



*Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
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## **Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) Feb. 1, 2024 Meeting Highlights**

### **City of Watsonville Transportation Projects**

The Commission received a presentation from Murray Fontes, City of Watsonville Assistant Director of Public Works & Utilities, on recent transportation accomplishments and upcoming projects. Fontes said that the City recently completed a number of road reconstruction projects on its major arterials, as well as storm damage repair and road maintenance projects. In January 2024, the City received Project of the Year awards from the American Public Works Association Monterey Bay Chapter for two of its road improvement projects – storm damage repair on Grizzly Flats Road, and a road reconstruction project on Freedom Boulevard from Alta Vista Street to Green Valley Road that included over a half mile of new roadway, pedestrian improvements, a new stop light, a new bus pullout, and accessible pedestrian signals at four intersections.

The City completed several bicycle and pedestrian safety projects using Measure D funds that include flashing beacons, curb ramp upgrades, separated bike lanes, and neighborhood traffic safety improvements, and they are partnering with Ecology Action and Bike Santa Cruz County on bicycle and pedestrian safety programs that include providing new bicycles and helmets for first-time cyclists, bike camps, and safety training programs in local elementary schools.

The City has also received a number of grants for its transportation projects, including a Federal Safe Streets for All grant that they will use to update the Watsonville Vision Zero Action Plan; an Active Transportation Program grant to provide bicycle and pedestrian improvements and safety training at eight schools in the southern part of the city and within the downtown area; and two Sustainable Transportation Planning grants, one to examine high collision corridors and prepare a preliminary improvement plan on one of those corridors, and one to assist with the preparation of the recently adopted Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan that allowed City staff to work with Caltrans to identify improvements that could be made to the portion of Highway 152 that passes through downtown Watsonville.

Future projects in the City include: construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities on Harkins Slough Road between Green Valley Road and the entrance to Pajaro Valley High School that will include a pedestrian bridge over Highway 1; construction of the Lee Road trail, a bicycle and pedestrian trail that will extend from the high school to the future Coastal Rail Trail where it crosses Lee Road; Construction of the Green Valley Road Improvements Project that will include reconstructing the roadway, improving substandard pedestrian facilities, and providing bike lanes

where none currently exist; and finalizing a Five-Year Pavement Maintenance Plan that is anticipated to be completed later this year with implementation in 2025.

## **Public Hearing: Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Preliminary**

### **Purpose and Need**

The Commission received a presentation on the [Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project's Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement](#), and received public comments and provided input on the item. The project proposes new high-capacity passenger rail service and stations on approximately 22 miles of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line from the City of Santa Cruz to Pajaro, as well as 12 miles of Coastal Rail Trail from Rio Del Mar Boulevard through the community of La Selva Beach and the City of Watsonville, as well as the Capitola Trestle section. The Project's Purpose and Need Statement identifies and documents the needs and constraints that drive the development of transportation improvements in the Project study area and further outlines the opportunities to address these needs through the project's fundamental purpose. Community members are invited to attend upcoming in-person and virtual open houses to learn more about the Project and provide input on the [Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement](#), which will guide the development of the project concept and is the first project milestone. In person open houses: Monday, Feb. 12, 6-7:30 p.m., Ramsay Park Family Center, 1301 Main St., Watsonville; and Tuesday, Feb. 13, 6-7:30 p.m., Live Oak Grange, 1900 17<sup>th</sup> Ave., Santa Cruz. Virtual open house: Available at <http://www.zeprt.com> from Feb. 5 through March 4, 2024.

### **Climate Adaptation Vulnerability Assessment and Priorities Report**

The Commission provided input on and approved the Prioritization Framework for the [Climate Adaptation Vulnerability Assessment and Priorities Report](#). The report will map climate hazards in Santa Cruz County and prioritize discrete transportation assets on County-maintained infrastructure within unincorporated Santa Cruz County and the entirety of the RTC-maintained Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line) for future actions to enhance resilience. The project framework includes: climate change-accelerated natural hazards that will be modeled; transportation asset types that will be evaluated; and the consequence metrics that will be used to assess and prioritize transportation assets for future actions to enhance climate resilience. With the framework approved, the project team will spend winter and spring 2024 creating and running the climate hazard models to determine the timeframe and severity of potential impacts and creating draft prioritized lists of County and Branch Line assets in accordance with the framework. The hazard mapping and draft priorities lists will be brought to stakeholders and the public in late spring and early summer 2024 for input.

