

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Funding a Permanent Regional Safe Routes to School Director Position in Humboldt County

Prepared by:

Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG)

Prepared for:

HCAOG Board of Directors

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DRAFT

Executive Summary

Humboldt County has sustained Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programming for more than two decades, producing measurable safety outcomes and a multi-agency task force that serves as the region's coordination backbone. That track record, however, has been built largely through grant cycles, volunteer coordination, and part-time staff capacity distributed across multiple organizations. No single agency currently employs a dedicated, full-time SRTS Director funded as a permanent line item. The absence of that position leaves the county's SRTS capacity structurally vulnerable: when grant terms end or key staff move on, programming gaps follow.

This feasibility study examines whether a permanent Regional SRTS Director position focused on education, encouragement, engagement, equity, and evaluation can be sustainably funded through a combination of local public agency contributions, state and federal transportation grants, and philanthropic sources. The study begins with a survey of Humboldt County's documented SRTS program history, draws on stakeholder interviews conducted between January and March 2026 (ongoing), a review of California transportation funding mechanics, and an analysis of comparable positions across the state and nation.

The findings support a conclusion that a permanent position is feasible, but only with deliberate structuring. A minimum annual cost of \$100,000 was identified as the working floor for such a position during stakeholder engagement. Using Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational wage data for the North Coast Region of California, fully loaded costs for a 1.0 FTE position range from approximately \$101,000 to \$154,000 per year depending on classification, with a 0.5 FTE option ranging from approximately \$50,000 to \$77,000. The City of Arcata's Engineering Department indicated a willingness to commit \$25,000 per year beginning in the upcoming fiscal year. No other organization contacted through March 2026 has made a firm funding commitment, though several expressed interest in participating through in-kind support.

The primary structural challenge is that the most accessible state grant source, the Active Transportation Program's non-infrastructure category, cannot fund ongoing operations, only start-up programs. A second material constraint is that the Transportation Development Act limits use of the Local Transportation Fund 2% Bicycle and Pedestrian Set-aside for education and encouragement purposes to 5% of that fund, materially restricting the portion available for the Director's position. Long-term sustainability therefore requires migrating core position costs to institutionalized local funding, including eligible portions of the LTF 2% set-aside, city general funds or local sales tax revenues, and interagency cost-sharing agreements, with ATP and other grant programs supporting program expansion and infrastructure work. This report presents five staffing and hosting options calibrated to California's funding mechanics, along with a recommended action sequence that begins with governance formalization and near-term grant pursuit, and transitions to a stable local funding base by year three.

I. Introduction and Study Purpose

HCAOG's Role in Safe Routes to School

The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) serves as the clearinghouse for local Safe Routes to School information in Humboldt County. HCAOG participates in the local and national SRTS task force, shares resources and best practices with partners, and assists with grant applications.

Humboldt County SR2S Task Force focuses on countywide efforts, works with schools on needs assessments and grant applications, and includes partners spanning the nonprofit sector, county public health, Caltrans, CHP, public works, cities, and school representatives. The Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) coordinates both the Greater Eureka and Humboldt County SRTS task forces, working with leaders, schools, and parents to improve safety and encourage walking and biking to school.

This governance structure represents a functioning multi-partner system. What it lacks is a dedicated staff position with defined responsibility and sustained funding to advance non-infrastructure programming countywide. This study was initiated to determine whether that gap can be closed.

Scope of This Study

This study is part of the Vibrant Multimodal Neighborhoods Planning Grant funded by the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant. The feasibility report is intended to examine funding structure for a permanent Safe Routes to School Director position in the County. The position would be focused specifically on education, encouragement, engagement, equity, and evaluation functions—the non-infrastructure components of SRTS programming. Infrastructure grant pursuit and capital project delivery are noted where relevant to funding pathways but are not the primary focus of the position this study evaluates.

The study methodology included a review of Humboldt County's SRTS program history; key informant interviews with potential partner agencies and funders conducted between January and March 2026; a review of comparable SRTS director and coordinator positions from other jurisdictions; an analysis of California state and federal transportation funding mechanics; and a review of the scope of work originally developed by HCAOG for a fiscal and employment scenario analysis consultant.

