

2025 Consolidated Grants – Additional Comments

Additional comments received by 9:00am on November 5, 2025. Some comments reference "Option" or "Scenario" 1 or 2 – based on initial/preliminary scenarios that were presented to committees in October. They are reflected in the last columns of Attachment 2.

From: Jack Brown

Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2025 1:45 PM

Subject: Support for Staff Recommendation – Agenda Item 18 (Consolidated Grants Program)

Dear Chair Montesino and Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the RTC staff recommendation for Agenda Item 18 to adopt Scenario 1 of the Consolidated Grants Program, which does not allocate funding to the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) project.

Staff's recommendation reflects fiscal responsibility and sound prioritization. With limited regional funds, it makes far more sense to invest in construction-ready projects that improve safety, maintain existing infrastructure, and expand active transportation access — rather than directing millions toward yet another round of rail feasibility work.

Please stay the course and adopt the staff recommendation as presented. The public deserves transportation investments that deliver tangible results now, not speculative studies with uncertain outcomes.

Thank you for your leadership and thoughtful stewardship of our county's limited transportation resources.

Sincerely,

Jack Brown
Aptos, CA

Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

From: Brian Peoples

Sent: Saturday, November 1, 2025 7:26 AM

Subject: Item 18: Adoption of the Consolidated Grants Program and RTIP

The 2025 Consolidated Grants Program and 2026 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) provide an opportunity to fund projects that are **equitable, practical, and ready to deliver**.

Trail Now urges the RTC to **support the Interim Coastal Trail** and **not allocate \$2.8 million in future STIP funds** to the speculative Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) project.

Key Points:

- The ZEPRT project lacks a defined scope, operator, or secured funding plan.
- Allocating funds to an undefined rail concept diverts resources from shovel-ready, community-serving projects.
- Coastal Act and environmental constraints make new rail construction along the coastline unlikely.
- The **Interim Trail**, implemented through the federal Railbanking process, can be built now while preserving the corridor for potential future rail use.

Trail Now Recommendations:

1. Approve the 2025 Consolidated Grants Program and 2026 RTIP, prioritizing trail, pedestrian, and transit access projects.
2. Do **not** designate the \$2.8 million for the ZEPRT project.
3. Reallocate those funds to stabilize costs for Coastal Trail Segments 8–11.
4. Direct staff to coordinate with the **CCC** to ensure all future projects comply with Coastal Act requirements.

Best regards,

Brian Peoples



Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

From: Joe Martinez

Sent: Sunday, November 2, 2025 3:49 PM

Subject: Input for November and December RTC meetings

Item 18: Adoption of the Consolidated Grants Program and RTIP

The RTC should support the Interim Coastal Trail and NOT allocate \$2.8 million in future STIP funds to the ZEPRT project. The Interim Trail, implemented through the federal railbanking process, can be built NOW while preserving the corridor for potential future rail use. Please do NOT designate the \$2.8 million to the ZEPRT project.

I am a full time resident of Santa Cruz County. I have lived in Aptos for 25 years. I look forward to seeing my recommendations being incorporated into your decisions.

Sincerely,

Joe Martinez

Item 18: Adoption of the Consolidated Grants Program and RTIP

The RTC should support the Interim Coastal Trail and NOT allocate \$2.8 million in future STIP funds to the ZEPRT project. The Interim Trail, implemented through the federal railbanking process, can be built NOW while preserving the corridor for potential future rail use. Please do NOT designate the \$2.8 million to the ZEPRT project.

I am a full time resident of Santa Cruz County. I have lived in Aptos for 25 years. I look forward to seeing my recommendations being incorporated into your decisions.

Sincerely,

Ellen Martinez

Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

From: Anderson Shepard

Sent: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 9:40 AM

Subject: comments for Nov 6 meeting

Dear RTC. Please consider my comments as they relate to the agenda items in your upcoming meeting.

Item 18: Adoption of the Consolidated Grants Program and RTIP

I support approving the 2025 Consolidated Grants Program and 2026 RTIP, but I have real concerns about putting \$2.8 million toward the ZEPRT rail project right now.

Here's my problem: we'd be committing millions of dollars to something that doesn't have a clear plan yet. There's no detailed scope, no operator lined up, and no real funding strategy. That doesn't sound like a wise investment to me.

Meanwhile, we have trail projects that are actually ready to go—projects that would serve the community immediately. Why would we tie up money in something speculative when we have practical alternatives?

I'm also concerned about the regulatory hurdles. Building new rail along the coast faces serious Coastal Act constraints. The Interim Trail, on the other hand, can use the federal Railbanking process, which lets us build the trail now while keeping the option open for rail later if it becomes feasible.

