



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

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

In-Person Meeting

Scotts Valley City Council Chambers
1 Civic Center Drive
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

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

City of Santa Cruz

City of Scotts Valley

City of Watsonville

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

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

Donna Lind (Alt.)

Brandy Rider (Alt.)

Staff present:

Sarah Christensen

Amin AbuAmara

Marshall Ballard

Krista Corwin

Max Friedman

Brianna Goodman

Bella Kressman

Shannon Munz

Yesenia Parra

Nisha Singh

Steve Mattas (RTC Counsel)

2. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra communicated that handouts for item 8 and 23, replacement page for items 16 and 17, and an add-on page for item 17 were posted to the website, as well as a Spanish language version of the agenda.

3. Oral Communications

Received public comment from:

Lani Faulkner
Jim Helmer
Ryan Sarnataro
Brett Garrett
James Weller
Fred Geiger
Jack Brown
Jean Brocklebank

CONSENT AGENDA

At the request of a Commissioner, Chair Montesino pulled item 8 from the consent agenda to be considered on the regular agenda.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner Keeley seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Ryan Sarnataro
Lani Faulkner
Jim Helmer,
James Weller
Jack Brown

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the February 5, 2026, Regional Transportation Commission meeting and the draft minutes of the February 5, 2026 Regional Transportation Commission special meeting
5. Accepted draft committee meeting minutes
 - a. February 9, 2026 Bicycle Advisory Committee

- b. February 10, 2026 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee
- c. February 19, 2026 Interagency Technical Advisory Committee

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

- 6. Approved Transportation Development Act (TDA) claim from the City of Santa Cruz for the Laurel Bikeway and Pedestrian Striping project and correct Resolution 31.25 to clarify the City of Santa Cruz Bikeway Striping project TDA funding (**Resolution 37-26** and **Resolution 38-26**)
- 7. Approved the decommissioning and removal of all call boxes on highways within Santa Cruz County and authorizing the Executive Director to take the necessary steps to sunset the call box program
- 8. Approve authorizing the Executive Director to advance common carrier filing through formation of an RTC subsidiary and to amend a contract with Rail Pros (**Resolution 39-26** and **Resolution 40-26**) – *Commissioner Alternate Hurst requested that item 8 be pulled from consent agenda for discussion on the regular agenda.*
- 9. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to execute the Baseline Agreement with the California Transportation Commission for the Senate Bill (SB) 1 Cycle 4 Program for the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor Program (**Resolution 41-26**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

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

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

- 12. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to award a contract to Redwood Public Law for legal counsel services (**Resolution 42-26**)
- 13. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to award a contract to Stradling Yocca Carlson & Ruath, LLP, for Bond and Disclosure counsel services and amend the Measure D 5-Year Plans (**Resolution 43-26**)

14. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to approve expenditures incurred by Commissioners while traveling on official RTC business in 2026
15. Approved appointments to the Measure D Taxpayer Oversight Committee

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

16. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
17. Accepted correspondence log
18. Accepted letters from committees and staff to other agencies - *none*
19. Accepted information items - *none*

REGULAR AGENDA

Chair Montesino opened discussion of item 8. Item was pulled from consent agenda as request by Commissioner Alternate Hurst. Commissioner Downing recused herself from consideration of the item and left the dais.

8. Approve authorizing the Executive Director to advance common carrier filing through formation of an RTC subsidiary and to amend a contract with Rail Pros (**Resolution 39-26** and **Resolution 40-26**)

Real Property Specialist Bella Kressman delivered the staff report and responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the role RailPros will play in the subsidiary's operations.

In response to Commissioners' questions, Executive Director Sarah Christensen clarified the purpose of the special meeting on March 19, 2026; public availability of documents related to the formation of the subsidiary; consolidation of the subsidiary formation and the RailPros contract amendment into one agenda item; RailPros service as technical support.

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas clarified why staff recommends the subsidiary be formed as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation; public reporting of the subsidiary's finances, and whether the entity would be subject to the Brown Act.

Commissioners discussed: forming a subcommittee of Commissioners Keeley, Koenig, and Montesino to develop the subsidiary in the interim; make-up of the subsidiary board and staff will be the RTC itself and its staff; protection from liability; control over the new subsidiary's revenue and expenditures.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner Keeley seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Adopt **Resolution 39-26** authorizing the Executive Director to take necessary administrative steps to form a 501(c)(4) nonprofit entity as a subsidiary to serve as the designated common carrier for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line; and
2. Adopt **Resolution 40-26** authorizing Amendment 8 to Contract No. TP2061-01 with RailPros, Inc. for an additional \$29,650 in Compensation for a not-to-exceed contract value of \$307,251.36,

Commissioners agreed to have Commissioners Keeley, Montesino and Koenig work with staff in drafting the request for earmarks and represent the RTC in Sacramento next week.

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

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell
James Weller
Jack Brown
Jean Brocklebank

20. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Clark welcomed all to Scotts Valley and noted appreciation to the Commissioners and staff for RTC projects' positive impacts to the community, including completion of the Capitola Avenue Overcrossing project.

Commissioner Hurst shared information on the congestion along Highway 1 including some alleviation of congestion near the RTC/Caltrans Highway 1 projects.

Commissioner Downing appreciated staff for the Capitola Avenue Overcrossing Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and thanked Commissioner DeSerpa for her recent townhall on the County Strategic Plan.

