



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

**Thursday, December 7, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

In-Person Meeting

Scotts Valley City Council Chambers
1 Civic Center Drive
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

Remote Participation

RTC Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85406910971>

Dial-in: +1 564-217-2000

Webinar ID: 854 0691 0971

1. Roll call.

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m.

Members present:

Sandy Brown	Bruce McPherson
Kristen Brown	Larry Pageler (Alt)
Randy Johnson	Andy Schiffrin (Alt)
Alexander Pedersen	Robert Quinn (Alt)
Felipe Hernandez	Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson (Alt)
Eduardo Montesino	Brandy Rider (Caltrans Ex-Officio)
Manu Koenig	

Staff present:

Luis Mendez	Yesenia Parra
Amy Naranjo	Sarah Christensen
Cindy Convisser	Krista Corwin
Shannon Munz	Tommy Travers
Tracy New	Steph Britt
Grace Blakeslee	Steven Mattas (RTC Counsel)
Riley Gerbrandt	
Rachel Moriconi	

2. Approved AB2449 request(s) - *none*

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

A revised staff report for Item 25 and handouts for Items 21 and 25 were posted to the website.

4. Oral communications

Received comment from:

Brandon Freeman, SMART Local 0023 Bus Drivers Union
Jordan Vascones, Santa Cruz METRO Admin Staff
James Sandoval, International SMART Transportation Division
Jim Helmer
Carey Pico
Johanna Lighthill
Brett Garrett
Michael Saint, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation
Zen Sawyer, Zen Development
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Lowell Hurst
Jean Brocklebank
Jack Nelson
Barry Scott

Commissioners discussed: appreciation to bus drivers of METRO for the Reimagine METRO campaign.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin motioned and Commissioner Montesino seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Pedersen, S. Brown, Johnson, Hernandez, Montesino, Koenig, McPherson, K. Brown, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin, Quinn, Pageler, and Kalantari-Johnson voting "aye."

MINUTES

5. Approved draft minutes of the November 02, 2023 Regional Transportation Commission meeting
6. Accepted draft minutes of the November 13, 2023 Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting
7. Accepted draft minutes of the November 14, 2023 Special Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory committee meeting
8. Approved draft minutes of the November 16, 2023 Special Regional Transportation Commission meeting

9. Accepted draft minutes of the November 16, 2023 Interagency Technical Advisory Committee meeting

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

10. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County to develop the Coastal Resilience Plans for Highway 1 and the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line at San Vicente Creek and Highway 1 at Waddell Creek (**Resolution 16-24**)
11. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to enter into two separate agreements with Community Tree Service, LLC and Irish Excavation for on-call vegetation control services along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (**Resolution 17-24**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

12. Accepted status reports on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
13. Accepted status reports on Measure D revenues
14. Approved FY23/24 Budget Amendment (**Resolution 18-24**)

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

15. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to amend the contract with Clean Building Maintenance to include additional funding and to extend the contract term (**Resolution 19-24**)

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

16. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
17. Accepted correspondence log
18. Accepted letters from RTC committees and staff to other agencies -*none*
19. Accepted information items
 - a. Ecology Action Youth Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education 2022-2023 Final Report
 - b. November 20, 2023 Article: "FHWA Says Highway Construction Costs Continue to Soar"

REGULAR AGENDA

20. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Johnson welcomed all to Scotts Valley and appreciated the transportation improvements that have been made thanks in part to RTC funding.

21. Selection of Chair

Chair Koenig announced that the chair selection committee has nominated Kristen Brown as chair and Felipe Hernandez as vice-chair for 2024.

Commissioners discussed: professionalism & fairness of the outgoing chair and appreciation for a job well done.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin motioned and Commissioner Alternate Pageler seconded the motion to approve the nomination of Kristen Brown as chair and Felipe Hernandez as vice-chair for 2024. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Pedersen, S. Brown, Johnson, Hernandez, Montesino, Koenig, McPherson, K. Brown, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin, Quinn, Pageler, and Kalantari-Johnson voting "aye."

Received comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Michael Saint

22. Director's Report

Acting Interim Executive Director Luis Mendez appreciated Chair Koenig for his work and delivered words of welcome to incoming Chair K. Brown and Vice-Chair Hernandez; Mr. Mendez reported on: Highway 1 overnight closures on December 11 and 12, 2023; open house for aesthetic elements of the Highway 1 State Park – Freedom Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes and Bus on Shoulder – Segment 12 of the Coastal Rail Trail Project held on December 5; update on staff participation at SB 1 Cycle 4 grants kickoff workshop taking place on December 14 and hosted by the California Transportation Commission; update on the RTC's Transportation Equity Workgroup first meeting on November 27 and progress on the Transportation Equity Action Plan; Freeway Service Patrol drivers will take time off between December 25 and January 1; the RTC offices will be closed to the public between December 25 and January 1.

