

Marin / Sonoma

ON TRACK

FRIENDS OF SMART • ISSUE 8 • FEBRUARY 2008



SIEMENS SPRINTER RAILCAR

By Trail and Train to San Rafael

Petaluma resident Allen Tacy describes a day when the SMART trail and train are a reality:

I grab my bike and take my apartment elevator down to street level. A bright sunny day greets me, and I pedal swiftly toward Lucchesi Park and the Lynch Creek trailhead. On the trail, an arboreal canopy filters sunlight through leaves of green. My bike weaves along as the trail gently twists beside the bank of Lynch Creek. Soon the trail dips under the crowded highway. I revel as the bike's downgrade speed makes the following upgrade a breeze, and the trail enters a region of bright sunshine.

The plain of the Petaluma River opens before me as the trail passes a park where picnickers are gathered under shady oaks at river's edge. A bike bridge takes me across Lynch Creek above its confluence with Petaluma River. Here begins the Petaluma Riverwalk, a three-mile trail along the river bank. Snowy white egrets and other waterfowl wing above an occasional fisherman casting his luck. Moms guiding strollers, folks just out walking wave greeting. The bike rushes down beneath another roadway as I pass the upper tidal reach of Petaluma River. Ducks paddle its surface. Trail lamps light the way for evening travelers.

We join the SMART railroad trail at the Lakeville trestle and climb up to street level. Here I make the first street crossing since beginning my journey. It's a quick crossing, as this portion of Lakeville Blvd. only sees light traffic. Once across, the SMART trail and Riverwalk trail divide. I take the SMART route, crossing East Washington at the Copeland traffic signal. To my right I see an old Petaluma & Santa Rosa RR wooden caboose under restoration. A short ride to the Petaluma Depot ends a quiet, journey from home; a reliable 15 minutes, free of concerns that traffic congestion will hold me up. The SMART train will take me and my bike from Petaluma to San Rafael in just 30 minutes.

I board, stow my bike on one of the racks, and take my seat beside a big picture window. There's room to stretch my legs and open my laptop to record the journey. Seating is spacious, and even though the train

Continued on page 4

Transit Ridership Up

by Tanya Narath

The American Public Transportation Association recently released a report showing that Americans took 78 million more trips on public transportation during the first six months of 2007, compared to the first six months of 2006. Commuter rail saw the highest growth rate of all modes of transportation at 5.5%, followed by light rail at 4.1%, subways at 2.8% and buses at 0.6%.

Record high ridership on Northern California BART and ACE rail lines seem to be driven by rising gas prices and are cutting the carbon emissions that lead to global warming.

These national statistics showing increases for bus riders as well as train riders don't prevent some SMART critics from worrying that trains "steal" riders from buses. Should they really be concerned that a few bus runs from Santa Rosa to San Rafael will be replaced by trains with more comfortable, faster service? History tells us that total transit use rises when rail is initiated. Bus operators can shift buses and drivers to serve local routes more efficiently, and commuters start using buses to connect with trains. You can convince a lot more

people to take a short bus ride to/from the train station than you can to take the bus all the way to their destination.

John Schumann, of LTK Engineering compares transit ridership and costs for Sacramento and Columbus, Ohio, two capitol cities of similar size. Unlike Sacramento, Columbus tried and failed to establish a light rail service in the 1980s, and thus its public transportation system remains bus only. During the 17 years following the start of its light rail service, Sacramento experienced a significant increase in transit service and ridership (from 93,473 passenger miles in 1985 to 119,008 passenger miles in 2002, a 27% increase). Over the same period of time, bus ridership declined in Columbus (from 121,408 passenger miles in 1985 to 66,760 passenger miles in 2002, a 45% decrease). Also, operating costs per passenger-mile increased much more in Columbus than in Sacramento (205% in Columbus vs 151% in Sacramento).

Continued on page 3



Tanya Narath, new Chair of Friends of SMART, enjoys her commute.

