



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's
Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC)

AGENDA
Thursday, June 16, 2022
1:30 p.m.

TELECONFERENCE AND VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING ONLY

Zoom meeting link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87467167434>
Meeting ID: 874 6716 7434
Alternately participants may dial-in: 1-669-900-9128
or iphone one-tap: +16699009128,,87467167434#

Due to precautions associated with COVID-19, and following current state law (AB361) regarding the Brown Act, the Committee meeting will be held by teleconference only. Members of the public can listen and participate in meetings over the phone and through the internet.

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1. Call to Order
2. Introductions
3. Oral communications

The Committee will receive oral communications during this time on items not on today's agenda. Oral communications must be within the jurisdiction of the Committee and may be limited in time at the discretion of the Chair. Committee members will not take action or respond immediately to any oral communications, but may choose to follow up at a later time, either individually, or on a subsequent Committee agenda.

4. Additions, deletions, or other changes to consent and regular agendas

CONSENT AGENDA

All items appearing on the consent agenda are considered to be minor or non-controversial and will be acted upon in one motion if no member of the Committee or public wishes an item be removed and discussed on the regular agenda. Members of the Committee may raise questions, seek clarification or

add directions to Consent Agenda items without removing the item from the Consent Agenda as long as no other committee member objects to the change.

5. Approve Minutes of the April 21, 2022 ITAC meeting

REGULAR AGENDA

6. Status of transportation projects, programs, studies and planning documents
 - a. Verbal updates from ITAC members on projects
7. County of Santa Cruz General Plan Sustainability Update
 - a. Staff Report
 - b. Presentation from County Planning
 - c. Attachments
8. Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)
 - a. Staff Report
 - b. Draft RCIS online at: www.sccrtc.org/rcis
9. Funding and Grant Updates - Verbal updates and discussion
 - a. [Active Transportation Program Cycle 6](#) – applications due June 15
 - b. FY 2022-23 SB1-Local Streets and Roads Proposed Project List Submittals due in [CalSMART](#) by July 1, 2022
 - c. [Caltrans FY23/24 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants](#) – draft application and guidelines July 2022; applications due October 2022
 - d. [Reconnecting Communities Pilot \(RCP\)](#) –call for projects Summer 2022
 - i. [Request to Caltrans for RCP support or co-lead](#) due June 30, 2022
 - e. [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#) – applications due September 15, 2022
 - f. [Highway Safety Improvement Program \(HSIP\) Cycle 11](#) – applications due September 15, 2022
10. Next Meeting – The next ITAC meeting is scheduled for 1:30pm on **August 18, 2022. RTC committees do not meet in July.** Meeting location (virtual or in-person) will be determined based on the latest health guidance and state law. ITAC meetings will be canceled if there are no action items to be brought before the committee.

Adjourn

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available on an as needed basis. Please make advance arrangements at least three days in advance by calling (831) 460-3200.)

HOW TO REACH US: Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Ste 250; Santa Cruz, CA 95060; phone: (831) 460-3200
email: info@sccrtc.org / website: www.sccrtc.org

AGENDAS ONLINE: To receive email notification when the Committee meeting agenda packets are posted on our website, please fill out the e-subscription form on the website: <https://sccrtc.org/about/esubscriptions/> or call (831) 460-3200.

TELECONFERENCE MEETINGS: This meeting is being held by teleconference in accordance with guidance for gatherings issued by the California Department of Public Health and local health authorities. There is no option to attend this meeting in-person. AB361 and other state actions allow local board and committee members and the public to participate and conduct meetings by teleconference and/or videoconference, in order to protect public health. Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency COVID resources are online at: www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus

The RTC is committed to facilitating coordination among agencies and encourages members and interested parties to join the online meeting by clicking the meeting link provided above. If you are unable to participate by web or phone or if you need additional assistance to participate, please contact 831-460-3200 at least 3 days in advance of the meeting.

Zoom Meeting Tips: Meeting attendees are strongly encouraged to use the Zoom app for best reception. Prior to the meeting, participants can download the Zoom app at: <https://zoom.us/download>. A link to simplified instruction for the use of the Zoom app is: <https://blog.zoom.us/video-communications-best-practice-guide/>

Remote Meeting Public Comments: Due to current circumstances, there may be limited opportunities to provide verbal comments during the meeting. Persons who wish to provide comments during oral communications or on an item on the agenda are encouraged to submit comments in writing to rmoriconi@sccrtc.org by 12:00 noon the day before the meeting. Members of the public participating by Zoom are instructed to be on mute during the proceedings and to speak only when public comment is allowed, after requesting and receiving recognition from the Chair.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. This meeting location is an accessible facility. If you wish to attend this meeting and require special assistance in order to participate, please contact RTC staff at 460-3200 (CRS 800/735-2929) at least three working days in advance of this meeting to make arrangements. People with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format. As a courtesy to those persons affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent-free.