II. History of Safe Routes to School in Humboldt County

Safe Routes to School education and infrastructure programs have a long track record of success in Humboldt County. The brief history of program successes below shows the widespread impact that SRTS has had over the decades. For a rural area without dedicated funding, the region has been successful in securing funding non-infrastructure grant money. The experience has shown that

Organized Safe Routes to School activity in Humboldt County dates to at least 2006 and has been highly successful. Efforts have involved many jurisdictions including governmental, non-profit, and private and been multidisciplinary in nature. Funding sources have been diverse and included Federal and State Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), California Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Infrastructure improvements throughout the county, which have enhanced safety, have been strengthened with policy changes including reduced speed limits near many schools, bicycle and pedestrian education for students, encouragement programs including school walking maps,

and walk to school activities and programs. While many educational projects have focused on K-8 students at schools with high poverty levels, in keeping with SRTS Equity guidelines, older students have participated in Photo Voices projects through which they developed civic engagement skills by identifying their own safety priorities and presenting them to elected officials in a variety of fora. High School students received in class automobile driving lessons through a “Driver Lesson in a Box” course developed by DHHS.

Program Accomplishments

Alice Birney Elementary in Eureka began safe routes efforts in 2006 with a walk audit. In 2010, the City of Eureka received a State SRTS infrastructure award for work done at Washington Elementary, and a district-wide SRTS Task Force formed and conducted a walkability assessment at Alice Birney to address collisions and safe bicycling. That same year, the City of Eureka repainted ladder-style crosswalks, extended red zones for increased visibility, and added bike lanes near Alice Birney; a bicycle club and bicycle safety education program were also established there, led by a champion teacher.

By the 2010–2011 school year, bicycle collisions at Alice Birney dropped by 67% compared to the 2008–2009 school year. In 2012, Alice Birney leveraged a \$5,000 mini-grant from the California kids’ plates program to provide bicycle safety skills training to all 4th through 6th graders and hosted its first bike-to-school day.

At Grant Elementary, also in Eureka, a PTA-organized SRTS planning workshop and walkability audit in 2011–2012 led to a community grant that funded pedestrian and bicycle safety education for all students, visual crosswalk markers, Walking Wednesdays, walking school buses led by parents and volunteers, walk-to-school classroom contests, and gravel improvements near the school. Walking Wednesday participation increased, with at least half of the school participating on at least one occasion, and encouraging walking to school was associated with a decrease in traffic congestion. Grant Elementary also received a State SRTS infrastructure award in 2011–2012 for improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, bulb-outs, and a median near the school.

In 2012, HCAOG initiated an SRTS subcommittee to develop a countywide SRTS prioritization tool. On May 12, 2015, the SRTS countywide task force submitted a letter of support to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors requesting adoption of California’s Safer School Zone Act as an additional tool for county law enforcement; the Board voted unanimously to pass the ordinance. In 2015, Washington Elementary’s rural remote drop-off program—in which students rode the bus to a designated stop and walked the remainder of the route supervised by adult volunteers—was highlighted in the statewide guide *Safe Routes to School Programs in Rural California: A Guide for Communities and Partners* as a replicable model.

In 2017, ATP-funded non-infrastructure programs were active in both McKinleyville and Fortuna, delivering bicycle and pedestrian safety education in community-based youth programs, including at middle schools and parks, and supporting education, engagement, encouragement, and enforcement activities. That same year, Zane Middle School in Eureka launched the “Falcon Flyaway” program, which engaged the surrounding neighborhood in keeping an eye out for students and represented a community-awareness approach that complemented prior infrastructure-focused strategies.

In July 2023, Dan Burden—an internationally recognized transportation and walkability expert—visited Humboldt County at HCAOG’s initiative to conduct walkability assessments in Arcata, Eureka, Blue Lake, and McKinleyville. In July 2025, HCAOG secured a \$310,000 grant to improve pedestrian safety at Loleta Elementary and enhance connectivity to Tribal Lands.

Education and encouragement accomplishments documented by HCAOG program staff include: curricula that meet California State Education Standards, with SRTS content integrated as value-added material

that does not require teachers to develop new lesson plans or eliminate existing ones; crossing guard training (with the noted challenge that crossing guard duties are not incorporated into union contracts); High School Life Skills multimodal training; and the “Friendly Driver Lessons in a Box” program developed through DHHS—a packaged curriculum that provides supplies and instructions ready for classroom use. HCAOG staff also initiated the Walk’n’Roll citywide contest in Arcata and developed an original countywide SRTS prioritization tool.

