



## Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission 2026 STATE Legislative Program

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### Focus Areas in 2026

- **Protect and increase state funding for transportation projects and services** in Santa Cruz County, including active transportation, safety, transit capital and operations, local road system preservation, equity, climate adaptation and recovery, and other local/regional priority transportation projects. Oppose proposals that could reduce transportation funding.\*
- Support new transportation funding mechanisms to replace gas and diesel taxes, considering vehicle fuel economy, zero-emission vehicle adoption, and equity. \*
- Support efforts related to **adaptation, resilience, and response to natural hazards** and the impacts of climate change, including extreme storms, sea level rise, wildfires. Support funding for emergency repairs and flexibility to integrate complete streets elements into reconstruction projects.
- Support funding, programs and policy changes to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), improve mobility, and** reduce bureaucratic burdens.
- **Increase funding for active and sustainable transportation** and support equitable access to **zero-emission vehicles** and infrastructure.
- Ensure legislative and administrative actions **support the implementation of priority transportation projects and programs**, including Measure D projects. Support streamlining and other actions which could expedite delivery of projects and oppose efforts that could hinder or increase the cost to implement priorities.
- Support legislative and administrative actions that will improve safety on state highways and local roads, including **speed limit reductions** and Caltrans policies related to **complete streets**, especially where state highways serve as main streets.

*\*Starred items are also on the Central Coast Coalition's legislative platform.*

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## Ongoing Priorities

### Transportation Funding

- **Increase and Preserve Funding for Priority Projects in Santa Cruz County:**
  - Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor (Highway 1, Soquel Avenue-Freedom Boulevard Corridor, rapid transit corridors, Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line preservation and future transit, Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network)
  - Local Street and Roadway Preservation and storm damage repairs
  - Transit project development and operations
  - Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities
  - Transportation projects in equity priority areas
  - Transportation Demand Management programs, including 511 traveler information, Go Santa Cruz County, and electric bicycle incentive programs
  - Coastal resiliency and climate adaptation projects, including north coast creeks and the rail corridor
  - Complete Streets on State Highways that serve as main streets
- **Protect Transportation Funding:** Preserve existing and new funding for transportation projects, maximize funding for Santa Cruz County transportation projects, and preserve regional discretion and priority-setting.
  - Stable formula funding is essential for addressing the backlog of transportation infrastructure repairs and improvements in Santa Cruz County. Protect current and future taxes and fees and other transportation funds (including Highway Users Tax Account (HUTA), Transportation Development Act (TDA), State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Active Transportation Program (ATP), and other funds) from elimination or diversion to other state programs, General Fund loans, general obligation bond debt service, or to other non-transportation purposes.
  - Support actions that preserve the intent of Senate Bill 1 (SB1) and local measure funding to allow the state, regions, and local agencies to maintain, protect, and improve existing transportation funds dedicated to transit, safety and mobility on the state highway system, lifeline arterials, and goods movement routes while also addressing immediate and long-term unmet funding needs.\*
  - Monitor the implementation efforts related to Executive Order N-19-19, which directs the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to invest its annual \$5 billion portfolio to help reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure that state funds, specifically SB 1 funds, continue to be used for transportation purposes. Ensure that state regulations do not negatively impact the implementation of the voter-approved Measure D Expenditure Plan.
  - With increased emphasis on vehicle fuel economy and zero-emission vehicle adoption, explore and support new funding mechanisms to replace gas and diesel taxes for transportation investments. Monitor proposals such as pay-by-the-mile user fees, public-private partnerships, vehicle registration fees, or wholesale energy taxes. Ensure that proposals are equitable to disadvantaged individuals and rural areas.
  - Oppose proposals that could tie transportation fund availability to local jurisdictions, to non-transportation and development projects.



