

Transportation 1970-79

9-9-79

# CofC Group Can't Agree On SC-SJ Commuter Railway

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Specters of the Iron Horse may be agitating more area settlers today than the real, snorting monster agitated the Indians of yesteryear.

After two lengthy discussions of the merits and demerits of a proposed commuter train service between Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County, the Economic Concerns Committee of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce has agreed to disagree on whether to endorse or reject the service.

So a study will be launched to investigate the proposal in more depth than committee members were able to do at a 1½ hour luncheon meeting at Pasatiempo Inn.

Third District Supervisor Gary Patton argued against the proposal Wednesday in the last of the two discussions scheduled by Ray Bourret, committee chairman.

Patton's appearance in opposition to the proposal is notable because a proponent of it is Phil Baldwin, former county supervisor, usually allied with Patton on environmental

issues.

Patton blasted the concept that establishment of the rail service would benefit Santa Cruz County as a whole.

"Major changes would occur here," Patton warned. "The only thing that prevents run-away growth here is Highway 17. A major constraint against growth here is the capacity of Highway 17. People don't want to drive bumper-to-bumper on that crowded road if they can avoid it. A railroad would eliminate this constraint."

Patton said that Santa Clara County is trying to become the biggest industrial center in the world and is annually converting many acres of land to in-

dustrial use. Industrial development in the electronics field is considered desirable, Patton said, because they need few services, make few demands, often employ their own security forces and put in incredible payrolls.

But, Patton said, housing is needed for workers, and it is known that the Santa Clara area has included in its plans establishment of bedroom communities around it, including Santa Cruz.

"Why should we remove the constraint that prevents more growth here?" Patton asked.

And he said at one point: "We have a decision whether to maintain our self-sufficiency or

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plug ourselves into the large Santa Clara community with bands of steel."

Patton challenged many statements made in July by proponents of rail service. He said costs would be closer to \$100 million than to the \$50 million estimated by Alvin

Spivak, a July speaker who had urged the CofC group to support the concept of establishing the service.

Patton, who is the author of Measure J, the county's growth control measure, said bluntly that he is not at all sure the county has found a legislative

solution to growth management.

"I don't feel comfortable we have a legislative solution that would apply," Patton said. "We know that when we build a jail larger than we have it gets filled up. If we build a major arterial commuter line, it will be used."

Patton stressed he is not a supporter of the automobile and its enormous consumption of fuel, and he said that if the larger issue of preserving the county were not involved, he could support rail service. Indeed, he did say that he wants to see the Sun Tan Special return to weekend service.

But the county would be

changed drastically by the proposed commuter service line, he stressed. It would be a threat to Santa Cruz retail trade, destroy self-sufficiency, induce new growth, and there would be more cars on local roads because the families of commuters living here would use them to go to school, to shop. There would be heavier burdens on schools, the police, the amenities, the services as well.

Patton glanced around the room, noted real estate officials present, and twitted: "Having the commuter service would help you, I know, because you would have an even bigger market for the few

houses and the prices would go up again." But, he said, growth control must be applied to salvage at least part of the county for people with below average incomes and to insure a better life quality for everyone.

Developer Don Fultz contended in the question and answer period that rail service would drive up the price of housing here to the point that local industries such as Salz and Plantronics would have to close because their workers would be unable to find a place to live. But he was challenged on this by Ralph Bargetto and Bud Prindle, and a committee study was ordered on the issue.