

## Candidate Positions on Transportation Matters

### Santa Cruz City Council Candidates

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[Question 1: What type of high capacity public transit do you support on our rail corridor?](#)

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**Question 1): The Watsonville City Council recently voted unanimously in favor of implementing passenger rail service connecting Watsonville with the City of Santa Cruz. What type of high capacity public transit do you support on our rail corridor?**

Candidate Name	Supports ... on Rail Corridor	Please explain your choice:
Alicia Kuhl	Rail	I support having fewer vehicles on the road.
Elizabeth Conlan	Rail	I support the vision for a rail system along the corridor, along with a trail network, that is integrated with options to reach final destinations along the corridor via bike, walking, and public transit. I think we should be ambitious and I think the electric train options present us with an opportunity to move away from fossil fuel-powered public transit.
Kayla Kumar	Rail	Of the short list voted forward by the RTC, I'm currently most intrigued by the electric light rail option. This would be a type of rail that could meet the great transportation needs we have in our region while meeting the concerns of neighbors by taking steps to mitigate transportation sound, support the trail integration by having large capacity to store bikes, and maintain high capacity for riders. This is not to say I wouldn't be open to a more mixed method that involves more than one option, but I am hopeful an electric light rail is strongly considered as a key component.
Kelsey Hill	Rail	I'm supportive of a light electric rail, and believe that such infrastructure would be important in terms of equity and climate action for Santa Cruz County. The equity piece is critical, as a rail would support an accessible, lower-cost and easier commute for folks living in the South County to work and enjoy Santa Cruz; this would also promote economic activity around transit hubs and could be paired with sustainable solutions for last-mile transportation. The climate change angle is a foundational issue for me, as a rail would bring down reliance on fossil fuel powered vehicles (the largest source of our carbon emissions) and reduce congestion and idling on our roadways. As a climate activist, I am fully supportive of building out transportation that can help shift consumer behavior toward more long term sustainability.

Maria Cadenas	Rail	I believe we need to look at the future needs of our region, and rail provides the most streamline and sustainable option for years to come.
Martine Watkins	Rail	The City of Santa Cruz has already taken steps as the lead agency on the design and construction of the Coastal Rail Trail. We've already taken in our jurisdiction to support Rail Trail.
Sandy Brown	Rail	I absolutely support establishing passenger rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. As a Regional Transportation Commissioner, I have supported using a strong triple bottom line framework to ensure that the preferred alternative offers the greatest benefit to Santa Cruz County residents in terms of equity, environment, and economy. While I am not a member of the Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis (TCAA) Committee, I have followed their work and am pleased that the RTC will soon have detailed information, using the triple bottom line framework, on which to base our decision. Activating the rail corridor in this way will provide tremendous support for developing a robust, accessible, and effective multi-modal public transit system for our community.
Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	Rail	I am interested in learning more about both of these options. I understand that there is a study underway to explore which mode of transit will be best for the corridor. I look forward to learning the results of the study. I have received some information about the rail option that outline some compelling reasons to support a rail option (from the 2019 Unified Corridor Study and summarized in 'Top Reasons to Support Passenger Rail Transit'). I will highlight some here- -Removing the tracks to pave the rail corridor for buses will take a long time and delay progress. The rail options gets us to an efficient mode of transportation sooner. -The rail will run faster than the bus (by 22 minutes in peak travel time). This will allow commuters to spend more time on other things such as family and/or work. -It will provide approximately 3,000 more riders a day. -It is predicted that it will generate 2 million more users annually, generating revenue for the METRO and decreasing our reliance and use of auto transport. -Rail transit will be able to operate within the full existing rail corridor whereas bus transit will only use the corridor North of Aptos. This leaves out Watsonville and further South county residents. -Operating a rail transit costs less than a bus transit. -Would allow us to connect to future State rail plans, connecting us South to Monterey and North to the Greater Bay Area.
Sonja Brunner	Rail	I would love to see equitable commute options between south county and north county. Rail is the most efficient, and best environmentally and in terms of equity and access. The existing rail trail preserves the footprint of the rail line to be able to connect a future rail to other community rail lines.