I'd like to see the RTC approve these funding programs but hold off on committing money to ZEPRT until it's more than just a concept. Those funds could help cover the rising costs of the Coastal Trail segments instead, which would actually benefit the community in the near term.

I also hope the RTC will make sure staff work closely with the Coastal Commission on any future coastal projects, so we don't run into permitting problems down the road.

Sincerely,
Anderson Shepard
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

From: Nadene Thorne
Sent: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 9:58 PM
Subject: Comment for November 6 RTC Meeting

Commissioners and Staff,

I'd like to add my voice to the request that you program **no more funds from any source to any aspect of the ZEPRT project, either now or in the future.** Having voted to have this project considered by the state and federal government as an intercity rail project, there is nothing that our RTC staff can effectively do to promote any future progress, given the detailed process that is required by these agencies from here on.

Given the absence of any funding source of the suggested magnitude required in addition to the paltry number of prospective passengers and the clear lack of any effect whatsoever on Highway 1 traffic, pursuing ZEPRT at this time is clearly foolish and fiscally irresponsible.

I hope you will seriously consider the carefully researched and detailed emails accompanying this current meeting agenda offered by several in our community who have followed this project for many years. Further, I know you will equally as well have the wisdom to assign less value to the multiple click-bait robo-emails spondored by FORT: we all like to ride trains, but that doesn't make them a worthwhile or realistic proposition for Santa Cruz County.

Thanks for your consideration.
Nadene Thorne

From: Matt Farrell
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 7:00 AM
Subject: November 6 RTC Meeting Agenda Comments

Commissioners and Executive Director Christiansen,

Friends of the Rail and Trail has the following comments on tomorrow's agenda.

Interim Trail Option

There are a number of places in the agenda where building a trail on the tracks, which is described as an interim trail, specifically Items 14a, 18, 19 and 21, is listed as an option for moving forward for the Coastal Rail Trail.

There is no clear review or discussion of two critical impacts of the interim trail option: cost and delay.

Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

Cost Impacts

If it is truly an “interim” trail, cost estimates for the interim trail should include the total cost of all phases for the interim trail, specifically:

- Installing a trail over the rails or in place of the removed rail line,
- Then removing the interim trail,
- Replacing or re-establishing the tracks, and
- Building the ultimate trail next to the new tracks.

If we are struggling to afford one project, how are we going to afford all these additional projects?

Delay Impacts

In addition, the time required to pursue this or any other alternative which would require removing the rails or paving over them will delay the project. The interim trail will require railbanking which is opposed by three key stakeholders (the two current rail companies operating under the ACL and the community).

Railbanking, which would also require adverse abandonment, would involve several years of expensive legal wrangling during which no progress would be made on either the rail or the trail. It is also unlikely that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) would approve railbanking. These years of delay will tear our community apart and increase the project’s costs. These facts and issues have not been addressed anywhere in the agenda’s discussion of the interim trail. For a true comparison as an alternative to the ultimate trail, they need to be part of the analysis.

There is a better choice: build a narrower trail closer to the rail throughout the most densely populated parts of the county, preserving as many of the project benefits as possible. Remaining funding gaps could be filled with Measure D money allocated to the County, the city of Santa Cruz, and Capitola plus consolidated RTIP money. We just need to decide to use it.

Item 18: Consolidated Grants Program & Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)

Friends of the Rail and Trail strongly supports staff’s recommendation to program \$4 million for the Coastal Rail Trail. This programming will help preserve Measure D funding for Watsonville-area trail segments. We also support programming even more for these projects. Coupled with future rail, the Coastal Rail Trail is a transformative project that will dramatically improve travel choices for all our citizens (our youth, our seniors, our disabled).

Handout: Item 18 - Attachment 3

We also support reserving \$2.8 million of 2028 Surface Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZPERT) Project to help fund the project's environmental document.

[Note from RTC staff: Text specific to other items included as handout for those items]

Friends of the Rail and Trail appreciates all the hard work and dedication of the staff who have put so much work into preparing these reports.

Sincerely,
Matt Farrell
Board Chair
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT)

From: J Lighthill
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 8:34 AM
Subject: Agenda Item 18 - Adoption of Consolidated Grants Program

Dear Commissioners,

Please do not support Staff's recommendation to allocate \$2.8M to ZEPRT at this time.

Please consider the recommendations made by your stakeholder committees —the BAC, the E&DTAC, and the ITAC — and focus funding on projects with “high impact.”

