

AMENDED AGENDA

REVISIONS TO FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11 TIMES ONLY

RIVERSIDE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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WORKSHOP AGENDA *

** Actions may be taken on any item listed on the agenda*

FEBRUARY 10-11, 2011

**HILTON PALM SPRINGS
400 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA**

In compliance with the Brown Act and Government Code Section 54957.5, agenda materials distributed 72 hours prior to the meeting, which are public records relating to open session agenda items, will be available for inspection by members of the public prior to the meeting at the Commission office, 4080 Lemon Street, Third Floor, Riverside, CA, and on the Commission's website, www.rctc.org.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if you need special assistance to participate in a Commission meeting, please contact the Clerk of the Board at (951) 787-7141. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility at the meeting.

2:00 P.M.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2011

- 2:00 p.m. – 2:05 p.m. WELCOME AND WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**
Greg Pettis, Chair
- 2:05 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. CITY OF BLYTHE TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY UPDATE**
David Lane, Blythe City Manager
- 2:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. PASSENGER RAIL ISSUES**
Sheldon Peterson, Rail Department Manager

This item is for the Commission to:

- 1) Receive an oral report on rail matters that affect the Commission and specifically issues regarding rail operating rights and Commission-owned rail property;
- 2) Adopt Resolution No. 11-001, "*Resolution In Support of Amtrak's Sunset Limited Plan to Provide Daily Intercity Rail Service from Los Angeles to San Antonio via the Coachella Valley*";
- 3) Transmit Resolution No. 11-001 to the Federal Department of Transportation, the National Rail Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), and the Rail Division of the California Department of Transportation;

- 4) Transmit Resolution No. 11-001 to the Inland Empire's legislative delegations in Sacramento and Washington D.C. and others to show local support for the project
- 5) Authorize the Chair to submit a letter requesting the Commission to be included as a voting member in the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency.
- 6) Authorize the Chair to serve as the Commission's representative on the LOSSAN Board of Directors if membership is obtained.

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. PANEL DISCUSSION: FINANCING THE STATE ROUTE 91 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

*Michael Blomquist, Toll Program Director
Dan Wiles, Fieldman, Rolapp & Associates
Corey Boock, Nossaman LLP
Kathy Ruffalo, Commission's Federal Legislative Advocate*

6:00 p.m. ADJOURNMENT

The workshop will continue at 9:00 a.m., Friday, February 11, 400 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA.

**9:00 A.M.
OR DIRECTLY FOLLOWING THE COMMISSION MEETING
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2011**

9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. REVIEW OF LAST YEAR'S CHALLENGES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Anne Mayer, Executive Director

9:20 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. DOING MORE WITH LESS – CURRENT TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

*John Standiford, Deputy Executive Director
Cathy Bechtel, Project Development Director
Eliza Echevarria, Community Relations Manager*

10:20 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. CLOSING REMARKS

*Greg Pettis, Chair
Anne Mayer, Executive Director*

10:30 a.m. ADJOURNMENT

RIVERSIDE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DATE:	February 10, 2011
TO:	Riverside County Transportation Commission
FROM:	Sheldon Peterson, Rail Manager John Standiford, Deputy Executive Director
THROUGH:	Anne Mayer, Executive Director
SUBJECT:	Rail Update, Sunset Limited Plan, and Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for the Commission to:

- 1) Receive an oral report on rail matters that affect the Commission and specifically issues regarding rail operating rights and Commission-owned rail property;
- 2) Adopt Resolution No. 11-001, *"Resolution in Support of Amtrak's Sunset Limited Plan to Provide Daily Intercity Rail Service from Los Angeles to San Antonio via the Coachella Valley"*;
- 3) Transmit Resolution No. 11-001 to the Federal Department of Transportation, the National Rail Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), and the Rail Division of the California Department of Transportation;
- 4) Transmit Resolution No. 11-001 to the Inland Empire's legislative delegations in Sacramento and Washington D.C. and others to show local support for the project;
- 5) Authorize the Chair to submit a letter requesting the Commission to be included as a voting member in the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency; and
- 6) Authorize the Chair to serve as the Commission's representative on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency Board of Directors if membership is obtained.

SUNSET LIMITED BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Providing some form of passenger rail service to the Coachella Valley has been a long-standing priority for the area for more than two decades. In order to advance that priority, Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) completed a rail study update. The work effort was completed in April 2010, prepared in coordination with the Commission and Schiermeyer Consulting Services and adopted by the CVAG Executive Committee on October 25, 2010. At its November 10, 2010 meeting, the Commission reaffirmed its formal support for

implementation and expansion of intercity Amtrak rail service to the Coachella Valley and directed staff to work closely and coordinate with CVAG local communities to advocate for the service. This process has begun and the first action to be taken is for the Commission to adopt a formal resolution in support of Amtrak's plan to run the Sunset Limited daily through the Coachella Valley.

