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# Gaviota Coast Planning Advisory Committee

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## ***DRAFT MEETING MINUTES MEETING No. 26***

***Wednesday January 26, 2011  
Vista de Las Cruces School Auditorium***

**Meeting No. 26 Called to Order:** By Chair Kimbell at 6:33 p.m.

### **1. Roll Call**

**GavPAC Members Present:** Baer, Boise-Cossart, Bowman, Feeney, Kimbell, McGinnis (arrived after roll at 6:40 p.m.), McKenna, Tautrim, Van Leer

**GavPAC Members Absent:** Lloyd, McNabb

#### **County Staff Present:**

Jeff Hunt, Long Range Planning Division Director

Brian A. Tetley, Long Range Planning Division Senior Planner

Katie Haldeman, Long Range Planning Division Assistant Planner

### **2. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda:** None

### **3. Administrative Briefings**

**Deliberations:** Staff has no administrative briefings. Chair Kimbell relayed the status of the Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) certification process. The Board of Supervisors deferred their decision on accepting or rejecting the Coastal Commission's proposed modifications to the LUDC until their next hearing on February 1<sup>st</sup>, in light of ongoing negotiations with Coastal Commission director Peter Douglas.

### **4. Meeting Minutes from January 12, 2011**

**Deliberations:** Item 5 was amended to reflect McNabb's comments regarding reconstruction and/or relocation of Vista De Las Cruces School. The motion under Item 7 concerning watersheds was amended by moving the item about interagency cooperation to the motion on Interagency Council creation.

**Public Comment:** None

**ACTION:** Boise-Cossart moved, seconded by Bowman and carried by a vote of 7-0, with Tautrim and Baer abstaining, to approve the minutes with modifications.



## 5. Discussion and Comments on LOSSAN Railroad Improvement Planning

**Deliberation:** Staff gave a brief overview on the proposed improvements to the railroad corridor in Santa Barbara County in light of discussions with Caltrans and a LOSSAN representative from Santa Barbara County. All proposed improvements are currently unfunded. Caltrans is required to conduct environmental review of the Strategic Plan for the rail corridor, in order to apply for federal funding to conduct improvements.

### Public Comment:

**Mike Lunsford:** Caltrans should consider visual resources when designing railroad improvements. Caltrans should anticipate railroad maintenance activities and thereby better addressing or avoiding potential environmental impacts from conducting emergency maintenance activities.

**Mark Chaconas:** Hopes the GavPAC would review the Draft EIR on the proposed improvements to see if their EIR scoping comments have been addressed in the environmental document.

**ACTION:** Boise-Cossart moved, seconded by Feeney and carried by a vote of 9-0 to give the following comments to Staff to be included on the County's responsible agency review letter to Caltrans:

1. The visual impacts of any changes made to the corridor (e.g., grading, cut and fill), including the aesthetic effects of the design of the improvements (e.g., retaining walls, proposed 900-foot trestle at Jalama Creek), should be analyzed;
2. The GavPAC commends Caltrans for its current work along the rail corridor in the Gaviota Coast region. Removal of old telegraph poles from the rail corridor has enhanced the scenic qualities of the coastline;
3. The design and/or mitigation of proposed improvements should enhance fish and wildlife passage across the corridor;
4. The environmental document should analyze increased train speeds and pedestrians' safety when using formal and informal beach access that crosses track. The feasibility of using warning signals at pedestrian crossing places should be considered;
5. An adaptation strategy should be created to deal with the encroachment of the ocean into the existing railroad bed due to climate change;
6. The document should analyze how proposed improvements would affect existing and siting of future segments of the California Coastal Trail; and
7. The document should consider having a long-term vision for the rail corridor that includes the reinstatement of provisions for the shipping of agricultural products.

## 6-8. Resource Stewardship & Open Space Planning Deliberations:

### *Wildlife Corridors*

**Staff:** The County has no official maps of wildlife corridors and there has not been an official survey of corridors on the Gaviota Coast. In the plan area, wildlife corridors have been generally described as located along the ridgeline of the Santa Ynez Mountains and along watersheds. The Planning and Development Department is currently updating the County's Environmental Thresholds & Guidelines Manual update. A consideration of wildlife corridors could be included as part of future development constraints analyses.