Thanks for your consideration.
Johanna Lighthill



Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District

Watsonville, CA 95076



www.pajarovalleyfire.com

Nov. 4, 2020

info@sccrtc.org

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

Attn: Commissioners

1523 Pacific Avenue

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: Agenda Item #18, Consolidated Grants Program: Support for Full Funding of the Interlake Routes Phase 1

Dear Chair, Montesino and Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District, I am writing in support of full funding of \$800,000 for the Interlaken Routes Phase 1 Resurfacing Project along Casserly Road. This corridor serves as one of the most critical emergency response and evacuation routes in South County, directly connecting our station to major access points such as Highway 152 and Green Valley Road. Maintaining this route is essential to ensuring timely emergency response and safe evacuation for residents across a broad rural service area.

The deteriorating pavement conditions on Casserly Road currently hinder emergency response operations by increasing travel time and causing undue wear on emergency vehicles. Resurfacing will improve safety, reliability, and resiliency—particularly during seasonal flooding, when Paulsen Road, another key route, becomes impassable.

This project directly supports the RTC's goals of System Preservation, Equity Priority Populations, Safety and Health, and Climate Resiliency, helping ensure that vital infrastructure remains functional and accessible—especially when lives depend on it.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to investing in rural public safety and critical infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John [unclear]".

Fire Chief, Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District



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Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
November 5, 2025

Re: Agenda Items #14 Iterim Trail, #18 Consolidated Grant, #19 Measure D #21 Murray St Bridge - ZEPRT

Dear Commissioners, Commissioner Alternates, and Staff:

As elected representatives, you are elected to reflect the **'will of the people'** through your votes at the dais. As staff, you are hired to work to enable projects which benefit our communities based on the will of the people.

Almost immediately after we became owners of the Santa Cruz Branchline in 2012, the intention of the purchase being the development of passenger rail, a well-funded counterweight to the overwhelmingly popular passenger rail program arose! The founder of **Trail Now** formed the **Aptos Rail-Trail Investor Group** and in 2014, and along with fellow investors tried to purchase our publicly owned SCBranchline for private use ([document here](#)). His investor group's efforts failed as over a decade of efforts by the public to purchase the rail line **for passenger rail** did not go unnoticed. Possibly due to this failure, another investor backed organization, Greenway, spun from these efforts, led by their executive director, now a current commissioner, Manu Koenig. Between the two organizations, they have made no apparent efforts to contribute to funding our rail-trail and have, in my estimation, made significant efforts to stop progress of not just passenger rail, but also progress of the trail, implementing additional requirements and studies through the past several years that have cost taxpayers significant amounts of money and time all while costs to build skyrocket.

Major players funding a campaign to destroy passenger rail for our community have primarily been investors, developers and land owners adjacent to the rails who feel their personal and business interests take precedence over public transit projects which benefit the greater community, a community which has consistently supported passenger rail for DECADES! For those who are newer commissioners and staff on the RTC, here is a brief [history](#).

A small contingent of home owners who live along the rails exclaim they do not want (quiet clean) rail running in their backyards, when they knew full well that passenger rail service was planned for our community when they purchased the land. Buyers who considered purchasing homes adjacent to the rail line have had to sign disclosures which indicate they are fully informed the rail line is active and that passenger rail is planned for the future ([Copy of Disclosure here](#)).

Some landowners are well aware that if they are able to partner with developers/investors and land owners and deceive and/or coerce the RTC into railbanking the line, they might be able to make millions of dollars off the backs of tax payers and undermine the community's plans for passenger rail!

Railbanking the line means potential big payouts for land owners. One law firm, [LewisRice](#), who specializes in these 'takings' called a meeting inviting rail adjacent land owners just after the 2022 Greenway Measure D election which sought to railbank and rip out our valuable rail infrastructure. Once Greenway's measure lost, the lawyers indicated there was nothing they had to share at that time which



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might ‘help’ adjacent land owners. A number of small cities like ours targeted by lawyers and greedy landowners have convinced communities to rip out tracks to build a trail. All too late, the community learns they’ve lost their access to future transit ([example](#)). Rural communities benefit greatly from passenger rail and the loss of rail service is detrimental the community at large ([reference](#)). **Our rail line is also an important emergency escape route** should we be faced with a fire or earthquake as has been used for such in the past, by our rail line, the SMART rail system, and others just like it. Boutique law firms make a living off of claims or ‘takings’ by processing the paperwork for compensation from the federal government. This looks very attractive to some landowners and developers. Railbanking is a dead end for our passenger rail program, and the opposition is well aware of this. In the references below, I have included a number of links to papers written about how railbanking = NO PASSENGER RAIL EVER.

Passenger rail has received support from our voting majority for over 30 years! This mission is driven by both wise environmental principles and equitable access to opportunity. Future thinking community members worked hard to purchase our rail line to provide important ALTERNATIVES to polluting and traffic inducing car centric travel which does not equitable serve close to 30% of our community as car ownership is expensive! In the references at the end of this letter, you will find just a few examples of why rail is considered to be the cleanest form of travel that provides a robust alternative to driving.

