

SCCRTC Meeting 1/15/26

**Public Comment Item # 18b Caltrans Report, Presentation on the Corridor ID Program**

Dear Commissioners,

Great news now that our rail project is part of the Federal Corridor ID program! Thank you to staff, Commissioners and Caltrans for creating a successful competitive advantage for our rail project to be the Corridor ID program. I look forward to the presentation at the RTC meeting.

Please make sure we continue to be positioned to move on to step two of the program, the Service Development Plan. This will connect us to the expanded Caltrain and Amtrak service, especially benefiting Watsonville and South County overall. Staff needs to include and not remove references to the ZEPRT and Ultimate Rail and Trail planning in our long-range plans including the Climate Resiliency Planning and the Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This is critical to be able to continue to be in a strong position to move forward and leverage funding. I am mystified as to why we have not heard more about this program and the work Caltrans staff and others have done to successfully include the Central Coast rail in the Corridor ID program, prior to the 12/05/25 RTC meeting. It seems to me this program should be applauded and included in cost estimates and planning as it will result in substantial cost saving.

Please support the Corridor ID program and the Ultimate Trail for the future benefit of the County and as a destination for visitors. The Coastal Rail and Trail project benefits the entire county and beyond including the economy, the environment by reducing greenhouse gases as we are mandated to do, and benefits the health of residents. I am an avid cyclist and would like a great recreational trail but not at the expense of losing the rail corridor for public transportation. Our Coastal rail trail project has consistent voter and widespread support in Santa Cruz County.

Thank you,

Paula Bradley



January 12, 2026

TO: Chair Eduardo Montesino, Commissioners and Executive Director Christiansen

**RE: Agenda Item 18b. Presentation on Corridor ID Program: Rob Cunningham, Senior Planner, Office of Rail Planning**

Chair Mendocino, Commissioners and Executive Director Christiansen:

Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT) thanks Executive Director Christiansen and the Commission for inviting Mr. Robert Cunningham, Senior Planner, Office of Rail Planning to present on the Corridor ID Program.

We are excited that the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, which is part of the Central Coast Corridor, is moving forward in the Corridor ID program. As Mr. Cunningham will explain in his presentation, the Office of Rail Planning has completed the first phase of the Corridor ID program process, Scoping. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is currently reviewing this scoping document. Once FRA has finished its review, the project team will proceed with the Service Development Plan (SDP) which is Phase 2 of Corridor ID. As part of the Service Development Plan, the project team will review the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZPERT) Conceptual Study data, including a review of operations, station locations; and construction and operations cost estimates. The team will also do value engineering and evaluate project phasing options.

Phase 3, Project Development (the final phase) provides 30% engineering drawings and completes the federal environmental review (NEPA) document.

We are excited that the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is moving forward in this very competitive process. We urge the commission to continue to provide the support and leadership to move forward with this project. It will provide a powerful and transformative link to our county, and will bring business and tourism to South County and Watsonville via the regional rail network.

While Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding has been cut back at the federal level, that has not been the case with rail funding. It is critical that we continue to seize this opportunity and move rail planning forward. Time and again, voters in Santa Cruz have supported rail service and rail planning.

We should respect and follow through on their support.

Matt Farrell  
Board Chair  
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail