



AUSTIN, TX STADLER RAILCAR

# Marin/Sonoma ON TRACK

FRIENDS OF SMART • ISSUE 9 • MAY 2008

## Summit on Transportation and Land Use

by Steve Birdlebough

Transportation affects land use and the health of communities. The SMART Rail and Trail project aims to improve both. Friends of SMART were part of a strong delegation of Marin and Sonoma activists enjoying a variety of panels and networking opportunities at the recent “summit” of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition for the Bay Area.

The day began with a spirited presentation by Dr. Anthony Iton, Director of Public Health for Alameda County, who pointed out that physical health is tied to the economic and environmental health of the community. His talk was followed by nearly two dozen breakout sessions on issues ranging from congestion pricing to smart growth. It was a pleasure to meet and engage folks who really know their business.

We heard that the Bay Area’s Metropolitan Transportation Commission expects to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 10% over the next 25 years in order to meet greenhouse-gas reduction goals. That will require numerous additions to the walkable infrastructure, and reductions in fuel use. The developing Regional Transportation Plan is a measure of the Bay Area’s will to

achieve the needed reductions.

We heard about implementation of Safe-Routes-To-School programs that encourage more students to walk and ride bicycles, removing cars from the street. It is thought that more than 20% of morning auto trips in the Bay Area are headed to a school. Partly to ease parent fears about street safety, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has developed a \$1.3 billion Bay Area Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan for implementation over the next 25 years—a sixfold increase in trail investments.

Walkable areas surrounding rail stations reduce

*Continued on page 3*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Summit on Transportation and Land Use - 1

Just How Conservative Is SMART’s Ridership Forecast? - 1

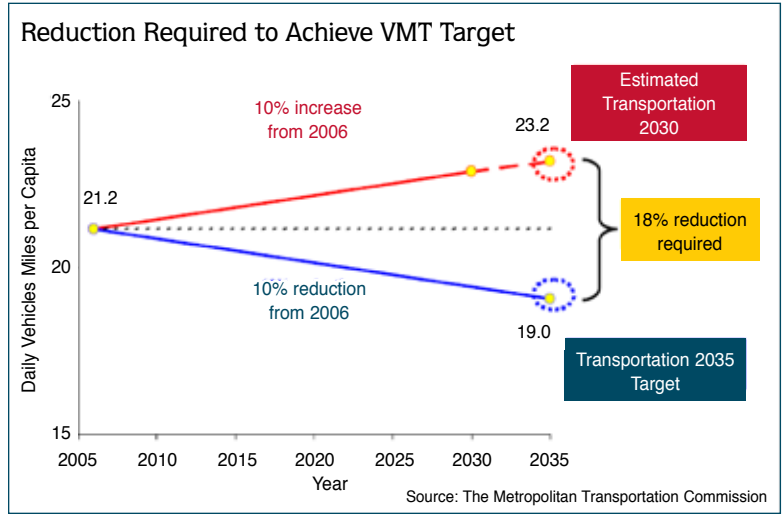
Sonoma Backroads Via SMART Trail - 2

Do Investments in Public Transportation Make Good Business Sense? - 3

Volunteers Needed, July 2-6 - 3

Calendar of Events - 4

SMART White Papers Now Available Online - 4



## Just How Conservative Is SMART’s Ridership Forecast?

by Marla Fields

We already know that SMART’s projected ridership is conservative based on gas prices that have more than doubled since the \$1.50 per gallon price used in the original forecast. Sensitivity analysis in the final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) reveals around 500 to 600 additional riders per day due to the current price of gas. But there is some indication that the ridership forecast at a station level may also be conservative.

For the recent supplemental EIR (SEIR), Hamilton

Field was reviewed as a possible alternative to the original South Novato station site. Hamilton is a thriving community with about 8,000 residents and 2,000 employees—1,200 who work in the Hamilton Landing Hangars. The SEIR revealed the highest ridership potential of alternatives studied was at Hamilton, with 225 to 250 riders per day of which approximately 40% to 50% are employees. So 90 to 125 riders per day would be employees.

