

# Scotts Valley transit center in the works

By KAREN CLARK  
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — Construction work on the newly approved transit hub behind the Kings Village shopping center probably won't begin for at least 14 months.

Scott Galloway, general manager of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, said the design of the \$2.4 million project still must be finalized and then approved by the Scotts Valley Design Review Board.

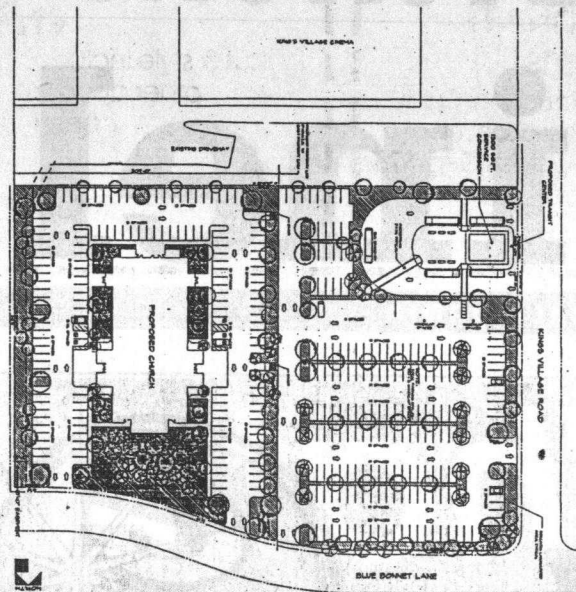
In addition, some \$325,000 in grants still has not been received, although Galloway said he does not anticipate any problems.

Ed van der Zande, director of redevelopment for the transit district, told the Scotts Valley City Council last week that the project should be finished in about six months once construction begins.

The transit center, which will be located in an empty field on Bluebonnet Lane and Kings Village Road, was bitterly opposed by neighbors, who were concerned about increased noise, traffic and pollution, as well as an influx of undesirable people.

Those protests failed to sway the City Council, which voted 3-0 to support the transit center with a make-or-break \$544,000 contribution. Councilwoman Peggie Lopez did not attend the meeting because she injured her back and Councilman Michael Shulman did not participate because he owns property near the site.

"I think people thought we were going to build a (Santa Cruz-style) Metro Center in Scotts Valley, and that's not what it's all about," Galloway said last



week.

In fact, much of the 5.2-acre site will be devoted to a 198-car paved lot for park-and-ride commuters who use the express bus over Highway 17 to San Jose. Many of these commuters already are parking at the old Skypark airport, which is just a few hundred yards from the proposed site.

The center also will have covered areas for bus

riders using the two transit lines that already serve Scotts Valley. One line is a direct route to Santa Cruz, and the other also serves the San Lorenzo Valley area. The lines now stop at various points on Mount Hermon Road and Scotts Valley Drive.

It was these riders, as well as the suggestion that the transit hub would include a Metro-like building, that worried many critics of the plan.

"We are not trying to do away with the Highway 17 express-bus system ... but we do not feel a transit center like this would be any different than ones in Watsonville or Santa Cruz," said Ken Carr, a resident of Monteville Mobile Home Park. "It would attract a certain amount of people that are undesirable for the area."

Galloway emphasized on Thursday, however, that any facility built on the site would be no more than 1,200 square feet and would be leased to a private fast-food restaurant or coffee shop operator. It would operate like any other private business in Scotts Valley, he said.

The property is owned by the George Ow family, but a purchase agreement is in escrow with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church, which has earmarked \$4 million for the project, will sell a portion of the property to the transit district for the new center.

Church officials expect a new sanctuary to be built on the upper portion of the site within five years, depending on when membership totals reach a high enough level.

"We feel comfortable at this point we can merge

this site together and make it very beneficial for the church and the transit center," said Gary Lee, real estate director for the church's national office.

Galloway said he and church officials expect to sign a joint-use agreement to share parking lots. When that happens, the transit center would have access to another 100 parking spaces when use of the Highway 17 commuter bus expands.

In addition, said Galloway, church-goers could use the transit center lot on Sundays.

Although critics objected to putting the transit center in a residential neighborhood, officials pointed out that the site is zoned commercial, and is adjacent to the city's main commercial area.

"We've looked at this property for a lot of years," said Councilman David Schmidt. "We knew, and the community knew, ... that the area was zoned commercial. Any other (commercial) project would create as much traffic in an hour than the transit center does in a day."

Councilman Bart Cavallaro added that the buses don't increase pollution, but rather ease it by providing commuters and transit riders with alternatives to driving alone in their cars.

"We're trying to make (the system) more user-friendly," Cavallaro said. "The need to improve and expand transit would be essential to the environment."

Transit officials are particularly targeting park-and-ride commuters with this center. The express bus is one of the most popular lines in the local system.