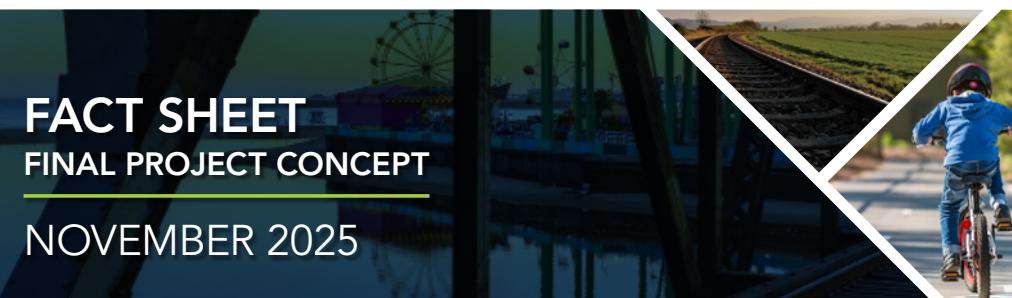


ZERO EMISSION PASSENGER RAIL AND TRAIL



FACT SHEET FINAL PROJECT CONCEPT

NOVEMBER 2025



The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) completed a key milestone and released the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Final Project Concept Report in mid-October 2025. The full report includes conceptual rail and trail alignment, ridership projections, station locations and design, operations, capital and operating cost estimates, and more. The Final Project Concept identifies improvements to better connect populated areas of Santa Cruz County, support diverse transportation needs, provide bicycle and pedestrian linkages, and enhance safe access to transportation options.

INTERCITY RAIL SERVICE

In order to align with the California State Rail Plan, and maximize funding eligibility and technical support through state and federal programs, the RTC Commission decided in March 2025 to pursue intercity passenger rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Branch Line). For ZEPRT, intercity rail service will:

- Serve travelers within Santa Cruz County, and enable regional and statewide connections
- Provide state and federal funding opportunities
- Limit stations to support competitive travel time

PASSENGER RAIL VEHICLE

ZEPRT proposes use of multiple unit trains, which include options for the following features:

• Passenger capacity (110–225 seats)	• Quiet operation with hydrogen or battery propulsion
• Interoperability with freight	• Variety of interior amenity possibilities
• Multiple propulsion options (battery, hydrogen, diesel, hybrid)	• Sleek & modern appearance
• Level boarding	



San Bernardino County Transportation Authority recently launched service of its zero-emission Stadler FLIRT multiple unit vehicle.

KEY ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES

Through proactive public outreach, the project progressed through the four milestones shown below. The Final Project Concept documents key project understandings, analysis and outreach conducted to-date.

MILESTONE 1 WINTER 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PRELIMINARY PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT• PROJECT LOOK AHEAD
MILESTONE 2 SUMMER 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENTS• ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE TYPES
MILESTONE 3 FALL 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ONGOING CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT UPDATES• STATION LOCATIONS AND FEATURES• RIDERSHIP APPROACH
MILESTONE 4 SUMMER 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DRAFT PROJECT CONCEPT REPORT• PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES• NEXT STEPS FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

WE ARE HERE

NEXT STEPS

The RTC Commission will consider the Project Concept Report for advancing ZEPRT project development. Next steps will clarify how the project can serve Santa Cruz County, and provide additional information for the Commission to make future decisions about funding and implementation alternatives. To learn more, read the report's Chapter 20 located on the website under Resources.

The ZEPRT project proposes new passenger rail service and stations on approximately 22 miles of the Branch Line from Santa Cruz in the north to Pajaro, just south of Watsonville. The project also proposes to develop 12 miles of Coastal Rail Trail (Segments 13–20) from Rio Del Mar Boulevard through La Selva Beach and Watsonville and the Capitola Trestle portion (Segment 11, Phase 2).

PROPOSED STATIONS

The Final Project Concept identifies nine stations proposed for initial service. ZEPRT passenger rail service would connect to the state rail system at the proposed Pajaro-Watsonville Station.



ESTIMATED END-TO-END TRAVEL TIME



SANTA CRUZ



40–55 MINUTES
Includes nine stations



Alignment revisions reduced projected vehicle speeds in certain locations and affected timing of passing sidings. Ongoing design work will explore opportunities to better accommodate the train meet-pass event to reduce estimated end-to-end travel time.

RIDERSHIP PROJECTIONS

Typical ridership estimated at
4,200–5,400 boardings per weekday

Boardings means each time a passenger steps aboard the rail vehicle. Ridership will continue to be refined as the ZEPRT project advances.

- Ridership likely slightly lower on weekends
- Future land use changes likely to contribute additional riders
- Ridership increased by improved walking and biking to stations, wayfinding, direct bus connections, and park and ride facilities

CAPITAL COSTS

Includes design and construction of the rail and trail and associated infrastructure with contingency applied.

Estimated Total Capital Cost

\$4.28 billion (2025 dollars)

Capital costs would vary based on further refinement of conceptual design through Beach Street corridor (Santa Cruz), and excludes costs for major trail structures (i.e. bridges) and trail sections located outside of rail corridor.

OPERATING COSTS

Includes expenses to operate and maintain passenger rail service once constructed.

Estimated Annual Operating Expenses

\$34 to \$41 million (2025 dollars)

Operating costs are based on service running every 30 minutes from average estimated annual operating expenses with and without a +20% contingency, which accounts for variables of historical experience of Santa Cruz METRO labor agreements and the uncertainty around hydrogen-fueled train operations.

STAY CONNECTED



Learn more at sccrtc.org/zeprt
(View the full Final Project Concept Report under Resources)



Email comments or questions to zeprt@sccrtc.org

