

Public Comments on the Draft Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study – Milestone 3

The following is a summary of public comments received on the Draft Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study (TCAA/RNIS) via emails, letters, and comment forms. The Open House ran from November 6 through November 27, 2020 and comments on the draft report were requested by November 27, 2020. The results of the online survey through the Milestone 3 Open House are provided in a separate document. The complete compilation of comments received can be found on the RTC website at the following link <https://sccrtc.org/projects/multi-modal/transitcorridora/>.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM EMAILS, LETTERS and COMMENT FORMS

Support for Passenger Rail Transit

Over 225 email comments supporting passenger rail transit including the following remarks:

- Rail and trail serve the greatest number of users
- Will integrate with rail networks throughout the state and nation
- Reliable, efficient and safe
- Provides other travel option to avoid and reduce congestion
- Allows for large bike capacity
- Rail is not short sighted
- Rail is critical to have in an emergency.
- Implement quickly, no more delays
- Rail will reduce emissions and stress of traveling in congestion
- Part of developing sustainably
- Rails exist, let's use them
- Rail transit for Santa Cruz County is identified in the State Rail Plan and therefore funding will likely be available.
- Preserving the tracks, protects the easements and any potential legal challenges.
- Rail transit to serve all not just the privileged
- Rail transit to provide better connection between Watsonville and Santa Cruz and reduce congestion
- Support rail transit because it is green, more affordable than widening Hwy 1, provide more options for travel, it scales – can add cars to increase train capacity, will connect to statewide rail network
- Need Rail transit to prevent wasted hours in traffic and reduce stress
- Support rail transit as it can be implemented sooner than bus to fight global warming
- Corridor must be used for transit and rail travel may be most practical and enjoyable
- Support commuter rail to reduce trips by car
- Support passenger rail – better for people (more reliable service, easiest access for bicyclists and people with wheelchairs), better for planet (lower emissions and global warming, avoid traffic congestion), better for prosperity.
- Support rail transit as it gives us the greatest benefit for the cost, leverages existing infrastructure
- Support rail transit as it can be used by everyone and easier and more reliable than buses and more environmentally sound, and can commute with both bike and rail

- Support rail and trail as trail only does not consider catastrophic consequences of not getting people out of their cars.
- Support rail transit and not the bus option. It is time for Santa Cruz to build a modern light rail system.
- Support passenger rail to provide reliable, high quality service and connect our county to regional and state rail network.
- Support Rail for the locally preferred alternative as it will be a more equitable, more sustainable, more prosperous community for everyone.
- Support rail transit, integration with METRO bus services is crucial, grow the choice transit users
- Support rail transit and availability to haul emergency supplies should be considered, need to plan for the future
- Support passenger rail and ability to connect at Pajaro Junction and to High Speed Rail
- Support light rail, need efficient rail system similar to Europe and Asia
- Support electric passenger rail, trains are fun, nobody likes riding buses
- Support for rail and trail as this is needed for the community of Watsonville
- Support passenger rail, do not let an unrepresentative group undermine this effort
- Support rail transit as the benefits are superior to bus transit as they include – faster, more reliable, easy to access for all users, reduces VMT, GHG, pair with shuttles to serve destinations, implemented quickly with public will and leadership, option uses the entire corridor
- Support rail transit, don't make the mistake that the Bay Area did in not utilizing their rail and having to repurchase land to build BART.
- Support electric light rail transit as it is less intrusive than commuter rail
- As a real estate insurance broker, buyers have been specifically looking for real estate purchases next to the rail corridor in anticipation of electric passenger rail and bike/pedestrian trail
- Support light rail transit with a station at La Selva/Manresa Beach. Request operation hours go from 6AM to 10 or 11 PM. It should not be for a bike/pedestrian trail only.
- Support rail transit and would like to see rail expand into San Lorenzo Valley someday.
- Support light rail transit – shortest travel time, greater carrying capacity, connectivity to regional transit, use of existing infrastructure
- Support rail transit and connection to UCSC Coastal Campus
- Support rail transit and less risk to losing the continuity of the corridor by potentially losing easements as then we lose both rail and trail, do not jeopardize the continuous ROW
- Support rail transit together with trail to provide the broadest range of benefits to residents of SCC, train options now are clean fuel, less noisy and less polluting than the old cement plant trains that used to travel the line
- Support rail transit and continue planning for long term benefits, rail has ability to increase capacity as demand increases and to bring on board many more bicycles. Big projects take determination, time and patience.
- Support rail transit and bring in demonstration trains to help people experience what a train on this corridor would be like. Public transportation is a great thing to invest in.
- Rail transit is the most forward thinking, once tracks are torn up they will never come back

Support for No Rail Transit

Over 10 email comments expressing support for no passenger rail transit including the following remarks:

- Stop wasting time and money on maintaining rail
- Rail is not viable; freight rail has been shown to not be sustainable given loss of two rail operators
- Do not support rail transit as it is old technology and would require taxpayer money
- Do not support rail transit as there is no funding for rail transit and there are no freight customers.
- Do not support rail transit as people in Watsonville will not drive to Watsonville train station, as there is nowhere to park, wait for the train, spend 30 minutes to get to Santa Cruz and then take a bus to their destination. This is not serving commute needs.
- Expand the highway to 3 lanes in each direction and people would prefer to drive to get to their destination than to take a train.
- Studies are flawed, there are numerous issues with rail transit – too expensive for both train and trail (\$1.8 billion), destroys 20 historic trestles, closes Roaring Camp to Boardwalk, road crossings closed every 15 minutes, Aptos Village shutdown every 15 minutes, no identified funding, requires local tax increase, delays use of corridor for decades, increases cost of trail, requires eminent domain of private property, major noise, speeding trains (45 mph).
- Do not support rail transit as it is not a sensible solution, need to concentrate on bus on shoulder on Highway 1 and bus rapid transit along Soquel and Mission.
- Since the rail system would not be elevated or underground, it may lead to more congestion and cause more problems
- Do not support a train, too expensive and corridor does not go where people want to go. No more useless studies that are predetermined.
- It seems absurd that today passenger rail along the entire line is recommended when a short recreational line was deemed infeasible in a previous study completed in 1998 – Around the Bay Study. The 1998 Major Transportation Investment Study concluded that a busway was the preferred option along with intercity recreational rail.