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Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC)

DRAFT MINUTES

Thursday, April 21, 2022, 1:30 p.m.
Teleconference

Due to precautions associated with COVID-19 (coronavirus), the meeting was held by videoconference, consistent with state laws and orders allowing legislative bodies to hold Brown Act meetings via teleconference.

ITAC Members Present

Capitola Public Works	Kailash Mozumder (Chair)
Santa Cruz Public Works	Nathan Nguyen
Santa Cruz Planning Proxy	Mark Dettle
Scotts Valley Public Works	Chris Lamm
Watsonville Public Works	Murray Fontes
Watsonville Community Development	Justin Meek
County of Santa Cruz Public Works	Casey Carlson
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments	Paul Hierling
Ecology Action- Transportation Program	Piet Canin
Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District & Proxy	John Urgo
Caltrans District 5 Planning	Ingrid McRoberts

RTC Staff Present

Grace Blakeslee, Sarah Christensen, Rachel Moriconi, Amy Naranjo, Guy Preston

Others Present

Rob Tidmore, Santa Cruz County Public Works
Members of Public: Joni Steele, Brian Peoples

- 1. Call to Order:** Chair Kailash Mozumder called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.
- 2. Introductions:** Introductions were made. All attendees participated by teleconference.
- 3. Oral Communications:** Brian Peoples requested that Caltrans, City of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Cruz and RTC initiate public outreach on construction schedules for the Murray Street Bridge and parallel projects.

Rachel Moriconi reminded public works departments to complete the Statewide Local Streets and Roads (LSR) Needs Assessment Survey and requested agencies identify staff working on the survey. She reported that

Caltrans plans to issue the call for projects for the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) on May 9, with a focus on vulnerable users. She also reported on state meetings regarding Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) implementation and shared webinar information for the New USDOT Safe Streets for All program:

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A/webinars>

4. Additions, deletions, or changes to consent and regular agendas:

Item 6 was moved to the end of the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

5. Approved Minutes of the March 17, 2022, ITAC meeting

Committee members present unanimously approved a motion (Lamm/Fontes) approving the consent agenda, with Urgo, Mozumder, Nguyen, Dettle, Lamm, Fontes, Carlson, Hierling, Canin, and McRoberts voting "yes" by roll call vote. Member Meek was not present at time of vote.

REGULAR AGENDA

7. Caltrans District 5 Active Transportation Plan (CAT Plan)

Ingrid McRoberts, Caltrans District 5 Planning presented the District 5 Active Transportation Plan (CAT Plan), which was completed earlier this year. District 5 was the first district in the state to develop this Plan and there are currently efforts underway to incorporate new data, methodology, and youth-based outreach activities into subsequent Plans. Going forward it will be important to be able to site the inclusion of a need in the Plan on grant applications.

8. Draft Active Transportation- Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (MBSST)/Coastal Rail Trail Five-Year Program of Projects for Measure Revenues (MBSST 5-Year Plan)

Rachel Moriconi presented options for programming Measure D-Active Transportation category funds, including consideration of requests for additional Measure D-Active Transportation funds from the City of Santa Cruz (\$370,000) for Segments 8-9 and from the County of Santa Cruz for 20% of Segment 10-11 cost, plus \$12.6 million estimated to be needed for Segment 12, and \$3.6 million for maintenance and oversight of the Coastal Rail Trail. *[Amounts subsequently changed after the committee meeting.]* Any commitments by the RTC would be reflected in grant applications being submitted later this year. She noted that financing may be needed based on current schedules if the RTC approves funding amounts for Segments 10 &

11 and Segment 12 trail alignments next to the railroad tracks as described in the staff report.

