



**VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SPBLAC)**

[www.goventura.org](http://www.goventura.org)

**AGENDA\*  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2021  
1:00 PM**

*\*Actions may be taken on any item listed on the agenda.*

**This meeting will be held by Zoom webinar.**

**Please click the link below to access the webinar:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84144790219?pwd=ZnhhUkdrZUE0d2NCszV4RzZtLzJudz09>

*On March 17, 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order N-29-20 suspending certain provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act in order to allow for local legislative bodies to conduct their meetings completely telephonically or by other electronic means. On June 11, 2021, the Governor subsequently issued Executive Order N-08-21 maintaining the suspension of certain provisions of the Brown Act to continue to allow for local legislative bodies to conduct their meetings completely telephonically or by other electronic means through September 30, 2021. As such, VCTC will continue to conduct its meetings by teleconference, its commissioners will participate in the meeting from individual remote locations, and no physical location will be open to the public for the Commission meeting. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting remotely. Members of the public who wish to address the commission on an item to be considered at this meeting are asked to please use the raise hand feature in Zoom (or \*9 if you are calling into the Zoom meeting) at the time the Chairperson requests public comments. The Clerk will then advise you when it is your turn to speak. Verbal public comments are limited to three minutes.*

*In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if special assistance is needed to participate in the Commission meeting, please contact VCTC staff (805) 642-1591 ext. 101. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring those reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility to the meeting.*

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** (For items not on the agenda) – *Under the Brown Act, the SPBLAC should not take action on or discuss matters raised during Public Comment portion of the agenda which are not listed on the agenda. Committee members may refer such matters to staff for factual information or to be placed on the subsequent agenda for consideration.*
4. **APPROVE SUMMARY FROM 3/21/2021 – SPBLAC MEETING – PG. 3**
5. **COMMITTEE MEMBERS/STAFF REPORT** – *This item provides the opportunity for the SPBLAC members and VCTC staff to report on attended meetings and any other items related to SPBLAC activities.*
6. **ADDITIONS/REVISIONS** – *The SPBLAC may add an item to the Agenda after making a finding that there is a need to take immediate action on the item and that the item came to the attention of the SPBLAC subsequent to the posting of the agenda. An action adding an item to the agenda requires 2/3 vote of the SPBLAC. If there are less than 2/3 of the SPBLAC members present, adding an item to the agenda requires a unanimous vote. Added items will be placed for discussion at the end of the agenda.*
7. **SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE 2021 BRIDGE INSPECTIONS – PG. 5**  
**Recommended Action:**  
*Receive and File.*
8. **SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ENCROACHMENTS AND LEASING UPDATE – PG. 13**  
**Recommended Action:**  
*Receive and File.*
9. **TRESPASS REMOVAL POLICY UPDATE – PG. 15**  
**Recommended Action:**  
*Receive and File.*
10. **SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE RAIL OPERATOR LEASE UPDATE – PG. 17**  
**Recommended Action:**  
*Receive and File.*
11. **ADJOURN**



## **VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SPBLAC)**

**FRIDAY, March 26, 2021  
1:00 PM**

**[www.goventura.org](http://www.goventura.org)**

### **SUMMARY**

**Ventura County Transportation Commission  
Held via Zoom webinar  
751 E. Daily Dr., Suite 420, Camarillo, CA 93010**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Sobel called the meeting to order.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Sobel, Johnson, Edmonds, and Long were in attendance.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**4. APPROVE SUMMARY FROM 3/23/2020 SPBLAC MEETING**

Commissioner Long made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Edmonds.  
Committee approved the meeting summary by a vote of 4 – 0.

**5. COMMITTEE MEMBER/STAFF REPORT**

Executive Director Kettle welcomed Commissioners Edmonds, Johnson, and Sobel to the Committee.  
Commissioner Johnson requested a tour of the Branch Line.

