

TRANSIT CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE TRANSIT CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS?

The Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis (TCAA) will evaluate public transit investment options that provide an integrated transit network for Santa Cruz County utilizing all or part of the length of the rail right-of-way as a dedicated transit facility. A performance-based planning approach based on a triple bottom line sustainability framework will be utilized to assess various public transit options for the rail right-of-way. Transit alternatives will be compared to define a Locally-Preferred Alternative that offers the greatest benefit to Santa Cruz County in terms of equity, environment, and economy. Proposed future intercounty and interregional connections to Monterey, Gilroy, and the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond will be considered.

HOW IS THE TCAA DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES?

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) completed the Rail Transit Feasibility Study in late 2015 to analyze a range of passenger rail transit service along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL), which roughly parallels Highway 1 and the coast along Santa Cruz County. The study was initiated to answer questions regarding how rail transit, in particular, could further transportation goals for Santa Cruz County, provide travel options that enhance communities, the environment, and support economic vitality. Key findings of the Rail Transit Feasibility Study include:

- Technical analysis and evaluation of seven sample service scenarios
- Ridership estimates ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 daily for Watsonville/Pajaro to Santa Cruz service scenario
- Watsonville/Pajaro to Santa Cruz travel times approximately 43 minutes
- Increased transportation choices, alternative to congestion, and potentially reduced sprawl and preserved farmland

In addition, the Unified Corridor Investment Study (UCS) was initiated in 2017 by RTC and completed in January 2019. RTC developed the UCS to evaluate multimodal transportation improvements in three parallel routes in Santa Cruz County, Highway 1, Soquel Avenue/Soquel Drive/Freedom Boulevard, and the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. One of the outcomes of that study was to protect the SCBRL for high-capacity public transit adjacent to a bicycle and pedestrian trail.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROJECT?



The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), in partnership with the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO), is responsible for the TCAA that was initiated in late 2019 as the next phase of planning for a transit corridor along the existing rail right-of-way.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The TCAA will identify use of all or part of the rail right-of-way, between Pajaro Station in Monterey County and Shaffer Road in westside Santa Cruz, as a dedicated transit facility, adjacent to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) that is under development. During the analysis, transit alternatives will be compared to define a viable project that will provide the greatest benefit to Santa Cruz County residents, businesses and traveling visitors.

HOW IS THE TCAA PLANNING EFFORT BEING FUNDED?

The TCAA is being funded by multiple sources including the Moving Santa Cruz County Forward Measure D Program and a grant from the Caltrans, Division of Rail & Mass Transit.

HOW WOULD A FUTURE HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM BE FUNDED?

As part of the TCAA, RTC and METRO are evaluating a variety of federal, state and local funding sources and strategies to support implementation of the Locally-Preferred Alternative. A full listing of potential funding sources is currently being documented and evaluated for the TCAA. A Business Plan for implementation of the Locally-Preferred Alternative will be developed as part of the TCAA that includes governance options, operating plan, marketing strategy as well as the financial plan.

WHAT LEVEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION IS ANTICIPATED ON THE TCAA?

The TCAA phase will utilize a triple-bottom line performance-based planning process to assess and understand corridor needs and identify a locally-preferred scenario. Environmental review will not take place during this project phase. The TCAA will provide a reasonably narrow project definition of the preferred transit project for future environmental review, based on the work performed in this planning study. RTC will consider environmental review of the preferred alternative after completion of the TCAA.

HOW WILL ALTERNATIVES BE NARROWED DOWN TO A LOCALLY-PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

During the TCAA planning process, project goals, screening criteria and performance measures will be established to screen and then evaluate the performance of each potential alternative quantitatively. Potential transit alternatives will consider mode types such as rail, bus and other innovative services. Potential connector services will also be evaluated. The analysis will identify potential infrastructure, vehicle type and right-of-way needs as well as other potential transit features.

Agency partners, local and regional stakeholders and the general public will have the opportunity to provide valuable input on the alternatives and evaluation criteria to aid in



narrowing down to a feasible transit solution. The ultimate goal of the TCAA is to identify one locally-preferred transit alternative that meets the needs of the diverse community for which it will serve.

