

**NOTES FROM TRI-CITY TROLLEY ROUNDTABLE NO. 1  
DANA POINT COMMUNITY CENTER  
JULY 11, 2007**

Diane Harkey, Mayor of Dana Point, opened the meeting by welcoming all participants to Dana Point. Dan Boyle, Project Manager, then gave an overview of the Tri-City Trolley Transit Needs Assessment Study and how OCTA's Go Local program might benefit this study.

Judi Norman of JNTC, the consultant team member leading the public outreach effort, then began the roundtable by asking attendees from each of the three cities to discuss their goals related to this project for their cities and organizations. Comments are noted below by participant, with participants identified by City.

San Clemente #1 began by noting that the committee had been interested in circulation through downtown into the redeveloping North Beach area (location of the Metrolink station) in San Clemente, also serving the new Marblehead commercial development north of North Beach and the south end of town. The trolley was envisioned to serve tourists in the summer season and local/regional users. The goal was to have all-day service.

San Clemente #2, noted that access to coastal resources and inter-regional connectivity were key goals of the committee. The committee also wanted to tie the north and south ends of the city together. The committee realized that a phased development of the trolley system would be required, and in the longer range wanted to extend it to other cities.

San Clemente #3, gave some background on the trolley committee. San Clemente conducted a downtown visioning study in 1999, and the trolley idea grew out of that effort. The proposed Marblehead site plan also was a factor. Could the Marblehead commercial development hurt downtown merchants by attracting shoppers away from downtown, and if so, what could be done to mitigate this impact? The committee was also mindful of not competing with local OCTA bus routes. The trolley was envisioned as a way to move local workers to jobs, and would serve tourists, shoppers, and local transit needs. The plan called for it to run until 10 p.m. so that residents and tourists could use it to get to restaurants and return home. The State park was mentioned as an important destination.

San Clemente #4, noted that a key benefit of the trolley would be to reduce parking demand. Like its neighboring cities, San Clemente always has a shortage of parking in downtown. With a circulator, visitors to downtown could park once (possibly at Marblehead?) and then use the trolley to get around from place to place.

San Clemente #1 noted that the beach trail is now complete, connecting North Beach to the Pier Bowl (at the Pier and the Amtrak station) and to the State park in the southern portion of San Clemente. SC #1 also mentioned that Metrolink stops at the Pier on weekends in the summer.

San Clemente #5 cited Metrolink's Beach Train, from the Inland Empire to the San Clemente Pier. SC #5 said that there are 30 trains going to/from the Pier on weekends. SC #5 was involved in the original effort to build the train station, and noted that a shuttle that connects to the train when it arrives was recognized as a critical need. SC #5 stated that each city has its own unique situation, and a trolley system would not necessarily need the same number of vehicles in each city, could have a different number of stops and different types of vehicles serving each city. The vehicle could be a trolley, an OC cruiser. The committee realized that it

would need to purchase vehicles, preferably alternate-fuel vehicles, possibly through OCTA, and would need a local maintenance facility serving all three cities.

San Juan Capistrano #1 told the group that in February 2006 the San Juan Capistrano Chamber of Commerce undertook a tourist summit lasting six or seven months. Key goals were to help downtown and all of San Juan Capistrano to be more pedestrian-friendly. A trolley was one of the top ideas to create more open space, reduce the number of vehicles, help businesses flourish, and reduce parking demand. Visitors come to see the Mission, and then want to spend the day at the beach and have dinner at the Harbor at night.

San Juan Capistrano #2 noted that the San Juan Capistrano station was a “twin” station served by both Metrolink and Amtrak. San Juan Capistrano has the Mission and the Los Rios Historic District, but no hotels. Visitors to San Juan Capistrano typically stay in Dana Point. The connection with the hotels in Dana Point is very important.