Support for Bus Rapid Transit

A few email comments expressing support for Bus Rapid Transit including the following remarks:

- Support bus rapid transit
- Support bus rapid transit as it is cheaper and faster and can be scaled as needed. Take out the tracks and put in an inexpensive trail. Cost for a trail next to the tracks is too expensive.

Support for Trail Only

Over 25 email comments expressing support for trail only including the following remarks:

- Rail is too expensive, buses won't fit, consider micro shuttles shared with bike/ped, trail only open to ebikes
- Trail only will get more use
- Rail transit is wasteful, expensive, lacks infrastructure for stations, parking and passing sidings, too narrow for rail and trail. Build a trail.
- Trail only with railbanking option to make the trail usable now, we have waited too long
- Trail only unless you can build a train and trail soon

- Support trail only – do not need a train to Davenport.
- Support trail only as rail is not realistic as you can see when walk the corridor. Build a trail only now and it could evolve to a bus and trail.
- Just build the trail and not the rail as people will just take a car to get to their exact end destination and would use a bike on the trail.
- Put mass transit on existing roads and improve the bus system. Keep the rail corridor for pedestrian, and cycle/light electric usage.
- Do not support rail transit as it does not serve the destinations where people travel. A trail will provide a great tourist attraction for people to enjoy our community and beaches. Put it to a vote and let people decide.
- Support trail only – listen to the over 10,000 residents petitioned for the bike only option on the rail right of way.
- Support a trail-only solution and stop spending money on more studies. Mass transportation should be kept on the Highway 1 corridor.
- Support trail only to offer a safe alternative to biking on roads
- Support minimal project and walk, bike, skate, scooter and micro-transport friendly
- Support trail only and make a world class attraction for cyclists to offer a safe alternative to biking on the roadway network
- Support trail only with a wide-multi-use continuous trail as train would serve only an elite few and not be a good fit for our county or provide social justice. Affordable housing is needed in Santa Cruz near job centers.
- Support trail only as passenger rail is a boondoggle
- Support trail only, put it to a vote, make similar to Monterey’s recreational trail
- Support trail only, buses are underutilized, why would a train work, too expensive and stop spending money on studies
- Support trail only, any extra funds should go to widen Highway 1
- Support trail only, there is not a budget plan to support rail, low farebox recovery or not affordable to vast majority, how has climate change impacts been addressed, will require tree removal, fencing, retaining walls, and trail will need to be diverted to surface streets along 35%of the corridor, if we go with bus rapid transit, could open a temporary gravel trail now. Support a feasible plan that can be delivered in a few years instead of decades.
- Support trail only now and lead to a bus-trail later that can be agreed upon by all. A bus and trail will allow flexibility during unfortunate times such as a virus outbreak to scale back buses and scale up the trail.
- Support trail only, why pick an alternative that is the most expensive, least ridership and no funding. You are kicking the train can down the road without taking any substantive steps.

Support for Personal Rapid Transit

A few email comments expressing support for Personal Rapid Transit including the following remarks:

- Reconsider Personal Rapid Transit as a future option for transit in SCC
- Support personal rapid transit but since not likely, support rail transit
- Support personal rapid transit, TCAA did not evaluate these and other options well. Rail is not a cost-effective solution.
- Consider personal rapid transit or automated transportation network (ATN). Mountain View is considering and RTC should consider too. Vehicles are automated, on-demand, non-stop from origin to destination, grade separated guideways in congested areas, safe, very green, less expensive than light rail or bus, quiet, comparable travel times to autos.

Comments Related to Roaring Camp

- Consider impact on Roaring Camp as 60 trains a day in front of the boardwalk will impact their business, Roaring Camp brings much benefit to the Santa Cruz County community
- Roaring Camp is a private business and the interests of a private business should not be considered over what is good for the general public.

Miscellaneous Comments

- Postpone decision until after the pandemic in order to get more community input
- This analysis is not offering anything new, I have heard it before.
- Consider options besides mass transit
- Consider a Summit Road By-pass that would direct traffic over Hwy 17 on a highway along the Summit Road to Hwy 152 to Watsonville
- Please consider the hundreds of homes that will be affected by the noise and vibration of trains running above Riverview Ave in Capitola along the trestle. When the holiday train crossed, my entire house vibrated and the noise is very loud.
- Utilize rail bikes while waiting for electric train to be completed
- The survey was biased as it could allow multiple responses from same person and did not include a demographic profile.
- Leave open the possibility to implement new technologies including personal rapid transit, rail transit alternatives with headways of 30-60 minutes are not adequate, social distancing is not addressed, no convenient access to Cabrillo or downtown Santa Cruz, not well adapted to sea level rise and flooding, excessive amount of energy per passenger-mile with empty seats in a heavier vehicle.
- Survey is not meaningful as it appears that one person can fill out the survey more than once.
- In theory, rail transit is great but in reality the funding and ridership need to be evaluated in more detail. The SMART train proved to be much more expensive and less ridership than projected.
- Put decision to a vote and let community decide
- The RTC public input process has no credibility and do not use lobbying efforts by community organizations as public input. If you want real input consider results of the 1st district supervisor election where the use of the rail corridor as trail was a primary issue and Manu Koenig won in a landslide.