



**Santa Cruz County Regional
Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

**Thursday, February 2, 2017
9:00 a.m.**

**Watsonville City Council Chambers
275 Main St., Ste 450
Watsonville, CA**

1. Roll call

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

Members present:

Jacques Bertrand	Sandy Brown
Randy Johnson	Jimmy Dutra
Greg Caput	Ryan Coonerty
Zach Friend	John Leopold
Bruce McPherson	Cynthia Chase
Ed Bottorff	Donald Hagen (alt)
Aileen Loe (ex-officio)	

Staff present:

George Dondero	Luis Mendez
Yesenia Parra	Jenn Eames
Karena Pushnik	Rachel Moriconi
Kim Shultz	Cory Caletti
Tegan Speiser	

2. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Commissioners adjourned to closed session at 9:03 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION

3. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-EXISTING LITIGATION. (Paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code) Santa Clara Superior Court Case No. 16CV293441

OPEN SESSION

4. Report on closed session

Commissioners reconvened to open session at 9:39 a.m. and there was no closed session report.

5. Oral communications

Lowell Hurst, City of Watsonville, welcomed the Commission to Watsonville and said that Highway 1 traffic congestion in South County is typical. He noted that the annual Engineer's Week Egg Drop Competition will be on February 25th.

Jack Nelson, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, said that a pound of CO₂ is emitted per vehicle mile traveled and green house gas emissions from the six million vehicle miles traveled daily in Santa Cruz County are adding to the destabilization of the environment.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, stated that an effective transportation system is the key to prosperity of the community and opening the coastal corridor now for alternative transportation is needed for public safety and economic vitality. Mr. Peoples noted that the community is in a transportation emergency and there is concern that the railroad tracks are a tax payer liability.

Becky Steinbruner, Aptos resident, said that she is concerned about the road conditions around Valencia Elementary in Aptos and the resulting traffic congestion on Freedom Boulevard. Ms. Steinbruner noted that secondary emergency access should be established on Valencia Road at Trout Gulch.

Marilyn Garrett, Aptos resident, said that expressed public health and safety concerns should be prioritized. Ms. Garret stated that she is concerned with microwave transmissions and that RTC funds should not be spent on traffic cameras.

Michael Saint, Aptos resident, said that the RTC should think outside the box and encourage utilization of alternative transportation and create a decent public transit system. Mr. Saint noted that highway widening will become less necessary once technology advances.

Barry Scott, Rio del Mar resident, said that having a rail system would require a considerable upfront investment, but would be cost efficient in the long run and would be a useful transportation alternative when the highway and buses are unavailable. Mr. Scott noted that there is significant support for the feasibility of having a rail.

6. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

A replacement page for Items 12 and 22, additional pages for Items 5, 19, and 23, and a handout for Items 18 and 20 were distributed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Leopold moved and Commissioner Caput seconded the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Brown, Johnson, Dutra, Caput, Coonerty, Friend, Leopold, McPherson, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner Alternate Hagen voting "aye".

MINUTES

7. Approved draft minutes of the January 19, 2017 Regional Transportation Commission meeting

POLICY ITEMS

None

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS

None

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

8. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

9. Approved CalPERS health benefit contribution rates for plan year 2017 (**Resolutions 16-17 and 17-17**)
10. Approved appointment to the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee
11. Approved opening Budget and Administration/Personnel Committee Nominations

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

12. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
13. Accepted correspondence log
14. Accepted letters from RTC committees and staff to other agencies
 - a. Letter to the City of Santa Cruz Council Members regarding the recognition of former City of Santa Cruz Public Works Director Bill Fieberling from the Bicycle Advisory Committee
 - b. Letter to the County of Santa Cruz Public Works Director John Presleigh regarding appreciation of green bike lane installations from the Bicycle Advisory Committee
15. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on RTC projects and transportation issues
16. Accepted information items
 - a. Letter dated January 13, 2017 from Caltrans District 5 regarding the completion of the Highway 17 Access Management Plan
 - b. 2018 California State Rail Plan Factsheet

REGULAR AGENDA

17. Commissioner reports – oral reports

Commissioner McPherson reported on: Santa Cruz County Public Works working hard to develop a priority list for the \$20 million in severe infrastructure damages caused by the recent storms; Governor Brown calling for a state of emergency for federal funds for natural disaster relief; and almost 10% of all storm damage in California being in Santa Cruz County alone.

