

LETTERS FROM PARTNER AGENCIES

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF RAIL AND MASS TRANSPORTATION

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*Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.*

January 4, 2020

Mr. Guy Preston
Executive Director
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Mr. Preston:

Caltrans appreciates Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's (SCCRTC) efforts to address existing transportation challenges and future needs of Santa Cruz County through the Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis study (TCAA). Caltrans supports and will continue to work with SCCRTC on the next steps that lead toward implementation of the locally preferred alternative identified in the draft TCAA.

The 2018 California State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) provides a vision and framework for investing in and integrating the state rail network over the next twenty years and beyond. The Rail Plan outlines a strategy for developing a clean, efficient, integrated rail system that will improve livability, help California meet climate and air quality goals, and improve regional mobility with connectivity to the statewide system. The Rail Plan identifies the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line as a key facility in the corridor for providing passenger rail service throughout the region while providing connections to other popular destinations, including the San Francisco Bay Area, locations on the central coast and further south, and access to High Speed Rail at Gilroy. It is vital to preserve this rail line because it aligns with the State Rail Plan Vision for service and connectivity in the region.

Caltrans, through the Rail Plan and other strategic planning work, is committed to advancing equity goals and rethinking the opportunities for the role of transit and public agencies that fund, administer and operate transit. Passenger rail service in this corridor can meet the demands of commuters while, importantly,

*"Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system
to enhance California's economy and livability"*

providing all-day service and mobility that provides transportation options for all users in the community - Investments in passenger rail service can support a shared vision of improved connections and travel time reliability in the Santa Cruz region. This is a priority for the State and there are significant State funding opportunities available that can provide a pathway for advancing Santa Cruz County connections as part of the statewide network, building on the State's investment in the corridor through Proposition 116 bonds.

Prop 116 and associated STIP funds showed a commitment from the State and from voters for preserving and delivering freight and passenger rail service on this corridor. Caltrans stresses that it is vital for SCCRTC to preserve rail rights of way for rail service, particularly where there has been a public investment to purchase rail lines for this purpose, as is the case with the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and conditions established under Proposition 116 (1990).

The entire statewide rail network will be delivered with zero, or near-zero emission infrastructure and technologies to continue decarbonizing the transportation sector while minimizing impacts to local communities. Incumbent to the vision is operating clean, quiet vehicles that are deployed strategically to meet regional and statewide speed, capacity, and community needs. Caltrans is also leading statewide fleet management planning to leverage state and regional investments while taking advantage of the newest advancements in fuel technology. The passenger rail vehicles that would eventually operate in this corridor will be zero-emissions vehicles that operate quietly without air pollutants or the need for costly and visually obstructive overhead catenary. Such vehicles align with the TCAA locally preferred alternative to deliver efficient, zero-emission transit throughout Santa Cruz County.

Importantly, the locally preferred alternative identified in the TCAA includes a rail with trail option to further expand multimodal options and enhance utilization of the corridor for passenger rail operations within the same footprint as a dedicated trail for bicycle, scooter, and pedestrian use. Caltrans previously supported a similar rail-with-trail option in the North Bay Area to deliver a trail along the SMART rail corridor which is nearly complete and already heavily used. Realizing the full potential of a combined rail and active transportation corridor is consistent with the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Monterey Bay area, the State Rail Plan connectivity goals for this region, and regional greenhouse gas emissions targets.

***"Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system
to enhance California's economy and livability"***

Mr. Guy Preston
January 4, 2020
Page 3

Again, Caltrans supports the locally preferred alternative identified in the TCAA and we look forward to the resulting final action on the preferred scenario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Kyle Grading", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W. Kyle Grading, Chief
Division of Rail and Mass Transportation

c: Scott Eades, Caltrans District 5

RESOLUTION NO. 112-20 (CM)

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
WATSONVILLE URGING THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT PASSENGER
RAIL SERVICE ON THE SANTA CRUZ BRANCH RAIL LINE**

