

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **\$30 million grant win funds METRO's bus-on-shoulder plan and purchase of zero-emission buses**

*U.S. Dept. of Transportation Mega Grant funding awarded to Santa Cruz County RTC, in partnership with Caltrans and METRO for "Multimodal" transportation projects*

JAN. 30, 2023 —SANTA CRUZ, CA— Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) announces that \$30 million in new funding has been awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation from the 2022 Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant to fund plans for a new bus-on-shoulder lane on Highway 1 from Freedom Blvd. to State Park Dr., as well as to purchase four zero-emission buses.

"Too many of us know the frustration of being stuck in traffic on Highway 1 between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, which leads to a decrease in our productivity and an increase in our carbon output," **said Rep. Panetta**. "The Multimodal Corridor Program will bring much needed relief to our congestion problems with an extra lane for public transportation, improvements for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and, ultimately, the reduction of our carbon emissions with new zero-emission buses. I'm proud to have partnered with Santa Cruz METRO and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission to secure this significant federal investment that will help alleviate traffic, improve our livelihoods, and allow us to play our part in dealing with the effects of climate change."

#### **Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor Program**

METRO, Caltrans and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission are working in partnership on the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Multimodal Corridor Program. The funds will go toward improving Highway 1 with a bus on shoulder facility, auxiliary lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian overcrossings between Freedom Boulevard and State Park Drive, including a 1.25 mile segment of the Coastal Rail Trail. Permitted under state legislation, the innovative bus-on-shoulder facility will provide transit vehicles an opportunity to bypass congestion and improve the on-time performance and reliability of regional bus routes. Construction is expected to be completed in 2028.

"We're thrilled with this major grant win," **said Santa Cruz METRO Board Chair Larry Pageler**. "The grant represents a very significant investment that will increase access to transit, improve the speed and reliability of METRO buses, and support our goals to reduce emissions."

#### **Zero-emissions Buses**

Advancing transportation equity and protecting the environment, the purchase of four zero-emission buses for METRO's regional routes will help connect the community of Watsonville with jobs in the City of Santa Cruz while growing the METRO fleet of zero emission vehicles.

"This project closely aligns with our goals of climate action and resiliency," **added Santa Cruz METRO CEO Michael Tree**. "We're taking a critical step toward our long-term vision to decrease congestion, increase efficiency, and reduce vehicle miles traveled, while supporting a safer and more sustainable community."

## **About 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 at least 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 battery electric buses
- Develop 175 affordable housing units at METRO-owned transit centers over the next decade

For more information, visit [scmtd.com](http://scmtd.com).

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