Chapter 2

Transportation Network

Santa Cruz County's transportation network is defined by its highways, local roads, transit routes, bikeways, pedestrian paths, freight corridors, and aviation facilities. It connects residents and visitors to their daily needs and economic, social, and recreational opportunities. Beyond the movement of people, the transportation network is necessary for the movement of goods, emergency vehicles, resiliency against disasters, and can influence land use patterns such as housing and job centers. Because of the unique geography of Santa Cruz County, the main transportation corridors and facilities are limited by the area's physical barriers of mountains and the sea. This requires creative solutions to ensure the transportation network is accessible, safe, promotes equity, protects the natural environment, and invests in the local economy.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Santa Cruz County residents and visitors rely on five main highways: 1, 9, 17, 129, 152 and major local roads such as Soquel Drive, Mt. Hermon Road, and Freedom Boulevard to access their daily needs and stay connected to their community. There are nearly 1,100 total miles of publicly maintained roadways in the county. In the urban areas of the county, arterial roads, including major state highways, make up 14 percent of roadway miles but carry over 72 percent of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT).[1] Several major roads are served by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) buses which rely on these corridors to get people where they need to go. Complimenting these corridors and connecting lower traffic routes is a 130-mile network of bidirectional bicycle lanes and paved bike/ped pathways. In addition, the County needs to effectively manage aviation, goods movement, and visitor facilities.

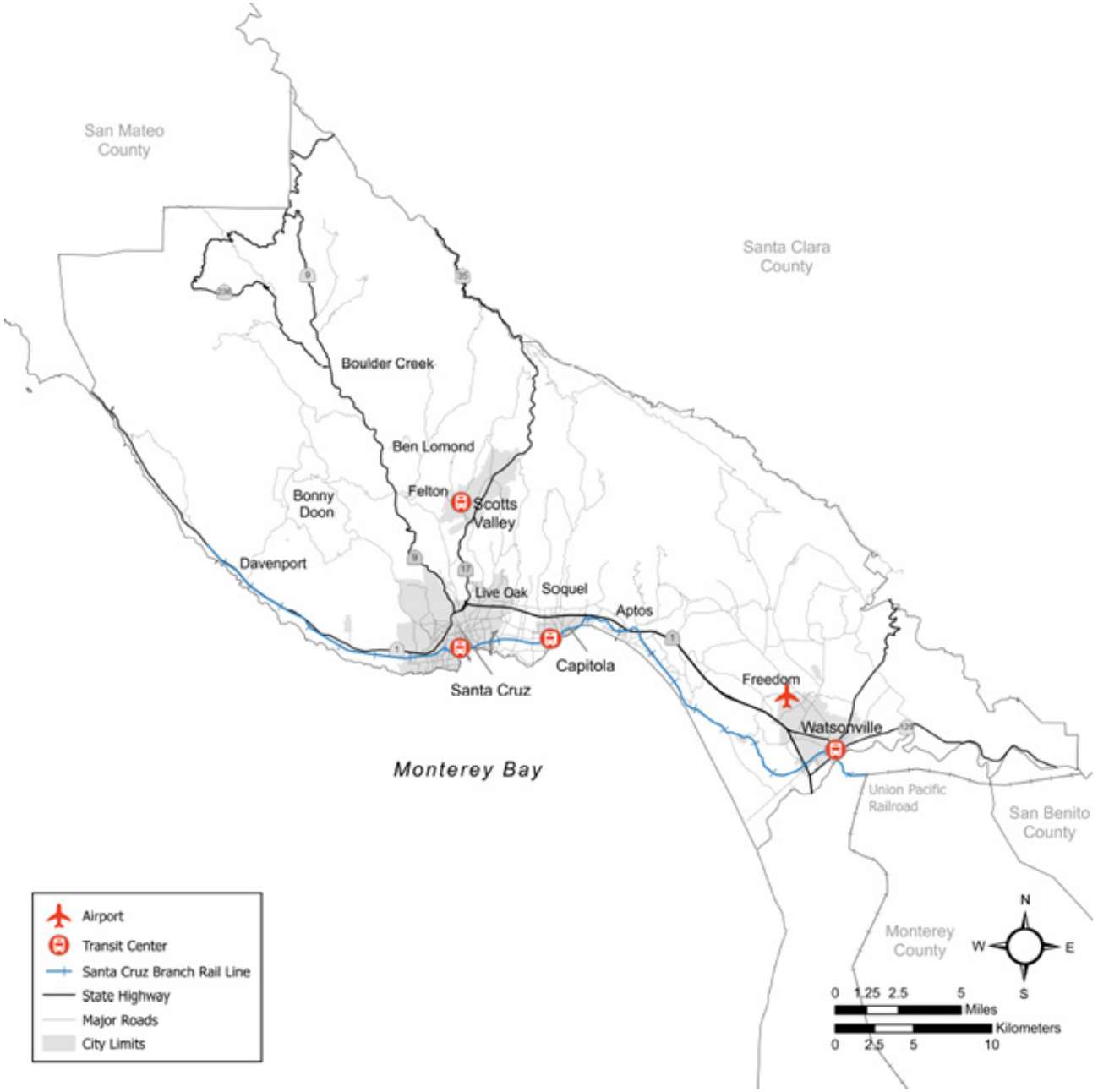


Figure 2.1 - Transportation network in Santa Cruz County.
Source: Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)

Highway System

Each highway in Santa Cruz County serves varying travel needs and makes distinct connections. Highways are managed by Caltrans with maintenance and safety projects done in coordination with the RTC and local jurisdictions.

Highway 1

Highway 1 is the highest volume facility running through the most heavily populated areas of the county. Between Watsonville and the City of Santa Cruz, it is a freeway with at least two lanes in each direction. Highway 1 has the highest average daily traffic volumes (number of vehicles) of all local streets and highways and connects the region with other coastal areas to the north and south. Highway 1 continues on Mission Street, the only arterial street on the west side of Santa Cruz, and serves the commercial activity in this area. Highway 1 is also the county's premier access route to the coast. The rural sections of Highway 1 in the coastal zone are scenic two-lane roads pursuant to California Coastal Act Section 30254. Major improvements in recent years include auxiliary lanes between Highway 17 and 41st Avenue and interchange widening at Highway 17.

Highway 17

Highway 17 traverses the Santa Cruz Mountains with 2 lanes in each direction, connecting the county with Silicon Valley and the rest of the San Francisco Bay Area. Because Highway 17 straddles both Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties, duties such as maintenance, enforcement, transit, safety improvements, and public education are shared by entities on both sides of the summit of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Due to its sharp, blind curves, narrow lanes, and heavy traffic special effort goes into enhancing safety along this corridor.

Highway 9

Highway 9 is a mountainous road connecting Santa Cruz to towns in the San Lorenzo Valley as well as providing another route over the Santa Cruz Mountains to Saratoga and Los Gatos in Santa Clara County. Through San Lorenzo Valley, the highway acts as a main street for the communities of Felton, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek.

Highways 129 and 152

Highways 129 and 152, doubling as commercial thoroughfares through the City of Watsonville, connect south Santa Cruz County with neighboring counties to the east and south and Highway 101.

On the western edge, Highway 152 begins at Highway 1 and is named Main Street through the city of Watsonville, then goes over Hecker Pass to Gilroy in Santa Clara County and beyond. The City of Watsonville coordinates with Caltrans to provide context-sensitive designs to enhance walkability and safety, and maintain the main street character of the roadway, while continuing operational uses within the corridor.

Highway 129 traverses the southern portion of the City of Watsonville, passing Watsonville High School before traversing unincorporated areas and connecting into San Benito County. Highway 129 is heavily used for goods movement, particularly for agricultural products as this is the link from Santa Cruz County to Highway 101, a major goods-movement corridor. Caltrans has made numerous improvements to Highway 129 in recent years, including curve realignments, turnouts, additional signage, improved striping, and an increased number of roadway reflectors.

Other Highways

Highway 35 roughly follows the border with Santa Clara County along Skyline Boulevard, an important connector between mountain communities. South of Bear Creek Road, it also includes the narrow one-lane portion of Summit Road. Highway 236 travels through rural neighborhoods east of Boulder Creek and serves as the connection to Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

Local Roads

Local streets and roads, including bridges, elements such as curbs and gutters, ADA compliant curb ramps, and traffic signals are critical to provide an interconnected, multi-modal transportation system where every trip begins and ends. Investment in local streets and roads is an investment in access to homes, jobs, and other key destinations, public safety, economic growth, and goods movement. The local system is important in supporting the goals of climate change resilience and mitigation and building sustainable communities, as local streets and roads serve as the right-of-way for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel. Key corridors in Santa Cruz County that move the most people are 41st Avenue, Soquel Drive, Mt. Hermon Road, and Freedom Boulevard. On average, these roads combined have over 100,000 vehicles driving through them daily. Bottlenecks on these local streets coincide with congestion happening on the highways, especially during work commute hours. Improvements to either of these transportation networks must be done in conjunction with one another. Investments on Santa Cruz County roads to incorporate complete streets elements is a priority and ongoing.

Transit Network

Santa Cruz METRO

Public transit plays a key role in the regional effort to reduce traffic congestion, VMT and vehicle emissions particularly in urbanized areas. Transit systems also play an important role in the mobility for those who are unable to drive, including youth and older adults, as well as low-income individuals, and people with disabilities.

Public transit in Santa Cruz County is operated locally by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO). METRO provides four types of services: local fixed-route bus service, Highway 17 Express Bus service, ParaCruz ADA-mandated paratransit, and Cruz On-Demand microservices (Figure 2.2). METRO operates over 100 buses on nearly 20 fixed routes on approximately 400 miles of roads.[2] All METRO buses are equipped with exterior racks for three bicycles to assist in first/last mile connections. Regular bus routes serve all of the county's major employment centers (Figure 2.7). Current ridership data can be found in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.3).

Reimagine METRO[3], a 15-month planning and outreach effort, analyzed where buses go and how often they should run, with goals to increase the amount of transit service in Santa Cruz County, provide simpler and more direct service between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, and enhance service on nights and weekends. After full implementation, 100,000 residents and 40,000 jobs will be near service that runs every 15 minutes in the daytime and every 30 minutes after 9 p.m., seven days a week. Reimagine METRO's proposed substantial service increases are being implemented in phases. The first two phases have been implemented, while the third phase is not funded.

Santa Cruz METRO is working toward transitioning their entire fleet to zero-emission buses. In 2023, METRO was awarded two competitive grants (one state and one federal) to purchase 53 fuel-cell electric buses and construct a hydrogen fueling facility. When the project is complete, it will increase METRO's zero emission fleet from nine battery electric buses to 62 zero emission buses.

METRO's buses operate out of four transit centers in Santa Cruz County: Cavallaro Transit Center in Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz METRO Center in Downtown Santa Cruz, Capitola Mall Transit Center, and Watsonville Transit Center in Downtown Watsonville (Figure 2.1.). Both the Santa Cruz and Watsonville centers are being re-developed to include updated facilities, enhanced services, and affordable housing.

