



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

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

In-Person Meeting

Santa Cruz County Community Room (Basement)
701 Ocean Street, Room 020
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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 9:37 a.m.

Members present:

City of Capitola

City of Santa Cruz

City of Scotts Valley

City of Watsonville

County of Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Caltrans (ex-officio)

Gerry Jensen

Fred Keeley

Steve Clark

Eduardo Montesino

Manu Koenig

Kimberly DeSarpa

Andy Schiffrin (Alt.)

Monica Martinez

Lowell Hurst (Alt.)

Fabian Leonor

Rebecca Downing (Remote)

Darron Hill (Alt.)

Staff present:

Sarah Christensen

Amin AbuAmara

Grace Blakeslee

Krista Corwin

Max Friedman (Remote)

Bella Kressman

Rachel Moriconi (Remote)

Shannon Munz

Luis Mendez

Yesenia Parra

Nisha Singh

Steven Mattas (RTC Counsel)

2. Received SB 707 Just Cause Requests

Commissioner Downing communicated her need to participate remotely for a Just Cause related to a contagious illness.

3. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra communicated that handouts for item 8 and 20 had been posted to the website as well as replacement pages for item 20.

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas communicated that the Brown Act allows, by a two-thirds vote, for the Commission to add items to the agenda when items came to the attention of the Commission after the agenda was posted and there is a need for immediate action. Mr. Mattas recommended that the Commission, if it desires, add an item to the agenda for consideration of giving direction to staff to issue unconditional commitments, as well as to identify item 20 as the curative action for an alleged Brown Act violation arising as part of the January 15, 2026 Commission closed session as set forth in a letter from TRANSDEV received by the SCCRTC on February 2, 2026. Mr. Mattas confirmed that the letter from TRANSDEV was received on February 2, 2026, after the regular meeting agenda was posted and that the Brown Act requires any curative action or unconditional commitment occur within 30 days of receiving the letter. Thus, there was a need for immediate action as the next Commission meeting would not occur prior until March 6, 2026.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion to add an item to the agenda for consideration of unconditional commitments and to identify item 20 as a curative action for the alleged Brown Act issue arising from the January 15, 2026, closed session as set forth in the TRANSDEV letter received on February 2, 2026.

Commissioner Downing communicated that she is abstaining from the vote due to a conflict of interest. The motion passed with Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, DeSerpa, Koenig, Martinez, Leonor and Commissioner Alternates Hurst and Schiffrin voting "aye."

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now

Jessica Evans

Ryan Sarnataro

Through the Chair and in response to a question from a member of the public, RTC Counsel Steve Mattas provided clarification regarding the motion on the floor.

4. Oral Communications

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Jessica Evans, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Jack Brown
Michael Saint, SCPRT
Jim Helmer
Zoom User
David Dean
Ryan Sarnataro
Lani Faulkner
Kevin McGuire
Sean
Saladin Sale

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Clark made a motion and Commissioner DeSerpa seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda.

Commissioner Downing recused herself from consideration of item 9 due to a conflict of interest.

With the exception of item 9, the motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Leonor, Downing, Martinez, Koenig, DeSerpa, Schiffrin, Hurst, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen voting "aye."

The motion to approve the staff recommendation in item 9 passed unanimously with Commissioners Leonor, Martinez, Koenig, DeSerpa, Schiffrin, Hurst, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen voting "aye" and Commissioner Downing abstaining.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now

MINUTES

5. Approved draft minutes of the January 15, 2026, Regional Transportation Commission meeting

6. Accepted draft committee meeting minutes
 - a. December 8, 2025, Bicycle Advisory Committee
 - b. December 18, 2025, Interagency Technical Advisory Committee
 - c. January 22, 2026, Interagency Technical Advisory Committee

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

7. Approved amendments to the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP) for previously programmed projects (**Resolution 36-26**)
8. Approved the 2026 State and Federal Legislative Program
9. Approved Real Property Easement Acquisitions for Highway 1 Auxiliary Lanes and Bus on Shoulder from State Park Drive to Freedom Boulevard and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project (**Resolution 37-26**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

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

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

No consent items

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

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

REGULAR AGENDA

16. Commissioner Reports – *none*
17. Director's Report

Executive Director Sarah Christensen delivered a presentation and provided updates on: the opening of the Capitola Avenue overcrossing and ribbon

cutting ceremony scheduled for February 26, 2026, from 4pm-5pm at 911 Capitola Avenue; release of the Draft Rural Highways Safety Plan; retirement of Senior Transportation Planner Rachel Moriconi after 29 years of service; resignation of Transportation Planner Amy Naranjo after 15 years of service.