The resolution outlines the benefits of this service to the Coachella Valley, as well as the need to coordinate with the host freight railroads to provide the service. The resolution will be transmitted to the Inland Empire's legislative delegations in Sacramento and Washington D.C. In addition, it will be sent to Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Rail Division of the California Department of Transportation, and others in an effort to demonstrate the strong local support for this project. The Commission will be joining the state of Arizona and many of their key cities in providing formal resolutions of support for the daily Sunset Limited.

DISCUSSION:

The Commission has long-supported the inclusion of intercity rail service to the Coachella Valley in the state's rail plan and can play an important role in working closely with CVAG in advocating for funding. As is the case with most Amtrak service in California including the Pacific Surfliner service between Santa Barbara and San Diego, state funding plays an important role in ensuring the operation of the line.

The Amtrak line of interest for the Coachella Valley is the Sunset Limited that travels between Los Angeles and New Orleans on a thrice-weekly basis. Moreover, the actual time of day for the line's operations takes away from its viability to serve those seeking shorter trips between the Coachella Valley and the rest of Southern California. Keeping such a marginalized schedule also degrades the service's time adherence and dependability.

Amtrak expressed an interest in expanding the service to a daily round-trip train. That would include the establishment of a crew base in Indio to support the service and would be a key factor in developing service that is more attuned to this region's needs. Expanding to daily service in the near-term could also provide the foundation necessary to add additional trains in the future.

One major challenge in implementing daily service has been raised by the owner of the rail facility that serves the area, Union Pacific (UP). The UP has identified over \$750 million in needed capital improvements that would be required in order to create the capacity needed for daily Amtrak service. This amount far exceeds conventional wisdom and the expectations of most rail experts and there will be a need to develop an effective working relationship with UP to develop realistic cost parameters.

Working with UP on this topic has been elevated to an issue of statewide importance given the allocation of Proposition 1B Trade Corridor Improvement Fund dollars for the Colton Crossing project. The Colton Crossing project was sponsored by the state of California and UP and received reluctant support from transportation agencies in Southern California and the Commission only after a memorandum of understanding was reached to include items of public benefit as part of the project. Passenger rail service considerations to the Coachella Valley should be an important consideration prior to the allocation of state funding for the Colton Crossing project.

The purpose of this staff item is to formally adopt a resolution to communicate the Commission's overall support for efforts to bring intercity rail service to the Coachella Valley. This would enable the Commission to communicate an official position of support to representatives in Sacramento and Washington D.C. and to support efforts in communicating with federal agencies, UP, and other stakeholders.

The establishment of reliable intercity rail service to the Coachella Valley is a worthwhile and important transportation and economic priority for the entire county. The Commission is in a unique position to assist communities in the Coachella Valley and CVAG in pursuing rail service and approval of Resolution No. 11-001 will be a great first step in our efforts to support rail service in the Coachella Valley.

LOSSAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency is a joint powers agency (JPA) created to oversee increases in the level of intercity passenger rail service in the travel corridor between San Diego and Los Angeles. This agency has evolved as rail service has been extended to Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties and now includes all counties along the Pacific Surfliner corridor from San Diego County to San Luis Obispo County. The LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency is tasked with the following functions:

- Plan, recommend programs, and promote and identify funding sources for improvements to passenger rail services and facilities in the LOSSAN corridor;
- Negotiate for and accept funds to be expended for the purpose of providing and improving intercity and commuter passenger rail services and activities;
- Review and comment on facility, service, and operational plans and programs of the agency or agencies operating sub-corridor commuter rail service in the LOSSAN corridor;

- Coordinate facility, service, and operational plans and programs with other organizations providing passenger rail service in the Southern California region; and
- Advocate improvements to services and facilities for the corridor before local, regional, state, and federal officials and agencies.

The LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency does not currently pay for the operation of any of the passenger rail services within the corridor but is a means to help coordinate operations and planning. There is no full-time staff working for the agency, but it is supported by staff from the San Diego Association of Governments and currently by a consulting firm developing a strategic plan. Each agency is required to pay annual dues to facilitate the planning and support needs of the JPA and the hiring of consultants or staff.

The current voting member agencies include:

- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro);
- Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA);
- San Diego Metropolitan Transit System;
- North County Transit District;
- San Diego Association of Governments;
- Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC);
- Santa Barbara County Association of Governments;
- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments; and
- California Department of Transportation.

