



March 24, 2017

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Marjie Kirn, Executive Director
Santa Barbara County Association of Governments
260 North San Antonio Road, Suite B
Santa Barbara, CA 93110

RE: Request to Discuss Goleta Amtrak Platform Needs at the SBCAG South Coast Subregional Planning Committee on April 5, 2017

Dear Director Kirn:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with City staff and me to discuss the need to make improvements to the Amtrak Platform in Goleta. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you and look forward to sharing plans for improvements to the platform with decision makers at the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), in addition to other stakeholders and the community at large.

With your approval, the City of Goleta would like the opportunity to make a presentation at the upcoming April 5, 2017, SBCAG South Coast Subregional Planning Committee in order to further explain the City's vision for the platform site, and how improvements would complement the rail component of Measure A, as well as the efforts underway to bring peak-hour regional rail to Santa Barbara County. SBCAG's support of this project is vital for the City to move forward, and as detailed below, such a project would have wide regional benefits with the power to transform travel habits in the South Coast area.

Contained within this letter is a summary describing: 1) the goals of Measure A and the City's General Plan with respect to rail transit; 2) the City's understanding of SBCAG's efforts to explore peak-hour regional rail service; 3) the deficiencies of the existing platform; 4) the current needs of local employers, residents, UCSB and the surrounding community; 5) the proposed scope of improvements to the platform and surrounding land; 6) a discussion of possible future use of the Measure A Rail Project funds and other funding sources for the proposed improvements; and, 7) how improvements to the Goleta platform would complement efforts to establish peak-hour regional rail service. Your consideration of the City's proposal is greatly appreciated, as is the

opportunity of working together on enhancements to rail service that will benefit the region overall.

Measure A and the City's General Plan

Measure A is a transportation measure that was approved by 79% of Santa Barbara County voters in November 2008 that will provide more than \$1 billion of estimated local sales tax revenues for transportation projects in Santa Barbara County over 30 years. Reducing traffic congestion is a component of one of the three guiding principles of Measure A development. Commuter and passenger rail service improvements were identified in the Measure A Ordinance under project descriptions for the South Coast region as a method to help reduce congestion. As can be seen in the project description below, improvements to "station facilities" are identified as eligible expenditures under the original Measure A Ordinance:

Commuter & Passenger Rail Planning & Service Improvements
\$25,000,000

Improve passenger rail service between Ventura and Goleta to reduce congestion on Highway 101 and provide commuters with an alternative to driving. Eligible expenditures are capital and operating costs including developing new schedules and service plans, obtaining environmental clearances, negotiating agreements, operating subsidies, rolling stock and related equipment, promotions and marketing, maintenance, connecting transit service, track improvements, **station facilities**, train and grade crossing controls. Funds may be used to revise Amtrak Pacific Surfliner schedules to improve service for commuters and to plan for implementation of new commuter train service between Ventura County and Goleta.

It is the City's understanding that SBCAG does not have a current expenditure plan for allocation of the \$25 million of Measure A funds, making these monies potentially available for improvements to the Goleta Amtrak station as described below.

In addition, the City's General Plan designates a location for an intermodal transportation center near the existing Amtrak station as follows: "The purpose of the transportation center would be to provide a convenient and safe hub for transfers between bus, shuttle, train, automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian modes" (Transportation Element, Ch. 7, p. 7-24). Figure 7.4 of the General Plan provides a map showing the location of a proposed new multimodal station.

It is significant that both of these guiding documents point to similar goals and regional needs, and support the collaboration by the City and SBCAG to implement enhancements to rail facilities in Goleta.

Peak-Hour Regional Rail Service Efforts Underway

It is the City's understanding that SBCAG, in partnership with the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Authority (LOSSAN), is working diligently to solidify the retiming of the Pacific Surfliner service by Amtrak or purchase of a train set to achieve peak hour service from Ventura County to stations in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta. Further, it is understood that efforts are underway to obtain funding for this effort and the purchase of an additional train set to help provide for this service expansion. The City supports these efforts, and along with many other stakeholders in the region, believes this service enhancement is a critical component in order to achieve the goals of Measure A.

