



March 1, 2022

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
1101 Pacific Ave Suite 250  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
via email to [info@scrtc.org](mailto:info@scrtc.org)

RE: March 3, 2022 RTC Meeting

Dear Commissioners,

As you consider, at this week's meeting, the RTC's 2022 State and Federal Legislative Program, we encourage you to provide some additional information to the public during your discussion about funding for the development of passenger light rail on our Santa Cruz County Branch Rail Line (SCCBRL) corridor.

1. Please explain to the public why grant funding for some transportation projects has been obtained or allocated BEFORE an EIR is completed, yet Director Preston has repeatedly stated that funding for development of the electric light rail system, the preferred project per the Corridor Study, cannot be sought until AFTER an EIR is completed.

For example, on p.24-14 of this same agenda packet, Caltrans lists five SHOPP (State Highway Operation and Protection Program) projects funded for FY 23/24 as in the "PA/ED" or "Project Approval/Environmental Document" stage of project development. How is this different from funding for development stages of a rail project on the SCBRL?

The RTC's May 5, 2021 split vote on the adoption of a Draft Business Plan for the Transportation Corridor Alternatives Analysis (TCAA) was not a rejection of rail itself, since the majority of the Commission had voted in February 2021 to accept the TCAA Study which identified electric light rail as the preferred option for our SCBRL. The May 2021 tie vote was instead a reluctance by some Commissioners to move forward at that time due to cost and lack of funding. In fact, Director Preston said at the time that he would continue to seek funding for the preferred option. Now, with an historic amount of rail funding becoming available this year, the Commission should be moving quickly to research these new funding opportunities, resolve cost issues, and move the majority's preference for rail forward.

2. We encourage the Commission to consider the following staff comment in this agenda: "While the RTC does not currently have a contract with federal or state consultants to provide assistance tracking and implementing this work, staff may recommend contracting with consultants to provide assistance in the future."

As we move into a time of increased funding for rail projects from both Federal and State legislation, the cost of contracting with consultants to seek and apply for such competitive funds might greatly increase the success of our applications. Such costs would also be a small fraction, and a reasonable approach within the larger costs of these projects.

In summary, we believe the RTC should immediately direct staff to seek and identify funds, including from Measure D, to undertake the next development and environmental review phase of the electric passenger rail project, and return to the Commission at its following meeting with a status report on this effort.

Sincerely,

Barry Scott, Co-Chair  
Civic Engagement Committee