My background is in biochemical endocrinology, a field that includes extensive study in both physics and chemistry. From this scientific perspective, the steel-on-steel rail transport represents not only the most energy-efficient form of mass transit but also one of the least toxic. In contrast, the global production and disposal of hundreds of billions of rubber tires has resulted in significant environmental contamination. Toxic compounds released from tire wear and waste enter our air, soil, and water systems, contributing to rising rates of cancer, neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease, autism spectrum conditions, hormonal imbalances, and other health challenges. The escalating incidence of brain and other cancers, even among younger populations, is partly linked to the immense scale of tire use worldwide.

It is deeply concerning that certain members of the commission and staff appear to disregard the democratic process in favor of serving the interests of a select few. Some have chosen to align with a small but vocal contingent of aggressive rail opponents—individuals who have engaged in bullying, doxxing, and other harmful behavior—as well as with special interests that may include campaign contributors or those offering improper incentives. We are aware that such offers have been made, and it must be stated clearly: bribery remains both unethical and illegal.

The leadership within the commission and staff should recognize that preserving our rail infrastructure and pursuing passenger service has long been an overwhelmingly popular goal among Santa Cruz residents. It is time for our public institutions to honor that commitment and uphold the integrity of the democratic process.



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Important Presentation: SMART's Guidance for Santa Cruz Passenger Rail

Below is a link to a highly important presentation delivered by representatives from SMART (Sonoma–Marin Area Rail Transit) during the **Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)** meeting on **August 2, 2018**. Presenters **Debra Fudge**, former Santa Cruz resident and then Chair of the SMART Board, and **Farhad Mansourian**, then SMART's General Manager, came to Santa Cruz to share their experience and expertise to help our community advance passenger rail implementation.

 **Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission – August 2, 2018**

 <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=2667>

This presentation is essential viewing for all commissioners and staff as well as community members. Over the course of approximately 90 minutes, Debra and Farhad outline similarities of their rail line and efforts to activate passenger rail with our own and key strategies and practical guidance that gave them a successful path forward for passenger rail.

Most importantly, Farhad has repeatedly offered mentorship and technical assistance to our RTC commission and staff and Ms. Fudge has offered support as well. I have had the honor of communicating with them directly. Farhad expressed several times in the presentation, and over the past several years, even as recently as 2022-2023, the importance of drawing insights from SMART's real-world experience in overcoming similar challenges—financial, logistical, and political—to deliver a successful rail project for their region. **Farhad repeatedly advised, in the video and in person, to not rely on the expensive planning estimates drawn up by expensive planners who have never done the work of building a rail system.** We've heard from experts who've built rail that the estimates of \$4.3 Billion seem way out of line for real world implementation when guided by seasoned experts in building passenger rail.

Two other important pieces of advice both Debra and Farhad have given us include 1- seeking out guidance and hiring professionals who have **experience** building passenger rail systems and 2- establishing a rail transit agency, like SMART for Santa Cruz County. As Felipe Hernandez has suggested, Santa Cruz should consider working with Monterey in creating a partnership across two counties whose population is similar to that met with SMART (**Population: ~741,000 Sonoma Marin v.s. ~700,000 SC-Monterey**). **We do not have leadership working on our passenger rail project with actual experience building a passenger rail system!!!**

Unfortunately, despite SMART's continued willingness to engage and support our efforts, these opportunities for collaboration have not been pursued by RTC executive staff. Debra and Farhad have responded to our questions and visited multiple times over the years, including recently, offering their expertise and wondering why the help they've extended has not been utilized by the current RTC.

This lack of follow-through by our RTC staff and commissioners represents a missed opportunity and a concerning lapse in leadership. Since the 2018 meeting, following the hiring of a new Executive Director, **Guy Preston**, the initial momentum toward supporting passenger rail has shifted direction—particularly



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after the involvement of the Greenway Executive Director on the commission. This reversal has stalled progress at a critical moment when other regions are advancing sustainable rail solutions.

Now is the time to revisit the knowledge and partnerships offered by SMART and renew our commitment to a transparent, forward-looking, and community-supported rail for Santa Cruz County.

The future of our passenger rail system should not be jeopardized with threats of railbanking and an interim trail. We should do what we can to maximize the funding we have received to build the trail adjacent to the rail line, as planned, and ensure the rails remain intact until leadership and funding is available to honor the voting majority's support for passenger rail.