21. Director's Report

Executive Director Sarah Christensen reported on and delivered a presentation, including appreciation for RTC General Counsel Steve Mattas and Redwood Public Law; a public input survey to name the RTC's new rail subsidiary; that the Capitola Bluff Fencing Project will begin in March; the Capitola Avenue Overcrossing ribbon-cutting ceremony; and completion of

the second phase of the Highway 1 Bay/Porter to State Park Drive improvement project.

Commissioners discussed: Their appreciation for support from the legal team.

22. Caltrans Report

Caltrans Deputy District Director for Planning and Modal Programs Brandy Rider responded to a public comment regarding shoulder closures on Highway 9 resulting from the Felton Safety Project construction; other projects along Highway 9: new speed-limit signage and completion of a speed-limit study; drainage work; anticipated bridge replacements and temporary signals to begin around April; fact sheets available with more San Lorenzo Valley project details.

Commissioners discussed: Appreciation for Caltrans' work in Pajaro Valley; responsiveness to the Highway 9 concerns and continued communication.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Ms. Rider will follow up with the Commission regarding updates on the Highway 1 Bay/Porter ramp closures and closures of the auxiliary lanes between Soquel Drive and 41st Avenue.

Received public comment from:

Jim Helmer

23. Request for State and Federal Earmarks to Fund the Environmental Component of the Zero Emissions Passenger Rail and Trail Project

Transportation Planner Max Friedman delivered the staff report and responded to Commissioners' questions. Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding: the shelf-life of the environmental component and project delivery timeline; costs and deliverables of an environmental impact report.

Commissioners discussed: need for an environmental impact report (EIR) in order to seek funds for preconstruction activities; obtaining funds for EIR will likely be a multi-year project; contingency planning for what the RTC may do with acquired funds if granted only a partial amount, or if project does not meet grant deadlines; concerns about competing with requests for project funds proposed by local jurisdictions and the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District; Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program; seeking state funding through the budget process for this fiscal year; ensuring the project continues to meet the requirements of the Corridor ID Program; Commissioner subcommittee to develop the portfolio of issues to be discussed with Senator Laird and other state congressional representatives and reaching out to several elected officials.

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Lani Faulkner, Equity Transit
Ryan Sarnataro, Trail Now
Johanna Lighthill
Brett Garrett
Cami Corvin
Jean Brocklebank

Commissioner Keeley made a motion and Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Authorize staff to pursue federal Community Project Funding requests (also known as Congressionally Directed Spending or Federal Earmarks) to support the environmental component of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project;
2. Authorize staff to pursue Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program competitive funds, to support pre-construction activities for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project; and
3. Authorize staff to pursue funds from Senator Laird to be included in the state budget to support the environmental component of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project;

With added motion that Commissioners Montesino, Koenig, and Keeley be authorized to work with Senator Laird and also to develop a portfolio to work with state representatives and ensure that our request is consistent with the Corridor ID funding.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin offered a friendly amendment that the subcommittee bring a report back to our commission at our next meeting and the maker of the motion accepted the amendment.

Commissioner Koenig offered a friendly amendment that staff include in all requests, including federal earmarks, related documents, the ZEPRT project the ability for the Commission to repurpose awarded funds for the Coastal Trail Environmental Impact Reports if sufficient funding for the environmental document has not been identified by 2030 or the grant deadlines, whichever comes first, and the maker and the seconder of the motion accepted the amendment.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin offered a friendly amendment that would make clear that the request includes recognition that any state restrictions on the funding be acceptable and the maker of the motion accepted the amendment.

The motion passed unanimously.

24. Rural Highways Safety Plan: Milestone 3 – Final Report

Alexandra Lee-Gardner, Senior Transportation Planner with Fehr and Peers and Transportation Planner Brianna Goodman delivered the staff report and gave a presentation. Ms. Goodman responded to Commissioner questions regarding the safety enhancement concept for Scott Creek; roundabout improvements, and funding opportunities.

Commissioners discussed: appreciation for the work, youth concerned about highway safety; discussions on safety improvements for other Highways, for example 152 and 129; improvements along Highway 1 in Davenport.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner Downing seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to accept the Rural Highways Safety Plan Final Report and including options for implementing priority improvements.

Received public comment from:

Lani Faulkner, Equity Transit
Jim Helmer
Kelly Curlette, Santa Cruz County Public Health

25. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Fourth Floor, Watsonville, CA 95060.

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra, Administrative Services Officer

Attendees

Lani Faulkner
Ryan Sarnataro
Matt Farrell
Kelly Curlette
Jim Helmer
Johanna Lighthill
Brett Garrett
Cami Corvin

Jean Brocklebank
James Weller
Crystal Wallace
PK
Rosemary Sarka
Chris Amsden
Nilton Silva
Heather Adamson
Paul Guirguis

Portia Ramer
Nadene Thorne
Brett Garrett
Larry Pageler
Michael Pisano
Fred J Geiger
Cindy Convisser
Rae Hughes
Nisha Singh
Grace Blakeslee
Nadene Thorne
Jack Brown
Matt Johnson
Jesus Bojorquez
Barry Scott
Deborah
Italo Jimenez
Paula
Marta's iPad
Max Chun
Madilyn Jacobsen
Tommy Travers
Ramon Gomez
Peter Haworth
Karoline A
Jillian Ritter
Kev COAST
Liza Bryant
Bernie Gomez
Will Mayall
Steve Davis (F&P)
Howard Cohen
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Bud Colligan