

**Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting
May 24, 2023 – Public Comments**

Date	Name	2. Member Ericksen is unable to attend in person due to a verified “Just Cause” and is requesting to participate remotely via Zoom (Action) – Presented by Leticia Rosas
		None
Date	Name	3. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson (Action) - Presented by General Manager Cumins
		None
Date	Name	4. Approval of March 22, 2023 Minutes
		None
Date	Name	8. Set Upcoming Quarterly Meetings (Action) - Presented by General Manager Cumins
		None
Date	Name	9. Draft Fiscal Year 2024 Budget (Information/Discussion) – Presented by Heather McKillop
5/23/2023	Richard Brand	Attached

From: [Richard Brand](#)
To: [COC](#)
Cc: [Jon Kerruish](#); [Julia Gonzalez](#); [eric](#); [mmqos](#)
Subject: Serious budget issue
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 1:24:17 PM

My friends. As freight is one of the four pillars of SMART's business it needs some immediate attention re: publicity.

I've been an advocate of the restoration of the old Northwestern Pacific rail line even before moving to Sonoma County and as a resident, now have encouraged local acquaintances to use the service.

But now with what I consider negative comments during the last Board meeting plus the recent quote in the Marin Independent Journal, I am in receipt of questions from contacts about SMART "getting out of the freight business".

Per your CFO's comments you need new customers. The previous staff erred in not reconnecting some of the previously connected spurs to the new rails. But that can be resolved and there is some funding to do that. With the renovation of the rails past the Windsor Industrial Park those spurs can be reconnected to service customers in that park.

In my career I have started new businesses that were serving Fortune 500 customers (e.g. Gap, Chevron, Cisco) and one of our prime tasks in doing that was to convince those customers that we would remain in business to service their requirements going forward. These latest comments starting at the last board meeting and now in the Marin newspaper surely are having a deleterious effect on any new customers and could even jeopardize your existing ones. Your freight competitor, the trucking industry is fiercely competitive and will highlight these rumors about "getting out of the freight business"

So to this new committee, take some time to learn about the rail common carrier business and then work with Eddy and Ms Gonzales to promote positive press and media regarding how SMART is committed to maintaining freight service to existing customers. And as has been discussed in the new budget new customers are needed to enhance the income. As the line is extended northward, there will be opportunities for serving new customer too but they will need assurances of continued service.

Go forward with success

Richard Brand

Sonoma County

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