Santa Cruz County's public transit system is an important and necessary link to neighboring counties. METRO connects to Monterey County by bus service provided by Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) and to other parts of the state via the Highway 17 Express. The Highway 17 Express Bus – which is operated by METRO and overseen by a partnership of METRO, Amtrak, the Capitol Corridor, the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) – provides a connection to Diridon Station in San Jose which serves the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area and other regional passenger train services.

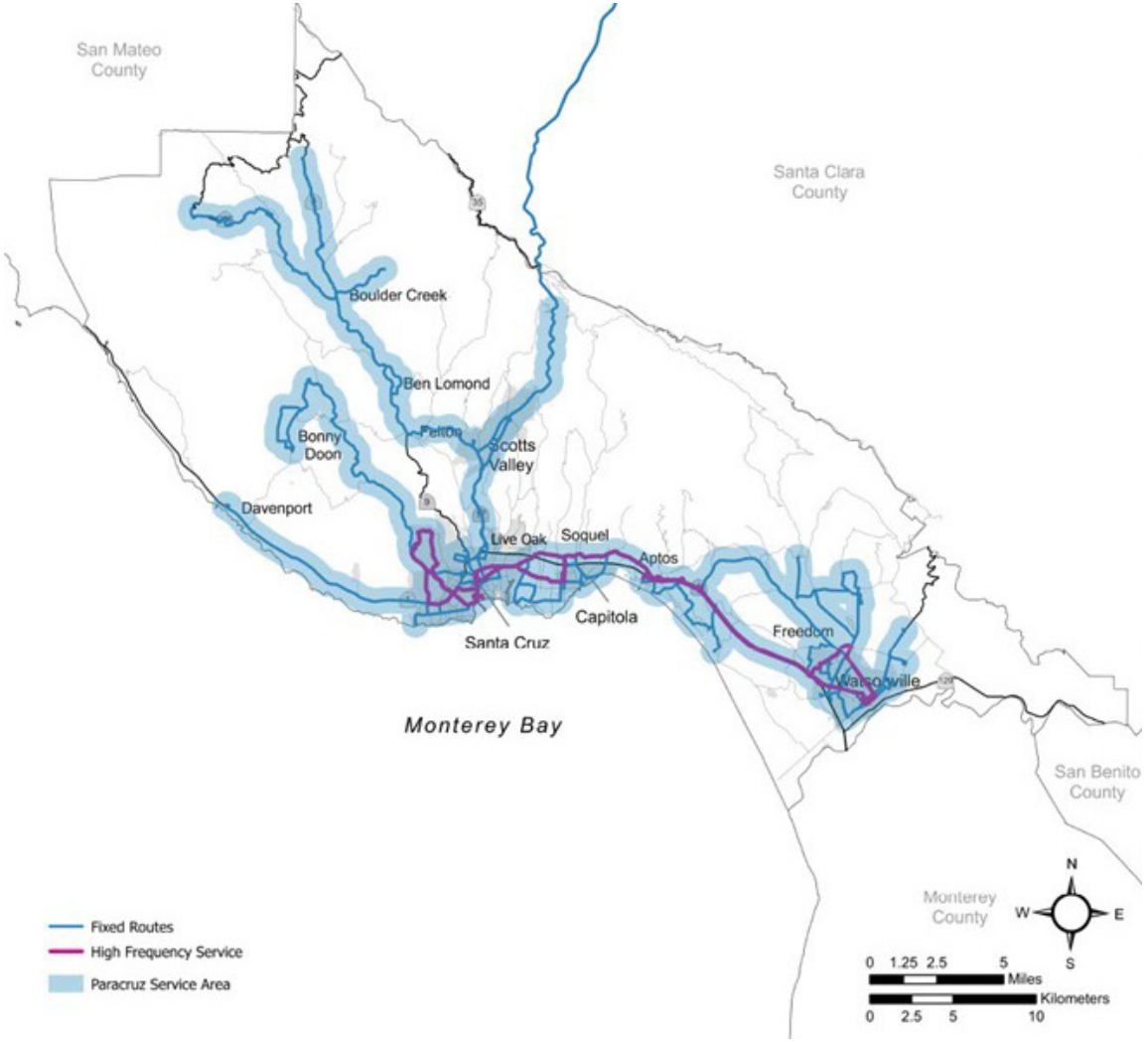


Figure 2.2 – Transit Service Provided by Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)
High Frequency defined as 15-minute service or better. Source: RTC and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, Spring 2025

Paratransit

Many seniors and people living with disabilities need specialized transportation services to get around Santa Cruz County. This might include lifts or ramps for wheelchairs in vehicles, drivers with special training, or vehicles that kneel or are equipped with other accessible features. There are three main services in Santa Cruz County offering Paratransit and senior transit services. These include METRO ParaCruz, Community Bridges Lift Line, and the Volunteer Center.

In the region, **METRO ParaCruz**[4] is Santa Cruz METRO's ADA Complementary Paratransit service offering accessible door-to-door shared rides for people who cannot use the bus due to a physical, cognitive, or psychiatric disability. METRO ParaCruz provides service to any destination within Santa Cruz County that is within three-quarters (¾) of a mile of an operating bus route.

Community Bridges Lift Line[5] is a non-profit that provides or contracts a range of services including local and out-of-county medical transportation, senior center/meal site delivery, bed-to-bed medical, veterans medical transportation and taxi scrip. As the area's designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency, Community Bridges has a responsibility to work toward consolidating and coordinating specialized transportation services to avoid inefficient and duplicative social service transportation programs. Many of the rides provided by Lift Line are to individuals who are unable to afford ParaCruz or because their origin and/or destination are outside the ParaCruz service area.

The **Volunteer Center Transportation Program**[6] offers free rides to seniors (60+) and disabled individuals who need a ride to essential destinations within Santa Cruz County (e.g. to medical appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies, and banks) with volunteer drivers. Santa Cruz County has many rural areas that are not serviced by the fixed-route system. Transportation programs like this are crucial to enhance access to services.

Other service providers exist in the county that operate specialized transportation services and fill a unique niche for, or offers discounted services to, seniors and people with disabilities. These include non-profit or private for-profit entities, such as the Veterans Services and local taxi companies.

The RTC produces a Guide for Specialized Transportation Services that is regularly updated. Included in this guide is information about enrollment eligibility, schedule, service area, and fee information for over 30 transportation providers or agencies throughout Santa Cruz County.

Identifying Transit Needs

To gain a better understanding about potential deficiencies, the RTC conducts a regular process to solicit input about unmet specialized transportation needs in the community. Social service entities, non-profits, local transportation providers, community organizations and human service advocates, as well as members of the public identify gaps and needs in human service transportation.

Input is incorporated into the development of the RTC Unmet Needs List and federally mandated Monterey Bay Region Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. The plan incorporates identified needs and presents innovative implementation strategies for closing the gaps and improving the management of mobility services. These strategies help prioritize available funding.

Active Transportation

Biking and walking promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce environmental impacts. The use of bicycles and walking is an important consideration during the planning process. A well-connected transportation network within the region includes routes with bicycle and pedestrian facilities on local streets which provide trips to key destinations. Higher levels of physical activity are associated with well-connected transportation networks that are coordinated with land use development.

Bicycle Network

Santa Cruz County has an active bicycling community which promotes the provision of dedicated bicycle facilities on a variety of roadway types. Santa Cruz County boasts 202 miles of unidirectional bike lanes and 28 centerline miles of separated paved paths that can accommodate varied ability and comfort levels. Bike lanes can be found on most arterials and collector roads and there are an increasing number of separated bike paths and bikeways on low traffic volume neighborhood streets. Bicycle parking, including bicycle racks and lockers, are located throughout the county.

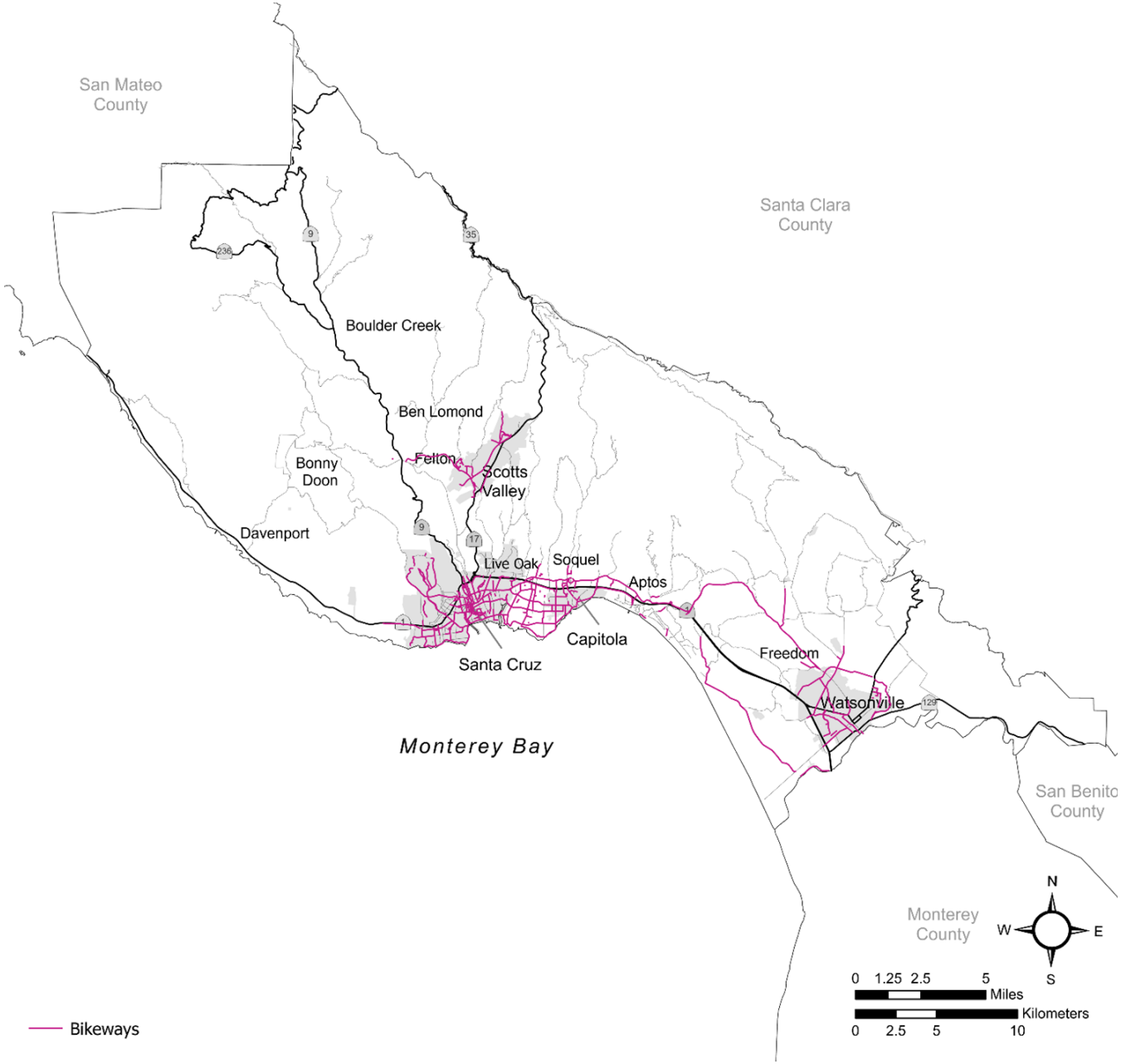


Figure 2.3 - Bike lanes and paved paths, 2024
Source: RTC

To help navigate local bike routes and facilities, the RTC's 2020 bikeways map (https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/bicycle/bicycle-route-signage-program/) shows bicycle lanes, bicycle paths, sharrow routes, and signed wayfinding routes within Santa Cruz County. The 2016 paper maps also contain information on bicycle routes as well as topographic features, major attractions, schools, bike shops, parks, campgrounds and hostels.

