1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

Members present:

Jacques Bertrand
Ed Bottorff
Sandy Brown
Greg Caput
Cynthia Chase
Trina Coffman-Gomez
John Leopold
Randy Johnson
Bruce McPherson
Patrick Mulhearn (alt.)
Andy Schiffrin (alt.)
John Olejnik (ex-officio)

Staff present:

George Dondero
Guy Preston
Luis Pavel Mendez
Nzuzi (Daniel) Nikuna
Yesenia Parra
Grace Blakeslee
Cory Caletti
Sarah Christensen
Fernanda Dias Pini
Ginger Dykaar
Rachel Moriconi
Shannon Munz

Chair Leopold moved Item 22 to come before Item 2.


Dave Fellon, Progressive Rail (PGR), Inc. Owner and President, gave an update on PGR’s progress during their first 4 months of service.

Commissioners discussed: local demand for freight rail service; data on the anticipated effects to the numbers of freight trucks on Highway 1 due to Progressive Rail’s (PGR) operations; Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line repairs
timeline; assessment and data detailing PGR’s contributions to the local economy; public outreach meetings to be held by PGR; information on PGR’s plans for moving freight trains through the county; Watsonville businesses’ satisfaction with PGR’s services. Commissioners also requested regularly scheduled progress reports from PGR detailing services rendered.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, supports freight rail south of Lee Road and asked that Progressive Rail’s (PGR) contract be renegotiated to limit service to south county only.

Carey Pico, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that demand estimates for passenger rail presented by PGR are optimistic and that rail service in the county will be costly for taxpayers.

Jack Carroll, Santa Cruz County resident, questioned whether county residents north of Watsonville would benefit from rail services, and whether there can be both freight and passenger rail services on the rail corridor.

Stanley Sokolow, Santa Cruz County resident, inquired about PGR’s plans to provide freight and passenger rail service on the rail corridor.

Ryan Sarnataro, Live Oak resident, urged that PGR contract be renegotiated to be exclusive to freight services in Watsonville and he asked for greater community engagement to decide on the best use for the corridor.

Buzz Anderson, Live Oak resident, stated that previous rail operators failed due to insufficient demand and urged the RTC to consider the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District’s (METRO) request for an alternatives analysis.

Gail McNulty, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the RTC should be wary of PGR.

Silvia Morales, Santa Cruz County Greenway, inquired if the contract with PGR allows for freight service to be prioritized over passenger service and why there has not been greater discussion about rail transport of flammable materials through the county.

Corinna McFarlane, Live Oak resident, opposes freight rail service in North County.

Bud Colligan, Santa Cruz County Greenway, stated that previous rail operators failed due to lack of demand for freight service and that he supports keeping freight service exclusive to Watsonville. Mr. Colligan asked that the agreement with PGR be renegotiated.

Cathy Marino, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that county residents need transportation options, that passenger and freight rail services provide an
environmentally sustainable alternative, which she believes to be the best option for the region.

**Barry Scott**, Aptos resident, is impressed with the investment PGR has already made to restoring the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. Mr. Scott stated that freight and passenger rail services should be pursued for the entire county.

**Diana Adamic**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that rail does not provide the transportation solutions needed in the county, and she asked for greater investment in emerging transportation technologies and in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

**Lowell Hurst**, Mayor of Watsonville, stated that there is a need for freight rail services and for better transportation solutions for county residents. He also stated that it is important to consider economic development, the need to decrease the number of trucks on highways, and for the RTC to move forward with getting Santa Cruz moving.

2. Oral communications

**Jack Nelson**, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation, spoke on the imperative need to combat climate change through sustainable policies in transportation planning.

**Brian Peoples**, Trail Now, stated that active modes of transportation provide transportation options in the county.

**Corinna McFarlane**, Live Oak resident, informed the RTC that she is working with the Center for Wise Democracy to hold a *Santa Cruz County We the People Council* - a community conversation to discuss the rail corridor issue.

**Michael Saint**, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation, stated that due to the climate change crisis, CO2 emission reduction needs to be prioritized, and that auxiliary lanes and highway widening does not advance that goal.