IN THIS ISSUE

By Trail and Train to San Rafael - 1

Transit Ridership Up - 1

Letter from the New Chair - 2

Advantages of Proven Technology - 2

Building Livable Communities with Transit - 3

In Memorium - 3

Calendar of Events - 4



MISSION STATEMENT
FRIENDS OF SMART
IS A CITIZENS GROUP
DEDICATED TO
INFORMING THE PUBLIC
OF THE BENEFITS
OF RAIL AND SMART
GROWTH IN MARIN AND
SONOMA COUNTIES.

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VICE-CHAIR SONOMA

Dani Sheehan-Meyer

TREASURER

Willard Richards

SECRETARY

Valerie Taylor

fos@pacbell.net

707-578-9133

www.friendsofsmart.org

Dear Friends of SMART,

It is a great honor to succeed Steve Birdleough as Chair of Friends of SMART. Although he will be very busy in his new role as co-chair of the SMART campaign, Steve has promised to stay active with the Friends and keep us apprised of the latest campaign developments. I extend my deepest appreciation to Steve for all that he's done for SMART in his role as Chair. He leaves some big shoes to fill!

I learned about Friends of SMART in 2005 when I took my first Grand Tour of Rail and Ferry Systems in the Bay Area led by Lionel Gambill. Prior to this tour, I was very intimidated by public transportation. Fears of not having the right fare, not being able to interpret a bus or train schedule, and misperceptions about the safety and reliability of our transit systems all resulted in me relying way too heavily on my car to get anywhere.

Going on the tour with Lionel was truly a life changing experience for me. We traveled an amazing distance without once getting in a car. We experienced great camaraderie and a delicious lunch at Scott's Seafood. We had fun!

After learning just how easy and relaxing it can be to use different forms of public transportation, I vowed to give our local bus system a try. Now I ride the bus to and from my office in downtown Santa Rosa, commute by bike as much as possible, and generally enjoy a sense of freedom from my car that I never would have imagined before joining the Friends of SMART. I've also become famous in my family for insisting on trying out public transportation systems wherever I travel (e.g. Portland and Chicago). Next on my list is to try out the Railrunner, a new commuter rail service in my home town of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I look forward to working with all of you to see our dream of commuter rail service in the North Bay become a reality. Then our Grand Tour can truly be a bay area wide tour—imagine starting in Cloverdale and going all the way to the south bay without once getting in a car!



Tanya Narath, Chair

Advantages of Proven Technology

by Jack Swearingen

Changing America's commuting habits may be the most difficult step to sustainability. The effort to establish passenger rail service in Marin and Sonoma counties, where more than 60% of the greenhouse gases are emitted by buses, trucks and cars, serves as an example.

SMART expects to begin moving passengers in energy efficient, self-powered rail cars in 2012 if voters approve a quarter-cent sales tax this November. Various critics of the project have suggested that monorail, maglev, BART, bus-on-rail or some other alternative would be better or less expensive than well-tested rail technology.

Friends of SMART has studied all of the ideas to see if any of them could compete with the rail plan. A thorough comparison must address many variables. We evaluated eleven alternatives against twenty measures, including population in the corridor and the characteristics of the right of way, plus environmental, social, economic and aesthetic issues as they apply to Marin and Sonoma counties.

The results validate the technology originally chosen for the project: use of self-powered railcars on the existing right of way. The present plan is cost effective, protects the environment, and permits electrification or other upgrades of SMART as ridership increases or as economic conditions change. (For the complete report visit www.friendsofsmart.org.) ✕

Jack C. Swearingen, Ph.D. is Emeritus Professor of Engineering, Washington State University



