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ROARING CAMP PROVIDES MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FORCED ABANDONMENT

CEO's remarks address misinformation about freight vs. passenger rail, "railbanking," RTC's closed-door discussions, RTC's failure to fix bridges and more

FELTON, CA – JANUARY 26, 2022 – Roaring Camp, Inc. (Roaring Camp), operator of the Santa Cruz, Big Trees & Pacific Railway, today responded to misinformation that is targeting Roaring Camp related to the RTC's consideration of forced abandonment of the rail line owned and operated by Roaring Camp. The following remarks are provided by Roaring Camp CEO Melani Clark:

Are Roaring Camp's tourist trains actually threatened?

Roaring Camp's tourist trains are absolutely threatened. RTC staff and some commissioners, aided by advocates from Greenway and Trail Now, have stated that Roaring Camp's tourist trains will not be impacted by a loss of freight rail. Some have even said that Roaring Camp's business "will be just fine." This is absolutely not the case. An attack on our freight rights is an attack on passenger rail. Loss of our rights to freight service on the Felton Branch Rail Line will mean a loss of current federal protection of our line. Loss of federal protection will mean that our ability to reach the Boardwalk with our tourist trains will be entirely controlled by the RTC and subject to the whims of the current RTC board and leadership, as well as those of the future. In addition, the Felton Branch Rail Line will become vulnerable to future eminent domain claims. The RTC is currently demonstrating an interest in breaking the promise made to my family at the time the RTC purchased the rail line 10 years ago, when we gave up our right to purchase the line. They also are demonstrating an interest in breaking the promise they made to the State of California when the RTC accepted \$14 million in Prop 116 funds that required a promise to maintain the rail line.

Is it true RTC commissioners worked behind closed doors on the issue of forced abandonment and that they will vote on 2/3?

Yes. Some have questioned the accusation that discussion has taken place behind closed doors at the RTC on the topic of forced abandonment. The fact is, RTC commissioners chose to discuss abandonment proceedings in closed session, rather than open session where public input would have been allowed. Not only did the discussion happen behind closed doors, but Roaring Camp was provided no advance notification that the RTC was considering forced abandonment of the Felton Branch Rail Line. On Feb. 3, commissioners will have the opportunity to vote to direct staff to continue working on adverse (forced) abandonment. We implore commissioners to reject any attempt during the Feb. 3 meeting to support the study of, or future consideration of, abandonment of either local branch rail line.

Shouldn't Roaring Camp agree to abandonment because "railbanking" will ensure rail service can return in the future?

Railbanking is not a strategy. It is a fantasy. The RTC, including staff and some commissioners, as well as advocates from Greenway and Trail Now are pushing for so-called "railbanking" as a solution that allows tracks to be removed and rail service to return in the future. In fact, in the 40 years since railbanking was

introduced, 25,000 miles of track has been pulled up and not one single mile has returned to rail service after being paved for a trail. Some have also said railbanking is needed to protect the rail corridor from lawsuits related to easements. This is untrue. The simple and highly effective way to protect the corridor from lawsuits related to easements is to not rip up the tracks. The RTC's recent success managing easements on the North Coast section of the corridor is testament to what's possible when the rail line stays in place. Railbanking is a totally unproven concept for ensuring future rail service. Our community should be deeply concerned about our elected officials considering an utterly unproven concept as the foundation for policymaking that impacts our local economy, the lives of county residents and our future.

Since there hasn't been freight service happening for years, why is Roaring Camp opposed to freight abandonment?

The RTC is directly responsible for the lack of freight service north of Watsonville, due to the RTC's failure to maintain the rail line and specifically due to the RTC's failure to fix two bridges. The RTC is responsible for maintaining the rail line per agreement with Progressive Rail, and per the direction provided by local voters in 2016 through the passage of Measure D. That measure provides approximately \$75 million over the life of the measure to support the rail corridor, specifically including "rail line maintenance and repairs." Currently there are requests for freight service, including at the north end of the line. However, Roaring Camp is unable to meet the requests, due to inaction by the RTC. It is frustrating, as well as ironic, that the RTC is citing lack of freight traffic on the line as a reason for abandonment, when the RTC itself has prevented Roaring Camp's use of the line.

Shouldn't Roaring Camp support abandonment of its line, as well as abandonment of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL), since it's too expensive to fix the SCBRL in support of freight service and future passenger rail service?

The RTC has offered baseless, unverifiable estimates for repairing the RTC-owned SCBRL. Their estimates, created outside of public view just happen to align with their push to end service on the rail line. There has been no study available to the public for scrutiny or third-party validation. There is no report available and no information about who made the estimates or how. There are no schematics of specific bridges to show what repair or maintenance may be needed. Local taxpayers deserve full transparency about estimated costs. Following a transparent process to determine repair costs, the RTC should look to voter-approved Measure D funds as a source, since the measure designates approximately \$75 million to support "rail line maintenance and repairs." In addition, both the state and federal governments have made it clear that funding for rail infrastructure is a key priority. The state includes the SCBRL in Caltrans' State Rail Plan. California is sitting on the largest budget surplus in its history. The federal government recently approved funding for transportation infrastructure, including rail. Without any study or transparency with the public, it simply doesn't pass the straight-face test to say it's too expensive to fix the rail line.

To read Roaring Camp's Jan. 19, 2022, statement on the RTC's consideration of forced abandonment of the Felton Branch Rail Line that is owned and operated by Roaring Camp, click [here](#).

ABOUT ROARING CAMP, INC.

Incorporated in 1958, privately held Roaring Camp, Inc. (Roaring Camp) operates two railroads, including the Redwood Forest Steam Train and the Santa Cruz Big Trees & Pacific Railway. Roaring Camp also owns the historic Felton Branch Rail Line, which is eight miles long and runs across a 1909 steel truss bridge and passes through a tunnel in Santa Cruz that was built in 1875. Norman Clark founded Roaring Camp and ran the business until his passing in 1985, after which his wife, Georgiana assumed ownership and management responsibilities. She was succeeded as CEO by Georgiana and Norman's daughter, Melani Clark. Roaring Camp is a woman-owned business, with majority shareholders that include Melani Clark and her two sisters. Visit www.roaringcamp.com for more information.

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