



Reimagine METRO

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

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What is Reimagine METRO?

- Santa Cruz METRO is re-envisioning **where** buses should go, and **how often** they should run.
- Key goals include:
 - Increase the amount of service provided.
 - Make transit more reliable, and relevant to the community's needs.
 - Adapt to post-COVID travel patterns.
 - **Create a network that is useful and attractive for many people's trips.**

How do we get there?

We are planning changes to the network that would come into service in:

- **Phase 1 - December 2023**, with the operating resources that will be available by the end of this year.
- **Phase 2 – over the course of 2024**, based on additional funding and operators.
- **Phase 3 – long-range improvements**, once Phase 2 is complete and further resources become available

What we've done so far

- **Analyzed the data** on the market and needs for transit, and the performance of the existing network.
- **Outreach** to stakeholders, riders and the general public about their perceptions of the system.
- **Network design workshop** with project partners.

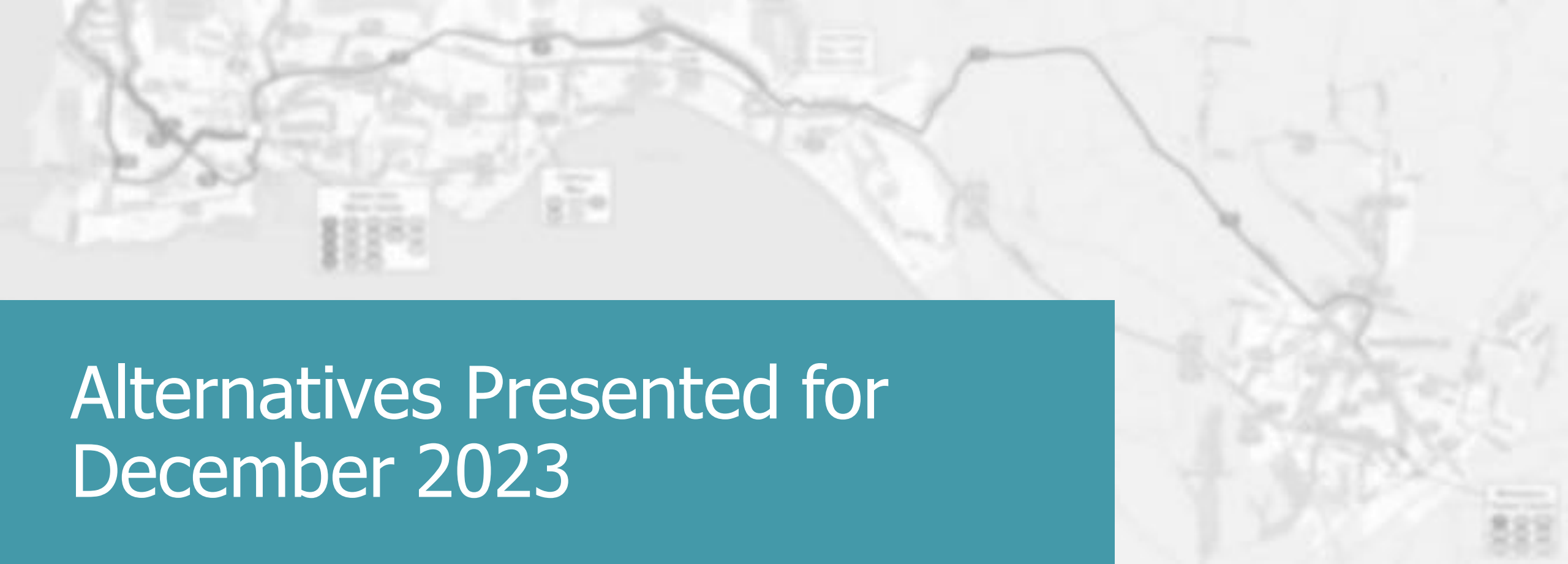
Reimagine METRO - Phase 1 Outreach Efforts



Figure 50: Efforts undertaken during Phase 1 of community outreach for the Reimagine METRO project.

What we've heard

- **It takes too long to get places**, due to long waits, slow rides, and occasional missed trips.
- **There isn't enough service.** METRO provides 13% less service than in 2019, and 30% less service than it did twenty years ago.
- A broad range of concerns about communications, fare structure, reliability, weekends and evenings, bike-bus connections, overcrowding at UCSC and other topics.