In response to questions from committee members, Rob Tidmore and Nathan Nguyen clarified that they plan to submit ATP applications for the trail alignment next to railroad tracks. Sarah Christensen provided additional information on the joint Segment 12 and Highway 1 project. ***The committee unanimously approved a motion (Fontes/Nguyen) recommending that the RTC approve funding for Segments 8–12 and ongoing maintenance and corridor maintenance as shown in Attachment 1: 5 Year Project List [Additional \$370,000 for Segments 8/9; additional \$10 million for Segments 10/11; \$12.6 million for Segment 12; and \$3.6 million for maintenance and management], and issue bonds if needed to meet those funding commitments, with members Urgo, Mozumder, Nguyen, Dettle, Lamm, Meek, Fontes, Carlson, Hierling, Canin, and McRoberts voting "yes".***

Guy Preston & Grace Blakeslee left the meeting at approximately 2:45pm.

9. Go Santa Cruz County Program Update

Amy Naranjo, RTC Transportation Planner, provided an update to the Go Santa Cruz County program. She highlighted elements of the program, including services for employers such as system impact and heat map reports, and incentives and rewards for participants. She encouraged members to try out the program, commit to and track smart commutes, and invite them to provide feedback and use data collected.

Nathan Nguyen, Mark Dettle, Justin Meek, and John Urgo left the meeting at about 2:55pm.

6. Status of transportation projects, programs, studies, and planning documents *(Item was discussed after Item 9)*

ITAC members provided updates on projects, programs, studies and planning efforts.

County of Santa Cruz – Casey Carlson reported that the County is still working on 2017 storm damage sites, with two recently awarded projects and 35 locations going before the board for approval over next two months. The Soquel Multimodal Project is at 100% design. The Holohan/152 intersection project is projected to start construction this summer. The final draft of the County's Active Transportation Plan is out for review. For the Soquel area adaptive signal project, intersections currently in adaptive mode include: 41st Ave/Soquel Drive, 41st Ave/Redwood Shopping Center,

Soquel/Daubenbliss, Soquel/Porter-Main, and Soquel-San Jose/O'Neill Lane. Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons have been installed at another 12 locations. The 2022 Measure D repaving project in partnership with Capitola is moving forward. County sanitation division is also working on projects and plan to add green lanes on Portola Drive. Environmental review of the Buena Vista Dr. project is delayed, moving construction to summer 2023. The County is working to get its emergency routes project [Alba and Jamison Creek Roads] out to bid this summer. The San Andreas Road rehab STIP project is also scheduled for construction for summer 2023. The County also won a \$5 million Clean California grant for its Green Valley path and will be getting consultants to help with design.

Watsonville Public Works - Murray Fontes reported that while Watsonville is still waiting for delivery of lighting components for the Lincoln Street pedestrian safety project, utility work is underway that will be needed for several other planned projects. He reported that Caltrans incorporated many of Watsonville's complete streets plans into its Highway 129 and Highway 152 projects. Patrice Theriot is preparing information for the statewide local roads needs assessment. He noted that Watsonville has no bridge projects planned. The city is working on an ATP application for various bike and pedestrian projects near schools identified in complete streets and downtown plans.

Scotts Valley - Chris Lamm reported that the city's Measure D 5-year plan and SB1 project list is going before the City Council on May 4. Chris will be the contact for the statewide local roads needs assessment report. They are recruiting a new senior civil engineer and Council awarded about 20 on-call professional services contracts, including civil engineering, project management, grant support, and construction support services to help address some of the backlog of projects. He reported that candidates for ATP or HSIP have not been identified yet.

City of Capitola - Kailash Mozumder reported 2022 road resurfacing work is going to be done in coordination with the County in June. The city is advertising for construction bids for the Clares Street project. They are still a few months out from bringing an updated Measure D 5-year plan to council. The city's adaptive signals on 41st Ave. from Jade St. to Clares St. are expected to go into detection mode before the end of the month, with adaptive signals at Caltrans intersections expected in next few months. He also reported that the regional bike share program agreement with a contractor is being finalized and expressed interested in trip information from Go Santa Cruz County to identify station locations. He noted that the City has not identified projects for ATP or HSIP applications.

AMBAG - Paul Hierling reported that AMBAG received a Caltrans Partnership Planning grant to develop an updated Central Coast Sustainable Freight Study, which will integrate California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP), the State Freight Mobility Plan 2020, Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), and sustainability and equity.

Ecology Action – Piet Canin announced May Bike Month. He encouraged everyone to participate: <https://ecoact.org/bikemonth/>. He reported that Ecology Action is implementing several grants, including outreach on EVs for low-income residents. Ecology Action is also partnering with UCSC for implementing bike safety education projects and may submit a Cycle 6 ATP application to expand the UCSC Slug Bike Life (#slugbikelife) program.