Commissioner Caput reported on: his appreciation for the cooperative work done by multiple agencies to fix road damages on Thompson Road and Howard Road; improvements plans needed, with the cooperation of state and federal entities, to ensure that the Pajaro River is flood proof; the importance of protecting the community from floods before it becomes a state of emergency; and two minors that were saved from drowning in Pinto Lake.

Commissioner Bertrand reported on: neighborhoods being flooded due to the recent storms; and the City of Capitola Public Works Department's diligence in monitoring the stream for public safety.

18. Director's Report – oral report

George Dondero, Executive Director, reported on: the Scott Creek Lagoon restoration goal to develop a bridge and lagoon system that would improve the habitat while providing a sustainable transportation infrastructure; Golden Gate Railroad Museum's (GGRM) decision to locate to the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in Marin County; the retirement of Senior Transportation Planner, Tegan Speiser, after 15 years of service with the RTC; President Trump's remark to prioritize fixing existing infrastructure before starting new projects; and the Senate panel approving Transportation Secretary nominee Elaine Chao. Mr. Dondero noted that future Transportation Policy Workshop (TPW) meetings will be utilized to discuss the implementation of Measure D.

Tegan Speiser, Senior Transportation Planner, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the RTC's accomplishments and said that community awareness of the background work needed for transportation projects is important. Ms. Speiser stated that the rail corridor should be preserved and that there is a need for ongoing public engagement so that the agency is identifiable to the community. She noted that she is looking forward to participating in future transportation plans as a member of the community.

Commissioner Leopold congratulated Ms. Speiser on her retirement and expressed his appreciation for her many transportation efforts, her commitment to the community, and for developing the Cruz511 program. He noted that he is happy that she will not be stepping away from the community, but rather into the community to be involved in different ways.

Becky Steinbruner, said that she supports rail transportation and feels that Santa Cruz County has suffered a huge loss with GGRM's decision to go to another county. Ms. Steinbruner noted that she is interested in a public disclosure of the terms that were discussed by the ad-hoc committee.

19. Caltrans report and consider action items

Aileen Loe, Caltrans District 5 Deputy Director, reported on: the process of incorporating the completed Highway 17 Access Management Plan (AMP) into the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); the State Highway Operation Protection Program (SHOPP) transitioning to asset management and performance based evaluations; and the possibility of providing more frequent updates on Santa Cruz County SHOPP funded projects.

Commissioners discussed: their appreciation for Caltrans' efforts in connecting with the community to incorporate public concerns regarding plans for the Highway 17 AMP; how the AMP would have a dramatic impact on Highway 17 safety; and the need for additional resources to make more significant transportation infrastructure and safety improvements.

20. Measure D Update

George Dondero, Executive Director, and Karena Pushnik, Senior Transportation Planner, presented the staff report and the outline for the implementation of Measure D. Mr. Dondero reported on: assessments of administration tasks and fiscal processes; development of guidelines and agreements for direct allocations to local jurisdictions, transit, and paratransit; and the State Board of Equalization (BOE) starting collection of the ½ cent sales tax on April 1st with funds projected to be received by the RTC in July. Ms. Pushnik reported on: the development of 5-year plans for jurisdictions and the annual audit requirements; a 30-year implementation plan that would be updated every 5 years and would require RTC Board approval; preparation of timelines and projections for regional projects; development of a communications plan for public engagement; and the guidelines and membership requirements defined in the ordinance for establishing an Oversight Committee.

Commissioners discussed: the effects of public input on regional and local projects; how RTC staff recommendations for the Oversight Committee members would require RTC Board approval; utilizing resources from other Self Help Counties to assist with the development of Measure D implementation procedures for collecting the sales tax, distributing funds to jurisdictions, and preparing annual reports; the need for consistency and having a unified plan when approaching the public; appreciation for RTC staff work efforts and public engagement that resulted in the success of Measure D; the need to increase RTC staff to implement projects; infrastructure projects in Watsonville that will utilize Measure D funds; support for leveraging funds to be able to complete projects that may cost more than available funds; the importance of transparent community outreach efforts and public awareness of transportation projects that are funded with tax payers' money; and timelines and the delivery of projects in the jurisdiction's 5-year plan.

