

## Board of Directors Meeting: April 15, 2020 - Public Comments

Date	Name	5. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items
4/11/2020	Nadia Silvershine	I love the train and need it to commute to my job in Novato (I live in San Rafael) and enjoy taking the train also to go to Santa Rosa and Petaluma for social outings. PLEASE FIGHT TO KEEP THE TRAINS RUNNING DURING AND AFTER THIS CHALLENGING TIME! Thank you for listening. Nadia
4/12/2020	Robert G Williamson	I am a 22-year Sonoma County resident, retired and living in Santa Rosa. My private sector career was in finance for a large Bay Area corporation. My experience as a customer of public sector train service includes BART, Penn Central into New York City and Northern Europe. My interest in SMART sharpened during the recent election, so I decided to look at its financial reporting. My initial effort has used the Smart Monthly Financial Reports for the eight months to date ending February 2020. The first thing that struck me was the Revenue/Expense report. The only comparison given was 8 months of actuals vs. a 12-month budget, or 67% vs. 100%. It takes a lot of mental math for each line item to achieve a comparable 67% to 67%. The current comparison only answers the question "how much money do we have left?". I would think a more appropriate question for the Board and public is "how is the business doing?", which requires a 67% vs. 67% comparison. I realize that segmenting an annual budget into discreet months can be challenging, but most advanced organizations do it as an imperfect but sizeable improvement. The second item standing out is inclusion of "fund balance" as revenue. It is a big number, \$9.5 million and 26% of reported revenue. Is it really revenue in the normal understanding of positive cash flow received? My limited knowledge of "fund balance" from memory is its being a budgetary reserve accounting concept and not cash flow. It not only likely overstates revenue, it messes up comparisons. Looking at the 8 months admin and operations revenue shortfall vs budget, a 67% vs. 67% comparison puts it at 7% down, not too bad. By removing the "fund balance" the shortfall doubles to 14% or \$7.2 million. Could this be misleading the Board and public about real revenue and cash flow, and "how is the business doing"? Your agenda item 8 -Reporting on Measure I – sub item b is "seek input on lessons learned". One lesson learned should be SMART's reporting credibility, further damaged by the withheld ridership data posture. Showing a stronger Board interest in "how is the business doing" with better reporting would be a step forward. Credibility would also be enhanced if on the stakeholder input list there were taxpayer-oriented groups or individuals, likely adding some helpful diversity. R G (Bob) Williamson
Date	Name	6. Consent
NONE		Page 1 of 8

## Board of Directors Meeting: April 15, 2020 - Public Comments

Date	Name	7. Approve a Resolution to Acknowledge and Ratify a Declaration of Local Health Emergency and Proclamation of Local and State Emergency in the Sonoma-Marin Rail Transit District area due to COVID-19
4/14/2020	Duane Bellinger	I have two suggestions, Under Recommendations: 5. It would be appropriate to have a report even if the meeting was cancelled. and Under Recommendations #2; and RESOLVED #2 "Suspension of Board procedural rules and policies" Could we be a little more specific?
Date	Name	8. Reporting on Measure I
4/12/2020	Robert G Williamson	My comments under "Public Comment" relate to this item as well. It was a comment on the general subject of financial reporting. I wrote it before understanding this format, so excuse its length and awkward fit. I will improve with my next submission.
4/14/2020	Richard Brand	To the issue of SMART rail's public benefit before the March vote, I had spoken to the Board several times about the value of also having freight service highlighted as an asset to the public in the outreach campaign. But I saw little if any of that in the actual materials. I'm a farmer and I interact with other farmers. When I asked how they felt about SMART most said things to the effect of waste of money, what does it do for me etc. So I asked them if they or any of their colleagues have livestock or do they ever need lumber. Of course most said yes and then I told them that SMART rails via NWP provide low cost transport of feed and lumber to the County. Most didn't know that (NWP required to run at night) but indicated that was a consideration. Did anyone go to speak to the farm bureau on this subject?
4/14/2020	Duane Bellinger	Preliminary election results suggest that East Petaluma's support dropped from 76% yes vote on measure Q in 2008 to only 48 % yes for Measure I in March. My letter to the EDITOR was an effort to stimulate public comment. It would be useful to have a professional analysis of the change in voter support. Petaluma Argus-Courier April 9 SMART rejection EDITOR: East Petaluma's rejection of the SMART tax extension, Measure I, compared to their endorsement of Measure "Q" in 2008 could be explained by several factors: 1) their rejection of Petaluma City Councilman Mike Healy's vision of the train as "a good - albeit pricey commute option to Marin or Santa Rosa"; 2) the realization that the anticipated pedestrian oriented commute supported by mixed use was just a denser suburbia (the proverbial camel as a horse designed by committee); 3) the rejection of SMART General Manager Farhad Mansourian's threat to move Corona Station to the end of the (construction) line if voters do not endorse his plan.
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Date	Name	9. Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget Discussion and Establishing Minimum Reserve Policy
4/12/2020	Robert G Williamson	Clarification of the "fund balance" matter noted above would be helpful in understanding the role of reserves in deficit management.
Date	Name	10. Approve a Resolution Authorizing the General Manager to execute Change Orders 030 and 054 to Contract No. CV-DB-16-001 with Stacy Whitbeck/Herzog, JV for an amount of \$339,442 for the Larkspur Extension Project
NONE		