Meanwhile, the tenant management firm for the Hamilton Landing, Barker Pacific, recently conducted their own survey through Q&A Research, Inc. With over 200 respondents out of 1,200 employees, they reported findings at a 90% confidence level. They found a full 61% of their employees would use SMART to ride to work at least once per week, with 41% riding 3 or more times per week. 17% surveyed said they

*Continued on page 3*



MISSION STATEMENT  
FRIENDS OF SMART  
IS A CITIZENS GROUP  
DEDICATED TO  
INFORMING THE PUBLIC  
OF THE BENEFITS  
OF RAIL AND SMART  
GROWTH IN MARIN AND  
SONOMA COUNTIES.

CHAIR

Tanya Narath

VICE-CHAIR MARIN

Walter Strakosch

VICE-CHAIR SONOMA

Dani Sheehan-Meyer

TREASURER

Willard Richards

SECRETARY

Marla Fields

fos@pacbell.net

707-578-9133

www.friendsofsmart.org



Sites seen along the SMART trail in Sonoma County—left: The handsome Petaluma depot facade; center: Looking west with the Penngrove Community Park in background; right: Looking north across the SMART crossing on the Main Street in Penngrove; bottom: bucolic farmland along the trail.

## Sonoma Backroads Via SMART Trail

by Allen Tacy

SMART's promise to link trails with trains will offer new pathways to enjoy the Sonoma County experience. The trail described below is an easy bike ride, less than an hour, barring stops at the numerous fascinating wayside distractions. Biking the trail brings me closer to nature. Try it.

I begin my ride at Petaluma's restored downtown depot. This spic and span 1914 Mission Revival structure houses a visitor's center chock full of descriptive literature for tourists. Stop in and browse, but I'll take you on one of the finest tours you will find.

Bike north across East Washington Street and turn left. Go to the bridge across the Petaluma River and turn right. I can cross the bridge or not, either way my turn puts me on the Petaluma Riverwalk trail tracing the banks of the river. I picture in my mind the tremendous schooner and barge traffic, which coursed this river in 1900, at the time the third busiest waterway in California. I pedal past the towering Dairyman's Feed mill. Built in 1937, it continues to serve Petaluma's poultry and sprawling dairy industries, providing custom grain and feed mixtures for discriminating chickens and cows. Beyond the mill, a trail bridge brings both sides to a juncture with the SMART Trail.

I follow the trail across Lakeville Highway and then left

on the trail bridge across the river once more. On the right is the Clover-Stornetta plant, home of the county's most contented cow. Now we parallel the SMART tracks through a wooded residential area up to Payran Street. Here the Trail crosses the tracks. One block west via Payran and across Petaluma Boulevard is Three Cooks Café. Good eats there; it's a longtime favorite. Two blocks north is Petaluma Cyclery. There's another track, which comes in parallel to SMART along here. If I'm lucky, I'll see one of Petaluma Trolley's vintage streetcars clanging its way by. Heck, I flag the trolley to a stop, board, and enjoy a really unique experience! There's a rack at the Lucky store on Payran where I leave the bike.

The trail leaves the urban area now. I revel at the broad oak woodlands of the flood plain to my right. Grassy hillsides catch the sunlight to my left. A natural park-like setting surrounds me. Glorious. I cross the tree-lined river on the walkway that straddles the railroad trestle. Below and to the left are the stubs of bridge piles. They carried the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Rail Road Company tracks years ago. On the far bank a new bike trail follows the riverbank, inviting me to take a detour in my exploration. The trail crosses a grass plain, and the Highway 101 undercrossing appears ahead. I hurry forward past rows of commercial office buildings.

Approaching Corona Road Station, a city park stretches eastward to the right, offering connecting trails. Crossing Corona Road, small farms dot the land. On a hilltop, the windows of a brown house reflect the sun. The home of friends Bill and Lucy Kortum. Here and there a chickenhouse recalls a distant past. The occasional tank house suggests a future. For this is the Petaluma Gap, frequented by regular afternoon sea breezes. Now the track curves and the tower of a feed and grain mill come into sight. Past the mill is Ely Road crossing. Here I turn left to stop at the nearby Palace of Fruit. Farm fresh fruits and vegetables and other good things for a grand picnic lunch. Selections stowed in my saddlebags, the journey continues on the trail.

More farms, pastures, and country homes appear as the ride continues up the low valley of Lichau Creek. Approaching Penngrove, I spot on the left Penngrove Community Park. Children gleefully ride Shetland ponies. Picnic tables invite my promised repast. At the Petaluma Hill Road crossing a short way right is an Italian deli with just the right foods to make the rest of a fine picnic lunch. The inner being refuels. A walk to enjoy this charming village with its century old architecture helps to settle a contented stomach.

