

LOCAL

Campus-garage hearing draws crowd

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UCSC - Growth Opponents say traffic problems must be addressed regionally

By DAN WHITE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Opponents of a proposed UC Santa Cruz parking garage vented frustration at regional traffic planners during a Tuesday night public hearing.

Roughly 175 people filled most of the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium's floor for the second hearing on the \$11 million, six-story parking garage's environmental impact report. Many criticized both the university and bus routes throughout the county.

Some said a 500-space parking garage would only worsen already bad Westside traffic.

"The existing situation is already intolerable and the EIR does not address this fact," said Westside resident Michael Singer. He said regional traffic studies also fail to address the Westside adequately. "It will take a major cooperative effort to find a solution."

Supporters of the parking garage sometimes used arguments similar to their opponents'. Physics professor George Brown, said there is no feasible alternative to a parking garage, and that it is long overdue. But he also touched on the same regional transportation issues.

"For many people, having property near campus is not affordable," he said. "Public transportation doesn't effectively serve outlying areas."

The hearing, added last week because of public pressure, lasted an hour past its two scheduled hours and included 68 speakers.

At 7:45 p.m., about 50 people had spoken against and seven in favor of the garage.

Several UCSC students also talked of transportation troubles, describing difficult bus commutes from outlying areas. One student said it was hard for him to get from the Eastside to UCSC in a timely manner because he has to change buses. Others spoke of commutes from Boulder Creek and other communities.

They also took UCSC to task. A few said that the \$11 million for the garage could vastly improve UCSC's own transportation network.

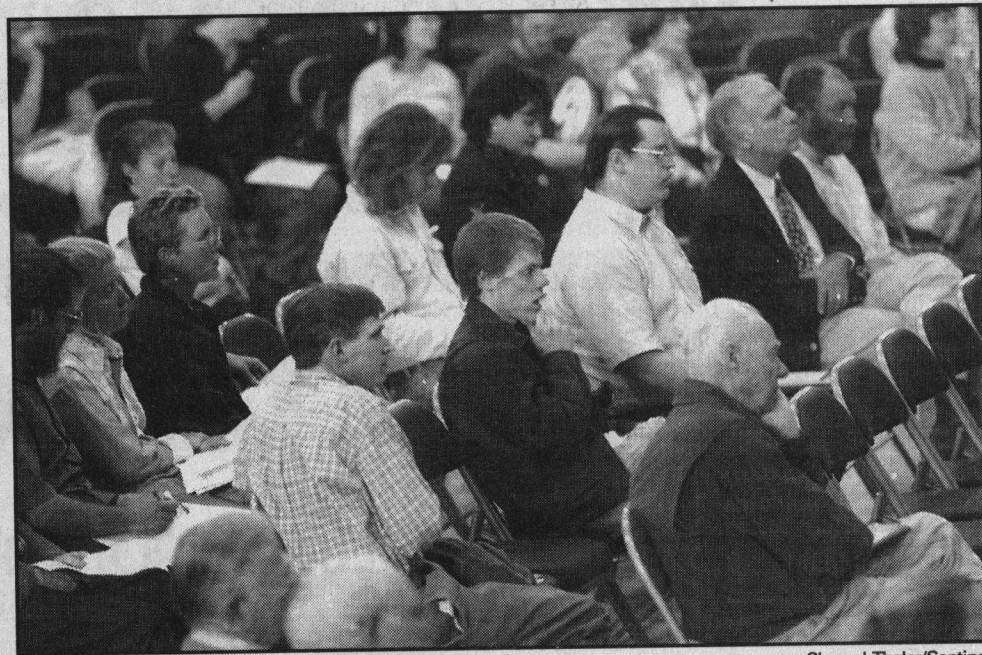
The debate is no longer exclusively city vs. campus. Some speakers said they fear that the urban traffic nightmares they have tried to escape are coming true.

"I don't think it's town and gown," said staff member De Clarke, speaking at the hearing. "I see it as the fact that we are approaching a traffic crisis. We don't want to live in L.A."

But some speakers made specific references to tension between the university and city.

UCSC staff member Richard Stover reacted to a comment by UCSC Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood at last week's city/university meeting. Greenwood had said the city was being unfair by criticizing the parking garage plans while greenlighting much larger commercial and parking areas in town.

Stover said the campus should not compare itself to those developments: "I work at Lick Observatory," he said. "We don't look for the



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Some 175 people gathered to comment on the 500-space garage proposed for the UCSC campus.

worst example and use that as our performance goal. I don't want someone to think if we're not worse than Costco, we're doing OK."

Greenwood was not at Tuesday's meeting, although a number of UCSC staff members were there to observe.

Last year the issue drew eight people to a planning meeting on campus. But interest ballooned in recent months, beginning with the students, spreading to a number of residents and most City Council members.

Earlier this month, 100 people showed up to the first on-campus hearing.

After residents complained that the first hearing was inadequately advertised and inaccessible, the university agreed to extend the public review period by a week and present a second hearing, this one in town.

The campus will now prepare a final environmental report.

UC regents will review the report, and if they approve, construction could begin in August and finish a year later.