Railbanking, which will require adverse abandonment, will yet again waste time, more than is allotted to utilize the 2022 CTC grant funds. The likely result of attempting to railbank the line is denial by the STB and loss of the CTC grant funds. We will lose time and more money by deviating from our plan to build the trail adjacent to the rail line and **railbanking is an action directly opposed by the voting majority.**

Here are some key notes from the **SMART** presentation at the **August 2, 2018 RTC meeting.**

- By 2018, SMART had built 30-minute service on **43 miles** of running passenger rail, **27 bridges, and 12 running platforms** for **\$553 Million dollars** with very quiet clean passenger rail, level boarding on a single track with 4 passing sidings on a track which had not had passenger rail on it for 60+ years. All rails and bridges had to be totally rebuilt ([Construction Milestones](#)).
- The SMART Rail line and the Santa Cruz Rail line share a number of similarities:
 - Both lines are single track
 - Both lines pass through environmentally sensitive coastal/estuarial areas
 - The SMART rail line last had passenger rail until about 60 years prior to 1998
 - Moved forward with rail with what was thought to be \$30M initial shortfall which turned out to be a \$70M shortfall – **the problem was that their agency was initially using consultants who have never built rail projects** (like we have with HDR). There a lot of assumptions consultants make which are not accurate and tend to substantially increase the price of the estimates. We **MUST** have support and guidance from agencies and engineers and leaders who have **BUILT** passenger rail projects in order to optimize our success! (see comments <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=7506>)
 - They built **BOTH** Rail and an adjacent **TRAIL**, in segments
 - The SMART commission was founded in 1998 by a group of people concerned about congestion and committed to finding a robust alternative to driving
 - Local billionaires and opponents to rail in the Sonoma-Marin area poured money to put an end the SMART passenger rail project, similarly going against the will of the people



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- The State of California supports and rewards communities committed to passenger rail with funds to build passenger rail.
- Just as they received funding to begin the project, they were hit with the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression in 2009 and so they **phased** the project and used the downturn to plan and get ready to build when economic vigor returned
- Replacement of bridges included the Haystack Bridge that took 15 minutes to turn allow boats to pass through with a bridge that turned in 30 seconds!
- The 43 miles of track had to be completely replaced -and other construction milestones: <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=3721>
- SMART carried 650,000 people between Aug 2017 and Aug 2018. The ridership in 2025 exceeded expectations, hitting 8,000 per day. The ridership has become so popular with the public that all 12 transit agencies in the North Bay Area are partnering in a program called MASCOT, redesigning transit so that access to SMART ridership optimized ([MASCOT](#)).
- SMART Agency was formed by passage of AB-224 in 2022 and is composed of 12 Board Members, with representatives including county supervisors
- Social: Passenger rail connects communities and people together. People riding the train get to know their neighbors as they meet on the train and **businesses saw an increase of 30%** with passenger rail
- By August 2018, they had to add two more cars to each system as they had exceeded ridership capacity
- Overall costs **“It is critically important during the planning process to have engineers who have BUILT RAIL not just engineers who make plans on paper, because this provides opportunities for cheaper construction”**. <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=6089>
- Get everything ready with the plans and get ready to build to put people back to work.
- The highway system and local roads are subsidized every single day and this subsidy does not provide access to equally
- People choose rail due to the higher Quality of Life it provides, less stress, more connection, can get work done, enjoy community time on board
- 2018 stats for Santa Cruz: **77%** of people who commute starting in our county, stay within our county, similar to SMART
- The SMART train is an important option during emergencies, evacuations, earthquakes and fire. 101 is their only corridor, just like Hwy 1 is the only corridor for Santa Cruz
- Implement a quarter cent sales tax early. The sooner we can implement a ¼ cent sale tax the sooner we can save money for the work that needs to be done. Every time you spend \$100 you give 25cents to SMART.

LESSONS LEARNED: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2Tor0dvots&t=2814s>



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- Fahrhad Mounsour offered numerous times to come to Santa Cruz and guide us through the tips and tricks, starting in 2018. He has come to visit several times and has only been invited by members of the public to meet, the RTC has completely ignored the offers of Fahrhad and of SMART. Debra Fudge has also offered support and guidance.
- Reasons for rail for Santa Cruz:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2Tor0dvots&t=2814s>
- Typical anti-rail arguments from the opposition: <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=5410>
- SMART is an option not a silver bullet – Community and downtowns are so happy compared to before as their businesses have grown by 30% with the implementation of passenger rail
- What is the option of doing nothing? Employers who cannot get employees when congestion on roads is so bad. In Sonoma and Marin, **70%** of the people across the county live in other towns some 30 miles from the rail line voted to support the sales tax because they saw the important bigger picture. <https://youtu.be/v2Tor0dvots?t=8230>
- The Future is NOW: Extensions to Windsor completed and opened in summer 2025. Extension to Healdsburg is now funded including the cost of a bridge to be built across the Russian River. The extension to Cloverdale and a Hwy 37 are in progress as well!