BCycle offers electric bicycle-share in the urbanized area between Capitola and Santa Cruz, including relatively high usage at the University of California campus. The system utilizes docking locations for the start and end of trips. The company reports approximately 35,000 trips taken in the month of January 2026. Traditional bicycle rental shops also exist in several communities.

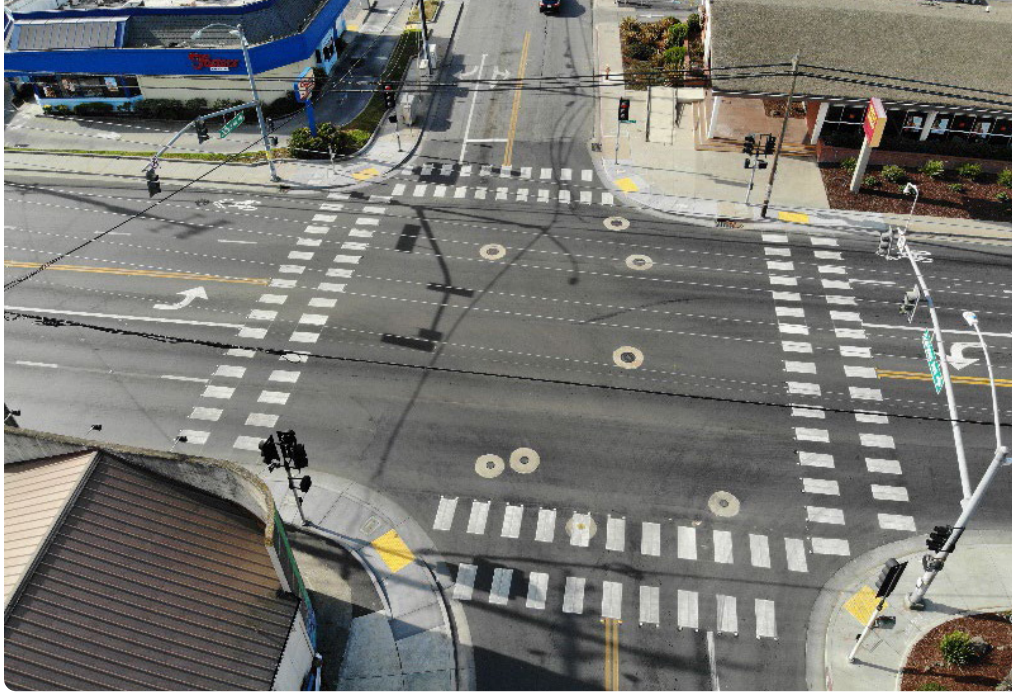
Pedestrian Network

Whether walking or rolling to the bus stop, from a parking spot into work, or home from school, everyone is a pedestrian for some portion of their trip. A well-functioning pedestrian network includes sidewalks, crosswalks and curb ramps and can include other supporting design features such as refuge islands, tactile paving, and trails. Amenities such as benches, trees, lighting, and wayfinding signage may also be included in the pedestrian network. Santa Cruz County has many of these facilities and amenities across the county and this RTP prioritizes projects that make the pedestrian network safer and more enjoyable to use.

Improving and maintaining the pedestrian network is a community effort. Local jurisdictions work towards expanding the pedestrian network by constructing sidewalks and curb cuts in conjunction with new and

redeveloped streets and buildings. They consider pedestrian access, where gaps exist in the sidewalk network, and where updated amenities are needed. They also work closely with the public to identify where existing pedestrian facilities need attention. Property owners are responsible for maintaining and repairing sidewalks adjacent to their property, including addressing safety hazards like cracks, overgrown vegetation, and obstructions.

The RTC aids in this effort through a hazard reporting tool. The Hazard Report Tool can capture any road or sidewalk hazard that endangers or inconveniences pedestrians or bicyclists such as potholes, glass in bike lanes, overgrown bushes, damaged sidewalks, and nonfunctioning crossing buttons. After the report is made RTC staff forward it to the responsible Public Works agency. Public Works will investigate the hazard and decide how to address it, and RTC follows up and reports out to the advisory committees.



Coastal Rail Trail

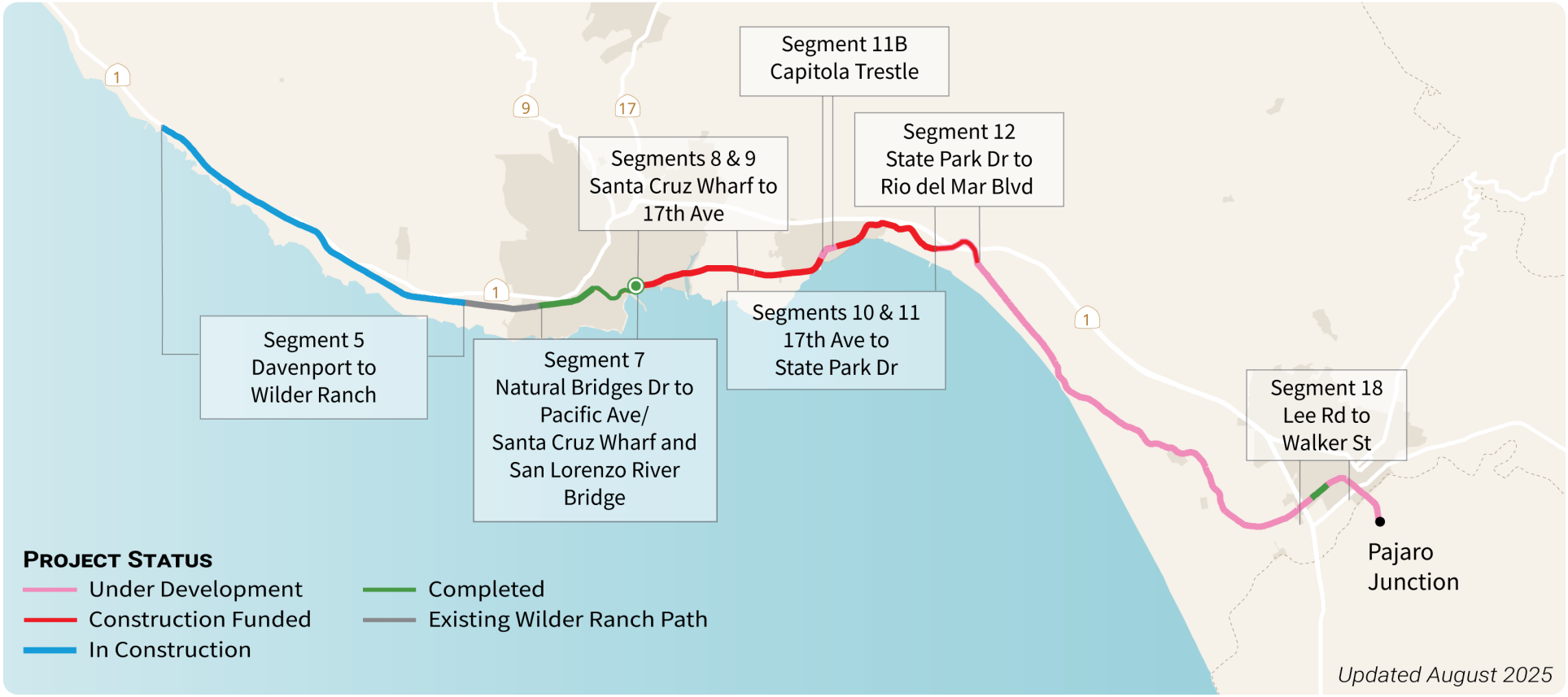


Figure 2.4 - Coastal Rail Trail Progress
Source: RTC

A highly valuable asset to Santa Cruz County's active transportation network is the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (MBSST), an RTC proposed 50-mile bicycle and pedestrian trail project that is a part of the California Coastal Trail. The spine of the trail network will be the 32-mile Coastal Rail Trail from Davenport to Watsonville, to be built within or adjacent to the RTC-owned rail right-of-way. The remaining miles will be connecting paths, sidewalks, bike lanes, other roadway improvements or unpaved coastal spur trails.

The Coastal Rail Trail will provide the Santa Cruz County community with transportation, recreation, education, health, eco-tourism, coastal access, economic vitality,

and other visitor-serving purposes. It will connect to neighborhoods, schools, parks, transit hubs, commercial and other activity centers.

The RTC is partnering with local jurisdictions to develop the Coastal Rail Trail by segments and in phases with logical termini. Figure 2.4 describes the status of the trail by segment. Project delivery includes completing design, engineering and environmental permitting, as well as receiving public input.

Freight Network

Developing, operating, and maintaining a robust goods movement system is essential to supporting the growing regional economy. Given the wide range of goods transported and the complexity of their origins and destinations, the system must remain multimodal to function efficiently.

In Santa Cruz County, trucking is the dominant mode for moving commodities in and out of the region. More than 75% (by weight) of goods shipped into and out of the county are transported by truck. Rail freight in 2012 accounted for approximately 4.9% of the county's freight by weight and 2.4% by value. Air freight, while representing negligible tonnage, accounted for about 3% of freight value—reflecting the smaller, higher-value, time-sensitive shipments typically transported by air.[7] The remaining weight of shipping occurs by pipeline or is not known.