Alternatives Presented for December 2023

Both alternatives included:

- **More service.** ~10% increase overall.
- **Higher frequency** in areas with higher demand.
- **Simpler and more direct routes**, especially in Watsonville.
- **Better transfers.** Shorter waits, no second fare.
- **Some different route numbers** and names.
- **In some areas, change which streets** have bus service.



Public Input

Outreach Efforts

- **Online Public Meeting** – 90+ attendees
- **Stakeholder Conversations** – 20 organizations
- **Rider Focus Groups** – 30 riders from throughout the service area
- **In-Person Outreach** – 3 events in Watsonville, 1 in Live Oak
- **Online Survey** – 789 responses online, plus 15 in-person responses
- **Project Website** – 1,500+ unique visitors from July 1 to Aug 15.

Existing METRO Service



Alternative A – Lean toward Frequency



Alternative B – Lean toward Coverage



High Level Takeaways

- **Positive Responses to Increased Frequency**
- Positive Responses to Simplified Service, esp. in Watsonville
- Desire for return of Route 91X
- Some uncertainty about what's being proposed, and questions about how major service changes will be communicated

Survey Results reflect a diversity of county residents and METRO riders

- 804 responses
- Among those who reported demographic information:
 - 52% regular METRO riders
 - 45% people of color (30% Latino)
 - 40% from households earning less than \$50k/year
 - 40% don't have a car
 - 28% UCSC or Cabrillo College students
 - 15% have a disability that limits mobility

Most respondents agree service needs to change

"Do you agree that METRO service (where and how often the bus should come) needs to change?"

- **Yes: 78%**
- **No: 7%**
- **Not Sure: 15%**

n = 790 responses

...most respondents agree the proposed changes for December go in the right direction.

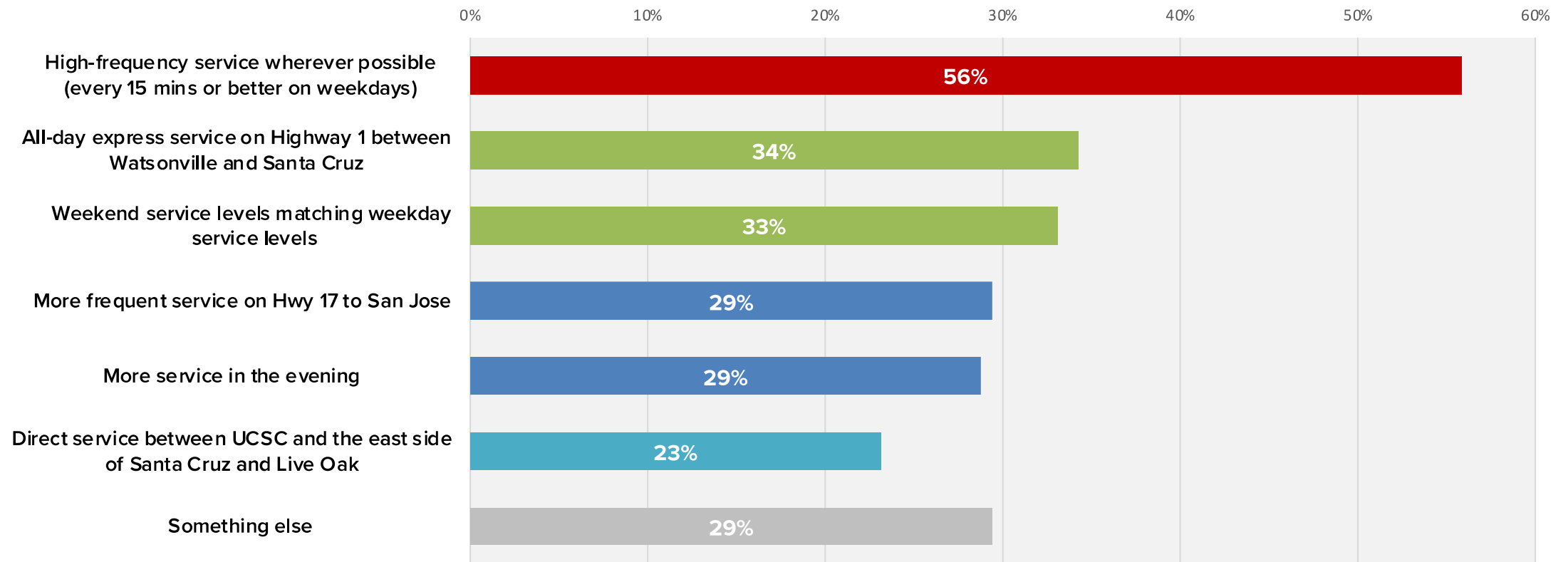
"Generally speaking, do these changes sound like a good idea?"