SCCRTC - Rachel Moriconi shared the Measure D Taxpayer Oversight Committee's appreciation for work done on annual reports and audits. She reported that the RTC has been awarded Caltrans planning grants for equity and climate resiliency planning. She announced that the RTC has hired Stephanie Britt as a new planning technician. Sarah Christensen reported that the RTC submitted a federal RAISE grant application for \$14.8 million for the Hwy 1 Soquel-41st auxiliary lanes/bus-on-shoulder and zero-emission buses project. RTC is working with Caltrans to prepare a \$30 million application for a federal Rural Mega grant for the Highway 1 Freedom Blvd. to State Park Dr., plus Segment 12 project.

10. Next meeting. The next meeting of the ITAC is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on May 19, 2022, by Zoom. ITAC meetings may be cancelled if there are no action items to be considered by the committee.

Adjournment: Chair Mozumder adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Convisser and Rachel Moriconi

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TO: Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC)
FROM: RTC Staff
RE: County of Santa Cruz General Plan Sustainability Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) receive a presentation and provide input on the Draft County of Santa Cruz Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (General Plan Sustainability Update).

BACKGROUND

The County of Santa Cruz is preparing a comprehensive Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update) to the County's General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP). The County's existing General Plan/Local Coastal Program (GP/LCP) was adopted in 1994 with a focus on preserving natural and agricultural resources and limiting urban expansion outside the urban services line.

DISCUSSION

The Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update) is a comprehensive update to the County's General Plan/Local Coastal Program and modernization of the County Code. The goal of this update is to implement new policies and code regulations that support more sustainable communities in Santa Cruz County. It also includes new community Design Guidelines for developments and amendments to the General Plan land use and Zoning maps.

Key features of the General Plan update include:

- Incorporate a new planning horizon of 2040 for population and employment growth
- Reflect the vision and principles of the [Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan](#)

- Align with other County plans such as the [Strategic Plan, Climate Action Strategy, Economic Vitality Strategy, and Parks Strategic Plan](#)
- Align with [California Coastal Act and Local Coastal Program Guidelines](#)
- Address recent changes in [state law](#)
- Link land use and transportation planning and ensure compatibility with [regional land use and planning transportation efforts](#)
- Clearly align objectives, policies and implementation strategies with goals, and set “actionable” implementation strategies that can be tracked over time to gauge plan success
- Reorganize General Plan to reflect sustainability focus and refrain from property-specific policies.

Updates to the General plan include topics regarding housing, transportation, agriculture & resource conservation, sustainable communities, code modernization, commercial development, community services, and environmental justice. Policies and strategies related to transportation in the Sustainability Update can primarily be found in [Chapter 3: Access + Mobility Element](#) of the plan (summarized in [Attachment 1](#)). The full draft plan and additional information can be reviewed by visiting <https://sustainability-update-sccgis.opendata.arcgis.com/>

SUMMARY

The County of Santa Cruz is seeking input from the ITAC on the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update which is a comprehensive update to the County’s General Plan/Local Coastal Program and modernization of the County Code.

Attachments

1. General Plan Sustainability Update Fact Sheet

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Transportation

A New Approach to Transportation Network Planning

Transportation planning has shifted substantially over the last decade. State legislation and regional policy changes recognize the need to achieve a more balanced, multi-modal transportation system that allows people with varying physical abilities, ages and economic circumstances to access goods and services via transportation modes other than single-occupant vehicle travel.

The Sustainability Update provides a framework for providing a system that recognizes all users by identifying a network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities where people are prioritized at a human scale as well as recognizing the need to maintain streets that move vehicles and transit. This approach provides for all modes but prioritized on specific streets to comprise a “layered network.” In an area where right-of-way is constrained and there are not many opportunities for new facilities, attempting to get the best facilities for all modes on all roadways is practically infeasible. This approach allows for improved facilities for each user type within a network. As an example, a Main Street type would have much larger sidewalks than a Multimodal Corridor.



Source: Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan

Layered Network and Street Types

A balanced transportation system is based on the understanding that it is difficult for a single roadway to meet the demands and expectations of all modes simultaneously. A “layered” transportation network envisions streets as systems based on user types.