San Juan Capistrano #3 suggested re hours of operation that shoppers, commuters, and tourists have different times when they need to travel: shoppers in the midday, commuters in the early morning and late afternoon, and tourists mid-morning through evening. We need a connection from Amtrak to the beach, and we need a connection from remote park-and-ride lots to the station for commuters. Parking is very constrained at the station. The ratio of boardings to alightings on morning Metrolink trains is 300 to 1 – we are a bedroom community (and also the key station for Dana Point). We are also the only station (south of Irvine) with two services: Metrolink and Amtrak. From the Amtrak station it is a \$12 cab fare to the beach. Amtrak publicizes special activities program; they have a deal for the Del Mar racing season between July 18 and September 5 we have 500 to 1000 riders per day, coming in by 10 a.m. It would be nice to encourage something similar. We need parking to serve the station, whether on-site or remote. There is need to communicate with Amtrak and with Metrolink. Scheduling of trains has been a problem.

San Juan Capistrano #4 identified two key issues: how we fund this service and how we strike a balance between getting people downtown and losing people to other cities. Need to serve downtown directly, not through other cities.

San Juan Capistrano #5 suggested that we think beyond reducing congestion to making the trolley a true alternative for automobile travelers. From the user’s point of view, it needs to be attractive, accessible, and fun.

San Juan Capistrano #6 noted that timing and convenience are key elements of the service that will contribute to success. Timing in two senses: frequency and travel time on the trolley. If it doesn’t run often enough or takes too long to get where it’s going, then it will not attract ridership.

San Juan Capistrano #7 noted the need to connect Downtown San Juan Capistrano and the Los Rios historic district with the hotels and the harbor in Dana Point. Commuters are a second market, and local residents are a third market – anything that can help them get around town easier is a plus. The San Juan Capistrano Community Center, mobile home parks, and senior housing locations are all important local destinations. Connecting components of the city will be important. An advantage is that downtown San Juan Capistrano is not spread out and is a central destination. It would also be nice to connect all the historical resources (which are spread throughout the city). A San Clemente participant noted that she works at St. Margaret’s school in San Juan Capistrano, and they would love to have a shuttle. SJC #7 suggested the

Main Street Trolley in Park City, UT as one example of a successful project and emphasized the need for the service to be sustainable.

San Juan Capistrano #8 followed up on previous comments by describing how school boundaries cross city lines, with San Juan Capistrano kids attending high school in San Clemente and vice versa. SJC #8 suggested a focus on students, perhaps helping to organize school transportation. The service could be a boon for children by teaching them to use public transit. Sports and after-school activities often require later afternoon trips from school.

Dana Point #1 described previous discussions and attempts at a trolley or circulator. The way we always do it, and why it doesn't work, is that we try to do too much without sufficient resources. DP #1 hopes that we focus on real emerging needs, such as connections among the hotels, beaches, and Mission. DP #1 sees lots of synergy with a transit network oriented this way, rather than trying to serve the needs of all residents within the three cities. More stops and more hours lead to a failed project, because the cost is too high. A narrow focus will help to ensure that we target markets that will actually use the service.

San Clemente #3 noted that San Clemente went through this issue. SC #3 said that they came to focus on two activities: eat and get to the beach. The Trolley Committee came to the conclusion that this would not be a transportation system for the City of San Clemente.

San Clemente #5 followed up on the idea that the trolley needed to be an attraction on wheels. It has to keep to schedule and be maintained impeccably throughout all three cities, but a high quality service is an absolute necessity.

San Juan Capistrano #9 endorsed previous suggestions that we narrowly define our focus and emphasize excellence. We will have to deal with the problem of the homeless, and should charge a fare to mitigate that issue. SJC #9 noted that the Mission is a second or third destination. Anaheim is the premier destination, but after a few days at Disneyland visitors are looking for something authentic, affordable, and beautiful. The Mission is also a regional draw, in the sense that Orange County residents might stop by on the way to Laguna Beach and the Arts Festival. Attendance is seasonal – they just got through the French and German visitors, and the English are on the way. In the fall, visitor patterns change (e.g., may not want to go to the beach). The Mission's busy time is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and again after 4:00 p.m. when attendance picks up, possibly people stopping off on their way to dinner. Weekend versus weekday activity also needs to be considered, as well as the kind of special events taking place at the Mission. Buses run from the Ritz Carlton and the St. Regis to the Mission. The Mission has an Ambassador Program, why not on the bus/trolley also (could the driver be the ambassador)? We need to stress quality of life values in this program, and address the two questions SJC #9 gets most often: where to eat and how to get to the beach. Mission San Juan Capistrano has as its goal to be the Nation's Mission.

Dana Point #2 has done trolley service in Dana Point Harbor, operating a free shuttle during their busiest months (July and August) that connected to major hotels. Problems included: (a) no ridership from the hotels; some from time shares on Capistrano Beach; (b) overall low ridership, 60 to 100 people a day on a free service running every 20 minutes with two shuttles; (c) no ridership among seniors or other residents; and (d) getting people to buy in to the concept. The last was the hardest. The only time the shuttle worked was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The biggest suggest was actually intra-harbor, bringing people from the shops to the Ocean Institute. Lessons learned that are applicable here are: (a) it has to be fun, an e-ticket ride; (b) the focus should be on the tourist market; (c) service must be dependable and timely, e.g., it

can't run once an hour; (d) the schedule needs to take into account activity levels during different seasons. This service ran during the two busiest months of the year; merchants contributed \$8 to \$9k and the City contributed \$25,000 for this short route. This effort will need enough destinations and participation by all three cities to make it work.

Dana Point #3 noted that Dana Point visitors will stay longer with added authentic experiences that nearby San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente provide. The Dana Point Town Center will someday be a major destination, although it is not quite that now. We should also keep Doheny State Beach in mind as a destination. For the OCTA funding application, we should talk about the joint effort among the three cities but also include the County harbor and state beaches as partners. This will strengthen the application.

San Clemente #2 indicated the possibility of a public/private partnership that could also help educate the public on which way to go. We need to go over the OCTA version of Go Local, as there will be competition for this funding. Metrolink is geared for the workforce while Amtrak is more for tourists.

San Clemente #4 noted that Metrolink is making a significant investment in increased service between North Orange County and Laguna Niguel that will eventually result in 20-minute headways. We need to think of ways to tie into this.

Dana Point #4 stressed connectivity. If Metrolink will be very frequent at Laguna Niguel, what will be the frequency at San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente? We should touch base with Laguna Niguel and see if there are common issues re connectivity. The Dana Point Harbor revitalization and a funicular service to the Headlands (Strands Beach) are planned for 2008. These might not affect the first phase of the trolley, but should be considered. DP #4 likes the ideas of a bar on the bus and drivers serving as tour guides. DP #4 referred to the 2001 Feasibility Report, which tracked how many people come in and out of the Dana Point and connect with Laguna Niguel.

San Clemente # 6 reiterated the importance of North Beach connectivity. SC #6 sees three major issues: timing, funding, and marketing. Dan Boyle briefly summarized the project schedule re timing. SC #6's thinking on marketing went beyond the trolley to the idea of "collectively presenting ourselves to the behemoth" (i.e., the Transit Industry Association in Anaheim – 86 countries attended a recent meeting). European tourists are tired of going to Disneyland, they've seen the Queen Mary, and they are looking for something else. This tri-city area is the jewel of Orange County and we should promote it. Other participants noted that this is beyond a trolley issue, but by making it easy and fun to get around, the trolley can be a part of the overall effort.

Orange County #1 noted that Supervisor Bates will be an advocate, but that it is important to deliver a "shelf-ready" project to OCTA. This means that it can't just be a concept plan, but has to have sufficient detail to be readily implementable. OC #1 emphasized that there are three places to go for someone living in, for example, Rancho Santa Margarita: Dana Point Harbor, the Mission, and San Clemente. Parking is very difficult, as OC #1 has witnessed numerous scuffles in parking lots related to finding a space. The idea of remote parking lots connected by a trolley is very appealing.

San Clemente #5 noted re implementation that Marblehead drove the San Clemente process but its opening has been delayed.

Dana Point #5 suggested that the trolley does not have to be a set-in-stone circulator route. DP #5 also commented that the vast majority of Dana Point hotel workers come from the tri-city area.

San Clemente #7 noted that while theoretically we are competing with all Orange County cities, not all applied for Go Local funding. Orange County #2 noted that 12 applications were received. San Clemente #2 suggested a discussion with OCTA staff to analyze Go Local's intent thoroughly.

Dan Boyle closed the meeting by mentioning other outreach activities planned for this project. He also noted that we would convene a second meeting of this group in the fall, after the development of alternatives. In the interim, the project team would continue to work with the cities and OCTA. The final product will definitely be "shelf-ready."