- **Yes: 84%** (definitely: 44%, probably 41%)
- **No: 5%** (definitely: 2%, probably 3%)
- Not Sure: 11%

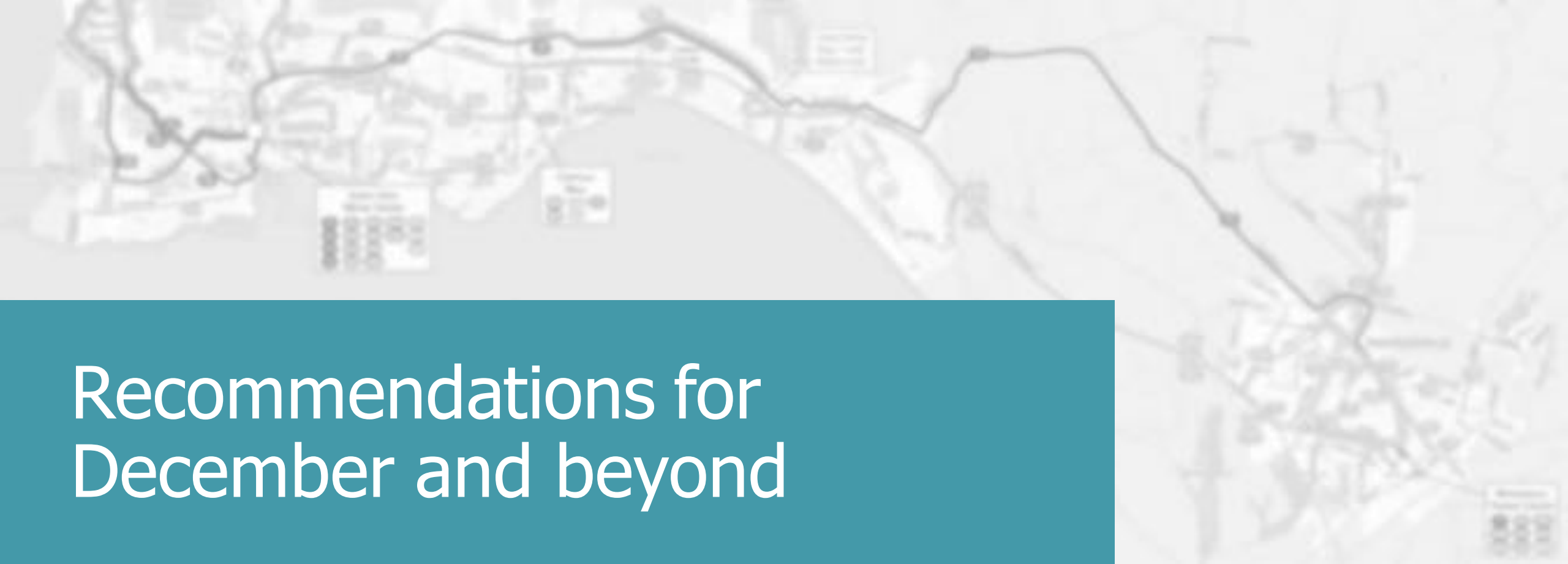
n = 767 responses

For future improvements, high frequency is the public's highest priority.

