

# Trails take priority over trains, supes say

By Noel Stack

City editor

An excursion train could break the silence of the railroad corridor in El Dorado County.

Several proposals have come to the Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor Joint Powers Authority requesting the opportunity to run a train from Folsom to some point in El Dorado County. Tuesday the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors considered parameters for the proposals, opting for an emphasis on trail development.

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- Supervisor  
Rusty Dupray

"We should ask them to demonstrate how they might build and pay for some of the trails," Supervisor Jack Sweeney said of those interested in running excursion trains.

Rails-to-Trails Act rules require that affected agencies consider rail proposals for old train corridors. In the case of the Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor, El Dorado County, Sacramento County, Folsom and Sacramento's Regional Transit all have an interest in the 53-mile corridor.

El Dorado County officials have long advocated for converting the portion of corridor in El Dorado County — about 28 miles — to a walking, biking and equestrian trail. The supervisors decided Tuesday that a request for proposal should go out to interested

companies that includes language emphasizing those desires.

Having pedestrian and bicycle access is "as important, if not more important" than an excursion train, Supervisor Rusty Dupray said.

"My preference is to keep it as a trail," Supervisor Ron Briggs said.

County resident James Waterman agreed. Representing about 300 homeowners along the corridor, Waterman said the residents are dismayed at the idea that an excursion train may take precedence over the trails.

"Everyone wants to see these railroad tracks turned into trails," Waterman said.

"We don't need it," he said of the train. "What we want is the trail."

Supervisor Norma Santiago said she also supports a trail program that could

eventually connect to South Lake Tahoe. However, she added, the county shouldn't overlook this economic development opportunity. She advocated for phased development of the corridor, starting with the trail and eventually expanding to excursion rail. There is room in the corridor for both rail and trail projects.

The proposals for excursion trains must also include a funding and management plan. As Dupray noted, the rails along the corridor are damaged and missing in some areas, but, he said, all that expense must come out of the developer's pocket.

"That's going to be extremely expensive," Dupray said of the repairs. "I don't think Folsom's interested in paying for that, nor are we. If (the project developers) want to do this, more power to them."

"I would like to see us not spend one penny on rail," Dupray added.

Art Marinaccio with the Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County whole-heartedly agreed. If the project is fully funded by the proponent, the board must consider it, Marinaccio said.

"We can't just say, 'Go away train,'" Sweeney said.

The supervisors unanimously voted, Supervisor Helen Baumann absent, to approve the request for proposals with language promoting projects that incorporate trail development and fully fund any rail project without local government aid. The request for proposals will also go to Folsom, Sacramento County and Sacramento Regional Transit for review before being released.

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