Institutional Knowledge and the Continuity Gap

The accomplishments above span nearly two decades and multiple funding cycles. They were produced through combinations of grant-funded staff, in-kind volunteer coordination, interagency cooperation, and the sustained engagement of a small number of practitioners who have held institutional memory, to the extent possible, across programs.

The challenges facing SRTS in the county manifest in various ways but interview data results indicate that the uncertainty created by the “boom and bust” nature of grant funding cycles is foundational. For example, the COVID years, in addition to moving all local school instruction on-line, drew Public Health staff from programs like SRTS to doing contact tracing leaving many programs unstaffed and no one available to write grants for programs to resume in the future. Recent funding cuts to Cal-Fresh and Healthy Living programs have eliminated programs and reduced staffing.

Changes in distribution of state funding from a designated SRTS program to ATP funding, through which rural areas such as Humboldt County compete with MPOs and all vulnerable users are left to compete for the same funds, has made grants more competitive.

State law changes to the After School Educational Services (ASES) program mandating that all low-income students qualify for the program has overwhelmed local schools drawing staff and resources from pedestrian and bike programs.

Grant funding for Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) to host the Humboldt County Safe Routes to Schools Task Force meeting ran out and have only been replaced by the Loleta SR2S STPG grant in April 2026.

Foremost among these challenges is gaining and maintaining buy-in from local schools. While there is an interest in the benefits of SRTS from school Superintendents, Transportation Directors, classroom teachers and after-school coordinators there is little staff time or funding available.

However, each of the above programs have ended when the grant funding expired. Program continuity currently depends on the continued availability of grant funding and the engagement of those same practitioners, a dependency that stakeholders identified as a key concern during interviews. Stakeholders further recognize that funding a permanent position could help preserve institutional knowledge and provide program continuity by putting a face to SRTS locally and creating a dependable contact.

III. Position Description: Regional SRTS Director

Core Program Functions

The position under consideration is a Regional SRTS Director whose primary responsibilities center on non-infrastructure programming structured around the Six E framework: Education, Encouragement, Engagement, Engineering coordination, Equity, and Evaluation.

Core duties identified across comparable job descriptions and stakeholder interviews include: developing and implementing pedestrian and bicycle safety curricula at elementary, middle, and high schools;

organizing and leading encouragement events such as Walk and Bike to School days, bike rodeos, bike camps, and walking school buses; developing suggested route maps to schools, parks, transit stops, and community centers; coordinating with city transportation engineers, planners, and school officials to identify safety concerns, infrastructure needs, and grant opportunities; serving on district, city, and county committees and coalitions; compiling and analyzing data to document mode shifts and assess program effectiveness; and managing grant compliance documentation.

The program’s scope does not need to be limited to school-age children. Interviewees noted the relevance of safe routes programming to broader community populations, including older adults and residents served by community health organizations.

Benchmark: Marin County Bicycle Coalition Program Director, Education

The Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC)’s Program Director, Education position - currently posted as of March 2026 and serving the Transportation Authority of Marin’s Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program -provides a directly comparable California example for position scoping and compensation benchmarking. The position is structured at 0.8 FTE (full-time exempt) and compensated at \$40.00–\$45.00 per hour, equivalent to approximately \$66,600–\$74,900 annually at 0.8 FTE. Fully loaded using the 1.618× multiplier (see Section IV), total employer cost is approximately \$107,700–\$121,100 per year.

The MCBC Director oversees a team of eight part-time staff and serves approximately 60 school communities across Marin County, reporting to the Executive Director and managing the primary TAM government contract. Program responsibilities span strategic leadership, staff management, school and partner engagement, communications, evaluation, and grant and contract management. This scope of work is similar in responsibility and influence to the desired Regional SRTS Director role for Humboldt County.

