on alcoholic drinks to fund transit projects.
- **Opening General Session: How to be an Ally**, in which Deanna Singh, founder of Flying Elephant and Uplifting Impact, encouraged everyone to use their power to be inclusive and outlined all the benefits of inclusion, including growth, innovation, profitability, and retention. She noted that everyone can exercise “microinclusions” by repeating and giving credit (“elevating”) the ideas of your colleagues who are not heard and mentoring and sponsoring colleagues and employees.
- **Addressing the Workforce Crisis: Strategies, Models, New Generations, Great Stories**, in which a panel of excellent speakers discussed the challenges with the Great Retirement/ Silver Tsunami and a shift in workplace dynamics in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, leading to a massive shortfall in the transit workforce. Some suggestions were to train up the workforce, plant seeds in early education about the potential for a transit career, provide internship opportunities, give new hires more time for on-boarding to get used to the work environment, and empowering supervisors to support flexible work schedules that meet each employee’s needs.
- **Innovative Funding and Finance: Finding Ways and Bridging Gaps**, in which panelists discussed grant strategy, efficiency and land value capture. The session presented the “Readiness, Merit and Eligibility” (REM) tool to assess grant applications, examples of

efficiency and accountability in organizational health, land value capture examples that show how real estate and transit strategy intersect. A topic of interest was the strategy to maximize federal grant opportunities through identification, screening, eligibility, and merit benchmarks. Agencies can beat application anxiety by having a strong five-year model for delivering important projects.

- **Winning Hearts and Minds: Strategies for Building Public Support for Your Transit Projects**, in which panelists discussed the various ways they engaged with the public when facing opposition or looking to enhance their existing outreach efforts. The session provided practical insights, real-world examples of successful campaigns, and innovative approaches that transit agencies have used to address misinformation and build trust with their stakeholders. Of note was the use of micro geo-fencing to deliver targeted messages to the public and elected officials.
- **Federal Transit Administration Update** from Veronica Vanterpool, FTA's Deputy Administrator, who noted that transit industry ridership still hasn't recovered from the pandemic (nationwide, ridership is at 62% of pre-pandemic levels). A panel of transit operators discussed workforce initiatives and the "fiscal cliff" facing transit operators after the COVID relief funds are no longer available.
- **Hydrogen is on Track: the Rise of Hydrogen in Commuter & Intercity Rail in US & Across the Globe**, in which the panelists discussed the status of various hydrogen rail projects around the globe. The first passenger hydrogen train started operations in Germany in 2018, and the first one in the Americas will start operations in Quebec later this year. In California, which has an ambitious target of having all zero-emission rail service by 2047, the San Bernardino Redlands service is testing equipment now and aiming to start revenue service in 2024. California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) Chief Deputy Secretary for Rail and Transit Chad Edison was a panelist and garnered a lot of inquiries on what California is doing in the hydrogen realm.
- **Regional Planning for Rail: Covering all the Bases** went over multiple and diverse factors that require consideration during the planning and development of rail projects. Panelists delved into some of the current areas including modal integration, corridor access, asset management, community involvement, facilities planning, and connecting to a longer-term vision.
- **Staying One-Step Ahead of Sea-Level Rise Along Coastal Rail Rights-of-Way**, in which the presenters addressed some level of planning for future sea level rise, but focused on

responding to climate-related high tide, flooding, and landslide events currently impacting rail corridors, primarily the Pacific Surfliner (in multiple locations).

- **Federal Railroad Administration Update** from FRA Administrator Amit Bose, who discussed the evolution of FRA from being a safety-focused organization to administering an unprecedented federal investment in rail service.
- **Planning the New High-Speed Rail Era** was a very engaging session showing the discrepancy between publicly managed and privately funded high speed rail projects in the United States. Brian Kelly, CEO of the California High Speed Rail Authority, noted that 119 miles of new tracks are currently under construction in the Central Valley, aiming for revenue service on 171 miles from Merced to Bakersfield in 2030-2033. Meanwhile, Mike Reininger from Brightline West noted they have a goal of 2028 to start operations on a 218-mile high speed rail from Rancho Cucamonga to Las Vegas in the median of I-15, avoiding at-grade crossings, aiming to break ground this fall. Of note, the Brightline West project did not need to do any environmental review nor purchase any property, as they are proposing to build the tracks entirely within Caltrans right-of-way.
- **Closing General Session: Building Transit Ridership and Addressing Community Workforce Housing Needs** had a panel of transit and development representatives from Phoenix, Seattle, Nashville, and Amazon's Housing Equity Fund. One key point is successful TOD depends on very frequent (10 minute headway) all-day service to truly wean residents from their dependence on cars. They also pointed out that a narrow focus on TOD can lead to gentrification, displacement, and increased unaffordability, unless it is done with an eye toward ensuring affordable housing is in the mix. Amazon's representative Senthil Sankaran shared his "Spiderman principle": with broad scale and reach comes great responsibility.

The final program of the conference is available on the website, <https://s6.goeshow.com/apta/rc/2023/fullprogram.cfm>.