

The Sentinel

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Santa Cruz, Calif.—33

Via Watsonville

Energy Future Panel Supports Rail Service

The development of train service from Santa Cruz to Santa Clara County through Watsonville has received support from the Energy Future Santa Cruz Advisory Board.

The board — made up of local business, education and government leaders — unanimously gave its support to the potential passenger and freight rail service at its recent meeting.

Board members stressed they are not giving support to the more controversial "over-the-hill" rail service between Santa Cruz and Los Gatos.

They called for further study on the costs and environmental impacts of such a route, expressing concern that the route would have growth-inducing effects.

Gov. Edmund Brown Jr. in September signed a bill allowing Caltrans to enter into a contract with a private railroad company for rail service from San Francisco to Monterey and Santa Cruz via Watsonville if such a service proves economically feasible.

However, there is no such contract. The bill also authorizes any local transit district or county to negotiate with a railroad company for passenger rail service within its jurisdiction.

In other matters, the board adopted a retrofit ordinance as part of the Energy Plan it is preparing for the county.

The ordinance, which the board hopes local governments will adopt, would require homebuyers to install energy-saving measures in their new homes.

It also calls for local jurisdictions to establish specific time periods after which all homes must be brought up to minimum energy efficiency.

The board also discussed water at its recent meeting and advocated the writing of design standards by local governments that would encourage the domestic use of composting toilets and grey water recovery systems.

The board supported the building a a pilot sewage treatment plant near the city of Santa Cruz' treatment plant at Neary Lagoon. The pilot plant would recover maximum amounts of water, energy and nutrients for soil fertilization.

The board also called on local water districts to create household quotas on water use and to charge higher rates to those who go beyond these quotas.

Board members also recommended that minimum water conservation standards be adopted for new homes.