It is important for our public to know that Greenway leaders worked hard to **reduce the percentage% of Measure D-2016 funds** from initially proposed **20%** to a very low **8%** to thwart progress and funding for the popular project. Greenway and Trail Now strategically threatened to destroy our efforts to create a self-help county tactic by undermining the work our community was doing to become a self-help county. Their tactics have and continue to work against the greater good and against the voting majority of the community. Their leaders continue to show up at RTC, Coastal Commission, Metro and other meetings, threatening to undermine sales tax efforts unless action in support of passenger rail is stopped.

The RTC has still not fully completed its contractual duties per the ACL ([ACL Link](#)).

Commissioners, we encourage you to use your representation appropriately and not be so easily manipulated by a small entitled wealthy minority, using their money to support candidates willing to bend to their agenda. It is not by accident that many of the opponents of passenger rail are people who own land along the rail line or include wealthy family members or friends of people who live along the rail line.

Our climate is warming more rapidly than ever and recent increases are [unprecedented](#)! Yet some of you who sit on the dais seem unaware of this reality. **Over 70% of our greenhouse gasses are produced by driving.** Our addiction to fossil fuels is leading us rapidly towards a mass extinction that has already begun. Over 30% of species have become extinct or are threatened since the 1500s! And still, some of you avoid the growing crisis by continuing to prioritize building new and widening more roads rather than investing in equitable environmentally wise robust public transit. The continued investment in widening and building more roads is a Ponzi scheme that future generations will pay a price they cannot afford! With wider roads, **induced demand** means more and more people drive on those roads. Turning a blind eye to prioritizing robust passenger rail transit that will connect us to the State Rail Network and



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providing ALTERNATIVES to driving is critical to providing access to opportunity for people of all ages and abilities, not just those who can drive.

Monterey County's TAMC has committed to building the **Pajaro Station** and passenger rail not only to Gilroy but to Monterey City (See [TAMC Rail Plan](#)). The Santa Cruz Branchline will give our community vital access, by passenger rail, to the growing California State Rail Network, which will allow our community to have car free access to Monterey, Gilroy, San Jose, San Francisco and beyond! We need to be thinking 50-100 years into the future and investing in passenger rail is just this kind of investment.

If you want to talk about and address issues concerning INCLUSION, EQUITY, and the ENVIRONMENT, ensuring a greater percentage of our community have ALTERNATIVES that provide access to OPPORTUNITIES then we need to think about moving beyond a CAR CENTRIC SOCIETY.

REGARDING ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA:

Item #14 p245:

We understand the need for pedestrians to walk across the harbor. There is currently a walkable path to cross the bridge informally on foot. There is a safer passage north to south for cyclists through Arana Gulch, the path that we fought to have built because it is safer than crossing over the Murray St. Bridge. The high cost of well over \$1M to build a **temporary solution** over the rail line is not worth the brief time the Murray bridge will be closed. We've heard the bridge will be open to foot and bike traffic by February. We feel this money is better spent on investing in a permanent solution for the already planned segment 8&9 of the rail-trail. Please do not risk our future passenger rail in any way with temporary or interim plans that require railbanking. The community has made efforts to increase patronage of the businesses on both side of the bridge and it appears to be working.

Item #18 p270 Public Hearing no earlier than 9:30:

Please ensure that funding and planning for passenger rail is maintained and continues to move forward including allocating funds to support the environmental work required in the future. We support prioritizing the \$4M or more for the Ultimate configuration of the Coastal rail-trail project and at least \$2.8M if not more for the ZEPRT project more as noted on page 18-6.

Under no condition do we support funding an Interim Trail, which not only would require railbanking which would risk the future of passenger rail, but would likely result in the permanent loss of the California Transportation Funds allotted for Segments 10 and 11 of the Coastal Rail Trail. We support moving forward with the trail adjacent to the rails, referred to as the "Ultimate" Trail. Any other action would be directly opposed to the majority will of the people.

Item #19 p312 Public Hearing no earlier than 10am on Measure D Funds:

Fund the Ultimate Trail.

Do NOT steamroll the voters with the Interim Trail! Railbanking will take too long, cost us a ton of time and money, and you will LOSE OUR GRANT FUNDS if you attempt to RAILBANK***

This is a path to failure and our community will lose.