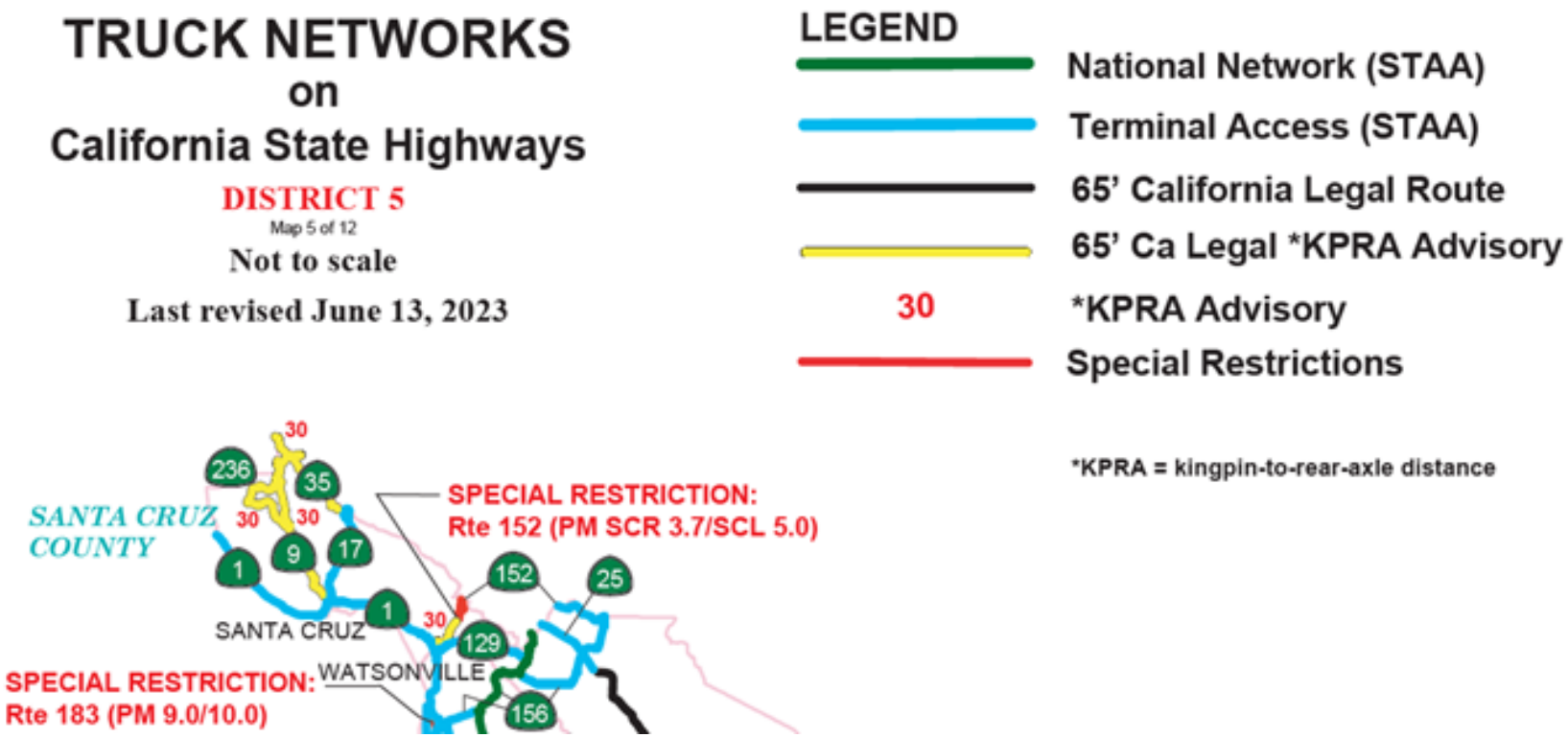


Figure 2.5 - State Highway Truck Network in Santa Cruz County
Source: Caltrans

Figure 2.5 shows the truck network in Santa Cruz County that is located on the state highway system. Trucks also rely on locally-maintained arterial streets and some major collector streets. Watsonville's truck network of city-maintained streets consists of Airport Boulevard, Walker Street, streets located in its industrial zones, and portions of other streets that connect an industrial zone to Highway 152. The city of Santa Cruz's truck network of city-maintained streets consists of Bay Street north of Mission Street, Soquel Avenue between Morrissey Boulevard and the eastern city limit, Morrissey Boulevard between Soquel Avenue and Highway 1, and the portions of Empire Grade and Ocean Street/Graham Hill Road connecting to the county-maintained portions. The County and cities of Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville prohibit through trucks from certain major streets. Major streets that do not prohibit trucks and essentially serve as part of the countywide truck network include Mt. Hermon Road, 41st Avenue, and Soquel Drive.

The truck network directly serves all the industrial areas of the county, the largest of which are in western

Watsonville, northern Santa Cruz, and northern Live Oak.

Although there are currently no rail intermodal connections in the Central Coast region, rail freight plays a limited but important role. Freight rail service is provided from Watsonville south to the Union Pacific main line in Pajaro serving roughly half a dozen customers and moving primarily lumber, biofuels and agricultural products. The entire Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (Figure 2.1), along with three spurs in Watsonville and the entire wye (junction) in Santa Cruz, are owned by the RTC. St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, a company of Progressive Rail, was the common carrier on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line since 2018. In 2026, the RTC formed a rail subsidiary known as Santa Cruz County Coastal Rail that serves as the common carrier for the line, and will contract out freight service operations.

The 2022 California State Rail Plan and the 2023 California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP) stress the importance of short line railroads, including the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, Santa Maria-Valley Rail, and Monterey Bay Rail Line, and the potential for rail freight to integrate with other freight modes and with passenger rail, lowering energy use and pollution, maintaining global competitiveness, and aiding in developing livable and vibrant communities.

Aviation

Aviation improves mobility options for work and pleasure travel, provides overnight freight options, generates tax revenue, saves lives through emergency response, medical, and firefighting services, produces air cargo revenues, and generates profits for the state's tourism industry.

The Watsonville Municipal Airport, owned by the City of Watsonville, is a general aviation airport without a control tower that serves business and recreational users, and is the only public use airport in Santa Cruz County. The airport is a self-sustaining "enterprise operation" with a staff of nine full-time employees. The airport is home to 285 aircraft and is used extensively by various businesses and specifically the agri-business community. It accommodates over 60,000 operations per year including an estimated 5,000 instrument approaches. The airport has a National Weather Service Automated Surface Observation Station (ASOS) on the field.[8]

Watsonville Municipal Airport runway
Photo: Tarmo Hannula, The Pajaronian

Approximately 45 percent of all general aviation activities for the Monterey Bay Area are served by the airport. Watsonville Economic Benefit Analysis Brochure shows that activity at Watsonville Municipal Airport created $67 million in total economic benefits in the region.[9]

The airport serves as the airport base for several agricultural growers that distribute fruits, berries, and vegetables. In addition to use by private citizens and businesses, the airport is also used for law enforcement (County Sheriff, California Highway Patrol, Coast Guard, and California Fish and Wildlife), medical evacuation, fire suppression and flight instruction.

There are also three private airstrips within the county, located in Bonny Doon, at the Monterey Bay Academy, and Las Trancas/ Big Creek (the latter two operate for private uses amounting to fewer than 10 trips per month). Civil aviation helipads maintained for helicopter use include those at Watsonville Community Hospital and Dominican Hospital. There is also a helicopter pad next to Highway 17 in the Santa Cruz Mountains summit area. Large passenger airports serving the region are in San Jose, Monterey, Oakland, and San Francisco.

NETWORK IMPACTS

When thinking about the transportation network in Santa Cruz County, it is important to understand where people are commuting, high-use routes, and special circumstances that may lead to more wear and tear or congestion. It can also provide information on where people want to go and where investments should be made to best support those needs.

In Santa Cruz County, eighty percent of the population lives in approximately 20% of the area of the county. The California Household Travel Survey estimates that on average each person in California takes 3.6 trips per day. These trips are mostly made between where people live and work, go to school, shop, socialize and recreate.[10]

Employment and Work Trips

Employment opportunities have a significant influence on regional travel patterns. As job availability and population grow, so does the demand on the transportation system. The number of jobs in Santa Cruz County increased by approximately 7% between 2015 and 2023, with slower growth projected at about 6% between 2023 and 2050 (Figure 2.6).

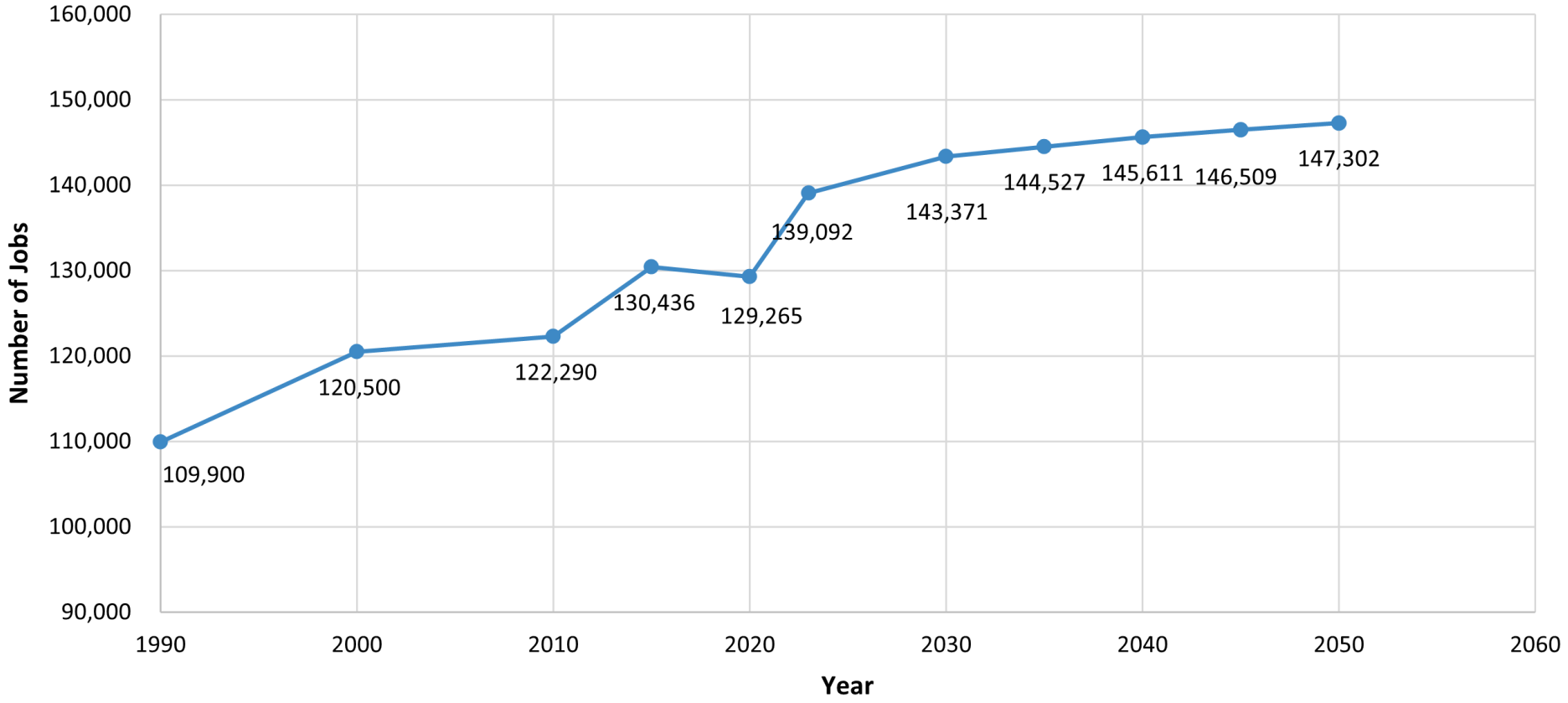


Figure 2.6 – Historical and Projected Number of Jobs in Santa Cruz County
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, EDD- Info USA, AMBAG 2026 Regional Growth Forecast[11]

Many residents living in the southern or more rural areas of the county travel to job centers located in the Santa Cruz-Capitola urban area or commute outside the county for employment (figure 2.8). Figure 2.7 illustrates the primary employment centers across Santa Cruz County, highlighting the main job centers where residents within and outside of the county are commuting to.