## SONOMA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION & LAND-USE COALITION

April 14, 2020

To: Eric Lucan and the SMART Board  
Re: Recommendations after Measure I  
Via email

Dear Eric Lucan:

SMART is our future. It can provide mobility along the rail/Highway 101 corridor far into the future by expanding as needed.

Widened sections of Highway 101 are already congested before the planned widening of other sections is completed. Widening beyond three lanes between Novato and Windsor is unacceptable, both because of the costs and the environmental consequences.

SMART decreases exhaust emissions caused by transportation and thereby improves community health and our efforts to address climate change. It also causes developers looking for sites for major projects to favor sites near SMART stations, thereby encouraging growth to occur near city centers.

SMART now needs to plan the recovery from two setbacks—the failure of Measure I and the downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This is an opportunity for SMART to abandon promises it cannot keep. There are many opportunities for SMART to regain much needed public trust. The more conservative estimate of future operations in the current Strategic Plan is a good start.

It is important to recognize that participants in the NotSoSMART campaign are still active in spreading misleading information, and the best counter measure is to ensure that the public has the correct information as soon as possible.

SMART is to be commended for the increased releases of operating information beginning a few weeks before absentee ballots for Measure I were mailed. This began with daily ridership data, the analysis of those data, and comments on the three ways ridership data are collected, followed by ridership vs time of day, greenhouse gas emissions, etc. The public will be interested in how SMART plans to recover from the failure of Measure I and the current effects of the coronavirus pandemic. It is important for information releases to continue and expand so the public understands how SMART's financial status and planning evolve as the pandemic evolves.

Scan the bold headings below to get an overview of the recommendations and look at the subheadings when more information is of interest.

### **1. Announce it will be decades before SMART is extended to Cloverdale. Promise electric bus service instead.**

- 1.1. SMART has already published statements that a 30-year extension of the sales tax could not fund the \$364 million capital cost of building the tracks to Healdsburg and Cloverdale.

- 1.2. It is highly unlikely that a grant could be obtained to fund the \$170 million cost of constructing rail service from Healdsburg to Cloverdale in the foreseeable future. Granting agencies evaluate the cost effectiveness of projects, and extending rail service to Cloverdale will not serve enough riders to be cost effective.
- 1.3. Bus service is an acceptable alternative to rail service as long as congestion is not an issue on the segments of Highway 101 used by the buses. Granted, rail is more attractive.
- 1.4. Sonoma County Transit (SCT) can bring commuters from Cloverdale to the north end of the SMART service at far less cost than SMART could operate rail service to Cloverdale. Information on SCT's costs were provided by Bryan Albee.

**1.4.1. The SCT capital costs are far less**

- 1.4.1.1. SCT is now installing the charging capability for six electric buses. Electric buses cost \$650 thousand to \$850 thousand depending on their size.
- 1.4.1.2. The SCT capital cost for providing electric bus service from the northern end of the SMART service to Cloverdale is certainly less than two percent of the capital cost of extending rail service.

**1.4.2. The SCT operating costs are far less**

- 1.4.2.1. Page 19 of the 2019 Strategic Plan estimates that SMART's annual operating costs would increase by \$3.2 million to extend operations from Healdsburg to Cloverdale. The number of trains per day going to Cloverdale is not specified.
- 1.4.2.2. SCT provides two northbound and two southbound buses each weekday between Cloverdale and Airport Station for \$213 thousand per year. This is seven percent of SMART's estimated operating cost for extending service from Healdsburg to Cloverdale. SCT could provide many more buses and even express service for far less cost than SMART could provide rail service.
- 1.4.2.3. Eliminating the operating cost of rail service to Cloverdale from the SMART budget will free up funds for the construction and maintenance of the multiuse path.

**2. Stop saying that SMART is reducing traffic congestion.**

- 2.1. The fact that SMART gives people an alternative to travelling on a congested freeway is much more important than any effects that SMART has on congestion.
- 2.2. Except during economic downturns or emergencies, congestion will increase on Highway 101 with time with or without SMART.
- 2.3. Less than one percent of the commuters on the rail/Highway 101 corridor ride SMART.
- 2.4. Latent demand will fill up any congestion reductions SMART might cause.
- 2.5. Although SMART does take some cars off the road, the differences in congestion are invisible to the average person. It is only acceptable to talk about the number of cars that SMART takes off Highway 101 if some effort is made to estimate the number of SMART passengers that previously rode a bus.

