

Santa Cruz County

North Coast Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan



Fehr & Peers

MAY 2026

Executive Summary





Introduction

The Santa Cruz North Coast is a unique coastal corridor defined by its scenic landscapes, state and federal public lands and trails, and popular recreational destinations and beaches. Stretching approximately 17 miles along Highway 1 between the City of Santa Cruz and the San Mateo County line, the North Coast attracts travelers year-round. Ongoing and planned investments are expected to further increase visitation in the coming years, such as the California Coastal Trail, the North Coast Rail Trail, and the recently opened Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, which is expected to receive approximately 200,000 – 350,000 visitors annually.

The purpose of the North Coast TDM Plan is to identify solutions that reduce dependence on driving while improving access by walking, biking, transit, and shared transportation. Building on previous planning efforts and shaped by community input, the North Coast TDM Plan provides a roadmap for managing travel demand in a way that supports safety, protects the natural environment, provides alternatives to driving, and preserves the unique character of the North Coast for current and future generations.

As visitation on the North Coast continues to grow, there is a clear need for a coordinated approach that enhances the overall travel experience on the North Coast.

Vision and Objectives

The vision for the North Coast TDM Plan was created in partnership with stakeholders and the community and establishes the framework for developing strategies and prioritizing TDM projects, programs, and services.

The following TDM objectives provide the framework to achieve this transportation vision. These objectives help identify specific, actionable outcomes for the North Coast TDM Plan. The six overarching North Coast TDM objectives listed below represent common themes and values that apply to all people traveling on the North Coast. Specific objectives by traveler profile (different types of North Coast travelers) are included in **Section 1.4**.

The vision for the North Coast TDM Plan is to make **alternatives to driving more appealing, safe, accessible, and affordable for all**, which enhances the experience of residents and visitors alike. For individuals choosing to drive, this plan envisions managing parking in a way that reduces conflicts between users and improves functionality on Highway 1.



Provide **flexible transportation options** within the North Coast that support diverse groups



Preserve the natural environment for future generations by managing the amount of driving



Ensure there is **local input** in planning



Make the North Coast more **accessible to more people**, including non-drivers



Improve **parking management** to reduce conflicts



Improve **access, safety, and navigation** to the North Coast for those who do drive

Understanding Travel Needs on the North Coast

To ground the TDM strategies in real conditions, the project team conducted a comprehensive assessment of existing travel patterns and transportation conditions along the North Coast. Additional information on existing conditions and travel needs is included in **Chapter 2**.

Travel Patterns and Visitation

Analysis of available travel data shows that most visitors to the North Coast originate from Santa Cruz County and the broader San Francisco Bay Area. Travel demand is highly seasonal and peaks on weekends, holidays, and during spring and summer months. The most active times of day typically occur between 12 PM and 4 PM, which is when parking demand is highest.

Most visitors travel to the North Coast by car due to limited transit service and constrained non-motorized connections. Once on the corridor, visitors often make multiple stops at beaches, parks, and trailheads, leading to repeated vehicle circulation and competition for limited parking.

When is the North Coast Most Popular?



Season: Spring and Summer



Day of Week: Weekends



Time of Day: Afternoon (12 PM – 4 PM)



Existing Transportation Conditions

The North Coast transportation system includes Highway 1, local roads, trails, beaches, parking areas, and limited transit service. Key existing transportation conditions and challenges include:

- Highway 1 functions as both a regional connector and local access roadway resulting in **high traffic volumes and temporary back-ups** during peak periods, including **delays** from cars entering and exiting parking areas and slower recreational vehicles.
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is fragmented, with **significant gaps, limited crossings** of Highway 1, and **barriers for users with mobility challenges**.
- **Transit service is limited** and primarily oriented toward commuter and school travel, with **minimal amenities at bus stops**.
- Parking supply is **constrained** and

unevenly distributed, leading to informal roadside parking, unexpected vehicle turning and merging movements and potential conflicts between vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The **mobility challenges** identified in the existing conditions analysis (Chapter 2 and Appendix C) define specific access limitations and constraints that are unique to the North Coast and are addressed in the North Coast TDM Plan.

The Existing Conditions analysis highlights multimodal network gaps, current and anticipated capacity constraints, and points of confusion.

Traveler Profiles and Key Needs

Several shared needs emerged across all profiles, reflecting corridor-wide challenges and opportunities. Additional details are included in **Chapter 2**.

Safe and Connected Travel

Safe crossings, sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities that accommodate people of all ages, abilities, and mobility levels.