Among the following improvements, which three are most important to you?



n = 622 responses



Recommendations for December and beyond

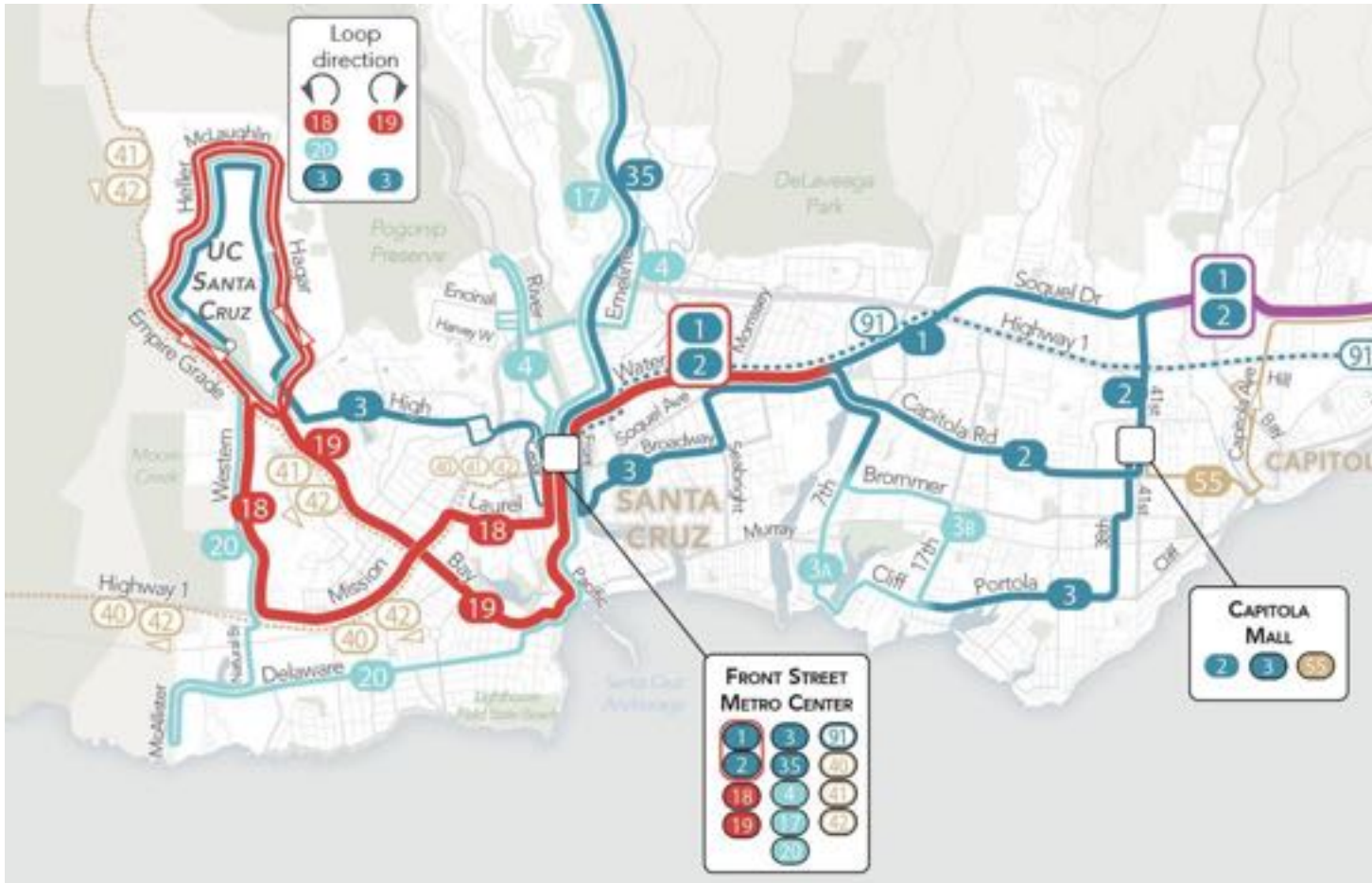
December – Updated Parameters

- **Return to a full roster of drivers.**
- New climate and ridership recovery funds from FY 23-24 state budget.
- This allows for **21% more service**, compared to Spring 2023 (vs. 10% more in the alternatives).
- This makes it possible to incorporate the most popular elements of both alternatives.

