

Questionnaire for Supervisor Candidates

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Candidate for First District Supervisor

Location: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uo1IChplj9ZWUZaesJZviPDCHkC6Y4_ZxCFyUMjxoVA/edit

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.

It never ceases to amaze me that we continue to allow our elected officials and representatives make policies and initiate projects that do not achieve benchmarks in equity, climate wise standards, nor align with sustainability and economics! In the case of Highway 1, the publicly apparent problem at hand is traffic. Research data clearly tells us that adding another highway lane for cars will lead to the generation of more traffic on the roads and increased vehicle miles traveled, in a few short years. Our climate impact and equitable access will likely worsen not improve. We should use our best guidelines to ensure that we make wise choices.

We can best address our traffic, equity, and environmental impact with respect to travel along the north south corridor of our county by prioritizing our investment of transit funds into options that will help move people out of their cars and into transit, including bus and rail. Making transit the quicker and easier choice means ensuring that instead of building an HOV lane, we consider having a bus-only lane or true bus-on-shoulder lane. To prevent vehicles from dangerously weaving in and out to get ahead of others during peak traffic, the auxiliary lanes between Santa Cruz and Watsonville should only be used for buses and vehicles entering and exiting the highway, which can be indicated by using signage and red paint on the pavement.

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?

The recently canceled Kaiser project would have been a welcome service for the community, providing jobs and healthcare to thousands of people who currently drive over the hill to receive treatment from Kaiser. This would have reduced vehicle miles traveled overall. However, any project of this scale that requires large numbers of people to access critical services, must look towards environmental guidelines and principles which ensure that people can access the service by public transit and reduce the dependency on automobiles. The fact that this large medical facility was proposed with no direct access by public transit and over 720 parking spaces instead of a minimal number of parking spaces and a robust plan to ensure that their employees could primarily access work via public transit or active transit, is not only short-sighted but would have promoted automobile use.

We need to ensure that large scale public services built in this county are willing to do so in a way that ensures equity and reduces impact on the climate. I would support language built into the General Plan that helps guide us towards wise, equitable, environmentally robust projects in the future and seek to change language that perpetuates auto dependency.

Having a bus stop a mile away from a critical medical facility does a disservice to our current community members and future generations on several accounts. A large number of our community members do not have a car. Imagine a one-car family and a young mother with 3 young children whose husband uses their only car for work and must bring their new baby or other children in for regular well-child appointments or follow-up if a child breaks a leg or is injured. Imagine a senior who financially does not qualify for Paratransit and uses the Metro regularly but now must walk over a mile to get to their regular appointments! As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I would encourage us to look at the foundations of our general plan so

that large scale projects and businesses that are approved in the county do not prioritize or perpetuate auto dependency.

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?

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.

Our public transit systems across this state and our county are underfunded. I have worked, and will continue to work, within various organizations communicating with our state legislators to help inform them of the importance of robust public transit for equity and the environment. I have also worked collaboratively with a number of local and national organizations, like the Sierra Club and the Labor Network for Sustainability, to bring awareness to the importance of robust public transit in addressing equity and climate change. I am a huge advocate of free transit for youth, ideally under the age of 25. I worked on AB1919, free transit for youth throughout the State of California, with Pauline Seals and the students of Youth for Climate Justice, and connected them with Gail Pellerin. This bill later became AB610 and was co-authored by Gail Pellerin. As founder of Equity Transit, I wrote letters on behalf of Metro in support of a number of grants for which Metro applied over the past year which resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in the past year alone.

We need to think out of the box as well as look at a number of creative ways that other successful public transit systems use to ensure that Metro can not just survive but can thrive. We must grow transit to become an easy, fast, reliable and even fun way for community members to get to where they need to go. I believe Michael Tree shares that vision and has worked incredibly quickly to help realize that vision. I support prioritizing funding for robust public transit including a sales tax devoted to transit as well as devoting a portion of parking fees and developer fees towards transit. Incentivizing developer-owners of rental properties to provide their tenants with bus passes and incentivizing businesses to provide bus passes to their employees can help get people out of their cars. As a Board of Supervisor member, I would also be able to sit as a voting member of the RTC where I would look to support prioritizing funding for Metro and future developments in our public transit system. I would support applying for additional grants that we may not have applied for in the past and I would continue to work with legislators and support legislation that would prioritize more funding for robust public transit from the State of California.

Question 4: Rail Corridor

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

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

The State of California has prioritized rail as a primary form of addressing climate change through its CAPTI (Climate Action Plan for Transit Infrastructure). Rail is the most energy efficient and least environmentally damaging form of transit ever invented for connecting large numbers of people to places. A recent report by the Sierra Club states what many environmentally educated transit experts already know, that rail is an essential component of addressing climate change. I absolutely will support our work towards bringing rail to our community so that we can connect to the State Rail Network.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/Sierra%20Club%20Rail%20Statement%20Backgrounder.pdf>

A robust rail network throughout California would serve as a network of primary connectors between targeted cities and towns which could then be accessed locally by bus. Our Coastal Rail-Trail would become a critically important way for people to not only have daily access to parks, schools, and shopping along our north-south corridor, but would also provide an exciting way for people to get in and out of the county and access other cities by rail. Large numbers of tourists who live over-the-hill could then be encouraged to leave behind their cars and instead visit Santa Cruz by train.

