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Regional Transportation Commission
Commissioners and Staff
May 3, 2023

RE: Feedback on the agenda for May 4, 2023

Dear RTC Commissioners and Staff:

Item #27 - Hearing on Unmet Needs: Having met with representatives of the disabled and elderly community, it is clear that for many in our community, public transit is a lifeline, as it is the primary way in which many disabled and elderly (as well as others such as essential workers) get to their required appointments, meetings, shopping, and social activities. Despite the misconception, many people with disabilities and elders neither qualify for nor do they want to depend on the door-to-door services of Paratransit for their daily activities. For example, members of the community who are vision impaired, simply cannot legally or practically drive, but as working members of our community, are required to use the public busing system or rely on others to get to distances beyond what is walkable.

We advocate for the large majority of seniors, and people with disabilities in our community of all ages, who have consistently through the past 2 decades, fought for and supported with their voice, in writing, and their vote, an integrated rail and busing system which serves to provide community members with access to local parks, appointments, and shopping within walking distance to the rail and bus lines. This will give community members with disabilities, and our entire community, greater access to the growing state rail network, a priority of the Governor of the State of California and the California Transportation Commission.

In an April 19th, 2023 DOT State Rail Meeting we recently attended, the California DOT and State Rail Program leaders, envision our rail system up and running within 10 years. The funding is there to do so, we simply need elected leaders and a committed RTC Staff to commit to the work of applying for funds to move this project forward.

Item #28: Congratulations to the RTC Staff and thank for the work and commitment that resulted in a new grant for the bike and pedestrian overcrossing will connect the Coastal Rail Trail to the Cotoni Coast Dairies National Monument at Yellowbank Creek/Panther Beach. This added safety feature is a big win for our community and is exemplary of the kind of wins your staff continues to have when it prioritizes a goal.

Item #29: WE encourage you to certify the EIR for Segments 8 and 9 of the Rail-Trail. After an in-depth process including public feedback, review of CEQA considerations, and extensive research and reporting by the City of Santa Cruz, our careful look at the EIR shows substantial evidence that it is adequate. It is important to note that the study found that the Ultimate Trail option is Environmentally Superior and is therefore the preferred alternative, as it has a much lower environmental impacts compared to the interim trail option.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lani Faulkner, Director