

The Somewhat Forgotten Link between SMART's Passenger Service and the North Coast Railway Authority's Freight Service:

Hi Sustainable TamAlmonte Friends,

The recent uproar over the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan has renewed public interest in scrutinizing the value of the SMART train system itself.

Please follow the below link to read an article entitled; "**Railroad Proposals Under Scrutiny**" by Mike Arnold published in the Spring 2008 Eel River Reporter.

<http://www.eelriver.org/Spring2008/Railroadproposals.html>

Although the article was written in 2008, it is still relevant and reveals that a key and somewhat forgotten component of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) system is that the North Coast Railway Authority, a State Agency with responsibility for railroad tracks, has the right to use the one-way track for freight service throughout the night. The article also calls out SMART's political strategy to mislead the public and avoid being linked to the NCRA due to public opposition to night freight trains with impacts associated with noise, vibration, traffic congestion, diesel fumes, etc.

It also demonstrates that, via the SMART sales tax, local taxpayers are paying for much of the track maintenance, offsetting some of the North Coast Railway Authority's costs, facilitating the very freight service that the public was most concerned with and that SMART had tried to claim it had no connection with.

Moreover, the article speaks of how expensive maintenance of the tracks are and gives support to the theory that SMART will continue to need more and more subsidies.

Here is an excerpt from the article:

"The economic realities of this rail line, however, are not those of your typical freight rail line. It is a single-track "stub" line that runs through the unstable soils of the Eel River Canyon, crossing the northern California storm track, where significant storms occur with some regularity, and is in an area of constant earthquakes. Consequently, the line is susceptible to frequent storm-related damage and slides, creating significant maintenance costs. Southern Pacific Railroad stated in the 1970s that it was costing the company at least \$1 million a month for maintenance of the line through the Eel River Canyon. Therefore the company was going to abandon the track, but the state legislature was convinced to purchase the line."

Then there is Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Resolution 3434, which

requires an average of 2000 housing units within 1/2 mile of each SMART train stop. (Remember that the purpose of MTC Resolution 3434 is to increase revenue for SMART by increasing Transit Ridership by stimulating construction of housing along SMART's transit corridor.) Given the significant adverse impacts of the night freight train, next to the SMART tracks is the last place where they should be planning for more housing. (Of course, proposed development near SMART generates other potential significant adverse impacts to be concerned about too, as exemplified by the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan.)

Best,
Sharon

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