



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

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AGENDA*

**MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026
1:00 PM**

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

**Ventura County Transportation Commission
751 E. Daily Drive, Suite 420
Camarillo, CA 93010**

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) – *Each individual speaker is limited to three (3) minutes or less or less as set forth below. The Committee may, either at the direction of the Chair or by majority vote of the Committee, waive this three-minute time limitation. Depending on the number of items on the agenda and the number of speakers, the Chair may, at his/her discretion, reduce the time of each speaker to two (2) minutes. In addition, the maximum time for public comment for any individual item or topic is thirty (30) minutes unless extended by the Committee. Speakers may not yield their time to others without the consent of the Chair. Any written documents to be distributed or presented to the Committee shall be submitted to the Clerk of the Board. This policy applies to Public Comments and comments on Agenda Items.*

Under the Brown Act, the Committee should not take action on or discuss matters raised during the 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 03/12/2025 – 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 BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026/2027 – PG. 7**

Recommended Action:

Review draft Fiscal Year 2025/2026 budget for the Santa Paula Branch Line and provide comments to staff.

- 8. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE UPDATE FROM SIERRA NORTHERN RAILWAY – PG. 9**

Recommended Action:

Receive and file an update from Sierra Northern Railway representatives regarding operations and maintenance on the Santa Paula Branch Line.

- 9. SESPE CREEK OVERFLOW RAILROAD BRIDGE UPDATE – PG. 11**

Recommended Action:

Receive and file an update on efforts to repair storm damage to the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge and to seek Federal and State reimbursement of emergency repair costs.

- 10. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE – PG. 13**

Recommended Action:

Receive and file a report on the Santa Paula Branch Line Trail Master Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement project.

- 11. ADJOURN**



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

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MEETING SUMMARY

**THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2025
1:00 PM**

**Ventura County Community Foundation
Board Room
4001 Mission Oaks Blvd.
Camarillo, CA 93012**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Long called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

Attendees included Committee Members Broggie, Crosswhite, Halter, LaVere, and Long, VCTC Executive Director Erickson, VCTC Staff Fagan and Efner, and Matt Blackburn, Ken Beard, and Kennon Beard, representing Sierra Northern Railway.

2. ROLL CALL

Committee Members Broggie, Crosswhite, Halter, LaVere, and Long were in attendance. No Committee Members were absent.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS (For items not on the agenda)

None.

4. APPROVE SUMMARY FROM 03/11/2024 – SPLBAC MEETING

Commissioner Broggie made a motion to approve the minutes from 03/11/2024, seconded by Commissioner Crosswhite. Commissioner Halter abstained. The motion carried 4-0 with 1 abstention.

5. COMMITTEE MEMBERS/STAFF REPORT

Mr. Erickson welcomed Commissioner Halter to the Committee.

6. ADDITIONS/REVISIONS

None.

7. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026

Ms. Fagan provided an overview of the Santa Paula Branch Line draft budget for Fiscal Year 2025/2026, including railroad operations and maintenance, staff time, right-of-way maintenance, repairs to the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge, Santa Paula Branch Line Trail Master Plan Update. The \$5 million Priority Legislative Budget Project contribution to the SPBL Trail project is also added for Fiscal Year 2025/2026. The Committee also discussed accounting for expenses related to storm damage and response for FEMA and CalOES reimbursement and monitoring.

The Committee received and filed the report on the draft budget.

8. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE UPDATE FROM SIERRA NORTHERN RAILWAY

Mr. Beard and Mr. Blackburn shared an update on Sierra Northern Railway operations and activities, which included railroad tie replacement, removal of encampments from the railroad right-of-way in cooperation with local law enforcement, freight rail services, railbike tours, and three film shoots. Railbike ridership was up 19% over the previous year. Railbikes schedules were discussed relative to upcoming housing and hospital development activities in the Santa Paula / Hallock Drive area. Mr. Beard noted that Sierra Northern Railway has four employees currently assigned to the Santa Paula Branch Line. Sierra Northern plans to replace the Ferris Lane Bridge later this spring, which will take about one week to complete.

