

Marin/Sonoma ON TRACK

FRIENDS OF SMART • ISSUE 11 • AUGUST 2009



NEW MEXICO RAILRUNNER

SMART Railcar Selection

By Chris Coursey

The SMART Board has decided on a new generation of environmentally friendly railcars to speed train riders through Marin and Sonoma counties starting in late 2014. Staff was directed to prepare specifications for rail vehicles that meet the most stringent EPA standards, are capable of speeds up to 79 mph and will provide a first-class passenger experience for commuters, tourists and other travelers in the North Bay.

"This is the vehicle we promised the voters," said Board Chairman Charles McGlashan. "It gets our service up and running on time, on budget and with room to expand for the future. In the long run, that means our greenhouse gas savings will be even greater."

The vote to choose "FRA-compliant" vehicles was 9-2, with Directors Judy Arnold and Madeline Kellner opposed. Director Valerie Brown was absent. Development of vehicle specifications, which will include public input, is expected to be complete by the end of March 2010. Bids from the railcar-building industry will be due around Oct. 1, 2010. The first vehicles should arrive in the North Bay for testing on the SMART corridor in the fall of 2013, with the complete fleet due to be ready for service in the fall of 2014.

The railcars will allow for maximum flexibility in operations because they meet Federal Railroad Administration standards for passenger trains and need no special waivers to operate in a corridor with the freight trains of the North Coast Railroad Authority. This has been SMART's preference since the agency's first vehicle selection studies were conducted in 2002 because it avoids the need for "temporal separation" between passenger and freight trains, a requirement that - if imposed - could mean either fewer passenger trains available during the day or forcing freight trains to run only at night.

SMART intends to run DMUs, or diesel multiple units, on the 70-mile corridor between Cloverdale and Larkspur. DMUs are self-propelled units with the engines usually placed underneath the passenger compartments. This allows for relatively compact trains, generally two cars operating together in a "married pair" that seats about 150 passengers and is about 150-170 feet long. SMART's specifications likely will require manufacturers to provide a third car that can be added to the "married pair," increasing the seating capacity to

225 and expanding the area available for bicycles, disabled accommodations and other on-board amenities.

SMART's rail vehicles likely will be the first FRA-compliant DMUs in the world to use "clean-diesel" engines. These engines will meet the Environmental Protection Agency's strict new emissions requirements that begin in 2011. This new technology greatly reduces the amount of pollutants emitted from diesel engines, virtually eliminating the smoke and odor traditionally associated with old-style diesel.

The SMART Board took a very methodical approach in deciding which technology to adopt, hearing manufacturer presentations, welcoming a wide range of public comment, visiting other rail systems and experiencing the ride qualities of different equipment types. Many of the Friends of Smart including Steve Birdleough, Lionel Gambill, Bill Kortum, Barbara Moulton, David Schonbrunn, Jack Swearingen, Walt Strakosch and Allen Tacy brought their experience to the process.

Board members have remarked on the ways that these intense discussions have served to familiarize them with the various factors that make for a high-quality ride. Representatives of the Siemens and Nippon-Sharyo railcar builders have appeared at more than one hearing to address the particular characteristics of the SMART Project. The time invested may yield important dividends as the process of selecting a railcar manufacturer unfolds. ✕

Steve Birdleough contributed to this article and is a Friends of SMART board member.

Novato Stations Update

By Marla Fields

The successful SMART ballot measure of 2008 included specific locations for all station sites in the Sonoma-Marine SMART corridor, except for those in Novato. Novato had several sites that were studied through a supplemental environmental impact report and were found to be viable locations. However, the Novato city council declined to make a final decision on the location of the two potential Novato station sites prior to the November 2008 election. The majority of Novatoans supported the 2008 SMART ballot measure despite the fact that it was unclear where the SMART stations would be. After the election, SMART provided a consultant's review of the three most promising station sites: Atherton, Downtown Novato, and Hamilton.

In the past, Novato Council members had selected Atherton as the northern Novato station and Roblar as

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Larkspur Connectivity

By *Walter Strakosch*

One of the most important features of the SMART train is to provide the easiest possible transfer to the Larkspur ferry for passengers bound for San Francisco. Although not on the construction schedule yet, a group of Friends of Smart recently scouted Larkspur Landing to scope out possible interfaces between the train and the ferry. We looked at four possible options. None of these include taking the rail across Sir Francis Drake Blvd. (SFDB) directly to the ferry as costs appear to rule that out.

