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METRO Awarded \$2,000,000 to Convert Watsonville Transit Center into Affordable Housing
Development Will Increase Affordable Housing and Multimodal Transportation Opportunities

Santa Cruz, CA (Dec. 21, 2023): The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) has been awarded \$2,000,000 from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments' (AMBAG) Regional Early Action Planning Grants of 2021 (REAP 2.0) Regional Competitive Grant Program (RCGP). The funds will be used to redevelop METRO's Watsonville Transit Center into an affordable, transit-oriented housing development.

The ground floor of this infill development will serve as a METRO transit center and ticketing office. The upper floors will hold 65+ units of net-zero affordable housing. Bus operations will be relocated to on-street bus bays to maximize the development potential of the one-acre site. In addition, METRO plans to operate two bus routes with 15-minute frequencies between the Watsonville Transit Center and Santa Cruz. These routes will meet the state's definition of high-quality transit.

"The Watsonville project is an excellent example of how infill development combined with affordable housing can also support exciting multimodal transportation opportunities," said METRO Board Chair, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson. "METRO is proud to bring forward a project that will increase access to housing and transit in Watsonville, a historically underserved community.

Located within downtown, the project is a key element in the City of Watsonville's overall revitalization effort. It will directly increase fair housing in the area because hundred percent of the 65+ dwelling units will be affordable. The project will also indirectly support the construction of housing in Watsonville through the implementation of bus services that meet the state's definition of high-quality transit. This designation allows the City and developers to streamline certain California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and reduce parking, if they choose.

"Transit-oriented development coupled with increased transit service is proven to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), especially in corridors with long commutes, such as the one between Watsonville and Santa Cruz," said METRO Vice Chair, Kristen Brown. "To further increase transit use, free transit passes will be provided to all project residents."

REAP 2.0 funding will cover the architecture and engineering phase of the project, a two-year process that will begin in January 2024 and conclude in December 2025 with a fully designed, permitted project that is ready to move to construction.

The REAP 2.0 Grant Program is a statewide effort to invest in housing, planning, and infill housing-supportive infrastructure across California to reduce VMT, increase housing affordability, and advance equity. VMT reduction is a critical tool in reducing greenhouse gas emissions; reducing air pollution and its harmful health effects; and addressing climate change.

The Watsonville project is a key element of METRO's efforts to be an environmentally focused community partner in Santa Cruz County. The agency aims to provide 175 new, transit-oriented affordable housing units in Watsonville and Santa Cruz by 2033.

About Us

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)

Established in 1968, METRO'S mission is to provide environmentally sustainable transportation to Santa Cruz County. METRO directly operates county-wide, fixed-route and Highway 17 commuter service, with connections to Santa Clara County and Monterey Salinas Transit at our Watsonville Transit Center. The agency also operates ParaCruz paratransit service. Today METRO operates a fleet of 94 buses on 24 fixed routes and 32 paratransit vehicles.

Every ride on a METRO bus takes cars off the road, significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and supports economic opportunity and quality of life in our community. Moving into the future, METRO strives to meet the following goals:

- Increase transit ridership to 7 million trips annually within the next five years
- Transition to a zero-emissions fleet with a mix of hydrogen and electric vehicles
- Increase affordable housing at METRO-owned transit centers to 175 units in the next 10 years.

For more information, visit [scmetro.org](https://www.scmetro.org).