



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

MINUTES

**Thursday, December 3, 2015
9:00 a.m.**

**County Board of Supervisors Chambers
701 Ocean Street, 5th floor
Santa Cruz, CA**

1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at: 9:02 a.m.

Members present:

John Leopold	Don Lane
Zach Friend	Ryan Coonerty
Greg Caput	Bruce McPherson
Jimmy Dutra	Randy Johnson
Dennis Norton	Cynthia Chase
Ed Bottorff	Karina Cervantez
Brandy Rider	Virginia Johnson (alt.)
Tony Gregorio (alt.)	

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Jennifer Rodriguez
Rachel Moriconi	Karena Pushnik
Cory Caletti	Kim Shultz

2. Oral communications

Jack Nelson, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, quoted President Obama's speech about embracing responsibility for global warming. Mr. Nelson said that our atmosphere has a record level of CO₂, surpassing 400 parts per million, and the heat is not vanishing. He stated that if we destroy creation, creation will destroy us, and urged the Commission to consider a balance in all transportation projects.

Nancy Faulstich, Watsonville Climate Action Network, said that world leaders are currently meeting and discussing climate change issues. Ms. Faulstich stated that over 50% of carbon emissions are from transportation and pollution is the cause of rising rates of asthma. She noted that policies need to be made for preservations and to help people make good decisions.

Pam Stearns, Santa Cruz Climate Action Network, stated that she is opposed to highway widening because continuous highway widening will still lead to congestion. She said the use of fossil fuels in transportation needs to be limited.

Carey Pico, said he's had many jobs, in which he specialized in troubleshooting issues, and suggested that a Citizens Advisory Board be formed so members of the public can contribute to solving transportation issues and so that the community could be assured of the RTC's transparency.

Kirk Ance, Lift Line, stated that the Community Bridges board had voted to support the expenditure plan and sales tax measure and distributed a letter to Commissioners.

Amelia Conlen, Bike Santa Cruz County, said she appreciates the recognition of the Bicycle Advisory Committee's 40th anniversary and thanked Caltrans for their work to improve the rumble strips project.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

A handout for Item 15, a replacement page for Items 18 and 19, and additional pages for Items 12, 17, 18, and 19 were distributed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Norton moved and Commissioner McPherson seconded the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Leopold, Lane, Friend, Coonerty, Caput, McPherson, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, and Cervantez voting "aye".

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the November 5, 2015 Regional Transportation Commission meeting
5. Approved draft minutes of the November 19, 2015 Transportation Policy Workshop meeting

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS

No consent items

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

6. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
7. Approved out-of-state travel for one Transportation Planning Technician

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

No consent items

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

8. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
9. Accepted correspondence log
10. Accepted letters from RTC committees and staff to other agencies - *None*
11. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on RTC projects and transportation issues
12. Accepted information items - *None*

REGULAR AGENDA

13. Commissioner reports – oral reports

Chair Leopold reported on his attendance at a Caltrans Highway 17 Access Management Plan (AMP) public meeting and the Summit community's appreciation for being included.

Commissioner McPherson stated that he also attended an AMP meeting and noted that although the federal committee recently approved a transportation bill, the state funding is not looking very promising for 2016.

14. Election of 2016 RTC chair and vice-chair

Commissioner Leopold said that the appointing committee nominated Commissioner Don Lane as Chair and Commissioner Zach Friend as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Bottorff moved and Commissioner McPherson seconded a motion to approve the nominations of Commissioner Lane as Chair and Commissioner Friend as Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Leopold, Lane, Friend, Coonerty, Caput, McPherson, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, and Cervantez voting "aye".

15. Director's report – oral report

George Dondero, Executive Director, reported on several items, including: the federal bill, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act; he reminded everyone that the Highway 1 Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) is available for public review, with a comment period through January 18, 2016: he invited all to attend the DEIR/EA open house this evening from 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Live Oak Elementary School and to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County presentation, "All About Your Local Rail Trail", next Tuesday, December 8th, 2016 from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Hotel Paradox.

He noted that the Bicycle Advisory Committee was recognized for their 40th anniversary, as well as being a nominee for a 2015 Wheelie Award. The award winners will be announced at Bike Santa Cruz County's Annual Dinner on December 6th, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Food Lounge in Santa Cruz.

Mr. Dondero welcomed Nestor Guevara, who recently joined the RTC as the new Temporary Transportation Planning Technician. Nestor is from Puerto Rico and has his Masters in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon.

16. Caltrans report and consider action items

Brandy Rider said that Caltrans is seeking input for the 2016 State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP). The draft is available online and the comment period is open until December 15th. Ms. Rider noted that Caltrans is currently winterizing the transportation infrastructure to accommodate the rainy season.

18. November 2016 Transportation Ballot Measure – Expenditure Plan – *Taken out of order before Item 17*

George Dondero, Executive Director, presented his staff report and handed out an additional page showing the current Transportation Development Act (TDA) and tax measure allocations for Santa Cruz Metro and Community Bridges.