Commissioners discussed: misinformation regarding Coastal Rail Trail segments 8 and 9, railbanking, and construction on the Murray Street bridge; significant pushback anticipated if the RTC were to proceed with the abandonment and railbanking process; the Interim Trail, if optioned for segments 8 and 9, could not be implemented immediately, due to legal and political constraints.

In response to a Commissioner's question, Senior Transportation Planner Grace Blakeslee communicated that the City of Santa Cruz is working through the final design and permitting phase of the Murray Street Bridge project and is looking to go to construction in spring 2025. Ms. Blakeslee explained that the schematic plans and final design work that would need to be redone if the Interim Trail option were to be implemented.

Mr. Mendez communicated that the RTC does not have the legal right to remove the tracks without going through an abandonment and railbanking process; the timeline of that process (1 year to 18 months or longer if there is significant opposition).

23. Caltrans Report

Brandy Rider, Deputy District Director for Transportation Planning and Local Assistance in District 5 noted a community meeting for the Mission Street paving project being held on December 7 in the community meeting room of the Santa Cruz City Police Department.

Commissioners discussed: unexpected concerns arising about the Segment 5 rail trail project from Wilder Ranch to Davenport going out to bid; delayed construction of fully-funded project; safety concerns and encroachment permit; expedition of conditional permit; collaboration with Caltrans on reduction of speed limit to 25mph.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples
Michael Saint
Lowell Hurst
Brett Garrett

24. Presentation from Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District – Project Updates

METRO Chief Executive Officer Michael Tree delivered a presentation with updates on the proposed WAVE service, the ongoing fare free service for students and other METRO initiatives.

Commissioners discussed: potential funding options for transit services;

gratitude to METRO staff & bus operators; Youth Cruz Free pilot success in South County; transit-oriented development; economic sustainability of WAVE service beyond the three-year pilot; fare-free sensitivity analysis; peer-reviewed studies available in planning journals; positive impact on parents drop off and pick up challenges; WAVE service unlocks affordable housing.

Mr. Tree responded to commissioner questions regarding fare free transit, effects on ridership, and the program's economic sustainability; the University of California – Santa Cruz (UCSC)'s partnership with METRO; timeline of affordable housing developments centered on METRO transit stations.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now

Lowell Hurst

Brett Garrett

Michael Saint, Campaign for Sustainable Transportation

Lani Faulkner, Equity Transit

Zen Sawyer

Sean

Brandon Freeman

James Sandoval, SMART Transportation Division

Jessica

Alejandro Torres

Kimberly Moon

25. **Public Hearing:** Adoption of the 2023 Consolidated Grants Program, Senate Bill (SB) 125 Transit Funding Grants Program and Regional Transportation Improvement Program

Transportation Planner Amy Naranjo gave a presentation. The public hearing opened at 11:32 a.m.

Received public comment from:

Jim Helmer

Claire Gallogly

Jessica Evans

Paula Bradley

Saladin Sale

Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail

Matt Machado

Tina Andreatta

Joan

Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Lani Faulkner
David Van Brink
Piet Canin, Ecology Action
Jack Nelson
Sean

Commissioners discussed: enthusiasm for the potential benefits of METRO's WAVE program; concerns regarding reduced funding recommended for rail study.

Commissioner Montesino made a motion and Commissioner K. Brown seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Consider recommendations and input for programming regional shares of approximately \$61.3 million from various state and federal funding programs (Attachment 2) from staff and the RTC's Bicycle Committee (BAC), Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC), Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC), and the new Transportation Equity Workgroup.
2. Hold a public hearing to receive comments on proposed projects and consider any written comments received (Attachment 4); and
3. Adopt a resolution (Attachment 1):
 - a. Approving projects to receive the region's anticipated formula shares of state and federal funds (Exhibit A/Attachment 2);
 - b. Approving amendments to previously programmed projects, as requested by project sponsors, to reflect current project scopes, costs and schedules (Exhibit B/Attachment 3);
 - c. Adopting the 2024 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) for State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)-funded projects;
 - d. Requesting that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) incorporate project funding and amendments into the 2024 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), as applicable.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a substitute motion and Commissioner S. Brown seconded the substitute motion to approve the staff recommendation with an increase in the funding for rail from \$2 million to \$4.25 million.

