

RESOLUTION NO. _____ (CM)

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE ACCEPTING THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL VMT MITIGATION PROGRAM PRELIMINARY FINAL REPORT AND DIRECTING STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTATION OF A MULTIJURISDICTIONAL REGIONAL VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) MITIGATION PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Senate Bill (SB) 743 was signed into law in 2013 and required the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to identify new metrics for identifying and mitigating transportation impacts under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and that the OPR identified vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the new metric where VMT is a measure of the number of vehicle trips multiplied by the length of those trips.; and

WHEREAS, the City of Watsonville created a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Program by adopting Resolution No. 205-22 (CM) on September 27, 2022 to approve a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Policy and adopting Resolution No. 51-23 (CM) on March 14, 2023 to approve an in-lieu fee to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) associated with development projects; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the County of Santa Cruz staff, in partnership with the City of Watsonville and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, began a project to develop a framework for a regional VMT mitigation program that would ensure compliance and provide streamlined options for project mitigation in accordance with the new metrics for transportation impacts under CEQA.; and

WHEREAS, City staff has explored the possibility of expanding the City VMT Mitigation Program into a regional program, which would enable collaboration on broader initiatives, such as transit and transportation demand management projects, allow for more effective pooling of resources, and create more developer certainty which could result in more significant reductions in VMT and funding increases; and

WHEREAS, staff recommends that the City Council receive a presentation on the Santa Cruz County Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program, provide input on the preliminary Final Report, accept the report, and direct staff to participate in developing the implementation of a multijurisdictional Regional VMT Mitigation program (Council is not being asked to confirm participation in the program at this time).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. This action is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a “project” that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment and because the action constitutes organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. Additionally, even if a “project,” the action would be exempt under the “common sense” exception (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15061(b)(3)) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that this action may have a significant effect on the environment.

2. The Council accepts the Santa Cruz County Regional VMT Mitigation Program Preliminary Final Report and directs staff to participate in developing the implementation of a multijurisdictional Regional VMT Mitigation program (Council is not confirming City participation in the program at this time).
