



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

**Thursday, January 15, 2026
6:00 p.m.**

In-Person Meeting

Watsonville City Council Chambers
275 Main Street, Watsonville, CA 95076

Remote Participation (see page 5 for more information)

RTC Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89597173447>

Dial-in: +1 312 626 6799

Webinar ID: 895 9717 3447

1. Roll call. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present:

City of Capitola	Gerry Jensen
City of Santa Cruz	Fred Keeley
City of Scotts Valley	Steve Clark
City of Watsonville	Eduardo Montesino
County of Santa Cruz	Manu Koenig (Remote)
County of Santa Cruz	Kimberly DeSarpa
County of Santa Cruz	Andy Schiffrin (Alt.)
County of Santa Cruz	Larry Pageler (Alt.)
County of Santa Cruz	Felipe Hernandez
Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District	Rebecca Downing
Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District	Donna Lind (Alt.)
Caltrans (ex-officio)	Kelly McClendon (Alt.)

Staff present:

Sarah Christensen	Yesenia Parra
Amin AbuAmara	Nisha Singh
Grace Blakeslee	Sierra Topp
Krista Corwin	Tommy Travers (Remote)
Amanda Marino	Steve Mattas (RTC Counsel)
Shannon Munz	

2. Received SB 707 Just Cause Requests

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra stated that there were no SB 707 Just Cause Requests. She noted that Commissioner Koenig would be attending remotely using the regular teleconferencing provisions of the Brown Act and that his alternative remote location is noted on the agenda.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra noted that replacement pages for the Agenda and for item 12 had been posted to the website, and handouts for items 7, 18, and 19 were also posted to the website.

4. Oral Communications

Received public comment from:

Lowell Hurst
Jessica Evans
Damon Meyer
Barry Scott
Saladin Sale
David Van Brink
Michael Saint
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Fred Geiger

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Hernandez made a motion and Commissioner Alternate Pageler seconded the motion to remove item 7 from the consent agenda and consider it on the regular agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Downing, Koenig, DeSerpa, Hernandez, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen, and Commissioner Alternates Lind, Pageler, and Schiffrin voting "aye."

Commissioner Hernandez made a motion and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda with the exception of item 7. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Downing, Koenig, DeSerpa, Hernandez, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen, and Commissioner Alternates Lind, Pageler, and Schiffrin voting "aye."

MINUTES

5. Approved draft minutes of the December 4, 2025 Regional Transportation Commission meeting and the December 18, 2025 Regional Transportation Commission special meeting
6. Accepted draft committee meeting minutes
 - a. December 9, 2025 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

7. Approve authorizing the Executive Director to amend an agreement with HDR Engineering for Climate Resilience Planning on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Right-of-Way – *Chair Montesino removed this item from the consent agenda for consideration on the regular agenda*
8. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to amend an agreement with RideAmigos and to amend an agreement with Miller Maxfield, Inc., for the Go Santa Cruz County program (**Resolution 32-26**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

9. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
10. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

11. Approved appointment to the Bicycle Advisory Committee

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

12. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
13. Accepted correspondence log
14. Accepted letters from committees and staff to other agencies
15. Accepted information items - *none*

REGULAR AGENDA

The Chair brought consideration of item 7 onto the regular agenda from the consent agenda. Commissioner Downing recused herself from consideration of the item and left the dais.

7. Approve authorizing the Executive Director to amend an agreement with HDR Engineering for Climate Resilience Planning on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Right-of-Way (**Resolution 31-26**)

Transportation Planner Amanda Marino delivered the staff report and responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the study of preservation of the rail line alongside the trail; flooding in Harkins Slough; and analysis of the La Selva bridge.

Senior Transportation Planner Grace Blakeslee and Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding which segments of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line are included in the contract and climate hazards the impact the entire Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

Commissioners discussed: erosion along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and impacts to public safety.

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell
Saladin Sale
Jessica Evans
Anonymous Speaker
Trink Praxel
Barry Scott
Lowell Hurst
Michael Saint
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
David Van Brink

Commissioner Montesino made a motion and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to adopt (**Resolution 31-26**) to:

1. Authorize the Executive Director to execute amendment 1 to the agreement TP 2205 with HDR Engineering Inc. to increase the contract by up to \$340,490 for a total not-to-exceed \$1,527,177 for tasks associated with developing design concepts resilient to climate hazards for an Interim Trail Configuration along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line;
2. Amend the Measure D Five-Year Plan Measure D Active Transportation (Coastal Rail Trail) category to increase funding for RTC ongoing

oversight, coordination, and assistance by \$340,490 in Fiscal Year (FY) 25/26 for this work; and

3. Amend the RTC FY 25/26 budget to add additional funds.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, Hernandez, DeSerpa, Koenig, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin, Pageler, and Lind voting "aye."

Commissioner Downing returned to the dais at 6:42 p.m.