From Penngrove the trail makes a huge S curve through gentle wooded hills, emerging on the flat Santa Rosa plain. Straight as a die it makes for Cotati. The East Railroad Avenue crossing is signaled by simple white crossbucks and a small PG&E substation. Cotati Station lies one and a quarter miles further north. I turn aside from the trail here, cycling west on East Railroad. One of the most delightful backroad journeys lies ahead of me. That is a story for another time. Until then, happy trails, to you, until we meet again. ✂

Allen Tacy serves on the Petaluma Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee; he retired from the Southern Pacific Railroad.



# Do Investments in Public Transportation Make Good Business Sense?

Excerpted from "Public Transportation Means Business," produced by the American Public Transportation Association

Did you know that a capital investment in public transportation triggers an economic chain reaction that leads to increases in business activity, more jobs, higher property values and tax earnings and gets more people to work in a cost-effective way?

Here are a few examples that demonstrate why investing in public transportation makes good business sense:

## Sparks business activity

- St. Louis' 25-year modernization and expansion of its public transportation system is expected to yield a \$2.3 billion return in business sales.
- Chicago's 20-year "good repair" strategy could create an estimated \$4.6 billion in business sales.

## Generates jobs

- Tri-Rail of South Florida expects its five-year transit development plan to generate 6,300 ongoing system-related jobs in operations, maintenance and other industries.
- As new systems attract riders, businesses are drawn to set up offices near transit. For example, BellSouth in Atlanta is consolidating all of its suburban offices into three downtown locations convenient to the city's public transit system.

## Boosts property values, tax revenues

- The Commonwealth of Virginia's Metrorail system is expected to generate a 19.2 percent return and create additional tax revenues of \$2.1 billion.
- In recognition of the increased value of homes near transit, Fannie Mae offers special mortgages for buyers of these homes

## Connects employers to their work forces

- San Jose's business community was an early proponent of the very popular Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) Train because of its direct link to Silicon Valley's work force. ACE cuts commuting costs nearly in half, decreasing the annual cost of an 80-mile-a-day commute from \$5,282 by car to \$2,688 by train.
- For service or entry-level employees with limited mobility options, public transportation is an important link to employers. For example, the success of the Greater Lafayette, IN Public Transit Corporation in linking workers to jobs in outlying areas is so valuable that local businesses are underwriting the costs of their employee's bus commutes.

According to Carl Guardino, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group, "Our local public transportation, through regional partnerships—VTA, Caltrain, ACE—has continued to keep Silicon Valley moving...local voters and leaders have continually recognized that strong public transportation can enhance a healthy regional economic engine and a high quality of life." ❖

## Summit on Transportation and Land Use

Continued from page 1

the need to drive; the Metropolitan Transportation Commission is funding Station Area plans to encourage infill housing and commercial activity. The process in Santa Rosa was enthusiastically reviewed by our own Daisy Pistey-Lyhne of Greenbelt Alliance and Jessica Diaz of the Accountable Development Coalition. The public was involved in taking a whole new look at transit-oriented development, mixed-use planning, emphasizing green building standards and affordable housing



in the heart of Santa Rosa, the North Bay's largest city.

One energizing session explored the process of lobbying public officials. The case study addressed efforts to increase Caltrain bike-carrying capacity and emphasized (1) knowing your goal, (2) understanding what is important to the decision maker, (3) finding out what action the decision maker can take to help, (4) impressing the decision maker with those who are on your side, (5) accurately fielding questions, (6) asking for his or her support, (7) following up.

The panels made clear that we need to use many forms of pressure for change: planning and funding processes, well-informed citizen activists, legislation and litigation. And for SMART to enable a reasonable share of the 10% driving reduction in the North Bay will mean providing service levels that are far higher than those now proposed. The vision of SMART trains running by like streetcars excites, does it not? ❖

Steve Birdlebough, former Chair of Friends of SMART and Co-Chair of the SMART Campaign Committee.

## Just How Conservative Is SMART's Ridership Forecast?

Continued from page 1

would ride daily, and 83% said they were either sure or very sure of their answer! If we extend the findings to these 1,200 employees, that means close to 220 employees would ride SMART each day, and that doesn't even count any potential riders amongst the 800 employees in schools, hotels, restaurants, offices and retail centers in other areas of Hamilton.

