



Rail & Trail Candidate Questionnaire

November Election 2022

Local elected officials are appointed to serve on boards like the Metro and the RTC and can have an impact on countywide transportation decisions. Friends of the Rail & Trail is committed to discovering candidate positions and sharing them with the public so we can all make informed choices at the ballot box.

Responses by Justin Cummings, Candidate for Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors District 3

1

The Regional Transportation Commission owns the rail corridor. The RTC has unanimously affirmed its commitment to leave the railroad infrastructure in place, maintain freight rail service, and institute high capacity public transit service. The RTC has also selected electric passenger rail transit as the locally preferred alternative for transit on the corridor. Do you support these policies? Why or why not? How would this position be expressed in your work, should you be elected?

I absolutely support maintaining freight rail capabilities and prioritizing electric passenger rail service on our Santa Cruz Branchline. These essential services will improve and strengthen our multimodal north-south transportation corridor, provide an additional emergency evacuation route for our community, and open up the possibility of products being shipped into and out of Santa Cruz in the most environmentally smart way, by clean, quiet electric rail. As a Santa Cruz City Council member, I voted in favor of the City Council endorsing NO on Measure D. As county supervisor, I will urge the RTC staff and commissioners to seek and apply for all available funding in support of rail, including federal rail infrastructure bill and state rail network funds, to help us make desperately needed rail infrastructure improvements.

Affordable equitable access to housing, job opportunities, and education is possible with direct rail connections to and from cities like Salinas, San Jose, Monterey, and San Francisco once our Santa Cruz rail line connects to the State Rail Network. A large percentage of our nurses, laborers, teachers, police force and essential workers live outside the county, and battle aggressive drivers and sit in traffic for hours commuting to and from work each day. Investing in rail means parents can get home faster and easier and have more time with their kids. I fully advocate for implementing more affordable

housing along transit lines giving our working community an easy option to steer clear of traffic. Over a million tourists visit Santa Cruz each year! With rail, they will have an opportunity to leave their cars behind, contributing to less traffic and better air quality for everyone. Investing in rail means that our community members will have access to the future state rail network which will connect us to cities across the state of California and decrease our reliance on automobiles.

It will be important to work with Mr. Michael Tree, the new General Manager of Bus Metro. Mr. Tree is an advocate of rail, and experienced in developing a successful integrated rail and bus system. I will work to ensure the RTC and Metro form a strong partnership in support of a future robust rail and an integrated bus system that serves the current and future needs of our community. I will work with our local, state and federal leaders including John Laird, Gail Pellerin, Robert Rivas, and others to make the case that Santa Cruz County can serve as a leader, statewide and nationally, addressing equitable access to opportunity as well as reducing our impact on climate change by providing a state of the art robust rail and bus transit system. I will reach out to other communities that have been successful in implementing their integrated rail and bus systems to determine lessons learned and steps towards success. I look forward to working with local organizations, such as the Friends of the Rail and Trail and Equity Transit, that have been strong advocates for both the rail and the trail. I will work to help the public understand the complexities and timing of bringing such a large scale project to this community.

I actively campaigned against measure D in support of passenger rail for our community including walking door-to-door speaking with community members to dispel Greenway misinformation. I worked with local organizations and spoke publicly at events in support of rail. I am the only current Third District Supervisor candidate that did not take money from Greenway Investors, including Bud Colligan, founder of Greenway and one of the biggest financial contributors and backers of the Yes on D/Greenway campaign that worked to rip out our community owned tracks.

I will continue the work that was in progress prior to March 2021 and honor the will of the people of Santa Cruz County by advocating for passenger rail

for this community. My position on this is unequivocal. As supervisor, I intend to take a leadership role and encourage the other commissioners to join me in delivering rail and the trail without compromise.

2

Construction has begun on the **trail** next to the tracks, but some segments have faced opposition and resulting delays. What is your position on the multi-use trail planned for the rail corridor? How would this position be expressed in your work, should you be elected?

