

planning for improved service for users. The Project utilized a hybrid of the Santa Cruz County (SCC) regional travel demand model, developed and overseen by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), and the custom-built direct ridership model (DRM), with the DRM utilized to refine the big-picture findings of the regional model.

Project forecasts estimate daily boardings between ~~23~~,500 and ~~3,56,000~~ by 2045 (approximately ~~333-389~~ to ~~500-667~~ average daily ridership per station), depending on service frequency, land use assumptions, and station access design. Refinements in future Project phases can help clarify how the model accounts for:

- Weekend and special event demand
- First/last-mile access
- Seasonal travel behaviors
- Interregional connectivity with METRO and Monterey County services

In addition to estimating ridership, the Project team conducted a preliminary farebox revenue forecast based on model outputs. Revenue estimates reflect assumed fare levels and projected daily boardings, providing early insights into the potential for operational cost recovery and informing future service planning and financial strategy. Further refinement of fare assumptions and revenue projections will occur in subsequent Project phases as the service plan is finalized.

4. Station Locations and Access

A total of nine potential primary passenger rail stations are identified at Pajaro, Watsonville, Aptos, Cabrillo (at New Brighton Road), Capitola, Live Oak (at 17th Avenue), Seabright, Boardwalk/Downtown Santa Cruz, and West Side Santa Cruz near Natural Bridges Drive. These stations were selected for their regional significance, estimated passenger demand, proximity to downtowns and transit hubs, and intermodal connectivity. Each location includes conceptual design considerations and proposed multimodal integration strategies. In response to community interest, the Draft Project Concept Report will include analysis of limited-use or seasonal stations (referred to as exception stops), and it also identifies opportunities to integrate with future park-and-ride and trail access points.