

APPLICATION/PROJECT PROGRAMMING REQUEST

SCCRTC 2025 Consolidated Grants Program (2026 RTIP)

A. PROJECT INFORMATION					
Applicant/Implementing Agency			Public Agency Sponsor (if different)		
Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission					
Contact Name	Phone	E-mail Address			
Riley Gerbrandt	(831) 460-3215	rgerbrandt@sccrtc.org			
Project Title					
Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)					
Agency Priority Number (e.g. 1 of 3)			1		
Description and Scope of Work (attach extra pages to fully describe scope)					
See Application Continuation Sheet					
Location, Limits, Length (attach map(s)/photos separately)					
<p>The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail rail service is proposed to be 22 miles of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) starting from MP 0.4 in Pajaro in Monterey County to MP 22.2 to the west of City of Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz County. Along side the SCBRL right-of-way and by proximity, 12 miles of the Coastal Rail Trail Segment is proposed from Pajaro to Rodriguez Street in Watsonville down to West Beach Street and San Andres Road through La Sevla Beach to Rio Del Mar Boulevard in Aptos. As part of the project the Capitola Trestle Segment 11 will be replaced with a rail and trail bridge on the existing right of way. Please see project fact sheet for map.</p>					
Roadway Functional Classification (see Caltrans map link):		Select If Applicable			
Summary of Project Benefits, Purpose and Need					
See Application Continuation Sheet					
Funds requested	\$15,006,611	Total Project Cost	\$26,237,000	Estimated # of Daily Users	Rail:4,200 - 5,400 Boarding
Are you able/willing to receive federal funds?		Yes			
Was project previously programmed for funds by			Yes	RTIP ID	1
Project Cost by Mode (list approximate percentage of total project costs)					
Mode		% of Total Cost			
Pavement Preservation (rehab, overlay, etc.)					
Road-Auto serving (not rehab)					
Bicycle		5%			
Pedestrian		5%			
Transit		90%			
Transportation System Management (TSM)					
Transportation Demand Management (TDM)					
Other: <i>Include description</i>					
Total		100%			

B. PROJECT BENEFITS/ EVALUATION CRITERIA

Information in this section will be used to evaluate projects. The RTC is required to consider how well projects advance regional, state and federal goals, policies, performance metrics and targets, including how projects will contribute towards implementation of the long-range transportation plan (Regional Transportation Plan) and other state and federal regulations including the California Complete Streets Act of 2008, SB375, the Federal FAST Act.

See **Attachment 2** of the call for projects for examples of type of information to demonstrate benefits.

Project Title:		Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)
Generally, what are the benefits of this project?		
<p>Zero emission passenger rail and trail will provide the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of active transportation and health by making it easier to utilize transit with a bicycle • Public safety enhancements through improved transit services to encourage reductions in VMT on the region’s roadways/highways • Improved affordable access for disadvantaged communities • Improved transit facilities, increased service, and improved transit travel time reliability for low-income residents who rely heavily on transit, and do not own their own vehicles • Increased mode shift from autos to transit, bicycling and walking to reduce congestion and reduce emissions • Reduced GHG to reduce the impacts of climate change • Resilience to climate change impacts from sea level rise and increased erosion • Reduced energy usage 		
How does this project address any of the following criteria?		<i>Projects are not expected to address all of these; if not applicable or not a primary purpose, write “N/A”.</i>
1	Access for All	<p>This project offers multi-model travel options, including new passenger rail service with stations and a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail. This will help connect the most populated communities in Santa Cruz County to meet the needs of commuters, youth, seniors, low-income individuals, people with limited mobility, and businesses. The trail is designed to be 12 feet wide throughout the 12 miles of trail, providing easy access to recreational places, schools, and jobs. Sections of trail where the Right-of-Way is narrow will be taken out of the Right-of-Way onto the streets, where Class I or Class IV bike path will be implemented to provide safety throughout the project. The rail and trail pass lakes, creeks, and freeways, to solve this issue a new bridge will be built to create a connection throughout the corridor. When it comes to the passenger rail service, the rail service will go from Natural Bridges to Pajaro, and then it will create a connection to the California State Rail Plan. Within Santa Cruz County, the passenger rail service will consist of nine stations: Pajaro, downtown Watsonville, Aptos Cabrillo, Capitola, 17th Avenue, Seabright, Beach Street, and Natural Bridges Drive. The placement of each station was determined by where the number of riders would be the highest. The estimated ridership projection in 2045 is about 4,200-5,400 riders per weekday and can be increased by enhancements to each location. The rail as the trail will connect to jobs, school, and recreational areas, creating access to all.</p>

2	Collisions and Safety	<p>Public transportation investment is among the most cost-effective ways to enhance traffic safety in a community. A 2016 study “The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation” conducted by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) found that the chance of being in a collision decreases by more than 90 percent when taking public transit instead of driving, making public transportation more than 10 times safer per mile than driving in a car. Safety will also be incorporated into the project planning, design and outreach relating to rail (details can be found in the TIRCP application, pages 18-20). Rail service is also crucial to the safety of residents during an emergency, as it provides a viable mass-evacuation option, especially the residents who do not drive including low income, elderly, youth, and people with disabilities. In addition, safety will be increased for the community by the inclusion of the Coastal Rail Trail in the project. Santa Cruz County has a high number of bicycle collisions relative to the population. The combination of a rail-with-trail provides increased safety benefits by providing an accessible path that is separated from vehicle traffic for accessing the rail stations, with greatly reduced interaction with automobile road networks. The Rails to Trails Conservancy report “America’s Rails with Trails” published in 2013 shows that a well-designed rail-with-trail facility can reduce fatalities and injuries by providing safer ways to guide the movement of people alongside and across rail corridors, and greatly reduces the incentive to use the tracks themselves as a shortcut when traveling</p>
3	System Preservation & Infrastructure Condition	<p>The conditions of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line corridor has naturally deteriorated over time. The implementing the ZEPRT project on this underutilized corridor the state of this transportation corridor will be greatly improved by rehabilitating or adding new track structure, bridges, highway-rail, pedestrian-rail grade crossing warning devices and crossing configurations which will extend the useful life of this facility. Not only will the corridor be revitalized but the system should minimize resource consumption, and visibly promote the environmental benefits of public transportation.</p>

4	System Performance	<p>The implementation of a passenger rail service facility complemented by a bike and pedestrian infrastructure along the 22 miles of the SCBRL will provide reduction vehicle miles travel. The projected ridership per weekday is approximately 4,200- 5,400 boarding per weekday. In addition, approximately 3,641 bicyclists and 1,628 pedestrians are expected to use the dedicated trail. Creating a sustainable option will help to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions, combat climate change, and improve air quality and public health.</p> <p>By offering residents and visitors safe, reliable, and clean energy travel options such as zero emission passenger rail, and off-street bicycling and walking facilities, more people are likely to choose sustainable travel options for getting around.</p> <p>The total system end-to-end travel time is expected to be between 40-55 minutes beginning from Pajaro to West Santa Cruz. It will be operating on 30-minute headway daily from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. to reduce end-to-end total travel time during peak travel times. Historically, the SCBRL initially served as a freight operations hauled out from Santa Cruz County agriculture produce, timber, lumber cement, and aggregates. Today, freight services continue on the SCBRL in 3 mile segment in Watsonville and the Santa Cruz Big Trees and Pacific Railway (SCBG) continue to provide service to existing passengers. The SBRL will be designed to accommodate passenger rail service and freight.</p> <p>The passenger rail service is envisioned in the 2024 California Rail State Plan connecting to the California State Rail at Pajaro. Creating connections to the California State Rail network.</p>
5	Public Health	<p>One of the primary goals of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is to support a sustainable transportation system through a triple bottom line framework where environmental/public health and social equity are two of the three components of this decision-making framework along with economic vitality. In October 2012, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission purchased the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line on behalf of the community to make significant strides in working towards these goals. A rail facility on the SCBRL complemented by local transit and bike and pedestrian facilities will provide an end-to-end equitable service that will allow for a reduction in vehicle miles traveled to reduce GHG emissions, combat climate change, and improve air quality and public health. Commuters, youth, seniors, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, businesses, and visitors have a diverse set of transportation needs. Improvements in the transit and active transportation network are essential for improved environmental and public health, social equity and a better quality of life.</p>