**Brett Garrett**, City of Santa Cruz resident, spoke on the recently approved City of Santa Cruz Climate Emergency Resolution.

**Carey Pico**, Santa Cruz County resident, commented on property easements along the rail corridor and asked that Commissioners consider the most risk-averse option to ensuring that the RTC retains the right-of-way.

**Gail McNulty**, Santa Cruz County resident, asked that Commissioners consider interest groups that are behind pro-rail organizations in the county. Ms. McNulty stated that serious changes need to be made to address the dangers of climate change.
Ryan Sarnataro, Live Oak resident, asked for a document showing the funding sources and fund allocation of rail projects.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

   Replacement page for Items 5, 10, and 24 and handouts for Item 23.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioners thanked staff for the update on the storm damage repair project and stated that the fence on the railroad bridge across Highway 1 in Rio del Mar will be fixed in the near-term.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin requested that Item 6 include direction to staff to provide a report at the January 17, 2019 Regional Transportation Commission meeting on the timeline, process, and future actions for moving forward after the release of the Highway 1 Tier I and Tier II Project Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Bertrand seconded the amended consent agenda with the addition to Item 6 as described above. The motion carried unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Chase, Coffman-Gomez, Leopold, Johnson, Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Schiffrin voting “aye.”

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the November 1, 2018 Regional Transportation Commission meeting

5. Approved draft minutes of the November 15, 2018 Regional Transportation special meeting

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS

6. Accepted update on the completion of the Highway 1 Tier I and Tier II Project Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment

7. Accepted update on storm damage repair projects on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

8. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
9. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues and distribution

10. Accepted Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18 SCCRTC Annual Internal Financial Statements

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

No consent items

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

11. Accepted monthly meeting schedule

12. Accepted correspondence log

13. Accepted letters from RTC committees and staff to other agencies
   a. November 5, 2018 letter from Veronica Elsea, Elderly and Disabled Transportation Committee Chair, to Matt Machado, County of Santa Cruz Deputy CEO/Public Works Director, expressing support for the Active Transportation Planning grant application

14. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on RTC projects and transportation issues – none

15. Accepted information items – none

REGULAR AGENDA

16. Commissioner reports – oral reports – none

17. Director’s report – oral report

George Dondero, departing Executive Director, reflected on his 12-year tenure at the RTC. Mr. Dondero thanked the dedicated staff and Commissioners who worked with him to pass Measure D and to make Santa Cruz County a self-help county. He encouraged Commissioners to make best use of the rail corridor and take the next logical steps towards implementing high-quality public transit in the county.

Guy Preston, Executive Director, thanked George Dondero for the service he provided to Santa Cruz County and the RTC. Mr. Preston reported on: the pre-construction meeting for the San Lorenzo Bridge Trestle project; a meeting with Alex Clifford, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) CEO & General Manager; the City of Santa Cruz Planning Commission postponement of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) consideration document for the Phase II of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary
Scenic Trail (MBSST) Segment 7 project; and the first segment of the Coastal Rail Trail – the San Lorenzo River Parkway Phase III/ Trestle Trail Project groundbreaking on January 10, 2019.

18. Caltrans report

John Olejnik, Caltrans District 5, announced that 50 Senate Bill (SB) 1-funded projects have been completed and that an additional 50 projects will be completed by the end of 2018. Mr. Olejnik also stated that SB 1 provides funding for many planning grants and that Caltrans is actively seeking to incentivize communities to apply for these grants.

Commissioners requested information on: South County projects; if Caltrans is conducting a study on the impact to the red-legged frog as part of the Highway 1 Davenport Culvert Replacement project; and the status of the Scott Creek Bridge replacement project.

Gail McNulty, Santa Cruz County resident, asked about the District 5 Climate Vulnerability Assessment timeline and how the RTC could incorporate it in its projects.

19. Appreciation of Executive Director George Dondero and Fiscal Officer Nzuzi (Daniel) Nikuna (Resolutions 12-19 and 13-19)

George Dondero, Executive Director, introduced Nzuzi (Daniel) Nikuna, who is retiring after nearly 26-years of service as the Fiscal Officer to the RTC.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Nikuna for his dedication and stellar service provided to the RTC.