Clear Access and Navigation

Easily identifiable parking, intuitive routes, and legible transit and wayfinding information.

Inclusive and Equitable Experiences

Facilities and services that support participation by zero-vehicle visitors and people with mobility challenges.

Comfort and Support Amenities

Rest areas, seating, shade, and restrooms that support longer visits and diverse users.

Environmental Stewardship and Guidance

Tools and information that protect sensitive resources while supporting safe, responsible use.

To reflect the diversity of travel patterns, perspectives, and mobility needs along the North Coast, the project team developed **five traveler profiles**, summarized below and additional detail is included in **Section 2.3.1**.



North Coast Residents rely on Highway 1 and local roads for daily travel. They prioritize safety, reliable access, and strategies that reduce visitor related conflicts while preserving community character.



Recreational Travelers travel in large groups or with many things (recreational gear, bags, picnic supplies, etc.,) and arrive by car and are likely to continue doing so. They would benefit from opportunities to park once and safely walk, bike, or use transit between beaches, trails, and other destinations.



Zero Vehicle Travelers access the North Coast without a personal vehicle and depend on transit, walking, bicycling, or shared rides. Continuous trails, reliable transit service, and clear travel information are essential for convenient travel to, from, and around the North Coast.

These profiles present a list of typical user identities and associated existing travel patterns that assist in identifying range of needs for TDM solutions on the North Coast.

For example, the TDM strategies aimed at improving transportation for residents will differ from those designed for day visitors.



Visitors and Tourists may be unfamiliar with the North Coast and seek low-stress travel options, clear wayfinding, and managed parking that helps them navigate the North Coast safely and responsibly. They currently travel by car out of necessity but could be interested in non-driving travel options if they are comfortable and easy to access.



Residents and Visitors with Mobility Challenges require mobility assistance such as a walker or wheelchair and require predictable, accessible routes, ADA-compliant parking and amenities, and infrastructure that supports independent and dignified travel.

Community Engagement and Shared Priorities

Community input was central to shaping the North Coast TDM Plan. Engagement was conducted over three project milestones through pop-up events, workshops, surveys, and stakeholder coordination as described in **Chapter 3**. Participants included residents, visitors, agency partners, and advocacy groups.

and stakeholder coordination as described in **Chapter 3**. Participants included residents, visitors, agency partners, and advocacy groups.

Across engagement activities, several consistent themes emerged:

- **Safety along Highway 1 is the top concern**, particularly related to vehicle speeding, informal parking, and pedestrians crossing Highway 1.
- **Parking should be better managed**, formalized, and located strategically in areas with higher demand.
- There is strong support for improvements that **support walking, bicycling, transit**, and “park once” improvements that reduce vehicle circulation.
- Improvements should respect the **North Coast’s rural character**, environmental constraints, and community values.
- Solutions should be **phased and scalable**, with pilot projects used where appropriate.

This feedback directly informed the Plan’s vision, traveler profiles, and recommended strategies.



Milestone 1: Existing Travel Patterns	Milestone 2: Draft Vision, Objectives, and Travel Profiles	Milestone 3: Draft North Coast TDM Plan
Spring 2025	Winter 2025-2026	Spring 2026
Activities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five pop-ups • One hybrid stakeholder workshop • Online survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three pop-ups • One hybrid stakeholder workshop • One virtual community workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online public comment period • One virtual stakeholder meeting
Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the North Coast TDM Plan • Confirm existing conditions and travel patterns • Gather input on barriers and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and refine the Draft Vision, Objectives, and Traveler Profiles • Gather preferences on potential TDM strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback on the Draft North Coast TDM Plan document
Key Feedback		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, parking, and wayfinding are top needs • Participants want to see more travel options for getting to and around the North Coast including transit and trail connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was strong support for TDM projects, programs, and services that closed trails gaps and expanded transit service • Participants felt that the traveler profiles accurately reflected their needs and travel patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback is currently being collected on the Public Draft North Coast TDM Plan

Recommended TDM Framework and Strategies

The North Coast TDM Plan organizes recommendations into five complementary TDM strategies that together create a comprehensive approach to managing travel on the North Coast:

Accessible Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

TDM projects, programs, and services that allow for accessible, comfortable, and connected pedestrian and bicycle access for all ages and abilities. Connections include new trails, pathways, roadway crossings, bike parking and other related walking and biking improvements.

Well-Planned Vehicle Access

TDM projects, programs, and services that help to manage how vehicles operate on Highway 1, reduce conflicts between users and enhance safety. TDM projects, programs, and services are focused on physical roadway improvements to clarify how vehicles can more easily enter and exit Highway 1.

