



November 1, 2018

George Dondero, Executive Director
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Bike Santa Cruz Recommends Adoption of Scenario B with Modifications

Dear Mr. Dondero,

On behalf of Bike Santa Cruz County, I would like to acknowledge our gratitude to RTC staff and consultants in putting together a complex study of our County's potential transportation options.

Our vision is that bicycling in Santa Cruz County is a safe, respected, convenient, and enjoyable form of transportation and recreation for people of all ages and abilities. To reach that vision, we must build infrastructure that is safe and separate from traffic.

Overall, Bike Santa Cruz County supports the adoption of Scenario B due to several factors including: it has the lowest number of annual collisions, highest projected bike trips, lowest rate of CO2 emissions, and highest transit mode share. While we support Scenario B overall for the reasons stated above, we believe two key additions will significantly increase cyclist safety and bike ridership. Therefore, we request the following additions to Scenario B:

1. Include a cost estimate of protected bike lanes rather than buffered bike lanes.

Protected bike lanes have a physical separation between the bike lane and vehicle lane in contrast to a buffered bike lane that merely has paint. Protected bike lanes can be separated from motor traffic by raised medians, on-street parking, or bollards. In contrast, buffered bike lanes are conventional bicycle lanes paired with a designated buffer space separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane, typically demarcated by white paint and hatch marks. Protected bike lanes have been proven around the world to exponentially increase bike ridership and safety due to the physical separation, rather than just paint, between cyclists and motorists.

Between 2006 and 2017, there were more than 200 bicycle collisions on Soquel Dr./Ave./Freedom Blvd. and it has been termed a high injury corridor by the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency in their 2017 Traffic Violence in Santa Cruz County report. Protected bike lanes provide the physical separation needed to prevent collisions and because Soquel Dr./Ave./Freedom Blvd. is a high-use cross county route for cyclists, the minimal investment would create a significant return.

Protected bike lanes not only increase safety drastically, but they also increase bike ridership significantly. After a protected bike lane was installed on Chicago's Kinzie Street: Bicycle ridership increased 55 percent, according to morning rush hour counts; Forty-one percent of respondents changed their usual route to take advantage of the new lane; Bicyclists accounted for a majority of all eastbound traffic (53 percent) and more than one third (34 percent) of total street traffic during a CDOT traffic count conducted during morning rush hour in August 2011. (Chicago DOT, 2011 - Initial Findings: Kinzie Street Protected Bike Lane).

To truly reduce human impacts on climate change, we must get as many people onto bikes as possible, and protected bike lanes have proven to do that around the world. Please prioritize protected bike lanes on Soquel Ave./Dr./Freedom Blvd. over buffered bike lanes.

2. Include a cost estimate to retrofit the Capitola Trestle bridge to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians.

Ridership estimates in the Unified Corridor Study were reduced for the Trail next to Rail project on segments and surrounding segments by 20% where the rail is routed onto roadways. While including ridership data for the Rail Trail to extend across Soquel Creek would only bolster the ridership data for Scenario B, we think it's extremely important to be explicit to ensure the community that the Rail Trail will not be permanently routed through the Capitola Village. Additionally, looking at the San Lorenzo River Trestle as an example, we think it is entirely possible to retrofit the Capitola Trestle Bridge rather than needing to build a completely new bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians. Having said that, we would support a new bike/ped bridge if that is required.

In addition to the infrastructure projects outlined in Scenario B and above, Bike Santa Cruz County supports encouragement and education programs in order to support a growing population of cyclists. Some of those programs include an integrated county-wide bike share system, bike safety education in schools, enforcement of the rules of the road, long-term bike parking at transit stations, and bike repair stations along the Rail Trail.

Additionally, we assert the importance of improved bike/pedestrian facilities throughout the urban area closing gaps in the network. Connecting cyclists from one route to another reduces bicycle collisions and increases bike ridership by increasing access to safe routes to work and school.

The Bike Santa Cruz County Board of Directors acknowledges the benefits of a trail-only option in the rail corridor as outlined in the Unified Corridor Study. Bike ridership was reduced by 5% in the Transit with Trail Scenarios B and C, because trail usage next to rail or BRT may be discouraged due to proximity to moving transit.

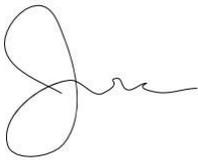
In contrast, bike ridership in Scenarios B and C were increased by 5% due to the increased access to transit. We believe this estimate is lower than it should be because the implications of the State Rail Plan were not included in the Unified Corridor Study. Rail has the potential to promote bicycling because it allows people living a car-light lifestyle to travel further distances

with their bike. An improved rail network across the State would increase bike ridership even further due to the access to an integrated transit system.

Transportation is the number one cause of greenhouse gas emissions in Santa Cruz County and given the recent climate change reports that have been released, we must do everything in our power to not delay this decision and move forward. Bike Santa Cruz County urges you to approve Scenario B with the addition of prioritizing protected bike lanes over buffered bike lanes and including an estimate for the Rail with Trail project to extend over Soquel Creek on the Capitola Trestle.

Thank you for your dedication and time working on this extremely important topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Strause". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Janneke Strause
Executive Director
Bike Santa Cruz County
director@bikesantacruzcounty.org