### **Highway 1 State Park-Freedom Auxiliary Lanes, Bus-on-Shoulder, and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project Amendment to Professional Engineering Services Agreement**

The Commission approved a resolution authorizing Interim Executive Director Mitch Weiss to negotiate and execute an amendment to a professional engineering services agreement with consultant Mark Thomas for additional scope of work for the Highway 1 Auxiliary Lanes and Bus-on-Shoulder Project between State Park Drive and Freedom Boulevard, which includes Segment 12 of the Coastal Rail Trail. As the project's final design phase progresses and competitive grant opportunities guidelines are developed, the project's needs have slightly changed, and the scope of work needs to be updated. Changes include: a change in bridge type from a three-span simple prefabricated bridge to a single-span 300-foot-long bridge for the bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Aptos Creek and Soquel Drive due to challenges with utilities conflicting with the location of bridge

columns; additional work on Senate Bill 1 grant applications to include bus transit infrastructure improvements recommended by the Reimagine Metro study; and work with Caltrans to consider a bus-on-shoulder extension to an existing State Highway Operation and Protection Program project under development by Caltrans between the Buena Vista Drive and Freedom Boulevard interchanges.

### **Funding for City of Santa Cruz Bicycle Projects**

The Commission approved \$150,000 in Transportation Development Act funding for two City of Santa Cruz active transportation projects. \$75,000 for the Lateral Bikeway Project and \$75,000 for the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. For the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, the City of Santa Cruz released a call to residents to submit streets and locations for potential traffic calming strategies. The form to submit projects was available to the public from December 7, 2023 to January 15, 2024. The program gained rapid popularity and the City of Santa Cruz received many requests for traffic calming strategies.

### **Measures K and L on the March 2024 Presidential Primary Election**

The Commission voted to support local ballot measures K and L, which are on the March 2024 Presidential Primary Election ballot. Measure K was placed on the ballot by the County of Santa Cruz and would impose a 1/2% transactions and use tax (sales tax). It is estimated that the measure would raise about \$10 million per year for a variety of services provided by the County including maintenance of transportation infrastructure. Measure L was placed on the ballot by the City of Santa Cruz and would impose a 1/2% transactions and use tax (sales tax) within the city. It is estimated that the measure would raise about \$8 million per year for a variety of services provided by the City of Santa Cruz including maintenance of transportation infrastructure.

### **[Upcoming RTC and Committee Meetings](#)**

RTC and committee meetings are now being held in person. Non-voting members of the Commission and its committees, as well as members of the public and staff, will have the option to participate in person or remotely, provided equipment is available at the meeting location to allow remote participation. If there are technical difficulties during a meeting that prevent remote participation, the meeting will continue. Please check the RTC website [<https://sccrtc.org/meetings/calendar/>] or call 460-3200 to confirm meeting and video conference information for future meetings. Agendas are posted to the website at least 3 days before the meeting and will also include attendance information. Meetings may be canceled if there are no action items to be considered by the committee.

The RTC is committed to its compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) during this time of national emergency. Please contact the RTC at least 3 days in advance of a meeting if special accommodations are needed. If any document, webpage, meeting, or recording is inaccessible to you, kindly notify us at [info@sccrtc.org](mailto:info@sccrtc.org) or by calling 831-460-3200.

**Regional Transportation Commission Meeting**

Thursday, March 7, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

**Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee**

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

**Interagency Technical Advisory Committee**

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

**Bicycle Advisory Committee**

Monday, March 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

**Budget & Admin/Personnel Committee**

Thursday, March 14, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

*Public input on transportation issues is welcomed and encouraged. For more information, visit the SCCRTC website at [www.sccrtc.org](http://www.sccrtc.org) or call 460-3200. Some Regional Transportation Commission meetings are televised countywide by Community TV of Santa Cruz. Consult [www.communitytv.org](http://www.communitytv.org) or call 831-425-8848 for schedule and station information.*