- Support actions to increase the flexibility of use of Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funds.
- **Ensure Fair Distribution of Funding:** Ensure state and federal funds are made available for projects in Santa Cruz County and are not disproportionately distributed to large regions. Ensure competitive programs make funding reasonably available for multimodal projects in Santa Cruz County and address local and regional priorities.
  - **Local Role:** Ensure a strong role for regional and local agencies in planning and determining transportation investment priorities. Support legislation that respects local authority, protecting or expanding local decision-making in programming expenditures of transportation funds, rather than the state making top-down funding decisions that are not community-based. Project and increase direct funding to regions through both federal and state programs, and reinforce and build upon the structure of SB45 that provides regions a strong voice in the programming of state funds.
  - **State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):** Ensure equitable programming and allocation of STIP funds.
  - *"Disadvantaged Communities" Definition:* Support legislation and programs that incorporate equity considerations but ensure that regional definitions of equity priority populations, disadvantaged communities (DACs), or priority populations can be used that accurately reflect low-income, communities of color and transportation-disadvantaged groups within Santa Cruz County. Ensure that state definitions do not rely solely on CalEnviroScreen or other designations which disproportionately exclude many local low-income neighborhoods.
- **Increase Funding for All Transportation Modes:** Support measures that increase funding for and support the implementation of transportation projects in Santa Cruz County, including funds for ongoing system maintenance, congestion reduction, safety, complete streets, pedestrian and bike projects, transit-oriented development, specialized transportation, and general transit projects (which are important for people with disabilities).
  - **New Funding Systems:** Phase in new funding systems which are tied to system use rather than fuel consumption or fuel prices. This approach could include new user fees, such as a Road User Charge or Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) fee and other alternative funding mechanisms that do not overburden low-income and rural residents.
  - **Expand Local Revenue-Raising Opportunities:** Support innovative financing options to address the significant backlog of transportation needs. Provide locals with the ability to supplement and leverage state funding for investments that protect state and local transportation assets.
    - **Vote Threshold:** Support efforts to amend the California constitution to lower the voter threshold for local transportation and affordable housing funding measures, such as local sales tax or vehicle registration fee ballot measures, from the 2/3 supermajority to a simple majority or 55% vote.



- Expand the authority of the RTC and local entities to increase taxes and fees for transportation projects, such as new gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, property-tax financing and transfers, gross receipts taxes, payroll taxes, and infrastructure financing districts.
- Support clarifying amendment to Government Code Section 65089.20 that will give RTPAs equal treatment with Congestion Management Agencies (CMAs) to seek voter approval for a local vehicle registration fee. *(SB83 cleanup)*
- **Active Transportation Program (ATP):** Increase ATP funding and ensure potential reforms to the Active Transportation Program (ATP) do not reduce the proportion available for Santa Cruz County agencies to compete for, including funds to the competitive statewide, small urban, and rural funding pots. Support efforts to simplify the Active Transportation Program (ATP) application and project delivery, build local capacity to deliver transformative projects and provide regions greater flexibility to innovate and strategically invest funds to meet local needs.
- **Passenger Rail along the Central Coast:** Support implementation of the State Rail Plan and innovative projects, including improvements at the Pajaro Station in north Monterey County, improvements along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and a new state-supported intercity passenger rail service on the planned Coast Route between the SF Bay Area and Southern California.
- **Cap-and-Invest:**
  - Increase the percentage of Cap-and-Invest revenues allocated to transportation projects and programs that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Santa Cruz County.
    - Support increases in Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) appropriations.
    - Support policy changes to the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program (AHSC) that increase funding opportunities for projects in Santa Cruz County.
    - Ensure continued funding for low and zero-emission transit deployment. Ensure regulatory and legislative requirements related to transit electrification provide flexibility, consider cost and available technology, and do not place an undue burden on transit agencies.
  - Support legislation to devote a permanent Cap-and-Invest funding allocation to the Active Transportation Program.
  - Cap and Invest Renewal: Support the implementation of the renewal of the state's cap-and-invest program that limits the amount of emissions and encourages investment in cleaner technologies and to ensure robust funding for transit and other projects that reduce emissions.
- **Prop 4 Implementation:**
  - Monitor the implementation of Proposition 4 and support funding for new trails, restoration and protection of coastal areas from the effects of rising sea levels, adding trees to protect pedestrians from extreme heat, water conservation and water quality improvement projects, wildfire prevention, and vans to transport farmworkers and other transportation projects in Santa Cruz County.



- Support actions that would broaden eligibility in existing and/or new transportation funding streams to enable their use as a subsidy for low-income transportation system users (e.g. discounted fares for public transportation or shared mobility service).
- **Transportation Development Act (TDA):**
  - Monitor potential modifications to the TDA. Ensure that funding for transit, planning, administrative, and other TDA purposes in Santa Cruz County is not reduced. Oppose efforts that would reduce TDA funds which are essential for RTC administration and planning.
  - Support the development of greater efficiencies within the TDA while streamlining and updating performance metrics and eliminating penalties associated with farebox recovery.
  - Support the development of alternative performance measures that are focused on incentivizing transit agency actions that improve transit service and increase ridership, consistent with state and regional climate and equity goals.
  - Ensure discount fares aimed at boosting ridership and improving social equity do not result in reduced state funding. Pursue relief from TDA audits and performance criteria during the current economic downturn.

