SECTION B
WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 15, 1995 CC

MET

HIGHLIGHTS

COCHRAN'S DEAL: Attorney Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. signed a book contract for a figure that "slightly exceeds" the $4.2-million advance paid Marcia Clark. **A1**

SPENDING DISPARITY: L.A. schools' spending for students with special needs grew more than tenfold, while the amount spent for regular education programs dropped nearly 3% from 1967 to 1991, a study finds. **B1**

VENICE REVAMP: Community groups that rarely agree are applauding a boardwalk redesign plan that the L.A. parks commission is scheduled to vote on today, although the material to be used for resurfacing has sparked debate. **B1**

HEARTS OF THE CITY

AL SEIB / Los Angeles Times

Robin Deane, above, who spent years being shuffled from one foster home to another, teaches young people to express themselves through dance. **B2**

More Pathways to Coast Sought for the Public

■ **Ocean:** State commission urges that $500,000 in permit fees be used to open new accessways offered by landowners.

By JEFFERY L. RABIN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

With four out of five potential coastal accessways not yet open to the public, the California Coastal Commission unanimously agreed Tuesday to seek legislation that could generate $500,000 a year to open new paths to the state's 1,100-mile coastline.

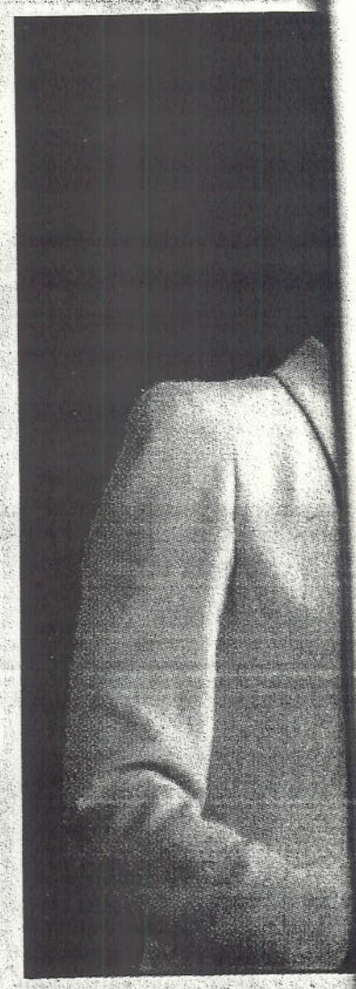
The commission's 11-0 decision came in response to a Times report in September that only 19% of offers to dedicate narrow strips of land for public access along the state's coastline had been accepted by public agencies.

The remaining 81% of the offers will expire—most in the next 10 years—and the potential access they would provide will be lost unless public agencies or nonprofit groups step forward and agree to accept responsibility for them.

Commission Executive Director Peter Douglas called the vote a "strong reaffirmation" of the commission's commitment to public access.

Nowhere is the number of potential accessways greater than in Los Angeles County, which has the biggest population,

Please see COAST, B3



Marcia Clark in light moment Tu
Long Beach, where she spoke

Surface Tensions

Rebuilding the Boardwa

The Los Angeles Recreation and Pa
Commission is expected to vote on a
renovation plan for the Venice boar

Continued from B1
$5,923-per-student cost of running the local district included ballooning shares of funding for bilingual education, desegregation programs and subsidized meals.

Although similar trends were identified in the eight other districts—selected by the Economic Policy Institute to present a national microcosm—Los Angeles' experience was the most extreme.

Project Director Richard Rothstein, a former Los Angeles Unified analyst, said the district is coping with a far more needy student body than others studied.

"Social problems are so much more severe [here] . . . than in the other urban areas we studied," he said. Besides Los Angeles, the urban districts reviewed were East Baton Rouge, La., and Fall River, Mass.

While education spending rose 61% overall, the report speculated that the spending shift may explain why urban areas have stubbornly low showings on standardized tests: most of their new money is going toward serving students with special needs—students who do not typically take the tests.

By contrast, most of the suburban districts evaluated experienced moderate but consistent annual increases in regular education spending, while special education and other programs grew a little more gradually.

The findings prompted questions about whether the tion for limited dollars, said school board member David Tokofsky. "The mentality of the system is not for these regular kids. . . . There's no advocacy for them."

In addition to regular education, declines also were seen in spending for school maintenance and administration.

Rothstein emphasized that the spending increases in some programs cannot be automatically blamed for decreases in others because so many funding sources are involved. Much of the money spent on such things as special education comes to the districts earmarked specifically for those programs, he said.

Yet previous studies have shown that supplemental funding for the special programs—many of them mandated by state or federal law or dictated by court ruling—has not kept pace with their cost, forcing districts to delve ever deeper into their general funds.

Teachers find that trend demoralizing, according to union President Helen Bernstein.

"An awful lot of what's happening for children with special needs is actually necessary because they *do* have special needs," Bernstein said. But teachers feel the sting when their districts find the money for those special needs by raising class size, reducing supply allowances and cutting teachers' salaries, she said.

The Economic Policy Institute study found that forces far outside a district's control—including waves priorities also contributed.

Currently, for instance, nearly half of the Los Angeles Unified's 640,000 students speak little or no English and about a third come from families on welfare.

