

# Rail mass transit backers seek SC support

TRANSPORTATION 1980-89

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SANTA CRUZ — Jeff Ringold knows he's asking for blind faith, but he hopes the same voters who in 1984 supported the idea of rail mass transit in Santa Cruz County can come up with \$150,000 to help make the idea a reality.

The only hitch is, the money must be gathered in less than a month.

A statewide group behind a rail bond measure for 1990 has asked communities desiring funds for "fixed guideway" — monorail or train — systems to help contribute money to get the measure on the ballot.

"In trying to raise money for the Rail Bond Act, people are saying we should look at the kinds of options we have for the county," said Ringold, a member of the Santa Cruz Chapter of the Central Coast Greens. The Greens have set up a "Rail Advocacy Fund" to take donations for the ballot effort.

According to Ringold and Santa Cruz Transportation District General Manager Scott Galloway, if the Rail Bond Act, sponsored by the California Planning and Conservation League, makes the ballot and passes, it could mean Santa Cruz will have some kind of modern mass transit system by the year 2000.

Feasibility studies due for release later this year revolve around two potential systems. City riders would be able to take advantage of the "urban corridor" which would include some kind of line from UCSC to downtown, and downtown to the beach areas. Other parts of the county could be connected to Santa Cruz through the "suburban corridor" which would use the rail lines from Davenport to Watsonville.

But to raise the chances for these systems from possible to probable, Santa Cruz supporters may have to contribute right away, Galloway said.

"If in fact Santa Cruz County is to receive \$60 million (from a potential bond issue), it needs to raise \$150,000 now," said Galloway.

Because the costs of sponsoring a ballot initiative are high, the Conservation League is asking interested communities to contribute funds to get it off the ground, Ringold said. If Santa Cruz County is unable to make the contribution by the league's April 15 deadline, its share of the potential bond monies could shrink from \$60 million to \$11 million, Galloway said. He said communities receiving money from the bond would also be eligible for federal matching funds.

"Our studies will say the systems are feasible. It suddenly becomes even more

feasible if this ballot measure succeeds," said Galloway.

If a 1984 election is any indication, then Santa Cruz County is certainly interested in such systems: 83 percent of voters approved a measure directing the transportation district to dip into state funds to develop a "fixed guideway" transit system, such as a monorail, light-rail, or automated trolley-type system.

Even so, Galloway acknowledged problems with asking people to donate money in the absence of concrete proposals. But he said the money might not be available in the future and that interested citizens should act now.

"We're saying, here is the answer. We just haven't asked the question yet," Galloway said. Galloway said the transit district is not associated with the Greens' fund-raising effort, and that he

wanted to make citizens aware of the issue.

Both Ringold and Galloway emphasized that contributors to the ballot effort are not "committed to particulars of the project," and that any plans would be subject to scrutiny through a public hearing process.

Galloway said that UCSC growth and increased local highway traffic will make such transit systems more a necessity than a convenience in the future.

"The impetus for doing this is to look for energy efficient transport systems that are safe and cost efficient to meet the growing needs of the community," said Galloway.

Those interested in the ballot measure effort or seeking further information can contact the Santa Cruz Greens at 335-3216.