



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

Draft MINUTES

**Thursday, August 06, 2026
9:00 a.m.**

In-Person Meeting

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chambers
701 Ocean Street, Room 500B
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

1. Roll call. The meeting was called to order at 9:02 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 DeSera

Monica Martinez

Andy Schiffrin (Alt.)

Lowell Hurst (Alt.)

Fabian Leonor

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

Rebecca Downing

Darron Hill

Staff present:

Sarah Christensen

Amin AbuAmara

Grace Blakeslee

Riley Gerbrant

Michele Gomez

Bella Kressman

Shannon Munz

Yesenia Parra

Marim Pearson

Nisha Singh

Mitch Weiss

Steve Mattas (RTC Counsel)

2. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra communicated that handouts for items 6, 14, 17 and replacement pages for item 17 were posted to the RTC website.

3. Oral Communications

Received public comment from:

Bill Richards
Fred Grieder
Brett Garret

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioners DeSerpa and Kalantari-Johnson arrived

Received public comment from:

Matt Ferral
Bill Richards
Brian Peoples

Commissioner Clark made a motion, and Commissioner Martinez seconded, to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Kalantari-Johnson, Clark, Montesino, Downing, Leonor, Keeley, DeSerpa, Koenig, Martinez and Commissioner Alternates Hurst and Schiffrin voting “aye.”

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the June 11, 2026 Regional Transportation Commission Meeting
5. Accepted draft committee meeting minutes
 - a. June 09, 2026 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee
 - b. June 08, 2026 Bicycle Advisory Committee
 - c. June 18, 2026 Interagency Technical Advisory Committee

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

6. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the City of Capitola for Capitola Trestle Seismic Assessment (**Resolution 73-26**)
7. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to award a contract to Community Tree Service, LLC for vegetation control maintenance along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (**Resolution 74-26**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

8. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
9. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues
10. Approved amendments to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27 Budget and Work Program- Climate Resilience for South County Rail Caltrans Planning Grant Award (**Resolution 75-26**)

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

No consent items

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

11. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
12. Accepted letters from committees and staff to other agencies - *none*
13. Accepted information items - *none*

REGULAR AGENDA

14. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Downing noted that the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District appointed Cory Aldridge, CEO to the California Transit Association's new transit funding task force and that Chief Planning and Innovation Officer John Ergo has been selected to serve on the California Transit Association's Advisory Committee. She reported on the planning for the 2026 Week without Driving event taking place from October 1st-8th, noting that the RTC is one of the hosts.

Chair Montesino congratulated Commissioner Alternate Andy Schiffrin on having the Panther Beach parking Lot named in his honor.

Chair Montesino appointed Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Koenig, DeSerpa and himself to an ad hoc committee charged with developing responses to the Grand Jury report.

Received public comment from:

Fred Grieder
Brett Garret
Matt Ferral
Brian Peoples

Commissioner Keeley responded to public comment noting that the Civil Grand Jury process is helpful to jurisdictions. He noted that under the law the RTC is required to respond. He reminded all that this is a Civil Grand Jury not a criminal grand jury. The report looked at the RTC operations and has made recommendations that the ad hoc committee will respond to.

15. Director's Report

Executive Director Sarah Christensen reported on the Panther Beach Parking Lot Ribbon Cutting that took place August 4, 2026. RTC received an award for this project and the parking lot was dedicated to Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin in honor of his years of service.

Executive Director delivered a construction update on the North Coast Rail Trail; Climate Resiliency Grant Award and announced the San Vicente-Wadell community workshop on Thursday, August 27th at 6:00 pm., information is on the RTC website.

Commissioner Hurst thanked staff for the focus on South County, specifically for improvements on Highway 1.

Received public comment from:

Jack Brown
Antonio Rivas

16. Caltrans Report

Darron Hill provided an update on the Sustainable Planning Grants, noting that the annual meeting to discuss grant criteria and the application process is scheduled for August 19. He also provided an update on construction activities along Highway 9 that may impact school-related traffic. Caltrans is adjusting as needed to minimize traffic impacts where feasible. Mr. Hill reminded the Commission that construction projects along Highway 9 will continue for several years; however, Caltrans remains committed to communicating with the community and adjusting construction activities when feasible.

Commissioners expressed appreciation to Caltrans for the work being performed throughout Santa Cruz County, its flexibility, and its quick response to traffic concerns associated with back-to-school traffic. Commissioners also expressed concern regarding construction activities during the County's high tourism season, traffic flow impacts associated with on- and off-ramp closures, bicycle lane striping in Watsonville, outreach protocols for ramp closures, and construction activities that may not be visible to the public.

Executive Director Christensen responded to Commissioner questions, noting that summer is the primary construction season due to favorable weather conditions. She also explained that the outreach protocol involves coordination and partnership with local agencies and Caltrans. The RTC uses e-newsletters, social media, radio, and various other outreach tools to provide the community with information about construction activities and traffic impacts.