6	Benefits to Equity Priority Communities	<p>The ZEPRT project is intended to serve the whole County of Santa Cruz. Nine station locations have been identified starting from Pajaro to Natural Bridges, creating a safe connection to the most populated areas of the Country Watsonville and Santa Cruz provind access to people who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, income, disability, language, or race/ethnicity. The Regional Transportation Plan identifies approximately 50% of the county population as transportation disadvantaged based on age (under 18, over 70), ability, income, minority status, or lack of access to a car. Of Santa Cruz County’s over 273,000 residents, 10.6% are considered "persons in poverty.” Poverty areas are defined as census tracts where greater than 20% of households earned less than \$25,000/year. In addition, 19% of households within ½ mile of the proposed stations earn less than \$25,000 per year. Due to the high cost of living, low-income households are locally defined as those earning less than \$75,000 per year. The household income of approximately 40% of Santa Cruz County residents is below \$75,000. Approximately 45% of Santa Cruz County’s population is non-white, 32% of residents over 5 years old speak a language other than English, and the percent of persons under 65 years with a disability is 9%.</p>
7	Climate Change and Resiliency	<p>The RTC was awarded a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to develop a plan for climate resilience of the ZEPRT corridor. Technical analysis of existing conditions and climate hazards will inform project concepts at the four most vulnerable locations along the ZEPRT corridor – Pajaro River Rail Bridge, Harkins Slough Rail Crossing, La Selva/Manresa bluffs, and Capitola bluffs. The project concepts will be developed for short-term (2030), medium-term (2050) and long-term (2100) climate projections that consider protection, accommodation, and/or retreat strategies from climate hazards at these vulnerable locations.</p>
8a	Funding- Overall Funding Plan: If RTC approves the requested funds, will the project be fully funded? If not, how much additional funding is needed, and what is the likelihood of securing those funds? Please provide a realistic assessment of the project's overall funding security.	<p>If RTC approves the requested funds the enviromental document for this project will be fully funded. The initial contract elements have been secured through award of \$3.45 million TIRCP Cycle 6 competitive funds, \$2 million SB125 Funds, and \$5.78million of Measure D local funds. Funds for the remaining contract elements to perform environmental analysis, preliminary engineering and initial right-of-way services and to complete environmental documentation would be funded through this grant application funding request.</p>
8b	Committed Funding: What other funding has been secured for the project?	<p>Funds for the initial contract element have been secured through award of \$3.45 million TIRCP Cycle 6 competitive funds, \$2 million SB125 Funds and \$5.78 million of Measure D local funds.</p>

8c	<p><u>Leveraging</u>: Will the funds you are requesting from RTC be used to leverage other grants? If so, please identify those grants and the potential funding amounts. If RTC funding is not approved, will any of this other funding be at risk of being lost?</p>	<p>The RTC (project team) will seek to secure other project funds as sources become available and will leverage funds programmed by the RTC as local match funds. Such potential project development fund sources include State Rail Assistance (Emerging Corridors) funds or federal fund sources, such as earmarks or project development funding through the inter-city Federal Corridor ID program. Funds programmed by the RTC for completion of the environmental document will also be used as much as possible to leverage funds for subsequent phases of project implementation. If funds are not approved by the RTC, there are no funds that will be at risk of being lost but there is a risk that the project may require more funds due to inefficiencies if it is completed piecemeal, rather than all at once.</p>
8d	<p><u>Eligibility for Other Grants</u>: Is this project eligible for any other competitive grants? If so, what other grants are reasonably available for this project, and what is the status of those applications?</p>	<p>There are limited State and Federal funding programs that permits funds to be used on preconstruction activities such as completion of environmental documentation (CEQA/NEPA). Additionally, most funding programs have local match requirements, which has made it historically challenging to identify funding programs to fully fund environmental documentation. RTC's other discretionary state and federal funding programs, such as the TDA, STIP, LPP formula, and STBG/RSTPX programs are currently committed to Santa Cruz METRO, the Highway 1 program, and local streets and road maintenance. This project could be eligible for future cycles of TIRCP competitive funds, although there is significant competition for these limited funds. Other potential future sources of competitive grants are State Rail Assistance (Emerging Corridors) funds or federal development funding through the inter-city Federal Corridor ID Program.</p>
8e	<p><u>Funding for Cost Increases</u>: How will potential cost increases be funded? What potential funding sources are available to cover unanticipated cost increases?</p>	<p>If cost increases are identified during project development and implementation, RTC staff will work to secure these funds, which may include Measure D or other local and regional discretionary funds.</p>
8f	<p><u>Partial Funding</u>: If the RTC approves partial funding or the project costs increase, can the project be scaled to match available funds?</p>	<p>Yes, if the RTC approves partial funding or the project costs increase, the project can complete the Preliminary Engineering and the Initial Right of Way Services tasks plus some of the environmental technical analyses, and additional funding can be sought to complete the full environmental document services.</p>
9	<p>Project Readiness and Potential Delivery Risks-</p>	
9a	<p><u>Schedule</u>: How quickly can the project be implemented to provide benefits to the community? Are there any potential risks that could impact the project schedule?</p>	<p>The project can be implemented in the year to provide benefits to the community assuming funding is fully secured through award of the requested funding, potential delays to schedule for completion of the environmental document include stakeholder support, unanticipated significant right of way concerns, opposition from key regulatory agencies such as the California Coastal Commission or the California Public Utilities Commission, and litigation risk.</p>

9b	<p><u>Deliverability:</u> Describe why your agency is capable of delivering this project. (sufficient staff, project management, performance in past)</p>	<p>The RTC project management team takes a proactive approach to delivering projects by closely monitoring the scope, budget, schedule, and risks on a regular basis and takes steps to mitigate risk in a timely manner. The RTC has a history of excellent performance on past environmental documents.</p> <p>A highly capable consultant team was selected, who have demonstrated by their performance and delivery of the Draft Project Concept Report and now are working closely with RTC staff to finalize the Project Concept Report. HDR is more than capable of delivering this complex project with their background in the rail service industry. The consultant agreement only includes the initial contract element (the Project Concept Report), but the contract agreement could be amended in the future to include the remaining elements through completion of the environmental documents if complete funding is secured.</p> <p>The project development team is robust and includes sufficient staff to complete the project. Moreover, the RTC has identified key internal staff with sufficient capacity and experience to deliver this project, supported as needed through existing contract on-call project management and engineering/environmental consultant expertise.</p>
9c	<p><u>Environmental:</u> Describe any potential environmental issues, mitigations, risks associated with current and future environmental conditions (climate change, extreme weather, seismic)</p>	<p>Through the development of the Draft Project Concept Report, an initial environmental screening has been conducted to identify potentials constraints that can impact planning, design, permitting, construction, and implantation of the project. This includes sensitive environmental resources along the SCBRL between Pajaro and Santa Cruz, including the habitat for several threatened and endangered species, wetlands, riparian areas, cultural resources, hazardous materials sites, and areas likely subject to flooding or coastal erosion. As mentioned in row 7, The RTC was awarded a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant which will find protections and/or retreat strategies for climate hazards.</p> <p>It is important for RTC to engage all stakeholders early, so that the preliminary engineering can be done in a way that avoids significant impacts, where possible, and adequately identifies mitigation measures that may be required to offset unavoidable impacts. RTC will have early coordination number of cooperating and responsible federal, state, and local agencies to address concerns potential impacts and mitigation. These include agencies such as the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Central Cost Regio. Often, the interests of different agencies are competing, so it is advisable to concurrently engage with all agencies to fully understand, identify and quantify impacts and associated mitigation that may be required.</p>
9d	<p><u>Mitigating Risks:</u> What efforts will be undertaken to minimize risks to project implementation.</p>	<p>As the Project Concept Report is near completion, an initial environmental been conducted to identify potential risks. These initial findings will be implemented in the next steps of the project to reduce project delays, minimize costs, and ensure solutions are in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). With the requested funds to move foward to the enviromental face will help better refine any ricks to the project.</p>
9e	<p><u>Other:</u> Describe any other potential risks and plans to mitigate risks.</p>	