Key structural features of the MCBC role relevant to Humboldt County scoping include:

- The position is hosted by a nonprofit (MCBC) under contract to a county transportation authority (TAM)—a governance model analogous to Options D and E in this study.
- The position manages a portfolio of education, encouragement, volunteer coordination, curriculum delivery, and data evaluation across a geographically dispersed set of schools—directly parallel to the Six E scope under consideration here.
- Compensation at the 0.8 FTE level falls between the Health Education Specialist (\$62,660) and Urban and Regional Planner (\$83,980) BLS proxies for the North Coast Region, confirming that those proxies represent a reasonable range for the Humboldt context.
- MCBC offers full employer-paid health and dental insurance, a 403(b) retirement match, and transportation stipends—consistent with the 1.618× loaded cost assumption used in this study.

Comparable Positions

The table below summarizes compensation data from job descriptions reviewed as part of this study.

Position	Employer / Type	Annual Salary Range	FTE
Walk N Roll Program Representative	Intercity Transit, Olympia, WA (transit agency)	\$60,757–\$82,098	1.0
SRTS Coordinator	Mid-Willamette Valley COG, Salem, OR (COG)	[VERIFY — not stated in source]	1.0

Position	Employer / Type	Annual Salary Range	FTE
Transportation Safe Routes Supervisor	Rochester Public Schools, MN (school district)	\$61,598–\$63,336	1.0
Transportation Planner (SRTS)	City of Palo Alto, CA (municipality)	\$115,565–\$141,482	1.0
Associate Planner (SRTS)	City of Palo Alto, CA (municipality)	\$100,422–\$123,281	1.0
SRTS Program Coordinator	Valley Regional Transit, Ada County, ID (transit agency)	\$41,600 (starting; \$20.00/hr)	1.0
Program Director, Education (SR2S)	Marin County Bicycle Coalition / TAM, CA (nonprofit/CMA)	\$66,600–\$74,900 (at 0.8 FTE)	0.8

The Palo Alto positions reflect a high-cost urban California labor market and are not directly transferable to Humboldt County. The Oregon, Minnesota, and Idaho positions are in rural or semi-rural settings more comparable in geography, though labor market conditions still differ. The MCBC/TAM position provides the most directly relevant California nonprofit-hosted benchmark. North Coast Region wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides the most defensible basis for local cost modeling and is used in Section V below.

Recommended Qualifications for the Humboldt Context

Drawing from the range of job descriptions reviewed, a minimum qualification framework appropriate for the Humboldt County context would include: a bachelor's degree in transportation planning, public health, public administration, education, or a related field, or two or more years of experience in SRTS coordination or a related field; demonstrated ability to develop and deliver education and encouragement programs for K–12 students; familiarity with grant compliance and documentation; a valid California driver's license; and the ability to travel regularly across a rural, geographically dispersed county. Bilingual capacity in English and Spanish is identified as a desirable qualification across multiple comparable positions and is consistent with the county's community health outreach context.

IV. Cost Analysis

Wage Benchmarks

Because “SRTS Director” is not a standard occupational code, wage proxies from Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data for the North Coast Region of California (nonmetropolitan area) provide the basis for cost modeling. The North Coast Region includes Humboldt County.

Occupational Proxy	Annual Mean Wage (North Coast Region, CA)	Source
Project Management Specialists	\$95,140	BLS OEWS
Urban and Regional Planners	\$83,980	BLS OEWS
Health Education Specialists	\$62,660	BLS OEWS
Civil Engineers	\$109,080	BLS OEWS

Fully Loaded Cost Estimates

Bureau of Labor Statistics Employer Costs for Employee Compensation data for state and local government workers as of December 2024 is applied: wages represent approximately 61.8% of total compensation, implying a fully loaded multiplier of approximately 1.618× salary.

Classification Proxy	Base Wage	1.0 FTE Loaded	0.5 FTE Loaded
Health Education Specialist	\$62,660	~\$101,400	~\$50,700
Urban and Regional Planner	\$83,980	~\$135,900	~\$67,950
Project Management Specialist	\$95,140	~\$153,900	~\$76,950

The feasibility study process used an estimated minimum cost of \$100,000 per year as a working figure for stakeholder conversations about a full-time position, with in-kind match of shared office space noted as a potential supplement. This figure is consistent with the lower end of the loaded cost range for a Health Education Specialist classification at 1.0 FTE, or a Planner/Project Management classification at 0.5 FTE. The MCBC/TAM benchmark (\$107,700–\$121,100 loaded at 0.8 FTE) is consistent with this range and confirms that the \$100,000 working floor is realistic for a California-based program director.

