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Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) April 4, 2024 Meeting Highlights

Vegetation Control Utilizing Goats Along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

The Commission adopted a resolution to enter into an agreement for vegetation control along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL). Goats will be utilized as one of the methods of controlling vegetation overgrowth. Goats are quieter, more energy efficient, require less person-power, reduce the need for and/or enhance the effectiveness of herbicides, and reduce the overall maintenance cost of the corridor. Traditional vegetation control methods such as trimming, mowing, and hand application of non-hazardous herbicides will also be utilized as part of the overall vegetation control program. Goats will work at five locations along the SCBRL: South County (Galligan Slough); Aptos (Doris Ave to Sandalwood Dr); Aptos (State Park Dr to Poplar St); Capitola (Coronado St to Wesley St); and Live Oak (41st Ave to 17th Ave).

Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Update and Railroad Bridge Loading Assumptions

The Commission received an update on the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Concept development, including information on recent public engagement. As the project team begins the next milestone of the Project Concept Report – preliminary conceptual alignments and zero emission vehicle types – evaluation of existing corridor infrastructure was completed in February as a first step. The evaluation concluded that the majority of the existing bridges on the Branch Line would need to be replaced in order to accommodate passenger rail service. Staff informed the Commission that since the Branch Line is an active freight railroad, the recommendation is that the Project Concept Report include rail infrastructure that supports loading for freight rail and passenger rail. The current industry standard design loading for new infrastructure supporting freight rail is referred to as the Cooper E80 loading, in which the heaviest locomotive loads are 80,000-pounds per axle. Constructing new bridges to a design load standard less than Cooper E80 yields very little cost benefit while introducing fundability risks. Staff also informed the Commission that for existing Branch Line bridges that can be strengthened and potentially remain, adopting a

loading standard for existing bridges that is lower than Cooper E80 may be practical while still meeting the needs of both freight and passenger rail uses of the Branch Line.

The Commission directed staff to design new infrastructure to support the industry standard Cooper E80 loading for freight rail, and to design repairs to the existing Branch Line infrastructure to support the anticipated passenger train demand loadings and current operational freight rail loadings that will be developed by the Project.

The Project team plans to seek community input in summer 2024 on the initial conceptual alignment, followed by the refined conceptual alignments, station locations, and facilities in fall 2024. The Project Concept Report is expected to be completed in early 2025.

2050 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan – Goals and Policies

The Commission reviewed and approved the draft goals and policies for the 2050 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan. As the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for Santa Cruz County, the Commission is responsible for developing, implementing, and regularly updating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Santa Cruz County. The RTP is a state-mandated plan that identifies transportation needs in Santa Cruz County over the next twenty-plus years. The 2050 Santa Cruz County RTP, through its goals and policies, continues the RTC's focus on long-range planning via a sustainability framework. The 2050 Santa Cruz County RTP revises the goals and policies from the 2045 RTP to simplify the goals so that each one is clearer and more understandable, and to strengthen the RTP's emphasis on climate resiliency, social equity, and safety.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Proposed Budget

At the beginning of each calendar year, staff prepares a proposed RTC and Measure D budget for the following fiscal year. The FY2024-25 budget proposed for the RTC and Measure D reflects the most recent revenue projections from the Santa Cruz County Auditor for Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues, State Controller's Office of California for State Transit Assistance (STA) and State of Good Repair (SGR) revenues, and Hinderliter de Llamas (HdL) for Measure D revenues.

The FY2024-25 budget includes continued delivery of Highway 1, Coastal Rail Trail, Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail, traveler assistance, regional planning, and other ongoing RTC projects and programs, and the implementation of Measure D. The Commission approved the proposed FY2024-25 budget and accepted Transportation Development Act and Measure D revenue forecasts and estimates.

[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 or by calling 831-460-3200.

[Regional Transportation Commission Meeting](#)

Thursday, May 2, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

[Bicycle Advisory Committee](#)

CANCELED Monday, April 8, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

[Transportation Policy Workshop](#)

Thursday, April 18, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

[Interagency Technical Advisory Committee](#)

Thursday, April 18, 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 or call 460-3200. Some Regional Transportation Commission meetings are televised countywide by Community TV of Santa Cruz. Consult www.communitytv.org or call 831-425-8848 for schedule and station information.