**3. Be more forthcoming when responding to public information requests**

- 3.1. Kevin Fixler of the The Press Democrat complained repeatedly for more than a year that the ridership data reported to the National Transit Database did not agree with the data reported in the General Manager's Reports and that SMART declined to respond to public information requests about ridership data. SMART responded only a few weeks before absentee ballots were mailed.
- 3.2. The NotSoSMART campaign released several responses by SMART to public information requests that created the impression that SMART was avoiding disclosure of information that could and should have been released.
- 3.3. If the requested information cannot or should not be provided, SMART needs to fully explain why so that the response does not appear to be evasive or perfunctory.
- 3.4. SMART needs to continue and expand the information releases that began shortly before the Measure I election.
- 3.5. SMART staff should provide periodic reports to the Citizens Oversight Committee and to the SMART Board summarizing public information requests and the SMART response.

**4. Be highly cooperative with community organizations that are interested in SMART.**

- 4.1. SMART needs to do more to inform, listen to, and cooperate with groups such as the bicycle community.
  - 4.1.1. Rail construction to Windsor is now funded (once the RM3 funds are released), and SMART has said in the Measure I ballot language it does not plan to use sales tax revenue to fund rail construction beyond Windsor. Grant funding to extend SMART north of Healdsburg is unlikely. Therefore, there is less opportunity for conflicts regarding the design of the rail and accompanying multiuse path such as those that occurred in Marin County. There is also less opportunity for conflicts about the apportionment of capital funds between rail and the path.
  - 4.1.2. As revisions of the Strategic Plans and budgets are developed in response to the failure of Measure I, the bicycle coalitions should be invited to participate.
- 4.2. SMART should seek to actively participate in events where both supporters and opponents of SMART are invited.

**5. Increase participation in community planning that is affected by SMART**

- 5.1. SMART should do more to explain to the public the tradeoffs involved in the planning of the San Rafael station and the Bettini Transit Center. The NotSoSMART campaign frequently complained about the effects of SMART on traffic flow in San Rafael. SMART and the City should cooperatively release traffic-flow data that accurately reflects the effects of SMART on traffic flow in San Rafael.

**6. Restructure the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC)**

- 6.1. The SMART Board should consider changing the way that COC members are selected and invite members to be a sounding board for policy development. The Transportation Authority of Marin and Sonoma County Transportation Authority both include the representation of various groups on their citizens advisory committees. They represent various geographic areas, bicycle, taxpayer, environmental, civic, and social justice groups, the business community, etc. The COC could provide a useful forum for review of major policy issues and provide feedback to the SMART Board.

**7. Advertise the beneficial effects of SMART on future development.**

- 7.1. Both counties strongly support preserving rural areas and limiting growth to urban areas. Building large projects near SMART stations will take decades, but this is a key element of city-centered growth. It is also key to increasing the number of trips that will be taken on transit.
- 7.2. SMART should work with the public works departments and the real estate and construction communities to maintain a list of the major developments already built, under construction, and now being planned near SMART stations.
- 7.3. Any information releases should be sensitive to the anti-growth factions in Marin County. Perhaps Marin voters can be persuaded SMART will influence where developers build a project and not whether they build a project.

**8. Expand information releases on SMART's exhaust emissions.**

- 8.1. It is easy to determine SMART's carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon in equals carbon out. Carbon dioxide emissions can be calculated for any operating segment that diesel fuel use is measured.
- 8.2. The public information releases on carbon dioxide emissions should include the number of typical commuter vehicles needed to equal emissions from one SMART train. This way of providing information avoids making assumptions about what SMART passengers would do without SMART and is easily understood by the public.
- 8.3. SMART has an excellent story to tell on fine-particle emissions.
  - 8.3.1. It is well documented that people living near freeways suffer from a wide range of adverse health effects. The pollutant causing these adverse health effects has not been definitively determined, but most experts believe the prime suspect is fine particles.
  - 8.3.2. Older diesel engines have high emissions of fine particles in the form of black smoke.
  - 8.3.3. SMART has Tier 4 exhaust emission controls, which nearly eliminate black smoke emissions.
  - 8.3.4. The Tier 4 exhaust emission regulations require the black smoke emissions from a SMART train to be approximately equal to the black smoke emissions from one average commuter vehicle measured in a 2007 study in the Caldecott Tunnel.

April 14, 2020

- 8.4. There is no odor from SMART exhaust emissions. The oxidizing catalyst removes the hydrocarbons responsible for the odor emitted by uncontrolled diesel engines.
- 8.5. Emission of nitrogen oxides is greatly decreased by selective catalytic reduction. Nitrogen oxides cause smog and can cause adverse health effects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Willard Richards". The script is cursive and fluid.

Willard Richards, Chair

Cc: Farhad Mansourian  
Members of the public