I absolutely support the work that has been done and the plans in progress for the remaining segments of the Coastal Rail-Trail, 32 miles of trail being built in segments as funding is secured, alongside the rail. Trail segment 7a won several awards, including the California Trail & Greenways 2020 Merit Award for Reconstruction of Unique Trail Project, the American Council of Engineering Companies/California 2020 Engineering Excellence Merit Award, and the 2021 Caltrans Excellence in Transportation Award. Segment 18 opened in Watsonville in 2021 and provides the vision for when the Coastal Rail-Trail will provide safe car-free passage for pedestrians and cyclists along our 32 mile North-South corridor. We need to ensure that we are continuing to make progress on building out the trail in addition to securing funding to make the rail operational.

With the outcome of Measure D, it is clear that our community wants rail. We need to take advantage of all funding opportunities as possible to operationalize this effort. At the RTC, we need to make sure the business plan continues to move forward so that we can get a real sense of what it will cost. We need to work with our state and federal representatives, and local agencies to identify funding sources and advocate strongly for investing in rail for our community, along with studying examples of communities where this has worked and in areas where it hasn't what challenges they needed to overcome.

3

Neighborhoods with **safe streets**, bike lanes, and sidewalks create room for us to move freely without our cars. What would you do to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists?

Once a person moves off the Coastal Rail-Trail and onto the streets, safety suddenly decreases. We must work harder to ensure the streets are truly safe for everyone, whether they are walking, biking or driving a vehicle, from Watsonville to Davenport or in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Santa Cruz County has led in the number of bicyclist deaths in California. There are countless roads and streets throughout Santa Cruz County that are not safe for the pedestrians and cyclists that must travel on them, either to get to school, work, or other activities. And people have mentioned aggressive driving has increased over the past year. Speed limits do not effectively curb speeders.

In order to improve street safety across the county, I will also prioritize funding for infrastructure that serves to make streets safer, such as sidewalks and protected bike lanes as well as traffic (speed) calming measures such as speed tables, narrower streets with wider sidewalks, raised medians, and other physical measures. I will also work with organizations throughout the county which advocate for safe streets and work to develop educational programs that 1- help shift how drivers drive on the roads and 2- help implement safe riding practices and routes through schools, clubs, and advocacy programs. I would also work to reactivate the electric bikeshare program so that people have quick access to a bike and don't have to worry about their personal bike getting stolen. Prioritizing infrastructure that provides safe biking and walking zones along streets and roads will encourage more cycling and walking throughout the county.

4

What did you think of the June 2022 **Measure D** vote? What was your position on this measure? How do you interpret the outcome of this vote?

I was excited and pleased by the community's overwhelming and resounding NO on Measure D in June 2022.

I first learned about the Santa Cruz Rail Line and the Coastal rail-trail in 2018, when running for City Council, and ever since then, I have been 100% in favor of both rail and trail. I supported the No on D campaign and included No Way Greenway (NWGY) logos on our campaign flyers and distributed NWGW materials during the spring door to door campaign. I donated money to the No on D campaign, attended as many events as possible to show solidarity with

the No on D campaign. Although I met with Greenway to listen to their perspective, I never took any money from Bud Colligan or Greenway during my campaign.

My interpretation of the outcome of the incredible opposition to Greenway's Measure D, was that voters sent a loud and clear message when they voted NO on Measure D! The community absolutely said NO to Greenway's proposal to remove rail from the county general plan, the community said NO to ripping out our tracks, and said NO to trail only! The outcome of the vote, almost 74% of the community, was clearly opposed to Greenway's proposals. This is in line with a 2021 survey done by the Friends of the Rail and Trail indicating that 74% of the county wants to move forward with a passenger rail.

After the June election, many community members are asking, 'How soon until we see rail?' They've been wanting it and waiting for it for years! I believe that the Santa Cruz community expects the Regional Transportation Commission to prioritize their efforts towards seeking federal and state funding to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and we're in the best position possible to strongly advocate for funds to make infrastructure improvements and move forward with rail and trail.

Find-out more about Justin Cummings at their website:

<https://www.cummingsforsupervisor.com/>