

Park-ride lot OK'd despite opposition

Scotts Valley to give
\$504,000 for project

BY TERRI MORGAN
Special to the Mercury News

A new park-and-ride lot serving the Highway 17 express bus line could open in Scotts Valley by fall 1997 now that the city has given a green light for the project.

After listening to three hours of public testimony — most from neighbors adamantly opposed to the lot's location — the city council agreed Wednesday night to contribute \$504,000 in redevelopment agency funds to the project.

Behind shopping center

The new lot is to be built on a 3.4-acre site behind the Kings Village Shopping Center, about one-quarter of a mile from the temporary park-and-ride lot in use. It will include parking for four buses and 368 cars and will be owned and operated by the Santa Cruz County Metropolitan Transit District.

To be built in two phases, the project could include a 1,200-square-foot building housing restrooms, a waiting area and a concession stand.

Neighbors were particularly opposed to the inclusion of the concession building. Comparing the Scotts Valley transit center with those in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, residents of nearby condominium and townhouse developments were concerned that the new lot would increase crime, traffic and noise in their neighborhoods. They urged the city and the district, unsuccessfully, to put the transit center elsewhere.

Concerns about traffic

Transit officials said residents' fears were groundless, stressing the center will be primarily a park-and-ride lot and generate a fraction of the traffic a traditional transit centers would. They, along with several riders who spoke in favor of the new site, also pointed out the current park-and-ride lot has been operating without problems and it is also nearby.

"There will be no change from what we've been doing here the last five years," said Scott Gallo-way, general manager of the San-

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Scotts Valley OKs park-ride lot near site of temporary facility

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ta Cruz County Metropolitan Transit District.

Noting the property is zoned for commercial use, the city council decided the park-and-ride lot would have the least impact of other commercial uses allowable on the property.

"I think this site is well-suited to transit," said Mayor Joe Miller. "It's a commercial area, near high density (neighborhoods) so people can walk to and from their residence to the bus."

The transit center will serve riders on the Highway 17 express bus service, which runs weekdays between Santa Cruz and San Jose. Ridership fluctuates from 400 to 800 passengers a day. The Scotts Valley stop is the most popular one along the line, with nearly half of all passengers boarding there.

The express bus service is the transit district's most successful line. While most lines recover about 20 percent of their operating expenses from the fare box, the over-the-hill service captures about half its revenues from the fare box.