

Board of Directors Meeting: January 17, 2024 – Public Comments

Date	Name	2. Approval of December 20, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes
		None
Date	Name	5. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items
12/31/2023	Paul Garbarini	Attached – Farebox Recovery
1/7/2024	Paul Garbarini	Attached – Farebox Recovery
1/16/2024	Phill Carter	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Richard Heinberg	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Mike Arnold	Attached – Ridership /Farebox Recovery Ratio
1/16/2024	Alexa Forrester	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Stephanie Callimanis Turk	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Bruce Hagen	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Janet Barocco	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
1/16/2024	Michael Lipelt	Attached – Jennings Avenue Crossing
Date	Name	Consent a. Accept Monthly Ridership Report – December 2023 b. Approve Monthly Financial Report – November 2023
		None
Date	Name	7. Review and Accept SMART’s Fiscal Year 2022-23 Annual Financial Report and Single Audit Adopt a Resolution Amending Resolution No. 2023-23, the Fiscal Year 2023 Adopted Budget, to add funds for marketing activities for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2024 in the amount of \$301,800 – Presented by Chief Financial Officer, Heather McKillop
		None
Date	Name	8. Class and Compensation Study Recommendations – Presented by Chief Financial Officer, Heather McKillop and Human Resources Manager, Lisa Hansley
		None

Board of Directors Meeting: January 17, 2024 – Public Comments

Date	Name	<p>9. Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the General Manager to execute Agreement No. CV-PS-23-002 with Construction Testing Services Inc. for as-needed construction material testing services to support construction activities for the next five years in an amount not to exceed \$1,600,000 over a 5-year period - <i>Presented by Chief Engineer, Bill Gamlen</i></p>
		<p>None</p>

Eddy Cumins, General Manager
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma CA, 94954
ECumins@SonomaMarinTrain.org

Dear Eddy,

I watched your November farebox recovery presentation and could not believe what you were saying. Rather than embarrass you in front of subordinates, mistakenly keep quiet; that was a mistake. Attached is the December 2023 assessment of SMART's situation, which is dismal.

The taxpayers deserve a SMART management to correctly calculate the farebox recovery ratio, the total operating cost includes cash and depreciation. Taxpayers deserve a Board of Directors and a Citizen's Oversight Committee that understands accounting well enough to know SMART has been spending taxpayer money over the subsidized system for years. For example, in FY2023, the farebox recovery ratio was 3%; thus, the subsidy was 97% - unsustainable. We don't need a new management metric, but we need executives, a Board, and a Citizens Oversight Committee that understand the implications of the facts.

The December 2023 position paper attempts to separate facts, which I footnoted that are not changeable, from my implications, which are changeable. Good luck in finding a better alternative.

Happy holidays
Paul Garbarini, Marin County Citizen

SMART DECEMBER 2023

I will attempt to separate **undisputed facts**, facts we should all agree on, from **implications**, some of which we may not agree.

UNDISPUTED FACTS – THAT ARE TRUE AND CAN NOT BE CHALLENGED

Fiscal year Ending	SMART Farebox recovery [percent]
2013	4.7%
2014	6.9%
2015	4.4%
2016	2.9%
2017	2.4%
2018	9.1%
2019	10.9%
2020	7.5%
2021	1.4%
2022	2.6%
2023	3.0%

The definition of farebox recovery ratio equals farebox revenues divided by the total operating cost. It's a common definition used to indicate the effectiveness of commuter systems worldwide.¹ The correct SMART farebox recoveries are in the table to the left.²

SMART is primarily a suburban-to-suburban heavy rail commuter system. The SMART train only handles about 4% the Highway 101, and only about 5% of SMART passengers continue to San Francisco on the ferry.

State law requires SMART to take a neutral position in the upcoming sales tax extension, and they cannot support either approval or disapproval.³

A 3% farebox recovery means that if a commuter buys \$10 of commuter services, they only pay 30 cents, and the government subsidizes the remaining \$9.70.

Most heavy rail at the farebox recovery between 40% and 60%, Caltrain down the Peninsula is about 45%, and BART about 60%. Golden Gate Buses about 25% farebox recovery,⁴

IMPLICATIONS – THAT CAN BE CHALLENGED

1. The current farebox recovery ratio of 3% and the 97% implied subsidy are unsustainable, but the farebox recovery ratio has been very low for several years.
2. The sales tax extension will no longer be viable once the public understands that SMART uses most of its tax on a 97% subsidy for a few commuters. This data, combined with the SMART requirement to behave neutrally, dooms any hope of a sales tax extension; the opponents have too much ammunition.
3. If SMARTS sales tax extension is not approved, SMART will have to liquidate its assets, as the financial market will not lend an obvious losing proposition.
4. We have enough information today to know that SMART will get liquidated sooner or later.
5. Liquidation as soon as possible would save \$500 to \$600 million in taxpayer money.

¹ <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/farebox-recovery-ratio>

² all years before 2023 can be found on the SMART website: <https://www.sonomarintrain.org/financial-documents>. The current year, 2023, is not yet posted under financial documents, and this is a little more complicated because the farebox revenue and total operating costs are on separate pages.

³ https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/ballot_measure_activities_public_resources_final.pdf?1652940580

⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farebox_recovery_ratio or Google “farebox recovery ratio.”