Brian Peoples, said that Caltrans did a good job with engaging the community for the Highway 17 Access Management Plan (AMP) and that Trail Now is willing to assist with community outreach efforts for Measure D. He noted that he encourages the Commission to connect with the legislature to leverage funds for transportation projects.

Becky Steinbruner, stated that she appreciates that the Oversight Committee will be publically vetted and noted that the community needs transparency and follow through from the RTC.

Eric Richter, said that he appreciates the work done by the RTC and reiterated the need for transparency and reliability to deliver projects. He noted that Santa Cruz County has a tremendous asset in the Rail Trail.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, thanked the RTC for moving forward with the allocations clearly defined in the Measure D ordinance and stated that additional public communication is needed to reinforce the voter endorsed transportation improvement plan. Mr. Canin noted that local funds are more discretionary for each jurisdiction and that leveraged funds are needed to complete more projects.

Barry Scott, urged the Commission to stay the course with the plan to build the Coastal Rail Trail with the allocated Measure D funds for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST). He noted that the funds dedicated to the Highway 1 auxiliary lanes could have paid for scenario E for passenger rail transit.

Marilyn Garret, thanked Commissioner Caput for being an advocate for public input and transparency and said that widening the highway will not work to alleviate traffic congestion. Ms. Garret noted that improving public safety around schools with Measure D funds should be prioritized.

Jannika Strauss, Bike Santa Cruz County, stated that Bike Santa Cruz County had endorsed Measure D to ensure bicycle safety in the County and that she looks forward to working with RTC on projects.

21. 2017 Legislative Program and Funding Updates

Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner, presented the staff report. She reported on: the significant decrease of funding from traditional transportation revenue sources; the transportation infrastructure needs in Santa Cruz County; the new state transportation proposal from Governor Brown and updates to the proposal provided in Assembly Bill (AB) 1 and Senate Bill (SB) 1; and federal transportation updates with President Trump's interest for public-private partnerships for infrastructure investments, and expedited environmental reviews and approvals for high priority infrastructure projects. Ms. Moriconi noted that the 2017 legislative priorities focus on increasing and stabilizing transportation funding.

Commissioners discussed: RTC's leverage as a self help county to advocate for the backlog of transportation funds; potential political issues with receiving federal funding in the future; California not being included in President Trump's \$140 billion infrastructure project improvements list; the need for a contingency plan if federal funds are unavailable; and the RTC Legislative Program seeking to expand the definition of "disadvantaged communities" to ensure areas in Santa Cruz County are not excluded from Cap and Trade program funding.

Brian Peoples, said that the RTC needs to be tactical in their efforts and should consider filtering out the specifics of projects when advocating for transportation funding.

Jack Nelson, said that the Commuter Benefits Program in the Bay Area has been successful in reducing green house gas emissions and that increasing gas taxes would encourage less driving rather than a vehicle miles traveled tax. Mr. Nelson noted that climate change Senate Bill 32 requires California to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

Becky Steinbruner, requested that her public comment submitted for Item 19 be moved to Item 21. She stated that she would like the Commission to include safeguards for approved projects to ensure that there are no code violations and that there is proper oversight for spending of awarded funds.

Marilyn Garret, expressed her concerns with the prioritization of transportation projects to be funded.

Commissioner Dutra moved and Commissioner Coonerty seconded staff recommendation to approve State and Federal Legislative Programs for 2017 to assist in analyzing the transportation impacts of legislative activities. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Brown, Johnson, Dutra, Caput, Coonerty, Friend, Leopold, McPherson, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner Alternate Hagen voting "aye".

22. Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Corridor Plan – Contract Award

Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner, presented the staff report. Ms. Moriconi reported that three proposals were received in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) to analyze the needs for the Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Corridor and the consultant team of Kimly Horn had been chosen by the evaluation committee.

Commissioner McPherson moved and Commissioner Dutra seconded staff recommendation to adopt **(Resolution 18-17)** authorizing the Executive Director to negotiate and enter into an agreement for professional consulting services with Kimly Horn to prepare a multimodal complete streets plan for the Highway 9 Corridor through San Lorenzo Valley. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Brown, Johnson, Dutra, Caput, Coonerty, Friend, Leopold, McPherson, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner Alternate Hagen voting "aye".

23. City of Santa Cruz Rail Trail Project Phasing Plan and Cooperative Agreement

Cory Caletti, Senior Transportation Planner, presented the staff report. Ms. Caletti summarized the actions and progress to date on the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) and noted the Coastal Rail Trail, Rail Trail, and Rail with Trail interchangeability of terminology wording. She reported on the design changes to the City of Santa Cruz Rail Trail, the cost increases for the phasing plan, and the details of the cooperative agreement for duties and responsibilities for project construction and maintenance.

Nathan Wen, Associate Engineer with the City of Santa Cruz, provided information on: community outreach efforts and public input received for the preliminary plans for the Coastal Rail Trail; cost estimates from the schematic plans and the stakeholders' decision to move forward with phasing the project from Natural Bridges Drive to California Avenue and California Avenue to the Wharf; and the proposal of moving forward with the construction of Phase 1 this year and Phase 2 being shovel-ready until further funding is secured.

Commissioners discussed: the City's expectation for additional funds for maintenance and ongoing management of the Rail Trail; the need to be careful when deploying the limited amount of available funds; how the original MBSST schematic plan estimates for construction costs have been impacted by fluctuations in the economy; the role of the RTC specified in the project's terms and agreements; and the possibility of additional environmental studies needed in the future to widen the trails in Phase 2.

Piet Canin, said that he appreciates the City of Santa Cruz's transparency efforts, the inclusion of public input on the Coastal Rail Trail project, and the compromises made to accommodate the improvements needed. Mr. Canin noted that additional funding resources should be explored to expedite the project.

Mark Mesiti-Miller, Santa Cruz resident, said that a terrific plan was developed for the construction of the Rail Trail and that the scope of work should be expanded to include the trestle that crosses the San Lorenzo River. He noted that project costs often come in over budget and the Commission has an opportunity to be credible to the community by moving forward with the plans.

Commissioner Dutra left the meeting and Commissioner Alternate Hurst arrived.

Commissioner Caput left the meeting.

Brian Peoples, said that he is concerned about the maintenance costs of a retaining wall and that the RTC should be transparent by using the right terminology when communicating with the community. He noted that the Unified Corridor Plan should be completed before moving forward with plans for a rail adjacent to the trail.

Jack Nelson, stated that the community will love having the rail with trail and he is looking forward to seeing it completed.

Grace Voss, Santa Cruz County Cycling Club, stated that people use trails because they feel safe and safe facilities in high density areas are needed to encourage biking and walking. She said that the public has been waiting for the west side segment of the rail trail and plans should continue to move forward.

Barry Scott, said that Rails to Trails Conservancy wrote a letter to the RTC on August 17, 2016 that expressed their support for all rail trails. Mr. Scott noted that although segment 7 of the rail trail is complicated, improvements made are never bad.

Commissioner Chase moved and Commissioner Alternate Hurst seconded staff recommendations to receive an update from the City of Santa Cruz on the 2.1 mile rail trail project underway and the two-part phasing plan; and approve **(Resolution 19-17)** authorizing the Executive Director to enter into necessary agreements and amendments to implement the City of Santa Cruz project and other funded rail trail projects. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Brown, Johnson, Coonerty, Friend, Leopold, McPherson, Chase, Bottorff, and Commissioner Alternates Hagen and Hurst voting "aye".

24. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean Street, 5th floor, Santa Cruz, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 16, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

The meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenn Eames, Staff

Attendees:

Alex Clifford
Maura Twomey
Brian Peoples
Lowell Hurst
Michael Saint
Murray Fontes

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
Trail Now
City of Watsonville
Sensible Transport
City of Watsonville

Becky Steinbruner
Marilyn Garrett
G.L. Lindstrum
Jack Nelson
Kate Gibson
Jannika Strauss
Grace Voss
Piet Canin
Nathan Wen
Tom Howland
Barry Scott
Eric Richter
Mark Mesiti-Miller

Aptos resident
Aptos resident
Aptos resident
Campaign for Sensible Transportation
Harris & Associates
Bike Santa Cruz County
San Cruz County Cycling Club
Ecology Action
City of Santa Cruz