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is the owner of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and is currently conducting a Transportation Corridor Alternatives Analysis to determine how best to use the existing rail corridor to provide additional travel options for Santa Cruz County residents, businesses and visitors; and

WHEREAS, developing, operating and maintaining passenger rail service between north and south Santa Cruz County and connecting to Monterey County will:

- Increase commute options for all County residents including hospitality workers living in Watsonville;
- Relieve traffic on State Route 1 and existing County and City roadways;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, developing passenger rail service that is compatible with freight rail service will allow existing freight service in Watsonville to continue and allow the RTC to meet its obligation to maintain a rail line that is accessible to freight; and

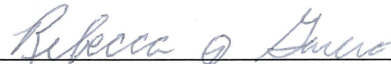
WHEREAS, developing the proposed Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network or Rail Trail in a manner that is compatible with passenger rail service was previously supported by the Watsonville City Council through approval of Resolution No. 141-14 (CM), approved on October 14, 2014.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, AS FOLLOWS:

That the City Council of the City of Watsonville urges the RTC to support the start of Phase 1 in South County for the development, operation and maintenance of passenger rail service along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line that is compatible with existing and future freight rail service and with development of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network and connects with Monterey County.

The foregoing resolution was introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of the City of Watsonville, held on the 23rd day of June, 2020, by Member Hernandez, who moved its adoption, which motion being duly seconded by Member Hurst, was upon roll call carried and the resolution adopted by the following vote:

AYES:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	Coffman-Gomez, Estrada, Gonzalez, Hernandez, Hurst, Parker, García
NOES:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	None
ABSENT:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	None


Rebecca J. García, Mayor

ATTEST:


City Clerk

June 25, 2020
Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


City Attorney

I, Beatriz Vázquez Flores, City Clerk of the City of Watsonville, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution No. 112-20 (CM) was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the Watsonville City Council at a meeting thereof held on the 23rd day of June, 2020, and that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of said Resolution.


Beatriz Vazquez Flores, City Clerk

Date June 25, 2020



MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • (831) 420-5020 • Fax: (831) 420-5011 • citycouncil@cityofsantacruz.com

November 18, 2020

Chair Bruce McPherson and Commissioners
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Chair McPherson and Commissioners:

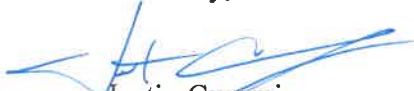
With the draft Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis (TCAA), the City of Santa Cruz (City) would like to reaffirm our support for trail and transit on the rail line and our appreciation of the Regional Transportation Commission's (RTC) continued work to further sustainable transportation options for Santa Cruz County.

In 2015, the City adopted a resolution reaffirming support for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan and the preservation of the rail option. As a City, we recognize how critical transportation solutions are to addressing the looming threats of climate change. We continue to support passenger transit on the rail line, in accordance with our General Plan and Climate Action Plan policies supporting public transportation on the rail corridor and transit-oriented development land use patterns. Further, as a City, we adopted the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan and are moving forward with building the trail adjacent to the rail, in accordance with that adopted plan.

The TCAA identifies a locally preferred scenario of Electric Commuter Rail or Electric Light Rail on the branch rail line. Either of these options are supported by our existing policy framework. While there is more work to come, we are encouraged by the TCAA in moving our community towards greater transportation sustainability.

As a City, we continue to support rail with trail on the rail line and are thankful for the RTC's continued work to bring sustainable multimodal transportation options to Santa Cruz County. The City looks forward to working with the RTC on the next steps of this process.

Sincerely,



Justin Cummings
Mayor



Donna Meyers
Vice Mayor



December 18, 2020

Chair Bruce McPherson and Commissioners
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

Via email to: gpreston@sccrtc.org; gdykaar@sccrtc.org

**RE: Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study:
Support for Electric Passenger Rail Alternatives**

Dear Chair McPherson and Commissioners:

On behalf of the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), I write in support of the recommended locally-preferred alternative of electric passenger rail on the Santa Cruz Branch Line, connecting Santa Cruz with Watsonville and Pajaro.