6. Liquidation would involve immediate cessation of all expansion activities, stopping passenger service as soon as possible, hiring a liquidation management firm, evaluating any prepayment penalties on SMART debt, and establishing when the tax collector will no longer collect the SMART portion of the sales tax.

CONCLUSION - THAT CAN BE CHALLENGED

The SMART organization has a burn rate of about \$8 million a month, so when it is understood that liquidation is inevitable, the board should take immediate action.

From: [Paul Garbarini](#)
To: [Leticia Rosas](#)
Cc: [Michael Arnold](#); ELucan@marincounty.org; [Tom Lyons](#); [Tom Lyons](#); arodriguez@marinij.com; spotswood@comcast.net; [COC](#)
Subject: Farebox recovery
Date: Sunday, January 7, 2024 3:42:11 PM
Attachments: [Farebox Recovery Ratio - TransitWiki.pdf](#)
[Farebox recovery ratio - Wikipedia.pdf](#)

Rosa, I will be on vacation for the next Board meeting, but please add this to my previous submission for all Board members

Farebox recovery is an international metric used to measure the effectiveness of bus, ferry, and train systems. Attached are the first pages from two websites that monitor this international metric.

Paul Garbarini, Marin County Resident

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Farebox recovery ratio

The **farebox recovery ratio** (also called **fare recovery ratio**, **fare recovery rate** or other terms) of a passenger transportation system is the fraction of operating expenses which are met by the fares paid by passengers. It is computed by dividing the system's total fare revenue by its total operating expenses.^[1]

Fare structures

There are generally two types of fare structures: a simple, flat rate fare structure (pay a fixed fare regardless of time of day and/or travel distance) or a complex, variable rate fare structure (pay a variable fare depending on time of day and/or travel distance). A variable fare structure is typically associated with a higher recovery ratio, though it may simply be the case that such systems are implemented only on more profitable networks or modes such as commuter rail. Variable-rate fares require a higher initial investment in fare ticketing technologies such as the use of contactless smart cards, turnstiles or fare gates, automated ticket machines, as well as IT infrastructure.^[2]

Farebox ratios around the world

The farebox recovery ratio is the ratio of fare revenue to total transport expenses for a given system.^[1] These two figures can be found in the financial statements of the operators. Oftentimes the operator runs multiple modes of transport (e.g. subway and bus), and there is no data for individual modes (segment analysis). In this case the operator is considered as one system, or a group of modes are collectively considered one system.

Fare revenue is not the same as "transport" or "operational" revenue, as there are often secondary sources of revenue such as lockers and paid restrooms and advertisement revenue. Fare revenue is a subset of transport revenue, which is in turn part of total revenue along with "non-transport" or "non-operational" revenue.

Total "transport" or "operational" expenses are a part of total expenses along with "non-transport" or "non-operational" expenses. Total transport expenses may include expansion projects if they are paid for by the operator.

Asia

Please note that, the "operating ratio" (Japanese: 営業係数 Korean: 영업계수) commonly published by some Asian systems is different from farebox recovery ratio even after inverting the number to turn cost per unit revenue into revenue per unit cost, as that figure includes all operating revenue instead of only the fare revenue.^[3]

Country or Region	System	Fare system	Ratio	Year
Hong Kong	<u>Mass Transit Railway (MTR)</u>	Mostly Distance based	106.76%	2021 ^[4]
Hong Kong	<u>Hong Kong Tramway</u>	Flat rate	48.80%	2021 ^[5]
Hong Kong	<u>Kowloon Motor Bus</u>	Route-specific	100.05%	2021 ^[6]
	<u>Long Win Bus</u>	Route-specific	77.91%	2021 ^[6]
Hong Kong	<u>Citybus</u>	Route-specific	72.98% ^[7]	2021 ^[8]
	<u>New World First Bus</u>	Route-specific	76.73%	2021 ^[8]
Japan	<u>Tokyo Metro</u>	Distance based	119% ^[9]	2016
Japan	<u>JR Central Rail</u>	Distance based	245.95%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR East Rail</u>	Distance based	142.44%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR West Rail</u>	Distance based	132.38%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR Kyushu Rail</u>	Distance based	111.34%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR Shikoku Rail</u>	Distance based	69.84%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR Hokkaido Rail</u>	Distance based	59.18%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>JR Freight Freight rail</u>	Distance based	96.25%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Sapporo Municipal Subway</u>	Distance based	220.79%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Sapporo Streetcar</u>	Flat rate	104.31%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Hakodate Streetcar</u>	Distance based	82.87%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Sendai Subway</u>	Mixed zonal and distance based	159.68%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Tokyo Metro</u>	Distance based	161.55%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Tokyo Toei rail services</u>	Distance based	74% ^[11]	2015
	<u>Tokyo Toei Subway</u>	Distance based	171.46%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Tokyo Toei Streetcar</u>	Flat rate	83.39%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Tokyo Toei elevated rail</u>	Flat rate	109.84%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Tokyo Toei other rails</u>	Distance based	136.81%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Yokohama Municipal Subway</u>	Distance based	232.28%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Meitetsu Railway</u>	Distance based	155.99%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Meitetsu Tramway</u>	Distance based	90.70%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Nagoya Municipal Subway</u>	Distance based	167.24%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Kintetsu Railway Rail</u>	Distance based	152.77%	FY2018 ^[10]
	<u>Kintetsu Railway Cable</u>	Various	36.70%	FY2018 ^[10]
Japan	<u>Nankai Electric Railway Rail</u>	Distance based	161.26%	FY2018 ^[10]

Farebox Recovery Ratio

The **farebox recovery ratio** of a transit system is the percentage of total operating expenses that are made up by passenger fares. The figure is calculated by dividing total passenger-fare revenue by total operating expenses. Farebox-recovery ratio is a key metric used to judge the financial health of transit systems, and varies heavily based on geography, fare structure, and ridership patterns.