Recommendation: Phase 1



Santa Cruz and Live Oak



Elements of both Alternative A and B:

- Routes 18 and 19, both operating every 15 minutes or better
- Service every 30 minutes on High Street, connecting UCSC and parts of the East Side.
- Route 3 splits into Route 3A (Twin Lakes) and Route 3B (Brommer/17th)
- Route 91 peak express service from Watsonville to Santa Cruz

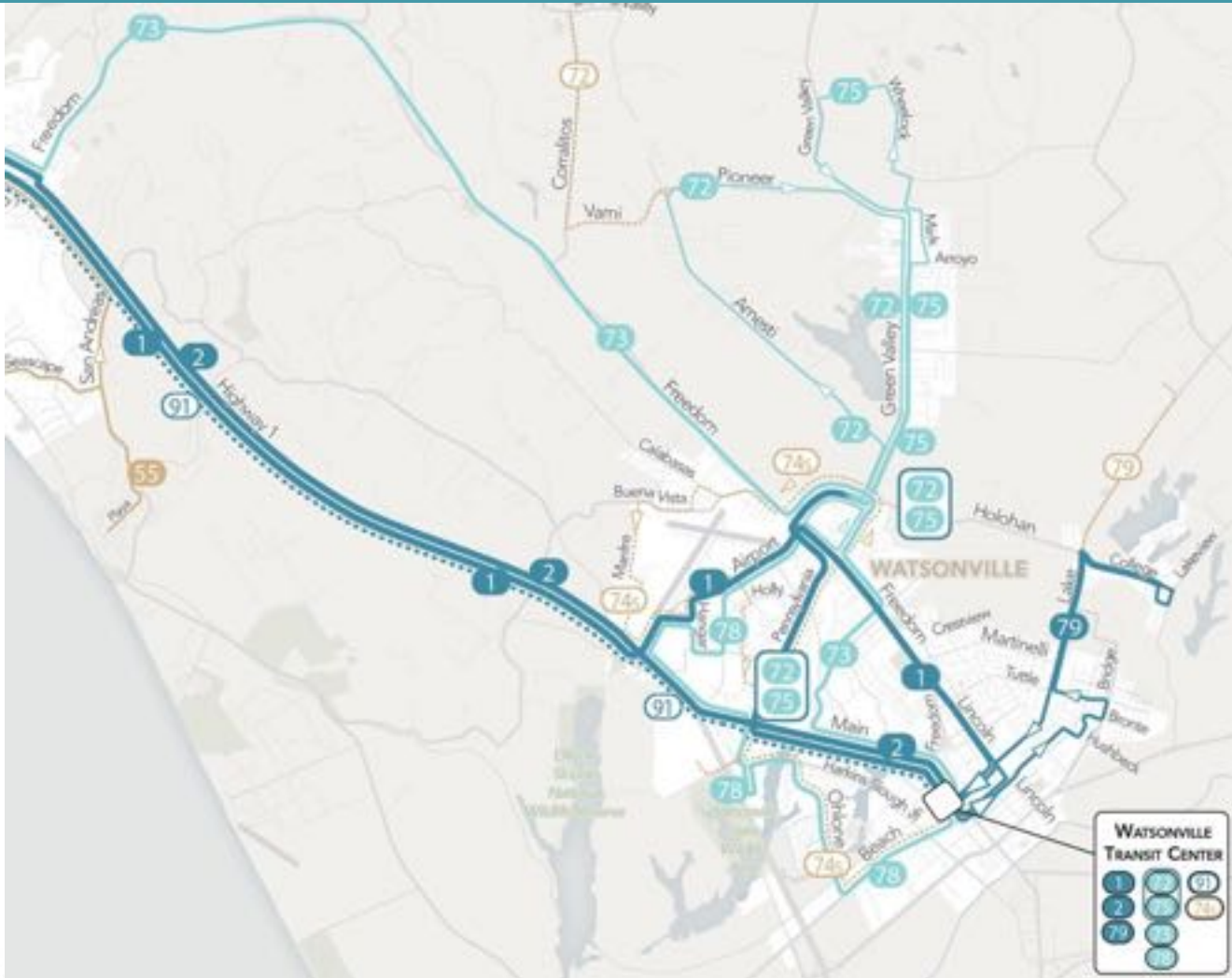
Mid-County



Similar to Alternative A in this area, plus:

- Route 3 on both 38th and 41st Ave
- Better evening service on Routes 1, 2 and 3.