**6. ADDITIONS/REVISIONS – None.**

**7. DRAFT FISCAL YEAR 2020/2021 SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE BUDGET– *Receive and Comment.***

Amanda Fagan presented the draft budget, noting a reset of approach and costs associated with the operations and maintenance of the Branch Line for the coming Fiscal Year, including a \$773,743 decrease in the budget compared to the previous year. The budget was developed to align with Commission guidance not to subsidize the operations of the Line with public transit revenues. No State Transit Assistance revenues are included. Revenues are included from Signal Revenues and Lease and License Fees. The budget includes “Good Neighbor Policy” implementation, including weed abatement, trash removal, and other activities, and rail engineering consultant support for future planning of the Line. Commissioners asked questions about

the revenue sources and expenses. Commissioners discussed a possible future need for investment in bridge repairs and maintenance. No action is required.

**8. DRAFT PAULA BRANCH LINE 2020 BRIDGE INSPECTION – *Receive and File.***

Amanda Fagan presented the 2020 annual bridge inspection report. Approximately \$1.264 million in repairs across 37 bridge structures is recommended. Commissioners asked questions about the current condition of the railroad and bridges and potential for accessing Federal funding to repair the bridges. No action is required.

**9. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ENCROACHMENTS AND LEASING UPDATE – *Receive and File.***

Amanda Fagan provided an overview of existing leases and portions of the Branch Line being used by adjacent landowners without agreements in place. Two new leases were executed since March 2020, including Loza Property Investments (Prancer's Farm). Standard crossing and lease agreement templates have been developed. The Committee discussed management of leases and future administration of the Branch Line right-of-way property. No action is required.

**10. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE RAIL OPERATOR LEASE – *Receive and File.***

Report received and filed. No action is required.

**11. HEARTHSTONE CROSSING UPDATE – *Receive and File.***

Amanda Fagan provided an update on the Hearthstone railroad crossing. The railroad crossing and stoplight at Trestle Way and Highway 126 are now open. No action is required.

**12. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS AND RESPONSE - *Information Item.***

Amanda Fagan provided an overview of the staff response to reports regarding homeless encampments present on the Santa Paula Branch Line right-of-way. VCTC conducts preventative and responsive weed abatement, clean-ups, and tree trimming to address debris accumulation. Recent railroad safety incidents and efforts to address encampments in partnership with law enforcement and social service providers were discussed.

**13. ADJOURN**



Item #7

**TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY**  
**SUBJECT: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE 2021 BRIDGE INSPECTIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- *Receive and File.*

**BACKGROUND:**

In July 2010, the Federal Railroad Administration promulgated Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 237 – Bridge Safety Standards, which mandates that owners of railroads develop and adopt a Bridge Management Plan (BMP). As part of the BMP, bridges must be inspected annually for safety and engineering deficiencies, and by March 2017, all bridges in service must have had a bridge load capacity rating performed to determine the weight each bridge can safely carry. As owner of the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL), VCTC must comply with the federally mandated 49 CFR Part 237 on the prescribed schedule.

**DISCUSSION:**

In December 2020, VCTC rail engineering consultant Wilson & Company conducted the Annual BMP Bridge Inspection. Wilson & Company inspected and assessed each of the thirty-seven bridge structures in terms of condition, needed repairs, and estimated cost of repairs. Wilson & Company provided a written report in February 2021 within the required schedule. Total estimated maintenance costs are \$1,264,000, which was \$52,500 more than the previous year.

Annual bridge inspections must be completed no later than December 31, 2021. It is anticipated that responsibility to complete bridge inspections will be included in a new Rail Operator Lease. VCTC Staff had initially expected that the bridge inspections for 2021 would be completed by the new Rail Operator. However, with the final agreement still under negotiation, and a projected start date for the new operator of January 1, 2022, VCTC will need to separately arrange for bridge inspections for this Calendar Year.

