

Solana Beach train station deal postponed

PAUL SISSON
Staff Writer

OCEANSIDE ---- There is an old adage that you shouldn't sign something you haven't read.

The North County Transit District board of directors followed that advice when it met Thursday, refraining from voting on an exclusive negotiating agreement with Sedona Pacific Corp. to develop the Solana Beach train station and 10 acres of prime real estate surrounding it, until after the board has actually read the document.

The board was scheduled to approve the agreement, but several members never received a copy to review before the meeting.

Tom Golich, the board member from Solana Beach, asked that the transit district staff send the city's attorney a copy of the document so the city could make sure the agreement was in order. A copy of the agreement will be circulated among board members and voted on at their next regular meeting Dec. 19.

An exclusive negotiation agreement would allow Sedona Pacific to move forward with the transit district's plans for the property. However, the firm would still have to return to the board within 18 months for a formal development agreement before construction could begin.

Sedona Pacific president Greg Shannon presented an overview of the \$40 million project at the meeting, giving much of the same information unveiled at a public workshop in Solana Beach on Monday.

The project, between Coast Highway 101 and North Cedros Avenue, contains a mix of 70 percent residential and 30 percent commercial buildings. The entire development would perch on top of a 722-space underground parking garage. The transit district owns the property and would lease it to Sedona Pacific for 55 years for development.

Shannon took special care to note that the architects who designed the project tried to make it fit with Solana Beach's coastal character.

"In other words, more beach funky than planned community," he said.

Shannon also addressed a suggestion by the city of Solana Beach that a bridge should be built from Highway 101 to the below-ground parking structure, giving drivers direct access to the transit center without driving on Cedros Avenue. But the bridge would arch over the railroad tracks, and that could cause some problems, Shannon said.

Shannon said a crew of employees with hand-held radios spent a week tracking traffic patterns at the property. His study found that traffic at the site would not be lessened by the bridge and that it would have to be built with a 20 percent slope in order to stay out of the way of passing trains.

"Given that it doesn't alleviate any traffic, we're not anticipating including a bridge in the project," Shannon said.

The transit district also awarded a \$2 million construction contract to J.C. Baldwin Construction Company to build the Del Mar Bluffs Stabilization Project. The project includes drainage improvements to the Del Mar bluffs where the train track runs through town, to maximize stability and installation of a landslide warning system that would warn beach users of an impending collapse.

David Druker, a transit board member and city councilman from Del Mar, said he and his city's staff believed the project was adequate.

"We've been working very closely on this and everybody's very happy," Druker said.

11/22/02