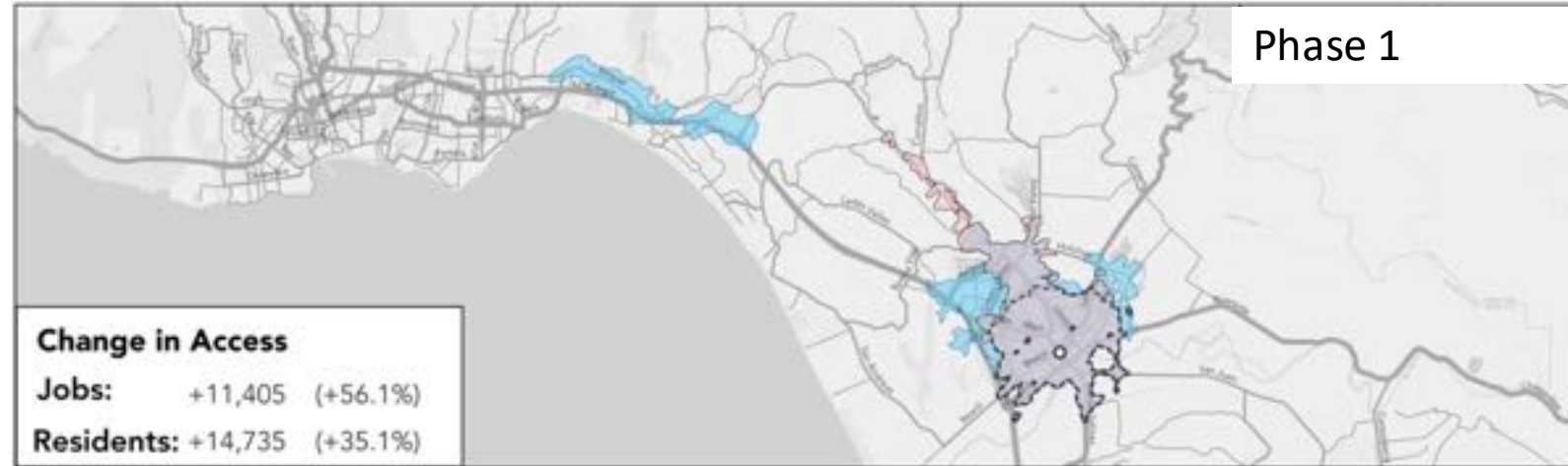
Watsonville and South County



- Route 91 peak express to Santa Cruz
- Better evening service on Routes 1 and 2
- Routes 73 and 78 adjusted to maintain coverage on similar streets

How would access improve?

How far can I travel from
Downtown Watsonville
in 45 minutes?