10	<p>Consistency with Complete Streets guidelines and policies: Describe how is project consistent with guidelines and integrates complete streets elements.</p>	<p>Complete Streets are streets that are designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users, regardless of their ages, abilities or mode of transportation (U.S. DOT). The 2013 Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook identifies that, "Although great strides have been made by local jurisdictions across the Monterey Bay Area to provide adequate facilities for all roadway users, many streets are not "complete" in the Monterey Bay Area due to lack of sufficient bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In recognizing that roadways have primarily been designed to serve the automobile, the Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook highlights bicycle and pedestrian access as an essential design objective" (emphasis added).</p> <p>The intention of complete streets as stated in the Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook is to expand transportation choices by making walking, bicycling, and public transportation more convenient and safe to accommodate all users, thereby encouraging bicycle, pedestrian and transit usage.</p> <p>The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail project proposed will provide 13 miles of new dedicated multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path, largely within the existing Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right-of-way, to nearly complete the 32-mile Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network, that will transform Santa Cruz County communities by expanding available transportation choices. A new dedicated active transportation path will be available for users of all ages and abilities, thereby offering a convenient and safe route for transportation across and throughout Santa Cruz County. The new path will be the "spine" of a broader network of active transportation routes with additional spur trails and natural surface paths that will provide safe and convenient access to over half of the county's population who live within one mile of the facility.</p> <p>Also consistent with the Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook, the new</p>
11a	<p>Public engagement: Was this project identified as a priority by the community? How was it determined to be a priority? How have residents in the project area been involved in the decision-making or project information process to date?</p>	<p>Several past planning efforts, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Master Plan, Unified Corridor Investment Study (UCS), and the Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis & Rail Network Integration Study (TCAA/RNIS), all helped to shape the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project. A critical component of all of these past planning efforts was engaging community members, especially those in the historically disadvantaged communities in southern Santa Cruz County, where 22% of its residents have limited English proficiency (LEP). These planning efforts and studies identified public transit and active transportation along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line as priorities for Santa Cruz County.</p> <p>The engagement programs for ZEPRT project include dynamic public engagement and outreach to target and reach the general public, with focused efforts on meaningfully engaging with community members in disadvantaged and low income communities. Outreach efforts were conducted these past years in Spanish and English throughout the county and included public meetings, workshops, open houses (in-person and virtual), public hearings, community focus groups, surveys, media and social media campaigns, live chat virtual discussions with the project teams, and collateral material distribution (Frequently Asked Questions, fact sheet, maps, presentations, boards).</p> <p>The input received through surveys and comments of these past efforts continues to shape the current project to ensure equity benefits and impacts were addressed.</p>

11b	<p><u>Outreach:</u> Describe how the public and stakeholders were/will be engaged in the development and implementation of the project (e.g. intended outreach methods, activities, pop-up planning events; planning activities at community events; community workshops; design charrettes; online and social media, etc.)</p>	<p>The ZEPRT team is committed to meaningful community engagements through the project’s timeline. Community participation is vital to minimize impacts while meeting the needs of riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It has been a critical part to understanding the needs, issues, and challenges in the development and implementation of the project. Outreach events and activities have been held through the four major milestones of the project include community meetings, virtual open houses, information sessions, social media blasts and pop-up events in adjacent communities between Santa Cruz and Pajaro with surveys to understand the needs in the community. These engagements have resulted in over 500 in-person connections and 5,00 people reached out through virtual events. Through these efforts multiple comments from community members via the project website which will continue through the development of the project.</p>
11c	<p><u>Diverse Participation:</u> How will you ensure participation from diverse and historically underrepresented members of the public in project planning? What specific outreach to low-income, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), etc., residents about this project has already been conducted or is planned?</p>	<p>The outreach strategy includes bilingual materials, translation services, and accessible formats virtually and in-persons for the open houses and office hours held in both Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Multiple pop-up events have been held throughout the County specifically at local events in low-income and disadvantage communities by incorporating feedback received to the project’s development and implementation. Posting flyers at different locations in the County and posting social media blast on all RTC social media platforms. The team will continue to ensure participation from diverse and historically underrepresented members of the public and continue to shape the projects and it keeps moving forwards.</p>
12a	<p>RTP Consistency: If project is included in the approved 2045 or draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Project List, provide RTP Project Number/title</p>	<p>This project is identified as fiscally constrained in the 2045 RTP project list (ID#RTC-P02) and the 2045 AMBAG MTP/SCS project list (SC-RTP-P02-RTC). Consistent with the RTP, Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail supports the regional vision aligning with the sustainability framework/triple bottom line principles. The project will reduce per capita fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (Goal 1, Target 1.B), injury and fatal collisions (Goal 2, Target 2.A), and increase travel options for people who are transportation disadvantaged (Goal 3, Target 3.B). It will align with the RTP policy to develop dedicated transit facilities that will improve transit access, travel time, promote smart growth, and transit-oriented development (Goal 1, Policies 1.3-1.6). Rail and Trail will also address the RTP target to improve people’s ability to meet most of their daily needs without having to drive and improve access and proximity to employment centers (Goal 1, Target 1.A).</p>

12b	Consistency with other plans. What other plans is this project listed in, if any?	The 2024 California State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) developed by Caltrans Division of Rail & Mass Transportation (DRMT) provides a new framework for investing in a California wide integrated rail network and outlines a vision for new and better rail and community connections throughout the State. The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) is identified in the Rail Plan as part of the Central Coast geographic service area between San Jose in the north and Santa Barbara/Goleta in the south, including the Union Pacific Coast Route and Santa Cruz/Monterey Branch Lines. Passenger rail service on the SCBRL is consistent with the Rail Plan.
13	Scale of Benefits - How many users are expected to use the facility, service or program? What is the source of this estimate?	<p>Ridership for ZEPRT in Santa Cruz County was forecasted for 2045 by Fehr & Peers as a subcontractor to HDR using a combination of data sources and tools, including the Santa Cruz County travel demand model (SCCModel), Direct Ridership Model (DRM), Santa Cruz County, UC Santa Cruz, cities of Watsonville, land use growth data, and existing transit data and transit trip patterns from Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO).</p> <p>Ridership Estimates Assuming - Number of Stations 9; Frequency of Service: 30 minute headways; Service Span 6AM to 10PM;</p> <p>2045 Boardings: Base Scenario</p> <p>Average Daily Weekday Boardings by Station:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pajaro Station 350-450 * Downtown Watsonville 900-1,100 * Aptos Station 250-400 * Cabrillo Station 350-450 * Capitola Station 450-500 * 17th Avenue Station 400-500 * Seabright Station 300-400 * Bech Street/ Downtown Station 1,050-1,300 * Natural Bridges Drive Station 150-250 <p>Total Daily Riders : 4,200 – 5,400 riders/ day</p>

C1. CAPITAL PROJECTS - SCHEDULE, COST AND FUNDING SUMMARY

Non-infrastructure projects/programs/plans - see NI tabs

Project Title:		Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)		
Project Schedule/Milestone <i>(For TRANSIT vehicles- modify milestones accordingly or use Uniform Transit Application)</i>			Anticipated Date	Notes on schedule (flexibility, worst-case schedule)
Project Cost Estimates/Scope Developed			9/22/2022	Already Completed
Begin Environmental (PA&ED) Phase			10/25/2023	Already Completed
Circulate Draft Env'l Document	Env'l Document	EIR & EIS/EA	2/29/2028	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.
Draft Project Report			7/30/2025	Already Completed
End Environmental Phase (PA&ED Milestone)			12/31/2028	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.
Begin Design (PS&E) Phase			1/1/2029	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.
End Design Phase (Ready to List for Advertisement Milestone)			6/30/2035	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.
Begin Right of Way Phase			10/1/2026	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.
End Right of Way Phase (Right of Way Certification Milestone)			4/30/2035	This assumes funding is secured for future phases.