Commissioners discussed: appreciation and well-wishes for departing staff members.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples
Grace Blakeslee
Rachel Moriconi
Lani Faulkner

18. Caltrans Report

Deputy District Director Darron Hill delivered the Caltrans Project Updates list and the upcoming Highway 17 corridor planning meetings hosted by Caltrans, the SCCRTC, and partners in the Bay Area on February 19th and 24th.

Commissioners discussed: appreciation for Caltrans' work on the highways, especially the response to the "Scotts Valley sinkhole incident," the Highway 152 slide, and Highway 1 slides near Big Sur.

Ex-Officio Hill responded to questions from other Commissioners about daytime work along Highway 9; completion of the Emergency Prospect Avenue Retaining Wall Project.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Jim Helmer

19. Commissioner Committee Appointments

Chair Montesino announced his recommendations for the 2026 Budget & Administration/Personnel Committee, which included Commissioners Clark, Keeley, DeSerpa, Cummings, Koenig, and himself. Commissioner Montesino made a motion and Commissioner DeSerpa seconded the motion to approve the nominations.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, DeSerpa, Koenig, Martinez, Downing, Leonor and Commissioner Alternates Hurst and Schiffrin voting "aye."

20. Response to Commission Requests from December 2025: Termination to the Administration, Coordination and License Agreement with Progressive Rail, Inc. to Assume Common Carrier Status for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and Cooperative Agreements for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 8 & 9 and 10 & 11

Commissioner Downing recused herself from discussion and consideration of the item due to a conflict of interest and departed the meeting.

Real Property Specialist Isabella Kressman and Supervising Transportation Planner Grace Blakeslee delivered the staff report and presentation.

Ms. Kressman responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the impacts to freight and recreational service resulting from today's action; who has authority to approve common carrier status; list of comparable agencies that have assumed common carrier status to preserve freight and passenger rail service.

Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding staffing capacity to take on additional tasks if SCCRTC becomes the common carrier; costs and benefits of assuming common carrier status; investigation of an option to proceed with an interim trail design without removal of the tracks; who has responsibility for maintenance of the rail line.

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas responded to Commissioners' questions about the RTC's qualifications to assume the status of common carrier; basis for the default and termination of the ACL.

Supervising Transportation Planner Grace Blakeslee responded to Commissioners' questions about the next steps towards design of the interim trail; and the process for soliciting feedback on the final design.

Principal Planner for the County of Santa Cruz Rob Tidmore also responded to Commissioners' questions about the next steps towards design of the interim trail.

Commissioners discussed: maintenance history of the rail line; business partnership between the RTC and Progressive Rail; consideration of interim trail options; investigation into a feasible alternative to preserve the tracks; Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) concept report recommendation to remove the tracks as part of development of the passenger rail project; seeking to secure funds for an environmental impact report for passenger rail; challenges of working with Progressive Rail.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Jessica Evans, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Saladin Sale
Tina Andreatta
Russell Weiss
Blake Charman
Paula Bradley
Anonymous
David Schonbrunn, TRANSDEF
Jack Brown
Zoom User
Michael Saint
Dianne
David Dean
Patrick M.
Trink Praxel
Brian
Lani Faulkner
Nyanko
Barry Scott
Ron Swenson
Sean
James Weller
Jean Brocklebank
Michael Setty
Kevin Maguire
Bob Hickman

Commissioner Montesino made a motion and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Accept information in response to requests made at the December 4, 2025, RTC meeting, including:
 - a. An approach to continue planning and state-wide coordination activities for passenger rail in the long-term between Pajaro and Santa Cruz as envisioned by the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Project Concept Report
 - b. An approach to construct the Interim Trail in the near-term without the need for adverse abandonment of the freight easement or railbanking; and,
 - c. A Project delivery approach for retrofitting and preserving the Capitola trestle and converting the railroad bridge to an interim

bicycle and pedestrian bridge as a separate future project in the near term.

2. Adopt **Resolution 35-26** to formally terminate the Administration, Coordination, and License agreement with St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, a subsidiary to Progressive Rail, Inc. and authorize the Executive Director to take necessary administrative steps to have the RTC or its designee become the common carrier of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
3. Adopt **Resolution 36-26** authorizing the Executive Director to:
 - a. Enter into a three-way Cooperative Agreement with the City of Santa Cruz and County of Santa Cruz for the environmental, design, and right-of-way components of the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 8 & 9 and make non-substantive changes as appropriate;
 - b. Amend the Cooperative Agreement with the County of Santa Cruz for environmental, design and right-of-way components of the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11 and make non-substantive changes as appropriate; and,
 - c. Amend the Measure D 5-year plans and FY25/26 budget to add \$70,000 for RTC oversight of Segments 8 & 9 and Segments 10 & 11 based on anticipated work associated with delivery of the Coastal Rail Trail Interim Trail Configuration.