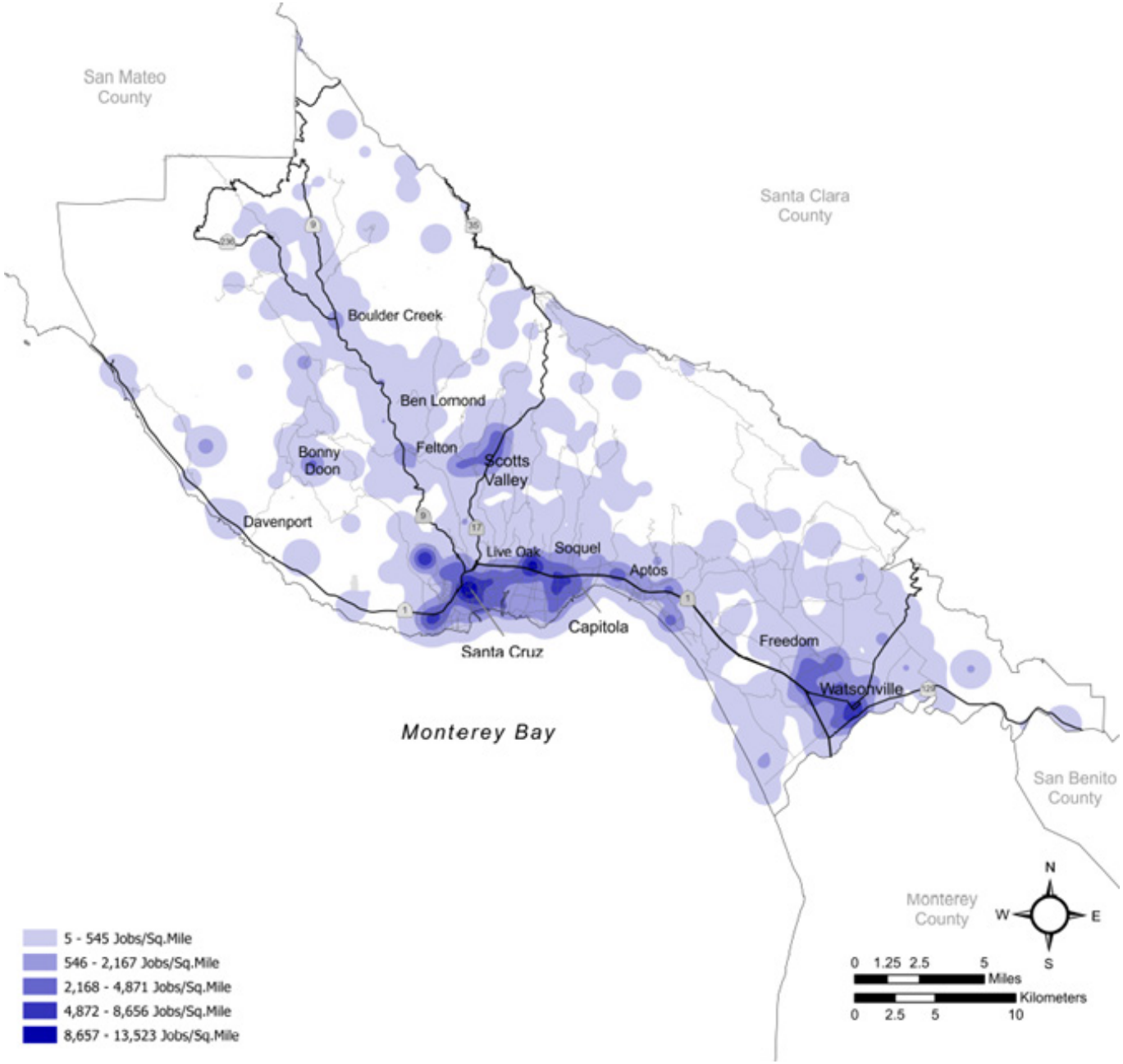


Figure 2.7 – Where People Work in Santa Cruz County
Source: U.S Census Bureau (On the Map), 2022[12]

The mean travel time to work for Santa Cruz County residents is 27.5 minutes, which is longer than 50% of other CA counties, and overtime this value has continued to increase.[13] Contributing factors to longer commute times include increased roadway congestion during peak travel periods and a growing number of residents living farther from their workplaces.

At the same time, technological advances and changing work patterns have made it possible for many individuals to work remotely. According to the American Community Survey (2019-2023), approximately 17% of employed residents in Santa Cruz County work from home most or all the time. This number has more than doubled from 7.8% since 2015-2019 counts.[14]

Overall, employment trends and commuting patterns directly affect transportation system performance, influencing congestion levels, infrastructure needs, and the types of investments required to support both in-person and remote work.

County to County Commute Flows

Commuting patterns also extend beyond county boundaries. Many residents travel outside Santa Cruz County for work, while others commute into the county from neighboring areas. Figure 2.8 shows workers living in Santa Cruz County and the county where the worker is employed, while figure 2.9 shows where residents of neighboring counties live and how many work in Santa Cruz County, giving insight into a typical commute flow.

Data shows that nearly one in four Santa Cruz County residents (22%) commute to jobs outside the county. The most common destinations are Santa Clara County and Monterey County. Conversely, of all people employed within Santa Cruz County, approximately 18,000 workers (15%) live outside the county with 8% commuting from Monterey County and 4% from the San Francisco Bay Area. These regional commuting patterns underscore the importance of coordinated transportation planning between Santa Cruz County and neighboring counties, particularly in addressing corridor congestion, improving intercounty transit services, and supporting sustainable travel options for long-distance commuters.

Workers Living in Santa Cruz County Commute Patterns

County of Residence	County of Work	Total Commuters 2000*	Total Commuters 2006-10**	Total Commuters 2009-13**	Total Commuters 2011-15**	Total Commuters 2012-16**	Total Commuters 2016-20**	% Share of Commuters 2016-20	% Change 2012-16 to 2016-20
Santa Cruz	**Santa Cruz**	93,084	93,245	96,296	99,105	99,440	103,431	78%	4%
Santa Cruz	**Monterey**	5,164	5,779	5,995	6,583	6,490	6,078	5%	-6%
Santa Cruz	**San Benito**	622	538	659	700	545	552	0%	1%
Santa Cruz	**SF Bay Area**	26,243	21,184	20,790	20,619	21,090	21,367	16%	1%
Santa Cruz	*San Francisco*	*621*	*832*	*608*	*714*	*705*	*830*	*1%*	*18%*
Santa Cruz	*San Mateo*	*2,010*	*1,305*	*1,273*	*1,242*	*1,290*	*1,765*	*1%*	*37%*
Santa Cruz	*Santa Clara*	*21,540*	*17,451*	*17,280*	*17,458*	*17,935*	*17,622*	*13%*	*-2%*
Santa Cruz	*Alameda*	*1,419*	*1,007*	*1,118*	*862*	*820*	*926*	*1%*	*13%*
Santa Cruz	*Contra Costa*	*244*	*274*	*227*	*156*	*140*	*49*	*0%*	*-65%*
Santa Cruz	*Solano*	*24*	*10*	*46*	*68*	*70*	*25*	*0%*	*-64%*
Santa Cruz	*Napa*	*49*	*79*	*66*	*34*	*55*	*18*	*0%*	*-67%*
Santa Cruz	*Sonoma*	*142*	*102*	*100*	*55*	*55*	*96*	*0%*	*75%*
Santa Cruz	*Marin*	*194*	*124*	*72*	*30*	*20*	*36*	*0%*	*80%*
Santa Cruz	**Elsewhere**	993	7,277	734	1,138	703	1,495	1%	113%
Santa Cruz	**Total**	**126,106**	**128,023**	**124,474**	**128,145**	**128,268**	**132,923**	**100%**	**0%**

Figure 2.8 – Workers Living in Santa Cruz County Commute Patterns
Source: Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP), Federal Highway Administration.
*U.S. Census Bureau, Census long form data.
**U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year summary data, Commuting Flows[15]

Workers Living Outside Santa Cruz County Commute Patterns

County of Residence	County of Work	Total Commuters 2000*	Total Commuters 2006-10 (Avg)**	Total Commuters 2009-13**	Total Commuters 2011-15**	Total Commuters 2012-16**	Total Commuters 2016-20**	% Share of Commuters 2016-20	% Change 2012-16 to 2016-20
Santa Cruz	**Santa Cruz**	93,084	93,245	96,296	99,105	99,440	103,431	85%	4%
Monterey	**Santa Cruz**	7,601	8,551	9,178	9,640	10,175	10,252	8%	1%
San Benito	**Santa Cruz**	714	848	848	1038	1005	1264	1%	26%
SF Bay Area	**Santa Cruz**	4,738	5,420	5,452	5,829	5,945	5,044	4%	-15%
San Francisco	*Santa Cruz*	*206*	*213*	*259*	*389*	*425*	*244*	*0%*	*-43%*
San Mateo	*Santa Cruz*	*214*	*441*	*332*	*475*	*405*	*319*	*0%*	*-21%*
Santa Clara	*Santa Cruz*	*3,463*	*3,725*	*4,045*	*4,249*	*4,375*	*4,052*	*3%*	*-7%*
Alameda	*Santa Cruz*	*462*	*522*	*606*	*410*	*405*	*195*	*0%*	*-52%*
Contra Costa	*Santa Cruz*	*141*	*235*	*100*	*219*	*235*	*175*	*0%*	*-26%*
Solano	*Santa Cruz*	*61*	*36*	*14*	*0*	*0*	*8*	*0%*	*n/a*
Napa	*Santa Cruz*	*30*	*12*	*5*	*10*	*10*	*0*	*0%*	*-100%*
Sonoma	*Santa Cruz*	*70*	*222*	*67*	*32*	*35*	*51*	*0%*	*46%*
Marin	*Santa Cruz*	*91*	*14*	*24*	*45*	*55*	*0*	*0%*	*-100%*
Elsewhere	**Santa Cruz**	1,259	11,262	1,588	1,527	1,277	1,622	1%	27%
Total	**Santa Cruz**	**107,396**	**119,326**	**113,362**	**117,139**	**117,842**	**121,613**	**100%**	**1%**

Figure 2.9 – Workers Employed in Santa Cruz County
Source: Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP), Federal Highway Administration.
*U.S. Census Bureau, Census long form data.
**U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year summary data, Commuting Flows[16]

Visitors and Tourism

Beyond needing to understand the travel patterns from residents and employees, Santa Cruz County is a popular tourist destination that attracts an estimated 3 million visitors per year, who, according to Visit California's 2024 Economic Impact of Travel, together spend over $1.4 billion and support 10,880 local jobs.[17] Tourism creates a unique traffic pattern in Santa Cruz County where daily traffic volumes on Highway 17 during summer weekends are typically higher than on weekdays. Similarly, Highway 1 traffic volumes on summer weekends are comparable to typical weekday congestion. Visitors also impact the local network with over $142 million spent on ground transportation and gas.

