

Dear Business and Community Leaders of Santa Cruz County,

On June 15th 2017, the Santa Cruz County Business Council Board of Directors voted unanimously to endorse the building of a “multi-use, contiguous trail, with separate pedestrian and bike lanes, down the center of the corridor” over the potential future option of having an active rail line, and bike and pedestrian pathway together. This triggered an all member wide vote of the entire Business Council to take a formal position on the preferred use and vision of the existing rail corridor.

After taking a month to receive ballots from all dues paying members, the Santa Cruz County Business Council Membership has voted to endorse the Board of Directors position, with 86 percent of all member companies who participated voting in favor of bike and pedestrian only vision for the rail corridor.

The vote follows a 5 month long process during which the SCCBC Board of Directors received presentations from members of Greenway Santa Cruz and Friends of the Rail Trail, and had 2 Board meetings of open discussion on the information that was presented. Beyond this process, the Business Council has been engaged in discussions around transportation in the County for decades, having been one of the primary supporters of Measure J back in 2004, and major proponents and financial contributors toward Measure D, which passed last year.

Our focus on transportation has always been: “how can we most efficiently move people, and goods and services throughout the County, and promote public safety on our roadways?”. That interest has since grown to include support for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, and for improving the quality of existing infrastructure, including that which primarily serves bikes and pedestrians.

However, we have always been cognizant of resource and funding constraints, knowing full well that the needs of our transportation system greatly surpass the ability of our public sector partners to address them. We also recognize the great political hurdles that any active rail system would face in securing future funding and passage. Given these constraints, and our role as stewards of the public interest, our membership believes that the trail only scenario is the vision that best meets our goals, while also being the most prudent option in the context of limited and finite resources.

We also understand that our adoption of a formal position may strike some members of the community as premature, given the timeline for completion of the Unified Corridors Study which, as part of Measure D, proposed to study the best case usage option of the existing rail corridor. While we understand this sentiment, we believe that, given the information available, our organization has a duty to stake out a position to help guide the public process. Our endorsement of a preferred scenario does not hinder the completion of the Unified Corridor Study.

Sincerely,
Rick Weiss, Board Chair
Santa Cruz County Business Council