These options include:

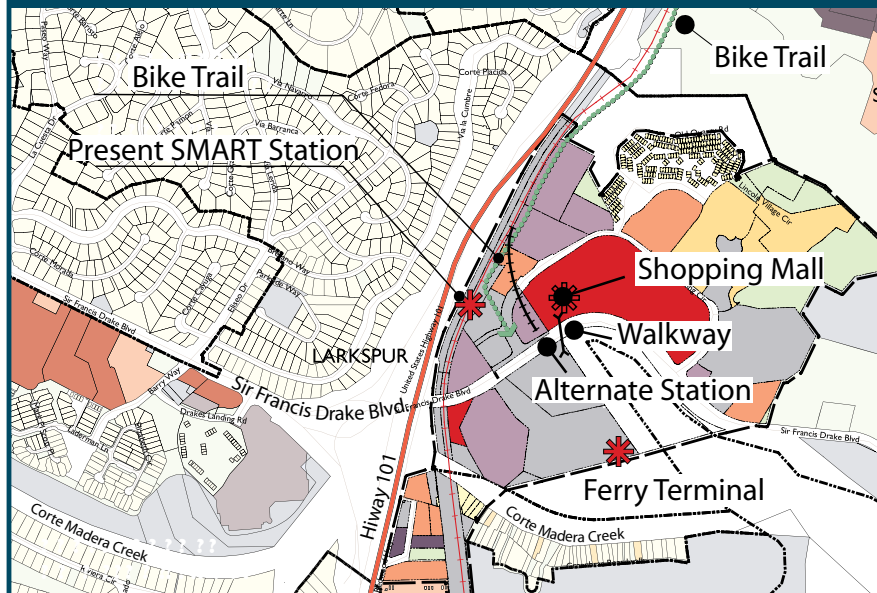
- » (1) An elevated rail to a station at SFDB that connects to an existing walkway across SFDB that leads to the ferry. (Shown as Alternate Station on map.)
- » (2) Present SMART station site located above and close to the Marin Airporter site with an entirely elevated pedestrian walkway generally following the footprint of #1.
- » (3) A sky-train or gondola from the station location in #2 to a location at the ferry.
- » (4) A mini-tram from station #2 using a newly graded road leading to the ferry.

We realize there are pros and cons to each of these options. With option #2, it will take at least 10 minutes for passengers to walk to the ferry. Options #3 and #4 require an additional transportation mode, while having a questionable ability to handle the passenger capacity required to quickly transfer to and from the ferry.

Our preferred choice is #1, placing the station as close to SFDB as possible. The track will curve after it leaves the tunnel to cross in front of the movie theater and extend across Larkspur Circle Dr., almost reaching SFDB. The structure and station will be elevated and the front end of the station will have an exit and walkway that connects to the existing walkway across SFDB. This existing walkway ends close to the ferry entrance and walking time is about two to three minutes. However, there are several obstacles including cost and bicycle path connectivity issues. Besides bringing the train directly across SFDB right to the ferry, this is the best alternative and certainly the most passenger friendly. Although costs will be higher with this option, passenger counts will likely increase because of a seamless connection between the train and the ferry. ✂

Walter Strakosch graduated from USC with a business degree and a major in transportation. He has spent his entire career working in the field of transportation including eight years with the Santa Fe Railroad and eleven with the Federal Transit Administration.

Proposed Larkspur Station Locations



“One of the most important features of the SMART train is to provide the easiest possible transfer to the Larkspur ferry for passengers bound for San Francisco.”



Top: Walt Strakosch stands at his proposed station location #1. The current pedestrian walkway and ferry building are in the background.

Above: View seen from Larkspur station location #2.



Novato Stations Update

Continued from page 1

the southern location. However, the council changed its mind on the Roblar site after nearby residents complained. The Novato city council then requested that their staff review alternative locations for the southern Novato station. After city staff reviewed a total of 15 potential locations, the Hamilton site was recommended. Opponents and supporters of a Hamilton SMART station began advocating their positions at council meetings and within their neighborhoods. In February 2009, Novato city staff recommended hiring a consultant (at a cost of over \$100,000) to conduct public meetings and explore station alternatives.

A group of determined Hamilton residents decided to get involved. They canvassed the neighborhoods with petitions. Volunteers walked door-to-door in nine different neighborhoods within Hamilton as well as at the Unity of Marin and Charter School to evaluate support. Out of the 632 people they contacted, 565 (89%) supported having a Hamilton station. Hamilton offers not only a high number of residents within walking distance to the station, but a large employment center nearby. As a result, it had the highest ridership forecast of all Novato locations studied. Armed with this information, the city council unanimously voted to make Hamilton the city's southern SMART station choice.