An important role the county and neighboring jurisdictions play is ensuring access to the many recreational and natural resources available in the area, such as the beaches, state parks, and trails, to the rest of the state's residents and visitors that travel from farther distances. The influx of visitors is generally seasonal as well as event based with the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and several beaches and business districts attracting a large percentage of these visitors.

The University of California Santa Cruz, with a population of approximately 20,000 students, also brings numerous people throughout the year from outside the county.

Due to the county's unique travel patterns from tourism, there must also be creative solutions to reduce congestion and VMT. One example of such an effort is the travel demand management study for Highway 1 north of Santa Cruz, where most of the users are visitors, that the RTC is leading in 2025 and 2026. Cruz511 (described below) can also be used by visitors and for irregular or non-work trips.

Goods Movement Impact and Needs

U.S. Highway 101 is the primary truck route for the Central Coast region. The key routes that connect Santa Cruz County with the rest of the Central Coast region's freight network are Highways 1, 129, and 17. Major truck bottlenecks occur along the Highway 1 corridor, which experiences high levels of congestion and unreliable travel times. Notable segments with frequent bottlenecks include Highway 1 southbound from Emeline Avenue to State Park Drive and Highway 1 northbound from Rio Del Mar Boulevard to Soquel Drive.[18] The most recent available calculation of truck travel time reliability on Highway 1 in the mid-county area resulted in a ratio of 2.32, meaning that travel in congested periods takes 2.32 times more time than average.[19] Santa Cruz County is also one of the few counties without designated truck parking facilities, leaving drivers without authorized locations to take rest breaks or park in emergencies.

Santa Cruz County Highway	2017 Daily Truck Volume*	2018 Daily Truck Volume*	2019 Daily Truck Volume*	2020 Daily Truck Volume*	2021 Daily Truck Volume*	2022 Daily Truck Volume*	2023 Daily Truck Volume*	% of Total Traffic Volume
Highway 1	5814	6120	5604	5220	5460	5880	5400	6.0%
Highway 9	1841	1939	1722	1785	1785	1785	1785	7.0%
Highway 17	2301	2376	2142	1650	1650	2130	2220	3.0%
Highway 129	2159	2301	2537	2537	2537	2360	2313	11.8%
Highway 152	910	956	1085	910	945	945	840	3.5%

Figure 2.10 – Annual Average Daily Truck Volumes on Highways in Santa Cruz County
Source: Caltrans Traffic Data Branch[20]
Notes: Trucks include two-axle, 6-wheel vehicles and larger. Truck volumes are from locations with highest counts on each highway

Figure 2.10 lists the annual average daily truck volumes on highways in Santa Cruz County. Truck traffic accounts for nearly 12% of overall daily traffic on Highway 129. In comparison, truck traffic on Highways 1, 17, and 152 range from 3% to 7% of overall vehicular traffic. There have been relatively consistent truck volumes across all highways in recent years, with Highway 1 having the most trucks.. However, as the population grows, the demand for more goods into the county will likely increase.

Investment in goods movement supports job creation, ensures access to a diversity of products, improves truck speed and reliability, and reduces bottlenecks. However, goods movement can also create adverse effects such as zoning changes that prohibit future housing investments, increased air pollution, roadway congestion and delays, and disproportionate impacts on equity priority communities where there is a higher proportion of people who are low-income, are people of color, seniors, youth, or have disabilities. For example, there are high equity priority residential neighborhoods in southwestern Watsonville which have been zoned industrial and designated as part of the truck network.

Local and regional governments can support goods movement industries by improving the efficiency of goods movement to major destinations and intermodal facilities. This includes maintenance of key roadways, improved travel time reliability on highways and arterials, improving safety on key routes and increasing options for shipping freight by rail.

According to the Economic Contributions of Santa

Cruz County Agriculture report, agriculture contributed more than $1.5 billion to the local economy in 2023 and supported nearly 12,000 jobs, both directly and indirectly. The total estimated gross production value of Santa Cruz County agricultural commodities for 2024 is approximately $742 million, a 13.3% increase from 2023.[21]

When looking at freight volumes from 2012, sand and gravel products are the largest commodity group in Santa Cruz County at 35% of the total, or 9.2 million tons.[22] Agricultural goods were the second largest commodity by volume, estimated at 2.5 million tons in 2012. Trucks are the preferred mode for time-sensitive agricultural products, including fresh produce and other agricultural commodities. There are refrigeration (coolers) and packing facilities for agricultural products located in and around Watsonville, contributing to increased freight traffic for farm products. In addition, strawberries and cane berries are major crops in the county and are particularly labor-intensive seasonally. Figure 2.11 shows the county-level distribution of goods

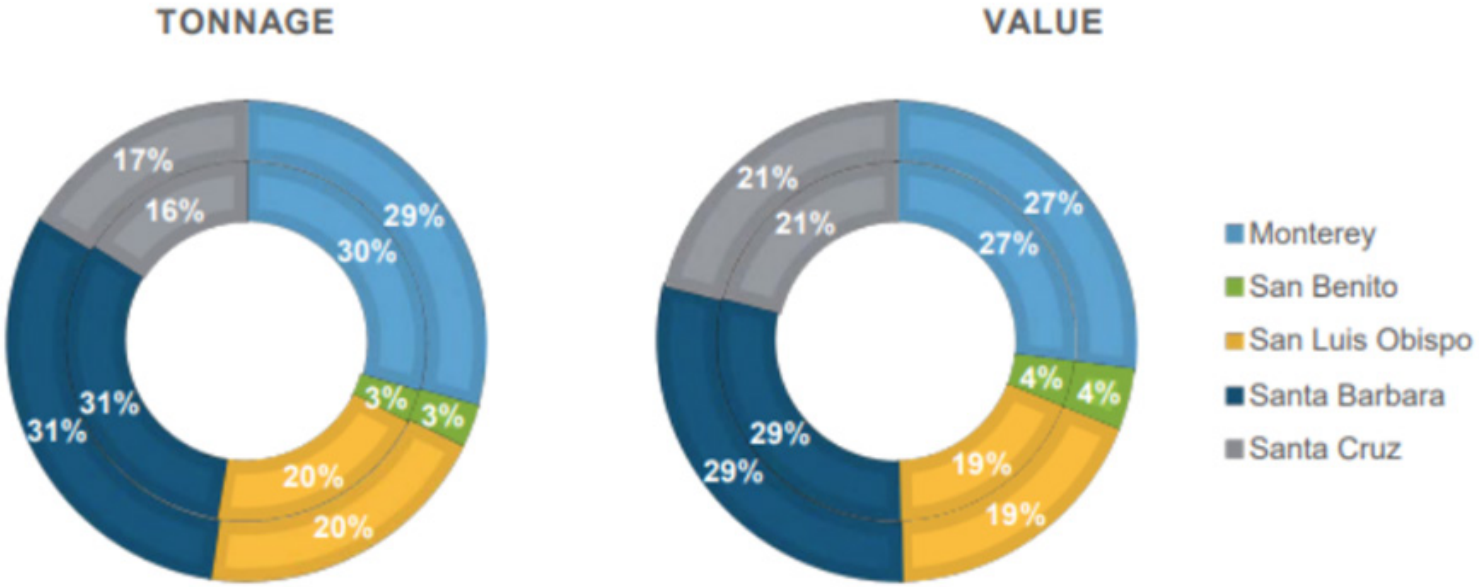


Figure 2.11 - County-Level Distribution of Inbound Freight Tonnage and Value, 2022 (Inner) and 2050 (Outer)
Source: AMBAG's 2024 California Central Coast Sustainable Freight Study

(tonnage and value) shipped into the Central Coast region for 2022 and projections for 2050.

Upward pricing pressure on the trucking industry due to rising fuel costs, congestion, additional wear and tear on roads caused by trucks, as well as safety and environmental concerns, have prompted the region's freight and transportation stakeholders to look for alternatives for transporting goods. The rail system is one of the main options available.

AMBAG undertook the Central Coast Sustainable Freight study in 2024 to identify short-term and long-term strategies to improve freight mobility and transportation operations along the U.S. 101 corridor from San Benito County through Santa Barbara County.[23] The Sustainable Freight Study's goals and objectives were developed to align with those goals and objectives defined in the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP) adopted in 2023, Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), and the California Transportation Plan (CTP). The U.S. 101 corridor supports the economic vitality of the Central Coast area as a major goods movement corridor. The report recommends partnering with Caltrans to conduct a regional freight rail study with the goal of increasing options for shippers in the Central Coast to improve freight connectivity to other regions in California and nationwide. The Sustainable Freight Study additionally recommends that a feasibility study be conducted for developing dedicated truck parking facilities for freight in Santa Cruz County.

Airport Impacts

The Watsonville Municipal Airport provides economic and emergency event value to Santa Cruz County. Due to federal safety requirements, development within certain distances of the runway are limited. In 2024, the city council decided to deactivate the secondary runway, called the "crosswind runway", which is used when fog limits the use of the main runway. Because the crosswind runway is oriented differently from the main runway, its deactivation is expected to allow increased development in the vicinity. It will take several years before this begins.

KEY NETWORK ISSUES

A well-connected and equipped transportation network is crucial to accomplishing Santa Cruz County's transportation goals. However, challenges exist in creating a seamless network that connects all modes equitably, safely, and efficiently. Some physical reasons include congestion or gaps in pedestrian facilities. On top of these are challenges reaching the most rural populations, maintaining old or damaged facilities, and the ongoing impacts from climate related disasters. Two main reasons jurisdictions are challenged in addressing these issues are because of limited funding and lack of data to plan effectively.

Congestion

Rising traffic congestion is an inescapable condition in most urban areas and on state highways, having

negative effects on daily commuters' quality of life. Figure 2.12 shows average annual daily traffic volumes on state highways in Santa Cruz County. Of the six state highways in the county, Highway 1 has the highest average daily traffic, as it is the primary north-south travel route in the region. Between the cities of Watsonville and Santa Cruz, Highway 1 is congested at peak travel times with peak periods stretched through the day between Santa Cruz and Aptos. On the most congested segments of Highway 1, in the vicinity of Soquel Avenue and Morrissey Boulevard interchange, weekday traffic volumes are on average around 90,000. High traffic volumes on Highway 1 translate into longer travel times on both Highway 1 and parallel arterial routes (e.g., Soquel Drive and Capitola Road).