Project Cost Summary/Funding Information								
Total Project Cost (\$1,000s) - AUTO FILLS (do not enter numbers here)								
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total
E&P (PA&ED)	7,126,389	3,200,000	15,906,611	4,000	0	0	0	26,237,000
PS&E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R/W SUP (CT)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CON SUP (CT)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R/W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7,126,389	3,200,000	15,906,611	4,000	0	0	0	26,237,000

Fund No. 1:	NEW FUNDS REQUESTED FROM RTC								SCCRTC to consider proposals at its November 6, 2025 meeting
Fiscal Year									
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total	Are there certain fund sources (e.g. federal, STIP)
E&P (PA&ED)			15,006,611					15,006,611	No
PS&E								0	
R/W SUP (CT)								0	
CON SUP (CT)								0	
R/W								0	
CON								0	
TOTAL	0	0	15,006,611	0	0	0	0	15,006,611	

Fund No. 2:	Measure D Rail								Funding status	
Fiscal Year									Are these funds secured?	Yes or No
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total		
E&P (PA&ED)	1,326,389	3,200,000	900,000	4,000				5,430,389	If no, when will you know if funds are secured?	Yes
PS&E								0		
R/W SUP (CT)								0	What risks are there to these funds, if any?	RTC could reprogram these funds if the commission decides to deprioritize this project.
CON SUP (CT)								0		
R/W								0		
CON								0		
TOTAL	1,326,389	3,200,000	900,000	4,000	0	0	0	5,430,389		

Fund No. 3:		Measure D Active Transportation							Funding status	
		Fiscal Year							Are these funds secured?	
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total	Yes/No	
E&P (PA&ED)	350,000							350,000	If no, when will you know if funds are secured?	
PS&E								0		
R/W SUP (CT)								0	What risks are there to these funds, if any?	
CON SUP (CT)								0		
R/W								0		
CON								0		
TOTAL	350,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	350,000	No Risks	

Fund No. 4:		TIRCP Cycle 6							Funding status	
		Fiscal Year							Are these funds secured?	
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total	Yes/No	
E&P (PA&ED)	3,450,000							3,450,000	If no, when will you know if funds are secured?	
PS&E								0		
R/W SUP (CT)								0	What risks are there to these funds, if any?	
CON SUP (CT)								0		
R/W								0		
CON								0		
TOTAL	3,450,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,450,000	No Risks	

Fund No. 5:		RTC Discretionary Grants (2023 SB125 Funds)							Funding status	
		Fiscal Year							Are these funds secured?	
Component	Prior	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	Total	Yes/No	
E&P (PA&ED)	2,000,000							2,000,000	If no, when will you know if funds are secured?	
PS&E								0		
R/W SUP (CT)								0	What risks are there to these funds, if any?	
CON SUP (CT)								0		
R/W								0		
CON								0		
TOTAL	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,000,000	RTC could reprogram these funds if the commission decides to deprioritize this project.	

C2. ENGINEERS ESTIMATE

Replace with categories/format appropriate to your project. Shown below are examples only.

Project:	Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)				
Item No.	Engineer's Estimate				
1	Environmental Studies and Permits				\$0
2	Plans, Specifications, and Estimate				\$0
	Right of Way				
3	Right of Way Acquisition				\$0
4	Right of Way Support				\$0
5	Utility Relocation (exclude if included in construction)				\$0
	TOTAL RIGHT OF WAY COMPONENT COST				\$0
	Construction (Update items to match actual items for project)				
	Item Description	Quantity	Units	Unit Cost	Total
		SUBTOTAL CONSTRUCTION ITEMS			\$0
		CONTINGENCY		5.0%	\$0
	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST				\$0
	Escalation Rate Used:				%
Total Cost					\$0

D1. NON-INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS/PROGRAMS - DETAILED TASKS, COSTS, AND SCHEDULE

For non-capital projects, summarize tasks/work/activities to be completed; estimated cost/funding for each; and schedule Below is a sample, but update to match work anticipated planning, project implementation, public outreach project completion and timeline for each. Add additional lines if needed to reflect all tasks and additional columns if needed to refl

Project Title:	Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)
-----------------------	--

Task #	Task Title (UPDATE WITH TASKS APPLICABLE TO YOUR PROJECT)	RTC Grant Request*	Fund Source:		Estimated Local In-Kind Match*	Estimated Total Project Cost
			RTC Discretionary Grants (2023 SB125 Funds)	IRCP Cycle 6		
1	ProjectManagment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,652,872	\$2,652,872
2	Consultant procurement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$146,391	\$146,391
3	Operating Concept	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,728,873	\$2,981,127	\$7,710,000
4	Pleminary Engineering	\$8,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,500,000
5	Initial Right of Way Support	\$400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$400,000
6	Enviromental Document	\$6,106,611	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,106,611
7	Public outreach	\$0	\$0	\$721,127	\$0	\$721,127
8	Materials	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
9	Contingency	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Totals		\$15,006,611	\$2,000,000	\$3,450,000	\$5,780,389	\$26,237,000

Minimum match = 11.47% of total cost \$ 3,009,383.90

* Use only whole dollars in the financial information fields.

D2. NON-INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS/PROGRAMS - STAFFING

For non-capital projects, summarize tasks/work/activities to be completed; estimated cost/funding for each; and schedule Below is a sample, but update to match work anticipated for your project - ex. preliminary planning, project implementation, public outreach project completion and timeline for each. Add additional lines if needed to reflect all tasks and additional columns if needed to reflect other funding sources.

Project Title:	Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT)
-----------------------	--

Task #	Task Title (UPDATE WITH TASKS APPLICABLE TO YOUR PROJECT)	Estimated Total Project Cost	Staffing - Person 1			
			Name	Position-Classification	Estimated Hours	Hourly Rate
1	ProjectManagement	\$2,652,872	Riley			
2	Consultant procurement	\$146,391	Riley			
3	Operating Concept	\$7,710,000	Riley			
4	Pleminary Engineering	\$8,500,000	Riley			
5	Initial Right of Way Support	\$400,000	Riley			
6	Enviromental Document	\$6,106,611	Riley			
7	Public outreach	\$721,127	Riley			
8	Materials	\$0	Riley			
	Contingency	\$0				
Totals		\$26,237,000				

* Must have current ICR approved by Caltrans to bill for indirect costs



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250, Santa Cruz, CA 95060-4418 • (831) 460-3200 • info@sccrtc.org

September 15, 2025

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Sarah Christensen, Executive Director & Application Evaluation Committee:

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is pleased to submit this application for the **Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail Project** under the *2025 Consolidated Regional Transportation Grants Call for Projects*. This project aligns closely with the goals of the State Transportation Agency, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan, and our local community. The project development effort will provide state and federal environmental clearance for zero emission passenger rail service on 22 miles of the RTC-owned Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, as well as the remaining sections the Coastal Rail Trail, within the project limits. Implementation of the future capital project will convert the underutilized branch line into a multimodal corridor, transforming the way people travel to and within Santa Cruz County. The request is \$15,006,611 from any and/or multiple consolidated funding source(s). The project's total cost is estimated to be \$2,623,7000 with \$5.78 million of local Measure D funds already spent or programmed as a local match (22%).

The rail line offers a sustainable alternative to highly congested Highway 1 for commuters, students, visitors, freight, and emergency evacuation. The trail will provide important healthy and safe first- and last-mile connections, and local jurisdictions are planning affordable housing and commercial development close to the proposed station locations.