Commissioners discussed: rail corridor maintenance and repair; operating expenses and funding; Monterey County considering a tax measure; responsibilities in providing the best representative investments; overall balance versus victory for specific groups; simplifying allocation priorities; choke points on Highway 1 after the auxiliary lanes end; the Highway 1 EIR; the importance of becoming a self help county for increased state and federal participation; sustainable transportation; a possible friendly amendment to the staff recommendation to increase funding for Santa Cruz Metro; support of the measure to ensure future transportation issues are addressed; the need for congestion relief specifically for South County commuters; working with the needs of every jurisdiction; the rail not deterring from the progress of the trail; the Climate Action Plan; corridor efficiency for reduced emissions; alternatives to lower carbon footprints; how fighting a specific cause hurts the most vulnerable; disproportionate number of votes, impacts, and needs; maintaining quality of life; adapting to climate changes; support being critical to help the most vulnerable that need transit services; examining future possibilities of the rail; fracking banned in Santa Cruz County to reduce global warming; and Santa Cruz Metro zero emission fleets.

Jack Nelson, read a letter of comments on the Highway 1 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and distributed a copy to Commissioners. Mr. Nelson noted that he supports most of the proposed allocation of funds, with the exception of Highway 1 auxiliary lanes. He asked the Commission to consider postponing allocating funds to highway projects to allow for more time for alternatives to be evaluated.

Carey Pico, said rail option needs to be studied rather than advocated for because the trail can be made without a rail. He stated that there are unjustified projects included in the expenditure plan. He also noted that the State of California gave a lower estimate on the cost to build Pajaro Station.

Nancy Faulstich, said the cost of cleaning up climate changes is higher than preventing them and policies need to be made to lower carbon emissions. Ms. Faulstich suggested incentivizing pools for transportation and stated that promoting single occupancy vehicles is selfish. She said that we have a responsibility to use alternative transportation to build communities and the convenience in using cars is endangering the planet.

Joe Martinez, Trail NOW, stated that the RTC should not approve the ballot measure with the proposed expenditure plan, and does not agree with the allocations for the rail. He said he believes the tax measure will fail and eliminate the funding needed for other projects needing attention. Mr. Martinez included a written statement of his comment to be added to the handouts.

Mark Mesiti-Miller, said this county that has become congested and the relatively balanced expenditure plan is needed to get everyone moving. He stated that he supports the opportunity to become a self-help county and that the rail is valuable to the community.

Roland Saher, said we have to think about the future that is beginning right now with climate change happening. Mr. Saher stated that the Highway 1 EIR is a direct contradiction to the Climate Action Plan and encouraged the Commission to stick with the plan's goals of reducing green house gas emissions and not invite more single occupancy vehicles to drive on the highway.

Rick Longinotti, stated that it will take skill and creativity to come up with a measure that everyone could support. He said we need to wait before investing money in Highway 1 because it can no longer be argued that auxiliary lanes will relieve congestion, and alternatives will continue to be advocated for.

Terry Corwin, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, said she supports the allocation plan as is, even if it means not everyone will be supporting it, because the plan will provide an overall benefit of community.

Paul Elerick, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, noted that the business community funded the voter survey. Mr. Elerick said the sales tax measure is needed to fix local roads, but believes the lack of merit in the Highway 1 EIR will cause the sales tax measure to fail and we should think twice before casting percentages in stone.

Robert Singleton, Santa Cruz County Business Council, said he supports the expenditure plan because doing something is better than doing nothing. Mr. Singleton stated that there is a dire need for transportation improvements and we should use the plan that is most likely to pass to become a self help county, because specialized groups can easily defeat the measure.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, said the expenditure plan is a balanced compromise and provides significant funding for active transportation, transit, and rail.

Dana Bagshaw, said she finds public transportation very useful and is in favor of transportation improvements that will reduce carbon emissions.

Bruce Van Allen, noted that a recent report from Caltrans said widening the highway will not reduce congestion and he supports the other expenditure plan projects. He said to consider the 2/3 votes needed for the sales tax measure to pass because the rail needs to be made available so we aren't dependent on driving on the freeway.

Eduardo Montecino, said that we need to work together in moving the community in the right direction to become a self help county. He stated that with the economy getting better and more jobs available, working families having a little bit of extra time to be with their families makes a difference.

Bill Tysseling, Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce, told of Santa Barbara's experience of polling and the outcome of votes, and said the polling results should be considered to have the sales tax measure pass. Mr. Tysseling stated that the time constrained retail workforce has impacted the economy and transportation needs to be improved.

Commissioner Friend moved and Commissioner McPherson seconded the staff recommendation to adopt the expenditure plan for a local ½ cent sales tax ballot measure for the presidential election of November 8, 2016 as shown on Attachment 1 to the written staff report for this item.

