1. Roll call

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

Members present:

Jacques Bertrand  Bruce McPherson
Ed Bottorff  Oscar Rios
Greg Caput  Aileen Loe
Cynthia Chase  Tony Gregorio (alternate)
Ryan Coonerty  Patrick Mulhearn (alternate)
Randy Johnson  Mike Rotkin (alternate)
John Leopold

Staff present:

George Dondero  Sarah Christensen
Luis Mendez  Brianna Goodman
Yesenia Parra  Fernanda Dias Pini
Cory Caletti
Grace Blakeslee

2. Oral communications

**Brian Peoples**, Trail Now, supports a transportation trail that will have a positive impact in the region’s traffic problems. He also said that resources should be allocated towards buses.

**Michael Saint**, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, said that it is imperative to focus on sustainable, multi-modal transportation policies and asked that the RTC keep in mind the Sustainable Transportation Analysis and Rating System (STARS).
Gail McNulty, Greenway, noted that various interest groups in the region have different views on transportation policy and expressed support for the urgent need to address traffic on Highway 1, improve the North-South county commute and reduce greenhouse gases.

Paul Elerick, Aptos resident, stated that congestion between Watsonville and Santa Cruz is atrocious, that there is a need for transit options, and that a train would help address the congestion issue.

Jenny Sarmiento, Watsonville resident, supports building a transportation network that would provide transit solutions to county residents and supports the rail and trail option.

Lowell Hurst, City of Watsonville Mayor, stated that good transportation infrastructure is imperative for a healthy local economy. Mayor Hurst also discussed the need for multi-modal transportation, how limited resources require project prioritization, and the need to build transportation infrastructure that will benefit all residents.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

Hand-outs to Items 7, 14, 21 and add-on pages for Item 18 were distributed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Leopold moved Item 7 to the regular agenda as Item 13a at the request of Commissioner Johnson.

Commissioner Alternate Rotkin moved and Commissioner Rios seconded the motion to accept the Consent Agenda as amended. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Chase, Coonerty, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios, and Commissioner Alternates Gregorio, Mulhearn, and Rotkin voting “aye.”

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the January 18, 2018 Regional Transportation Commission meeting

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS

No projects and planning items
BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

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

6. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues and distribution

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

No administration 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 – none

12. Accepted information items - none

REGULAR AGENDA

13a. Highway 1 Corridor Tiered Environmental Document (Resolution 14-18)

Commissioners discussed: the reasoning behind switching federal for state funding; public comments on this project and how they will be presented to the Commission; and that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will require costly infrastructure investments.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, supports widening Highway 1 to Larkin Valley Road, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on the corridor, and looks forward to supporting the RTC in efforts to acquire additional funds to complete these projects.

Michael Saint, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, supports BRT on the shoulder of Highway 1 because it is a more sustainable mode of transportation than single-occupancy cars.

Commissioner Alternate Rotkin moved and Commissioner Coonerty seconded the motion to adopt the resolution exchanging $500,000 of previously programmed federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBTG) funds for state Regional Surface Transportation Program Exchange (RSTPX) funds for the Highway 1 Corridor Tiered Environmental Document and amending the RTC fiscal year 2017-18 budget. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Chase, Coonerty, Johnson, Leopold,
McPherson, Rios, and Commissioner Alternates Gregorio, Mulhearn, and Rotkin voting “aye.”

13. Commissioner reports – oral reports

Chair Leopold discussed the need to keep abreast of current transportation issues, such as: future transportation options, the economics of transportation, railbanking process, cost of requirements, transit and affordable housing. He suggested that it would be useful to visit local sites of rail and trail, rail only, and trail only projects to gain insight into the requirements for maintenance and operation of such projects. Chair Leopold stated that these issues will be discussed during the Transportation Policy Workshops (TPW) and a schedule of these meetings will be presented at the RTC’s March 1, 2018 meeting.

Commissioner Bertrand commented how Capitola, like many other places in the county, is facing traffic issues that impair on the quality of life and the need to address these issues either at the local or state level.

14. Director’s report – oral report

George Dondero, Executive Director, reported that staff is working closely with the consultant team at Kimley-Horn to complete the Step 2 performance measure analysis part of the Unified Corridor Study (UCS).