"Nobody has the kind of population we have in this district, not anywhere in the country," said Los Angeles Unified Supt. Sid Thompson. "And we feel we have a responsibility to these kids, we really do. But it does cost money."

Special education costs rose during the period studied for a variety of reasons, Rothstein said. In the 1960s, many of the students now taught in special education programs were either kept home or housed in state-funded institutions. Some—suffering from serious birth defects—may not previously have survived to school age. Others bear the physical and mental scars of growing drug use among poor mothers.

Public education administrators also became more tolerant over the years, striving to find ways to continue to teach previously excluded groups such as pregnant teen-agers, young mothers and former dropouts. The cost of that quest was reflected in increases in alternative education support during the study years.

"Those are kids who were kicked out of school in 1967," Rothstein said.

district.

Monday's
state Sen.
Asian Paci
California,
ees Assn.
organizatio

After a
district's D
their comp
of Trustees
Monday.

That pr
ments amo
whether to
ee Elizabe
the board i

Trustee
said Yone
education.
complete
the chance

But trus
is the mos
Los Angel
time to im
be interr
jeopardize

And bo
favored
some disc
removal."

Yoneji,
publicity-
one of th
public off
they foun

Yoneji,
1973 to 1
chancello
interim c
after a na

COAST: Access

Continued from B1
the most development and the greatest demands for beach access along the California coast.

More than 370 of the 1,012 unaccepted offers to dedicate strips of land to the beach, along the shoreline, or for trails in coastal mountains are in Los Angeles County. Most are in Malibu, where long stretches of the beachfront along Pacific Coast Highway are walled off from the public by homes and commercial development.

Intense opposition from some Malibu residents has prevented the opening of secluded beachfront areas to the public. That was evident again Tuesday as the commission heard from an Escondido Beach property owner opposed to having $75,000 spent to open and maintain two accessways, including one on his land.

By a 6-4 vote at Tuesday's meeting near Los Angeles International Airport, the commissioners agreed to transfer $75,000 from a Malibu access fund to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which has agreed to open the accessways on the Malibu shoreline.

To ensure that the opportunities for accessways are not lost across the state, the commission called on the Legislature to pass two bills next year that would allow about $500,000 a year in coastal development permit fees to be used for grants to speed up the slow process of getting potential accessways in the hands of public agencies or nonprofit groups. The money now goes directly to the state's general fund and is not designated for coastal purposes.

In addition, the commission will ask legislators to give greater immunity from lawsuits to public agencies and nonprofit groups that agree to open and maintain the accessways.

From the late 1970s through much of the 1980s, the commission required property owners seeking to develop coastal land to dedicate a portion of their property alongside a home or building or along the beachfront for public access.

Many local governments along the coast have declined to accept the access points and then open them to the public because of fears that doing so would expose them to legal liability if someone were injured.

"Without legal and financial help, they simply won't be accepted," said Coastal Commissioner Gary Giacomini. "That is not in doubt."

Douglas said the commission has "taken steps to make sure no [offers to dedicate] will expire." He said the state Coastal Conservancy and the State Lands Commission have agreed to accept the potential accessways to prevent them from being lost. The organizations say they do not have the money to open all the accessways, but can help preserve them.

EDITORIALS of THE TIMES

Public Access to Beaches

■ Re "The Long, Bumpy Path to the Beach," editorial, Nov. 26:

Protecting and expanding rights of public access to and along the California coast have always been and continue to be the Coastal Commission's highest priority. The challenge is translating this policy into reality. Unfortunately, your editorial relating to potential public access ways along the coast (i.e., existing legal "offers to dedicate" easements for public use (OTDs), which have not yet been accepted and opened to the public, misstated several important facts. The editorial unnecessarily alarmed members of the public by incorrectly suggesting public coastal access opportunities could be lost as a result of inaction by the Coastal Commission. In fact, public access opportunities represented by OTDs will not be lost because the commission long ago took steps to make sure these OTDs would be preserved. The State Coastal Conservancy and the State Lands Commission have agreed to accept legal title to any OTD that would otherwise expire. Losing public access opportunities represented by OTDs is not the issue—finding a way to convert them into usable public access on the ground is.

The commission does not have the legal authority to accept and hold interests in land (i.e., easements for public use). Nor can the commission make the physical improvements needed before people can use an access way to the beach; nor can it accept maintenance and liability responsibilities for access ways. The Coastal Act prohibits opening potential access facilities to public use unless and until a public or private organization, other than the commission, steps forward to accept responsibility for liability, operations and maintenance of the access way. Unfortunately, due to fiscal constraints, potential liability costs and the politics of local opposition to access for the general public, few governmental or private, nonprofit organizations have stepped forward.

Disturbed and frustrated by the lack of progress in opening new access ways for public use, the Coastal Commission has taken the initiative to seek legislation to address the problem. The first measure would place coastal development permit fees that the commission collects (about $500,000 per year) and which now go to the state's general fund into a special public access account that the Coastal Conservancy would use to make grants to local governments and nonprofit groups for the purpose of improving and opening access ways on the coast. Another proposal would expand protections against legal liability for any property owner who provides free coastal access to the public. In addition, the commission will increase its ongoing efforts to persuade public and private agencies and organizations to open and operate coastal access facilities.

PETER DOUGLAS, Exec. Dir.
California Coastal Commission
San Francisco