Amin AbuAmara, Director of Project Delivery, responded to questions regarding construction schedules for on- and off-ramp closures. He noted that the work is expected to be completed by the end of September 2026. He also explained that construction activity is not always visible to the public for a variety of reasons, including work occurring in areas of the construction site that are not visible from the roadway, electrical work, and construction activities conducted during evening hours.

Darron Hill responded to Commissioner questions and noted that the public can obtain updated information regarding construction activities by visiting the Caltrans website and Facebook page.

Received public comment from:

Bill Richards
Antonio Rivas
Jack Brown

17. Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project contract award

Senior Transportation Engineer Riley Gerbrandt delivered a presentation.

Commissioners discussed the anticipated project timeline; estimated project costs; funding commitments needed to complete the project; the proposed scope of work; and ensuring that the Commission retains authority to select the preferred alternative. Commissioners also discussed RFP protocols, the importance of incorporating equity considerations, coordination with the City of Watsonville and its existing plans, and concerns regarding any predetermined or presupposed project outcomes.

Executive Director Christensen and RTC staff responded to Commissioner questions, noting that RTC staff is working closely with the City of Watsonville to ensure coordination and alignment with the City's existing plans and priorities.

Received public comment from:

Brett Garret
Matt Ferral

Jack Brown
Brian Peoples

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

1. Authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and execute Contract TP2603 for professional engineering services with HDR Engineering, Inc. for a total amount not to exceed \$4,497,545 to complete the Project Approval and Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project; and
2. Amend the approved FY26/27 budget accordingly.
3. Additional directions to staff to bring to the Commission requests for Commission direction on the final decision on preferred alternative(s)

Commissioners discussed the importance of receiving regular updates from consultants regarding project outcomes, particularly concerns and costs associated with specific alternatives. Commissioners emphasized that advancing equity should remain a priority throughout the evaluation and consideration of the alternatives.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Kalantari-Johnson, Clark, Montesino, Leonor, Keeley, DeSerpa, Koenig, Martinez and Commissioner Alternates Hurst and Schiffrin voting "aye."

18. Issuance of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Measure D Sales Tax Revenue Bonds (Limited Tax Bonds) Trail

Nisha Singh, Director of Internal Services presented the staff report.

Commissioners discussed the commitment of Measure D funds; the expectation that project costs will exceed the interest earned; the availability of funding to ensure timely project delivery; future funding needs for Segments 13–20; and the current need to secure funding for both the highway and trail projects.

Staff responded to Commissioner questions.

Brian Forbath, Bond Counsel, confirmed that the pledge is a gross pledge of Measure D funds only. He also noted that the bonds will have a fixed interest rate and that the RTC will have the option to refinance the bonds after 10 years.

Melissa Shick clarified that the RTC is borrowing only within the program areas where bond proceeds will be used to advance projects. She noted that Measure D revenues are projected to be approximately five times the required debt service. She also explained that the RTC's commitment includes embedded coverage.

Executive Director Christensen responded to Commissioner questions and confirmed the RTC's continued commitment to funding Segments 13-20 as funding becomes available.

Received public comment from:

Brett Garret
Fred Greider
Mark Lee
Debbie Bulger

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin motioned, and Commissioner Clark second to approve staff recommendation

1. Authorizing the issuance of not to exceed \$75,000,000 of Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Measure D Sales Tax Revenue Bonds (Limited Tax Bonds), Series 2026 (the Series 2026 Bonds)
2. Authorizing the execution and delivery of a Master Indenture, a First Supplemental Indenture, the Notice Inviting Bids, the Notice of Intention to Sell, the Bond Purchase Agreement, the Preliminary Official Statement, the Continuing Disclosure Certificate, and a CDTFA Agreement, and delegate authority and authorize the taking of all necessary actions to the each of the Authorized Representatives and any other appropriate officer of the RTC to complete said documents.
3. Adopting a Debt Management Policy governing the issuance of debt by the RTC, including the Series 2026 Bonds.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Kalantari-Johnson, Clark, Montesino, Leonor, Keeley, DeSerpa, Downing, Koenig, Martinez and Commissioner Alternates Hurst and Schiffrin voting "aye."

19.  Review of items to be discussed in closed session

Received public comment from:

Grace Blakeslee

CLOSED SESSION

20. Public Employee Performance Evaluation
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6)
Title: Executive Director
21. Conference with Labor Negotiators
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6) Agency Designated
Representatives: Eduardo Montesino and Steve Mattas; Unrepresented
Employee: Executive Director
22. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation (Pursuant to Gov.
Code § 54956.9(d)(4): Initiation of Litigation: Two Cases
23. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation (Pursuant to Gov.
Code § 54956.9(d)(2) Significant Exposure to Litigation: Two Cases

OPEN SESSION

24. Report on items discussed in closed session-NONE

The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.
25. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 3, 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

Antonio Rivas
Matt Ferral
Mark Lee
Debbie Bulger
Bret Garret
Fred Greider
Brian Peoples
Chris Olsen
Tyler Losz
Jack Brown