VCTC prepared a Budget Amendment and Request for Proposals to solicit professional engineering services to perform annual structural inspections of bridges. The draft Request for Proposals is included for Committee awareness. The Budget Amendment and RFP will be presented to the Commission at the November 5, 2021 meeting.



**VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
TO PERFORM ANNUAL BRIDGE INSPECTIONS  
ON THE SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE**

**OVERVIEW**

Professional engineering consultant, licensed to practice in the State of California, to perform annual structural inspections of bridges on the VCTC-owned Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) to comply with 49 CFR, Part 237, Bridge Safety Standards.

**BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION**

VCTC purchased the rail corridor and active rail line known as the Santa Paula Branch Line in 1995 from Southern Pacific Transportation Company. The SPBL corridor is 32 miles long, with approximately 29 miles of active track and 39 bridges requiring annual inspection and capacity ratings. SPBL traverses Ventura County eastward from the Coast Main Line in the City of Ventura to the unincorporated community of Piru. A Bridge Management Plan is in place and annual bridge inspections have been completed since 2012.

Current train operations on the SPBL consist of Union Pacific, approximately one freight car per week scheduled to Mile Post 413.85 in Santa Paula. Past operations by Fillmore & Western Railway Company included excursion train operations from approximately MP 414.45 in Santa Paula to the eastern terminus of the line at MP 435.07, movie train operations on SPBL MP 403.20 to the eastern terminus of the line at MP 435.07; and movement and storage of empty rail cars east of Fillmore. The 20-year Fillmore & Western Railway Company lease to operate the SPBL expired on June 30, 2021. Negotiations are underway with a new prospective railroad operator based on the results of a Request for Proposals issued in 2020. Operations are anticipated to include freight service, storage and transload services, public/tourist excursion trains, and movie production, and are subject to change.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

The scope of work includes physical inspection of each of the 35 bridges listed in Attachment 1 to the Scope of Work attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit A, in conformance with 49 CFR 237.109. See attached Scope of Work included below.

**WORK PRODUCTS**

- Two (2) hardcopy and one (1) digital copy of Bridge Inspection Reports;
- Estimates for any required repairs or modifications; and
- List of bridges for which safe load capacities must be recalculated based on the findings of the bridge inspection.

## PROPOSED PROJECT SCHEDULE

Proposal Deadline	-	<b>November 23, 2021 – No later than 4:00 PM</b>
Notice to Proceed	-	<b>December 1, 2021</b>
Inspections Complete	-	<b>December 31, 2021</b>
Deliverables	-	<b>March 31, 2022</b>

## PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

One electronic version of the proposal shall be submitted no later than **4:00 P.M. Tuesday, November 23, 2021. Proposals delivered after the stated time will not be considered.** Proposals shall be delivered via email to Amanda Fagan, Planning and Sustainability Director, at [afagan@goventura.org](mailto:afagan@goventura.org).

There is no expressed or implied obligation for the VCTC to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in the preparation or delivery of proposals in response to this request nor any expense incurred in negotiating with VCTC on any matter related to proposals. The VCTC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and use any idea in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected. All submissions are considered a matter of public record. All proposals must include the items listed below. Any proposal that does not include the following may be deemed non-responsive and rejected.

Proposals should include the following information:

1. **Letter of Transmittal** - Indicate name of proposer's firm, mailing address, telephone number, name of contact person, and date of proposal. Provide the names and titles of individuals authorized to make representations for the proposer. Include the names and contact information of any subcontractors.
2. **Understanding of Work to be Performed** - Briefly state the proposer's understanding of the work to be done and make a positive commitment to perform the work within the specified timeframe.
3. **Profile of the Proposer and Summary of Proposer's Qualifications** - Provide a brief overview of the firm and summary of representative experience and similar projects relevant to the work solicited by this RFP. Provide a list of references for whom similar work has been performed and references for any proposed subcontractors. Include sample maps or related print material.
4. **Fee Structure** - Include a detailed quote and fee structure.