Program Delivery Costs

Costs beyond salary and benefits include program materials, event supplies, and travel. The City of Arcata reported spends \$2,000 - \$5,000 for equipment for its Kids’ Bike Rodeos, providing a reference point for per-event supply costs. Travel costs for mileage reimbursement would be \$4,000 - \$6,000 depending on the extent of travel to more rural areas.

V. Stakeholder Engagement Findings

Interview Methodology

HCAOG and its feasibility team conducted key informant interviews and outreach meetings with potential partner organizations between January and March 2026. The interviews used a structured set of questions developed by the feasibility team covering organizational interest in SRTS, potential financial contributions, in-kind contributions, preferred service models, and governance preferences. Interview questions were refined after the first meeting with Open Door Community Health Centers; as a result, not all organizations were asked identical questions, and funding-related questions were more fully explored in the BGCR and City of Arcata interviews than in the Open Door interview.

[NOTE: Interviews and input is still welcome while this draft report is in progress]

Key Findings by Organization

Organization	Date	Expressed Interest	Potential Contribution	Constraints Noted
Open Door Community Health Centers	1/7/2026	Sees SRTS as relevant to pediatric health and social drivers of health; referred additional stakeholders	Staff time from pediatrics, case management, mobile dental; additional contacts provided	No direct funding commitment discussed; first interview, process not yet refined
Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods	2/17/2026	Strong interest; reports regular youth travel by walking, biking, scooter; safety concerns identified	Possible in-kind office space; open to train-the-trainer programming	Financial constraints; fee-for-service model difficult given member affordability; upcoming Eureka Teen Center renovations may limit space
County of Humboldt	2/18/2026		Measure O potential funding in future; conceptual department shifts could create more time for	Staffing – Public Works limited
City of Arcata, Engineering Department	2/20/2026	Willing to support a regional staff person for non-infrastructure active transportation services	\$25,000/year; confident City Manager would agree; sees LTF 2% Bike & Pedestrian Set-aside as potential funding component	Expects HCAOG and others to identify additional funds; Director would need to pursue grants as part of duties
HCAOG (staff)	3/12/2026	Staff time within existing budget could be reallocated to grant-seeking and coordination	Staff time reallocation	No direct funding contribution identified

Organization	Date	Expressed Interest	Potential Contribution	Constraints Noted
Dept. of Health and Human Services	3/17/2026	Interest in concept	Technical support for writing grants	All work is grant-funded; competitive grant writing overhead is high; county overhead is high; no space at Wellness Center
Humboldt Area Foundation / H. Health Foundation	3/9/2026 (email outreach)	Potential fit with health and wellness goals; HHF provides organizational grants	Organizational grant funding (avg. \$5k–\$8k, max \$15k, annual August cycle)	“Active Transportation” language does not resonate; “Health and Safety” framing recommended; developers averse to active transportation framing

Summary of Funding Expressions

The City of Arcata is the only organization to date that has expressed a specific annual dollar contribution (\$25,000) toward the position, and that expression is subject to formal City Manager and budget process approval. At \$25,000, the City of Arcata’s potential contribution represents 25% of the \$100,000 working minimum cost figure—leaving a minimum funding gap of \$75,000 per year that would need to be addressed through additional agency contributions, grant funding, or a combination. No other organization contacted through March 2026 made a specific funding commitment, though BGCR indicated possible in-kind office space and the Humboldt Health Foundation represents a potential supplemental grant source.

The City of Arcata’s Engineering Department identified the Local Transportation Fund 2% Bicycle and Pedestrian Set-aside as a potential funding component and raised the question of how HCAOG allocates that fund for education and encouragement purposes. That question, and its TDA-governed answer, is addressed in Section VI below.

VI. Funding Pathways

California Active Transportation Funding

SRTS programming in California is funded through a layered system combining statewide transportation dollars, federal-aid programs, regional programming decisions, local revenue, and nonprofit and philanthropic support. The Active Transportation Program (ATP) is the single most consequential current funding channel for both infrastructure and education/encouragement non-infrastructure work.