Because farebox recovery ratio deals with operating expenses alone rather than total (capital + operating) expenses, the following types of transit systems tend to have higher overall farebox-recovery ratios:

- Rail-Based (particularly commuter or high-capacity rail)
- Distance or Zone-Based Fares
- Asian and European systems

Few major transit systems throughout the world have a farebox-recovery ratio of 100%. Within California, BART has the highest farebox-recovery ratio, and a variety of state laws use this metric to evaluate transit-system performance. For example, in order to qualify for funding under the state Transportation Development Act (TDA), urban transit agencies must maintain a farebox ratio of 20% and rural agencies must maintain a ratio of 10%. Exceptions are sometimes made for new routes or routes that serve disadvantaged populations. In the United States, California ranks seventh for farebox-recovery ratio, at 27.9% (behind New Jersey, New York, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Massachusetts). (Baselines 174-5). Within California, the Bay Area has the highest farebox-recovery ratio (60.9% within the MTC MPO area), while the Los Angeles area has among the lowest (21.4%).

Wikipedia Table of Farebox Ratios of Major Transit Systems around the world

Source:Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farebox_recovery_ratio)

Ratio of fares to operating costs for public transport systems (%)

Continent	Country	System	Ratio	Fare system	Fare rate	Year
Asia	Hong Kong	<u>Hong Kong MTR</u>	123.68% ^[1]	Distance based	<u>HK\$3.5+</u> (cash) <u>HK\$3.5+</u> (<u>Octopus card</u>)	2016
Asia	Japan	<u>Osaka (Hankyu Railway)</u>	123%	Distance based	¥150+	1991 ^[2]
Asia	Japan	<u>Osaka (OMTB)</u>	137%	Distance based	¥200+	1991 ^[2]
Asia	Japan	<u>JR East</u>	84.39% ^[3]	Distance based		2016
Asia	Japan	<u>Tokyo Metro</u>	119.05% ^[4]	Distance based	¥160+	2016
Asia	Japan	<u>Tokyo Toei rail services</u>	73.82% ^[5]	Distance based		2015
Asia	Taiwan	<u>Taipei Metro</u>	100.14% ^[6]	Distance based	<u>NT\$20+</u> (cash) <u>NT\$16+</u> (<u>EasyCard</u> or other cards)	2015
Asia	Taiwan	<u>Kaohsiung MRT</u>	83.16% ^[7]	Distance based	<u>NT\$20+</u> (cash) <u>NT\$17+</u> (<u>iPASS</u> or other cards)	2015
Asia	Singapore	<u>Singapore (SMRT)</u>	100.76%	Distance based	<u>SGD 1.10+</u> (cash) <u>SGD 0.77+</u> (<u>EZ-Link Card</u>)	2017 ^[8]
Asia	China	<u>Beijing Subway</u>	59.5% ^{Template:Citation needed}	Distance based	<u>CNY 3.00+</u>	2012 ^[9]
Europe	Netherlands	<u>Amsterdam (GVB)</u>	86.5%	Distance based		2016 ^[10]
Europe	Netherlands	<u>Rotterdam (RET)</u>	80.2%	Distance based		2016 ^[11]
Europe	Germany	<u>Berlin</u>	70.3%	Zone based	EUR 2.60+	2010 ^[12]
Europe	Belgium	<u>Brussels</u>	35.2%			2007 ^[13]
Europe	Denmark	<u>Copenhagen</u>	52%	Zone based		1991 ^[14]
Europe	UK	<u>London Underground</u>	107.25%	Zone based		2016 ^[15]
Europe	Spain	<u>Metropolitan lines of Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC)</u>	93.18%	Zone based		2014 ^[16]
Europe	Spain	<u>Madrid</u>	41.3%			2007 ^[13]
Europe	Italy	<u>Milan</u>	28%			1991 ^[14]
Europe	Germany	<u>Munich</u>	42%	Zone based		1991 ^[14]

From: [Mayor Kate](#)
To: [Phill Carter](#)
Cc: [Eddy Cumins](#); [Leticia Rosas](#)
Subject: Re: Crossing gate at Jennings
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:16:29 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-1ji4arkw.png](#)

Hi Mr. Carter - Thanks for taking the time to share your input. I've added SMART staff to the thread so they can ensure that your comments are part of the public record.

Warmly,
Kate

Kate Colin (she/her/hers)
Mayor, City of San Rafael



From: Phill Carter <phill.carter@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 10:52 AM
To: Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us <Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us>; Mayor Kate <Kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; district3@sonoma-county.org <district3@sonoma-county.org>; gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org <gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org>; Msackett@marincounty.org <Msackett@marincounty.org>
Subject: Re: Crossing gate at Jennings

Hello:

I'm sorry if this isn't the right channel for communication. Please consider a Jennings avenue street-level crossing at tomorrow's meeting.