**Question 2): The pandemic has adversely impacted METRO. How would you strengthen METRO services for our county?**

Candidate Name	How would you strengthen METRO services for our county?
Alicia Kuhl	Increased service. Additional routes, and lowered fees.
Elizabeth Conlan	I am grateful that METRO received federal funding in the CARES Act to help cover operating expenses this year. METRO's bus routes within the City of Santa Cruz, throughout the county, and over the hill provide extremely valuable transportation alternatives for many people. Further maintaining the viability of Para Cruz is essential to making sure that residents with disabilities have transportation options. I worry that until the pandemic is under control, the student population returns to Santa Cruz, and bus capacity and routes can return to normal, METRO will likely struggle. Therefore, we need to ensure that METRO is supported because I believe that demand will return and we are going to need robust public transportation as we continue to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
Kayla Kumar	One way to strengthen METRO services is to support the well-being and ability to work of the METRO workers. I've begun to learn more about how to do this through my working relationship with SMART 23, the bus driver union that has also supported my campaign. Within the bounds of the City Council, one example of how we can improve the lives of METRO employees is to stabilize the cost of living. When workers experience economic stability, they are more able to carry out their important work in the community. While the City does not have authority over the METRO in and of itself, the City does have two seats on the METRO Board. This is one key way the City could contribute positively to the oversight of the METRO and again advocate for policies and procedures that meet the needs of commuters and workers.
Kelsey Hill	First, I'd want to increase input with SMART Local 23, the union for METRO workers, as they hold the most knowledge in how to better rider experience and streamline service in a way that expands METRO capacity. Additionally, I'm interested in pursuing increased ridership and thereby strengthened services throughout the county by expanding bus pass programs. I was very supportive of the bus pass program in Downtown Santa Cruz and believe that such a program could extend to other high-traffic areas in Santa Cruz and for students who don't currently have access to busing. As transportation trends show, younger folks will use public transit more often when it is easily available. It's critical to me that we harness this energy by integrating the bus system more comprehensively into the way we approach our Climate Action goals.
Maria Cadenas	Our public transit has been impacted by the pandemic, including METRO. We must review options to ensure that public transit is supported and provides adequate service for those who use it. This can include connection to the rail stops in future.

Martine Watkins	<p>METRO is currently upgrading its technology to bring SMART technology to the bus system in order for more efficiency in the system including avoiding bus overcrowding and better schedule delivery. METRO is also upgrading its payment system with SMART phone payment technology so riders do not need to use cash with the drivers. I think these are all very good improvements and I would advocate for METRO to receive federal grants for these types of technologies to be in place. METRO also provides critical paratransit services for our community and we must keep advocating for these services and for federal support for this service. METRO will need to evaluate the community's response to using buses after COVID but METRO is a service we need especially for UCSC and for Cabrillo students and for commuters going over the hill. I think bus service is important in our transportation demand management system and I will advocate for METRO to obtain federal funds for rider protections in order to remain competitive. I am thankful that the voters approved Measure D to assist with modernizing the METRO.</p>
Sandy Brown	<p>The pandemic has exacerbated METRO's pre-existing fiscal and service-provision challenges. Strengthening METRO service will require significant investment, beyond the resources currently available through Measure D and the complex, layered state and federal funding streams on which METRO relies, particularly given the decline in already low fair box recovery rates that come with limited ridership. I absolutely support METRO workers rights to protect themselves and passengers and hope for the kind of political change that could emergency/stimulus funding. More generally, sustainable funding streams must be sought and I want to be an active participant in that process over the longer term.</p>
Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	<p>The METRO provides much needed transportation for our county. Some of the ways to strengthen our METRO services include: -Continuing to put in place COVID safety measures (i.e. social distancing at stations and in buses; requiring face masks; cleaning all areas regularly) so that patrons are safe - Accessing Federal and State resources -Reducing and/or eliminating fares (for low-income and city employees) -Working to meet 2025 and 2040 electric bus goals -Community engagement/outreach---to assess METRO transit needs; to educate about the benefits of riding buses -Needs assessment and shift of METRO bus services to meet those needs -Partnership with downtown businesses to incentivize use of METRO/bus services -Preserving Paratransit services and advocating to maintain the service -Work with both UCSC and Cabrillo on understanding needs and uses of busses by students and staff moving ahead.</p>
Sonja Brunner	<p>I would engage with the METRO board, community, workers and riders to listen and understand their needs and align with available resources. Also advocate for more money.</p>