Commissioners discussed: availability of funds for transit service vs. rail studies; collaboration between bus transit and passenger rail programs is needed in order to move forward with funding both modes; the rail concept

report will provide the necessary information to make funding decisions; building consensus from all interest groups to develop public policy; urgency in moving forward with METRO's program; data-driven decision-making; gratitude to staff and stakeholders for collaboration and compromise; enthusiasm for improvements proposed at the intersection at Robertson Road.

Acting Interim Executive Director Luis Mendez provided clarification that the passenger rail concept report is already fully funded with Measure D and Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funds.

Senior Transportation Engineer Sarah Christensen gave a breakdown of the current funding plan & timeline of the passenger rail project; current deficit of \$16 million for the environmental study; staff will continue to pursue rail funding regardless of the outcome of today's vote; Measure D rail pot is limited; infrastructure preservation needs; reimbursements from FEMA still pending for the 2017 and 2023 storms; concept report timeline about 18 months; inter-program loans help to manage cashflow; minimum of 20% local match required to secure grant funds; the source of the local match will depend on the guidelines of the grant.

The substitute motion failed on a 1-11 vote with Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin voting "aye," and Commissioners Pedersen, S. Brown, Johnson, Hernandez, Montesino, Koenig, McPherson, K. Brown, and Commissioner Alternates Quinn, Pageler, and Kalantari-Johnson voting "no."

The original motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Pedersen, S. Brown, Johnson, Hernandez, Montesino, Koenig, McPherson, K. Brown, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin, Quinn, Pageler, and Kalantari-Johnson voting "aye."

26. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

RTC General Counsel Steve Mattas communicated that there may be reportable action coming from closed session and that there will be one more item for consideration in open session.

Received public comment from:

Brianna Goodman, Community of RTC Employees (CORE)

CLOSED SESSION

27. Public Employment (Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957)
Title: Executive Director

28. Public Employment (Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957)

Title: Interim Executive Director

29. Conference with Labor Negotiators (Pursuant to Government Code 54957.6)
Agency Designated Representatives: Tony Harris and Jesse Lad
Employee Organizations: CORE and RAMM

OPEN SESSION

30. Report on items discussed in closed session
31. Consideration and action to approve contract for Interim Executive Director

On a 12-0 vote, the Commission approved awarding a contract to Mitch Weiss to serve as Interim Executive Director.

32. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 9:00 a.m., at the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chambers, located at 701 Ocean St. Rm. 525, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Respectfully submitted,

Krista Corwin, Administrative Assistant

Attendees

Yvonne Penn	Jaime Renteria
Hector Hernandez	Adrian Jimenez
Daniel Zaragoza	James Sandoval
Michael Foes	Nate Abrego
Jaso Favio Zairatt Gareia	Ruben Jauregui
Guillermo Velasques	Gaby Gonzales
Christopher Robinson	Lucas Iviguchi
David Guerrero	Jose Flores
Jose Ramirez	Rene Lopez
Kaina Guzman	Arturo Valdes
Justin Brager	Mark Nolfi
Justin Ward	Kimberly Moon
Faina Segal	Rohit Ghaz
Matt Farrell	Araseli Campos
Brandon Freeman	Joe Valtierra
Manny Perez	Robert Valdivia

Gustavo Guevara
Jordan Vascones
Jose Loma
Sergio Toledo
Ricardo Fevaulez
Guadaloja Fernandez
Fabrie Valdivias
Cliff Gulpa
Brian Zamarripa
Daryl Sesscoas
Trevor Edwards
Mary Casarez
Ruben Valdez
Nicholas Soba
Severiano Lara
Elmer Tomas
Rosemary Sarka
Nancy Yellin
Pete Rasmussen
Matt Miller
Rene
Nadene Thorne
Susan Cavalieri
Lowell Hurst
Gina Gallino Cole
Val Cole
Jacob Wysocki
Dianne D
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Christina Watson
Heather Adamson
Jon
Johanna Lighthill
Joni
Jean Brocklebank
Brian
Rob Tidmore

Jeanette Guire
Carey
Lani Faulkner
David Dean
Jlepage
Brian Peoples
Michael Zeller
Linda Wilshusen
Barry Scott
Matt Starkey
Paul P
Piet Canin
Michael Saint
K Glavis
Sean
Zen Sawyer
Johanna Edmonds
BobFi
David
Monica
Paul Guirguis
Chris Schneiter
Mariana Ivancko
Marc Yellin
Peter Haworth
Mike Pisano
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