The SMART train is ultimately about connecting people. Feasibility is always an issue but that shouldn't cause a project to divide a community physically. Unfortunately, highways and trains can be unintentional barriers.

I am a strong proponent of Active Transportation, and my kids and I bike where whenever possible, even on the SMART train to SF, to show them how to reduce pressure on our roadways.

The Coddington Mall area, as well as the area across the tracks and 101, are travel spots I do not bike. It is unfortunately unsafe unless you are in a car, but it is densely populated and a great place to have walkability scores far higher.

The SMART train is a connector of people, not a divider.

Please find a way to manage paying for a safe crossing near Coddington Mall as approved by the PUC, knowing Santa Rosa (as many of your cities) faces so many other financing

challenges.

Yours,
Phill Carter

--

Phillip Carter



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From: [Richard Heinberg](#)
To: [Board Questions](#)
Subject: Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 11:41:27 AM

Greetings:

Santa Rosa's Northwest community was split, disconnected, and disempowered by SMART's closure of the Jennings pedestrian walking route, formerly connecting east and west. Now bicyclists, shoppers, and schoolchildren must take a much longer and more dangerous route via either College Avenue or Guerneville Road. SMART and the City have yet to come to an agreement on a CPUC-approved at-grade crossing with the appropriate safety systems. This pedestrian/bike crossing is long, long overdue. Please expedite the construction of an at-grade rail crossing at Jennings Avenue.

Thank you,
Richard Heinberg

--
 **Richard Heinberg**
Senior Fellow, Post Carbon Institute
[he/his](#) | [+1 \(541\) 566-8700](tel:+15415668700)
richard@postcarbon.org
postcarbon.org | resilience.org


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To: Eric Lucan, SMART Chair and SMART Boardmembers; Eddy Cumins; Heather McKillop

From: Mike Arnold

Subject: Comment on Non-Agenda Items - Item #5

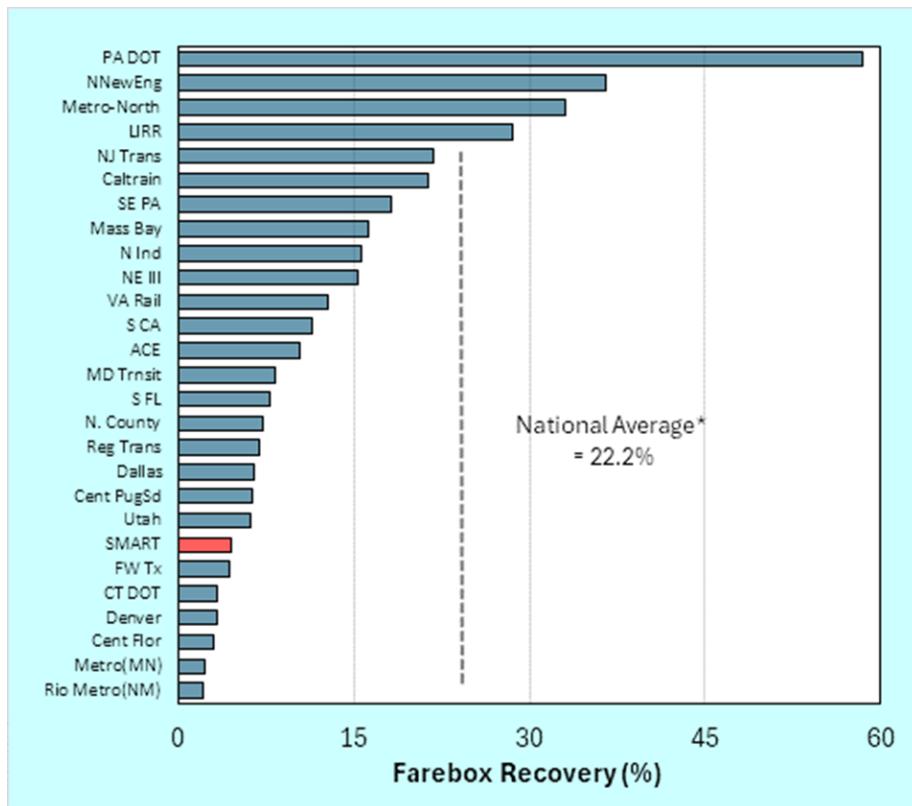
Date: January 15, 2024

In the past two meetings, the Board has stated its preference to emphasize ridership at the cost of the Farebox Recovery Ratio (i.e., fare revenues/operating expenses), which according to staff is currently at 6%.

This comment provides the Board and the public with some data relevant to this measure from the National Transit Database (NTD), maintained by the FTA.