[REDACTED]
Capitola, CA 95010
[REDACTED]

Find other alternatives:

- There are significant monies available right now in the Measure D coffers that can be used to fund the gap in order to build the Coastal Rail Trail and not lose our CTC grant. Stand behind your commitment and desire to build the trail while honoring the voting majority and will of the people to save our valuable rail infrastructure for passenger rail. You have taken money from the rail project in the past to fund other needs. You can take some money from the highway pot in order to close the gap on the trail so that we do not lose the \$70M grant! Simple. Prioritize Measure D funds for what our community wants prioritized.
- Save the ATP Grant and go with a narrower cheaper trail placed closer to the rail line through the densest portion of segment 10 and 11
- Capitol City Council could save the project **two thirds** of these grant overages if they go with Park Ave configuration that was proposed. If they are unwilling to collaborate in saving costs with these simple measures, Capitola should be responsible for footing the bill for their portion of the segment. Why should we ALL loose out because Capitola Council is unwilling to collaborate? Why should we all pay for their unwillingness to compromise?
- We oppose covering the tracks, period, as it will initiate issues around railbanking. This will cause delays and increase costs further and we will lose our ability to fund any trail whatsoever!
- **If Greenway and Trail Now are so keen to build a trail, as they claim to be, have them contribute funds to the RTC to build the Ultimate Trail.**

Please ensure that funding and planning for passenger rail is maintained and continues to move forward. **This is what the voters asked for.** We do not support any further efforts to research or fund the Interim Trail as this would require adverse abandonment and railbanking which is neither guaranteed nor timely. **It is a waste of our tax payer dollars to do so!** Railbanking is unlikely to be approved by the STB which, similar to the State of California, opposes the destruction of critical rail infrastructure across the country.

We are concerned because the full extent of the expenses of building and converting an interim trail back to the Ultimate Trail configuration have not been shared with the public nor included in any of the recent cost estimates, and so the purported 'lower' costs estimates to build an the Interim Trail are based on incomplete and misleading calculations.



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How do we trust agency leadership that spent a year doing value engineering and turned up with an INCREASE in cost of \$70 Million Dollars???

The total cost estimates for an Interim Trail must also include the reactivation of passenger rail, which would far surpass what is feasible for this county and community. The costs of an interim trail should include removal and disposal of the toxic ballast, which HDR indicated was one of the most substantial costs of the \$4.3 Million passenger rail project. The costs of the interim trail should also include the destruction and disposal of the interim trail, composed of huge amounts of asphalt, along with the required engineering, grading, and drainage and new ballast, and trackage to return the passenger rail back into place. In fact, the costs of an 'Interim' Trail are SO outrageously costly, not just financially but environmentally, that it is outlandish.

The voters have agreed that we should **not** consider an interim trail. And yet this commission is considering steamrolling the voting majority and risk losing millions of dollars in grant funds in the process!

Step forward as planned, as the voting majority has supported, with the **Ultimate Trail** adjacent to the rail line so that our community can pursue passenger rail moving into the future.

Resources

- 1. Curiosities: Returning Commuter Service to the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line**
<https://www.santacruztrains.com/2022/05/curiosities-returning-commuter-service.html#:~:text=Trail%20Now%20was%20formed%20in%202013%20to%20promote%20the%20idea%20of%20removing%20the&text=The%20next%20year%2C%20the%20Aptos%20Rail%2DTrail%20Investor%20Group%20formed%20to>
- 2. *** Modern Rail Transit presentation, Feb 15, 2016 Jeffrey Booth with Booth Transit Consulting regarding how the Santa Cruz Branchline is IDEAL for passenger rail transit**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrKKElb_nw8
- 3. Rail Preservation Programs: A Survey of National Guidance and State Practice June 21, 2011**
https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/research-innovation-system-information/documents/preliminary-investigations/rail-preservation-pi-6-21-11-a11y.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3BvsoHNa6J-QeEzZYfyZGkK6iTCrjz_VwlhYRRNL1Gj9jh5rkcmA-FcdI
- 4. Rails and Railbanking: Once the Tracks are Gone, odds are they are not coming back. The importance of keeping rails in place. by Loren Herrigstad**
<https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/rails-and-railbanking/63599829#1>
- 5. California State Transportation Agency (CALSTA) indicates that RAIL is a #1 Priority in addressing climate change according**
<https://calsta.ca.gov/press-releases/2021-07-12-ca-finalizes-captiDc>