All of the proposed daily stations are located within disadvantaged and/or low-income communities. Especially important will be direct rail connection into and through the disadvantaged city of Watsonville. The project is the result of prior investments in purchasing the rail line and advancing major studies recommending the best use of the corridor to satisfy community-developed goals of environment, equity, and economy.

The rail line is included in the State Rail Plan, and the project will provide dual state rail connections at the planned Pajaro Station and via the Highway 17 Express Amtrak Thruway bus to San Jose Diridon Station. The branch line is included in Caltrans' Central Coast Corridor project under development through the FRA Federal Corridor ID Program, paving the way for federal funding and future eligibility for capital funds in TIRCP as well as other state and federal programs. The RTC has a stable source of local revenue from a local countywide sales tax measure passed in 2016. A realistic financial plan has identified potential funding from FRA, FTA, FHWA, as well as state and local sources.

We appreciate your consideration for the necessary funding to complete this important project development work.

Sincerely,

Riley Gerbrandt
Associate Transportation Engineer
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

2025 Call for Project

Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project

Application Continuation Sheet

Project Description/Scope of Work

The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Project is requesting funds for project development of a new high-capacity zero emission passenger rail service and stations on approximately 22 miles of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, from the City of Santa Cruz in the north (MP 22.2) to the Union Pacific Coast Route in the south at Pajaro Junction (MP 0.43). The project also proposes 13 miles of a parallel paved bicycle and pedestrian path, primarily within the rail right-of-way, from Rio Del Mar Boulevard in Aptos to the community of Pajaro in northern Monterey County, to complete a continuous multi-use active transportation trail (the Coastal Rail Trail) adjacent to the rail facility.

The new rail service will take advantage of a publicly owned rail right-of-way to provide all-day service connecting the most populated areas of Santa Cruz County to each other and to the California State Rail network. At the Pajaro Junction, existing Amtrak and planned expanded regional service to the north and south will provide a seamless intercity travel option for riders on the Central Coast as part of the 2024 California State Rail Plan. The dedicated right-of-way will bypass highly congested Highway 1 and local arterials and reconnect cities to each other. The new trail will nearly complete the 32-mile Coastal Rail Trail, which provides a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facility that serves all nine rail stations.

The Project is near completion of the Project Concept Report and will continue forward with preliminary engineering design, initial right-of-way services, and environmental documentation (Tasks 1-4, respectively) for the new rail passenger service and trail. Implementation of the future capital project will convert the underutilized branch line into a multimodal corridor, transforming the way people travel to and within Santa Cruz County.

Project Task 1 involves professional services to complete the Project Concept Report, which will refine the locally preferred alternative from earlier planning work and provide a stable project definition that would then be carried through subsequent project phases to and through the draft and final CEQA/NEPA environmental documents. The project team will prepare the Project Concept Report and then move forward to environmental, preliminary engineering design, and initial right-of-way services to complete environmental documentation. The Project Concept Report involves extensive community outreach and early engineering, requiring multiple iterations to complete initial system planning. The work involves refinement of the locally preferred alternative from the TCAA/RNIS, including further development of the project definition and purpose & need statement, analysis of rail equipment technology and performance requirements, ridership and revenue forecasts, evaluation of existing infrastructure, environmental screening, geotechnical review, safety assessment, development of the rail and trail alignment, station/layover/maintenance

facility assessment, operations modeling and equipment planning, cost estimates for both capital and operations/maintenance, and risk analysis for the project. The RTC intends to carry one build alternative through the CEQA/NEPA process and the environmental documents. Included in the scope is coordination with the segments of the rail trail that are already under development. Once environmental documentation is complete, the Project will be positioned for additional local, state, and federal funding for final design and construction of the new rail service and multi-use trail facility.

Prior studies, such as the MBSST Master Plan, Rail Feasibility Study, UCS, and TCAA/RNIS, were all major multi-year efforts consisting of numerous public meetings, hearings, surveys, workshops, and stakeholder meetings. For the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project, the RTC will follow its Public Participation Plan as well as initiate new policies from its upcoming Equity Action Plan, which is currently being developed. This will guide the project team to utilize the latest best practices for meaningful participation at all stages by all segments of the community, especially those who traditionally are under-engaged due to various factors such as income, language, age, and mobility.

Following the completion of the Draft Concept Report, the project's Purpose and Need were addressed from community input received in past Milestones virtual and in-person engagement. The typical ridership projection is estimated at 4,200- 5,400 boardings per day for the first year in service, with expected growth. The system's total end-to-end from Pajaro to West Santa Cruz is estimated at approximately 40-70. It will be operating on a 30-minute headway daily from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. to reduce end-to-end total travel time during peak travel times. Rehabilitation or adding new track structures, bridges, highway-rail, pedestrian-rail grade crossing warning devices, and crossing configurations will be necessary to allow these service levels. Stations will have level boarding and integrate with the bicycle and pedestrian network. The rail trail will constitute Segments 13 through 20 of the MBSST, a planned continuous, dedicated primarily Class I off-street multi-use paved path.

The Project is the result of prior investments in purchasing the branch rail line and advancing major studies recommending the best use of the corridor to satisfy community-developed goals of environment, equity, and economy.

Summary of Project Benefits, Purpose and Need

Purpose and Need The purpose of the project is to provide access to convenient, accessible, and reliable public travel options to create connections to community activity centers, supporting the local economy and providing access between housing and jobs. A further objective is to relieve capacity constraints of the existing transportation system in reducing transit travel times and promote alternative transportation modes, which will reduce vehicle miles traveled and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a sensitive and protective manner to California and its central coast region's unique natural resources.

The approximately 22 miles of rail and 12 miles of trail are essential components of the 2024 California State Rail Plan and California Coastal Trail. The project will provide access to a new

transportation mode with a new parallel active transportation option, contribute to increased mobility and help improve health within the county, and connect the county to the rest of the statewide rail system.

The ZEPRT project will implement an intercity passenger rail service on the SCBRL corridor in alignment with the California State Rail Plan. Intercity Rail will connect Santa Cruz County communities across California to meet the needs of people traveling short and longer trips. This service will enhance regional mobility by enabling seamless connection to other transportation networks. It will reduce traffic congestion and travel time and improve travel time through the stations between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

The current State of Santa Cruz County's transportation infrastructure is not meeting the needs of serving the community effectively. There is a need for diverse transportation. The current system is congested and will continue to result in deteriorating air quality, reduced reliability, increased travel times, more highway collisions, and negative climate impacts. The current statewide and regional transportation system has not kept pace with increases in population, economic activity, and tourism demand on the Central Coast. There are current bicycle and pedestrian linkages missing and safety concerns between the most populated communities in Santa Cruz County. Active transportation is needed to support and improve the health of the community. The ZEPRT Project offers an underutilized continuous corridor and 12-mile trail that will significantly advance transportation solutions.

Residents of the disadvantaged Watsonville metro area will especially benefit from more easily accessing employment and educational opportunities in Santa Cruz and the rest of the Monterey Bay Area. Public transit will be transformed into a network built on frequency and predictability. The active transportation trail will complete the 32-mile Coastal Rail Trail, providing a dedicated travel facility that serves all the rail stations for first and last mile connections and is part of the planned California Coastal Trail.

The ZEPRT Project will implement both a daily rail service with an integrated multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail to help improve the linking in the Santa Cruz County and create a connection to the California State Rail Plan. The trail will improve active transportation in the county for residents and visitors, as well as create an accessible connection to all stations located in the SCBRL corridor. The trail and the rail combine to provide a safe, sustainable, healthy, affordable, reliable, and enjoyable alternative to driving.

Expected Benefits

RTC completed a Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Rail Network Integration Study (TCAA/RNIS) in 2021 that identified zero emission electric rail as the locally preferred alternative and showed how it will integrate with future intercounty and interregional rail connections. The TCAA/RNIS utilized a performance measure analysis that informs much of the primary and secondary evaluation criteria in this grant application.

