

Metro eyes return of Frederick service

Transportation

Seniors, disabled seek route
that's been missing since '02

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SANTA CRUZ — With seniors and disabled passengers lobbying hard for its return, Santa Cruz Metro's Board of Directors took a step Friday toward restoring bus service on Santa Cruz' Frederick Street.

Meeting in Santa Cruz, the board said it wanted more information on the cost of restoring Route 6, which last ran in 2002 when Metro cancelled it due to a funding crunch and lack of riders. But many seniors say it's needed to safely get around town.

"Having access to the bus is freedom, and it is maintaining dignity," said director Deborah Lane, who uses a wheelchair.

Much of the outcry is coming from residents of La Posada, an assisted-living facility on Frederick Street. Route 6 ran hourly between Capitola and Santa Cruz via Broadway and Frederick Street, and now residents must walk less than a quarter-mile to Soquel Avenue for a bus stop.

But many require walkers, use wheelchairs or have other difficulties getting around. And not only is the Frederick Street sidewalk narrow and broken in places, but Soquel Avenue is usually overrun with cars and can be dangerous to cross.

Metro staff suggested contributing funds toward sidewalk fixes to improvements planned by the city of Santa Cruz at the Frederick/Soquel intersection. They suggested ridership — which had an average of 8.3 per trip in 2002 — was too low to justify adding a route.

But that irked seniors who attended the meeting, and the board clearly wanted to

SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2013 A5

METRO

Continued from A1

see if there was enough money to pay for a route. A final decision could come later this month.

"We feel very outraged by this plan that's presented today," said Lynn Gallagher, who attended the meeting in her wheelchair.

One man said he had been hit by a car crossing Frederick Street, and another said Soquel Avenue is dangerous for seniors. Supervisor John Leopold, who sits on the board, proposed restoring service on a trial basis.

"I think it's a reasonable compromise in the hopes of addressing an important need in the community," Leopold said.

Staff had cautioned that a full restoration of the route could cost \$800,000, but said they would work on alternatives and refine their cost estimates before the board gave final approval.

County Supervisor Bruce McPherson also raised the possibility of contracting with La Posada to use the facility's van to ferry passenger to bus stops on Soquel Avenue.

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