



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
phone: (831) 460-3200
email: info@sccrtc.org; website: www.sccrtc.org

CONTACT: Shannon Munz, Communications Specialist (smunz@sccrtc.org)

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)

January 15, 2026 Meeting Highlights

Contract Amendment with HDR Engineering for Climate Resilience Planning on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Right-of-Way

The Commission approved a contract amendment with HDR Engineering to add tasks to a previously approved contract that will analyze impacts of climate hazards on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) at four locations – Capitola Bluffs, La Selva/Manresa Bluffs, Harkins Slough Rail Crossing, and the Pajaro River Rail Bridge. These locations were identified as highly vulnerable through a Climate Analysis Vulnerability Assessment planning effort that was completed. The approved amendment expanded the scope to include climate adaptation concepts for an Interim Trail Configuration in addition to the previously approved work to develop climate adaptation concepts for a Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project.

Presentation on the Corridor ID Program

The Commission received a presentation from Rob Cunningham, Regional Rail Coordinator for Caltrans Division of Rail on the Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) initiated the CID Program to provide a comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development process that will help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and create a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation. Caltrans is the sponsor of five corridors in the program, including the Central Coast Corridor which includes the SCBRL. All projects in the program go through a uniform planning process that will make them eligible for federal and state construction grants. Participation in the program does not mean project funding is guaranteed, but it would make it more competitive for funding.

There are three steps in the CID Program process. Step 1: Scoping the Service Development Plan includes the development of the scope, schedule and budget. This step has been completed for the SCBRL. Step 2: Preparing the Service Development Plan includes a Capital Project Inventory as part of the Phased implementation Plan. This step is expected to start in early/mid 2026 and finish in 2029-2030 and is being funded by the FRA and Caltrans. Step 3: NEPA/Preliminary Engineering will be done after Step 2 subject to funding availability and readiness criteria. Funding for this step will be 80% covered by the FRA, and Caltrans can assist the RTC in identifying state and local funding opportunities for the other 20%.

Cunningham stated that temporary track removal on the SCBRL would not result in Caltrans taking action to remove the SCBRL from the CID Program as long as the RTC is committed to building and operating intercity rail in the corridor.

Public Hearing: Draft 2050 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan

The Commission held a public hearing and received public input on the Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP identifies transportation needs and priorities in Santa Cruz County over the next 25 years. It sets goals and policies for the transportation system that includes an emphasis on safety, climate resiliency, equity, system efficiency and preservation, and a reduction in vehicle miles traveled. The RTP includes the list of transportation needs in Santa Cruz County based on input from local jurisdictions, partner agencies and members of the public, and estimates the amount of funding that will be available for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County over the next 25 years. The transportation needs identified in the RTP far exceed the available projected funding and additional funding sources will be needed to implement some projects. The plan is an essential first step in securing funding from federal, state, and local sources. The Draft 2050 RTP is available for review at www.sccrtc.org/2050rtp. Comments can be submitted through Jan. 30, 2026, by email to info@sccrtc.org.

RTC to Become Common Carrier for Portion of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line to Advance Coastal Rail Trail Projects and Protect Community Interests

The Commission voted in Closed session to issue a notice of termination of the Administration, Coordination, and License Agreement with Progressive Rail Incorporated, which currently serves as the common carrier on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. This decision marks a necessary step in the development of transportation solutions along the RTC-owned branch line, including the Coastal Rail Trail in the near-term and passenger rail in the long-term. This action also preserves the existing freight and recreational rail uses along the branch line, while allowing Coastal Rail Trail projects to be implemented along non-operational sections of the line. The RTC remains fully committed to continuing freight service for the three existing freight customers in Watsonville. Read more [here](#).

Upcoming RTC and Committee Meetings

[Regional Transportation Commission Meeting](#)

Thursday, February 5, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

[Interagency Technical Advisory Committee](#)

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

[Bicycle Advisory Committee](#)

Monday, February 9, 2026, 5:30 p.m.

[Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee](#)

Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

[Budget, Administration & Personnel Committee](#)

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

RTC and committee meetings are held in person. Non-voting members of the Commission and its committees, as well as members of the public and staff, will have the option to participate in person or remotely, provided equipment is available at the meeting location to allow remote participation. If there are technical difficulties during a meeting that prevent remote participation, the

meeting will continue. Please check the RTC website [<https://sccrtc.org/meetings/calendar/>] or call 460-3200 to confirm meeting and video conference information for future meetings. Agendas are posted to the website at least 3 days before the meeting and will also include attendance information. Meetings may be canceled if there are no action items to be considered by the committee.

The RTC is committed to its compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Please contact the RTC at least 3 days in advance of a meeting if special accommodations are needed. If any document, webpage, meeting, or recording is inaccessible to you, kindly notify us at info@sccrtc.org or by calling 831-460-3200.

Public input on transportation issues is welcomed and encouraged. For more information, visit the SCCRTC website at www.sccrtc.org or call 460-3200. Some Regional Transportation Commission meetings are televised countywide by Community TV of Santa Cruz. Consult www.communitytv.org or call 831-425-8848 for schedule and station Information.