The Project's TIRCP Cycle 6 application includes a detailed list of expected benefits upon construction of the Project facilities. A summary is included on the following page hereof, and

application evaluators are encouraged to review pages 10-46 of the Project’s TIRCP Cycle 6 application for specific details.

Summary of Expected Project Benefits	
Benefit	Summary
Reduction of GHG Emissions	A high-capacity passenger rail facility on SCBRL complemented by local transit and bike and pedestrian facilities will provide an end-to-end service that will allow for a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, shifting drive trips to transit, bike, and walk, in order to reduce GHG emissions, combat climate change, and improve air quality and public health. The GHG emissions reduction for zero emission rail service implementation for Santa Cruz County was estimated using the CARB quantification methodology. The total GHG emissions reduction using this tool is estimated to be 206,078 MTCO _{2e} , or an average of 4580 MTCO _{2e} /year.
Increase in Transit Ridership	Ridership for zero emission passenger rail in Santa Cruz County was forecasted for 2040 in the TCAA/RNIS. Up to 8,000 average daily boardings in 2040 were forecasted.
Transit Oriented Design	Rail investments help attract and enable new, higher-density TOD. Developers are more likely to invest in areas with fixed-guideway systems. Property owners and renters are willing to pay a premium to locate where they can take advantage of improved accessibility and other benefits provided by rail transit improvements, especially when combined with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements.
Regional-Level Rail and Transit Integration	<p>Passenger rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line will provide extensive connectivity opportunities at Pajaro Junction to planned regional rail and state rail systems to connect at future Pajaro Station to the Caltrain commuter extension, existing Coast Starlight service, planned Coast Daylight service and through these to High-Speed Rail service at Gilroy.</p> <p>In Santa Cruz, implementation of passenger rail will provide transit connection from Santa Cruz to regional rail service at Diridon Station in San Jose via the Highway 17 Express Amtrak Thruway service Diridon Station is a major Silicon Valley transportation hub served by Caltrain and Amtrak trains, as well as local and regional bus lines and light rail. In addition, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) is currently implementing an extension to Diridon Station and High-Speed Rail will also serve the Diridon Station. Amtrak service from</p>

	<p>San Jose includes the “Capitol Corridor” that provides convenient, frequent, and affordable service between San Jose and the Sacramento region, and the “Coast Starlight” that runs daily between Seattle and Los Angeles with a stop in San Jose linking major cities on the West Coast. Caltrain provides frequent commuter rail service along the San Francisco Peninsula, from San Francisco to San Jose and south to Gilroy.</p>
<p>California Rail Network Integration</p>	<p>In the State Rail Plan, the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line links Santa Cruz County communities to existing and proposed new rail transit lines on the major state rail corridors – extending from San Diego to past the northern boundary of California – via local connections at both the planned Pajaro rail station as well as the proposed downtown Santa Cruz station by way of the existing Highway 17 Express Amtrak Thruway bus service to San Jose Diridon Station, where users can also connect to several Bay Area transit systems as described above. Implementing passenger rail on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line will advance the rail transit system in Santa Cruz County in sync with the rest of the state.</p>
<p>Safety</p>	<p>Public transportation investment is among the most cost-effective ways to enhance traffic safety in a community. A 2016 study “The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation” conducted by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) found that the chance of being in a collision decreases by more than 90 percent when taking public transit instead of driving, making public transportation more than 10 times safer per mile than driving in a car. Implementation of the Project and bringing zero emission rail service to the SCBRL, the RTC will improve global transportation safety in the Santa Cruz County area.</p>
<p>Reduce VMT and Trips from Automobiles</p>	<p>Reductions in automobile vehicle miles traveled (VMT) will occur due to both the passenger rail services and the bicycle and pedestrian trail to be completed by the Project.</p>
<p>Streamlined transit-oriented development along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line providing opportunities for significantly reducing number of trips taken by car</p>	<p>Much of the densification and infill housing in the urbanized area is already a walkable or bikeable distance from rail stations due to the relatively compact development patterns of the county, and further infill development is prioritized near the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) in the County of Santa Cruz’s Sustainability Update to the General Plan (2022). The Project will serve as a major transportation corridor for high density infill developments with little to no parking requirements. Transit on the SCBRL aligns with the goals of the Sustainability Update to increase safety, accessibility, and improved multimodal connectivity providing more options for travel for future developments.</p>
<p>Expand Existing Transit Services</p>	<p>With the implementation of passenger rail service on the branch line right-of-way, a new high-quality transit connection with all the</p>

	<p>benefits described in the previous sections could drive some modifications to the overall structure of the Santa Cruz METRO system of bus routes. With a fast, reliable new transit connection between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, as well as neighboring communities, the bus system could expand to also provide a feeder system. As most identified station locations are situated adjacent to principal arterials of the Santa Cruz County street network, many are already adjacent to METRO bus routes. Such nearby routes could be modified to connect rail stations with local destinations outside of the walkable station area. In particular, Soquel Drive/Avenue is the primary corridor of the METRO system as well as being the location of many commercial and employment destinations, so feeder service could be highly beneficial if it effectively linked Soquel Drive/Avenue to the new transportation corridor of passenger rail service and the Coastal Rail Trail.</p> <p>As a result of implementing rail on the SCBRL, bus ridership as a first/last mile option would increase, and demand would increase for local transit to provide feeder service to stations where there is currently minimal service, and also to increase feeder bus service frequency to match the 30-minute frequency of the preferred alternative, as most local routes that intersect with the rail corridor currently operate with a 60-minute frequency.</p>
<p>Enhance Connectivity to Transit, Active Transportation, and Shared Mobility</p>	<p>Passenger rail station planning and design will consider the many types of connector services to integrate “first mile/last mile” connections that allow transit system users to complete their journey from the station to their final destination. Sidewalk and bicycle facility networks, particularly from stations to major destinations, including the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (MBSST) are planned to be improved in many jurisdictions.</p> <p>As envisioned and planned by the community in the Unified Corridor Investment Study (2019), both rail transit service and a trail in the railroad corridor are critical to the Santa Cruz County transportation future because they feed into and increase the ridership and use of each other, and because the county has so few other options for through travel between the coastal cities. A rail service that connects Santa Cruz and Watsonville/Pajaro, with a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting at the stations including the trail along the SCBRL right-of-way, provides a safe, sustainable, and integrated transportation network for the Santa Cruz County community and will function as a primary first and last mile walking and biking option for destinations near the corridor.</p>

	<p>The City of Santa Cruz in partnership with the Cities of Capitola and Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, the Regents of the University of California Santa Cruz, and Cabrillo Community College is implementing a public regional electric bicycle share system across all jurisdictions starting in 2023. The program is expected to launch with at least 700 e-bicycles, with options to increase. Bikeshare stations at rail stations immediately adjacent to the MBSST will allow for quick transfers between passenger rail and bikes, enhancing multimodal ability for residents and visitors and reducing vehicle trips.</p> <p>Shuttles can be public or private small buses or vans that travel either a fixed route back and forth to a major destination such as a hotel, shopping destination, or employment center, or a demand responsive service that drops off passengers at their requested location. Shuttles could become autonomous as the technology develops. In Santa Cruz County, shuttles could be run by private employers, business districts, or accommodations, or they could be organized by a public entity such as the transit district, the University of California Santa Cruz, Cabrillo Community College, or other publicly owned destinations. Connection to UCSC in particular might benefit from some type of shuttle service to and from rail stations, and a connection hub could be built into the stations at Natural Bridges Drive, Bay Avenue, and/or Downtown Santa Cruz Station.</p>
<p>Promote Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility and Safety</p>	<p>A critical part of the rail corridor that is already under development is the construction of the Coastal Rail Trail as part of the MBSST. The MBSST Master Plan was developed through a multiyear comprehensive planning process involving extensive input from members of the public, local jurisdictions, and resource agencies.</p> <p>18 miles of Coastal Rail Trail projects are in various stages of development and seventeen miles have been funded in full. Approximately \$135 million to date has been secured from state/federal grants and private donations to construct the trail. The 13 miles of remaining segments of the Coastal Rail Trail from Rio Del Mar Blvd to Pajaro Station (minus the constructed 1,600-foot section in Watsonville) are included in the Project. The existing and planned bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure provides a network of facilities connecting to the planned rail stations.</p> <p>Station designs will include safe circulation for bicyclists and pedestrians, including people with disabilities, as well as bike</p>