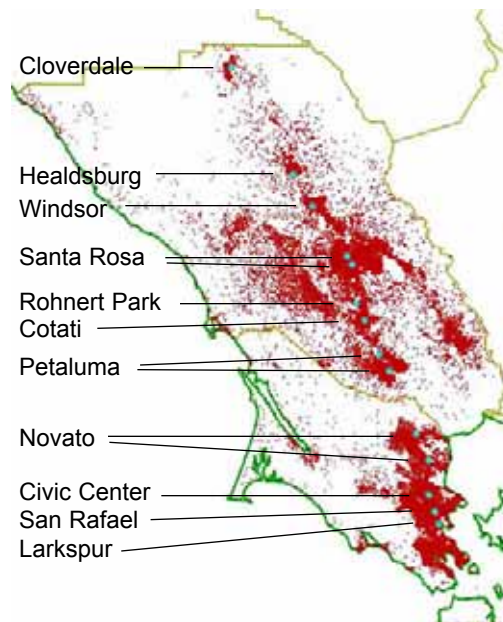
Above: The handsome Sprinter Railcar is functional and attractive both inside and out. Below: Walt Strakosch settles back in a comfortable Sprinter seat.



IN MEMORIAM Joel Woodhull & Charlie Brown

Friends of SMART lost two of its activists during the fall. Joel had been with us longer and was much better known, but Charlie hosted us with wonderful accounts of the effort to establish Downeaster Amtrak service between Boston and Portland, Maine. Below is just one of Joel's important contributions to our understanding of the importance of North Bay rail service in shaping the character of our communities.

POPULATION AND STATIONS IN MARIN AND SONOMA COUNTIES



Each small dot in the above map represents ten residents; the larger dots represent locations of stations. The population concentrations around the railroad stations illustrate both the importance of rail transportation in shaping historic growth, and the potential for renewal of rail service. ✂

Map created by Joel Woodhull and posted on the website of the Sonoma County Transportation and Land Use Coalition. <http://www.sonomatlc.org/LandUse/Patterns.htm>

Transit Ridership Up

Continued from page 1

One of the keys to success in Sacramento is the full integration of bus and light rail transit services and fares. When we integrate SMART as the backbone of our transportation system with bus, bike, pedestrian and perhaps even local trolley systems, we will create a sustainable transportation system for all and at last gain a measure of independence from our cars. ✂

Tanya Narath is the Executive Director of the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy.



Local residents and agency staff join Rail-volution participants in an all-day planning workshop aimed at converting 30 acres of parking near the Golden Glades Tri-Rail Station into a mixed-use residential and commercial development.

Building Livable Communities with Transit

by Steve Birdlebough

Four days of workshops, panel discussions, and tours of walkable places at the annual Rail-volution conference in Miami sparked animated conversations on ways to design and finance high-quality transit oriented developments. The events attracted more than 800 people to explore existing transit, and the plans for more than 80 miles of new rail, streetcar, and dedicated bus lanes in South Florida.

The unique ability of rail systems to reduce energy costs, to focus infill housing and job growth, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions often surfaced. People who live and work within one half-mile of a rail station use transit for 42% of work trips, according to the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "Bus service doesn't cut it in attracting infill housing or commercial activity," according to Art Lomenick of Trammel Crow in Dallas.

Climate strategy consultant Bruce Riordian (Davis) created a climate resource center with charts and graphs showing how compact cities reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gases. Stanford researcher Michael Wara (Mill Valley) pointed out how transit operators could benefit from cap-and-trade auctions. He urges transit systems to find out how they can register on carbon trading markets, and keep the funds tied closely to greenhouse gas reduction.

Additionally, the remarkable nationwide interest in streetcars was evident. Kenosha, Portland and Tacoma have demonstrated the value of streetcars in supporting pedestrian activity, with business leading the parade. It appears that costs can be surprisingly low, and several projects have been quickly completed.

Visit the Rail-volution website at http://www.railvolution.com/rv2007_pdfs/rv2007_307c.pdf to view some of the presentations. The next Rail-volution conference will be October 26-29, 2008 in San Francisco. ✂

Marin/Sonoma ON TRACK

SMART FACTS

According to the *Legislative Analyst*, inflation-adjusted gas tax revenues in California have fallen more than 20% since 1992.