Commissioner Leopold, introduced George Dondero, Executive Director, who is retiring after his 12-years of service to the RTC.

Commissioners remarked on Mr. Dondero’s outstanding leadership and service provided to the RTC.

Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Chase, Coffman-Gomez, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Schiffrin approved by acclamation resolutions (12-19 and 13-19) to commend Daniel Nikuna and George Dondero on their years of service to the RTC.

20. Appreciation of departing Commissioner Cynthia Chase

Item moved to a future meeting
21. Election of 2019 RTC chair and vice-chair

Commissioner Leopold reported that Commissioner Ed Bottorff was nominated as Chair and Commissioner Bruce McPherson as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Bertrand seconded a motion to approve the nominations of Commissioner Bottorff as Chair and Commissioner McPherson as Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Chase, Coffman-Gomez, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Schiffrin voting “aye.”

23. Unified Corridor Investment Study – Additional Information

Ginger Dykaar, Senior Transportation Planner, presented the staff report. Commissioner Caput left the meeting.

Commissioners discussed and obtained information from staff on: number of easements on the rail property and the ramifications of releasing ownership of the rail corridor; Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District’s (METRO) request and timing of an alternatives analysis; bus rapid transit on the rail corridor; and impact on future transportation projects and planning by selecting a scenario.

Commissioner Chase left the meeting.

Stanley Sokolow, Santa Cruz County resident, asked why there has not been an effort to legally address any questions about property easements along the right-of-way prior to conducting the Unified Corridor Investment Study (UCS) and if legal fees are budgeted as part of the UCS.

Jack Nelson, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation, supports a version of Scenario B that would include an evaluation of either bus or train on the rail corridor. Mr. Nelson also asked that invisible forces, such as carbon dioxide and its serious impacts, be considered when deciding on the future of transportation in the county.

Bud Colligan, Santa Cruz County Greenway, stated that the Rail and Trail plan does not work for ridership, cost, health, safety, and environmental reasons, and that it does not have full community support. Mr. Colligan supports Scenario “R” because it is cheaper than the draft proposed scenario and proposes public transit on the three corridors analyzed in the UCS.

Jack Carroll, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the train is too expensive, that it is unfunded, and that voters would not support new taxes to fund it. Mr. Carroll urged for railbanking to be considered on the rail corridor.
Carey Pico, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that railbanking is the best and most fiscally responsible option for the rail corridor because it will allow for it to be utilized in the near-future.

Manu Koenig, Greenway, asked that the RTC adopt Greenway’s *Statements of Principles for the Coastal Corridor*. Mr. Koenig supports Scenario “R” because it is realistic, effective, and affordable, and because it provides congestion relief and public transit on the rail corridor, Soquel Avenue/Drive, and Highway 1.

Rick Longinotti, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation, supports transit on the rail corridor and METRO’s request for an alternatives analysis. Mr. Longinotti asked that Highway 1 auxiliary lanes funding be diverted to creating a robust bus on shoulder system.

Will Mayo, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that Scenario B’s excursion train does not benefit the community and that it is unfunded. Mr. Mayo requested that the RTC return Proposition 116 funds and abandon a rail option on the rail corridor.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, supports METRO’s request for an alternatives analysis but stated that it should not be exclusive to public transit. Mr. Peoples stated that Scenario B has already had a negative impact on property prices along the rail corridor.

Brett Garrett, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that more information on the easements along the right-of-way is needed and urged the pursuit of full ownership of the rail corridor. Mr. Garrett supports METRO’s request for an alternatives analysis and that personal rapid transit be included in that analysis.

Michael Saint, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation, commented on Caltrans’ input on the UCS and expressed support for a modified Scenario B without additional developments to car-focused infrastructure and the inclusion of rail freight service in Watsonville.

Johanna Lighthill, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the draft preferred scenario is closer to Scenario E than Scenario B, and suggested that another public comment input period should be provided for Commissioners and stakeholders to analyze the draft preferred scenario.

Sally Arnold, City of Santa Cruz resident, stated that deciding on the UCS does not preclude subsequent analyses of the best mode of transportation on the rail corridor. Ms. Arnold asked that the tracks be kept in place.