The current ex-officio non-voting member agencies include:

- Southern California Association of Governments;
- National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak); and
- California High-Speed Rail Authority.

DISCUSSION:

The Commission is not currently a member of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, which is well represented by almost every other major transportation planning agency in Southern California. The agency has worked for years to try to develop corridor improvements and coordinated services between Amtrak, Metrolink, and the Coaster passenger trains. The agency completed several strategic plans in the past and currently is working on its most ambitious effort yet to redefine passenger rail in Southern California. All of these plans have used assumptions on service levels for Metrolink trains that have been provided by Metro, OCTA, or VCTC. The Commission has a vested interest in service patterns for both the Inland Empire-Orange County Line and the 91/Perris Valley Line service that operate on the

LOSSAN corridor. Without participation in the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, the Commission has had limited opportunity to provide input or feedback to the plans being developed that impact the service levels for Riverside County residents.

In addition, the LOSSAN corridor operates over the Commission's track rights between Fullerton and Los Angeles that the Commission purchased from BNSF as part of a shared use agreement. Therefore, any planned commuter rail service over that section would impact the Commission's track rights. This fact is often overlooked in many of the planning efforts and it is critical for the Commission to be an active LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency member to protect this significant investment.

To further demonstrate the need for active involvement in the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, there is a serious push from multiple agencies to advocate for a truly cohesive possibly combined Southern California rail service. This could have significant implications for how Metrolink, Amtrak, and the Coaster are managed and funded in the region. There are both pros and cons to this approach, however it will be fundamental for the Commission to be involved in the interregional efforts that may develop this type of service.

The participation of the Commission in the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency will be essential in expanding Metrolink commuter rail service, protecting the Commission's track rights, and actively participating in the discussions that will shape the future of passenger rail service in Southern California. Now is the appropriate time to be involved and engaged in these discussions and approval of the Chair's letter to request inclusion is the appropriate first step.

Attachments:

- 1) Resolution No. 11-001
- 2) Letter to the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency

Resolution No. 11-001

Resolution In Support of Amtrak's Sunset Limited Plan to provide Daily Intercity Rail Service from Los Angeles to San Antonio via the Coachella Valley

WHEREAS Amtrak currently runs the Sunset Limited train three days a week with service between Los Angeles and Coachella Valley in Riverside County; and

WHEREAS Amtrak has developed a Performance Improvement Plan that will increase the frequency to daily service in the Coachella Valley and reroute the train to provide new service via Riverside and Fullerton; and

WHEREAS there is strong local support to expand existing and establish new intercity rail passenger service in the Coachella Valley and the Banning Pass area; and

WHEREAS the Coachella Valley and the Banning Pass area are experiencing rapid population growth and demand on this route will continue to increase; and

WHEREAS no other public transit options exist between Coachella Valley and Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS expanded and new intercity passenger rail service to the Coachella Valley will ease congestion on local roads and freeways, providing new economic opportunity, improving mobility and the quality of life in the Inland Empire; and

WHEREAS both expanded daily service or new service to the Coachella Valley would use the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Route between Los Angeles and Colton, and the Union Pacific route from Colton to Indio; and

WHEREAS the implementation of this service will require the cooperation of both Union Pacific and BNSF to operate the trains over the host railroad; and

WHEREAS the Riverside County Transportation Commission has some limited contractual rights with the railroads that it will use to support the expanded service; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Riverside County Transportation Commission does hereby endorse and support Amtrak's Performance Improvement Plan to establish daily Sunset Limited intercity rail service between Los Angeles and Indio; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be transmitted to the Inland Empire's legislative delegations in Washington D.C. and Sacramento.

January 4, 2011

Honorable Joe Kellejian, Chair
LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency / Joint Powers Board

c/o Ms. Linda Culp
SANDAG
401 B Street Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Kellejian:

As Chair of the Board for the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), I am writing to you requesting approval from the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency for RCTC to formally join and become a member of the Agency.

RCTC owns substantial track rights within the corridor, and I believe that RCTC's participation as a voting member of the LOSSAN Board is necessary for future planning efforts and would prove helpful to the entire organization.

As the LOSSAN Board continues to consider future service enhancements and structures, RCTC's track rights will be an important consideration in the decision making process. Working in partnership with the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, RCTC would bring to the table considerable expertise in the areas of passenger track rights, funding, and service design. Moreover, the future expansion of Metrolink service on the Inland Empire-Orange County Line and the 91 Line clearly impacts the LOSSAN corridor and involves RCTC.

I respectfully urge you to agendize our request for consideration and ratification by the Board at your earliest convenience. Please contact Anne Mayer, RCTC Executive Director, at 951-787-7141 if you have any questions

Sincerely,

Greg Pettis
Chair