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The train leaving the station is Solana Beach's future

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It is time to call the question in Solana Beach on a prime example of smart growth, the Cedros Crossing mixed-use train station project.

There have been hearings, workshops, environmental studies, independent reviews of environmental studies and nauseam. Everyone in town knows what the arguments are.

Things have become so circular that Mayor Lesa Heebner is trying to make a big deal about a five-page update on Amtrak station parking done by the San Diego Association of Governments in 2005. But this is no surprise. It was referenced five times in a technical study the city itself had commissioned. The city and its consultant have known about the document – at five pages, it is hardly a study – for 18 months. The data on parking needs and the conclusions seem to be in conflict.

It is time to accept an environmental impact report finished 50 weeks ago and move on to consideration of the project itself, and reasonable tweaking if necessary.

This is a project that will provide 154 units of rental housing along a major transportation corridor. It will draw people and nighttime activity to the symbolic heart of Solana Beach. Cedros Crossing will provide a rehearsal and performance home for the North Coast Repertory Theatre as well as retail and office space. It will create much more parking, including 205 additional public spaces.

Cedros Crossing will increase tax revenues from the current zero to \$375,000 a year for a city headed toward a fiscal train wreck in the next three years. (Let's hear City Manager David Ott say with a straight face that he can't use another \$375,000 a year to close the gaps.)

Traffic and parking issues are often embraced by those with hidden agendas. The parking garage for Cedros Crossing can be expanded by 270 spaces in a later phase after the proper studies and regulatory steps. But that is not the real issue here.

This project meets all state and local laws. That is more than the city can say about the conduct of its own affairs. Solana Beach is out of compliance with its state housing element and has been given until September to correct its failure.

The housing element may be fairly toothless as to enforcement provisions, but why is Solana Beach going about breaking the law?

What appears to be happening here is that some in city government are trying to force the North Coast Rep out of town without being held accountable. They are practicing denial by delay.

Solana Beach was awarded a Golden Fleece Award last week by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. The city wasted in the neighborhood of \$150,000, the association said, by holding a special election to consider a mansionization referendum. But none of the fearless foursome on the council had the courage to come forward

that night and accept this award of shame. Instead, that was left to Councilman Joe Kellejian, the good guy on this issue.

Some trace Del Mar's financial decline to its decision to wave goodbye to the Amtrak station. We fear the Slump of Solana Beach will be linked to cowardly stall tactics, in effect waving goodbye to the North Coast Rep, a model of smart growth, and \$375,000 in sorely needed annual tax revenue.

There is one thing you can count on, though: When the award of shame is handed out for the Slump of Solana Beach, Lesa Heebner, Tom Campbell, Dave Roberts and newcomer Mike Nichols will be nowhere to be found.

Excerpt: Ignoring state law

The April 20, 2006 letter gave Solana Beach the bad news, that it was out of compliance with its state housing element, that it faced a deadline, and that conditional compliance could be granted based upon the city approving Cedros Crossing.

Wrote Deputy Director Cathy E. Creswell of the state Department of Housing and Community Development:

"Failure to report to the Department by Sept. 15, 2007 or failure to submit annual reports could trigger a compliance review by the department.

"The department also encourages the city to diligently continue identifying longer-term residential capacity on underutilized, service and transit-oriented sites."