David Van Brink, City of Santa Cruz resident, stated that Commissioners ought to be wary of the intentions of certain citizen advocacy groups.
Barry Scott, Aptos resident, stated that infrastructure needs to be built to address both current and future transportation needs of the community.

*Commissioner Brown left the meeting.*

Janneke Strause, Bike Santa Cruz County, supports building the trail now and continuing the study on passenger rail, asked the Commission to continue building the trail as planned.

Ashley Winn, La Selva Beach, requested that small electric buses be implemented on the rail corridor and that high occupancy vehicle lanes be prioritized. Mr. Winn stated that parts of the rail tracks are going to be inoperable due to climate change.

City of Watsonville resident, requested that Commissioners consider the needs of Watsonville residents and greenhouse gas reductions when making a decision and that all possible funding sources be explored. She also supports passenger rail and opposes Highway 1 expansion.

Keith Otto, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the RTC should not pursue freight or passenger rail services, other than freight rail in Watsonville, and instead allot maximum funding for Highway 1 improvements and METRO. Mr. Otto also asked that the UCS decision be subjected to voter approval.

Gail McNulty, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that RTC should prioritize impactful climate change planning, and that the contract with Progressive Rail jeopardizes the community.

24. Countywide Bicycle Wayfinding Signage Project

Anais Schenk, Transportation Planner, presented the staff report on the recommendation for a contractor selection for construction of the Countywide Bicycle Wayfinding Signage project.

*Commissioner Johnson left the meeting.*

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner McPherson seconded the staff recommendation to execute a contract with Liner Tech Striping for of the Countywide Bicycle Wayfinding Signage project contingent on receipt of: payment and performance bonds; list of subcontractors; documentation of good faith effort for hiring local labor; as well as a Certificate of Insurance showing the required coverage.

The motion carried unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Coffman-Gomez, Leopold, McPherson, Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Schiffrin voting “aye.”
25. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Luis Mendez, Deputy Director, informed the RTC that a closed session would not be needed.

CLOSED SESSION

26. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9 (d)(1) for Santa Cruz Superior Court Case No. 18CV02101

27. CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATOR pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Property: Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
Agency Negotiator: George Dondero and Luis Pavel Mendez
Negotiating Parties: Regional Transportation Commission and Hall Family Trust
Under Negotiation: Price and Terms

OPEN SESSION

28. Report on closed session

No report.

29. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 17, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean Street, 5th Fl, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 21, 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 1:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fernanda Dias Pini, Staff

Attendees:

Ashley Winn              Santa Cruz County Resident
Barry Scott              Santa Cruz County Resident
Blake Pfister  
UC Santa Cruz

Brett Garrett  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Brian Peoples  
Trail Now

Bud Colligan  
Santa Cruz County Greenway

Buzz Anderson  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Carey Pico  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Cathy Marino  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Chris Schneiter  
City of Santa Cruz

Corrina McFarland  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Cynthia Dzendal  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Daryl Jordan  
City of Scotts Valley

Dave Fellon  
Progressive Rail

David Van Brink  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Diana Adamic  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Eric Child  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Gail McNulty  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Grace Voss  
Santa Cruz County Cycling Club

Howard Cohen  
Saint Paul & Pacific

Jack Carroll  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Jack Nelson  
Campaign for Sustainable Transportation

Janie Soito  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Jannike Straus  
Bike Santa Cruz County

Johanna Lighthill  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Keith Otto  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Lowell Hurst  
City of Watsonville

Manu Koenig  
Santa Cruz County Greenway

Mark Mesiti-Miller  
Friends of the Rail and Trail

Mike Saint  
Campaign for Sustainable Transportation

Nadene Thorne  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Paul Hierling  
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG)

Phil Smiles  
Progressive Rail

Rick Longinotti  
Campaign for Sustainable Transportation

Ryan Sarnataro  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Sally Arnold  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Silvia Morales  
Santa Cruz County Greenway

Stanley Sokolow  
Santa Cruz County Resident

Virginia Johnson  
County of Santa Cruz

Will Mayo  
Santa Cruz County Resident