Commissioner Lane moved a friendly amendment to increase the mobility access allocation to 16% and reduce the rail corridor allocation to 14% with a distribution of the mobility access allocation as 15% to Santa Cruz Metro and 1% to Community Bridges. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chase. The friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and the second of the main motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Leopold, Lane, Friend, Coonerty, Dutra, Norton, Chase, McPherson, Bottorff, and Cervantez, voting "aye" and Commissioners Caput and Johnson voting "nay".

Chair Leopold called for a 5 minute break at 11:18 a.m.

Commissioner Caput left the meeting during the break and was replaced by Commissioner Alternate Gregorio.

Commissioner McPherson left the meeting during the break and was replaced by Commissioner Alternate Johnson.

Chair Leopold resumed the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

17. Rail Transit Study – final report – *Taken out of order after Item 18*

Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner, presented her staff report. Ms. Moriconi introduced the consultants Lindsey Hilde and Bob Grandy, from Fehr and Peers, who provided updated information and clarification on the final report of the Rail Transit Feasibility Study on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. A summary of addressed public comments received from the draft study was provided, as well as suggested parameters for phased implementation steps.

Commissioners discussed: the evaluation of service scenarios and composite scores; service to Watsonville during peak hours; parking constraints; community input for long term plans to have park and ride facilities; political and job access components; developing ridership forecasts for local colleges transit ridership; increase in housing density and investing in infrastructure; narrowing options with public input; compatibilities with noise and train technology; current allocations of funding to rail projects; and train technology advancing faster than projects are being implemented.

Rick Longinotti, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, said electric cars are becoming more popular and redesigning the Santa Cruz Metro system, to have a unified plan, needs to be considered.

Commissioner Lane moved and Commissioner Coonerty seconded to accept staff recommendation to accept the Rail Transit Feasibility Study for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and to direct staff to seek funding to conduct environmental review, preliminary engineering, and other analysis needed to answer questions regarding potential rail transit options. The motion passed with Commissioners Leopold, Lane, Friend, Coonerty, Dutra, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, Cervantez and Commissioner Alternates V. Johnson and Gregorio voting "aye" and Commissioner R. Johnson voting "nay".

19. Adoption of the 2016 Regional Transportation Improvement Program

Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner, presented her staff report. With the reduction in gas prices, there will be no new funding and projects programmed in Santa Cruz County will be unable to move forward this year.

Commissioners discussed the ITAC conversations, the importance of credibility, commitment to priorities, maintaining timelines, and funding availability; and having the bridge component separate from the highway corridor projects.

Amelia Conlen, said the Mar Vista bridge is a very popular project in the community and urged the Commission to continue moving the project forward.

Commissioner Norton moved and Commissioner Lane seconded to adopt **(Resolution 08-16)** approving the 2016 Regional Transportation Improvement Program and amending project listings for previously programmed projects. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Leopold, Lane, Friend, Coonerty, Dutra, Johnson, Norton, Chase, Bottorff, Cervantez, and Commissioner Alternates Johnson and Gregorio voting "aye".

20. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Commissioners adjourned to closed session at: 12:09 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

21. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-EXISTING LITIGATION. (Paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code) Santa Cruz Superior Court Case No. CV182123
22. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION. Significant exposure to litigation pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9 of the Government code: one case
23. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION. Initiation of litigation pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9 of the Government code: one case

OPEN SESSION

24. Report on closed session - *no report*
25. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 21, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the City of Santa Cruz Council Chambers, 809 Center St., Santa Cruz, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 18, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

The meeting adjourned at: 12:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Rodriguez, Staff

Attendees:

Alex Clifford	Santa Cruz Metro
Amelia Conlen	Bike Santa Cruz County
Bill Tysseling	Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce
Bob Grandy	Fehr and Peers Consulting
Bruce Van Allen	
Carey Pico	
Claire Fliesler	City of Santa Cruz

Dana Bagshaw	
Eduardo Montecino	
Erick Friedrich	Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
Gary Merrill	Santa Cruz County Business Council
Grace Voss	
Jack Nelson	Campaign for Sensible Transportation
James Swofford	
Jim Williamson	
Joe Martinez	Trail Now
Kelly McClendon	Caltrans
Kirk Ance	Community Bridges/Lift Line
Laura Diaz	Community Bridges/ Lift Line
Lindsey Hilde	Fehr and Peers Consulting
Mark Mesiti-Miller	
Miles Reiter	
Nancy Faulstich	Watsonville Climate Action Network
Pam Stearns	Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Patrick Stoll	
Paul Elerick	Campaign for Sensible Transportation
Piet Canin	Ecology Action
Rick Longinotti	Campaign for Sensible Transportation
Robert Singleton	Santa Cruz County Business Council
Roland Saher	
Russell Chen	County of Santa Cruz Public Works
Terry Corwin	Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Tom Padula	Solar Rail