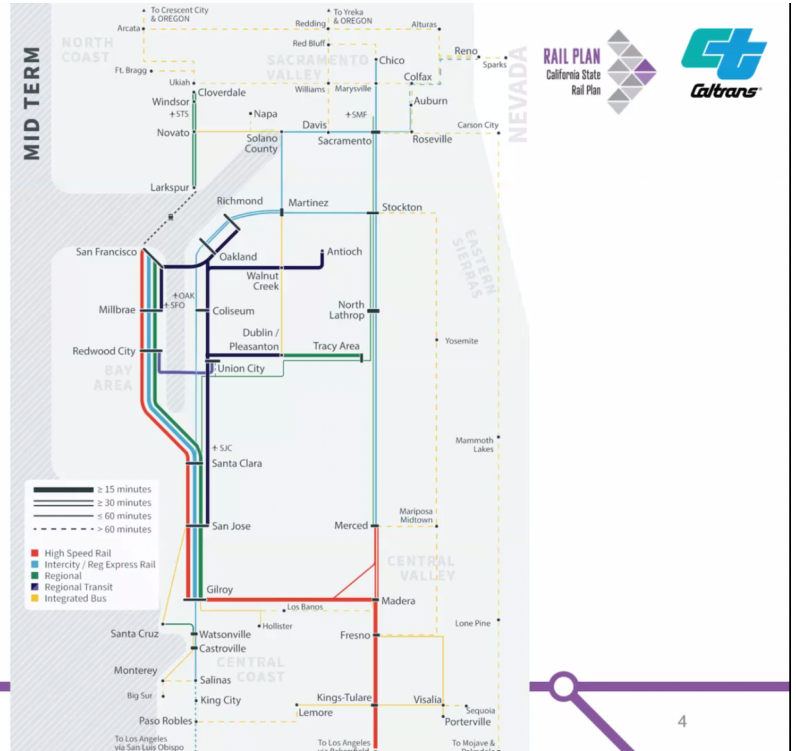
Caltrans presented the California State Rail Plan in a recent meeting this past April which indicated that the Santa Cruz Branch Line was targeted for rail service within 10 years. In a public forum in October of 2021, the then Vice Chair of the California Transportation Commission, Carl Guardino, clearly stated that our county was given the money to buy the Santa Cruz Branchline to build both rail AND trail, not just a trail-only. This was our promise to the State of California. Contrary to a small but aggressive local opposition to this environmentally wise plan by two organizations, Greenway and TrailNow, representatives of the State of California, the California Coastal Commission, the Sierra Club, and other important agencies have clearly indicated that implementing rail, including on our local coastal branch line, is a priority. The current incumbent Supervisor, my opponent, took direct responsibility in running

MeasureD-2022 with the goal of ripping out our valuable rail infrastructure with the intention of replacing it with a 26-foot wide trail-only. I opposed Greenway's ballot MeasureD-2022.

I will continue to support our promise of bringing passenger rail, which will connect us to the State Rail Network, to Santa Cruz County.

Northern California

Mid Term Improvements (10 Years)



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?

I am currently a member of the Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) and addressing our epidemic level of traffic violence is an essential part of the work I would prioritize as first district supervisor. The numbers of people that are killed and seriously injured on our county streets each day is far higher than that of gun violence! Vision Zero was implemented in Watsonville some time ago and we have already begun to implement Vision Zero across the county, however more needs to be done more quickly. I support ensuring that developers contribute to the improvements needed in order to make our community safer for our most vulnerable and therefore safer for everyone!

I hope to engage neighborhoods and our local public works agency in looking at creative measures we can take when funds are not available to implement large scale infrastructure right away. Including the community in the conversations often and regularly will help to prevent the kind of backlash that was seen when the current Supervisor implemented new temporary bike safety infrastructure along Portola Ave that was quickly mowed down by local motorists.

Working on making our streets safe for everyone is of critical importance to our community and to me. I will work to strengthen and prioritize our safe streets programs, including Vision Zero, that will ensure our children can safely bike to school, our seniors and people with disabilities can safely walk in our community, and that car crashes become a thing of the past on our local streets.

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.

I had the fortune of participating in the Housing Element Community Cohort and I was very excited to hear from a majority of the participants that they envisioned prioritizing future developments along and near our transit corridors. Increasingly, more people are looking to reduce their reliance on a car and many young families are getting rid of one or more cars altogether as the cost of buying and maintaining a car is very expensive.

The cost to build and maintain a parking space is very high and for people who would rather save money and not own a vehicle, unbundling the cost of renting or purchasing a unit from the cost of renting or purchasing a parking space would incentivize families to reduce their reliance on a car, especially if this can be tied to free or reduced bus passes. I feel that we must ensure that developers who are invited to build rentals and homes for purchase in our community must partner with us to ensure that they help reduce the reliance on cars and parking and increase the incentives for tenants and buyers to use public transit. Developers should also be expected to contribute to ensuring the areas around which they build are built according to the best safe streets standards so that ingress and egress from and around these new developments is welcoming to bikes, pedestrians, and wheelchair users.