



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission 2026 FEDERAL Legislative Program

- **Priority Projects:** Seek and preserve funding for priority transportation projects and programs in Santa Cruz County, including:
 - 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
- **Pedestrian & Bicyclist Safety**
 - Support incentives and regulations to reverse trends of heavier and taller motor vehicles, which can cause more severe injuries and deaths to pedestrians and bicyclists as well as environmental impacts; and support adding pedestrian detection systems in new vehicles.
 - Vehicle Speed Reduction Legislation: Support legislation that would reduce vehicle speeds, especially in areas with high pedestrian and bicycle usage.
 - E-Bike Safety: Monitor legislation that impacts e-bike safety and classification.
- **Transportation Act Implementation**
 - Support the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in a manner that maximizes funding for the implementation of priority projects in Santa Cruz County, including formula and discretionary funding and policies.
- **Transportation Funding**
 - **Protect transportation funding** for projects in Santa Cruz County and oppose federal actions that could reduce funding available for local projects, including active transportation, transit, greenhouse gas reduction projects, and projects in equity priority communities.
 - **Raise New Revenues & Grow Existing Programs:** Support raising and indexing federal gas taxes and developing new funding mechanisms to ensure the financial integrity and solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and Mass Transportation Account. Increase federal transportation investment in all modes to bring transportation infrastructure up to a good state of repair and meet growing transportation needs in Santa Cruz County.



- **Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Reauthorization:** Congress will begin federal reauthorization of the IIJA. RTC should work to ensure that the next federal bill supports RTP goals and critical multimodal transportation priorities in Santa Cruz County and ensure that previously approved funding is not reduced.
- **Increase funding:** Support legislative actions that increase funding for priority projects in Santa Cruz County, including:
 - **Active Transportation:** Bicycle and pedestrian safety and mobility projects, such as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), funds allocated to local jurisdictions, the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), and Active Transportation Program.
- 4. **Transit:** Small Transit Intensive Cities Program (STIC), funding for the acquisition of transit capital (Bus and Bus Facilities, and Low and No Emissions Bus Programs), Capital Investment Grants, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) implementation, state of good repair, and other transit programs. Support tax credits for the purchase of electric buses.
 - **Local Roads and Highways:** Support robust funding for core programs such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), and bridge programs needed for local entities to address the backlog of bridge and roadway projects.
 - **Self-Help Counties:** Support programs that reward areas that have approved self-help revenue measures like Measure D and the METRO dedicated sales taxes.
 - **Planning:** Federal planning funds to address increased planning, performance measures, monitoring, and model requirements.
 - **Transit Oriented Development (TOD):** Grants or pilot programs for comprehensive planning and infill development to connect housing, jobs, and mixed-use development with transportation options.
- **Climate and social spending bills:** If a funding package advances through the legislative process, support the inclusion of funding for sustainable transportation and system preservation projects in Santa Cruz County and addresses principles for the reauthorization of the transportation act. Any infrastructure package should ensure projects in Santa Cruz County are not disadvantaged in accessing those funds. The initiative should also include a significant investment of **new** federal funds for transportation, stabilize the Highway Trust Fund, and not be offset by reductions to other federal programs serving Santa Cruz County residents.
- **Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Climate Resiliency:** Strengthen federal partnerships to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and make our communities and transportation networks resilient to a changing climate.
 - **Funding:** Support the development of new resources to support climate adaptation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation (similar to those included in the Senate FAST Act reauthorization bill (S. 2302)), expand eligibility for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and other funding programs to Santa Cruz County.
- 5. **Air Quality:** Defend against rollbacks of California’s air quality and climate change laws and regulations, such as fuel efficiency standards and cap-and-invest programs.

- **Electrification and Alternative Fuels:** Support federal funding, tax credits, and coordination of vehicle electrification and alternative fuel vehicle adoption (including buses), planning and infrastructure. Oppose new drilling for fossil fuels along the Central Coast.
- **Resiliency:** Support resiliency and climate change preparedness and efforts that could support local efforts to improve resiliency, respond to new or worsening storms, wildfires, and other environmental hazards and meet regional climate goals. Support efforts to increase planning funds that help regional governments address climate change and make regional transportation infrastructure more resilient.
- **Disaster Recovery:** Ensure the federal government provides sufficient emergency relief appropriations and federal agency resources to support rebuilding and recovery efforts for wildfire, storm, and other natural disasters. Support legislative efforts to extend the timeframe for road projects qualifying for federal disaster reimbursement to move to the construction phase from two years to six years.
- **Federal Authorization Implementation:** Support legislation and administrative strategies to implement federal transportation authorization bills in a way that ensures the best possible outcome for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County. Ensure that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) implementation of MAP-21, FAST Act, IIJA, and any new transportation act rules and regulations do not negatively impact local projects and programs.
 - **Discretionary Grants:** Advocate for discretionary transportation grant awards for priority transportation projects in Santa Cruz County, including the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD, formerly RAISE and TIGER), Reconnecting Communities, Safe Streets for All (SS4A), and Capital Investment Grant programs.
 - **Innovative Financing:** Ensure proposals for public-private partnerships and innovative financing are favorable for project implementation in Santa Cruz County. Support and expand the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program and make the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program more accessible to smaller public agencies.
 - **Department of Transportation Budget and Annual Appropriations:** Ensure that Congress appropriates funding consistent with amounts authorized in federal transportation authorizations (e.g. IIJA), even if Continuing Resolutions (CR) are needed to keep transportation programs running each fiscal year.
 - **Oppose rescissions or arbitrary cuts** that could reduce funding for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County.
 - **Support transparent congressionally-directed spending** (earmarks) to allow for Congressional support of priority projects in Santa Cruz County
 - **Oppose unfunded mandates** and support legislation that provides funding for past mandates.
 - **Performance Measures:** Support the development of performance measures that are consistent with RTC-approved goals, policies, and targets and which recognize data limitations of many regions. Support open collaboration, data sharing, and

funding to successfully implement state and federal performance-based planning and management requirements.

- **Shared Mobility:** Advocate for federal legislative and regulatory updates that support shared mobility options such as bike-share, shared rides, carpooling, and shared scooters. Support expanding pre-tax transportation fringe benefit eligibility to include shared mobility options. Expand federal tax incentives for commuters to utilize alternatives to single occupancy travel to get to work.
- **Autonomous Vehicle and Drone Technology:** Monitor state and federal legislation related to autonomous vehicle and drone technology to assess potential impacts on transportation systems and develop appropriate policies and regulations. Monitor drone and other vehicle take-off and landing proposals.
- **Streamline Project Delivery and Reduce Bureaucracy:** Support regulations to streamline and integrate federal project delivery requirements for project planning, development, review, permitting, and environmental processes to reduce project costs and delays. Support reasonable efforts to streamline government processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles to expedite and reduce the cost of planning and project delivery.