

Local

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MICHAEL SMOLENS
Columnist

Transportation agencies struggle to get in sync

There's a growing consensus among elected officials that San Diego needs more housing and residential density should be greatly increased along major transit lines.

For that to be successful, most everyone agrees the region needs a vastly improved transportation system. Whether that can be achieved is a big question mark, in part because the two major transportation agencies don't seem to be on the same page at the moment.

The Metropolitan Transit System, which oversees trolley and bus operations in the county's central, south and east regions, is considering a 2020 ballot measure for a half-cent sales tax to expand service in the years to come.

The San Diego Association of Governments, the regional planning agency, is embarking on a transformative overhaul of the county's decadeslong transportation plan that also eventually would require going to voters for a much bigger tax increase.

Such tax hikes require two-thirds voter approval, a very high hurdle. A lot of stars have to be aligned to reach that threshold for one transportation tax; two is asking a lot, even if they're a few years apart.

Though MTS is considerably farther down the line, much will play out between the two agencies in the coming weeks and months. SANDAG and MTS know what the other is up to and they have been talking.

"The one that gets to the ballot first certainly has an advantage," said Chula Vista Mayor Mary Cassillas Salas. "... There is a fair amount of tension inherent around this."

Salas is among the elected officials who sit on the board of directors of both agencies, which she said puts her in a position akin to a referee.

"There has to be further discussions. There has to be a meeting of the minds," she continued, adding MTS and SANDAG "are not in sync right now."

Those differences aside, there's a broad sense that momentum is building for more reliance on transit in the county's future. For one thing, it's necessary if the increased housing plans are to be realized.

Also, state legislation changed the structure of the SANDAG board, giving the larger, more urbanized — and Democratic — cities more weight. Board members representing those areas tend to be more adamant about alternative transportation being a big part of the future — whether rail, autonomous vehicles, bicycles and whatever technology brings, along with automobiles.

Circulate San Diego, a transportation advocacy group, last week released an analysis of what a 2020 ballot measure could look like for MTS and concluded that a half-cent sales tax could raise in the neighborhood of \$10 billion over 40

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PALOMAR HEALTH, KAISER WEIGH SPLIT

Contract between parties, if not renegotiated, might be allowed to expire in 2022

BY PAUL SISSON

NORTH COUNTY

Palomar Health has put Kaiser Permanente on notice that its current agreement with the health care giant will be allowed to expire unless a better deal can be negotiated.

According to a letter obtained under the California Public Records Act, Robert Hemker, Palomar's former chief executive, notified Kaiser Permanente that the inland North County health system will "not extend" its current hospital services agreement between the two parties beyond its current term, which ends on Sept. 30, 2022.

Palomar borrowed heavily to build the nearly \$1 billion Palomar Medical Center Escondido and has counted on its partnership with

Kaiser to bring in enough revenue to cover the cost of operations and service its debt.

Palomar said in a statement that it has no intention of parting ways with Kaiser but does desire, according to the Oct. 10, 2017 letter, a "dialogue" that would "create a more relevant, long-term, collaborative partnership" and "competitive business agreement going forward."

"The contract no longer works for us," Palomar CEO Diane

Hansen said in an email sent by a Palomar spokesman. "The contract is more than six years old, and things have changed in that time. ... The intent is to come to an agreement on a new contract that works for both sides, not end the agreement."

It's clear that there are more specifics involved here. Palomar's 2017 letter appears to specify exactly how it wants the current agreement to change. A section of

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JOHN GIBBINS U-T

A roller skater enjoys an adults-only skating session on Tuesday morning at Skateworld in Linda Vista, where skaters are able to avoid the nighttime crowds and stretch out at the roller rink.

EFFORT ON TO SAVE RINK

Councilman looks at way to prevent sale of Skateworld

BY DAVID GARRICK

SAN DIEGO

Rallies and protests aimed at saving the region's last roller skating rink have prompted San Diego Councilman Scott Sherman to seek legal advice on what the city could do to prevent the imminent sale of the rink to a developer.

More than 16,000 people have signed a petition to save 44-year-old Skateworld in the heart of Linda Vista, and multiple rallies have been held in recent days in hopes of stopping the sale so the popular rink can remain open.

Supporters say the rink is a community gathering place, a relatively inexpensive recreation opportunity

for families, and a place where at-risk teens spend after-school hours constructively.

Sherman said Tuesday he's almost certain the city's hands are legally tied by a state law that requires public land previously owned by redevelopment agencies to be sold to the highest bidder, regardless of their plans for the site. The city owns the land where Skateworld is located.

But Sherman has asked City At-

torney Mara Elliott to analyze the law and see if there is any wiggle room or gray area on the sale of the land, which has been owned by the city since California dissolved redevelopment agencies in 2012.

"I want to make sure that what I understand is the law, and the actual law, are the same thing," Sherman said. "I would love to be able to do something to make Skateworld stay, but we have to make sure we're

SEE RINK • B3

WHERE LEARNING DISABLED THRIVE

Caregivers around world watching TERI campus take shape in San Marcos

BY PAM KRAGEN

SAN MARCOS

When their toddler son, Chris, was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder some 30 years ago, Steve and Sandy Baker focused their immediate energies on finding the schools and therapeutic resources Chris would need to lead a fulfilling life.

But always in the back of their minds, the Bakers say there was the nagging thought about what would happen to Chris when he grew up and grew old. Now 32, Chris can dress himself and is minimally verbal, but he can't bathe himself or brush his teeth, and he can't live alone.

"We were worried about how he'd live and how we would take care of him," said Steve Baker, who lives in Encinitas. His now-ex-wife Sandy lives in Oceanside. "But we were lucky. We knew about TERI,



HOWARD LIPIN U-T

Chris Baker, who is autistic, plays the piano at a residential home for TERI clients that he lives in.

and we always knew where he would go someday."

TERI Inc. is an Oceanside-based nonprofit, founded 39 years ago to serve the needs of people living with developmental and learning disabilities. It offers 19 programs and services for more than

850 clients, including private schools, adult programs, transportation services, camps and family respite care. It also runs 13 adult residential homes, like the large La Costa house where Chris now lives with five housemates and

SEE TERI • B6

GEORGE BAILEY
1919-2019

FORMER MAYOR OF LA MESA, SUPERVISOR

BY KAREN PEARLMAN

LA MESA

George Bailey, the longtime La Mesa mayor and former San Diego County supervisor, died at his home Monday of congestive heart failure, with his son, Richard, and one of his caregivers by his side. He was 100.

The Ohio native was known for his buzz-cut, flat-top hairstyle, his no-nonsense style during a 35-year career in government and commitment to the East County where he lived for 84 years.

"My grandpa was very strong," said Bailey's granddaughter Kristin Dreesen of Mount Helix. "But the last week was really rough. On Friday, I sang to him and he kind of

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TERI

FROM B1

a resident manager. All of TERI's services have waiting lists, because demand far outstrips supply.

"The need is massive," said Cheryl Kilmer, TERI's co-founder and CEO. "There are huge gaps in society, and we want to work to fill them."

An ambitious, long-term plan to better meet that need kicked off in January, when a groundbreaking ceremony was held for phase two of the TERI Campus of Life at 555 Deer Springs Road in San Marcos.

The \$50 million, 20-acre project in hilly, tree-lined Twin Oaks Valley, will one day serve as a replicable model for TERI-style community centers worldwide.

The center, aiming for completion in 2021, will be a green-designed and sustainable community center offering 111,000 square feet of buildings for client activities and research; kitchen, dining and training facilities for up to 600 people; theaters, galleries, lecture halls and art and music studios for both clients and the public; and a 6.5-acre organic garden and farm training center. The campus will also have a vocational training center for clients, a new administration building and more.