I. What is the Farebox Recovery Ratio (FRR) for Commuter Rail Systems in the U.S.

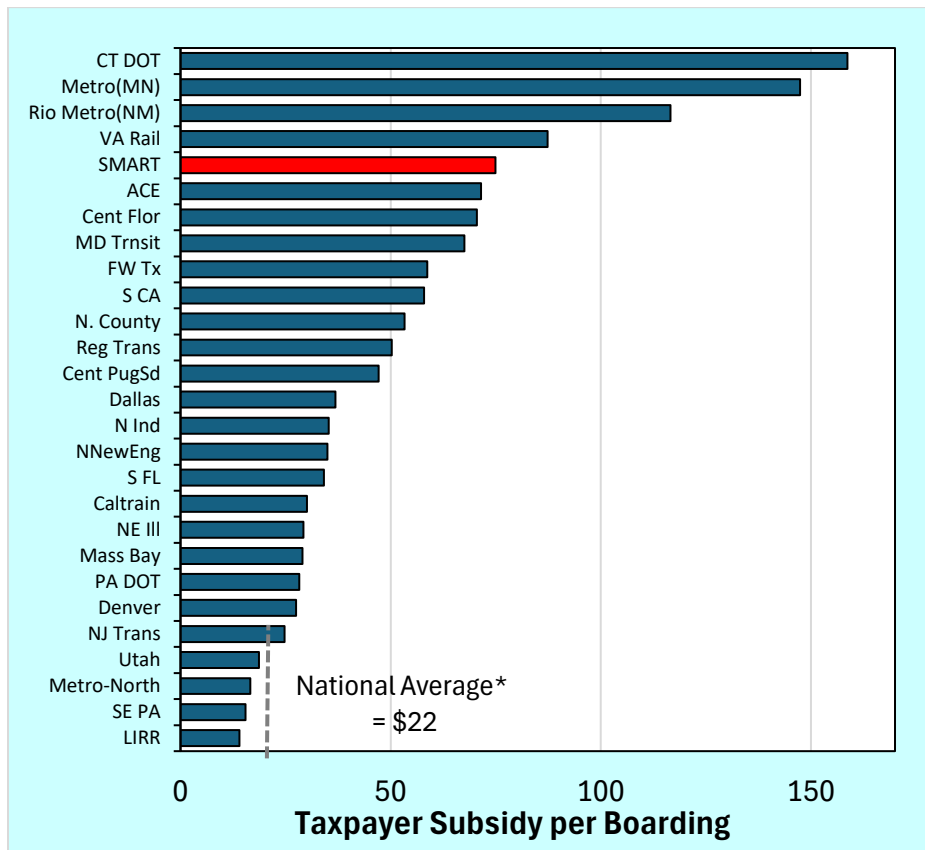
In the first figure, the bar chart displays the FRR from FY 2022 data published in the NTD, ordered from highest to lowest. As indicated, SMART does not have the lowest FRR among the commuter rail systems in the country. However, it is very near the bottom and in FY 2022, its FRR was far below the average for the transit mode.



*Total Fare Revenues/Total Operating Expenses

II. What is the Taxpayer Subsidy per Boarding for Commuter Rail Transit in the U.S.?

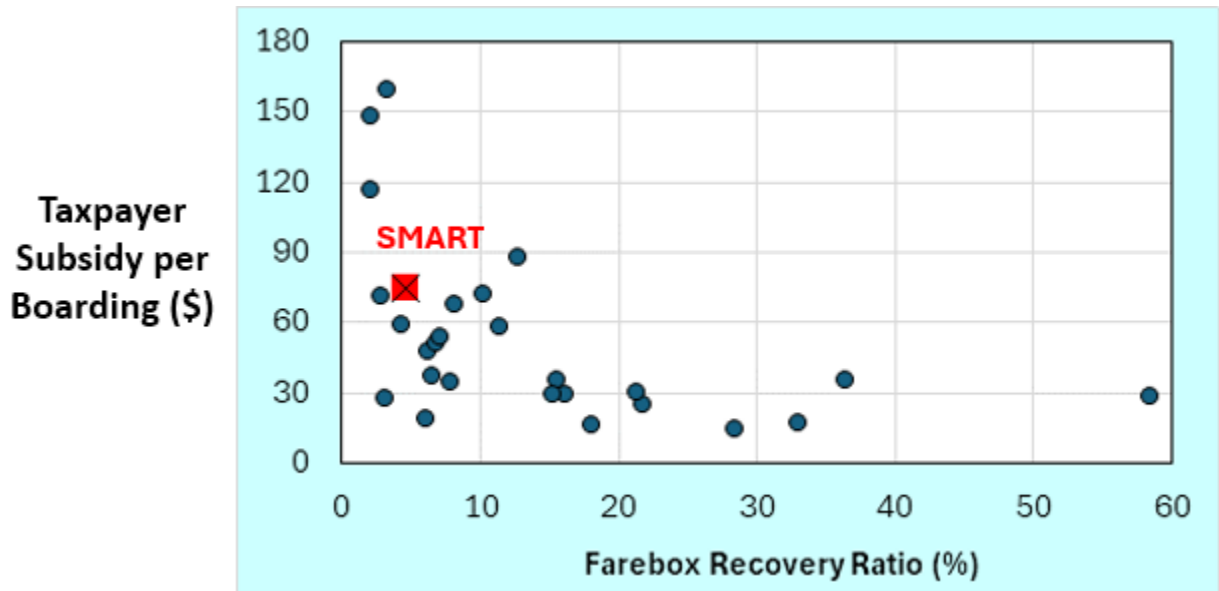
In the first figure, the bar chart displays the taxpayer subsidy per boarding from FY 2022 data published in the NTD, ordered from highest to lowest. As indicated, SMART does not have the highest subsidy among all of the commuter rail systems in the country. However, it requires near the largest subsidy of any commuter rail operator and in FY 2022 the subsidy for SMART passengers was far above the average for the transit mode.