HOW WILL THE ALTERNATIVES BE COMPARED? The alternatives that are screened down to the short list of alternatives will be compared to a future where no transit project is built on the rail line (future no build) as well as to the other alternatives being evaluated. The future no build analysis will be used to assess and compare the potential performance benefits of the future build alternatives.

WHAT ARE THE TRANSIT CORRIDOR BENEFITS?

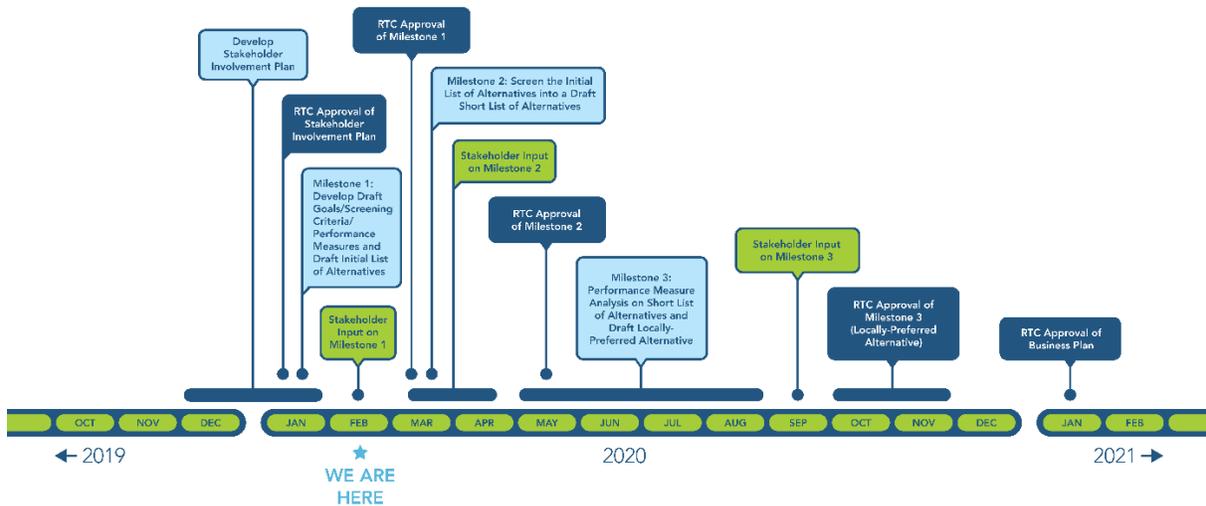
The TCAA will be evaluating the benefits of the various alternatives, but the key highlights of the alternatives analysis include:

- Rail right-of-way is within one mile of half of the county's population and can provide access to 44 schools and 92 parks
- Involves the community, partner agencies, RTC and METRO in the decision-making process to identify a locally-preferred transit alternative and next steps
- Utilizes a performance-based planning approach with a triple bottom line framework of equity, environment and economy
- Develops a strategic business plan for the selected alternative, including a cash flow analysis of environmental clearance, right-of-way, design, construction, operations and maintenance
- Rail Network Integration Study funded by Caltrans will be performed as part of the Alternatives Analysis to assess how the locally-preferred transit alternative on the rail right-of-way would connect at Pajaro to the larger statewide rail and transit system.



WHAT IS THE PROJECT SCHEDULE?

The TCAA kicked off in late 2019 with development of a Communications and Stakeholder Involvement Plan that was approved by RTC in mid-January 2020. Over the next year, there will be three key technical milestones where RTC and METRO will proactively seek stakeholder input during the TCAA process.



HOW CAN I STAY INFORMED?

RTC and METRO are committed to engaging with the public and regional stakeholders throughout the TCAA process. The outreach program will include multiple opportunities to share information, listen and address concerns, as well as seek valuable input to help identify a locally-preferred transit alternative to serve and connect our communities.

Stay informed at sccrtc.org/transitcorridora and subscribe for email updates at sccrtc.org/about/esubscriptions. New information will be distributed electronically through the website, social media and email blasts along with in-person distribution at meetings.

For additional project information, contact Ginger Dykaar, RTC Senior Transportation Planner, at transitcorridora@sccrtc.org or (831) 460-3200. Stay connected with RTC on Facebook and Instagram @sccrtc and Twitter @santacruzrtc.