## PROPOSAL EVALUATION

VCTC will conduct an initial review of the proposals for general responsiveness and compliance with the requirements of this RFP. Proposals failing to satisfy the requirements of the RFP or are inadequately responsive may be rejected.

After the initial responsiveness review, proposals will be reviewed by VCTC based on evidence of understanding of the work to be performed (20%), demonstrated competence to perform work specific to this request (20%), experience with similar projects and portfolio (20%), assigned personnel qualifications and availability (20%), and proposed cost (20%). VCTC reserves the right to select the proposal which in its sole judgment best meets the needs of the VCTC.

## **VCTC CONTACT INFORMATION**

All questions, comments, and proposals should be directed to:

Amanda Fagan, Planning and Sustainability Director  
Ventura County Transportation Commission  
751 E. Daily Dr., Suite 420  
Camarillo, CA 93010

Phone: (805) 642-1591 (ext. 103)

Email: [afagan@goventura.org](mailto:afagan@goventura.org)

## **FORM CONSULTING SERVICES AGREEMENT**

A form Consulting Services Agreement is attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit B. Firms interested in responding to this request for quotes should be prepared to enter into the agreement under the standard terms and should be able to provide the required insurance. Objections to any provisions must be identified in the proposal. No response will signify that the agreement is acceptable as written. If VCTC is unable to negotiate a satisfactory agreement with the top-ranked proposer, with terms and conditions VCTC determines, in its sole judgment, to be fair and reasonable, then VCTC may commence negotiations with the next most qualified proposer in sequence, until an agreement is reached, or determination is made to reject all submittals. If necessary, VCTC may repeat this process until a final contract has been negotiated. VCTC and Consultant may agree to add additional work to the Project work scope by a later agreement. VCTC may elect to stop work at any time in the contract and will pay for work completed to that point on a time and material basis.

## **RESERVATION OF RIGHTS**

In conducting this Request for Proposals, VCTC reserves the right to:

1. Accept or reject any or all submittals, or any item or part thereof;
2. Issue subsequent Requests for Proposals;
3. Alter the Selection Process Dates;
4. Remedy technical errors in the Requests for Proposals process;
5. Request additional information from Proposers and investigate the qualifications of all firms under consideration;
6. Confirm any part of the information furnished by a Proposer;
7. Obtain additional evidence of managerial, financial or other capabilities;
8. Approve or disapprove the use of particular subcontractors;
9. Negotiate with any, all, or none of the Proposers;
10. Solicit best and final offers from all or some of the Proposers;
11. Award a contract to one or more Proposers;
12. Accept other than the lowest-priced Proposal;
13. Cancel or withdraw this Requests for Proposals at any time without prior notice and the VCTC makes no representations that any contract will be awarded to any Proposer responding to this RFP;
14. Waive informalities and irregularities in Proposals or the selection process.



**EXHIBIT A**  
**SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE**  
**ANNUAL BRIDGE INSPECTIONS**  
**SCOPE OF WORK**  
**2021**

**OVERVIEW**

Professional engineering consultant, licensed to practice in the State of California, to perform annual structural inspections of bridges on the VCTC-owned Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) to comply with 49 CFR, Part 237, Bridge Safety Standards.

**BACKGROUND**

VCTC purchased the rail corridor and active rail line known as the Santa Paula Branch Line in 1995 from Southern Pacific Transportation Company. The SPBL corridor is 32 miles long, with approximately 29 miles of active track and 35 bridges requiring annual inspection and capacity ratings. SPBL traverses Ventura County eastward from the Coast Main Line in the City of Ventura to the unincorporated community of Piru. A Bridge Management Plan is in place and annual bridge inspections have been completed since 2012.

