

Planning begins for renovating Watsonville Transit Center

By ERIK CHALHOUB
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — Planning is underway to transform the drab, outdated aesthetics of the Watsonville Transit Center into a colorful, pleasant destination.

The center, which opened in 1995, has not received any renovations since then and is in "bad shape," said Lise Guizar of Santa Cruz Metro.

"It's in a state of disrepair," she said. "Which makes sense, since it's a high-traffic area."

The center, at Rodriguez and West Beach streets, is an important hub for Metro, ParaCruz, Greyhound and

Monterey-Salinas Transit.

Whether the center remains as a small business hub or become strictly transit-only is one of the main issues that surround the proposed renovation.

Four small kiosks sit in the center of the station, known as the "mercado." However, only one of those is currently operational.

The kiosks serve as "small business incubators," Guizar said, and with low rent and a highly-traveled area, many small businesses are able to easily get up and running.

"Do we remove them and open that space up, or do we

keep them and help out the community?" Guizar said during a public outreach meeting Wednesday.

Currently in the preliminary stages, the renovation project highly relies upon the public input, said Metro surveyor Claire Fliesler. Metro users are being surveyed to determine what they most want to see changed in the center.

Security and lighting were two issues that kept appearing during the surveying, Guizar said, but also an overhaul of the center's atmosphere was what the public found most needed.

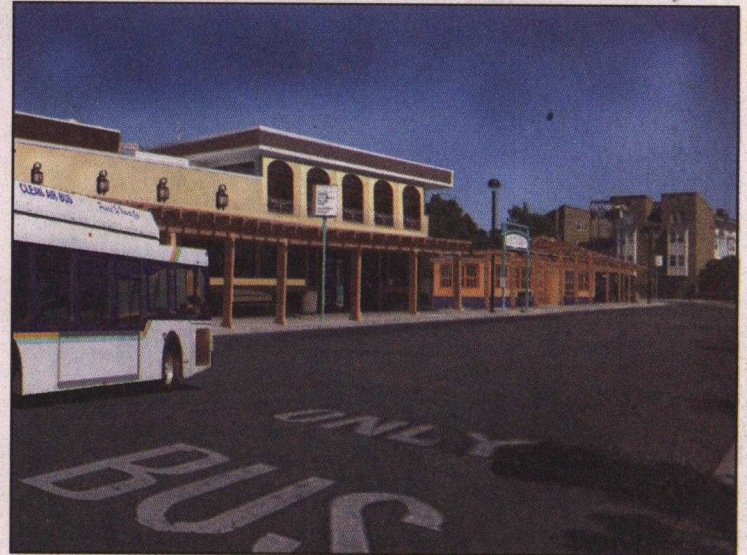
Rather than having people

look at "stained walls" while they are waiting for the bus, "we want to create a more pleasant experience," Guizar said.

Adding color, from the walls to the landscaping, would go a long way towards achieving this goal, she said.

The look of the "mercado" area, Guizar noted, is a "mismatch of patio furniture."

The mural that currently adorns a wall at the station was painted during opening year, and like the rest of the center, is in need of repair. Whether or not the mural should be



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An artist's rendering shows what the renovation of the Watsonville Transit Center could look like.

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replaced or repaired is currently under debate.

Local artists have shown a lot of interest in creating a new community-oriented mural for the rest of the walls surrounding

the center, Guizar said.

Besides beautifying the center, the mural would also serve as graffiti abatement, as the current 1995 mural has rarely been tagged by vandals, according to Guizar.

Once more public input is gathered, the results will be presented to the Metro Board of Directors on Sept. 28, where they will decide a general di-

rection for the renovation and begin looking at finding funding resources.

After the decision, more public meetings and surveying will take place to gather the public's input on the board's recommendations.

For information and updates on the Transit Center's renovation, visit www.facebook.com/Watsonville.Metro.