

The San Diego
Union-Tribune.

UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

Train station project deserves a ticket to proceed

August 31, 2006

They are called story poles in Solana Beach. These wooden poles, about the thickness of bamboo rods, stick up in the air to indicate the height and exterior dimensions of proposed structures in the beachside community.

Cedros Crossing is a proposed mixed-use project to build desirable apartments, retail, cafes, parking and a home for the North Coast Repertory Theatre at the Coaster train station in Solana Beach.

As the poles went up, taped to streetlight standards, so did complaints from residents who felt

their views of ocean meeting the horizon would be blocked. Seventeen in all.

The developer, Greg Shannon of Shea Properties, regrouped, lowering the height of the entire project, from 35 feet to 23 and 27 feet. Knocking off a story here, going below ground there.

The old story poles remained. Orange plastic banners, like those at a used car lot, were strung in place to tell one and all in Solana Beach the revised dimensions of Cedros Crossing.

The proposed development is part of a trend in urban-

sprawl Southern California to build people-oriented developments along major transit corridors. A choice is provided for those who want an urban lifestyle, with the car left in the garage most of the time. Commuters benefit from additional park and ride spaces created at transit stations. Transit providers, in this case the North County Transit District, benefit from additional ridership and from lease revenues generated by developments on their land.

Cedros Crossing does all this and more. Among those it is expected to benefit:

▪Apartment renters, with 10 percent of the units being affordable and the rest renting in a range from \$1,800 to \$2,400. Residents would have their own parking, elevators to their units, and a secured gate to the train.

▪Commuters, as parking at the station would increase from the current 319 spaces to 528.

▪Beachgoers and shoppers, as the public parking would be close enough to serve both Fletcher Cove park and the south Cedros shopping district.

▪The arts community, as a permanent home – both rehearsal and performance space – would be provided North Coast Repertory Theatre.

▪Solana Beach residents, as 34,000 square feet of retail, cafe and office space would be provided.

The North County Transit District, which would achieve greater ridership and receive a minimum of 10 percent of gross revenues from the apartments and retail.

▪A sand-starved city, as up to 90,000 cubic yards of replenishment sand would be available for its eroding coastline.

If there is a risk to this project, it is to the Rep. To take advantage of the opportunity for a permanent home, the theater must raise \$8 million to \$9 million to develop its facility.

Any large project will generate some controversy. Some residents are worried about additional traffic (downtown and on a coastal highway) and some merchants fear competition. But this project is consistent with Solana Beach's general plan and

zoning. The developer is not asking for any variances.

The project is under the review period for its draft environmental impact report. The earliest it can come before the City Council for consideration is December.

The Solana Beach City Council should give this project fair and prompt consideration. There are too many stakeholders who would benefit, public transit among them, to subject Cedros Crossing to endless delays.

As Monday's nightmare along Interstate 5, with just a single big rig on fire reminds us, robust public transit is needed to serve as an alternative to freeways. This project would help make that happen.