



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
**The Santa Cruz County Elderly & Disabled
Transportation Advisory Committee**

A Review of the Work Accomplished (2012-2015)

The Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee's Regional Role

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee -- also serving as the state-designated Social Services Transportation Advisory Council -- is a group of members of the public, transportation providers, and social service agency representatives who meet every two months to determine planning, funding, and policy for specialized transportation to serve Santa Cruz County's seniors and people with physical, mental and/or economic disabilities.

One of the essential functions of this advisory committee is to provide broad and significant insight to the Regional Transportation Commission, the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District and Community Bridges about the transportation needs, policies and issues affecting seniors and individuals living with disabilities. Meeting the specialized transportation needs of diverse populations in a mixed rural and urban county can be extremely challenging, and the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee is actively engaged in monitoring existing services, from public and non-profit to private, for-profit services.

Members of this committee have direct and personal experience with quality-of-life concerns related to maintaining full and independent lives through access to mobility assistance. Members are the voice for the approximately 10% of the population that are seniors of which approximately half are disabled and over 7% are below the poverty line. The population of seniors in Santa Cruz County will grow to make up close to 20% of the population by 2035. As this population group continues to grow, planning activities for specialized transportation services throughout the region will become even more important.

Among the specialized transportation service providers in Santa Cruz County, there are: the Americans With Disabilities Act -Mandated Paratransit program; ParaCruz, operated by Metro; the countywide Lift Line transportation by Community Bridges - the designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency; various private operators, including taxi companies and for-profit medical transport service; and a collection of informal and volunteer efforts to provide vital and personal transportation services to individuals whose mobility needs would otherwise be unmet.



Geographical information for each project or action is noted as follows: A – All the county, S–Santa Cruz, V–Scotts Valley, C–Capitola, W–Watsonville, I–unincorporated county areas.

Transportation Services & Projects

The Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee identified the most serious unmet paratransit and transit needs in Santa Cruz County and communicated priorities to the public and decision makers. (A) The Committee identified the need for:

- ❖ Fixed-route transit and paratransit service to areas with high concentrations of seniors, disabled and low income individuals, particularly in south county;
- ❖ Increase frequency and span of transit service in densely populated areas;
- ❖ Paratransit service to areas outside ADA mandated paratransit service area;
- ❖ Sidewalks and pedestrian improvements that provide universal access between transit stops and activity centers;
- ❖ Easy to understand information about transit and specialized transportation services; and,
- ❖ Bus stop improvements.



The Committee supported pedestrian improvements in Watsonville, Aptos, Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz, San Lorenzo Valley to repair and install sidewalks, curb cuts, crosswalks, bus stops, and construct dedicated pedestrian and bicycles paths. (S,V,W,I)

The Committee provided input to the development of the Monterey Bay Scenic Sanctuary Trail to support universal access to open spaces and separated pedestrian and bicycle facilities. (S, I)

The Committee participated in the design of the Santa Cruz Metro Pacific Station to encourage the use of design features that create convenient and comfortable access for seniors and people with disabilities. (S)

The Committee endorsed new paratransit vehicles for use by Santa Cruz Metro to support comfortable and convenient transport for riders. (A)

The Committee reviewed the Metro's ParaCruz Customer Guide & Fixed Route Discount Fare Program to attest to the experience of seniors and people with disabilities using transit services. (A)

Public Information & Outreach

The Pedestrian Safety Work Group, a subcommittee of the E&D TAC, conducted extensive outreach activities to inform the public about what makes good sidewalks, maintenance responsibilities, and pedestrian and motorist safety. Local radio programs aired a public service announcement, developed by the Pedestrian Safety Workgroup, to promote safe travel for all users and highlight the needs of elderly and disabled pedestrians. (A)



The Pedestrian Safety Work Group wrote, released and distributed copies of the [‘What Pedestrians and Motorists Want Each Other to Know’](#) brochure in English and Spanish. New partnerships with stakeholders and community groups were developed through this effort. Caltrans Accessibility Advisory Committee recognized the brochure and the report has been a model for similar efforts throughout California. (A)

The Pedestrian Safety Work Group informed the public about how to report a sidewalk hazard using the [RTC’s Hazard Report Form](#). Posters identifying the RTC’s hazard report form were designed and placed on Santa Cruz Metro buses and paratransit vehicles. (A)

The Committee worked with the Community Traffic Safety Coalition’s [Bicycle and Pedestrian Construction Safety Guidelines](#) to protect all users during construction by providing a list of construction hazards and recommended safety and access measures. The Committee emphasized the needs of those with disabilities who must navigate through construction zones. (A)

