



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Watsonville Mayor Oscar Rios (right) addresses the Back on Track group of Watsonville, a recently formed body of railroad historians and enthusiasts at AMF Cabrillo Lanes, 580 Auto Center Drive, Watsonville.

Capitola trolley proposal to include Watsonville

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

WATSONVILLE — Watsonville Mayor Oscar Rios visited the Back on Track railroad group Monday for a brief discussion regarding the future of rail service to the Watsonville area.

"The Watsonville city council is pushing for the rail service concept," Rios said. "We are congested enough with automobile traffic and I am particularly interested in transportation alternatives."

The meeting, which took place at AMF Cabrillo Lanes, 580 Auto Center Drive was also attended by Mary Orrison, associate transportation planner for Monterey County and Capitola council member Dennis Norton.

A coastal trolley proposal, which could eventually include rail passenger service between Santa Cruz, Watsonville Capitola and Felton was the central topic of discussion.

According to Norton, the idea for a coastal trolley is one of the least expensive and more environmentally feasible options to address increasing traffic. The trolley project is estimated to cost about \$54 million.

Other alternatives suggested have included the widening of Highway 1, which would cost about \$245 million, and creating a light-rail service, which is estimated to cost about \$369 million.

The trolley would function as both a tourist attraction and as an

alternate form of transportation, since it will be accessible to the 50,000 people who live within walking distance to the proposed rail service.

If city agencies approve the proposal, a trolley system could be up and running by 2005, said Norton.

The first phase of construction would connect Santa Cruz and Capitola with stops near Santa Cruz City Hall, the Santa Cruz Boardwalk, 17th Avenue and 41st Avenue.

Subsequent phases will extend the rail service west to Natural Bridges and further south to Aptos and New Brighton State Beach. The final phase, scheduled for 2010, would add services to Watsonville and Felton.

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