For many years, TAMC has been working to implement new rail service connecting the Monterey Bay Area with the San Francisco Bay Area. TAMC recently constructed improvements at the Salinas train station to support this increase in interregional train travel, and the plans for the Monterey County Rail Extension Kick Start project, extending Caltrain service from Gilroy to Salinas, are at 75% design. The Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study recognizes that electric commuter or light rail will provide superior service from Santa Cruz through Watsonville to Pajaro in Monterey County, which will eventually be a stop on the rail service to Salinas. Given our support for interregional service from Monterey County to Santa Cruz County, we support the locally-preferred alternative. In particular, construction of the Pajaro/Watsonville station will enable integration of passenger rail with future inter-county and interregional rail connections to Salinas, Monterey, Gilroy, the Bay Area and beyond.

In addition, the RTC's proposed electric passenger rail system will be compatible with the regional rail network originally envisioned in the joint 1998 Around the Bay Rail study, supported in the 2018 State Rail Plan, and now being further developed in TAMC's Network Integration Study, currently under preparation.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Debra L. Hale", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Debra L. Hale
Executive Director

**METRO, Partner Agency, and RTC Advisory Committee Comments and RTC Advisory Committee
Motions on the Draft Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study -
Milestone 3**

METRO Board comments

- The full length of the corridor should be used for dedicated transit to improve travel time reliability.
- Transportation infrastructure costs money, all of it. Investments in the long term must be made.
- The triple bottom line approach makes rail the appropriate LPA recommendation clear.
- The issue for success of this project is trip time to Watsonville. Reliability is also vital for workers.
- For a bicycle rider, trains can have entire bike cars, but BRT can't really do the same.
- Transit service must be better, not just adequate. LRT is preferred for community acceptance.
- Concern about funding for local transit connections at station
- Concern about the total time and costs for the trip including first and last mile
- Concerned about providing frequent service and the cost to the user
- These types of transit investments will attract federal funds
- Light rail transit is exciting
- This is an inclusive project for both north and south county
- There will be good funding leverage on this project
- Watsonville needs better access to north county as soon as possible
- Freight is also important; we need to take freight off the highway to lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Cost for rail is too high and uncertain
- Excited about rail but concerned about cost and how they will be covered
- Need to consider climate change. We can't get out of this climate situation if we can't get people out of their cars. It is expensive, but we need to move forward.

RTC Advisory Committee and Partner Agency Comments

- Rail as the locally preferred alternative aligns with the needs of Watsonville
- Watsonville planning staff also supports rail as the locally preferred alternative
- Caltrans supports rail as the locally preferred alternative especially given the high utilization of the corridor and the efficient connections to the CA state rail network
- When BRT is along the SCBRL, it takes up a lot of right-of-way, concerned about impacts on the trail
- Since fares are much less than the cost per rider, concerned about where this additional cost will come from
- Concerned expressed about impacts of rail sidings on the trail
- The need for a tax measure should be clearly presented in the report and discuss how higher fares would equate to less need for taxes
- Include more discussion on impacts of transit alternatives on the trail widths
- A station at Almar would be helpful for access to shopping, Natural Bridges is not near anything
- Consider connections to San Lorenzo Valley from downtown Santa Cruz

Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) Motion

ITAC passed a motion to support passenger rail as the locally preferred alternative.

Vote: 11 Ayes, 0 Noes, 2 Abstain

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) Motion

The final motion to support the proposed locally-preferred alternative (passenger rail – commuter rail/light rail) was put to a vote with the following priorities accepted as friendly amendments:

- Adequate usable trail width within the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right of way
- Adequate onboard bike capacity
- Level boarding
- Building the trail on the corridor where at all possible

Vote: 9 ayes, 1 Noes

Elderly &Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC) Motion

Motion to support the passenger rail recommendation utilizing clean fuel vehicles and having a flexible design which will support the maximum number of riders using mobility devices.

Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Noes