

# cut gets 2nd look

## Residents oppose Santa Cruz move

By Terri Morgan  
Special to the Mercury News

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit is reconsidering its plan to reduce bus service to the San Lorenzo Valley by 75 percent after residents complained that the move would further isolate their rugged mountain community.

"Those cuts would be real rough for a community of our size," said Dan Barnett, president of the Lompico Community Association. He said the proposed cuts "won't take care of the commuters who take the bus to and from work, and it won't take care of kids participating in after-school programs." In an effort to balance its budget, the transit district is seeking to pare its services by 29 percent county-wide. The largest proposed cuts were in routes to and from Lompico, which is currently served by 16 bus runs daily. The district is proposing slashing that number to four, and timing those buses to take children to and from school.

### Lompico would be hurt

Barnett, one of 30 people who spoke to the district's board of directors at an Aug. 17 public hearing, said upper Lompico, which has approximately 1,700 residents, is being unfairly treated.

"We're too large of a community to be cut off like that," Barnett said. "Lompico Canyon is too hilly for bikes, and hitchhikers up here put themselves in grave peril."

Because more than 25 percent of the complaints registered were regarding the Lompico routes, 5th District Supervisor Fred Keeley, who doubles as the chairman of the transit board, said he is advocating fewer cuts for that section of the San Lorenzo Valley. The 11-member board is scheduled to vote next month on the systemwide cuts, which are slated to go into effect in December.

### 'Real-world reality check'

"The public hearing was a real-world reality check, and we're going to re-evaluate the proposed reductions," Keeley said. "I'm hopeful I'll end up with enough votes from the transit board to restore some services to Lompico. The board can choose to fund other routes, and have a lower level of reserves."

Keeley said reductions are needed because the transit district's federal and state funding has been slashed by more than \$1 million annually, and because the district has depleted its reserve funds.

"We have to get this bus system to live within its means," Keeley said. "You cannot run a \$22 million bus company on \$18 million. It's gotten by in the past by dipping into the district's reserves. There's a point where you can't do that anymore."