	<p>parking, traffic calming, and safe circulation for bicycles and pedestrians for accessing the stations. Level boarding on rail systems is a key component to provide independent accessibility for passengers of all ages and abilities, allowing easy passenger access and egress from vehicles without requiring passengers to climb steps to board/alight the train. Level boarding for ease of entering/exiting with a bicycle is also crucial for promoting the use of bicycles to access rail transit.</p>
<p>Improve Public Health</p>	<p>A rail facility on the SCBRL complemented by local transit and bike and pedestrian facilities will provide an end-to-end equitable service that will allow for a reduction in vehicle miles traveled to reduce GHG emissions, combat climate change, and improve air quality and public health.</p> <p>Transit oriented development (TOD) around the rail stations also provides opportunities for improving environmental and public health by significantly reducing number of trips taken by a car. Linking housing to a transportation network through this type of development increases transit use, promoting healthier lifestyles and sustainable communities.</p>
<p>Freight Movement & Consistency with Plans</p>	<p>The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is an active single track freight railroad that is owned by the RTC. This project will accommodate possible future freight needs with planned passenger rail operations, allowing freight operations to continue to provide sustainable and efficient goods movement reducing GHG. Freight service on the rail line provides an alternative option for goods movement in Santa Cruz County with less congestion reducing the number of trucks on Highway 1 and improving safety.</p>
<p>Equity and Environmental Justice</p>	<p>The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project will improve equity and environmental justice by addressing vital transportation needs for transportation-disadvantaged communities in Santa Cruz County, including communities identified as low-income, areas of persistent poverty, non-white population areas, historically disadvantaged, people with limited mobility, and other disadvantaged communities that have been marginalized, underserved, or overburdened. The project will provide critical connections between Watsonville (south county) and Santa Cruz (north county) that will expand access to jobs, educational opportunities, housing, essential services, parks, town centers, as well as local and intercity transit services. This dedicated facility is located within and will benefit regionally, state and federally-defined disadvantaged communities in Watsonville, Pajaro, Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Capitola, and Aptos.</p>

	<p>Zero emission passenger rail has been identified as the locally preferred alternative that will provide the greatest benefit to Santa Cruz County residents, businesses, and visitors in terms of the triple bottom line goals of improving economy, equity, and the environment.</p> <p>The Project will help to address environmental justice and social equity in Santa Cruz County by providing more transportation and mobility choices to increase opportunities for all segments of the population at all income levels.</p>
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Funding Summary

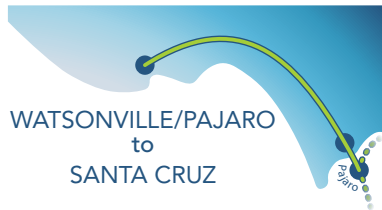
In February 2023, the Project applied for \$16 million in TIRCP Cycle 6 competitive grant funds from the Major Projects Project Development Reserve to complete initial professional services to complete the Project Concept Report, preliminary engineering design, initial right-of-way services, and environmental documentation (Tasks 1-4, respectively). The full scope of work for the proposed initial professional services is described in Section D of the Project’s TIRCP Cycle 6 application, on page 5 thereof. The Project’s total cost is estimated to be \$26.2 million, and \$5.78 million of local Measure D funds has been programmed as a local match. The Project’s Funding Summary anticipated receiving SB 125 Formula-Based TIRCP funds.

In April 2023, the Project was awarded \$3.45 million TIRCP Cycle 6, Major Projects Project Development Reserve funds to complete the Project Concept Report (Task 1). The Project later was awarded \$2 million in SB125 TIRCP discretionary funds from the 2023 RTC Consolidated Grants program. The project now requests \$15,006,611 million to complete the proposed preliminary engineering design, initial right-of-way services, and environmental documentation (Tasks 2-4) initial professional services.

A competitive RFP solicitation and consultant selection has already been completed, with the advertised scope of work and proposals received for the full scope of this project (completing the environmental documentation). A highly capable consultant team was selected that has shown through prior performance and through the in-dept selection process to be more than capable of delivering this project. Through the negotiation process, the consultant agreement only includes the initial contract element (the Project Concept Report), but the contract agreement could be amended to include the remaining elements through completion of the environmental documents if funding for Tasks 2-4 (as requested in this application) is secured.

The RTC has committed and programmed \$5.78 million of local Measure D funds to complete PA & ED. If sufficient 2025 RTC Consolidated Grant funds are not available to meet the anticipated programming, the RTC is committed to filling any funding gaps with other locally-controlled funding, unless other project development funding can be secured. Such potential project development fund sources include State Rail Assistance (Emerging Corridors) or federal fund sources, such as earmarks or project development funding through the inter-city Federal Corridor ID program.

ZERO EMISSION PASSENGER RAIL AND TRAIL



FACT SHEET DRAFT PROJECT CONCEPT

JULY 2025

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is at a key milestone to share information regarding the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Draft Project Concept including conceptual rail and trail alignment, ridership projections, station locations and design, operations, and capital and operating cost estimates. The Draft 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)
- Interoperability with freight
- Multiple propulsion options (battery, hydrogen, diesel, hybrid)
- Level boarding for bicycles & mobility devices
- Quiet operation with hydrogen or battery propulsion
- Variety of interior amenity possibilities
- Sleek & modern appearance

KEY ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES

Development of the Draft Project Concept is the main component of the final milestone of this phase of work.

MILESTONE 1
WINTER 2024

- PRELIMINARY PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT
- PROJECT LOOK AHEAD

MILESTONE 2
SUMMER 2024

- CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENTS
- ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE TYPES

MILESTONE 3
FALL 2024

- ONGOING CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT UPDATES
- STATION LOCATIONS AND FEATURES
- RIDERSHIP APPROACH

MILESTONE 4
SUMMER 2025

- DRAFT PROJECT CONCEPT REPORT
- PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES
- NEXT STEPS FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

WE ARE HERE ★

NEXT STEPS

The RTC will complete and document key understandings and outcomes of the analysis as well as the study and outreach conducted for this current phase, then use that to inform and advance future project activities. With the RTC Commission's approval, and subject to available funding, the ZEPRT project has the opportunity to advance into preliminary engineering and environmental review.



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

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 Draft Project Concept has identified 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



RIDERSHIP PROJECTIONS

- Typical ridership estimated at **3,500-6,000 riders per weekday**
- 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

OPERATING COSTS

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

Estimated Annual Operating Expenses
\$34,000,000 (2025 dollars)

Based on service running every 30 minutes.

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)

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.



SCAN HERE

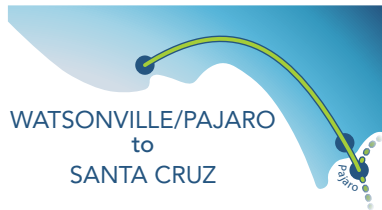
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ZERO EMISSION PASSENGER RAIL AND TRAIL



HOJA INFORMATIVA CONCEPTO DEL PROYECTO EN BORRADOR

JULIO DE 2025

ALL TRANSLATION IS
FOR PROOF ONLY (FPO)

La Comisión de Transporte Regional del Condado de Santa Cruz (RTC) se encuentra en un hito clave para ofrecer al público una primera mirada a los componentes clave del Concepto del Proyecto Borrador del Ferrocarril y Sendero de Emisión Cero para Pasajeros (ZEPRT), incluyendo el alineamiento conceptual del ferrocarril y sendero, proyecciones de usuarios, ubicaciones y diseño de estaciones, operaciones y estimaciones de costos de capital y operativos. El desarrollo del Concepto del Proyecto Borrador apoya diversas necesidades de transporte, acceso seguro y conexiones a áreas pobladas del Condado de Santa Cruz.

