



## Santa Cruz County

### Regional Transportation Commission

# 2011 Federal Legislative Program

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#### 1. **Next Federal Transportation Act:** (*Focus Area for 2011*)

The RTC will work with local entities, regional agencies, the State of California and the Federal Government to advance SCCRTC's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) policy priorities in development of the next Federal Transportation Act.

- a) Increase funding levels for all modes, as needed to bring transportation infrastructure up to a good state of repair and meet growing transportation needs in Santa Cruz County. Provide sufficient funds to allow agencies in Santa Cruz County to replace crumbling infrastructure, minimize traffic congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve safety, and expand travel options available to citizens and visitors. Give top priority to preservation and maintenance of the existing system of roads, highways, bridges, sidewalks, and transit.
- b) Ensure equitable distribution of funds to California and Santa Cruz County, which may include direct subventions to counties and Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Oppose proposals which restrict or otherwise disproportionately direct funds to large metropolitan areas or "megaregions".
- c) Support extension of the Small Transit Intensive Cities Program (STIC).
- d) Support development of new funding mechanisms for transportation to ensure the financial integrity of the Highway Trust Fund and Mass Transportation Account. Given that current per-gallon gasoline fees are insufficient to address transportation infrastructure needs, this may include raising and indexing gas taxes and fees and collecting fees based on vehicle miles traveled.
- e) Streamline project delivery. Support regulations to streamline federal project delivery requirements and integrate planning, project development, review, permitting, and environmental processes to reduce project costs and delays.
- f) Provide procurement preference for building and paving materials that have a lower emissions footprint than conventional materials but demonstrate comparable performance.

#### 2. **Maximize Funding for Local Area Projects.** Support increased revenues for transportation projects in the Santa Cruz County region. Oppose any efforts to reduce transportation funding to California or the region. Work with congressional representatives to obtain additional funding for Santa Cruz County highway projects, rail corridor, transit operations and capital projects, paratransit service, local streets and roads, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities and programs.

- a) Seek federal funds for high priority projects in Santa Cruz County through the next federal transportation authorization, annual appropriations, stimulus, or other special funding bills or programs. Priority projects include (not shown in priority order):
  - Projects on Highway 1
  - Infrastructure improvements to the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
  - Local road repair and sidewalk projects
  - Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)/511 program

- Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District's priority transit projects
  - Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST)
  - Watsonville/Pajaro Rail Station
  - Projects otherwise delayed due to state funding shortfalls
- b) Promote inclusion of funding for transportation infrastructure and transit operations in any new national funding programs, including climate change, cap and trade, economic stimulus, or infrastructure investment legislation. Ensure that those funds are available to deliver state, regional, and local projects. Ensure flexibility to use the funds to accelerate delivery of existing projects.
- c) Support timely annual allocations at the maximum levels allowed for programs authorized by the federal transportation act in order to meet growing transportation needs for local streets and roads, improving transit, relieving traffic congestion, encouraging alternative modes of transportation, and meeting increased paratransit demands. Allow for flexibility to use Federal Transit Administration urban and non-urban funds for both capital and operations.
- d) Oppose unfunded mandates on local and regional governments, in order to reduce project costs and maximize funding for infrastructure projects.
- e) Oppose proposals that would combine Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and Salinas into one urbanized area, given that they are not one continuous urban area, but rather separated by large rural areas. This reclassification could otherwise significantly reduce funding available for transit in the region.

### 3. Air Quality and Climate Change:

- a) Support federal action on climate change and energy policy and ensure that any legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions be structured in such a way as to assist the region and the state in achieving greenhouse gas reduction and mobility goals, not dilute state efforts. Ensure that any new environmental requirements are accompanied by additional funding necessary to implement those requirements.
- b) Support research and development of renewable energy sources that reduce the amount of emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels and support the development of more fuel efficient vehicles.
- c) Support a multi-pronged approach to addressing global warming, including carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems and direct revenues to transportation projects that reduce reliance on automobiles, including but not limited to public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

### 4. Support Legislative and Administrative Proposals to Streamline the Process for Federally Funded Projects.

Support regulations to streamline federal project delivery requirements (including cooperative agreements, pre-award audits, disadvantaged business enterprise regulations and duplicative federal environmental review laws) while maintaining the substance of environmental laws, either through regulatory or statutory changes. Support provisions that better integrate state and federal environmental laws.

### 5. Support Improved Elderly and Disabled Transportation.

- a) Support increased funding for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities, including those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and services beyond those required by ADA.

- b) Support federal rule changes to reimburse non-emergency medical transportation through Medicare as a less costly alternative to ambulances and provide funding for medical dialysis transportation.
- c) Require that all interstate transportation providers comply with ADA provisions, including wheelchair accessibility requirements.

**6. Support Simplification and Expansion of Incentive Programs for Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Carpool Commuters and Funding for Improvements.** In an effort to reduce congestion, pollution, and wear and tear on roads, expand grant programs to decrease single-occupancy vehicle trips; and expand and simplify transportation fringe benefits in the tax code (Commuter Choice Tax Benefit), including to permanently increase pre-tax transit benefits to at least the level allowed for parking expenses and make it easier for commuters to access the benefits.

## **7. Freight and Passenger Rail**

- a) Support measures that will provide sufficient funding for AMTRAK and facilitate the shared use of tracks by passenger and freight rail.
- b) Support full funding for the combined Federal and State funding program for rail capital projects in which federal funds are used for 80% of the project's cost and state funds for the remaining 20%, as provided for highway capital projects.
- c) Support federal funding for the California High Speed Rail project.
- d) Support the ongoing extension of Section 45G Railroad Track Maintenance Credit that provides 50 percent tax credit to short line railroads conducting qualified railroad track maintenance.
- e) Support funding and incentives for freight and passenger railroad capacity expansion and safety improvement projects.

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*Please contact us at 831-460-3200 with any questions about the RTC Legislative Program.*