The Committee conveyed ideas to the Open Streets Event coordinator to increase participation of seniors and people living with disabilities in events that foster individual and community health through the creative use of public spaces. (S, W)

The Committee provided input on the Monterey Bay Public Participation Plan which includes outreach strategies to encourage broad and effective public input for use by transportation agencies in the Monterey Bay Area. (A)



The Committee assisted with the **Bus Use of Aging and Disabled Adults and Transit Ridership Survey** in order to garner broad participation and effective data collection. The survey findings suggest that older adults may prefer the use of a car, yet a significant portion still utilize the bus to fulfill some travel needs. Carrying packages, weather, locations of transit service, and distances to bus stops were barriers to transit use. (A)

The Committee conducted extensive outreach to recruit new and fill vacant positions. The RTC seeks a broad representation of people from different geographic locations in Santa Cruz County to advise on transportation policy, planning and funding. (A)

Transportation Planning

The Committee engaged in long range transportation planning to ensure the benefits and impacts of transportation projects on seniors and people with disabilities were effectively measured, and priority projects included. (A)

The Committee engaged in short range transit planning to identify transit and paratransit priorities as part of development of **Santa Cruz Metro’s Short Range Transit Plan**. (A)

The Pedestrian Safety Work Group developed the “Improving the Safety and Accessibility of Sidewalks in Santa Cruz County” report. The comprehensive report reviewed local jurisdiction and property owner sidewalk responsibilities and practices. The Pedestrian Safety Work Group presented the report to the Watsonville City Council and was recognized by California Walks.

The Committee reviewed the Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook to establish complete street project designs that take into consideration the use of transportation facilities by seniors and people living with disabilities, with special attention given to pedestrian crossings. (A)

The Committee participated in the development of the Monterey Bay Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plan to identify the availability of services that meet the needs of Santa Cruz County seniors and people with disabilities in Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey Counties. (A)

The Committee provided input on rail transit service as part of development of the RTC Rail Feasibility Study to communicate the perspective of seniors and people living with disabilities, including the importance of providing transportation connections to and from rail transit stations. (A)

The Committee monitored the RTC’s State and Federal Legislative Program to identify areas of critical concern for seniors and people living with disabilities in Santa Cruz County in the areas of transportation funding and project design.

The Committee participated in the statewide discussion regarding Class IV bikeway design as part of the Caltrans committee, insuring a voice for pedestrians with disabilities who may interact with these bikeways. (A)

Funding Oversight



Members approved Transportation Development Act claims for transit and paratransit services including, but not limited to: rides to medical appointments, Meals on Wheels, senior dining centers, taxi voucher programs and other paratransit services provided by the Volunteer Center, Community Bridges and the Santa Cruz Metro. The claims were analyzed in detail including cost per ride, number of rides, the degree to which unmet needs were addressed, and cost efficiencies. (A)

Members approved Transportation Development Act claims for pedestrian projects located in the cities and county unincorporated area. Project designs were carefully reviewed to ensure convenient and comfortable access for seniors and people living with disabilities. (A)

The Committee carefully reviewed and scored three local Section 5310 grant applications to forward the most competitive local projects to the California Department of Transportation to be considered for funding. Applications for two new minivans and mobile commuters, four paratransit buses, door-to-door same day paratransit services, and accessible transportation services to a Boulder Creek camp and other Monterey Bay Area recreational facilities were reviewed. Funding was awarded to all, but three paratransit buses. (A)

Members provided recommendations about the highest priority projects to receive funding for grants from the Active Transportation Program, the Regional Surface Transportation Program, and potential new local funding sources to make certain the transportation needs of seniors and people living with disabilities were considered. (A)

The Committee communicated how changes to funding for paratransit and transit services would impact seniors and people living with disabilities as part of Santa Cruz Metro's discussion about how to address its structural deficit.

Internal Committee Issues

Members elected John Daugherty (Metro), Michael Molesky (Social Service Provider-County) and Veronica Elsea (Third District) to serve as the Committee Chairpersons during the 2012 to 2015 time frame. Ms. Elsea also served as the Chair of the E&D TAC's Pedestrian Safety Work Group from 2012-2015. Officers are elected annually.

One or two meetings were held annually in mid-county/Aptos and Watsonville at accessible facilities on a bus line.

Karena Pushnik was appreciated for her years as RTC Staff to the E&D TAC. **Grace Blakeslee** was assigned as the new RTC Staff to the E&D TAC.

Members completed a survey to evaluate the Committee structure and effectiveness. The survey findings resulted in improvements to how agenda materials are presented, increased awareness of membership activities, and recommendations to increase engagement with RTC Commissioners and the public.

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