He congratulated RTC staff Brianna Goodman on her recent promotion to Planner 1. He congratulated the City of Santa Cruz and Santa Cruz City Engineer/ Assistant Public Works Director, Chris Schneiter, for receiving the American Public Works Association Monterey Bay Chapter “2018 Project of the Year” and “2018 Public Works Person of the Year” awards, respectively. He also congratulated Maria Rodriguez, City of Watsonville Public Works & Utilities Assistant Director, for being recognized for the work she does with the local youth programs.

Commissioners discussed: request for a report on the methodologies developed for the UCS; the importance that public sector workers have the opportunity to rise within their organizations and for residents to work within their community; housing affordability issues in the county; study on the Capitola trestles and the timeline for repairs.

Commissioner Caput arrived and replaced Commissioner Alternate Gregorio.

15. Caltrans report and consider action items

Aileen Loe, District 5 Deputy Director, reported that the quick clean-up efforts on Highway 101 in Santa Barbara are a testament to how well projects can be completed when agencies collaborate. She noted that Caltrans has open solicitation through the end of February for transportation planning grants, which include Sustainable Communities, Strategic Partnerships, and Adaptation
Planning.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans District 5 staff is working to respond to questions raised in previous meetings.

Commissioners discussed: Highway 152 sidewalk installation; complete streets and safe routes to schools funding.

16. Budget and Administration/ Personnel Committee Nominations  
(John Leopold, Chair)

Chair Leopold reported that commissioners wishing to be appointed or reappointed to the RTC’s Budget and Administration/Personnel Committee should inform him or the Executive Director of their interest by February 15, 2018. Appointments will be made at the March 1, 2018 meeting.

17. City of Santa Cruz Rail Trail Project – Interim “Ingalls Option” Design  
(Cory Caletti, Senior Transportation Planner)

Cory Caletti, Senior Transportation Planner, presented an overview of the Rail Trail Project including its established goals and processes. Ms. Caletti discussed the City of Santa Cruz (City) design implementation of a 2.1-mile rail trail project from Natural Bridges Drive to Pacific Avenue. She also recommended that the RTC receive information on the City’s plans and specifications for the Phase 1 portion, Natural Bridges Drive to Bay/California, which is proceeding towards construction.

Chris Schneiter, City of Santa Cruz Engineer/Assistant Public Works Director, gave a presentation on the City’s Rail Trail Project Interim “Ingalls Option.” He reported that the City is still waiting on funding sources to start the bidding process and on the easement negotiations with New Leaf/New Seasons.

Mr. Schneiter also discussed the City’s history in obtaining easements from private property owners and stated that a trail only project would be more expensive than a rail and trail project, limit the right-of-way, and limit the potential use of the line.

Commissioners discussed: The RTC’s and the City’s joint responsibility of maintaining and operating the trail; the City’s timeline to keep state and federal funding; the likelihood that the City will be able to move forward with its original plan; importance to work with local businesses; need to look into the potentially increased safety issues with the Ingalls option; the need to consider all county commuters when making project decisions; appreciation of New Leaf for their collaboration on this project; the extent of the discussion and creative efforts that have been put towards this project to ensure that it is the best option for this community; how this project is a product of a collaborative process that aims to connect all parts of the county and be inclusive to all residents.
Gail McNulty, Greenway, stated that any construction done on Segment 7 might have to be reevaluated once the UCS is completed, she also commented that the detour that routes the trail in front of the Pacific Collegiate School parking lot poses a safety issue. Ms. McNulty noted that the current planning for Segment 7 demonstrates how bad the trail will be if current plans are not revised.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, noted that federal grant details should be spelled out when reported on. Mr. Peoples also stated that the current Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail plan includes many trail diversions onto sidewalks which would not lead to a continuous trail. He questioned the likelihood that the train trestles in Capitola and La Selva will be replaced. He also stated that Segment 7 is a recreational, substandard, costly trail.

Mark Mesiti-Miller, Santa Cruz County resident, commented how federal funding can be lost quickly without notice, and stated that reports show that the Segment 7 trail is projected to be under the budget.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, thanked RTC and City of Santa Cruz staff for starting this first section of the rail trail and stated that it is heading in the right direction. He recognized the contribution made by staff, the community, and New Leaf for moving this project forward.

Janneke Strause, Bike Santa Cruz County, appreciates the City of Santa Cruz for approving the project to go to construction and City staff for finding a way to keep the project from being delayed.

David Day, La Selva Beach resident, stated any project determining the use of the Branch Line should only move forward after the completion of the UCS.

Elliot Grouter, La Selva Beach resident, commented how a trail would allow him greater biking access to other parts of the county, and noted how a trail only option would also create an emergency road for emergency vehicles.

Bill Cook, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that rail and trail are incompatible and that such project would be a failure. Mr. Cook noted the current dangerous conditions for cyclists and that a protected bicycle lane is the only way to increase the population of cyclists in the county.

Nancy Collin, City of Santa Cruz resident, pointed out that cost statements on project reports should have hard figures. Ms. Collin stated her dismay with how the current negotiations with New Leaf/ New Seasons unfolded and that it is the responsibility of the RTC to ensure a civil discourse between all involved stakeholders. She stated her support for a continuous trail only option that does not diverge onto sidewalks.

18. Cruz511 In Your Neighborhood – Final Report
(Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planner)

Grace Blakeslee and Brianna Goodman Transportation Planners, provided an overview of the project.

Ms. Blakeslee also discussed how this program, which ran from March through September 2017, was focused on reducing the number of drive alone trips and increasing the number of trips made by bus, biking, walking, and carpooling in Santa Cruz County. She reported on the program’s approach, target audience, selection of various channels used to communicate with households, program materials, travel resources, and provided an analysis of the program’s effectiveness.

Commissioners discussed: support for the program, its results, and desire to see it replicated in other parts of the county; the significance of the data gathered and whether it demonstrates a successful and effective program; challenges of self-reported data; likelihood of over-reporting and bias; program population size, its effects on program conclusions, and how it translates to future program implementation; the future use of this report as a planning document; the sustainability of the program and if this program has been benchmarked against similar programs; participant distribution across different ages, genders, and racial groups; ways to impact travel behavior; benefit of measuring results against a small sample size to establish greater confidence in program results; why participants did not use some of the resources distributed; program cost-effectiveness; whether program should be replicated; desire to improve bus ridership and need to incentivize use of different modes of transportation; and community outreach.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, stated that program’s effort to influence uses of alternative modes of transportation is invaluable for future programs and that will lead to a bigger effort to get people out of their cars. Mr. Canin also commented on the impact of the door-to-door outreach in creating a community effort to change transportation behavior.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, stated that while this program was a good effort to increase public transit ridership, it should have focused more on convenience for the public. He also noted the importance of having the necessary infrastructure in place. He also appreciated the effort the Commission is doing for the community.

Elliott Grouter, La Selva Beach resident, commented that residents in La Selva Beach voted against a rail and trail option.

Michael Saint, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, stated that it is very difficult to change people’s transportation behavior, and he supports the Cruz511 program. Transportation Demand Management is a goal of the Campaign for Sensible Transportation (CST), and he offered assistance from CST volunteers to assist Cruz511 in community outreach.
Commissioner Alternate Rotkin moved and Commissioner Bertrand seconded the motion to accept the Cruz511 In Your Neighborhood Final Report. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Caput, Chase, Coonerty, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios and Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Rotkin voting “aye.”

19. 2018 State and Federal Legislative Programs
*(Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner)*

George Dondero, Executive Director, presented the staff report. Mr. Dondero reported that the Senate Bill (SB) 1: *Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017* provides the first significant, stable, and on-going increase in state transportation funding in over twenty years and that a repeal to SB 1 may be on the state ballot later this year. Therefore, the recommended 2018 RTC legislative program priorities are focused on protecting state and federal transportation revenues available for local transportation projects.

Commissioners discussed: attempt by republicans who are interested in using SB1 as a wedge issue to get more republicans elected in November; importance for communities like Santa Cruz to support Proposition 69 (ACA 5), motor vehicle fees and taxes; restriction on expenditures; appropriations limits; stopping any repeal of SB1 which would have a significant impact on transportation funding around the county; potential historic shift in how the federal government pays for infrastructure, putting greater funding emphasis at the local and state levels; need to change the definition of disadvantaged communities in the Cap-and-Trade Bill to be more inclusive of our region’s communities; availability of materials in support of Prop. 69 and SB1 to distribute to the four cities and the county; intent of the RTC to expand its authority and local entities to increase taxes and fees for transportation projects; and whether the California State Association of Counties has adopted a position on the repeal of SB1.

**Brian Peoples**, Trail Now, encouraged the Commission to continue to work with the various local interest groups in the county and to use them as a resource to garner support for SB1.

**Michael Saint**, Citizens Climate Lobby, suggested the Commission consider the Carbon Fee and Dividend program which would put a price on carbon emissions, encourage a shift towards lower energy demand transportation, decrease the number of vehicles on the road, and would serve as a replacement to Cap-and-Trade program. Mr. Saint noted that the Citizens Climate Lobby would be available to do presentations on the Carbon Fee and Dividend program.

Commissioner Alternate Rotkin moved and Commissioner Chase seconded the motion to approve the State and Federal Legislative Programs for 2018 to assist in analyzing the transportation impacts of legislative activities with a
provision for staff to provide Commissioners information for how their respective jurisdictions can support the effort to stop the repeal of Senate Bill (SB) 1. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Caput, Chase, Coonerty, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios and Commissioner Alternates Mulhearn and Rotkin voting “aye.”

20. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Deputy Director Luis Mendez reviewed the items to be discussed in closed session.

**Gail McNulty**, Greenway, stated that rail road companies are partnering with the oil and gas industry and is concerned what that could mean in the region if Progressive Rail is selected as the rail operator and commented on the connections between Progressive Rail’s leadership team and the oil and gas industry. Ms. McNulty also suggested the RTC contact other municipalities that have worked with Progressive Rail.

**Brian Peoples**, Trail Now, discussed Trail Now’s rail operator proposal, which included subcontracting freight operations in Watsonville, bringing in $2.5 million in private funds, allowing the RTC to beta-test transit solutions along the corridor (which would have satisfied RTC’s legal obligations to retain a rail operator), and protecting trestles in the county. Mr. Peoples encouraged the RTC to look within the community for an operator to find the best option for the corridor.

**Bill Cook**, City of Santa Cruz resident, stated that rail operators are not regulated at any level of government, noted that the RTC is currently not legally required to have a rail operator, and suggested that the Commission defer any action on this subject.

**Mark Mesiti-Miller**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that he was impressed with Progressive Rail’s proposal and approach, and that he trusts the RTC will reach a contract with them soon. Mr. Mesiti-Miller pointed out that rail has been statistically proven to be the safest mode to transport hazardous materials. He also noted that rail is more environmentally sustainable than trucks and that since there is no existing rail yard, any such facility would be subject to all local land-use regulations and permitting requirements.

**David Day**, La Selva Beach resident, commented that the transportation crisis in this county has negatively impacted his family, that he feels that passenger rail seems more distant than ever, and that he does not believe Progressive Rail has a short-term plan to operate passenger trains in the county. Mr. Day expressed the urgent need for transportation alternatives to relieve congestion on Highway 1 and that the Commissioners must make the best decisions for the community.

Commissioners adjourned to closed session at 12:02 p.m.
CLOSED SESSION

21. 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: SCCRTC and Progressive Rail
Under Negotiation: Price and Terms

OPEN SESSION

22. Report on closed session

_Nothing reported_

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

23. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 9:00 am 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, March 15, 2018 at 9:00 am at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Fernanda Dias Pini, Staff
Attendees:

Heather Adamson  AMBAG
Piet Canin    Ecology Action
Nancy Collin  City of Santa Cruz resident
Bill Cook    Santa Cruz County resident
David Day    La Selva Beach resident
Paul Elerick  Santa Cruz County resident
Elliott Grouter La Selva Beach resident
Lowell Hurst  Watsonville City Council
Gail McNulty  Greenway
Mark Mesiti-Miller City of Santa Cruz resident
Brian Peoples  Trail Now
Maria Esther Rodriguez City of Watsonville
Michael Saint  Campaign for Sensible Transportation; Citizens Climate Lobby
Jenny T. Sarmiento City of Watsonville resident
Janneke Strause  Bike Santa Cruz County