16. Commissioner Reports - *none*

17. Director's Report

Executive Director Sarah Christensen provided updates on the following items: the upcoming San Vicente–Waddell Coastal Resilience Community Workshop on January 27 at the Seymour Marine Discovery Center; the Capitola Avenue Overcrossing ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for mid-February; the call for applications to fill the District 4 vacancy on the Measure D Taxpayer Oversight Committee; and the completion of storm damage repairs to the New Brighton Railroad Bridge.

18. Caltrans Report

Caltrans Ex-Officio Kelly McClendon, Senior Planner from District 5, delivered updates on: emergency drainage project on Highway 9 just south of Boulder Creek nearing completion; drainage project between Brookdale and Boulder Creek will be scheduled around April; construction activities commenced for Felton pedestrian safety project and associated overnight lane closures.

Mr. McClendon responded to Commissioners' questions regarding Caltrans' response to a sinkhole and the collapse of the computer system for traffic lights at Granite Creek and Scotts Valley Drive.

Commissioners discussed: impacts of inoperable traffic lights on the Scotts Valley community; appreciation to Caltrans crew who responded and restored power to the intersection.

Mr. McClendon introduced Rob Cunningham, Regional Coordinator for the Central Coast for Caltrans Division of Rail, who delivered a presentation on the Federal Corridor ID program and how it relates to the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) project.

Mr. Cunningham responded to Commissioners' questions regarding timing of environmental review of the passenger rail project; implementation of the interim trail on the SCBRL; factors that influence competitiveness for funds;

funding available for NEPA but not CEQA; application requirements for capital program funds; requirement to identify funding source for grant match requirements; Commission interested in receiving regular updates on Corridor ID Program as it relates to funding for the SCBRL

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Saladin Sale
Sally Arnold
Jessica Evans
Lowell Hurst
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Michael Saint
Paula Bradley

19. PUBLIC HEARING: Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Supervising Transportation Planner Grace Blakeslee delivered the staff report on behalf of Transportation Planner Tommy Travers.

Ms. Blakeslee responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the gap between Measure D projected revenues and project needs; local share cost assumptions; upcoming sales tax measures in Santa Cruz County; funding for local road resurfacing; inclusion of rail planning in the draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas responded to Commissioner's questions regarding authority to place sales taxes on the ballot; headroom for sales taxes allowable under the law.

Commissioners discussed: need for public education on local share needs; correlations between housing and transit; regressive sales taxes; need for public understanding of alternative modes of transportation; hazard reports a useful tool for the public; Cruz511 public education.

The public hearing opened at 7:54 p.m.

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell
Jessica Evans
Saladin Sale
Sally Arnold
Barry Scott
Trink Praxel
Tina Andreatta
Ilia Bulaich

Lowell Hurst
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Michael Saint
Paula Bradley
Brett Garrett, Santa Cruz PRT
Rob Means, Loopworks
Bob Hickman
Sean

The public hearing closed at 8:13 p.m.

20. Review of items to be discussed in closed session

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas provided an overview of the items to be discussed in closed session, stating that there may be reportable action.

Received public comment from:
Brian Peoples

The Commission entered closed session at 8:25 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

21. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2))
Significant Exposure to Litigation: Two Cases
22. Conference with Real Property Negotiators
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8)
Property: Santa Cruz Branch Line Railroad Right-of-Way
Agency Negotiators: Sarah Christensen and Steve Mattas
Negotiating Parties: SCCRTC and St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, LLC, a
Subsidiary of Progressive Rail Inc.
Under negotiation: Terms for Administration, Coordination, and
License Agreement

OPEN SESSION

23. Report on items discussed in closed session

The Commission returned from closed session at 9:07 p.m. RTC Counsel Steve Mattas reported that upon a 10-0 vote, with Commissioners Koenig, DeSerpa, Hernandez, Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin, Pageler, and Lind voting “yes,” and Commissioner Downing abstaining, the RTC authorized staff to issue a default and termination letter to Progressive Rail in relation to the Administration

Coordination and Licensing (ACL) agreement for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

24. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Fourth Floor, Watsonville, CA 95076.

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra, Administrative Services Officer

Attendees

Ilia Bulaich

Matt Farrell

Jessica Evans

Saladin Sale

Sally Arnold

Barry Scott

Trink Praxel

Tina Andreatta

Lowell Hurst

Damon Meyer

Christina Watson, TAMC

Elizabeth Malmborg

Rick H

Michael Pisano

1(408)***0663

Jim Helmer

Paul Guirguis

nasya

Paula

Sean

Howard Cohen

Gina Cole

fred geiger

Rob Means

Don

Max Chun

Nancy

TrailNow.org (Brian Peoples)

Erica Williams

Rachel M

Nick

Johanna Lighthill

Frank Rimicci

Brett Garrett

Micheal Saint

David Morris

Nadene Thorne

Nadene Thorne

Guest Guest

Zoom user

Will Mayall

Barry Scott

David ❤️ Public Transit

Jennie Dusheck