



# 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 Maria Orozco, Candidate for Watsonville City Council District 3

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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?

Transportation touches every aspect of our lives and is intertwined with issues facing our community like housing, jobs, access to services, public health and safety, and equity. We must center transportation policy in any policy solution to these issues. I am a strong supporter of the rail/trail and as a council member, I will encourage policies that bring us closer to providing this quality of life transportation service. In Watsonville, many of our residents, including my family, commute daily to Santa Cruz and other surrounding cities for work. The implementation of a rail system will not only cut the commute time for us and other residents but will reduce our carbon footprint and have other lasting impacts on our environment. As a council member, I will work in partnership with our local, state, and federal partners to secure federal funding that supports sustainable multi-modal transportation projects.

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 support the multi-use trail on the rail corridor. The trail will provide affordable mobility options for families who cannot afford to drive due to the high costs of car ownership or because of other factors such as age or disabilities. It will also improve the health and quality of life of our community by promoting a

safe place to walk, bike, and connect with others while also reducing gas emissions. As a council member, I will work in partnership with our community stakeholders to support the completion of the multi-use trail through different efforts such as asking the Coastal Commission to approve permits so that there are no delays in construction. I will also advocate at the county level to ensure we take advantage of the benefits under SB 922 to not only accelerate the approval of climate-friendly transportation projects but also reduce the costs associated with those projects.

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?

As a school board trustee, I have worked to support efforts to increase bike and pedestrian safety to ensure our students have a safe path to school, and I will continue these efforts as a council member. I believe we need to build a transportation network for our future that promotes a healthy and safe car-free lifestyle. I understand this will take a community effort, and I am optimistic we can take steps in Watsonville toward this goal. I am encouraged by Caltrans' interest in our downtown corridor to build a revitalized downtown that is walkable and safe for cyclists. I will also continue to support the city's effort toward achieving the ambitious goals outlined in the Vision Zero plan to end pedestrian/cyclist automotive fatalities and injuries by designing safe transportation infrastructure city-wide.

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 supported the No on D campaign and publicly endorsed it. I also actively campaigned for it in and around my neighborhood. The outcome of this vote demonstrated our community's commitment to an affordable and environmentally-sustainable public transit system that is accessible by all and that promotes equity, inclusion, and the improvement of the health and quality of life of residents in our communities.

**Find-out more about Maria Orozco at their website:**

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