*(Total Operating Expenses – Total Fare Revenues)/Total Boardings

III. What is the Relationship between Farebox Recovery Ratio and Taxpayer Subsidies per Boarding for Commuter Rail Systems in the U.S.?

In the figure below, the scatter plot displays the taxpayer subsidy per boarding from FY 2022 data published in the NTD (on the y axis) vs. the farebox recovery ratio (on the x axis). SMART's position is indicated by a red box.



Note: FY 2023 data from the NTD has not yet been released. I will update this comment when the data becomes public.

From: [Mayor Kate](#)
To: [Alexa Forrester](#)
Cc: [Eddy Cumins](#); [Leticia Rosas](#)
Subject: Re: SMART board: Letter regarding Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:27:50 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-zf4gkuvz.png](#)
[SMART Board re Jennings - Jan 2024 \(2\).pdf](#)

Thanks Alexa. I've added SMART staff to this response so they can ensure that your email/letter is part of the public record.

Warmly,
Kate

Kate Colin (she/her/hers)
Mayor, City of San Rafael



From: Alexa Forrester <alexaforrester@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 11:27 AM
To: ELucan@marincounty.org <ELucan@marincounty.org>; Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us <Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us>; Mayor Kate <Kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; district3@sonoma-county.org <district3@sonoma-county.org>; rfarac@novato.org <rfarac@novato.org>; dfudge@townofwindsor.com <dfudge@townofwindsor.com>; Patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com <Patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com>; bpahreggb@gmail.com <bpahreggb@gmail.com>; gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org <gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org>; David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org <David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org>; Chris Rogers <crogers@srcity.org>; Msackett@marincounty.org <Msackett@marincounty.org>
Subject: SMART board: Letter regarding Jennings Crossing

Dear Members of the SMART Board,

For your consideration ahead of the board meeting tomorrow, please find attached a letter from our all-volunteer, grassroots campaign regarding the SMART tracks at Jennings Ave.

Many Thanks,
Alexa Forrester & Chris Guenther
[Bikeable Santa Rosa](#)

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message along with any attachments.



January 16, 2024

Board of Directors, Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART)
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954

Dear SMART Board Members,

We are writing on behalf of [Bikeable Santa Rosa](#), a grassroots, all-volunteer campaign aimed at catalyzing safe, low-stress, convenient bike routes in a connected network for riders of all ages and abilities. We have been organizing for just under 2 years and we are growing every month. We currently have hundreds of active supporters.

We are writing today to express that an at-grade crossing over the SMART tracks on Jennings Avenue is absolutely essential to our vision of a connected, multimodal transportation future for our community. We have been patiently monitoring what public information has been made available about the crossing and are growing increasingly frustrated with the delay on this project. We know the City of Santa Rosa and SMART have been trying to work out the details for a while now. Unfortunately, the growing public perception is that SMART – who we like to believe would be a natural ally of our campaign – is undermining our efforts to create mobility justice and climate-safe transportation options for Santa Rosa’s residents.

We write today to stress 4 points:

- 1. The active transportation community in Santa Rosa strongly supports an at-grade crossing.** This crossing has been in our city’s bike/ped plan for years. Further, there was an understanding in the community that this crossing, heavily used before SMART service began, would continue to be open after SMART service began. Neighbors in the area, many who were early advocates for bringing SMART to the county, now feel duped for advocating for SMART under false pretenses.
- 2. The active transportation community in Santa Rosa strongly opposes SMART’s proposed ‘solution’ of a raised bike/ped bridge over the tracks.** Representatives of our campaign attended the public presentation of SMART’s proposed solution last year (March 2nd, 2023), and we consider the proposed bridge idea dead on arrival, for three reasons. First, many vulnerable users do not feel safe using such crossings alone, especially at night, meaning this is not actually a solution for a certain segment of the population. Second, even people who do not feel threatened using such infrastructure will feel like the addition of a climb and extra mileage to their journey is inconvenient enough to discourage use. But even aside from the above facts, the major downfall of the project is its price tag. There is no plausible future in which SMART, the City, or the County will be able to procure the funds for such a project, especially given how unpopular it is with those who need to cross the tracks. It simply does not make sense to build an expensive, unpopular, not-very-useful piece of infrastructure when a much cheaper, more popular, more useful option is available.

3. **This approximately 1-mile stretch of the SMART tracks is currently serving as a barrier, dividing our community, and driving up Vehicle Miles Traveled.** We want to stress that this is not just a question of how this impacts our future. The SMART tracks are currently forcing people to drive, rather than walk or ride, for trips that could easily be done without a car if the crossing were open. Those who cannot drive (teens, elderly, those who can't afford a car) are simply being denied transportation justice. For this reason, the need to create safe passage across the tracks somewhere between Guerneville Road and College Ave is urgent. We hope you will treat it as such.