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6. **Making Yesterday's Mistakes Today: Why Are We Abandoning Railways?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoxA94q4xlE>
7. **Railbanking: Demystifying Santa Cruz County's Measure D (Greenway's greenwashing ballot measure on the June 2022 ballot which if it won, would have resulted in removing passenger rail from the General Plan and would have led to ripping out the tracks)**
<https://medium.com/@paulschoel/demystifying-santa-cruz-countys-measure-d-33c30de91f3d>
8. **The Climate Emergency: Trains-An Effective Response (INCL toxic tires)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTzf2L2Pzod>
9. **County Plans Integration with Statewide Rail Network Dec 2018**
https://tpgonlinedaily.com/county-plans-integration-with-statewide-rail-network/?fbclid=IwAR3wkKHeY5biCH04LGvpmLhSt2AGCZgOwE_RKLy-Uoyg6Slt1jnCXyklkiQ
10. **Sierra Club Rail Transportation Statement on RAIL**
[SUMMARY] <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/rail-paper-background.pdf>
[FULL REPORT] <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/Rail%20Report%20FINAL.pdfCd>
11. **Was public railroaded in trail deal? June 7, 2014**
<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/was-public-railroaded-in-trail-deal/>
12. **(Phoenix Arizona) Valley's light rail getting another extension March 8, 2021**
https://chamberbusinessnews.com/2021/03/08/lightrail/?fbclid=IwAR32YqkbiYF_O_TddMRkt1JZm9l_G81o_z4A-wlqRuNg10otPYN3S-y4Q1
13. **When Rural Communities Lose Passenger Rail Service**
https://www.multimodalways.org/docs/govts/federal/executive/Agencies/DOA/lose_pass.pdf
14. **Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/upshot/transportation-emerges-as-crucial-to-escaping-poverty.html>
15. **Why we need public transport?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv9US7UyMql&t=226sDqwdwq>
16. **Pollution from tire wear 1,000 times worse than exhaust emissions**
<https://www.tiretechnologyinternational.com/news/regulations/pollution-from-tire-wear-1000-times-worse-than-exhaust-emissions.html>
17. **Where the rubber meets the road: Emerging environmental impacts of tire wear particles and their chemical cocktails June 1, 2024**
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969724012920?via%3DihubSd>
18. **Where Rubber Meets the Road: EPA Researchers Study the Environmental and Health Impacts of Tires Aug 7, 2024**
<https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/where-rubber-meets-road-epa-researchers-study-environmental-and-health-impacts-tires>



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19. **Tires: An Emerging Threat to Our Waterways, Our Seafood, and Ourselves? March 29, 2018**
<https://www.nrdc.org/onearth/tires-emerging-threat-our-waterways-our-seafood-and-ourselves>
20. **Discovery of toxic chemical in tires spurs scientific and regulatory interest**
<https://www.pugetsoundinstitute.org/2020/12/discovery-of-toxic-chemical-in-tires-spurs-scientific-and-regulatory-interest/>
21. **Transport, health and environment: do you know the effects?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PxaPC2cOFE>
22. **Toxic microplastics found where the rubber meets the road**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAeh-7Qk2Es>
23. **Why Are 49,000,000 Tires in This Desert?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uh6DExQM5PY>
24. **Cleaning up 200 tons of toxic tire waste from Bottle Beach: Washington State Department of Natural Resources:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_nS9dmoSs8
25. **Evidence: There is unequivocal evidence that Earth is warming at an unprecedented rate. Human activity is the principal cause.**
<https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/evidence/>
26. **Rate and impact of climate change surges dramatically in 2011-2020**
<https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/rate-and-impact-of-climate-change-surges-dramatically-2011-2020>
27. **What Are the Effects of Climate Change? A rapidly warming planet poses an existential threat to all life on earth. Just how bad it gets depends on how quickly we act.**
<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-are-effects-climate-change>
28. **6th mass extinction**
<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1704949114>
29. **WATCH: Sir David Attenborough gives statement at COP26 climate summit in Glasgow**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmlUX4mnNY4>
30. **How Paris is Leading a Sustainable Transportation Revolution**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSQSBoHmG8sSd>
31. **How the Koch Brothers Are Killing Public Transit Projects Around the Country**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/19/climate/koch-brothers-public-transit.html>



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In summary, all of these comments are meant to support the following:

- Continue to move forward with BOTH rail and trail ASAP.
- Railbanking with the intention of covering the tracks with an INTERIM trail is a fast path to failure as it is certain we will lose the funds we received from the CTC in 2022.
- The RTC and Commissioners should stand behind their statements and use the Consolidated Grant and Measure D funds,
- This is important to me and my family and this organization because we want passenger rail, which offers wise equitable reliable sustainable car free alternatives which give us access to the many amazing places the rail line goes, including access to Watsonville, Monterey, San Jose and beyond.
- We should phase the project and move forward with inviting the guidance of SMART and other professionals who have experience implementing passenger rail to work with us towards success.
- We should form a transit agency in partnership with Monterey dedicated to implementing passenger rail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lani Faulkner, Director