## **Project Implementation**

- **Streamlining, Expediting, and Facilitating Project Delivery:** Support administrative and/or legislative efforts which may be required to implement or expedite the delivery of priority projects. This includes actions that streamline funding applications, simplify program administration, and efforts that modernize and accelerate project delivery, including additional allowances for funds to be used for pre-construction activities.
  - Support greater efficiencies that streamline development and delivery of priority transportation and transit projects, and eliminate any unnecessary, overly burdensome and/or duplicative mandates. Includes California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reform, simplifying stormwater runoff regulations, CA Fish and Wildlife, CA Water Quality Control Board, CA Coastal Commission, and California Public Utilities Commission permit and approval processes. This will aid in the implementation of local and regional Measure D projects, the SR1-Scotts Creek Bridge replacement, and implementation of the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS).
  - Support legislative and administrative actions to secure permits that may be required to implement priority projects.
  - Support a permanent cap for Caltrans indirect cost rates on locally-funded state highway projects.
  - Support opportunities to expedite transportation project delivery, such as increasing contracting and financing options, increased flexibility in the early allocation of programmed funds and initiating reimbursable work with local funds in advance of CTC allocation of all projects, efforts that expedite the Caltrans design review process, opportunities to expedite locally-sponsored projects on the state highway system, and increase in encroachment permit limits.



- Support environmental streamlining measures for bike, pedestrian, transit, and infrastructure preservation within existing public rights of way, and other measures that expedite project delivery. Support efforts that provide streamlined project delivery for transit projects that fulfill the goals of AB32 and SB375, as well as other state and federal air quality mandates and mobility performance measures.
  - Support the delegation of federal fund allocation responsibilities to Caltrans.
  - Support streamlining processes and guidelines for Caltrans Local Assistance and Oversight project development.
  - 1. Allow advance payment of programmed funds and other efforts to expedite project delivery and resolve cash flow challenges faced, including small and non-governmental agencies.
  - 2. Support streamlining the process for agencies to initiate projects with state funding, such as amending SB 184 to expedite project delivery and minimize delays due to California Transportation Commission (CTC) meeting dates and subsequent approvals.
3. **Advanced Mitigation:** Support the implementation of “advanced mitigation” environmental programs, including approving up-front environmental mitigation funding for projects. Support the creation of a low-interest loan program to support advanced mitigation and habitat conservation plans that mitigate the impacts of transportation infrastructure and make project implementation more efficient.
- **Safety:** Support legislation and programs that improve transportation safety for all users and support programs aimed at eliminating all traffic-related serious injuries and fatalities.
    - Speed limits: Support implementation of AB43 (2021), which allows local jurisdictions and Caltrans to reduce motor vehicle speed limits on local roads and state highways and work with Caltrans to reduce speed limits on state highways that function as main streets, especially in business and school zones to address findings, and support implementation of other recommendations of the AB2363 Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force report.
    - Traffic Laws & Enforcement: Support modification of traffic laws to better protect pedestrians and bicyclists, including proposals to expand and make permanent automated speed enforcement, limits to local laws banning reasonable bicycling on sidewalks where no bike facilities exist, and modifications to vehicle code to allow vehicles to cross a double-yellow line when passing cyclists.
    - Education: Support commercial driver, bus driver, motorist, bicyclist, e-bikes, and Safe Routes to Schools training and education programs which reduce collisions.
    - E-bikes and other motorized micro-mobility vehicles: support clarification and regulation based on speed, weight, or presence of hand throttle due to their safety and comfort impacts on pedestrians, walkability, and operator safety without discouraging the benefits of their use.
    - Support legislation that increases safety and education surrounding e-bikes while still promoting their usage.
  - **Active Transportation Facilities:** Support modifications to rules, regulations, and government codes that will make roadways and neighborhoods more bicycle and



pedestrian-friendly, including: laws associated with sharing the road; ensuring complete streets components are considered during the design of all projects; increasing funds for pedestrian, bicycle, and new micro-mobility devices and services (e.g. bike share), and safety countermeasures; increasing funds to provide resources necessary for First/Last Mile improvements, Safe Routes to School Programs, and new pedestrian and bicyclist bridges and access points to address network barriers and reconnect communities; making it legal for people on bikes to treat stop signs as yields (bike safety stop); providing additional direction and consistency for accessible pedestrian design; and allowing agencies to integrate complete streets into any disaster repairs.