Current train operations on the SPBL consist of Union Pacific, approximately one freight car per week scheduled to Mile Post 413.85 in Santa Paula. Past operations by Fillmore & Western Railway Company included excursion train operations from approximately MP 414.45 in Santa Paula to the eastern terminus of the line at MP 435.07; movie train operations on SPBL MP 403.20 to the eastern terminus of the line at MP 435.07; and movement and storage of empty rail cars east of Fillmore. The 20-year Fillmore & Western Railway Company lease to operate the SPBL expired on June 30, 2021. Negotiations are underway with a new prospective railroad operator based on the results of a Request for Proposals issued in 2020. Operations are anticipated to include freight service, storage and transload services, public/tourist excursion trains, and movie production, and are subject to change.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

**Task 1. Annual Bridge Inspection:**

Task 1 consists of physical inspection of each bridge listed on Attachment 1 to this RFP in conformance with 49 CFR 237.109 below. Deliverables include two hardcopy and one digital copy of Bridge Inspection Reports as well as estimates for any required repairs or modifications and a list of bridges for which safe load capacities must be recalculated based on the findings of the bridge inspection. All inspections must be completed prior to **December 31, 2021**. All work and documentation must be completed and submitted to VCTC by **March 31, 2022**.

#### **49 CFR Part 237.109 Bridge inspection records.**

- (a)** Each track owner to which this part applies shall keep a record of each inspection required to be performed on those bridges under this part.
- (b)** Each record of an inspection under the bridge management program prescribed in this part shall be prepared from notes taken on the day(s) the inspection is made, supplemented with sketches and photographs as needed. Such record will be dated with the date(s) the physical inspection takes place and the date the record is created, and it will be signed or otherwise certified by the person making the inspection.
- (c)** Each bridge management program shall specify that every bridge inspection report shall include, as a minimum, the following information:
- (1)** A precise identification of the bridge inspected;
  - (2)** The date on which the physical inspection was completed;
  - (3)** The identification and written or electronic signature of the inspector;
  - (4)** The type of inspection performed, in conformance with the definitions of inspection types in the bridge management program;
  - (5)** An indication on the report as to whether any item noted thereon requires expedited or critical review by a railroad bridge engineer, and any restrictions placed at the time of the inspection;
  - (6)** The condition of components inspected, which may be in a condition reporting format prescribed in the bridge management program, together with any narrative descriptions necessary for the correct interpretation of the report; and
  - (7)** When an inspection does not encompass the entire bridge, the portions of the bridge which were inspected shall be identified in the report.
- (d)** An initial report of each bridge inspection shall be placed in the location designated in the bridge management program within 30 calendar days of the completion of the inspection unless the complete inspection report is filed first. The initial report shall include the information required by paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(5) of this section.
- (e)** A complete report of each bridge inspection, including as a minimum the information required in paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(6) of this section, shall be placed in the location designated in the bridge management program within 120 calendar days of the completion of the inspection.
- (f)** Each bridge inspection program shall specify the retention period and location for bridge inspection records. The retention period shall be no less than two years following the completion of the inspection. Records of underwater inspections shall be retained until the completion and review of the next underwater inspection of the bridge.
- (g)** If a bridge inspector, supervisor, or engineer discovers a deficient condition on a bridge that affects the immediate safety of train operations, that person shall report the condition as promptly as possible to the person who controls the operation of trains on the bridge in order to protect the safety of train operations.

**Attachment 1. List of Bridge Structures**

<b><u>Structure #</u></b>
407.48
408.02
408.84a
408.84b
408.84c
409.74
410.40
411.97
412.25
415.20
415.32
415.59b
415.69
415.79
415.82
415.92
416.21
416.32
416.63
417.24
417.96
418.02
419.42
419.92
420.20
420.46
421.05
421.23
422.53
422.89
423.28
423.44
425.15
427.64
429.79b

**EXHIBIT B**  
**CONSULTING SERVICES AGREEMENT**

DRAFT



Item #8

**TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY**  
**SUBJECT: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ENCROACHMENTS AND LEASING REPORT**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- *Receive and File.*

**BACKGROUND:**

VCTC staff actively manages the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) to administer leases, conduct weed abatement and trash removal to carry out the “Good Neighbor” policy and maintain the right-of-way.