Clear Signage and Traveler Information

TDM projects, programs, and services that provide information to travelers about how to get around. Information can be provided online to help travelers understand their travel options, encouraging non-driving access and supporting parking management strategies. Once on the North Coast, signage and maps on Highway 1 and at key destinations and trails can help reduce travel stress and improve navigation.

Convenient Transit Services

TDM projects, programs, and services that improve transit by expanding existing bus transit service and adding new transit options such as shuttle services and/or rail service focused on visitors.

Park Once Supportive Facilities

TDM projects, programs, and services that make it easy for travelers to park once in a central location and then walk, bike, or use transit to access multiple destinations on the North Coast without needing to drive and re-park.

Additional information about the TDM strategies and individual TDM projects, programs, and services is included in **Chapter 4**.



TDM Strategies

Categories of projects and programs that collectively achieve the TDM vision.



Accessible Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections



Well Planned Vehicle Access



Clear Signage and Traveler Information



Convenient Transit



Park Once Supportive Facilities

Projects, Programs, and Services

Specific implementable actions organized by category

- ADA Improvement Plan
- Bike Parking
- Micromobility Stations
- Trail Connections
- Highway 1 Crossing Improvements

- Passing and Turn Lane Study
- New Scenic Pull-Outs
- Shared Use Shoulders and Bicycle Separation

- Cell Tower Upgrades
- Visitor Hubs
- Traveler Information Website and Outreach
- Wayfinding Plan

- Expanded Transit Service
- Shuttle Service
- Bus Stop Improvements and Service Upgrades
- On-Demand Microtransit Service
- Rail Service Designed for Visitors

- EV Charging Stations
- New Formalized Parking
- Paid Parking
- Parking Reservation System
- Parking Data Collection
- Parking Enforcement
- Real-Time Parking Information

Priority Projects

Selected high-impact projects that are key to achieving the TDM vision.



Priority Projects

From the full range of recommended TDM projects, programs, and services, five priority projects were identified **as the most impactful and actionable investments for improving transportation access and managing travel demand along the Highway 1 corridor** and may require the most conceptual development to be competitive for grant funding.

- Highway 1 Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings
- Bus Stop Improvements and Service Upgrades
- Trail Connections
- New Formalized Parking
- Paid Parking on the North Coast

To support implementation of these priority projects, **Section 4.3** includes conceptual plans and feasibility considerations for each of the five priority projects.



Implementation Approach

The North Coast TDM Plan outlines a phased implementation strategy including short-, medium-, and long-term TDM projects, programs, and services to align with funding availability, staffing capacity, and interagency coordination needs. Early actions focus on lower-cost, high-impact improvements such as traveler information, bike parking, and transit enhancements, while longer-term efforts address more complex infrastructure and parking management strategies and should be implemented as needed based on future visitation levels.

Successful implementation will require collaboration among SCCRTC, Caltrans, state and local agencies, transit operators, land managers, and the community. Ongoing monitoring and data collection will help track progress, evaluate effectiveness, and adapt strategies over time. **Chapter 5** includes additional guidance on implementation including general implementation considerations and roles and responsibilities as well as feasibility considerations for priority projects and potential funding sources.

Agency	Roles & Responsibilities	
SCCRTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access funding opportunities for project design and construction, as well as services and supporting measures. • Establish innovative regional policies that increase mobility and connectivity on the North Coast • Implement TDM strategies, as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate collaboration between Caltrans, the public, and other stakeholders. • Provide technical and staffing support on TDM implementation. • Monitor implementation efficacy.
Caltrans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and permit projects lead by partner agencies within Caltrans right-of-way. • Lead improvements within Caltrans right of way. • Provide information about permit process, required data and design standards for improvements subject to Caltrans permits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate appropriate TDM projects, programs, and services into Caltrans lead projects, including SHOPP projects. • Monitor implementation efficacy for TDM projects, programs, and services within Caltrans right-of-way.
Other State & Local Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and permit TDM projects, programs, and services where applicable, (for example, paid parking). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead improvements within owned and managed property.
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on implementation of TDM projects, programs, and services. 	

Moving Forward

Ultimately, the North Coast TDM Plan provides a roadmap for managing travel demand in a way that enhances safety, expands access, protects the natural environment, and preserves the character of the North Coast for future generations. With thoughtful implementation and continued partnership, the recommendations in the North Coast TDM Plan can help ensure that the North Coast remains a place where people can move safely, responsibly, and enjoyably today and in the future.