In this approach, certain user types are prioritized on specific streets. When compiled together the roadway system is then comprised of multiple networks of street types such that different users are traveling using different networks. This layering approach allows for each user type to have a higher quality experience than an approach that results in compromising space for all users by attempting to accommodate everyone within limited space.

The Land Use -Transportation Nexus

Santa Cruz County experiences severe congestion, particularly in the north-south direction, with long peak periods of travel and high amounts of delay. The direction of commute traffic and level of congestion reflects the jobs-housing imbalance that exists in the County, with jobs focused in cities and affordable housing focused farther south. Our incomplete transportation network also contributes to congestion by

Transportation

reducing the options for mobility and access to key destinations throughout the County. Transportation issues are inextricably linked to land use as well as historic patterns of insufficient investment in transportation infrastructure. The Sustainability Update reflects this re-orientation toward the land use-transportation connection by tying development character and land use form to the street type.

Technology will Transform Infrastructure

New technology such as automated vehicles and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications become more commonplace, transportation networks will change permanently in ways that are hard to envision in 2022. However, planners can anticipate that parking needs will change and become more centralized, curb space will be in higher demand, and that our current transportation system will go through a major disruption as we know it. Therefore, the Sustainability Update includes objectives and policies geared towards taking a proactive and adaptable approach to planning for intelligent transportation solutions and new technology.



Source: <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop17001/ch1.htm>

Highlights

- ❖ Layered network approach to roadways tied to land use planning
- ❖ Incorporation of community character and streetscape
- ❖ Updated and comprehensive policies on coastal access
- ❖ Inclusion of policies for safety of all modes
- ❖ Recognition of technological innovations including data infrastructure

LEARN MORE

Visit the Sustainability Update website to learn more about this project and review draft documents at www.sccoplanning.com/SustainabilityUpdate. The following documents will address transportation:

Draft General Plan:

- Chapter 2, Built Environment Element, Goal 1: Sustainable Development Framework
- Chapter 3, Access and Mobility Element

Draft County Code:

- Access, Circulation, and Parking (13.16)

Draft Santa Cruz County Design Guides: Residential and Mixed-Use Design Guidelines

AGENDA: June 16, 2022

TO: Interagency Technical Advisory Committee

FROM: Grace Blakeslee, Senior Transportation Planner and
Stephanie Britt, Transportation Planning Technician

RE: Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) receive an update on the draft Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (SCCRCIS), review the draft SCCRCIS, and that ITAC member agencies provide input by August 16, 2022.

BACKGROUND

Assembly Bill 2087 (Levine, 2016) created the [Regional Conservation Investment Strategy \(RCIS\)](#) to serve as a conservation planning tool to promote the conservation of species, habitats, and other natural resources. The RCIS is a voluntary, nonbinding document, and does not create, modify, or affect the land use requirements or standards. In May 2019, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) awarded the RTC a grant to create an RCIS for Santa Cruz County. The RTC and the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District (RCD) entered into an agreement to develop the Santa Cruz County RCIS (SCCRCIS). The RCD provides resources to help protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs. The RCD is leading all technical aspects of the SCCRCIS and RTC is leading outreach efforts and evaluation of potential transportation project mitigation needs. The SCCRCIS builds upon prior planning efforts including the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP), the Conservation Blueprint, and the Early Mitigation for Transportation Projects MOU.

The SCCRCIS will provide a comprehensive regional conservation strategy that enables protection of the region's focal species and other conservation elements. The regional conservation strategy and associated conservation actions can inform compensatory mitigation, including advanced environmental mitigation efforts, for transportation and other major infrastructure projects in Santa Cruz County. Opportunities for advanced mitigation can reduce project risk and support timely transportation project

delivery. An approved RCIS will allow RTC to enter Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCAs), which are an advanced mitigation planning tool that creates mitigation credits in advance of project impacts by implementing conservation or enhancement actions to achieve RCIS goals.

Early identification of opportunities for compensatory mitigation and advanced mitigation, including MCAs, could benefit regional transportation projects including, but not limited to, Highway 1 improvements, Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail projects, and rail line maintenance, repairs, and rehabilitation. Projects implemented by local jurisdictions may also benefit from opportunities for advanced mitigation.

Statewide, six RCIS documents have been completed and approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The approved RCIS documents and documents submitted for approval are located at:

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation/Documents>.

