ON SIERRA CLUB LETTERHEAD

DATE

**Chair Leopold and Commissioners**Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**Re: Local Group of the Sierra Club Supports UCS Scenario B**

Dear Chair Leopold and Commissioners,

After review of the Unified Corridor Investment Study, the Santa Cruz Group of the Sierra Club feels that Scenario B best meets the environmental and social equity principles of the Sierra Club. We support Scenario B for the following reasons:

* Scenario B has the fewest vehicle miles traveled (VMT) of any option.
* Scenario B emits the lowest level of pollutants of any option.
* Scenario B has the greatest CO2e emission reductions.
* Scenario B is the most equitable choice. It is responsive to needs of all people as it serves the highest number of transit users.
* Scenario B includes a rail option which according to national Sierra Club Transportation Policy, is “most effective in stimulating compact development patterns, increasing public transit patronage and reducing motor vehicle use.” (policy updated 9/2018)
* Scenario B results in the highest mode share for bicycle use.
* Scenario B results in the highest mode share for transit use.
* Scenario B has the second lowest mode share for driving alone.

While Sierra Club supports Scenario B, we feel this choice could be enhanced by addressing the following concerns:

* Special attention must be paid to the avoidance and mitigation of environmental impacts during the design phase of transportation projects. We must do a better job of implementing modern transportation design that protects plants and animals.
* Continued use of the rail line for transport of goods by freight must be included. Every freight rail car removes three to four trucks from the highway improving safety for road users and reducing greenhouse gases.
* Mission Street intersection improvements must be designed for increased safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, not just to improve automobile traffic flow.
* We urge future upgrade of public transit modes to all electric as soon as possible. This conversion coupled with the County’s participation in Monterey Bay Community Power will further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Sierra Club looks forward to working with the RTC and local jurisdictions to increase the environmental gains of Scenario B with more protection for local sensitive habitats.

Transportation is the highest source of CO2 emissions in the United States. As the national Sierra Club Transportation Policy states, transportation strategies must “protect natural systems and open space, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and promote environmental and economic justice and access for all, including low-income communities and those most impacted by pollution.” (policy updated 9/2018)

Sierra Club policy opposes the building or widening of limited access highways and states that HOV lanes should come from converting existing highway lanes rather than constructing new lanes.

When it comes to the environment, Scenario B is clearly best of the four scenarios analyzed. We urge the RTC to support Scenario B with the enhancements we included above.

*As you know the October 8, 2018 report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that time to act to limit global warming to 1.5ºC is “rapidly closing.” Because of this fact, we urge you to make a decision at your December 6 meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian Greensite, Chair
Sierra Club, Santa Cruz Group

cc: George Dondero, RTC Executive Director