

November 29, 2022

**Chair Sandy Brown, Commissioners and Commissioner Alternates
Guy Preston, Executive Director**

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Ave, Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**Re: Item 7 on the December 1, 2022 agenda
Acceptance of the 2022 UCS Supplement**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on items before you at your December 1, 2022 meeting.

Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT) requests Item 7 be moved to the Regular Agenda for public comment and consideration of certain additions. FORT offers the following specific additions to the proposed Supplement that we hope will be included prior to approval of the resolution and submittal to the California Transportation Commission and to Caltrans.

The specific additions we request are to the draft Appendices J and K, proposed in this staff report and resolution to be amended as a Supplement into the 2019 Unified Corridor Investment Study. The staff report states this Supplement is important in order to “ensure that the RTC will be as competitive as possible in current and future SCCP [Solutions for Congested Corridors Program] grant cycles” and to “strengthen future grant funding applications for the Watsonville to Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor Program.”

FORT believes the additions below will both clarify the evolution of the RTC’s current *Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Program* and support the above objectives. References are included to support the suggestions; page numbers refer to the staff report unless otherwise noted.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONS TO DRAFT UCS APPENDICES PRIOR TO ADOPTION

**Add to draft Appendix J, State, Regional and Local Plan Alignment, p.7-7 following
Local/Regional Plans - Measure D Expenditure Plan and Strategic Implementation Plan:**

Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Regional Network Integration Study (TCAA/RNIS)

Accepted by the SCCRTC in 2021, the *Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis* “meets the directive of the RTC to perform an alternatives analysis of high-capacity public transit on the SCBRL” following conclusion of the Unified Corridor Investment Study in 2019. (p.1-10 TCAA) The TCAA/RNIS concluded and the RTC accepted that the locally-preferred alternative for high-capacity transit service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is Electric Passenger Rail Service. Efforts are currently underway to seek funding for the Project Approval/Environmental Document phase of the Electric Rail Project.

**Add to draft Appendix J, State Plans - Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (Caltrans 2021),
p. 7-9 at the end of the paragraph referencing text from the Draft 2022 ITSP:**

“SCCRTC’s most recent study [TCAA/RNIS] and CSRP [California State Rail Plan] recommend creating a rail-trail corridor within the right-of-way to provide clean, quiet, high-quality passenger rail alongside a multiuse path for cyclists and pedestrians called the Coastal Rail Trail.” (p.32 Draft 2022 ITSP)

Add to draft Appendix J, State Plans - California Freight Mobility Plan (Caltrans 2020), p. 7-9 at the beginning of this section:

The *California Freight Mobility Plan* includes two eligible projects in the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor: *Santa Cruz Branch Line Freight Service Upgrades (\$25M)* and *Railroad Infrastructure Maintenance and Rehabilitation Project (\$22.4M)*. (Appendix M: *California Freight Mobility Plan 2020* Project List, p. 506, 507.)

Add to draft Appendix K, Public Engagement, p. 7-27:

Measure D - Santa Cruz County Greenway Initiative - June 2022 Primary Election

In 2022, a privately-sponsored ballot initiative known as Measure D - Santa Cruz County Greenway Initiative failed with 73% of voters countywide voting no. The Greenway Initiative had proposed to amend the *Santa Cruz County General Plan* to delete references to passenger rail and to convert the existing coast rail line to a bicycle and pedestrian trail.

Add to draft Appendix K, last paragraph on p. 7-34:

These partnerships continued with the 2021 *Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Regional Network Integration Study* and *Draft Business Plan* that resulted in a selection of Electric Passenger Rail as the locally preferred alternative for high-capacity transit service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. The TCAA/RNIS public engagement process included shared oversight with Santa Cruz METRO, the full range of public agency partners, media communications, public meetings and hearings, and targeted focus groups that included Progressive Rail, Santa Cruz Big Trees and Pacific RR, Business Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Major Employers, Community Leaders, Neighborhood Groups, Youth and Senior Groups, Educational and Healthcare Institutions, Transportation Advocacy Groups, Environmental Community Groups, Education Leaders; and Watsonville Specific Groups, including Spanish Speaking Advocacy Groups, Human Services Organizations, Youth and Student Groups, Women’s Organizations, and Faith Based Organizations.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of FORT’s comments and suggestions.



Mark Mesiti-Miller

Chair, FORT Civic Engagement Committee

Board Member, Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail (FORT)

CC: Michael Tree, Executive Director Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)
Larry Pageler, Chair, METRO Board of Directors
FORT Board & Civic Engagement Committee