Projected 25-year
Transportation Revenues
for the 9-Count Bay Area:

Total \$118 billion

Revenue Sources:

Local taxes & fares	64%
Regional bridge tolls	13%
State gas tax & fees	12%
Federal gas tax & fees	11%

Local Transportation

Sales Taxes:

COUNTY	
San Francisco	one cent
Contra Costa	one cent
Alameda	one cent
Marin	half-cent
Sonoma	quarter-cent

Source: Bay Area
Metropolitan Transportation
Commission

It cost 52.5 cents per mile to operate the average recent model medium sized sedan 15,000 miles per year in 2007, according to the American Automobile Association. Only about 16 cents per mile was spent for fuel, assuming \$3.50 gasoline cost and 22 miles per gallon; the remainder is insurance, depreciation and other costs.



In the rail maintenance car at the Heritage Days in Santa Rosa, owner and driver Rick Corbell offers treats to his passengers.

Friends of SMART
 P.O. Box 4057
 San Rafael, CA 94913
www.friendsofsmart.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - SPRING 2008

February 20	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, Santa Rosa, 555 5th St, 3d. Fl.
	Wed	1:00 pm	SMART Board meeting, Sonoma Co. Adm. Bldg.
March 12	Wed		Grand Tour of Rail & Ferry Services (see below)
March 19	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, 42 Hillcrest, San Rafael
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, San Rafael City Hall
April 16	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, Santa Rosa, 555 5th St, 3d. Fl.
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, Sonoma Co. Adm. Bldg.
May 14	Wed		Grand Tour of Rail & Ferry Services (see below)
May 21	Wed	11:30 am	Friends of SMART meeting, 42 Hillcrest, San Rafael
	Wed	1:30 pm	SMART Board meeting, San Rafael City Hall

For more information, go to: www.friendsofsmart.org

Bay Area Grand Tour of Rail and Ferry Services

SAVE THE DATES:

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 • WEDNESDAY, MAY 14
 THURSDAY, JUNE 12 • 9:45 AM TO 6:30 PM

Beginning and ending at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal

Relax and experience the following services:

Larkspur Golden Gate Ferry
 San Francisco Light Rail-N Judah Line
 CalTrain Station and equipment-4th & King St.
 Alameda/Oakland Ferry • AMTRAK Capitol Corridor
 Altamont Commuter Express • BART

Details: Carpools between Santa Rosa and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal can be formed at the CalTransPark'nRide. Trains and Ferries are accessible for bicycles and wheelchairs.

For further information, call 707-578-9133 (days) or 707-837-8814 (evenings) or e-mail: fos@pacbell.net

Reservations: \$50 includes fares on ferries and trains other than BART, as well as a lunch salad at Scott's Sea Food, Jack London Square; does not include the cost of beverage.

Make checks payable to "SCT" and send with your e-mail address and phone number to:

Willard Richards, Treasurer, 1009 Hyland Dr., Santa Rosa, 95404

By Trail and Rail to San Rafael

Continued from page 1

beats the bus by 30 minutes, the fare is comparable. Folks stand beside seated friends and converse.

We soon cross the Petaluma River Bridge, and the train enters a region drivers never see where we traverse the Petaluma River Marsh. Public Open Space funds preserve most of it as a state wildlife preserve which you can't get to by car. Over 200 species of birds frequent the marsh: ducks, geese, swans, herons, egrets, red tailed hawks, swallows, and many others. Rare sightings include wild turkeys, clapper rail, peregrine falcon, and the magnificent golden eagle.

After the popular Civic Center station, we climb to the long tunnel at Puerto Suello and then drift quietly downgrade to San Rafael. All the crossing signals are integrated with nearby stoplights, and trains do not blow horns at the crossing. I bike an easy 10 minutes to City Hall for a board meeting. My elapsed trip time, 60 minutes, compares with 85 minutes by car-fighting freeway traffic. And I need not worry about a place to park.

Healthful exercise, close to nature, a minimum of stress; next time try the train! You can bike on the local trails now, check www.marinbike.org and www.bikesonoma.org. ❖

Allen Tacy serves on the Petaluma Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee; he retired from the Southern Pacific Railroad.