**Deliberation:** The Committee recognizes the value of wildlife corridors and a need for flexibility when siting new development in concert with the application of buffers.

McKenna commented on an example of property in Hollister Ranch with fencing that constricts wildlife to areas along the road, which potentially constricts wildlife movement and maintenance of the wildlife corridor. Tautrim stated that there are no migratory



animals in the plan area. Wildlife movement on his property is continually in flux, therefore the Committee should consider adaptive management policies for wildlife movement.

Boise-Cossart believes that slick asphalt road material could present a barrier to wildlife crossings.

Van Leer asked who would be determining where wildlife movement occurs. He is concerned about creating policy that would be too restrictive. McGinnis said planners already address impacts to wildlife movement for discretionary projects as part of environmental review. Boise-Cossart stated that the County could develop thresholds (e.g., size of projects) that would trigger required analysis of wildlife movement on a property.

**Public Comment:**

**Mike Lunsford:** the GavPAC should seek expert advice on the specialized issue of wildlife corridors.

**Lee Ann French:** Roads and lighting can effect wildlife movement and should be considered during policy creation.

**Mike Chaconas:** would wildlife corridor policies apply to agriculture-related projects (i.e., construction of a barn)? Chair Kimbell responded that agricultural operations will be addressed later.

**Chris Schaeffer representing Caltrans:** A database framework has been created for the public to report road kill data. There may be the potential to create a sub-database specifically for the Plan area.

**Lee Ann French:** This could be an opportunity for the GavPAC to use the word “encourage” in its policy language, such as encouraging the use of non-asphalt surfaces.

**Mike Lunsford:** Wildlife movement should not be considered as being restricted to only certain locations.

**ACTION:** McKenna moved, seconded by Baer and carried by a vote of 9-0 to give the following policy direction to Staff:

1. Environmental review of the Plan should address wildlife movement areas and include a general identification of landforms and natural features that are likely to be potential wildlife movement areas.
2. Develop policies that stress the importance of free wildlife movement within the Gaviota Planning Area. Environmental review of development proposals should evaluate and mitigate for the effects on wildlife movement caused by fencing, roads, lighting, and siting.

**Cultural Resources**

**Staff:** Existing cultural resources policies at the State and County level are highly protective. In addition, the ongoing update to the County’s Cultural Resource Thresholds & Guidelines will further uphold cultural resource protection.

The Plan could include policy language that gives a general recognition of cultural resources. The GavPAC could include development standards and provide additional clarity on cultural resource policies as part of the Gaviota Coast Plan.

**Deliberation:** Tautrim asked what the GavPAC would be recommending that is not already addressed in State and County policies and regulations. McGinnis would like to



discourage potential development of a physical community cultural center on the Gaviota Coast, however she supports community cultural education.

**Public Comment:**

**Mike Lunsford:** Recalls the testimony by a Chumash representative regarding the adequacy of consultation with Native Americans in association with development. The GavPAC should make a statement that recognizes or acknowledges that consultation is important. Chair Kimbell responded that by the GavPAC's policy recommendation to support existing policies address the consultation issue.

**ACTION:** Feeney moved, seconded by Bowman and carried by a vote of 9-0 to give the following policy direction to Staff:

1. Support existing development standards and policy that protect archeological and historic resources.
2. Consider opportunities to develop a community cultural center or other community cultural research and education opportunities.

**9-11. Consideration of Transportation, Energy, and Infrastructure Preferences for the Gaviota Coast**

***U.S. Highway 101***

**Guest Speaker, Chris Schaeffer, Caltrans.**

The Gaviota Coast has a fragmented circulation system and the existing network could be realigned and/or consolidated at existing nodes to handle increased traffic volume and flow. In addition, Caltrans stresses safe and efficient movement for local access and strives to plan for regional visitor serving use and local access transportation facilities.