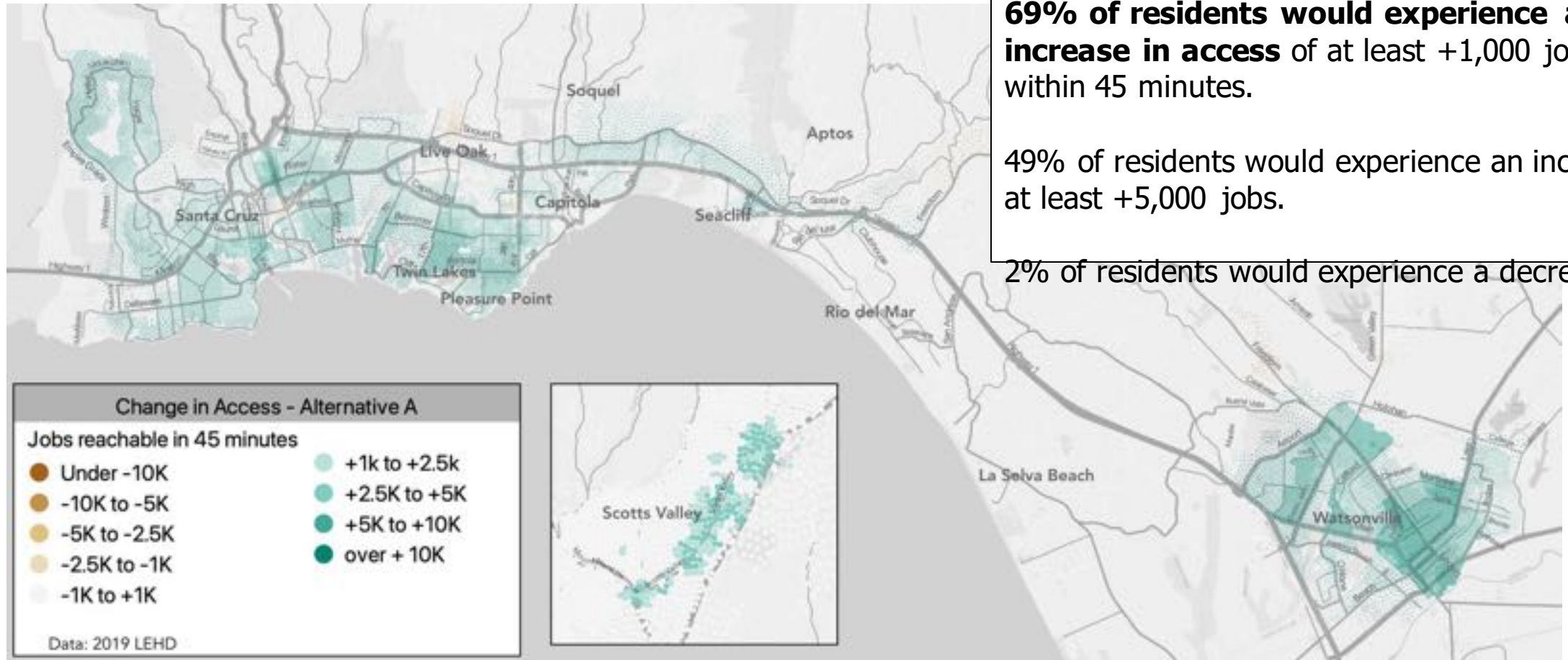
Downtown Watsonville

Blue Areas =
newly accessible within 45
minutes

Pink Areas =
no longer accessible within 45
minutes

Travel times include walking, waiting,
riding and transfers.

Overall Access Change – Phase 1



69% of residents would experience an increase in access of at least +1,000 jobs within 45 minutes.

49% of residents would experience an increase of at least +5,000 jobs.

2% of residents would experience a decrease.

Other Improvements in Phase 1

- Routes 1, 2 and 3 would each operate:
 - Every 30 minutes until 9 PM
 - Every 60 minutes until midnight.
- In other words, until 9 PM, in both directions:
 - A bus every 15 minutes between Santa Cruz and Watsonville.
 - A bus every 10-20 minutes at Cabrillo College
 - A bus every 30 minutes or better on all of Soquel Drive

Next Steps

If the Board approves this recommendation, staff and the project team will:

- Develop schedules and prepare for the Phase 1 major service change in December
- Proceed with development for a Draft Future Network Plan for Phases 2 and 3.

Phase 2: High-Frequency Cross-County Service



Existing METRO Service



Recommendation: Phase 1



Phase 2: High-Frequency Cross-County Service



Phase 2 Benefits

- Estimated **1.75 million new transit trips per year**, with over 100,000 residents within a 5-minute walk of 15-minute or better service
- **Reduction in VMT and GHG emissions** through creation of high-quality transit that is fast, frequent and reliable
- **Improved reliability and on-time performance** with transit signal priority and other rapid bus design elements
- **Greater development potential of affordable housing** along high-frequency network
- **Supports equity** – METRO riders are primarily low-income (65%), lack access to a personal vehicle (35%), and/or are students (52%)