Already, a delegation from China representing 300,000 adults with special needs has expressed an interest in replicating the concept, and TERI is now training and working with specialists in the field of autism and other developmental disabilities in Europe, Asia, Africa and Mexico. The goal is to commercialize the Campus of Life model and use the proceeds to fund further research and programs here in San Diego County.

TERI Campus of Life is one of just a handful of innovative and self-sustaining projects-in-development around the world that is being designed to meet the growing need for affordable services for those with autism and other disabilities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 percent of the world population has autism spectrum disorder. In the U.S., that's 1 in every 59 births, or 3.5 million people. The prevalence of autism in the U.S. increased by 6 percent to 15 percent each year from 2002 to 2010.

The Autism Society in



HOWARD LIPIN U-T

Construction takes place March 5 at the TERI campus in the Twin Oaks Valley area of San Marcos.

Bethesda, Md., reports that autism services cost U.S. citizens \$236 billion to \$262 billion a year, or about \$2.4 million over the lifespan for a person with an intellectual disability. Most of that money is spent on adults, who age out of school services at age 22 but rarely find work in the labor force (only about 17 percent are employed).

One of the key goals of Campus of Life is to teach TERI clients marketable job skills in the culinary arts and other hands-on fields so they can gain confidence and self-esteem and take a small step forward in contributing to their self-sufficiency.

The campus' first phase, the Harriet E. Pflieger Equestrian Center, opened in 2011. The now-in-progress second phase will include building the project's streets, the concrete pads for future structures, the vocational service building, the 6.5-acre farm and the rehabilitation of the property's historic 1875 Gustavus Merriam farmhouse.

The 8,460-square-foot vocational center will offer clients career training in floral arts, woodworking, food processing and sales. The farm will offer training in growing, harvesting, packaging, selling and delivering organic produce to restaurants and farmers markets.

Still to come at the campus in future phases will be a 10,700-square-foot fine arts center; a 10,600-square-foot performing arts and music center; a 7,800-square-foot country school for grades 3 to 12; a 16,000-square-foot learning academy for ages 5 to 22; a child development center; an administration building; a fitness center for clients and staff; an aquatics center with three pools; and a culinary institute for developing farm-produced food products for sale. All of the structures are being constructed with energy-effi-

cient systems and products, including solar panels from Baker Electric in Escondido.

Kilmer said she still needs to raise another \$3 million in donations to move forward on future phases.

TERI — an acronym for Training, Education, Research and Innovation — was founded in 1980 by Kilmer and Krysti DeZonia, who runs TERI's Learning Academy and Country School and the research and life planning departments.

Kilmer said she was studying psychology 40 years ago at the University of Michigan, when she was assigned to work with a girl in a nearby hospital. It was a life-altering experience.

"When you see a place teeming with children with terrible care in terrible conditions, you want to do something," she said.

After relocating to Southern California, Kilmer worked with DeZonia to apply for a grant to move people out of state hospitals into healthier living environments.

They started in Ocean-side with 24 clients in four houses, including the Via Rio home, which housed six young men who previously lived in Fairview State Hospital in Orange County. Thirty-eight years later, those same six men — now in their late 50s and early 60s — still live together in brotherly harmony in Via Rio house, which is now in Fallbrook.

The waiting list for spots in the homes can be long, because openings only occur when a resident dies. Steve Baker said he expected a significant wait, so he and Sandy put Chris on a future-openings list when he was just finishing high school. They were stunned when an opening popped up just two months later.

"We weren't ready to let him go just yet," Steve said.

Although Chris was homesick for the first few years after moving into a TERI home in 2011, he now enjoys visits to his parents' houses as much as he enjoys returning "home" to La Costa house.

Over the past eight years, Sandy Baker said her son has blossomed. He's more confident, more outgoing, has taken up the piano and has become a regular performer at TERI holiday parties and events.

pam.kragen@sduniontribune.com

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