The SPBL consists of 99 parcels owned by CTC and runs for 32 miles from Mile Post (MP) 403 to MP 435, with 29 active track miles extending through MP 432. The SPBL property has 75 active paying leases and generated \$338,015.93 in lease, film, and other local fee revenue in Fiscal Year 2020/2021. The SPBL currently has 621 total ongoing leases, the majority of which are for utilities (458 leases) or access (74 leases) that do not pay lease fees on an ongoing basis. Leased areas include 25 cultivation leases extending 11.55 miles, where agriculture occurs on some portion of the property owned by VCTC and leased to private parties.

Most recently in March 2021, the Commission directed staff to address encroachments through leasing activities to ensure fairness among neighboring landowners and generate revenues to sustain SPBL management and operations. An initial field study conducted in February 2020 and an analysis of the SPBL property indicated that many neighboring properties have extended cultivation activities and/or access onto the public property without entering into a lease with VCTC. These encroachments include row crops, lemon and avocado trees, equipment and materials staging areas, and other uses of the public property without an active lease or other permission to access the Branch Line property.

Though used for a public purpose, railroads are considered private property, unlike streets and highways. In California, courts have found that railroads are not subject to adverse possession, so users cannot gain a right to use the railroad property by using or occupying the property.

**DISCUSSION:**

As leases are renewed or reassigned, VCTC continues to work with landowners to update rent values consistent with current market rates. For leases with termination provisions, VCTC staff will continue to work proactively with leaseholders to update leases to market rates. Since the SPBL Advisory Committee last met in March, two new leases have been executed, one for access (Parallel Systems) and one utility lease (Rancho Dos Vasos).

VCTC Staff continue to conduct field study to document encroachments, prepare and send letters to neighboring property owners to notify, educate, and inform the owners about the need for a lease to access or cultivate within the public right-of-way or on railroad property, and give property owners

sufficient time to respond, execute a lease, or remove encroachments and/or cease access without permission. VCTC staff has not yet been able to access all of the Branch Line to conduct a detailed evaluation due to difficulty of access on certain portions of the Line without crossing private property; however, from a visual inspection, it is anticipated that additional encroachments along the Line are occurring. Upon execution of a Rail Operator Lease, VCTC Staff anticipates working closely with the Rail Operator to identify and prioritize those encroachments that negatively impact safe and efficient rail operations on the SPBL.



Item #9

**TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY**  
**SUBJECT: TRESPASS REMOVAL POLICY UPDATE**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- *Receive and File.*

**BACKGROUND:**

In October 2019, VCTC General Counsel's Office conducted a review of law regarding criminalizing behavior associated with homelessness and the removal of encampments. Counsel advised that, as long as proper notice and claims procedures are followed, VCTC may remove encampments from its property, and that VCTC rail operators may remove encampments and trespassers from their portion of the leased right-of-way via enforcement of trespass laws, providing notice, and coordinating with local law enforcement and social service agencies. Counsel also prepared a draft Trespass Removal Policy in November 2019 based on a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) policy upheld in *Sullivan v. City of Berkeley*.

VCTC staff was in the process of coordinating with local partners to implement the policy, notably storage of personal property, when the COVID-19 global pandemic changed the landscape for government actions. In early 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance advising against removal of homeless encampments unless the individual(s) can be provided non-congregant shelter, to prevent the potential spread into the community of the virus that causes COVID-19. Given this guidance, VCTC did not remove homeless encampments on its property, principally railroad right-of-way.