4. **The public deserves a transparent, clear, and well-supported communication regarding this project.** Our campaign tries at all times to work as good-faith partners to all government agencies, and to support your efforts to serve our communities. We would like you to extend the same courtesy to us. We realize that some governmental discussions involve confidential, sensitive matters and it is not always possible to share all the details of a given decision. But with this project, it seems that no one in the government is taking responsibility for providing reliable progress updates to the public, leading to rumor mills and disempowerment.

Charles Marohn, former traffic engineer and founder of the Strong Towns movement, has popularized the following [4-Step Approach to Public Investment](#):

1. Humbly observe where people in the community struggle.
2. Ask the question: What is the next smallest thing we can do right now to address that struggle?
3. Do that thing. Do it right now.
4. Repeat.

Opening the Jennings at-grade crossing is the next small thing that SMART and the City can do to alleviate Santa Rosans' struggles and improve our lives. We call on all members of the SMART Board to do whatever is in your power to get the at-grade crossing at Jennings built as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Alexa Forrester

Co-Lead, Bikeable Santa Rosa



Chris Guenther

Co-Lead, Bikeable Santa Rosa

From: [Mayor Kate](#)
To: [Stephanie Callimanis Turk](#)
Cc: [Eddy Cumins](#); [Leticia Rosas](#)
Subject: Re: Jennings Ave crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:55:45 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-mryuuubf.png](#)

Hi Stephanie - Thanks for taking the time to provide input on Jennings Avenue crossing. I've added SMART staff to this response to ensure that your email is part of the public record as well.

Warmly,
Kate

Kate Colin (she/her/hers)
Mayor, City of San Rafael



From: Stephanie Callimanis Turk <callimanis@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:28 PM
To: ELucan@marincounty.org <ELucan@marincounty.org>; Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us <Mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us>; Mayor Kate <Kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; district3@sonoma-county.org <district3@sonoma-county.org>; rfarac@novato.org <rfarac@novato.org>; dfudge@townofwindsor.com <dfudge@townofwindsor.com>; Patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com <Patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com>; bpahreggb@gmail.com <bpahreggb@gmail.com>; gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org <gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org>; David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org <David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org>; crogers@srcity.org <crogers@srcity.org>; Msackett@marincounty.org <Msackett@marincounty.org>
Subject: Jennings Ave crossing

January 15, 2024

Dear SMART Board Members,

I am writing to you today to express solidarity with the citizens of Santa Rosa who are calling for the **timely construction of an at-grade crossing at Jennings Ave.**

As a safe streets advocate in my community, I understand that rail travel is an essential component of our multi-modal future. I strongly support the SMART train and look forward to its extension to Healdsburg. However, I believe the train will only be a long-term success if it works in conjunction with the non-motorized street networks within local jurisdictions to create seamless mobility options for residents. The train tracks should not be another barrier dividing communities.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Turk
Healdsburg, CA

--

Stephanie Callimanis Turk
(707) 237-1945

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From: [Mayor Kate](#)
To: [Bruce Hagen](#)
Cc: [Eddy Cumins](#); [Leticia Rosas](#)
Subject: Re: Mind the Gaps! Jennings Avenue and Lakeville/Water Street
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:57:03 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[Outlook-1ae13mvi.png](#)

Hi Bruce - Thanks for taking the time to email the board and provide input in advance of tomorrow's SMART board meeting. I've included SMART staff on this response so that your email is part of the public record as well.

Warmly,
Kate

Kate Colin (she/her/hers)
Mayor, City of San Rafael



From: Bruce Hagen <brucekeyofh@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 11:47 AM
To: elucan@marincounty.org <elucan@marincounty.org>; mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us <mbagby@ci.cloverdale.ca.us>; Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; district3@sonoma-county.org <district3@sonoma-county.org>; rfarac@novato.org <rfarac@novato.org>; dfudge@townofwindsor.com <dfudge@townofwindsor.com>; patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com <patti.garbarino@marinsanitary.com>; bpahreggb@gmail.com <bpahreggb@gmail.com>; gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org <gpaulson@cityoflarkspur.org>; david.rabbitt@sonoma-county.org <david.rabbitt@sonoma-county.org>; crogers@srcity.org <crogers@srcity.org>; msackett@marincounty.org <msackett@marincounty.org>
Cc: Pete Gang <pete@commonsensedesign.com>; Chris Guenther <chguenther@gmail.com>; Alexa Forrester <alexaforrester@gmail.com>
Subject: Mind the Gaps! Jennings Avenue and Lakeville/Water Street

Dear SMART Board Members,

We write to you today to express support for the good work of SMART, bringing delightful "climate-SMART" mobility to the North Bay. And, to **agree with the citizens of Santa Rosa who are calling for the timely construction of an at-grade crossing at Jennings Ave.**

Some background: we are co-founders and leadership team members of Safe Streets Petaluma. Like our friends in Santa Rosa, we are active in

advocating for safe, healthy, and affordable mobility for everyone, whether they drive, take transit, walk, bike, scoot or skate. In other words, "complete streets". Our several hundred active supporters have been instrumental in moving the City to adopt safe streets as a top priority. We have begun to see progress on the ground, like the new protected bike lanes and secure sidewalks on North McDowell Boulevard (near, I might add, the SMART crossing there!)