- **Land Use/Housing/Transportation Coordination:**

- Support efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and promote job-housing balance, which also protects locally-driven land use planning that implements broad policy goals set by the state to provide affordable housing in transit-rich areas. Ensure SB743 (2013) implementation supports infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and expedites transportation project delivery. Support innovative measures to mitigate growth in vehicle miles traveled, such as regional mitigation banks.
- Encourage new developments to incentivize active transportation and transit use and to include public access easements within and across large housing and commercial projects.
- Support state goals to reduce homelessness, including the use of excess state or other public lands for short-term emergency homeless shelter.
- Support efforts to streamline SB375 implementation and address ambiguities and practical challenges in the implementation of SB 375 land use/transportation/vehicle miles reduction sustainable communities requirements. Support legislation to increase the availability of funding for cities, counties, and regions to support economic development, affordable housing, and implementation of sustainable community strategies, as well as policy tools to reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel in a manner that ensures equitable policy outcomes.

- **Federal Transportation Act Implementation:** Support state legislation and administrative strategies to implement the federal authorization bill (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) in a way that ensures the best possible outcome for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County.

- **State Highways and SHOPP Program:**

- Support Caltrans' efforts to provide more outreach regarding the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) and to encourage the enhancement of measurable targets to better reflect the needs expressed by communities. Support the clarification of existing laws to permit the expenditure of SHOPP funds for operational projects on state highways.
- Support implementation of the provisions of SB 960 (2024), which prioritizes "complete streets" planning and requires Caltrans to prioritize the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users in state highway projects.



- Support changes to the SHOPP program to address the high cost and project development challenges of implementing climate resiliency projects on state highways.
  - Encourage Caltrans to strongly support efforts to increase funding for active transportation projects and climate adaptation and resiliency through the SHOPP program.
  - Support actions to require Caltrans to fund maintenance to Caltrans-owned facilities, including complete street elements, regardless of which agency funded or constructed the improvement.
  - Support legislation prohibiting Caltrans from shifting responsibility to local, regional entities, or transit districts for funding and maintaining improvements on the State highway system and related infrastructure within State-owned Right-of-Way.
- **Commuter Programs:** Support policies and legislation aimed at reducing trips and vehicle miles traveled and associated traffic congestion, including, but not limited to, employer-based programs to help reduce the share of commuting by single-occupant vehicles, expanding broadband and incentives to facilitate telecommuting, expanding park and ride lots, and a regional commuter benefits ordinance. Support dedicated funding for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and strategies.
  - **Shared Mobility Systems:** Support policies that enable technological innovations to improve mobility while protecting the public's interest. Monitor legislation and regulations related to shared mobility, such as transportation network companies (TNCs) and real-time carpooling, to ensure that mobility benefits are maximized, especially for underserved populations, and access to critical data for transportation and land-use planning and operational purposes is assured. Support measures that allow for local control and regulation of shared mobility systems such as scooters, bikes, and other fleets.
  - **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and Drone Technology:** Monitor and engage in legislation and regulations to facilitate the deployment of connected vehicles, autonomous vehicles, and drone technology. Monitor state and federal legislation related to vertical take-off and landing to assess potential impacts on transportation systems. Oppose federal efforts to preempt local authority over the use of autonomous vehicles in their communities. In partnership with California cities and counties, transit agencies, the business community, and other transportation organizations, engage in regulatory and legislative efforts related to connected and autonomous vehicles with the goal of accelerating their safety, mobility, environmental, equity, and economic benefits. Similar to the "shared mobility" strategy, support access to critical data for transportation and land use planning and operational purposes.



- **Electrification and Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Fleets:** Support funding and coordination, including policy, planning, and infrastructure, for low and zero-emission vehicles.
  - Support additional dedicated funding to help transit operators and colleges convert their bus and van fleets to zero-emission. Support reduced utility pricing for public transit ZEVs.
  - Support proposals that provide funding for local agencies and colleges to build infrastructure (including chargers, trenching, and upgrading electrical capacity) and provide incentives for zero-emission vehicle purchases, considering the cost of increased usage of electricity, electric power storage capacity, proper safety protocols and access for lower-income households.
  
- **Resilience:** Monitor and support legislation that invests in projects and programs to improve resilience to the impacts of climate change on transportation infrastructure and the utilization of public transit in emergencies that address scenarios such as severe storm events, public safety power shut-off events, wildfires, and sea level rise.
  
- **Unfunded Mandates:** Oppose unfunded mandates and seek funding for mandates imposed in recent years. Require new regulatory proposals to include an estimate of the cost and impact such proposals will have in the delivery of California’s transportation program.