The motion passed with Commissioners Leonor, Martinez, Koenig, DeSerpa, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen, and Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin voting "aye" and Commissioner Alternate Hurst voting "no."

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas provided contextual information for the earlier addition of identifying item No. 20 as a curative action to address an alleged Brown Act violation arising from the closed session on January 15, 2026, as set forth in the TRANSDEV letter of February 2, 2026. Mr. Mattas explained that the Brown Act expressly provides that the taking of a curative action or the provision of an unconditional commitment is not an admission that a Brown Act violation has occurred but, instead is a process allowed for under the Brown Act that results in dismissal of litigation challenging an alleged Brown Act violation if the agency has taken a curative action or issued an unconditional commitment. Mr. Mattas noted that the Commission's consideration of the termination of the ACL in today's open properly noticed, open session regular meeting was a curative action for the alleged actions arising from the January 15th closed session meeting. Mr. Mattas further recommended the Commission consider an action directing staff to prepare a letter for the Chair's signature to make the following unconditional commitments:

1. The RTC unconditionally commits that the action taken in closed session related to real property negotiations will be within the scope authorized by Government Code Section 54956.8;
2. The RTC has utilized and will unconditionally commit to continue to utilize the language set forth in Government Code 54954.5 for Real Property Negotiations closed session items on its agendas;
3. The RTC unconditionally commits that staff or the Chair will report out of closed session items that relate to Real Property negotiations in a manner consistent with the reporting requirements of Government Code Section 54957.7.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Mr. Mattas confirmed that the pursuant to the Brown Act, the decision to undertake the curative action and issue the unconditional commitments is not an admission that the alleged Brown Act violation related to the real property negotiations closed session occurred.

The motion passed with Commissioners Leonor, Martinez, Koenig, DeSerpa, Montesino, Clark, Keeley, Jensen, and Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin voting "aye" and Commissioner Alternate Hurst abstaining.

Received public comment from:

Jessica Evans
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
James Weller
Nyanko

21. 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 from one of the items.

The Commission entered closed session at 12:22 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

22. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2))
Significant Exposure to Litigation: One Cases
23. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(4))
Initiation of Litigation: One Case

OPEN SESSION

24. Report on items discussed in closed session

The Commission returned from closed session at 12:59 p.m. There was no reportable action from item 22. Pertaining to item 23, by a 9-1 vote, the Commission authorized legal counsel to commence litigation against Progressive Rail if it becomes necessary to transfer the freight easement.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

25. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Scotts Valley City Council Chambers, 1 Civic Center Drive, Scotts Valley, CA 95066.

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra, Administrative Services Officer

Attendees

Brian	AT
Patrick Mottram	Marta's iPad
Kevin Maguire, COAST	Michael Lewis
Sunshine	iPhone
Cami Corvin	Nasya
Nyanko Nyasu	Liza Bryant
Laurie	Peter Haworth
Ron Swenson	1.51E+10
Jesus Bojorquez	Leslie Nielsen
Keith Bontrager	Michael Setty
Johanna Lighthill	Jim Helmer
Don	Linda Wilshusen
David Morris	Coral Brune
Ryan	Paul Valadao
Thomas Williams	Tiffany Mendoza
PK	Frank Rimicci
Michael Saint	Sean
Madilyn Jacobsen	Heather Adamson
Trink Praxel	Mark's Notetaker
Gina Gallino Cole	Maureen McCarty
Steve Wienser	Jim's iPad (3)
James's iPad	Joanna Edmonds
Unlicensed room	Gillian
Chris's iPhone 11	Bud Colligan

Regina Kelbert
Larry Pageler
Amelia Conlen
Zoom user
Michael N. Conneran
Chris Amsden
Barry Scott
Lani Faulkner Equity Transit
Jack Brown
Dianne
Tim Brattan
John
Rafa Sonnenfeld
Jacquis Bertrand
Pennington
Pauline Seales
Petra Mottishaw
Bernie Gomez
Jasmine C – Sen Laird Office
Rebecca Hurley
Howard Cohen
Nadene Thorne
Meghan Morrissey
Bob Berlage
Joni Steele
David Dean
Fernanda D. Pini
Paul Guirguis
Rosemary Sarka
Brian Peoples (Trail Now)
Michael Zeller
James Weller
David