INTERCITY RAIL SERVICE

En marzo de 2025, la Comisión RTC decidió impulsar el servicio ferroviario de pasajeros interurbano en la Línea de Ferrocarril Branch de Santa Cruz (Línea Branch) para alinearse con el Plan Ferroviario del Estado de California y maximizar la elegibilidad para financiamiento y el soporte técnico a través de programas estatales y federales. Para ZEPRT, el servicio ferroviario interurbano será:

Para ZEPRT, el servicio ferroviario interurbano hará:

- Conexión habilitada a través de conexiones de un solo asiento
- Proporciona consistencia con los objetivos de oportunidades de financiamiento estatal y federal
- Eliminar el tren ligero como una opción de servicio
- Necesitar que las paradas en las estaciones sean menos frecuentes

VEHÍCULO DE FERROCARRIL DE PASAJEROS

ZEPRT utilizará múltiples trenes de carga que sean más compatibles con la Línea Principal e incluirá:

Entrenamiento de características

- Capacidad de pasajeros (110-225 asientos)
- Interoperabilidad con sistemas de carga y de transporte de pasajeros
- Múltiples opciones de propulsión (batería, hidrógeno,

diésel, híbrido)

Características del Pasajero

- Abordaje a nivel para bicicletas y dispositivos de movilidad
- Operación silenciosa con propulsión de hidrógeno o batería
- Variedad de posibilidades de comodidades interiores
- Apariencia elegante y moderna



La Autoridad de Transporte del Condado de San Bernardino lanzó recientemente el servicio de su vehículo múltiple Stadler FLIRT de cero emisiones.

HITOS CLAVE DE COMPROMISO

El desarrollo del borrador del concepto del proyecto es el componente principal del hito final de esta fase de trabajo.

INVIERNO
DE 2024

- DECLARACIÓN PRELIMINAR DE PROPÓSITOS Y NECESIDADES
- MIRADA AL FUTURO DEL PROYECTO

VERANO
DE 2024

- ALINEACIONES CONCEPTUALES
- TIPOS DE VEHÍCULOS DE CERO EMISIONES

OTOÑO
DE 2024

- ACTUALIZACIONES CONTINUAS DE LA ALINEACIÓN CONCEPTUAL
- UBICACIÓN Y CARACTERÍSTICAS DE LAS ESTACIONES
- ENFOQUE DE PASAJEROS

VERANO
DE 2025

- REPORTE CONCEPTUAL DEL BORRADOR DEL PROYECTO
- ESTIMACIONES PRELIMINARES DE LOS COSTOS
- SIGUIENTES PASOS PARA EL DESARROLLO DEL PROYECTO

ESTAMOS AQUÍ ★

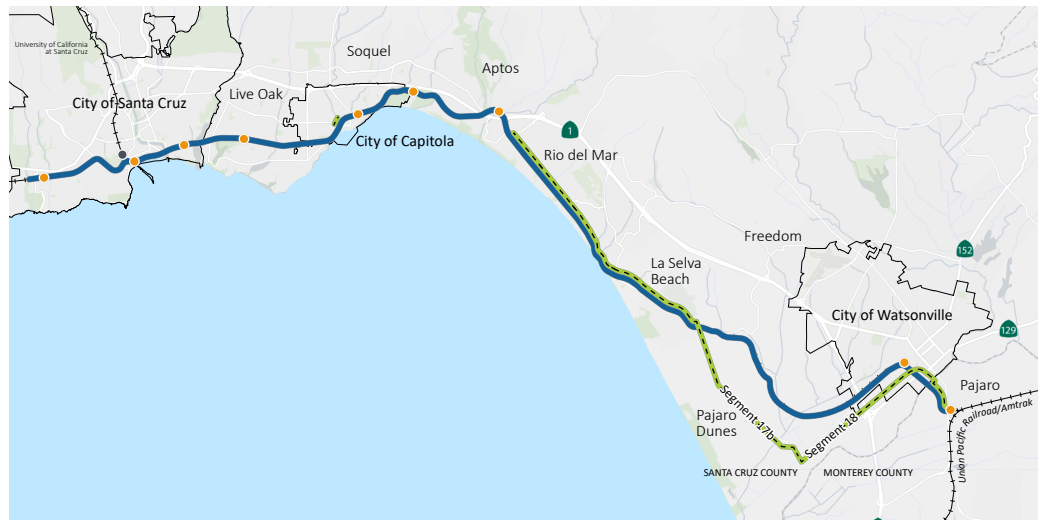
PRÓXIMOS PASOS

El RTC completará y documentará los entendimientos y resultados clave del análisis, así como el estudio de divulgación realizado para esta fase actual, y utilizará eso para informar y avanzar en las actividades futuras del proyecto. Con la aprobación de la Comisión del RTC y sujeto a disponibilidad, el proyecto ZEPRT tiene la oportunidad de avanzar hacia la ingeniería preliminar y la revisión ambiental.

El proyecto ZEPRT propone un nuevo servicio ferroviario para pasajeros y estaciones a lo largo de aproximadamente 22 millas de la Línea Ferroviaria Branch de Santa Cruz, desde la ciudad de Santa Cruz en el norte hasta Pajaro, justo al sur de Watsonville. El proyecto también propone desarrollar 12 millas de segmentos del Coastal Rail Trail 13-20 desde Rio Del Mar Boulevard a través de la comunidad de La Selva Beach y la ciudad de Watsonville, así como la parte del Trestle de Capitola (Segmento 11, Fase 2).

ESTACIONES PROPUESTAS

El concepto del proyecto de borrador ha identificado nueve estaciones propuestas para el servicio inicial. El servicio ferroviario de pasajeros de ZEPRT se conectaría al sistema ferroviario estatal en la estación propuesta Pajaro-Watsonville.



TIEMPO ESTIMADO DE VIAJE DE EXTREMO A EXTREMO



SANTA CRUZ



40-45 MINUTES
Includes nine stations



PAJARO/
WATSONVILLE



PROYECCIONES DE PASAJEROS

- Se estima que la cantidad típica de pasajeros es de **3,500 a 6,000 usuarios por día hábil**.
- Es probable que la cantidad de pasajeros sea ligeramente mayor durante los días de semana.

- Los cambios futuros en el uso del suelo (desarrollos planificados) probablemente contribuirán a un aumento en el número de pasajeros.
- La cantidad de pasajeros aumentó gracias a la mejora en el acceso a las estaciones mediante caminar y andar en bicicleta, la señalización, conexiones directas de autobús y las instalaciones de aparcamiento y subida.

COSTOS DE OPERACIÓN

Incluye los gastos para operar y mantener el servicio ferroviario de pasajeros una vez construido.

Gastos Operativos Anuales Estimados

\$34,000,000 (dólares de 2025)

Basado en un servicio que opera cada 30 minutos.

COSTOS DE CAPITAL

Incluye el diseño y la construcción del ferrocarril y el sendero, así como la infraestructura asociada.

Costo Total de Capital Estimado

\$4.28 billion (dólares de 2025)

Basado en una mayor refinación del diseño conceptual a lo largo del corredor de Beach Street, se estima que los costos de capital variarían en función del diseño estructural potencial o las mejoras en la infraestructura.



ESCANEE AQUÍ

MANTÉNGASE CONECTADO

Aprenda más sobre el Concepto del Proyecto de Borrador y las oportunidades de participación en zeprt.com.

Envíenos un correo electrónico con comentarios o preguntas: zeprt@scrtc.org