However, the City understands that the process of establishing peak-hour regional rail service is complicated and challenging. We are also aware that SBCAG has engaged the services of a rail consultant to help determine the feasibility of and steps needed to bring this type of service to the South Coast. The City is supportive of this effort as well, and would be appreciative of the inclusion of our proposed project as an essential component of the overall effort for regional peak-hour rail service.

Existing Facility and Current Needs

The Goleta Amtrak Platform is a very basic facility, which in its current state is challenged by the following:

- Lack of connectivity to riders' final destinations
- Inadequate parking
- Limited and marginal restroom facilities
- Inadequate covered waiting area with little shelter from the elements
- Lack of food and refreshment services
- No bus service, and no bus parking or turn around areas
- Poor pedestrian access
- Lack of adequate bike access
- Minimal bike storage
- Poor lighting

Significant improvements are needed to create an appropriate rail depot that is user friendly and functional, and that will accommodate multi-modal connections to businesses and residences in Goleta, UCSB, and the Santa Barbara Airport. The proposed improvements can be an important element toward SBCAG's commitment through the Measure A program to expand and enhance rail service. In addition, the project will greatly complement changes to the Pacific Surfliner schedule to mimic convenient peak-hour rail service by developing a place where riders can arrive and depart in a safe and comfortable environment.

During the next fifteen years, construction of the Highway 101 HOV widening project will cause added congestion on the 101, and the need for an effective rail alternative will be

severely magnified. A functional multi-modal Goleta train depot in tandem with the peak-hour commuter service from Ventura will contribute greatly to the mitigation of added congestion by taking additional vehicles off the road.

Recently the City of Goleta sent out a community survey to residents, commuters, employers and employees, and the UCSB community. 648 responses were received and results show riders want a depot facility that better meets their needs.

Survey Topic	Response Detail
Current Amtrak Platform Usage	Only 11.7% of respondents use the platform to commute to and from work, and an even smaller number of respondents (5%) use it to get to and from school. These results suggest there is an opportunity to improve the platform to encourage more usage by existing users and attract new riders.
Level of Overall Satisfaction	Less than half of respondents reported they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the existing platform (43.4%).
Safety	Safety is a concern among the majority of respondents, and many open-ended responses included comments related to safety. Safety could be increased with indoor waiting areas and improved lighting.
Train Stops	For respondents who indicated that they use the train station less than once per week, a top reason was: Train stops along route are inconvenient/do not land me in close enough proximity to my destination.
Departure Times	For respondents who indicated that they use the train station less than once per week, a top reason was: Departure and arrival times are inconvenient/do not fit with my schedule.
Services/Amenities	For respondents who indicated that they use the train station less than once per week, a top reason was: The train station does not offer certain services/amenities that would meet my travel needs/desires

Goleta ranks second in the region for its proportion of in-commuters, with an employment-to-residence ratio of 1.46 (Santa Barbara ranks number one). According to Vehicle Classification Data Collection Method, 11,556 vehicles travel from Ventura to Santa Barbara/Goleta each morning (over a 4-hour period). To further illustrate the commuter population traveling from Ventura northbound, the Ventura County Coastal Express bus service carried 285,000 passengers during Fiscal Year 2015-16, about 75% of which are residents of Ventura County commuting to their jobs in Santa Barbara

and Goleta. The commuter volumes traveling from Ventura northbound to Goleta are evident. Improvements to the Goleta Amtrak Platform complement efforts to provide a rail alternative to auto or bus travel.

In addition, USCB is a destination for approximately 24,000 students and 6,500 faculty/staff. Providing a modern rail depot with multi-modal connections would also enhance the University's commitment to minimize its impacts to the local transportation system.

One of the largest detracting factors to ridership at Goleta's Amtrak Platform is the lack of connectivity from the station to other destinations. Once the train arrives at the platform, riders have no public transit options onsite that would allow them to get to and from the station to work, UCSB, or elsewhere. To address this issue, MTD has indicated their interest in working with the City and SBCAG to deliver an appropriate level "first and last mile" public transit service to and from the depot and local employment centers and UCSB. In addition, a new bus stop at the station could be added to the existing MTD route along Hollister Avenue, which would allow riders to easily travel to and from the station to their places of work or residences. Adequate bus facilities at the Goleta Depot would allow for such service expansion. However, these connections cannot be made without infrastructure improvements and the additional land.