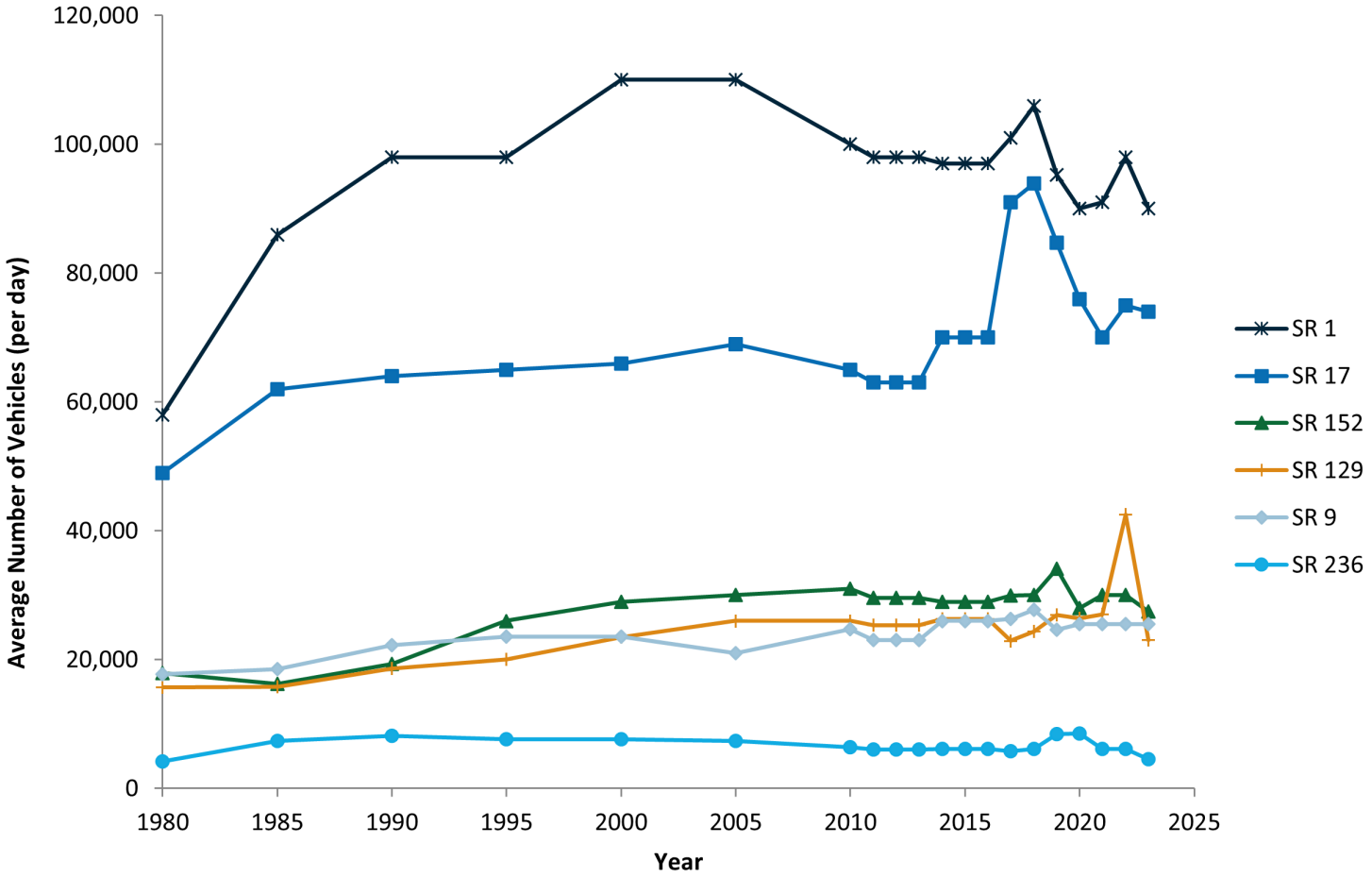


Figure 2.12 – Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes at Most Traveled Segments on State Highways in Santa Cruz County
Source: Caltrans Traffic Data Branch

Traffic volumes on Highway 1 declined between 2005 through 2016, likely due to the increased level of congestion or delay on the highway rather than decreased demand. As traffic flow slows during peak periods, highway daily traffic volumes decrease as motorists use alternative arterial and local roads to try to find a faster route.

Traffic volumes on Highway 17 increased around 6% between 2016 and 2023. Congestion on Highway 17 is primarily in the northbound direction during the morning peak and in the southbound direction during the evening peak as it is the primary travel corridor for over 20,000 daily commuters going to jobs in the Bay Area. Congestion on Highway 17 resulting from collisions on this winding, mountainous highway, with little or no shoulder space, can hold up traffic for long periods of time given the challenge of accessing and clearing incidents and detouring vehicles to other roads. Highways 9, 129, 152, and 236, although not as heavily traveled as Highways 1 and 17, have also seen increasing traffic volumes (Figure 2.12). Both Highways 1 and 17 also experience significant volumes and congestion on weekends and seasonally from visitors.
Despite high traffic volumes on state highways in Santa Cruz County, most travel occurs on the arterials, collectors and local streets and roads. Figure 2.13 provides average daily traffic volumes for motor vehicles on two, four and six lane arterials in Santa Cruz County. The most heavily traveled segment of each road is provided, where counts were available.

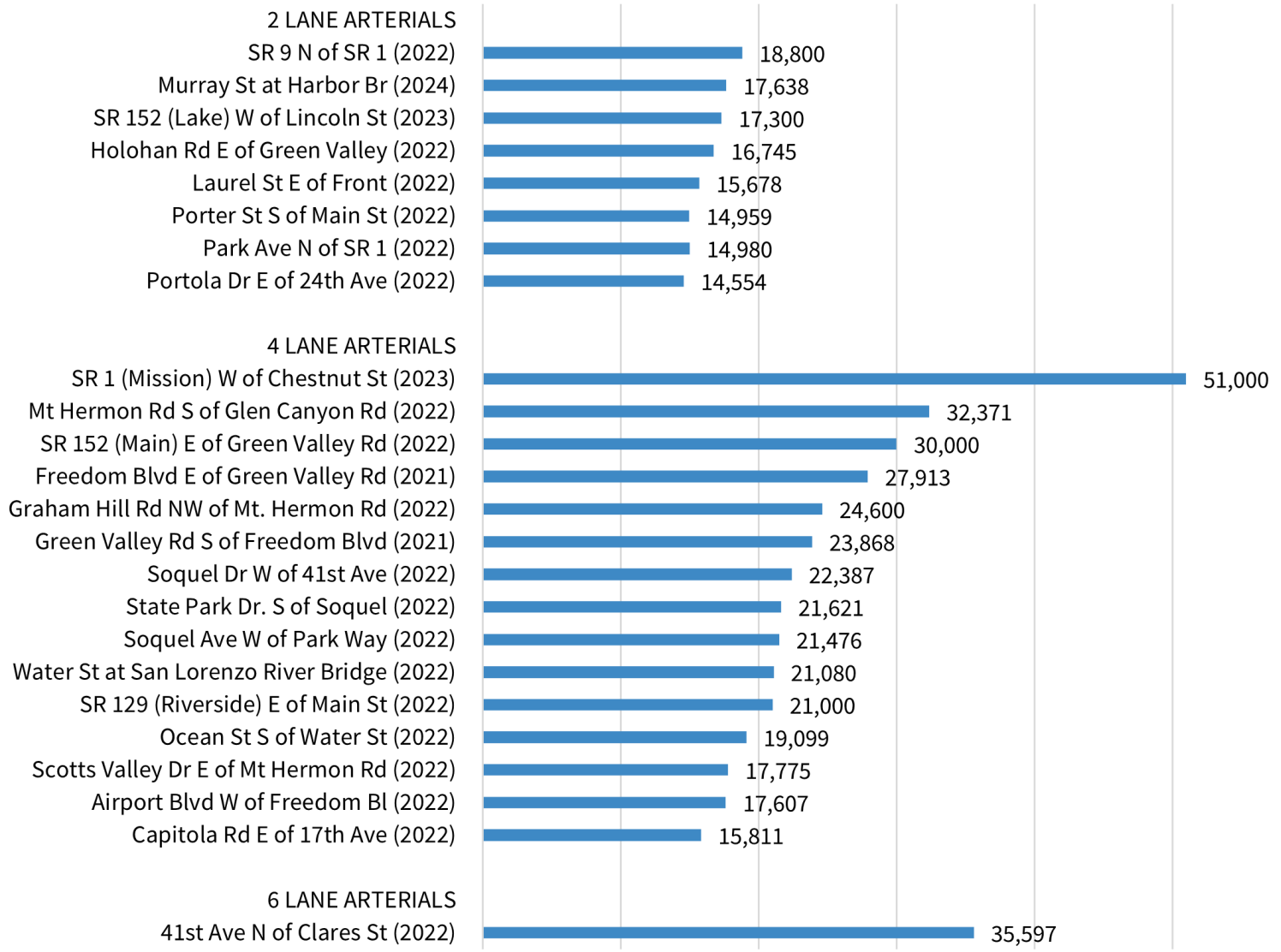


Figure 2.13 – Local ADT: Average Daily Traffic Volumes at Most Traveled Segments on Selected Surface Roads
Source: RTC, Caltrans Traffic Data Branch, City of Watsonville. Year collected is provided in parentheses.

Network Gaps

Despite a more recent focus on the community and personal, economic, and health benefits of active transportation, extensive gaps and other deficiencies in the network still exist. The condition of a sidewalk or lack of a bicycle lane can constitute a barrier, particularly if there are cracks, lift, vegetation or other obstructions blocking access. Network gaps create safety concerns, especially in high-use corridors. Vehicles and pedestrians must then compete for space in the right-of-way and those not in cars are more vulnerable to collisions.

Gaps also exist between transit service areas and frequency of service. With Reimagine METRO, buses since 2022 are more frequent on several major routes, but Santa Cruz County has many rural areas that are not serviced by these routes.

There are existing regional and state transit services which riders can connect to in San Jose via the METRO/ AMTRAK Highway 17 Express Bus; A new train station in Pajaro is under development by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) less than one mile from Watsonville, which would create a link to the statewide rail network, connecting to the San Francisco Bay Area and planned increased passenger train service along the California Central Coast. The RTC, in coordination with project partners, evaluated passenger rail service as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Concept Report completed in 2025. RTC is seeking funding for the next phase of project development and due to the project cost estimates, passenger rail is considered a longer-term transportation solutions. A map of existing and planned rail services around Santa Cruz County is shown in Figure 2.14.

Figure 2.14 - Regional rail network surrounding Santa Cruz County
Source: RTC

Infrastructure Vulnerability

Santa Cruz County has many roads and facilities in need of repair. Damage occurs over time as infrastructure ages and due to the growing frequency and intensity of storms, coastal flooding, fires, and extreme weather events that threaten the transportation system and are described in Chapter 1. These events damage roads and bridges, disrupt transit service, isolate communities, and delay emergency responses. Like many jurisdictions, keeping up with all the maintenance tasks is a difficult challenge and may be hard to predict.

