

Questionnaire for Supervisor Candidates -Kim De Serpa-District 2 Supervisor Candidate

Question 1: Highway 1 Expansion

Do you agree with the CFST in advocating that the Regional Transportation Commission:

Remove the HOV Lane Project from its Regional Transportation Plan

Designate the Hwy 1 auxiliary lanes between Santa Cruz and Watsonville as lanes for buses and entering and exiting vehicles only, by use of signage and red paint on the pavement.

I start out this questionnaire by telling your group that I have very little expertise in the area of transportation. I know my most formidable opponent has served on the RTC and has more knowledge in these areas than I do.

Having said that, I consider myself a fast learner and if elected I pledge that I will work with your group and other concerned citizens on these issues.

Because I have had the special pleasure of commuting to Santa Cruz daily in the back-up of highway one, I may have a different perspective. I lost more than 2 hours a day commuting 6 miles each way. I will never get back that precious time for myself nor my children. When I see the faces of the workforce commuting north to their positions in our medical centers, county services and university, I see mostly young Latina women. For me this is a matter of equity, not just for climate change, but for people's lives. The costs-personal, financial & environmental must be reckoned with. It's been 25 years since I commuted north and not a lot has changed except the back up now stretches back past Buena Vista on most days.

I honestly cannot answer this question in a deep way because I need further information and to study reports to develop an informed opinion (although I really appreciate your background and website) What I can say is that I believe that there is likely not one answer or fix to this issue. We need to address the issues from a multi modal perspective.

Background

1. Hwy Expansion a Failed Strategy to Reduce Congestion

The RTC has heard from several speakers in its Innovators in Transportation Speaker Series (Jarrett Walker, Jeffrey Tumlin, Becky Steckler) that expanding highways in order to reduce congestion is a futile exercise, due to increased traffic induced by the expansion. A study by Duranton and Turner reports a 1 to 1 ratio of increased traffic to increased lane-miles. Studies observe that the full impact of induced travel occurs within ten years. This means that with HOV Lanes there will be more vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, but no significant improvement in traffic congestion.

2. HOV Project Financially Infeasible

According to the Unified Corridors Investment Study (2018), "Implementation of HOV Lanes on Highway 1 will require seeking a significant level of funding at a time when state and federal funding for highway capacity-increasing projects is extremely limited and therefore will not likely be implemented until after 2035."

3. False Promise of Congestion Relief from Auxiliary Lanes

In 2016, the RTC spent over \$100,000 on a mailer to all voters in the County claiming that its sales tax measure would "ease congestion on Highway 1." This message was inconsistent with the Caltrans Draft EIR (2015) that said that auxiliary lanes "would result in a very slight improvement in traffic congestion when compared to the No Build Alternative". The EIR also estimated no safety benefit from the auxiliary lanes.

Question 2: Supporting the General Plan

No amount of public transportation infrastructure can offset land use decisions that perpetuate auto dependency. The recent proposal for a Kaiser facility with 300 employees, located over a mile from the nearest bus stop, with plans for the largest parking garage in the county, would have added significant traffic on Hwy 1 and local streets. Kaiser withdrew their proposal, though they had significant support on the Board of Supervisors.

Will you oppose amending the General Plan to allow development that perpetuates auto dependency?

To the best of my ability, I pledge to vote on projects that support workforce closer to employment centers, fosters housing along transit corridors, and has elements of mixed use housing and commerce/services so that people can easily access the things they need without use of their cars.

Question 3: Public Transit

Do you believe METRO is underfunded? If so, what is your strategy to redress that?

Do you support free transit passes for youth under 18?

I have not served on the metro board, but like most county services, yes they are underfunded. Because I sit on the PVUSD board I do know that that we have a behind the wheel training program that is very rigorous and requires more components than regular metro drivers due to educational requirements. Sadly for my district, Metro routinely hires away our trained staff, leaving us with out the needed workforce for our students. I have championed the use of a grant writer to compete for available funding from multiple sources I would additionally continue this process. I support free transit for youth under 18. I also support developing a way that our disabled riders may ride for free. Often times our citizens with disabilities who are extremely low income are charged to take metro to medical appointments, university or to run errands. A friend of mine who is paralyzed recently missed his chemotherapy appointment because for the first time in many years he forgot to bring money for his ride and the driver refused to transport him to the appointment. This is unacceptable.

I would support a sales tax on these efforts.

Background

San Francisco MUNI receives revenue from City parking facilities, private parking lots (including UC Med and SF State) and developer fees. Santa Cruz METRO does not receive any funds from these sources. There is currently discussion on the METRO Board of a sales tax devoted to transit.

Question 4: Rail Corridor

Do you support bringing electric passenger rail to Santa Cruz County and connecting to the State Rail Plan?

Yes, I support bringing an electric passenger rail to Santa Cruz County. Additionally I support building a great trail for our county citizens. I know this is a costly project, I will champion the efforts to procure state and federal grants and other funding to finish this project.

Background

- 2012 the RTC accepted state money to purchase the ROW for the purpose of implementing passenger rail
- 2021 the Transportation Corridor Alternative Analysis results led the RTC to unanimously vote that the public transit on the corridor should be electric passenger rail
- 2022 73% of the voters rejected Measure D, the "Greenway" proposal to tear out the tracks and replace them with a trail
- 2022 the RTC unanimously voted to hire HDR associates to design a general plan for electric passenger rail

Question 5: Safe Streets for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

In 2015 Santa Cruz County ranked #1 of 58 California counties in rate of injuries to bicyclists and #11 in rate of injuries to pedestrians. Will you vote to:

Redirect developer fees slated for projects that increase vehicle capacity to projects that make streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians?

Adopt Vision Zero as County policy?

Yes safe bike lanes as well as wheelchair and walking lanes should be a priority for our county. I've just been in Ireland and impressed by complete road closures in commerce areas. It was great walking in these areas without fear of cars.

Question 6: Reducing Transportation Demand

Building affordable housing near jobs and amenities is the ultimate strategy for reducing transportation demand. Will you support the following demand reduction strategies that also increase housing affordability?

Require new multifamily development near transit to unbundle the costs of parking from the costs of renting/purchasing the unit, allowing the consumer to opt out of purchasing parking.

Require developers who take advantage of exemptions to parking requirements to provide bus passes to tenants.

Yes, this is the plan. Our housing element in the unincorporated areas will require nearly 5,000 units of new housing. My hope is that our county we will be able to build in transit corridors and create mixed use housing so that the need to use cars will be minimized. Bus passes are a great idea, but I'm not sure how this idea would be implemented.

I think continuing to allow people to telecommute will additionally remove some traffic pressures. Also, helping people to take

advantage of solar energy via new building and electric cars could assist with carbon footprint/climate.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views on your questionnaire.

Take care-
Kim De Serpa