The Committee received and filed the report.

9. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE OVERFLOW RAILROAD BRIDGE UPDATE

Ms. Fagan provided an update on the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge storm damage and response. Staff anticipate bringing the Invitation for Bids and

Template Contract to the Commission for approval to release at the April Commission meeting. The target to complete bridge reconstruction is October 31, 2025.

The Committee received and filed the report.

10. SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Fagan provided an update on the status of the Trail Master Plan Update. The Commission approved the contract award to WSP for the Trail Master Plan Update at the March 7 Commission meeting. Staff anticipate executing the contract by the end of the week. Trail design and engineering projects are also underway in the Cities of Ventura and Santa Paula.

The Committee received and filed the report.

11. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 PM.

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March 23, 2026

TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY
SUBJECT: DRAFT SANTA PAULA BRANCH BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026/2027

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review draft Fiscal Year 2026/2027 budget for the Santa Paula Branch Line and provide comments to staff.

DISCUSSION:

The Draft Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) budget reflects the fifth full year of operations under the Railroad Lease and Operations Agreement (Agreement) with Sierra Northern Railway (SNR), which became effective January 1, 2022. The Draft Budget provides for operations and maintenance and associated costs for asset management, maintenance, and operational obligations along the thirty-two miles long railroad corridor. The Draft Budget also includes VCTC staff costs for lease and asset management, such as issuing new and updated leases and licenses, coordinating with SNR on right-of-entry permits, and working with City and County partners and other stakeholders to update and implement the SPBL Trail Master Plan to complete the trail.

The Draft Budget includes operations and maintenance of the full SPBL right-of-way, with reimbursement of up to \$450,000 in expenses related to deferred and regular maintenance of the rail infrastructure and right-of-way, pursuant to the Railroad Lease and Operations Agreement. The Draft Fiscal Year 2026/2027 SPBL Budget is \$5,002,100 below the previous fiscal year due to progress on the Sespe Bridge repair project, Trail Master Plan Update, and Priority Legislative Budget Project (PLBP) funds for the SPBL Trail Project. It is anticipated that the Final Program Budget will be updated to reflect amendments to the construction management services contract and the final restart date for repairs to the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge.

Consistent with the prior four fiscal years (2022/2023, 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026), the Signals Repair and Replacement has been absorbed into the Track Maintenance expense category in accordance with the Agreement. A relatively small Non-Rail Maintenance budget (\$5,000) has been retained for maintenance and repair projects that may fall outside the scope of Sierra Northern activities or are VCTC priorities.

Revenues for the Santa Paula Branch Line come from seven primary sources: (1) Local Fees from lease revenue generated by the approximately 75 paying leases along the SPBL; (2) Local Fees from permits, filming, and rail car storage; (3) State Transit

Assistance (STA); (4) STA - Federal Emergency Management Agency / California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) reimbursement; (5) Priority Legislative Budget Project (PLBP) funds, and (6) Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG); and (7) Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) County Transportation Commission Partnership Program Grant. STA funds are used to cover the delta between Local Fee revenues and the deferred and regular maintenance reimbursement to Sierra Northern and as local match against FEMA and CalOES contributions to repair of the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge. STA funds are also used for VCTC staff salaries, benefits, and indirect costs. It is anticipated that STA requirements for the SPBL Budget will be reduced over time as the Agreement with Sierra Northern matures and following completion of disaster response and bridge repair. The PLBP allocation, STBG grant, and REAP grant funds advance the Commission's adopted goal to reinvigorate the process to complete the SPBL bike trail and Strategic Plan strategy to update the trail master plan, validate trail alignment, connections, and amenities, and update existing conditions to facilitate trail completion, with stakeholder engagement.