**Question 3): FORT has launched the Coast Connect vision to transform transportation in our county. Would you support funding a more robust public transportation system, including safe streets for pedestrians, cyclists and other active transportation users? How would you support adding transportation funding?**

Candidate Name	Supports Funding	How would you support adding transportation funding?
Alicia Kuhl	Yes	I would look at what other cities are doing, and I would look into current opportunities that we have available now to generate additional transportation funding.
Elizabeth Conlan	Yes	Improving access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists is one of my top priorities. As a member of Council, I would prioritize investing in sidewalks, protected bike lanes, bike storage lockers, and other features and resources that would make it more enjoyable and safe for people in Santa Cruz to commute and get around town on foot or bike. I would also like to try to bring back an e-bike share program.
Kayla Kumar	Yes	One way the City Council drives strong work in securing funding is by providing clear direction to staff as they navigate the transportation grant funding landscape. Staff needs a clear understanding of the direction of the City in order to do their work to secure funds. In particular, the City must decide that staff time is better spent pursuing grants that relate to greener modes of transportation -- such as the Rail and Trail, Slow Streets, protected bike lanes, etc -- or if staff time is better spent cementing our status quo, car-centric infrastructure. I would be a Council Member who worked hard to redirect City efforts towards grant streams that bring us in closer alignment with our General Plan and Climate Action Plan by providing viable pathways for our community to reduce our reliance on cars and plug into more sustainable transportation methods.
Kelsey Hill	Yes	I'd like to leverage strategic partnerships, explore grant options as they intersect with various governmental programs and departments, and advocate that we put additional funding into meeting our Climate Action goals by heavily targeting the transportation piece in our carbon inventory. As we grow as a city, I want to see more resources given to residents to help move away from single passenger cars.
Maria Cadenas	Yes	I will work closely with stakeholders and others to review revenue options for transit including ensuring alignment with economic development and housing strategies, as well as outreach to state and federal funds.

Martine Watkins	Yes	We can continue to invest in integrated transportation at the local level, like recently using some of the parking fund to create the Santa Cruz Eco-pass. We must also allocate staff time to draw down state and local dollars. There are numerous grants available for county active transportation opportunities. I supported Measure D. Local measures must also be assessed to increase funding for integrated transportation options. We must maintain active collaboration with the RTC and draw down other funding opportunities for climate solutions.
Sandy Brown	Yes	Absolutely! I have consistently supported City and RTC investment in building out our bike/ped infrastructure, with improved crosswalks, dedicated and protected bike lanes, and local government support for an Eco-pass program to make free bus passes available for downtown workers (which I would like to see expanded). I believe we should be proactive and aggressive in identifying dedicated funding streams, lobbying for increased alternative transportation funding from the state and federal governments, and directing more of our existing funds for multi-modal alternatives to single occupancy car trips. When I allow myself to dream big, I envision a federal Green New Deal, with funding for local jobs to design, plan, construct, and operate 21st century sustainable transportation networks.
Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	Yes	If elected, I will play an active role in lobbying officials in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to increase funding for public transit. I will also support future efforts to educate the local public about the importance of public transit in addressing climate change and so that we may increase use. When the time is right, I will support local tax measures to support our public transit system. I will support increasing the focus on transportation in future general and area plans, including stipulations for residential and commercial projects to include conditions that support public transit (i.e. convenient bus stops; bus passes for residents and employees). Finally, I will be part of a community effort to make sure that the UC administration provides more financial support for public transit and not place the whole burden on students and the local community.
Sonja Brunner	Yes	I would support and advocate for funding from the State via the State Rail Plan and consider countywide funding options that may need to go before voters.