ATP was created by SB 99 and AB 101 (2013) and consolidated prior programs including Transportation Alternatives, the Bicycle Transportation Account, and the State Safe Routes to School program. SB 1 (2017) provided additional annual ATP funding beginning in FY 2017–18. The ATP distributes funds through three components as directed by state and federal law: 50% to the Statewide Component, administered competitively by the California Transportation Commission; 40% to MPOs in urbanized areas with populations greater than 200,000, administered competitively by each large MPO; and 10% to small urban and rural areas with populations under 200,000, administered competitively by the Commission. Humboldt County, as a non-large-MPO rural region, would access ATP funding through the Statewide Component and the Small Urban and Rural Component.

A central limitation for this study's purposes is that ATP non-infrastructure rules explicitly require NI programs to be start-ups or expansions and require a sustainability plan after ATP funds end. The 2025 ATP guidelines state that ATP cannot fund existing or ongoing program operations. This rule creates a structural barrier to using ATP as the primary long-term funding source for a permanent Director position.

Funding Sources

The table below summarizes the primary funding sources relevant to Humboldt County.

Funding Source	Typical Scale	SRTS Staffing Eligibility	Match Rules	Cashflow	Frequency
Active Transportation Program (ATP)	Wide range; min. ~\$250k generally	Infrastructure, plans, NI (start-up/expansion only; staff time and indirect costs eligible in NI work plan)	Commission: no match required; federally funded components may require 11.47%	Reimbursement; costs before allocation/FHWA authorization ineligible	Multi-year cycle; MPO, small urban/rural, statewide components
Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants (STPG)	Min. ~\$100k; max \$500k–\$700k; up to \$1M for climate adaptation	Planning studies including SRTS plans and multimodal planning	11.47% minimum or 20% minimum by category; waivers possible	Planning-grant administration; match and invoicing rules by grant type	Annual/periodic cycles
Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	~\$120M annual program statewide (IIJA-era); max project \$10M; 90% reimbursement	Safety infrastructure on public roads or publicly owned bike/ped pathways	90% reimbursement implies 10% local share	Federal-aid delivery requirements; project delivery performance affects future eligibility	Call-for-projects every two years
LTF 2% Bicycle and Pedestrian Set-aside	Varies by county TDA apportionment	Infrastructure and E&E eligible; E&E use capped at 5% of the 2% fund under TDA rules	Not applicable	Local fund; not subject to federal reimbursement timing	Annual programming cycle
Humboldt Health Foundation Organizational Grants	Avg. \$5k–\$8k; max \$15k	Health-oriented community projects; could support incentives, outreach, or small program gaps	Not a match policy tool; can serve as non-federal gap funding	Upfront grant funding can help with reimbursement float	Annual cycle (August)
HAF + Wild Rivers Community Foundation portal	Not specified	Local charitable programs; could support community engagement and gap needs	Not applicable	Potential flexibility for non-federal-eligible costs	Cycles vary by fund

Local Funding Sources

The Local Transportation Fund 2% Bicycle and Pedestrian Set-aside, administered by HCAOG pursuant to the Transportation Development Act (TDA), was identified by the City of Arcata's City Engineer as a potential funding component for the Director's position. Under the TDA, use of the 2% fund for education and encouragement purposes is limited to 5% of the total amount available in that fund. This is a TDA statutory constraint, not an HCAOG-imposed policy restriction. Depending on the size of Humboldt County's annual 2% set-aside apportionment, the dollar amount available for education and encouragement work under this cap may be limited, and should be calculated based on the current fund balance before relying on this source for position cost projections.

The City of Arcata's City Engineer also raised the question of whether HCAOG's increase of its LTF share could potentially supplant staff time otherwise paid with Rural Planning Assistance or Project, Planning, and Monitoring funding.

Structural Constraints

Three structural constraints govern the feasibility of any staffing approach under California's transportation funding system. First, ATP and other federal-aid programs are reimbursement programs: payroll and contractor invoices must be paid while awaiting reimbursement, requiring the host agency to carry cashflow. Costs incurred before Commission allocation and FHWA authorization are ineligible for reimbursement. Second, federally funded components of ATP projects carry a match requirement that is commonly represented as 11.47% in California practice, though toll credits can substitute for the cash match. Third, ATP non-infrastructure awards explicitly cannot fund ongoing operations, meaning any position funded initially through ATP NI must transition to other funding sources by the end of the grant term.