Item # 8

March 23, 2026

TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY
SUBJECT: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE SIERRA NORTHERN RAILWAY UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

- Receive and file an update from Sierra Northern Railway representatives regarding operations and maintenance on the Santa Paula Branch Line.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2021, VCTC executed a Railroad Lease and Operations Agreement (Agreement) with Sierra Northern Railway (SNR) for a 35-year term. Under the Agreement, SNR is responsible to operate and maintain the full SPBL right-of-way as of January 1, 2022. The Agreement defines roles and responsibilities and grants Sierra Northern the exclusive rights to operate the SPBL for Railroad Purposes, including tourist and freight services, film and television production, and storage and transload services.

DISCUSSION:

Representatives of Sierra Northern Railway will provide verbal updates on the activities, operations and maintenance of the Santa Paula Branch Line railroad.

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March 23, 2026

MEMO TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

SUBJECT: SESPE CREEK OVERFLOW RAILROAD BRIDGE UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

- *Receive and file an update on efforts to repair the Sespe Creek Overflow Railroad Bridge on the Santa Paula Branch Line.*

BACKGROUND:

The Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge is located at approximately Mile Post 423.44 on the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) railroad, just west of Fillmore, California. The bridge was constructed in 1969 and has a total length of 450 feet, vertical clearance of 14 feet, and 15 spans of 29 feet-10 inches each. On the early morning of January 10, 2023, heavy rain, stream flow, and debris accumulated during a series of storms and washed out three spans, or approximately 90 feet, of the railroad bridge. Three spans on the western end of the bridge were destroyed and require reconstruction to restore to pre-disaster design, capacity, and function to restore rail service on the bridge. On February 4-5, 2024, an atmospheric river storm and resulting high water flows caused further erosion behind the abutment and underneath the railroad track structure, exposing approximately 50 additional feet of track beyond the damage caused by the January 2023 storm, which required additional analysis, design, and permitting for emergency repairs to the embankment.

VCTC staff provided detailed written staff reports and verbal presentations on the Sespe Creek Overflow railroad bridge repair project for the November 2025 and January 2026 Commission meetings. Please refer to the corresponding staff reports for project background.

Staff will provide a verbal update on the status of regulatory permits and construction for the bridge repair project.

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March 23, 2026

MEMO TO: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: AMANDA FAGAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

SUBJECT: SANTA PAULA BRANCH LINE TRAIL MASTER PLAN UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

- *Receive and file a report on the Santa Paula Branch Line Trail Master Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report.*

BACKGROUND:

VCTC acquired the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) in 1995 for use as a multimodal corridor, which included a bicycle and hiking trail among its stated purposes. In 1996, VCTC adopted the *SPBL Master Plan*. Then in 2000, VCTC adopted the *SPBL Recreational Trail Master Plan* and certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The *Trail Master Plan* provides design guidelines, preliminary engineering, a preferred alignment for the trail, and mitigations to avoid and address any impacts to agriculture and other resources. To date, three segments of the trail have been completed in the Cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore and within the Piru community.

In April 2022, the Commission adopted a goal (Goal 13) to “Reinvigorate the process to complete the Santa Paula Branch Line bike trail,” and in April 2023, the Commission adopted the VCTC Strategic Plan FY 22/23 – FY 27/28, which includes Objective A8, “Update the Santa Paula Branch Line (SPBL) trail master plan, validate trail alignment, connections, and amenities, and update existing conditions to facilitate trail completion, with stakeholder engagement.” Final design and engineering for the four-mile segment from Montalvo to Saticoy is currently underway, led by the City of Ventura, with construction to be completed in 2027. Design and engineering for a 2.5-mile trail extension within the City of Santa Paula is also underway.

The Commission authorized the Executive Director to finalize and execute an agreement with WSP USA, Inc. to update the SPBL Trail Master Plan and EIR/EIS on March 7, 2025. VCTC staff provided a detailed written staff report and verbal presentation on the SPBL Trail Master Plan Update at the January 2026 Commission meeting. Please refer to the corresponding staff report for project background.

Staff will provide a verbal report on efforts to update the SPBL Trail Master Plan and EIR and other SPBL Trail planning, engineering, and development efforts.

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