In addition, the Santa Barbara Airport is the largest commercial airport on the Central Coast. Consequently, another largely untapped opportunity is to create new connections from rail to this airport. The potential incorporation of an airline shuttle (or other bus service) to and from the airport and an improved train depot could increase transit connectivity throughout the entire South Coast region, reducing Highway 101 congestion while serving tourists, commuters, and leisure travelers alike. The benefits of connecting air to train travel could have far-reaching impacts in improving alternative transportation. Santa Barbara Airport administrators have indicated their initial support for a future bus connection between the airport and train station.

Further, with improved bike storage at a future Goleta Depot and improved bicycle access (bike lanes) along La Patera Road, commuters interested in bicycling to and from an improved train depot to work or UCSB can be accommodated.

Finally, the improved parking lot would have enough space for large employers to park vanpool vehicles. But none of these improvements can be accomplished within the existing station footprint, and additional land acquisition is needed.

Proposed Goleta Train Depot Project:

The City is proposing the construction of a multi-modal Goleta Train Depot adjacent to the existing platform site. The project would include new connectivity options for riders, bike, pedestrian and ADA access improvements, a depot building, parking improvements, and accommodations for buses, vanpools and bicycles. However the proposed improvements cannot be accomplished without the acquisition of the parcel at

27 South La Patera Lane which is adjacent to the Goleta Platform (currently owned by Direct Relief).

The proposed elements of an upgraded Depot would include:

- A depot building, which would contain a ticketing function, a waiting area, a café, locker storage, and restrooms
- Additional vehicle parking, expanding the existing lot from 27 to 100 spaces
- Sidewalk and bicycle improvements along South La Patera Lane, and from the current MTD Hollister Avenue bus stop to the train
- A bus turn-around at the depot, bus pull-out and sidewalk connections between the bus turn-out and platform
- Drainage improvements on South La Patera Lane
- Bike storage and bike rental facilities
- Parking for buses and vanpools

The City estimates the total costs of these improvements to be approximately \$13.7M. A possible breakout of costs for the proposed improvements is as follows:

Description	Cost
Land acquisition costs for Direct Relief parcel	\$6.7 million
Depot parking, bus turn-around, building and facilities	\$4.5 million
Street improvements on S. La Patera Lane (sidewalk, drainage, and bike improvements)	\$2.5 million
TOTAL	\$13.7 million

The City of Goleta is committed to making the improvements along South La Patera Lane and is asking SBCAG to commit Measure A funds (Commuter & Passenger Rail Planning & Service Improvements funds) to the other project costs. The City will be seeking grant funding and will be exploring other sources to offset these costs as well.

Conclusion

We believe SBCAG is committed to providing rail travel to the region. To fully honor this commitment, attention needs to be given to both the services and the receiving infrastructure. With the 101 Widening project now under construction with the Linden-Casitas Interchange Project, (Phase 3 of the overall 101 HOV and Rehabilitation Project) and Phase 4 (the actual widening of 101), commuters will face additional congestion for the next 10 years, at a minimum. During construction, commuters will desperately be looking for an alternative to any car or bus travel on Highway 101. A logical alternative is traveling by rail. Furthermore, with the anticipated retiming of the Pacific Surfliner to mimic peak hour demand, rail travel will become a more attractive option and will generate additional ridership to the Goleta station. The station needs to be ready to meet this increased demand and the construction of a depot facility will also help generate additional ridership.

SBCAG is an important partner in a comprehensive rail strategy for the region. The City of Goleta is pleased SBCAG has engaged a consultant to evaluate the options and make a recommendation for solidifying the retiming of the Pacific Surfliner. This is an important component in the overall "Lane and a Train" strategy. We look forward to working with you in this process. In conclusion, the City is seeking your conceptual support of the Goleta Amtrak Depot project and requests the opportunity to return to the Board once the results of the consultant's study is available so the next steps can be developed collaboratively.

Sincerely,



Michelle Greene
City Manager