DISCUSSION

The Regional Transportation Commission, in coordination with the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District, worked with the RCIS Steering Committee, stakeholders and a technical advisory committee to develop the Draft Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (SCCRCIS). The Draft Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy includes:

Environmental Setting

The SCCRCIS Environmental Setting describes the existing land uses, existing conservation plans, the natural environment including ecoregions, aquatic systems and natural communities and describes the Santa Cruz County RCIS's approach to conservation elements. Identification of natural communities and focal and non-focal species is a key component of the SCCRCIS. The RTC and RCD worked closely with CDFW to prepare a conservation approach focused on natural communities, which differs from previously adopted RCIS's that derive conservation actions from only analyzing focal species.

Conservation Strategy & Actions

The SCCRCIS conservation strategy and actions sections identify the goals, objectives, and priority conservation actions for species and their natural communities. This section helps inform what activities and investments will have the greatest conservation benefits.

The conservation strategies promote the protection of focal and non-focal species within their natural communities. The goal is to conserve the habitats that these species rely on and to address any stressors that may affect them. As such, the conservation strategy outlines the goals and objectives that will best support their habitats. By investing in the persistence and integrity of the natural communities, the conservation element helps connect projects to the landscape, protect local biodiversity, and promote both water quality and quantity.

The actions portion of the RCIS strategy lists the steps that can be taken to achieve its conservation goals. The actions can be funded through a variety of existing mechanisms such as mitigation funding, government grants, public funds, philanthropy, and tax incentives. The RCIS facilitates the conservation strategies through monitoring and adaptive management. The high value conservation and habitat enhancement opportunities that are identified help develop projects that address impacts and prioritize mitigation efforts.

Transportation Mitigation Needs Assessment

An understanding of the potential impacts will inform advanced mitigation planning efforts by helping to connect potential project impacts with compensatory mitigation that address conservation priorities. Modeled after the Caltrans Advanced Mitigation Needs Assessment, the RTC analyzed the spatial distribution of natural resources and footprints of transportation projects listed in the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan that are expected to involve construction in non-developed areas or near waterways. This provided high-level information about potential impacts of planned projects on habitats. Design modification and avoidance strategies were not considered in the analysis and are expected to reduce potential impacts. Similar to the Caltrans Advanced Mitigation Planning process, the next step is to identify “species of mitigation need”. Species of mitigation need are those species for which extensive planning and resources may be required to identify and implement mitigation measures. RTC staff is monitoring the development of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mitigation Credits Agreement guidelines to inform opportunities for advanced mitigation.

The transportation mitigation needs assessment does not provide a project level assessment of impacts, scoping, environmental analysis, or permitting for transportation projects. Transportation projects still need to go through environmental and permitting processes and must demonstrate avoidance and minimization prior to compensation.

Public Review of the Draft RCIS

The draft Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) is available for public review on RTC's website from May 27th to August 16, 2022. RTC staff invites the ITAC to provide input on the draft RCIS at this meeting or by e-mailing comments to rcis_santacruzcounty@scrtc.org and rcis@wildlife.ca.gov. In addition, a public workshop will be held on June 29, 2022 at 5:30pm via Zoom to review the SCCRCIS content and answer questions. Visit www.scrtc.org/rcis for the link to the public workshop.

SUMMARY

The SCCRCIS will provide a comprehensive regional conservation strategy that enables the protection of the region's natural communities, focal species, and other conservation elements. The regional conservation strategy and associated conservation actions can inform compensatory mitigation. This includes advanced environmental mitigation efforts for transportation and other major infrastructure projects in Santa Cruz County. An approved RCIS will also allow the RTC to enter Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCAs), these are an advanced mitigation tool that creates mitigation credits in advance of project impacts. Thus, they implement both conservation and enhancement actions consistent with the SCCRCIS goals. An assessment of mitigation needs for Santa Cruz County planned transportation is currently being completed alongside of the SCCRCIS development. Once finalized, the SCCRCIS will be a tool to support delivery of transportation and other major infrastructure projects by identifying potential actions for compensatory mitigation in advance of project delivery.

The draft Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) is available for public review on RTC's website from May 27th to August 16, 2022. A public workshop will be held on June 29 at 5:30 via Zoom. Input on the draft RCIS can be made at this meeting and/or in writing by e-mailing comments to rcis_santacruzcounty@scrtc.org and rcis@wildlife.ca.gov. Visit www.scrtc.org/rcis for the link to the public workshop.

Attachment:

1. Draft Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Report - online at www.scrtc.org/rcis

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