



**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP**  
Of The Ventana Chapter  
P.O. Box 604, Santa Cruz, CA 95061  
[ventana.sierraclub.org/santacruz](http://ventana.sierraclub.org/santacruz)

April 6, 2014

ATTN:  
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### **Comments on the 2014 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

Each year, America invests more than \$200 billion in federal, state, and local tax dollars on transportation infrastructure—bridges and highways, aviation and waterways, public transit and sidewalks. But too often transportation projects undermine the higher national and local goals of reducing oil consumption, increasing safety, improving public health, and saving local, state or federal government—and citizens— money.

Americans are struggling with the health, climate, and economic costs of our oil- centered transportation system. While new standards that double fuel efficiency of new vehicles to 54.5 mpg by 2025 and cut carbon emissions in half are essential to reducing our dependence on oil and its many consequences, our transportation investments should provide an opportunity to further reduce our dependence on oil, reverse climate disruption, and save money. Because transportation infrastructure lasts for decades, the impacts of transportation investments are felt for many years to come, with huge consequences for America's ability to move beyond oil.

The transportation infrastructure we build today will either keep us stranded in our cars and at the mercy of gas prices—a situation that today drains too much from our economy every day to pay for foreign oil—or it can promote transportation choices that reduce our reliance on oil, curb air, water, and climate pollution, boost local economies, and improve transportation equity and public health.

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan should support our county in leading the way on green, resilient transportation investments. The Sierra Club Santa Cruz County Group understands that the Regional Transportation Plan must balance the needs of diverse users and must work within highly constrained budgets. Acknowledging the constraints that the RTC staff and commissioners must operate within, we appreciate the 2014 Draft Regional Transportation Plan's inclusion of community input via the STARS process, the triple bottom line approach of the plan, and many of the ambitious targets set by the plan. We also appreciate the RTC's acknowledgement in this draft RTP that HOV lanes on Highway 1 are not a feasible or appropriate strategy at this time.

This being said, the Sierra Club Santa Cruz Group believes that the RTP can be improved in the following ways:

- Fund the entire Santa Cruz County spine of the Monterey Bay Scenic Sanctuary Trail. We should not be resigned to complete the main linkages of the 32 mile-long spine of the MBSST in more than 20 years as the RTP implies. While other entities may be seeking funding for the Rail Trail, it is up to the RTC to lead the way and set ambitious goals.
- Target 1B of the plan states that the RTP should meet AMBAG's goals of a 0% reduction of GHGs by 2020, and a 5% reduction by 2035. If, as stated in the draft RTP transportation accounts for 60% of the GHG emissions in Santa Cruz County, the goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation 0% by 2020 and 5% by 2035 will never lead us anywhere near an 80% reduction in GHG by 2050 based on 1990 levels, as mandated by Governor Schwarzenegger's 2005 executive order and AB 32.
- Invest in Watsonville's capacity to support active transportation projects to meet the RTP's goals of "transportation equity and social justice." Watsonville has the highest rates of childhood obesity in the region and 43% of the population is under the age of 24. This makes Watsonville a prime community for active transportation projects, yet they have relatively few listed in the RTP. At a minimum, we would recommend funding all the active transportation projects listed for the South County.
- The county expects a 178% increase in the number of residents over 70 by 2035, making it critical that we continue to invest in our transit systems and pedestrian facilities which are highly valued by this demographic.

We believe that completing the Monterey Bay Area Sanctuary Scenic Trail coupled with passenger rail service will be a transformative project for the region and will play a significant role in helping to exceed the currently meager goals for GHG reduction. Investing in our underserved communities and populations will further the plan's stated goals of addressing social equity in our community as well as fostering active transportation in our younger generations.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



Greg McPheeters  
Chair, Executive Committee