

Campaign for Sustainable Transportation 2024 City Council Candidate Survey

Climate, Safety and Vehicle Miles Traveled

1. Santa Cruz consistently rates near highest of a list of similar California cities in rates of injuries to bicyclists and pedestrians (according to rankings of the [Ca. Office of Traffic Safety](#)). In 2019, the City Council adopted Vision Zero, an international campaign for achieving zero serious injuries due to traffic collisions. Four years later the City has yet to take the first step in implementing Vision Zero: creating an Action Plan. Would you prioritize Vision Zero by supporting a policy to spend 80% of Traffic Impact Fees to make our streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians until such time as Santa Cruz achieves its goal of zero serious injuries by 2030?

Background:

The City has a history of devoting 80% of its Traffic Impact Fee on new development to projects that expand auto capacity and vehicle miles traveled, like the intersection expansion on Hwy 1 and River St. and the intersection at Ocean and Water St. California law now prohibits environmental impact reports from requiring expansion of roadways. We need to stop expanding intersections, and undo the damage that those expansions have caused, especially “slip lanes” (free right turn lanes) which require bicyclists to merge into traffic and are likewise dangerous for pedestrians.

Yes, I agree that car infrastructure can't be our priority as a city. Whether we hope to achieve lower greenhouse gas emissions, more equitable and pleasant cities, or less traffic for cars on our roads, it is clear that the solution is to invest more in bike, pedestrian, and public transit infrastructure. We need to plan our city over the coming decades in a way that is suitable for these ways of getting around, rather than centering cars over other transportation methods. I'm very supportive of protected bike lanes, and bike-only or multi-use paths that are great for making it possible to complete more trips on a bike without having to contend with car traffic. I also agree that the benefits slip lanes provide in allowing cars to pass through intersections more quickly are far outweighed by the danger they pose for anyone outside of a car, so yes I would support a policy to spend 80% of traffic impact fees to make our streets safer.

2. We know that traffic speed is the main contributor to the severity of injuries. If a neighborhood group were to prepare a conceptual traffic calming plan for its streets, would you support the City establishing a process for such a plan to receive consideration and funding?

Yes. Part of the benefit of our new district system for city council is that, as the District 5 Council Member, I can be a resource and point of contact for constituents who want to improve their neighborhood. If residents want to introduce traffic calming in District 5 neighborhoods or, for example, improve bicycle safety on High St, I'll be entirely supportive and work with them and city staff to make it happen. Additionally, I have also heard from voters that they are interested in having speed bumps and side walks in their neighborhood to make it safer for their kids to walk to school.

Would you support measures already listed in the Climate Action Plan to reduce driving, e.g. transportation tax; congestion pricing; parking maximums; facilitate remote work

I would support measures listed in the Climate Action Plan, and believe we need to continue on that trajectory. Hitting our climate goals needs to be a higher priority. Luckily, we can make everyone happy because we all want the same thing: a sustainable, safe, affordable, and rapid transportation system in which people are given options. Measures like these outlined in the Climate Action Plan will help us achieve that.

UCSC plans a significant increase in enrollment, which will result in increased traffic. Would you support a City policy to cap vehicle trips to campus at current levels (modeled on the Santa Clara County policy that limits vehicle trips to campus to 2001 levels)? In order to enforce this cap would you support extending the City's existing parking tax to campus?

In running to represent the overwhelming majority of the UCSC campus, I understand the importance of working with the UC to guide their policy in a better direction. I am also aware that the UC is rarely externally accountable and we can only influence their decision-making so much. It is crucial to emphasize that increased enrollment does not have to mean increased car traffic. We need to ensure that students and staff can live on or near campus and make their commute via bike or bus. The city needs to use whatever means available to encourage UCSC to provide a 4-year guarantee of on-campus housing for its students and develop lots of affordable housing in the area near the base of campus, utilizing empty parcels and upzoning the area for more density. A cap on car trips to the campus is reasonable but would not be unnecessary if our housing and transit policies didn't make driving from other parts of the county the only option for many students and staff.

What should the City do to respond to sea level rise citywide and in the Downtown Plan Expansion South of Laurel?

We need to plan development and growth with climate adaptation in mind. I would support additional studies on the impact of sea level rise on overall development and specifically the feasibility of building in the south of Laurel area. We also need to take steps to combat environmental racism and injustice in neighborhoods like the Beach Flats, which will be affected soonest and most severely, so they have the resources they need before they are faced with the worst consequences of climate change.

How should auto, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic be configured on West Cliff Drive? For example, do you support separating bicycles and pedestrians? Would you support narrowing of vehicle lanes (e.g. to 9 ft) if that could accommodate a dedicated lane for bicyclists?

