

**BACKGROUND - PART 1**

**IRON HORSE CORRIDOR  
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

## IRON HORSE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Corridor History

The Iron Horse Corridor, formerly known as the Southern Pacific Right-of-Way, is 18.5 miles long traversing north-south in Central Contra Costa County. The northern terminus is Mayette Avenue in Concord and the southern terminus is the Alameda County line in San Ramon. The corridor varies in width from 30 to 100 feet and currently has a 10-foot wide, paved multi-use trail managed by the East Bay Regional Park District.

Beginning in the early 1890s, the San Ramon Branch line of the Southern Pacific Railroad served the center of Contra Costa County from Avon, near Martinez, South to Pleasanton, connecting with east-west railroads at both ends. It played an important role in the early development of the County. By the 1970s, however, changing transportation technologies made the line unprofitable, and the Railroad sought to abandon it. Contra Costa County officials responded to public concerns about the fate of the right-of-way and recognized the potential of the right-of-way as a corridor for a trail, utilities, and transportation facilities and made plans to acquire it.



Between 1983 and 1989, the County acquired the right-of-way between Mayette Avenue in Concord and the Alameda County line. During the acquisition period local citizen groups, particularly the Right-of-Way Trail Advocates, worked extensively to focus the use of the right-of-way for trail purposes. The District Master Plan of 1976 had identified this route as a priority regional trail, and with the cooperation of Contra Costa County, a license agreement to operate the first segment of the Iron Horse Trail was signed in 1986.

The County's policy regarding use and ownership of the facility has been expressed in several documents, including the County General Plan, the Pleasant Hill BART Area Specific Plan, various Board of Supervisors actions, and County ordinances. In general, the policies indicate the right-of-way shall remain in public ownership along its entire route and be used as a non-motorized transportation route (trail) and underground utility corridor, and provide an easement for a potential transit facility. To fulfill its responsibilities under the state grant conditions for acquisition of the right-of-way, the County commissioned several studies on the feasibility of transit development in the corridor. (The *Existing Conditions Report*, prepared by County staff in February 1998, describes the County's land use policies for the corridor and lists the transportation studies conducted.)

In response to numerous requests by residents living near the Iron Horse Corridor to allow landscaping, the Board of Supervisors, on July 22, 1997, directed staff to develop a management program for the former Southern Pacific Right-of-Way which evaluates the feasibility of landscaping consistent with current and committed uses of the right-of-way. County Supervisors Mark De Saulnier and Donna Gerber were authorized to form an advisory committee to assist in this effort. The Committee was formed and began the development of a management program in January 1998. The Advisory Committee was convened by staff in January 1998 and consisted of eight residents representing the cities and unincorporated areas along the corridor and one agency representative from the East Bay Regional Park District.

## **Project History**

In July 1997 the County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to direct the Public Works Department, the Community Development Department and the County Redevelopment Agency to jointly develop a Management Program for the Iron Horse Corridor. The Management Program consists of the six elements listed below:

- **Mapping:** Preparation and maintenance of right-of-way maps that record the locations of all existing and committed uses and easements.
- **Use Conditions:** Inventory of existing license agreements, contracts, and conditions for existing and committed uses.

- **Joint Use Criteria and Standards:** Establishment of criteria and standards to ensure the coexistence of the existing and committed uses, and to evaluate the ability to accommodate new uses that may be proposed in the future.
- **Landscaping:** Identification of the location and type of landscaping that can be accommodated in the right-of-way, and the cost for installation and maintenance.
- **Public information:** Development of a public information element to inform interested individuals of the management program.
- **Funding:** Update of existing fees and establishment of new mechanisms to cover program costs. Specific mechanisms will be established to cover installation and maintenance of landscaping, such as formation of an assessment district, private contributions, grant funding or a combination of new revenue sources.

The mapping component consists of the *Record of Survey* conducted in December 1997 and is filed at the County Public Works Department. The survey records existing easements including underground utilities and roads and drainage channels. The survey can be used to determine the appropriate location of acceptable landscaping and site amenity improvements. The **Joint Use Criteria and Standards** will appear as a separate document available from the Public Works Department. The **Public Information** element began with the public process used to prepare this management plan and will continue after publication of this document through the County's work with the Iron Horse Corridor Advisory Committee, notification of adjacent property owners as required for environmental review of large project improvements, and review and approval of corridor improvements initiated by the community.

### **Project Authority**

The County Public Works Department has overall management responsibility of the former Southern Pacific Right-of-Way. (The County Redevelopment Agency also manages a portion of the right-of-way around the Pleasant Hill BART Station which was acquired with Redevelopment Agency funds.) At the time of County acquisition, the right-of-way was already being used as a corridor for public utilities. Following the direction set by the Board of Supervisors and the terms of the state grants, the Department has broadened the number of uses and has continued to manage the corridor as a joint use facility for utilities, trail and other transportation uses. The Department's practice has been

to allow uses and activities on the right-of-way which are in the public interest and do not conflict with existing and committed uses. In keeping with the state grant conditions, uses should not preclude the development of a potential future transit facility within the corridor. The East Bay Regional Park District manages the Iron Horse Trail (a 10-foot wide asphalt trail within a 20-foot right-of-way) through a renewable license agreement with the County. The County Public Works Department and the Park District are the two main entities responsible for maintenance of the corridor.

---

<sup>1</sup> County Board of Supervisors Action of July 22, 1997 to initiate the Southern Pacific Right-of-Way Management Program was approved unanimously.