SBCAG estimates average daily trips on U.S. Highway 101 through the Plan area will double from current levels by 2030. Increased volumes will also depend on the condition of Highway 5 and the amount of trucking activity.

Caltrans is an engaged entity in the Monterey County Interagency Review Council. There is an intensification of interest in Monterey County to link the Union Pacific Railroad with local sidings to facilitate movement of produce from the Salinas Valley to the East Coast.

The GavPAC could identify near-term, medium-term, and long term projects related to pedestrians, bikes, trails, and roads in the Plan.

**Deliberation:** Chair Kimbell asked if Caltrans has a long-range plan for eliminating all at-grade crossings and replacing them with interchanges and frontage road. Schaeffer responded that in 1998 Caltrans prepared an inter-regional strategic plan for all significant routes across the State which identified roads that would need to become freeways. Highway 101 through Gaviota was one of those roads identified as having a future need for conversion to a freeway. However, given the State's fiscal deficiencies and a greater need for roadway improvements between the more frequently traveled portion of the Highway from Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, the Gaviota Coast would most likely not become a freeway over the next 20 years.

Boise-Cossart inquired as to which agency would fund a potential relocation of access to Hollister Ranch to the Mariposa Reina exit. Schaeffer responded that the County, State Parks, and Caltrans would work in concert to implement that potential project but that the County would likely take the lead. Caltrans would likely not be supportive of relocation access to Hollister Ranch to the existing rest stops in Gaviota due to safety issues, and the inability for ingress and egress of northbound traffic into that location.



Bowman asked how an official State Scenic Highway designation would affect Caltrans' planning efforts for the Gaviota Coast. Schaeffer responded that the designation would add a layer of complexity to the visual component of projects.

Tautrim believes the "peak oil" concept is still a reality and does not support Caltrans policies that promote engineering solutions and reconfiguration of existing road crossings to support additional traffic volume. Feeney does not support consolidation of at-grade crossings because there are numerous crossing within a short distance and consolidation would be prohibitively expensive and significantly impact natural resources. Feeney and Baer believe the existing level of safety on the Highway should be maintained, only marginal safety improvements should be considered and that Caltrans should not engineer solutions to improve safety.

The Committee discussed the potential for land condemnations as a result of improvements or expansion to U.S. Highway 101. Schaeffer responded that landowners proposing new development would typically dedicate a right of way to Caltrans as a condition of the development, but that condemnation likely would not occur. Baer noted that was the case at Las Cruces during the construction of the interchange with U.S. Highway 1 and Highway 101. Tautrim recounted that in approximately 1969, his historic family homestead was dedicated as right of way to Caltrans and the family received compensation for that land.

**Public Comment:**

**Mark Chaconas:** How does Caltrans identify and obtain local sources of funding and decide where to apply that funding? Schaeffer responded that once a safety index threshold is triggered, an initial investigation is conducted and if a problem is identified it will be investigated and a project will be initiated to address the problem.

**Mike Lunsford:** The movement of rest stops to Mariposa Reina seems sensible. Safety issues related to the ingress and egress of large trucks entering on to the Highway at Tajiguas Landfill should be addressed.

**Mark Chaconas:** How would U.S. Highway 101 change from an expressway to a freeway? Does Caltrans have any specific areas they have targeted for closure or improvements? Schaeffer responded that all stakeholders would be engaged in the planning process for such an undertaking.

**9. Discussion of Long Term Meeting Schedule**

**Deliberation:** The GavPAC will continue to deliberate on transportation, energy, and infrastructure policy preferences at the next GavPAC meeting. A public workshop will be conducted in Goleta to gather additional public comments and refine policy direction to Staff prior to Staff preparing the draft Plan. The GavPAC would take a break from meeting from April through June while Staff creates the draft Plan. The GavPAC would reconvene in June 2011 for review of the draft Plan. Staff would refine draft policy language and then reconvene the full GavPAC again in Fall 2011.

McGinnis stated that she could not attend the two proposed meetings on public recreation (March 23<sup>rd</sup> and April 6<sup>th</sup>) due to other commitments.

**Public Comment:** None

**Meeting Adjournment** – 8:57 p.m.