Background:

West Cliff is a heavily used recreation spot for City residents and tourists. The path combining pedestrians with bicycles and ebikes is unsafe. Separating bicycles from pedestrians would require creating a bike lane from some street space currently used by cars, eg. parking space. Over 90% of letter writers to the City Council supported separating bicyclists and pedestrians.

West Cliff Drive is far better used as an area for recreation than for moving car traffic. It is baffling that to ride a bike along West Cliff, one is forced to choose

between weaving through pedestrians on the sidewalk or contending with car traffic. I support a dedicated two-way bikeway like what we have on Beach Street and the preservation of space for walking. That could mean narrowing vehicle lanes or limiting vehicle traffic to one-way.

Housing and Transportation

Our mission statement includes: *We support measures to protect and increase the supply of affordable housing near jobs to reduce demand for motorized transportation and encourage stable and healthy communities.* The data suggests that the rising cost of housing in our community is resulting in longer commutes. For example, since 2013 vehicle trips to UCSC are [growing at a faster rate](#) than student enrollment.

1. How should the City respond to the RHNA allocation it has received?

As a city, we need to meet our RHNA numbers for housing. New State laws have limited the choices that cities have when it comes to the development of housing. I remain dedicated to getting as many affordable housing units as possible in what is built. We also need to further emphasize “missing middle” housing in our development. Neighborhoods are more community oriented, and public transit works better when a level of density exists between single-family housing and large apartment buildings. State law has made it so we have little choice on whether to build, so we should focus more on what we build and ensure the maximum number of affordable units are being built.

What are the best ways to achieve our housing goals while minimizing VMT [vehicle miles traveled]?

Dense housing near jobs and transit, missing middle housing, student housing, and increasing affordability. We need to build a pattern of development that does not center on the car. I also think that the city should allow remote work when possible, and encourage businesses to allow remote work so people can stay at home instead of commuting every day to work.

What is your strategy for ensuring that working people can live in Santa Cruz close to where they work?

We need more housing near job centers (downtown and UCSC) and we also need to do more to make that housing affordable. People will still have to make long commutes by car if they are unable to afford the housing right next to their work. In District 5, a majority of units in proposed housing developments will be affordable to low-income and very low-income residents. That should be the case city-wide because we lack housing the most at those levels of affordability. I look forward to ensuring we continue to build majority affordable housing in my district, and hope to see the city encourage and invest in more co-operative housing, like where I live in the El Rio Mobile Home Park.

Would you support an ordinance that would require new developments to unbundle parking costs from the cost of renting or purchasing a unit?

Background:

California legislation now exempts new developments within a half mile of transit from the requirement to build parking. Developers save by building less parking, and adding more residential units. The savings can be shared with tenants if tenants who don't own cars are allowed to opt out of paying for parking. Studies of developments that allow tenants to opt out of purchasing parking show **reduced vehicle ownership** and **significantly lower rents** and purchase prices. [Gabbe & Pierce \(2017\)](#) found that bundling the cost of a parking space adds an average of 17% to a unit's rent. [More info.](#)

Yes, this is a great idea. Parking requirements are a contributor to the unaffordability of our housing and residents should not be forced to pay to build parking garages if they don't drive a car. This would have the added benefit of encouraging people not to own cars if their situation allows.

Would you support an ordinance guaranteeing the right of tenants to legal counsel?

Background:

At our Transportation Justice Conference this August (see video of the panel, [Transit Oriented Development Without Displacement](#)), Fernando Marti reported that in San Francisco tenants have the right to counsel, funded by the City. [Research finds](#) that right to counsel has a high degree of effectiveness in preventing displacement.

People should not have to face their landlords alone. I strongly support the right to legal counsel for tenants, I support tenant organizations and stronger tenant protections, and I support continued or increased funding for organizations like Tenant Sanctuary. I support Supervisor Cumming's efforts to get this at the county level.

What is your position on the Housing for People ballot measure?

I am opposed to the Housing for People ballot measure, but if elected to the city council, I will work with residents in my district and hear their concerns that are driving this ballot measure. Additionally, if elected, I plan to commission a study to see how high we can raise our inclusionary zoning and will put forward a motion to raise it to that level after the study is conducted.

The City Council recently adopted changes to the Downtown Plan to eliminate the requirement that housing comprise at least 60% of the floor area of buildings on the river side of Front St. between Soquel and Laurel. This change was to allow a hotel to be developed. What are your thoughts about this action?

This is a "dessert after vegetables" situation. Hotels are beneficial to the local economy but we should use valuable land downtown for their construction only after we have built the affordable housing which our region so desperately lacks.