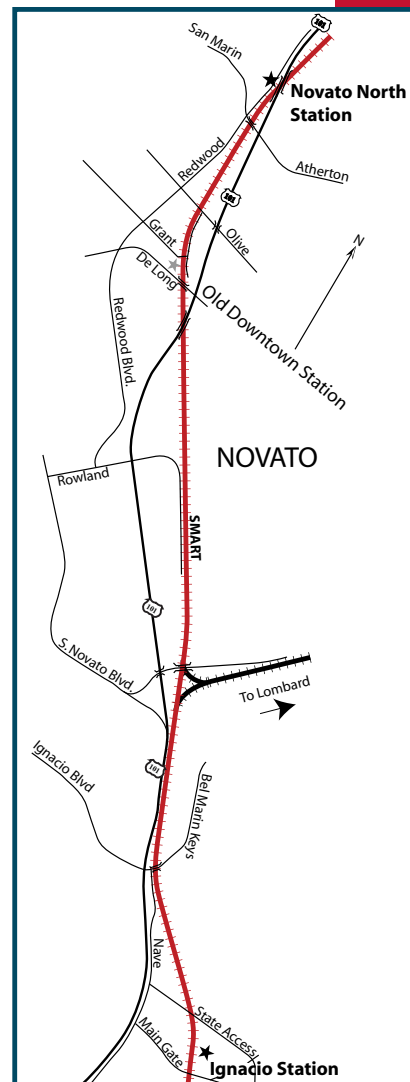
The Northern Novato station decision was much harder to resolve. Although the city council tried to get SMART to offer both a downtown and Atherton station, SMART was only able to accommodate one of these requests. Representatives from the Downtown Novato Business Association pleaded for a downtown site while representatives from the Fireman's Fund campus pleaded their case for Atherton. In the end, the council decided that the current conditions best warranted a Northern Novato station in Atherton. It includes both parking and the proximity to their largest private employer, Fireman's Fund. There is also a large hotel, conference center and housing project

planned for this location, already in the approval stages. The potential 4,000 jobs this development could bring to this location underscored the need to have a SMART stop within walking distance to Atherton. Currently, SMART's plan includes a shuttle that will service the downtown area from the Atherton station site.

There is still strong support for a stop in downtown Novato. A station there would serve as a catalyst for efforts to bring more business and housing to a downtown that is struggling. However, serious parking concerns will need to be addressed in order for Novato to procure a downtown station. Ultimately, the Novato City Council requested the SMART Board to consider Downtown Novato as a top priority for a future station site. ❖

Marla Fields is a current Friends of SMART board member and chair of Cool the Earth, a climate change educational program. She is a charter member of Green Schools Coalition of Novato and a member of the Novato School Board's Sustainability Committee.

**Marin/Sonoma
ON TRACK**



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- \$35 \$50 \$100 Other _____

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- Event Planning Tabling Office Fundraising Letter Writing

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Send check payable to Willard Richards, "SCT" Treasurer, 1009 Hyland Dr., Santa Rosa, CA 95404
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SCT, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, is the fiscal sponsor for Friends of SMART.
Donations made to Friends of SMART are tax deductible.



Bay Area Rail and Ferry Tours

In order to help educate the public about the benefits of alternative modes of transportation, Friends of SMART schedules North Bay rail and ferry tours by request. These tours start and end at the Larkspur ferry building. You or your group will enjoy riding the North Bay's finest transportation systems including: Golden Gate Ferry, San Francisco Light Rail, CalTrain, Oakland/Alameda Ferry, Altamont Commuter Express, AMTRAK and BART. Please email www.friendsofsmart.org for more information or to schedule a tour.

Friends of SMART
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS - FALL 2009

FRIENDS OF SMART MEETINGS

September 16	Wed	11:30 am–1:00 pm	San Rafael, Karchevski's
October 21	Wed	11:30 am–1:00 pm	Santa Rosa, Leadership Institute Conference Room
November 18	Wed	11:30 am–1:00 pm	San Rafael, Karchevski's

SMART BOARD MEETINGS

September 16	Wed	1:30 pm	San Rafael City Hall
October 21	Wed	1:30 pm	Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Administration Building
November 18	Wed	1:30 pm	San Rafael City Hall

For more information, go to: www.friendsofsmart.org

Friends of SMART Vision and Mission

In November 2008, the Friends of SMART celebrated the passage of Measure Q, the ¼ cent sales tax which will fund the start-up of the SMART passenger rail service and pathway. Now we turn our attention to working with the SMART District to ensure that the new service is successfully launched as planned in 2014.

Following are the organizational principles that were adopted by the Friends of SMART earlier this year:

Vision – The SMART Train and Pathway are a central backbone for sustainable mobility in Marin and Sonoma counties and have catalyzed the creation of walkable communities along the rail corridor.

Mission – Friends of SMART works to shape the communities of the future by advocating for and promoting the benefits of the SMART Train and Pathway, transit connectivity, and transit villages in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

We Accomplish Our Mission by:

- » Working with various interest groups and government entities to advocate policies necessary to create more sustainable communities.
- » Delivering public education programs which help build the political will required to carry out these policies.
- » Providing input to the SMART District to help build a better project.

Operating Principles

- » We support the work of the SMART District by participating in public forums and speaking in favor of SMART at public hearings before various agencies and boards.
- » We have formed several subcommittees:
 - Railcar selection
 - Bicycle and pedestrian pathway
 - Larkspur station
 - San Rafael stations
 - North and South Novato stations
 - Jennings station in Santa Rosa
 - Parking – amount and pricing

If you are interested in getting more involved with any of the subcommittees, please join us at our next general Friends of SMART meeting (see Calendar of Events above or check our web site at www.friendsofsmart.org) or give Tanya Narath, Chair, a call at 707-578-9133. Friends of SMART also accepts tax deductible donations. ❖

Tanya Narath is the current Chair of Friends of Smart and Executive Director, CEO and a Fellow of the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy. She was honored by the National Women's History Project as one of 100 women "Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet".