1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.

Members present:
Jacques Bertrand
Ed Bottorff
Sandy Brown
Greg Caput
Cynthia Chase
Zach Friend
Randy Johnson
Bruce McPherson
Oscar Rios
Andy Schiffrin (Alternate)
John Leopold
Mike Rotkin (Alternate)
Aileen Loe (ex-officio)

Staff present:
George Dondero
Luis Pavel Mendez
Yesenia Parra
Sarah Christensen
Ginger Dykaar
Grace Blakeslee
Brianna Goodman
Fernanda Dias Pini
Cory Caletti

Chair Leopold moved oral communications to follow Item 20b.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agendas

A replacement page for page 2 of the Agenda and handouts for Items 17 and 20 were distributed.

Commissioner Randy Johnson arrived.

CONSENT AGENDA
Chair Leopold moved Items 10 and 13b to the regular agenda as Items 20a and 20b at the request of a member of the public.

Gail McNulty, Greenway, communicated the need for the public and the Commission to be aware of how funds are spent and stated that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was not vetted with the community.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Chase seconded the amended consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Chase, Friend, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios and Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin voting “aye”.

MINUTES
4. Approved draft minutes of the December 7, 2017 Regional Transportation Commission meeting
5. Accepted draft minutes of the December 11, 2017 Bicycle Advisory Committee
6. Accepted draft minutes of the December 12, 2017 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

POLICY ITEMS
No consent items

PROJECTS and PLANNING ITEMS
No consent items

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS
7. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
8. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues and distribution
9. Approved revised Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18 Transportation Development Act: State Transit Assistance (STA) claim and Senate Bill 1 State of Good Repair allocation for Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) (Resolutions 11-18 and 12-18)

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS
No administration 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 30, 2017 letter from the Bicycle Advisory Committee to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Study requesting improved bicycle access
   b. December 5, 2017 letter from Santa Cruz County Supervisor Zach Friend requesting for the RTC to discuss how it will address rail line maintenance and other nuisance issues in its January 18th, 2018 meeting
   c. January 5, 2018 letter from the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee to the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) regarding the METRO Fare Restructure Analysis

14. Accepted miscellaneous written comments from the public on RTC projects and transportation issues

15. Accepted information items

   b. Ashley Keehn, “Trolley from Aptos to Westside of Santa Cruz gives preview of possible new railway system”, KION 5/46 New Channel, December 14, 2017
   c. Mairav Zonszein, “Rail operator Iowa Pacific plans to pull out of Santa Cruz County”, Santa Cruz Sentinel, December 13, 2017
   d. George Dondero, “What’s next for Santa Cruz County’s rail corridor?”, Santa Cruz Sentinel, December 22, 2017

REGULAR AGENDA

16. Commissioner reports on RTC related items – oral reports

   Commissioner Bertrand reported on presentations made by Friends of the Rail and Trail and Greenway during the City of Capitola Council Meeting which resulted in a consensus from the Council that the Unified Corridor Study (UCS) must first be completed before the City of Capitola supports decisions for transportation projects from the RTC.

17. Director’s Report – oral report
   (George Dondero, Executive Director)

   George Dondero, Executive Director, reported that staff is working with FEMA to repair areas with storm damage, that a preventative maintenance program will be established, and that a Request for Qualifications for on-call engineering services will soon be issued.
Executive Director Dondero reported that staff has partnered with the City of Watsonville to support their Downtown Complete Streets planning efforts as part of the Phase 2 for the Visualizing Sustainable Transportation Project.

He also stated that on January 30, Chair John Leopold will join him and other representatives from the other four Central Coast Coalition Counties for Legislative day in Sacramento to meet with legislators and transportation officials from the California Transportation Commission (CTC).

Commissioners discussed: regular updates on the Unified Corridor Study (UCS), the urgency to address storm damage on the rail property and information on plans to analyze trestles, specifically the Capitola trestle.

18. Caltrans report

Aileen Loe District 5 Deputy Director, reported on damages incurred throughout California within the past year due to natural disasters and which are taking up significant amount of resources. She noted that Caltrans is accepting applications for the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program for the 2018-2019 cycle. Funds are available for projects that support sustainable communities and greenhouse gas emission reductions for a total of $40.8 million.

She also reported on the California Road Charge Pilot Program – Senate Bill 1077, which was a research effort to investigate a long-term, sustainable transportation funding mechanism as a potential replacement to the gas tax, known as “road charge.” This program provides the California Legislature with needed information to make a decision on which direction it would like to pursue for future transportation funding.

Commissioners discussed: Highway 17 Wildlife Connectivity Project Advanced Mitigation Credits agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Working with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to receive funding for construction; Measure D; and the Road Charge Project impacts on transportation funding.

Becky Steinbruner, Aptos resident, inquired if Caltrans had a plan on how the Road Charge Program would work with older vehicles and asked Caltrans to look into safety improvements in the Seacliff area of Aptos.

Brett Garrett, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants are an opportunity to include studies on Personal Rapid Transit as part of the Unified Corridor Study.

William Menchine, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the Caltrans transportation planning grant should be used to look into toll road usage of Highway 1, Bus Rapid Transit, and high occupancy toll lanes on Highway 1.
Gail McNulty, Greenway, suggested that a study on the small autonomous minibuses be included as part of the Unified Corridor Study.

Josh Stephens, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that he would like to see the 2040 Draft Regional Transportation Plan explore different transportation options in Santa Cruz County.

19. **9:30am Public Hearing** on Draft 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) *(Ginger Dykaar and Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planners)*

Senior Transportation Planner, Ginger Dykaar, presented the staff report. She noted that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Santa Cruz County was released on December 8th, starting the public review period which ends on February 5, 2018. A public meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be held at the Simpkins swim Center in Live Oak on January 30 and coordinated by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). The draft RTP is available on the RTC’s website: [https://sccrtc.org/funding-planning/long-range-plans/2040-rtp/](https://sccrtc.org/funding-planning/long-range-plans/2040-rtp/). The draft EIR is available on AMBAG’s website: [http://www.ambag.org/programs-services/planning/metro-transport-plan/2040-MTP-SCS](http://www.ambag.org/programs-services/planning/metro-transport-plan/2040-MTP-SCS).

Commissioners discussed: state of the rail whether it is Class 1 or 2; whether cost-effectiveness is a major component in project evaluation; vehicle miles traveled projections; the impact on transportation funding when moving towards the vehicle miles traveled mechanism; the process that led to the formulation of the 2014 RTP and the STARS system; venues for public input and places for information on the Draft 2040 RTP process.

The public hearing opened at 9:46 a.m.

Bradley Snyder, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the Highway 17 METRO Express bus provides a needed service and should stop at the light rail station on Winchester in Campbell.

Gail McNulty, Greenway, noted the importance of the Draft 2040 RTP for its long-term impacts in the community, recommended that a meeting solely dedicated to this document be held, and stated a desire for the Draft RTP to have proposed a more radical shift in thinking towards eliminating greenhouse gases.

Michael Saint, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, communicated that he would like for the Draft 2040 RTP to result in an efficient, affordable, and sustainable transportation system that increases safety and convenience, reduces congestion, and combats climate change.

Barry Scott, Aptos resident, stated that a rail line helps meet the county’s long-term needs, in terms of sustainability, reliability, safety, and by providing
different modes of transportation.

**Becky Steinbruner**, Aptos resident, asked for the public comment period time for the Draft 2040 RTP to be extended and she suggested that the Commission try pilot projects instead of continuously funding studies.

**Robert Stephens**, Aptos resident, expressed the need to be selective when choosing transportation projects to ensure that the funding is being spent wisely.

**Carey Pico** Aptos resident, stated that he is available to provide any Caltrans data as a nonpartisan source.

**Roxby Hartley**, Agron Bioenergy, noted that the rail line is essential for moving Agron Bioenergy’s products and it would be beneficial if the rail line allowed for product mobility north of Watsonville.

**Peter Stanger**, Santa Cruz County resident, asked for RTC staff to ensure that all nonprofits listed in the Draft 2040 RTP have the correct IRS nonprofit status.

**William Menchine**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that the Draft 2040 RTP does not present an option for commuters to use alternative modes of transportation on the region’s highways, and that greater emphasis should be placed on Bus Rapid Transit and the infrastructure needed to support it.

20. Rail Service Operator for the Santa Cruz County Branch Rail Line  
*(Luis Pavel Mendez, Deputy Director)*

*Commissioner Chase left the meeting and was replaced by Commissioner Alternate Rotkin.*

Luis Mendez, Deputy Director, presented a brief background on the purchase of the Rail Corridor and noted that Iowa Pacific has informed the RTC that they will cooperate in obtaining a replacement operator.

George Dondero, Executive Director, discussed rail banking and how the Unified Corridor Study (UCS) will inform the RTC and the community before a decision of which is the best option for the Santa Cruz Branch Line can be made.

Luis Mendez, Deputy Director, noted that staff evaluated proposals for replacement operators and recommends the RTC to authorize the Executive Director to enter negotiations with Progressive Rail to operate the Branch Line.

Craig McKenzie, Progressive Rail Chairman, gave a presentation on Progressive Rail’s proposal for operating the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. He discussed the Progressive rail’s experience and vision for working with the county.
Commissioners discussed: environmental concerns to the region that might be a consequence of the rail, the rail and trail option, level of involvement of Progressive Rail in regional operations; community outreach and plans to address impact on residents; Suntan Special and excursion routes; why Progressive Rail is interested in running rail in the region; customer base and what will be the benefit and job creation aspect to the Watsonville area; potential for Progressive Rail to only operate in Watsonville; freight operations and whether the local agricultural community is interested in using freight to move product; critical need to preserve option for public transit as well as recreation on the corridor; legal obligations; Measure D was imperative to making transportation improvements possible; Bus Rapid Transit; RTC’s liability for providing freight services and making the improvements or repairs not made by Iowa Pacific; opportunities derived from RTC’s purchase of the right-of-way and duty to taxpayers to consider all potential uses for the corridor; the divided views expressed by the public; importance to remember the goal to reduce gridlock on Highway 1; reiterated that the motion is not the end of the conversation on this topic; the Unified Corridor Study (UCS) will be a product of staff time, stakeholder meetings, public hearings, and additional reports created by reputable consultants and if a decision will be made contingent on its findings, then the Commission will have to follow through with its recommendations.

Public comments:

**Ryan Hoffman**, Live Oak resident, urged the RTC to not make any long-term commitments until the full scope of the UCS is completed and stated that a trail would serve the community.

**Brian Peoples**, Trail Now, discussed legal action from the farmers in Davenport against a train as they believe that it would violate the current Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Mr. Peoples stated that the proposal submitted by Trail Now to be the branch line operator included maintaining the rail line and subcontracting to a rail operator for the Watsonville operations and would also bring funding to protect the corridor.

**Peter Stanger**, Santa Cruz County resident, commented on the purpose of the proposed rail line and asked for it to be mostly invested towards transportation options for county residents rather than recreational uses, and asked the Commission to ensure transportation options for south-county residents are considered when making planning decisions.

**Christine Guire**, Santa Cruz County resident, discussed previous rail operators, their shortcomings, questioned if Progressive Rail would have the same issues, noted that they are a freight and not passenger operator. Stated that the selection of an operator should only occur after the completion of the UCS and mentioned the lack of women and diversity on Progressive Rail’s senior management team. Ms. Guire supports using local businesses when
considering the next operator.

**Monique Kramer**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that noise pollution from rail could negatively impact residents and that an operator should only be selected when the UCS is completed.

**Mark Mesiti-Miller**, Santa Cruz County resident, commented that the Commission is not voting to enter into a contract but to authorize negotiations, and encouraged the Commission to approve the staff recommendation as not having an operator potentially exposes the taxpayers in the county to liability.

**Robert Stephens**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that there is a lack of funding to existing transportation infrastructure in the county and questioned the integrity of the UCS. Mr. Stephens commented that rail would not ease traffic congestion and that it is preferred to focus on more immediate solutions to the region’s traffic problems.

**Anderson Shepherd**, Live Oak resident, supports sustainable transportation planning and asked for the RTC to only make a decision after the UCS is finalized.

**Bud Colligan**, Live Oak resident, stated that Greenway has over 6,000 signatures in support of trail only, urged the Commission to focus on freight operations in Watsonville, and stated that a tourist train operation in north-county would face strong opposition from residents. Mr. Colligan expressed concerns with Progressive Rail’s proposal, and asked the RTC to wait until the UCS is completed before committing to a contract with any rail operator.

**Gail McNulty**, Greenway, stated that Progressive Rail’s proposal will likely increase the number of trucks on the road with hazardous materials. Ms. McNulty asked for transit solutions for the region’s workers, including increased bus availability.

**Patrick Weissman**, Friends of the Rail and Trail, has concerns regarding Progressive Rail’s proposal and questioned the need to bring an out-of-state operator when there is a well-established rail operator in Santa Cruz County.

**Josh Stevens**, Santa Cruz County resident, commented the need to invest in rail as an alternative mode of transportation that is reliable and sustainable, and he expressed doubt about some of the newer alternatives to transportation. Mr. Stevens asked the Commission to hold the next rail operator accountable.

**Carey Pico**, Aptos resident, mentioned that he considered that a survey conducted by the RTC was not objective and presented a more idyllic scenario than what is encountered by residents. Mr. Pico also expressed doubt about the source of the rail line operation and maintenance funding.
Ashley Winn, La Selva Beach resident, stated that Progressive Rail’s proposal, including its most recent financial statements, had issues that should be addressed. Mr. Winn asked the RTC to obtain more accurate financial statements from Progressive Rail and asked that the RTC negotiators include an “escape clause” from any long-term contract with this operator.

Stephen Slade, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, noted that there was a rail operator in place when the RTC purchased the rail corridor, when Measure D passed, and when the UCS started. Stated that this is not necessarily a proposition to use rail as a mode of mass transportation and asked the Commission to support the staff recommendation. Mr. Slade also commented on the experience and commitment of RTC staff.

Glenn Hanna, Pleasure Point resident, said that the RTC should not select a rail operator with a twenty-year lease contract before the UCS is concluded but rather obtain an interim operator while the UCS is completed, and he questioned Progressive Rail’s financial stability.

Scott Roseman, Live Oak resident, said that most county residents are primarily concerned with resolving transportation issues and reducing congestion in the county. Mr. Roseman commented on the divisive nature of this topic and asked the Commission to wait until the UCS is completed before making a decision.

Manu Koenig, Santa Cruz County resident, communicated that the RTC should capitalize on the opportunity for different possibilities rather than enter in a contract with another rail operator. Mr. Koenig expressed that there are new technologies that will improve transportation and that there is a large anti-rail sentiment in the county.

Nels Wessman, Capitola resident, noted that in the latest Capitola City Council meeting, many residents present were in favor of a trail-only option for the rail corridor. He urged the Commission to not enter into a long-term rail contract until the Unified Corridor Study is completed.

Piet Canin, Ecology Action, recommended that any contract that the RTC enters into is short-term and that it gives flexibility to the RTC to retain control and steer the corridor use to prioritize sustainable transportation modes. He stated that the goal for coastal rail corridor should be to provide viable, sustainable, affordable, convenient, safe, and healthy transportation options for residents and visitors.

Paul Elerick, Aptos resident, stated his support for Measure D due to the region’s need for transit improvements, especially as a means for daily commute for workers in south-county.

Roxby Hartley, Agron Bioenergy, noted that there are several sources of transportation grants that are dedicated to provide funding for rail
infrastructure in disadvantaged communities, such as Watsonville and asked the Commission to look into these potential funding sources.

**Bruce Sawhill**, Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT), expressed certainty that the RTC will choose a good operator and enter into a flexible contract. Mr. Sawhill stated how FORT has advocated for rail and trail for over a decade, discussed the efficiency and environmental sustainability of freight trains as a mode to transport local goods and its potential positive impact to local businesses.

**Barry Scott**, Rio Del Mar resident, stated that entering negotiations does not impact the integrity of the Unified Corridor Study but, rather, it keeps the RTC in compliance with grants, loans, and prior funding streams. Mr. Scott urged the Commission to support the staff recommendation.

**David Genini**, Santa Cruz County resident, shared that residents would enjoy the use of a protected and separated pedestrian and bicycle path and would be more likely to use their bicycles.

**Bill Cook**, Santa Cruz County resident, asked that any use of the rail corridor other than for freight service in the immediate Watsonville area be delayed indefinitely until all trestles are able to withstand seismic activity. Mr. Cook also noted the potential dangers that an earthquake would impose on passenger rail.

**“Buzz” Anderson**, Greenway, shared an email from former RTC Executive Director Ron Marquez to the Commission, which stated the proposed train contract will not impact the congestion issues in the region and that the environmental impacts of the contract have not been evaluated. Mr. Anderson asked that the Commission wait until the UCS is completed before entering in a contract.

**Dan Deon**, Santa Cruz County resident, supports keeping the rail corridor open for mass transit options and encourages the Commission to negotiate a flexible contract that can also provide useful data for the Unified Corridor Study.

**Chris Nunez**, Santa Cruz County resident, commented on the time it takes for workers in the region to commute by bus within the county and asked the Commission to consider their work commute transportation needs when making decisions.

**Ryan Sarnataro**, Live Oak resident, stated that the RTC should not invest in a rail option outside of the Watsonville area as a rail corridor from Santa Cruz to San Jose might not be as easily operational.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin moved and Commissioner Bottoroff seconded the motion to select Progressive Rail as the preferred entity potentially to
operate rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Line for purposes of negotiating a draft operating agreement, direct staff to return to the Commission if legally required interim actions are necessary, and finally, authorize the Executive Director to negotiate a draft agreement with Progressive Rail and return to the RTC for consideration of the negotiated agreement with the understanding that the RTC will consider final adoption of the agreement after the Unified Corridor Study is completed and acted upon. The motion passed with Commissioners Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Friend, Leopold, Rios, and Commissioners Alternate Rotkin and Schiffrin voting “aye” and Commissioners Bertrand, Johnson, McPherson, voting “nay”.

20a. Storm Damage Repairs – Civil Engineering Services (Resolution 13-18) (Sarah Christensen, Senior Transportation Engineer) Moved from Consent agenda

Gail McNulty, Greenway, stated that funding should not go towards fixing the rail when the community has not decided on a rail option.

Commissioners discussed: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding to repair storm damages may be lost if the RTC does not move to address the damage in a timely manner.

Commissioner Alternate Shiffrin moved and Commissioner Alternate Rotkin seconded the motion to authorize a contract with Bowman & Williams, Inc. up to $150,000 for civil engineering services for the storm damage repairs along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Friend, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios, and Commissioners Alternate Rotkin and Schiffrin voting “aye”.

20b. December 5, 2017 letter from Santa Cruz County Supervisor Zach Friend requesting that the rail line maintenance plan be in the January 18, 2018 RTC moved from consent agenda

Commissioners discussed: the interim solution for storm damages; need to develop emergency procedures for damages resulting from inclement weather or natural disasters

Commissioner Alternate Shiffrin moved and Commissioner Alternate Rotkin seconded the motion to accept the December 5, 2017 letter from Santa Cruz County Supervisor and RTC Commissioner Zach Friend requesting that the rail line maintenance plan be in the January 18, 2018 RTC agenda.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Bertrand, Bottorff, Brown, Caput, Friend, Johnson, Leopold, McPherson, Rios, and Commissioners Alternate Rotkin and Schiffrin voting “aye”.
2. Oral Communications

**Peter Stanger**, Santa Cruz County resident, asked the RTC to address the encroachment that has been taking place on the bike lane along the San Andreas Road.

**Gail McNulty**, Greenway, noted that a new detour for Segment 7 Phase 1 on the Westside is needed due to parking needs of New Leaf. She also said that the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail is destined to fail.

**Manu Koenig**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that congestion tolls should be considered in the Unified Corridor Study as a means to influence drivers’ behavior and as well as provide added revenue.

**Ryan Sarnataro**, Live Oak resident, asked the Commission to reconsider moving forward with the construction on Segment 7 in light of the utility deterioration until the UCS is completed.

**Josh Stephens**, Santa Cruz County resident, stated that he is impressed with the progress made by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) in upgrading their bus fleet and he hopes that the improvements continue. Mr. Stephens also asked for reflectors to be added to the Ocean Street and Soquel Avenue intersection.

21. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Commissioner Leopold reviewed the items to be discussed in closed session and Deputy Director Luis Mendez announced that for Item 23 the negotiating parties are the Regional Transportation Commission and Progressive Rail. Closed session started at 1:00 p.m.

**CLOSED SESSION**

22. Public Employment pursuant to Government Code Section 54957

Title: Executive Director

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

- **Property:** Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
- **Agency Negotiator:** George Dondero and Luis Mendez
- **Negotiating Parties:** SCCRTC and others to be announced
- **Under Negotiation:** Price and Terms

Closed session ended at 1:40 p.m.

**OPEN SESSION**

Meeting ended at 1:41 p.m.
24. Report on closed session

*No report*

25. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 2, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main St., Ste. 450, Watsonville, CA.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 15, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the RTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Fernanda Dias Pini, Staff

**Attendees**

Diana Adamic  Greenway
"Buzz" Anderson  Greenway
Carl Arnett  Santa Cruz County Resident
Piet Canin  Ecology Action
Eric Child  Santa Cruz County Resident
Bud Colligan  Live Oak Resident
Bill Cook  Santa Cruz County Resident
Dan Deon  Santa Cruz County Resident
Paul Elerick  Aptos Resident
Brett Garrett  Santa Cruz County Resident
David Genini  Santa Cruz County Resident
Kristine Guirre  Santa Cruz County Resident
Glenn Hanna  Greenway
Roxby Hartley  Agron Bioenergy
Ryan Hoffman  Like Oak Resident
Manu Koenig  Santa Cruz County Resident
Monique Kremer  Santa Cruz County Resident
Michael Lavigne  Greenway
David Lieby  Santa Cruz County Resident
Gail McNulty  Santa Cruz County Resident
Will Menshine  Santa Cruz County Resident
Mark Mesiti-Miller  Santa Cruz County Resident
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