Data Availability

Accurate, comprehensive, and well-managed data are the foundation of effective transportation planning. In Santa Cruz County, coordinated data collection and management enable the RTC and its partners to understand existing conditions, forecast future needs, evaluate system performance, and prioritize investments across all travel modes. Data regarding commute patterns, seasonal tourism, agricultural freight movement, growing active transportation use, and roadway conditions inform investments in a safe, efficient, and equitable transportation network.

While the RTC and partner agencies have a multitude of local data sets, as well as access to external sources, several gaps remain. For example, bicycle and pedestrian counts, truck counts on local roads, and information on the sidewalk network are all limited. In addition, many metrics may be available countywide, by jurisdiction, or by state highway, but require additional resources to measure specifically within equity priority areas. Expanding local data collection and improving data-sharing agreements among agencies will strengthen the county's ability to assess needs, monitor progress, and support competitive grant applications.

Funding

Santa Cruz County's transportation funding landscape includes a complex mix of federal, state, regional, and local sources, each with its own eligibility rules, timelines, and reporting requirements. Transportation funding in

California, and particularly in smaller regions like Santa Cruz County, faces persistent challenges that affect the ability to maintain existing infrastructure, invest in needed improvements, and collect/maintain data. The costs of preserving, operating, and expanding the transportation network continue to rise faster than available revenues. As a result, local agencies must make increasingly difficult choices about how to allocate limited funds to meet growing travel demand, address safety and climate goals, and maintain essential services.

Further discussion and an overview of the financial environment is discussed in Chapter 5.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Santa Cruz County's transportation system runs more efficiently and safely due to a variety of Traffic Operation System (TOS) components. Caltrans installs, operates and maintains these systems along Highway 1 and Highway 17 and works in cooperation with California Highway Patrol and the RTC to assure they are being used to the greatest benefit. Components include the following:

- **Changeable Message Signs (CMS)** - displays messages about roadway conditions (incidents, delays)
- **Dynamic Curve Warning Signs** - broadcasts driver speeds and cautions drivers about safe speeds
- **Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) Cameras** - displays live traffic conditions online to public and Caltrans TMC
- **Traffic Monitoring Stations** - obtains information about traffic speeds and counts
- **Traffic Management Centers (TMC)** - operators at the Oakland TMC and San Luis Obispo TMC control and operate the individual TOS components
- **QuickMap** – Caltrans mobile and desktop application that displays real-time traffic speeds, construction zones, incidents reported to the CHP, CMS messages and CCTV images

These systems are critical to traffic flow, since single-incident disruptions, such as crashes or construction projects, are responsible for a good portion of all freeway traffic jams. Better information and communication can improve the county's major commute thoroughfares in an economical way.

Transportation System Management

Transportation System Management (TSM) is a strategy of implementing operational projects that can enhance the efficiency of the existing transportation system. Generally, TSM techniques are designed to improve

traffic flow and air quality, as well as enhance system accessibility and safety. Often, the costs associated with TSM strategies are lower in cost than constructing new facilities. Example strategies include intersection and signal improvements (e.g., signal synchronization along a corridor, transit queue jumps, and transit signal priority), high-occupancy vehicle lanes, bus lanes, incident management, auxiliary lanes, and ramp metering.

One example of recent TSM is the adaptive traffic signals on 41st Avenue. Dozens of adaptive signals have also been installed on Soquel Drive and will improve efficiency once a signal is installed at the final stop-controlled intersection located at Robertson Street. 60 transit-priority signal upgrades were funded in 2025 to be installed along METRO's major bus Route 1 and Route 2.

Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a general term for the use of strategies that result in the more efficient use of transportation resources. These strategies are designed to increase the number of people using sustainable transportation options such as carpooling, bicycling, walking, telecommuting and taking transit. Since 1979, the RTC has worked with partner agencies to implement TDM strategies at a local level as well as at the regional level. Partner agencies include local jurisdictions and non-profits such as Ecology Action and Community Bridges. Regional strategies include traveler information services, carpool/vanpool matching, workplace-based commute programs, park and ride lot coordination, commute incentives for new development projects or other higher-density areas, and marketing campaigns.

The RTC provides TDM services through Cruz511.org, offering dynamic ride matching, multi-modal trip planning, transit resources, and an interactive traffic map with real-time travel conditions including incident details and road or lane closures on county roads and state highways. Knowledgeable travel counselors are also available by phone or email to provide personalized trip planning and support employer commute programs.

In 2019, the City of Santa Cruz launched GO Santa Cruz, a commute incentive program for downtown employees, and in 2021, the RTC expanded a similar program countywide, called GO Santa Cruz County. GO Santa Cruz County offers a variety of incentives to help commuters choose options other than driving alone to get to work or school, and is a key part of the RTC's ongoing effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and play an active role in addressing climate change. The program is partially funded by voter-approved Measure D, which provides a balanced vision to improve, operate and maintain Santa Cruz County's transportation network.

Safety and Congestion Management

Due to the steep terrain, curves, and high numbers of traffic incidents, a Safe on 17 Task Force was formed in

1998. Components of the Safe on 17 program include additional enforcement by California Highway Patrol to help enforce posted speed limits, construction projects by Caltrans to improve operational efficiency, and a public information and education campaign. Additionally, call boxes and changeable message signs were installed, and the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) service was initiated.

The RTC manages the Freeway Service Patrol Program (FSP) which operates roving tow trucks on both Highways 1 and 17 primarily during peak commute or visitor periods to provide quick fixes or tows for stranded vehicles. The FSP is a congestion management tool to keep traffic moving and reduce congestion by assisting motorists with minor roadside repairs and removing disabled vehicles from the roadway. Removing obstructions on the freeways as rapidly as possible has a positive impact on traffic volumes by eliminating problems which contribute to non-recurrent congestion. In 2026, the RTC plans to discontinue the call boxes due to very low usage in an age of improved rural cellular coverage and emergency satellite cellular services.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The RTP provides a comprehensive high-level overview of the existing and planned transportation network. It is complemented by more detailed studies and plans prepared by the RTC, local jurisdictions and transportation partners. Below is a summary of a few of the plans that provide more detailed analysis of different elements of Santa Cruz County's multimodal transportation network.

Unified Corridor Investment Study

Highway 1 and Soquel Ave/Dr are two of the most heavily traveled roadways in Santa Cruz County. Freedom Blvd provides an extension of Soquel Ave/Dr in the southern

portion of Santa Cruz County. The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line provides an opportunity to provide transportation options between north and south county.

The Unified Corridor Investment Study examined which transportation improvements work together to make the most effective use of the community's major north/south transportation corridors.[24] The study identifies projects that serve people traveling by auto, transit, bicycle and walking and groups projects into scenarios. The scenarios provide a tool to understand how changes in the transportation system could impact the community and to evaluate future potential uses for the rail right-of-way as required by Measure D.

The study's goals are to increase transit ridership, improve travel times, and enhance connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists by recommending projects like buffered/protected bike lanes, transit signal priority, and improved bus stops and intersections along Soquel Drive and Freedom Boulevard. Its implementation is already underway in the form of Santa Cruz-Watsonville Multimodal Corridor Program projects as well as the start of environmental analysis for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail project.

Rural Highway Safety Plan

The Santa Cruz County Rural Highway Safety Action Plan (RHSP) seeks to enhance safety for all users of the County's six conventional highways: specifically, Highway 1 north of the City of Santa Cruz city limits, Highway 9, Highway 236, Highway 35, and Highways 129 and 152 outside the City of Watsonville city limits, which

collectively function as main streets, intercommunity connectors, and rural highways.[25]

This RHSP plan is currently being produced through collaboration with Caltrans District 5, the Santa Cruz County Community Traffic Safety Coalition, County of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO), San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District (SLVUSD), Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), UC Santa Cruz, first responders, local stakeholders such as community-based business associations, neighborhood associations, and residents of the community.

The objective is to identify locations of patterns of crashes to generate and prioritize a suite of implementable countermeasures, to create a roadmap to Vision Zero. The intent is to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2050 with projects and strategies implemented through close partnerships with Caltrans.

The RHSP project team will perform a comprehensive

data-driven analysis to identify crash locations, severity, factors, and types of crashes from 2014 to 2023 that include pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, as well as conduct a literature review and transportation inventory. The data collected will be used to identify transportation needs and a transportation strategy development.

Active Transportation Plans

Active Transportation Plans are local master plans for the prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements. They assess the latest network infrastructure, safety needs, policies, and education programs and provide various recommendations through a public process. Recent plans have been developed by the County of Santa Cruz (2022), City of Scotts Valley (2021), and City of Santa Cruz (2017), with an update to Santa Cruz's underway in 2025 and a new plan for Capitola to get underway in 2026.

Equity Plan

In December 2025, the RTC adopted a Transportation Equity Action Plan (Equity Plan). The Equity Plan documents transportation disparities in Santa Cruz County, updates the regional definition of equity priority communities, identifies transportation priorities and engagement strategies that can reduce disparities, and includes an assessment of RTC policies, procedures and practices. Implementation of the Equity Action Plan, including ongoing staff trainings, more extensive project and program evaluation, and more robust outreach and engagement support and build upon RTP goals and policies.

Vision Zero

Vision Zero is a global initiative aiming to eliminate all traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. It is a road safety strategy that reframes traffic collisions as preventable tragedies and operates on the principle that human error is inevitable, so the transportation system must be designed to account for it. Key components include using a Safe System approach to design safer roads, managing speed limits, and implementing data-driven policies to improve infrastructure and safety for all road users. Several cities and the County of Santa Cruz are developing Vision Zero/Safe Streets for All plans.

Vision Zero policies and plans emphasize designing safer streets for all modes, managing speeds to reduce crash severity, and using data-driven approaches to improve safety outcomes.

The RTC incorporates Vision Zero principles into its safety goals, project prioritization, and ongoing planning activities. The Watsonville Vision Zero Task Force, a collaboration among the City of Watsonville, RTC, and community partners, advances these goals locally by developing and implementing targeted safety strategies. The County of Santa Cruz and the City of Scotts Valley also have established Vision Zero action plan committees to oversee development and implementation of these plans.

CONCLUSION

The transportation network in Santa Cruz County is extensive, interconnected, and continually evolving.

Balancing investments across different modes while responding to new opportunities and challenges requires ongoing coordination and strategic decision-making. The transportation system not only connects the region's residents, visitors, and goods but also shapes land use patterns and influences other planning areas such as housing, utilities, and disaster response.

Although this RTP focuses on transportation, it recognizes that transportation planning does not exist in isolation; it depends on collaboration among all jurisdictions and partner agencies across sectors to ensure a cohesive, efficient, and resilient countywide network.

By identifying where the transportation network experiences the greatest impacts and understanding where people need and want to travel, decision-makers can better prioritize resources. Addressing key issues such as congestion, safety, and network gaps creates opportunities to improve both system performance and user experience. As the transportation system evolves, advancements in technology and data management will enable more efficient maintenance and operations, enhancing the movement of people and goods throughout the region.

Each component of this chapter builds upon the next, emphasizing the importance of coordination, strategic investment, and shared responsibility. Together, these efforts support progress toward the five RTP goals, outlined in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

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