Instead, VCTC staff worked to address the impacts of encampments to VCTC-owned property and the surrounding neighborhoods, such as removal of accumulated trash, and conducted prevention activities, such as tree pruning and weed abatement. During the first eight months of Fiscal Year 2020/2021 (July 1, 2020 – February 28, 2021), VCTC expended \$54,315.32 for trash removal, weed abatement, and tree pruning on the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL). It is not known what portion of the debris is generated by homeless encampments or illegal dumping; however, problem areas occur in proximity to observable encampments. Staff also communicated with the County Continuum of Care and other partners, requesting support from the Backpack Medicine team and other support to determine whether shelter or care is available for the encampment residents, but refrained from removing encampments.

However, in early 2021, several incidents of increasing severity raised safety concerns for rail operations. To address these concerns, the Commission approved a Trespass Removal Policy in May 2021 to provide clarity and coordination around all aspects of trespass identification, removal, and storage of collected property located on VCTC property, which principally includes railway right-of-way property. The policy outlines identification, site inspection, notice, removal procedures, and personal property storage requirements.

## **DISCUSSION:**

After approval of the Trespass Removal Policy, VCTC Staff worked closely with the Santa Paula Police Department to implement the Policy throughout the City of Santa Paula, where the most significant encampments were located. VCTC Staff conducted the required field surveys, prepared notices in English and Spanish for Trespass and Personal Property Collection, developed tools and procedures for documenting personal property to be collected and stored, and selected a contractor to assist with personal property collection and disposal of debris. Timing of removal activities was closely coordinated across multiple agencies to ensure that notice requirements were met, law enforcement could be present to assist, and to provide an opportunity for County services to be provided to encampment residents.

In June 2021, 12 encampments were removed from the Santa Paula Branch Line within the City of Santa Paula. Figure 1 below depicts the location of eight encampments near the Santa Paula Creek, and also illustrates the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tools to collect and store data about the encampments and removal actions. The encampment removal and associated cleanup of the property resulted in 17,760 pounds of debris disposed, or nearly 8 tons. In July 2021, VCTC removed two additional encampments that had reestablished near the site of the initial removals.

In addition, the VCTC Executive Director signed a letter of authorization that enables the Santa Paula Police Department to enter SPBL property to prevent new encampments from being established. Recent reports indicate that the situation has improved, and VCTC has not received a report of any encampments of concern since July 2021.



**Figure 1.** Aerial image of SPBL identifying the location of 8 out of the 12 encampments removed in June 2021.





Item #10

November 5, 2021

**MEMO TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY**  
**SUBJECT: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE RAIL OPERATOR UPDATE**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- *Receive and File.*

**BACKGROUND:**

Anticipating the expiration of the 20-year operating lease for the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) on June 30, 2021, VCTC issued on October 2, 2020, a Request for Proposals for an Operator of Rail Services, with proposals due in December 2020. VCTC received two proposals, which were reviewed by a team of VCTC Staff and short line rail experts. VCTC entered into negotiations with the highest rated proposer and has worked to reach agreement on the terms and conditions of a long-term lease for operations and maintenance of the SPBL.

On June 30, 2021, the 20-year lease and operating rights to the Santa Paula Branch Line held by Fillmore & Western Railway expired, at which time Fillmore & Western would no longer conduct rail maintenance and inspections, nor respond to emergency calls. Though substantial progress had been made toward agreement between VCTC and the prospective rail operator, no formal contract had been approved by the Commission prior to the June 30th expiration of the operating lease with Fillmore & Western Railway.

To ensure continuity of necessary rail maintenance and inspections and responsiveness to emergency calls on the SPBL while negotiations continue, VCTC entered into an Agreement with Sierra Northern Railway for Track and Signal Maintenance. The contract currently extends through December 31, 2021.

**DISCUSSION:**

At this time, VCTC Interim Executive Director, Staff and General Counsel, and representatives of Sierra Northern Railway continue to negotiate in good faith toward an agreement for long-term operations and maintenance of the SPBL. Staff anticipates bringing the Agreement to the Commission for approval at the December 3, 2021 meeting.

Staff will provide a verbal update and introduce the leadership team from Sierra Northern Railway to the Santa Paula Branch Line Advisory Committee.

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