

AGENDA: August 5, 2021

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Guy Preston, Executive Director
RE: Director's Report

THIS ITEM FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Greenway Initiative:

On July 21st, Santa Cruz County Greenway published its Notice to Circulate Petition and the County Counsel's Title and Summary for an initiative to change the County's General Plan, specifically certain sections of the Circulation element to remove certain rail planning and insert planning for an interim trail or "Greenway" on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. They have apparently begun the process of collecting signatures to place the initiative on the June 2022 ballot.

RTC is a special district, independent of the County. RTC purchased the SCBRL in 2012 and is actively developing trail projects on the rail line. We recently also commenced certain studies that will consider both an interim trail and a trail adjacent to the rail on various rail trail segments. As the regional planning agency, staff has reviewed the initiative and believes it is in the RTC's best interest to focus staff's efforts on the delivery of our authorized trail projects. As always, we will continue to provide the Commission and public with information needed to make decisions moving forward.

RTC's Consolidated Call for Projects:

Staff has issued a call for applications for the RTC's anticipated regional shares of new state and federal funds, including State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Surface Transportation Block Grant Program/Regional Surface Transportation Program Exchange (STBG/RSTPx), federal Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP), and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) funds. Applications are due to the RTC on October 5, 2021. Approximately \$11 million is available for programming through this consolidated "call for projects." This spring Caltrans and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) informed regions that regions cannot distribute funds by formula, such as by population or mode; projects should be prioritized based on how well they advance federal, state, and regional goals, targets, and performance metrics. The Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) provided input on the programming process, schedule, and evaluation criteria at its June 2021

meeting. Additional information about this funding opportunity is available on the RTC's Grant Programs webpage: <https://sccrtc.org/funding-planning/project-funding/>

Measure D 5-Year Plans for Regional Projects

In 2016 Santa Cruz County voters approved Measure D, a 30-year sales tax for transportation projects and programs. The voter-approved ordinance requires the RTC and local agencies to prepare and annually update 5-year plans showing how they plan to spend Measure D funds in the near future. Staff will be presenting draft Measure D 5-year Program of Projects (5-Year Plans) for FY21/22-25/26 for regional investment categories to the RTC's Bicycle Committee, Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC), and Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) at their meetings this month, with final plans scheduled to be reviewed by the RTC board in September or October in coordination with the RTC's fall budget amendment. The 5-year Plans for the Highway Corridor, Active Transportation-Trail, Rail Corridor, Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley (SLV), and Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing Measure D investment categories have been updated to reflect anticipated expenditures of Measure D funds based on current cost and schedule information.

Federal Reauthorization & Infrastructure Plan

Today (August 5), the Senate is scheduled to consider amendments and potentially hold a vote on passage of a \$1 trillion infrastructure policy package, which would include reauthorization of the federal transportation act (which expires at the end of September) for roads, bridges, highways, ports, airports, rail and transit transportation programs. In addition to transportation, the legislation, crafted by a bipartisan group of senators, includes funding for drinking water systems and rural broadband internet access.

The Senate proposal includes:

- \$110 billion for upgrades to roads and bridges
- \$66 billion for freight and other passenger rail operations, including Amtrak
- \$39 billion for transit systems, including \$8 billion for heavy rail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit Capital Investment Grants (CIG)

House leaders are asking senators to negotiate a final version of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, expressing concern that the Senate version of the multi-year transportation act is not as robust as the \$547 billion "INVEST in America Act" (HR 3684), a 79% increase over the FAST Act, approved in the House in June.

The House version includes \$5.7 billion for member-designated projects, formerly known as "earmarks"

- Boulder Creek Complete Streets Improvements Project: \$1,500,000 (Eshoo)
- Scotts Creek Coastal Resiliency Project: \$3,500,000 (Eshoo)
- Santa Cruz METRO Paratransit Vans Replacement Project: \$505,750 (Eshoo)
- Santa Cruz METRO Bus Replacements: \$1,840,000 million (Panetta)

Changes might still be made, so staff will continue to monitor the infrastructure policy package and inform the Commission as the legislation moves forward.