



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
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Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) Dec. 5, 2024 Meeting Highlights

Appreciation for Outgoing Commissioners

The Commission recognized and thanked the five outgoing Commissioners and two commission alternates for their years of dedicated service on the Commission. Outgoing commissioners are Kristen Brown, Sandy Brown, Zach Friend, Randy Johnson, and Bruce McPherson. Outgoing commission alternates are Gine Johnson, alternate for Bruce McPherson, and Robert Quinn, alternate for Zach Friend.



Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2025

The Commission voted unanimously to select Commissioner Eduardo Montesino as Chair and Commissioner Felipe Hernandez as Vice Chair of the Commission for 2025.

Rural Highway Safety Plan Vision, Goals, and Objectives Framework

The Commission received information on the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the Santa Cruz County Rural Highways Safety Plan (RHSP) and approved the proposed goals and objectives framework. The RHSP seeks to eliminate traffic-related serious injuries and fatalities and enhance safety for all users of the County's six conventional highways: Highway 1 north of the City of Santa Cruz, Highway 9, Highway 236, Highway 35, and Highways 129 and 152 outside the City of Watsonville. The proposed plan vision indicates the overarching intent for the RHSP and establishes a Vision Zero goal for the project's study area. The RHSP's four goals support the RHSP vision statement by striving to reduce crashes that result in traffic fatalities and serious injuries as well as focusing on a collaborative approach to issue identification and strategy deployment. The public is encouraged to submit locations on the rural highways where they have safety concerns via the RTC's bilingual survey at www.sccrtc.org/rhsp until midnight Wednesday December 11, 2024.

Update on Repairs to the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Damaged by Previous Severe Winter Storms in Santa Cruz County

The Commission received a presentation on the status of repairs to the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) that was damaged by 2017 & 2023 severe winter storm events. The Commission also approved long-term interest-free borrowing from the Regional Surface Transportation Program Exchange (RSTPX) fund to pay for storm damage repairs until reimbursement is received from state and federal public assistance programs. After the 2017 and 2023 storms, the Governor and President declared a state of emergency and major disasters for multiple events in which Santa Cruz County was included in the designated disaster area. This made state and federal public assistance funding available for the repairs to the SCBRL through the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). RTC staff submitted requests for public assistance to CalOES and FEMA, which were approved. Storm damage repairs to the SCBRL resulting from the 2017 storms were completed in January 2022. Emergency storm damage repairs and emergency debris removal work associated with the 2023 storms have been completed, and staff continue to progress storm damage repair projects resulting from those major disasters.

Staff is working with CalOES and FEMA to obtain reimbursement for expenses in excess of FEMA's obligated amounts for 2017 storm damage repairs, and reimbursement for eligible expenses for 2023 storm damage repairs.

In October of 2024, FEMA issued a Determination Memorandum for one of the 2023 storm damage repairs asserting that the SCBRL is an ineligible facility because it was not in active use at the beginning of the 2023 disaster incident period. Staff continues to work with FEMA and CalOES to provide requested information and plans to appeal their determination.

Since reimbursements are taking longer than originally anticipated when a short-term loan from RSTPX was authorized in 2018, the Commission approved the long-term interest-free loan from

RSTPX to pay for storm damage repairs until reimbursement is received from CalOES and FEMA. If only partial reimbursement is received, the difference in funding will need to be paid out of Measure D-Rail category funds through a future programming action.

Public Hearing: Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Milestone 3

The Commission received a presentation on the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project's Milestone 3, received public comments, and provided input on the item. Milestone 3 of the project includes revisions to the rail and trail alignment and alignment options that are under development, project funding opportunities, ridership modeling approach, stations, bridge structures, and noise impacts. Input received will aid in the development of the project concept, and the Project team will continue to refine the conceptual alignment and other project components over the coming months.

Staff is planning Informational Sessions that cover topics such as quiet zones, ridership forecasting results, and cost estimating. The final Project Concept Report is expected to be completed by summer 2025.

Input can still be provided through the virtual open house at <https://zeprt.com>, or via email to zeprt@sccrtc.org through Dec. 20, 2024.

Upcoming RTC and Committee Meetings

[Regional Transportation Commission Meeting](#)

Thursday, Jan. 16, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

[Bicycle Advisory Committee](#)

Monday, Dec. 9, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

[Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee](#)

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

[Interagency Technical Advisory Committee](#)

Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

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). 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.

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.