Phase 2 Costs, Funding & Other Considerations

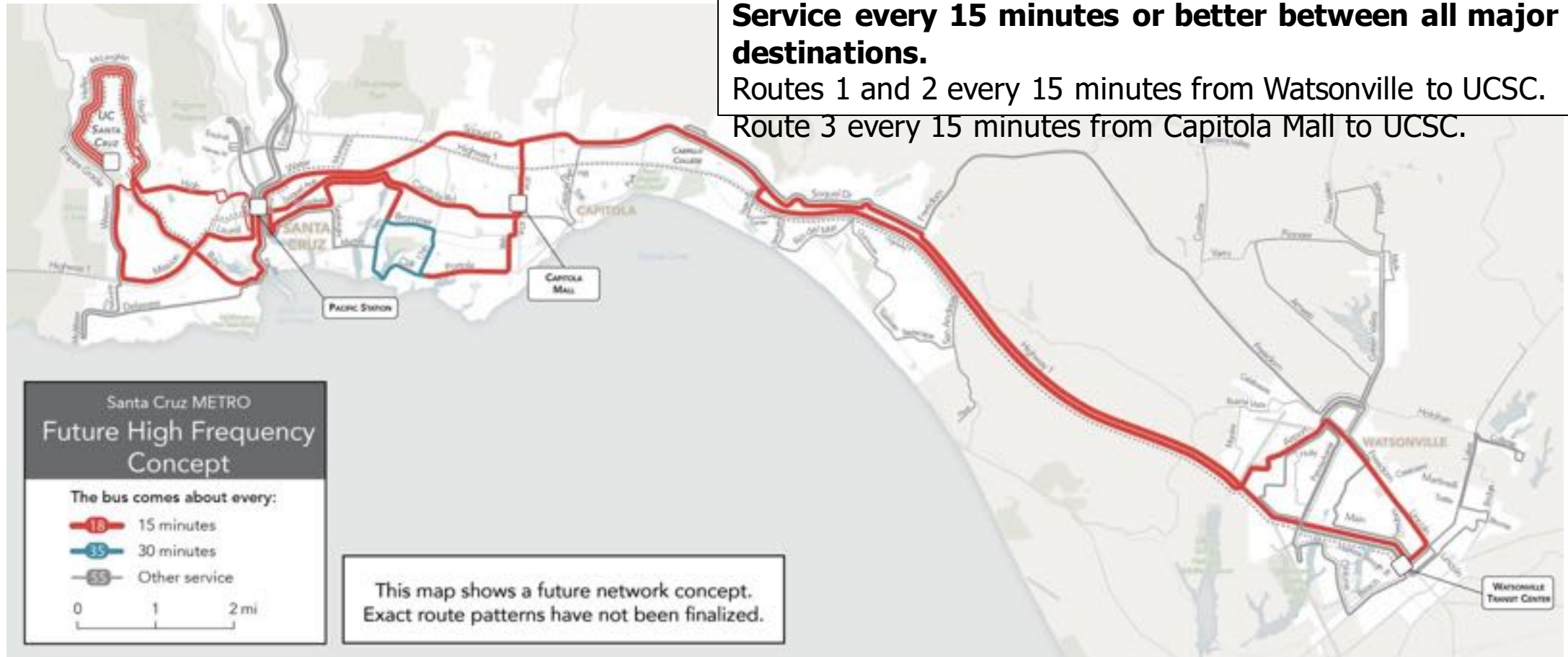
- Phase 2 would require 50 additional bus operators and 16 zero-emission buses
- Funding identified and plan to be workshopped in October with METRO Board. Will include consideration of:
 - Newly flexible Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funding
 - Increases in Contracts for Transit Services
- Free fares systemwide (pilot)
- Rapid Bus Enhancements (\$26 million, \$7.5 funded through TIRCP):
 - Transit Signal Priority (TSP) on all major corridors
 - Queue Jump/Transit Only Lanes where appropriate
 - Upgraded bus stops, including new shelters, lighting and real-time information

Phase 3: Long-range Plan

Service every 15 minutes or better between all major destinations.

Routes 1 and 2 every 15 minutes from Watsonville to UCSC.

Route 3 every 15 minutes from Capitola Mall to UCSC.



Phase 3: Long-range Plan

- Further increases in service on Route 91.
- Increased service on Highway 17.
- Weekend service matching weekday levels.
- Increases in evening service.
- When speed and reliability improvements allow, relinking Routes 1 and 2 between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.
- Additional service to Scotts Valley/more direct service to SLV.
- All-day service on the 40 and 41 in addition to peak school trips, no more 42.
- Potentially, some METRO contribution to increased service from Watsonville to Salinas.

Discussion

- Questions, Comments, Concerns?
- Direction to Project Team



Thank you!

Project Website

<http://www.scmttd.com/ReimagineMETRO>