

Attachment 5

Letter from TAMC Regarding Status of Future Rail Service



June 23, 2023

Carl Sedoryk
General Manager/CEO
Monterey-Salinas Transit District
19 Upper Ragsdale, Suite 200
Monterey, CA 93940

SUBJECT: SURF! Project Impacts on Future Light Rail along the Monterey Branch Line

Dear Mr. Sedoryk:

At your request, this letter is being sent to further clarify the Transportation Agency for Monterey County's (TAMC's) intended plan for future rail service on the Monterey Branch Line corridor, as it relates to Monterey-Salinas Transit's (MST's) SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, responding to questions posed by the Coastal Commission on May 3, 2023. Replying to the Coastal Commission's letter, below the Coastal Commission's inquiry is in *italics* with TAMC's response in **bold**.

- 1. Coastal Commission Comment: Please further describe the impacts the project will have on the existing railroad tracks, including where and how much track will be removed and any impacts to the structural integrity of the tracks caused by grading and retaining walls adjacent to the tracks.*

TAMC Response: Over the entire project, the railroad tracks are being removed or crossed in five locations and only where necessary to save cost, minimize impacts, make connections, and/or limit tree removal. Within the Coastal Commission permit area, the railroad tracks are crossed twice to avoid the 8th Street Bridge support column. This at-grade crossing could remain once rail service is re-established in the future to allow concurrent rail and transit service. In this location, for approximately 1,000', the busway alignment will move to the west side of the tracks.

Outside the Coastal Commission permit area, the railroad tracks are crossed at Palm/Del Monte in Marina, at California Avenue/Highway 1 southbound on ramp in Sand City, and the section parallel to California Avenue between Playa Avenue and the shopping center entrance in Sand City. The railroad tracks are being removed along

approximately 1,500' section parallel to California Avenue so that a new bicycle and pedestrian path can be constructed, and tree removal avoided. The cross section of this segment of California Avenue will be re-evaluated and may need to be reconfigured to maintain auto, bike, and bus access when rail service is ready to proceed.

Along the remainder of the rail corridor, the tracks will remain in place and will not be disturbed by the SURF! project. Specifically, the retaining walls and grading work needed to install the SURF! project will not require remediation of the rail that will remain after the SURF! project is constructed. For the future rail service, the tracks, ties, and ballast will likely need to be upgraded or replaced to meet current industry standards, including Federal Railroad Administration safety and design requirements for passenger rail.

- 2. Coastal Commission Comment: Please also describe the future compatibility of the busway and rail service if funding were secured to restore rail service along the corridor.*

TAMC Response: In collaboration with TAMC, the SURF! project team has planned the busway alignment so that bus and passenger rail service can co-exist within the historic rail corridor.

- 3. Coastal Commission Comment: Would the busway and rail service be able to provide service simultaneously given the currently proposed configuration of the busway?*

TAMC Response: Yes, both BRT service and rail service could operate simultaneously and would have ridership benefits by doing so. Modifications to the railroad tracks and to the busway, compliant with Federal Railroad Administration design and safety requirements, would be needed in limited locations for this to occur.

- 4. Coastal Commission Comment: Would future rail service require the termination of bus service?*

TAMC Response: Rail service and bus service are compatible and provide symbiotic benefits for ridership and connectivity within our region.

- 5. Coastal Commission Comment: Overall, how would the construction of the proposed busway impact the feasibility of future rail service?*

TAMC Response: TAMC's hope is the success of the SURF! project will help make the case for the future rail service, showing the latent ridership demand for a transit

service in its own separate right-of-way, providing an alternative to highway traffic. Construction in the corridor is limited to the busway alignment and will not impact the feasibility of future rail service.

6. *Coastal Commission Comment: Please describe and provide any relevant documentation regarding any commitments or legal restrictions relating to the future use of rail in the TAMC corridor and the preservation of the railroad tracks, if any such commitments or restrictions exist.*

TAMC Response: In 2003, TAMC purchased the Monterey Branch Line using State Proposition 116 funds for the purpose of providing transportation options, including public transit. This funding agreement allows for bus and passenger rail service.

TAMC continues to enthusiastically support the MST SURF! project as a funding partner with \$15 million in voter-approved Measure X (2016) funding dedicated to the project. The project enjoys support from community-based organizations and stakeholder agencies across many different interests. TAMC will further support this project by urging the California Coastal Commission, City of Marina, and City of Sand City to approve a Coastal Development permit for this important project.

Sincerely,



Todd A. Muck
Executive Director