We love having SMART as a backbone for our *connected* mobility network, and regularly use the train to link our work, play, and errands in SMART station towns. But we agree with our Santa Rosa colleagues: the train will only be a long-term success if it *expands* -- and does not *obstruct* -- active transportation opportunities for our communities.

Connectivity is thus the key. And while we're on this topic, let's talk about the SMART Pathway in Petaluma. We are happy to see not only the reopening of the path from Payran Street to Southpoint, but the continuance of the path from Payran to Lakeville. We are tantalizingly close to seeing a clear path from our "Telecom Valley" (around Redwood Highway) all the way to the heart of Petaluma.

Two obstacles remain. We know you are working with the City of Petaluma to upgrade the SMART crossing on North McDowell. That's a well-recognized gap, and a show-stopper for all the people wanting to ride or walk along this major north-south corridor, whether coming from Petaluma's east or west sides.

The other obstacle is the Lakeville-Water Street gap, a 500' gap between where the path ends at Lakeville Street and could pick up again on Water Street. Filling this gap would connect the SMART pathway via the Water Street promenade to a terminus at Washington, two blocks from the Petaluma downtown SMART station (see diagram below). That 500' is an abandoned freight rail spur, with what appears to be adequate room for an extension of the path. We'd like to know what you plan to do with this gap, what obstacles it might face.



Thanks for your community service and support!

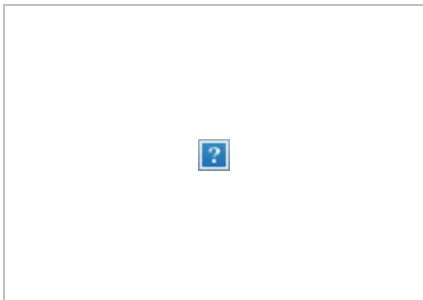
Bruce Hagen and Pete Gang

Safe Streets Petaluma

[Safe Streets Petaluma](#)

brucekeyofh@gmail.com

707-338-7363



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From: [Janet Barocco](#)
To: [Board Questions](#); [Leticia Rosas](#)
Subject: Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 3:43:39 PM

To: SMART BOARD members,

I've lived on Jennings Avenue in Northwest Santa Rosa for 23 years, and in Sonoma County for 31 years. For 8 years I've advocated for building an at-grade rail crossing at Jennings Avenue.

Building a crossing at Jennings is important to me, my neighbors and the community for many reasons, not the least of which is that it would provide a safe, convenient way for people to get essential needs met without driving.

An at -grade rail crossing at Jennings is safer than the current detour which routes people onto heavily-trafficked N. Dutton Avenue and Guerneville Road, or W. College which adds a half mile or 30 minutes to a pedestrian round trip.

We need this crossing because the current detour requires cyclists coming from the west/ southwest going to east Santa Rosa, to use dangerous W. College to reach the rail pathway that eventually connects with the proposed HWY 101 Bike Bridge. A crossing at Jennings crossing would allow a more direct and safer route connecting to the 101 Bike Bridge.

A crossing at Jennings is a vital west- east component of Santa Rosa's general plan for Jennings Bicycle Boulevard and the Hwy 101 Bridge.

We need this crossing as the effects of climate chaos intensify. Improving and creating car-free infrastructure for human-powered transportation to vital services should be a priority for SMART in this era of climate change.

An at-grade crossing at Jennings benefits citizens and builds community by connecting us face to face. Knowing our neighbors makes a healthy, strong community.

We have waited 8 years for this crossing, which was approved by CPUC long ago and supported by the City of Santa Rosa and our neighborhoods. It is time

for SMART to fully support our community and come to an agreement with Santa Rosa to build this crossing.

Thank you,

Janet Barocco

Santa Rosa

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From: [Michael Lipelt](#)
To: [Board Questions](#)
Subject: Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 4:06:50 PM

Dear Smart Board Members,

I am a Santa Rosa resident, semi-retired family doctor whose primary mode of transport is my bike or scooter. I am a Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition Board Member and a volunteer with Bikeable Santa Rosa. I have been following the issues around the Jennings' at grade crossing with some frustration. I attended the public meeting last Mar 2023 with Santa Rosa City and Smart participating. I believe local residents overwhelmingly made clear they want an at-grade crossing. After all Smart promised to keep Jennings open during the initial pitch for the Smart train. It wasn't long after the track construction started that they reneged on their promise. The Smart tracks now divide east Santa Rosa from west Santa Rosa from College Ave to Guerneville Rd.

Smart's alternative option to the at-grade crossing defies logic on many counts: 1) It's hugely costly 2) It's unsafe for folks traversing alone particularly at night 3) The sharp right angles and inclines make it impossible for manual wheelchair users 4) It's very difficult to imagine riding one's bike up the incline and making right angle turns while other users are on the bridge. As for Smart's worry about liability what about all the other at-grade crossings in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County and Marin County?

I strongly support the Jennings at-grade crossing to reconnect East and West Santa Rosa and to make my commute more low stress from the Smart trail to Dutton Ave. I urge all Smart Board Members to recommend the Jennings at-grade crossing.

It will save money and time in construction while connecting Jennings Ave to the 101 overcrossing, Armory Dr protected bike lane and SRJC.

With gratitude in serving your communities,

Michael Lipelt
Santa Rosa Resident

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