



Santa Cruz County Business Council

October 28, 2014

Chair Friend and Supervisors:

The Santa Cruz County Business Council appreciates the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan's (Plan) approach to planning and land use in ways that provide a foundation for nurturing long-term economic, social and environmental goals. We have commented positively throughout the Plan's development process on the opportunities presented for forward-thinking, transit-oriented development, that includes higher density as well as more flexible land use and zoning designations—all aspects we see as vital to a sustainable future. That said, while we are supportive of the Plan's main principles, we do feel it necessary to call attention to one element that will greatly undermine the Plan's future success—Highway 1.

The ongoing capacity problem of Highway 1 will serve as a major challenge to the overarching goal of improving the quality of the live/work environment within the Plan's geographic focus area. We note the substantial ongoing costs, both in quality of life and economic terms, associated with the untenable gridlock and consequent time wasted by those who must endure the peak hours on the Highway. The spillover of traffic seeking alternatives to the congestion diminishes the effectiveness of all modes of transit, reduces the quality of our neighborhoods, and makes the corridors less attractive as potential areas for people to live and work. The Plan does an admirable job providing partial solutions to mitigate traffic issues through a reworked network of roadways, new overpasses, and pedestrian/bicycle projects. Additionally, through the Plan's language encouraging greater density we could realize more housing in the urban core, thus reducing car trips with people to live closer to their place of employment. Even though the Plan features some traffic mitigation strategies, we feel that the County should place great emphasis moving forward on working with the community, through direction given in the Plan, to develop a clear, feasible portfolio of long-term solutions for Highway 1 congestion issues.

We encourage the Board to accept/approve the Plan. In doing so, based upon the rationale expressed above, we also encourage the Board to direct that staff refine the final version of the Plan to express the importance of Highway 1 improvements and to provide language that keeps all options on the table for future traffic mitigation efforts.

Sincerely,

Joe Foster
Executive Director