But how do those employees currently get to work? Turns out a full 90% of employees currently arrive to work in single-occupancy vehicles with only 1% arriving by bus (this despite two bus routes and free shuttle to the bus stop that serves Hamilton). Respondents also noted that on average they live about 4 miles away from their nearest SMART station.

"Just build it and they will come" never sounded so accurate! ❖

## Marin/Sonoma ON TRACK

Below: Carli Paine, TALC's Transportation Program Director, presents interesting information at the well-attended Summit on Transportation and Land Use.

## Volunteers Needed July 2-6

Please hear our call for volunteers during the Marin County Fair, July 2-6.

We promise a fun and interactive booth, but we will need help. Part time, full time, flexible hours, meet new people, and help a great cause. There are over 120,000 people over five days in attendance and we want to reach as many as we can with SMART details. It is very important to build excitement, especially in Marin, and we need your help!

To schedule times and receive information please contact:

**Dani Sheehan**  
707-486-3387;  
dsheehan@sonic.net,  
or **Marla Fields**  
marlafields  
@sbglobal.net. ❖



Visitors enjoying the Amtrak ride on a recent FoS Grand Tour.

Friends of SMART  
 P.O. Box 4057  
 San Rafael, CA 94913  
[www.friendsofsmart.org](http://www.friendsofsmart.org)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - SUMMER 2008

<b>May 14</b>	Wed	9:45 am	Grand Tour of Rail & Ferry Services (see below)
<b>May 21</b>	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, San Rafael
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, San Rafael City Hall
<b>June 12</b>	Thurs	9:45 am	Grand Tour of Rail & Ferry Services (see below)
<b>June 18</b>	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, 555 Fifth St., 3rd Fl., Santa Rosa
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, Sonoma Co. Admin. Bldg.
<b>July 16</b>	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, San Rafael
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, San Rafael City Hall
<b>August 13</b>	Wed	9:45 am	Grand Tour of Rail & Ferry Services (see below)
<b>August 20</b>	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, 555 Fifth St., 3rd Fl., Santa Rosa
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, Sonoma Co. Admin. Bldg.

For more information, go to: [www.friendsofsmart.org](http://www.friendsofsmart.org)

## Bay Area Grand Tour of Rail and Ferry Services

### SAVE THE DATES:

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 • THURSDAY, JUNE 12 • AUGUST 13  
 SEPTEMBER 10 • 9:45 AM TO 6:30 PM

#### *Beginning and ending at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal*

Relax and experience the following services:

Larkspur Golden Gate Ferry  
 San Francisco Light Rail-N Judah Line  
 CalTrain Station and equipment-4th & King St.  
 Alameda/Oakland Ferry • AMTRAK Capitol Corridor  
 Altamont Commuter Express • BART

**Details:** Carpools between Santa Rosa and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal can be formed at the CalTransPark'nRide. Trains and Ferries are accessible for bicycles and wheelchairs.

For further information and to confirm reservations, call 707-486-3387 or e-mail: [dsheehan@sonic.net](mailto:dsheehan@sonic.net).

**Reservations:** \$50 includes fares on ferries and trains other than BART, as well as a lunch salad at Scott's Sea Food, Jack London Square; does not include the cost of beverage.

Make checks payable to "SCT" and send with your e-mail address and phone number to:

Willard Richards, Treasurer, 1009 Hyland Dr., Santa Rosa, 95404

## SMART White Papers Now Available Online

To stay informed and updated on the SMART project, take a look at the recently published SMART white papers now available online at [www.sonomamarintrain.org](http://www.sonomamarintrain.org). These white papers, or fact sheets, are more accessible and less technical than SMART's thorough environmental documents. Following is a full list of white papers available online at the SMART web site:

- SMART Travel in the 21st Century
- Climate Change and SMART
- Alternatives for the NWP Corridor
- Why Not Pave the Tracks?
- SMART's Rail Vehicles
- SMART's Clean Diesel Trains
- SMART Is Both Rail and Trail
- SMART Shuttles
- Park and Ride
- Competitive Contracting of SMART Operations
- Quiet Zones
- Traveling Safely in the North Bay
- Downtown Traffic and SMART

**More online white papers coming soon!**