VII. Staffing and Hosting Options

Five feasible staffing and hosting models are identified as relevant to Humboldt County’s context. Cost estimates use North Coast Region BLS wage proxies and the 1.618× loading multiplier described in Section IV. The table below summarizes each option.

Option	Description	Est. Annual Cost	Pros	Cons	Primary Funding
A	ATP-funded start-up at public agency: 0.5–1.0 FTE coordinator at county, city, or HCAOG; scoped as ATP NI start-up with sustainability plan	~\$68k–\$154k/yr (1.0 FTE planner/PM proxies)	Directly pays for staff time; builds countywide delivery	Time-limited; cannot fund ongoing ops; reimbursement cashflow risk	ATP (NI); philanthropy for gaps
B	County-funded base position: stable line item in Public Health or Public Works; grants fund expansion	~\$101k–\$154k/yr (1.0 FTE)	Highest sustainability; strengthens grant competitiveness	Requires discretionary county budget capacity which is	County general fund or discretionary revenue; STPG; ATP; HSIP
C	School-district-housed via transportation agency agreement: education entity houses staff; funded through HCAOG or city agreement (San Mateo C/CAG model)	~\$200k–\$260k/yr (1.0 FTE coordinator + 0.5 FTE educator)	Direct alignment with schools; easier educator recruitment	Requires strong interagency agreement and fiscal controls	ATP NI (start-up/expansion); STPG; philanthropy
D	Contracted delivery through nonprofit or consultant: public sponsor retains internal contract manager; program delivery contracted (Alameda-like hybrid)	~\$150k–\$400k/yr (scope-dependent)	Fast to mobilize; avoids hiring delays; leverages specialized providers	Contract end can destabilize continuity; procurement overhead	ATP NI (start-up/expansion); local and philanthropic funds
E	Shared regional coordinator via RTPA or JPA: regional entity hosts coordinator serving multiple small jurisdictions	~\$136k–\$154k/yr (1.0 FTE planner/PM)	Economies of scale; strengthens competitive applications	Complex governance; risk of staff time spread too thin	STPG; ATP (plans, NI); ATRC technical assistance

Apportionment Models

Stakeholder interviews identified several models for apportioning the cost of the Director's position among contributing agencies. The City of Arcata's City Engineer identified a funding formula based on population and number of schools as one possibility, and a model in which program hours received are proportional to funding contributed as another. The feasibility team's interview guide also identified flat fee, minimum base fee plus added costs for more services, and cost-per-school as candidate apportionment structures. No model has been formally evaluated or adopted. The selection of an apportionment model should be addressed as part of the governance formalization step described in the recommendations below.

VIII. Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the feasibility of a sustainably funded SRTS Director position. Findings from stakeholder interviews indicate there is not available funding at this time. However, the following actions are recommended to

1. In its existing role as the county SRTS clearinghouse and its capacity as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency, HCAOG staff should continue to serve a coordinating role in discussions around SRTS Director funding and grant applications.
2. Better understand the mechanisms and support for a collaboratively governed SRTS Director. The region is currently working through this process to determine the MOU and organizational structure for housing a Regional Climate Director. The SRTS Director is envisioned to operate in a similar regional capacity, but the specifics of how a regional position would work in terms of geographic focus and proportional cost need to be further examined.
3. Leverage strengths by pursuing initial funding offers that could be used to help bridge to more sustainable sources. The City of Arcata's expressed \$25,000 annual contribution should be formalized through a budget appropriation and interagency agreement. Humboldt Health Foundation organizational grant funding (max \$15,000; August proposal cycle) for incentives, outreach materials, and reimbursement cashflow support. Approach the HAF/Wild Rivers Community Foundation portal for supplemental program support. In language directed at health foundations, use "Health and Safety" framing rather than "Active Transportation." Target: initiate by April 15, 2026.
4. HCAOG and partners can consider applying for a Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to build the SRTS plan and grant pipeline as part of a larger Active Transportation Plan. STPG funding (maximums of \$500,000–\$700,000 by category, with a \$1M ceiling for climate adaptation planning) can fund the planning work needed to maintain SRTS coordination work while developing grant-ready SRTS project scopes for subsequent ATP and HSIP applications.
5. Procure contracted support or hire a 0.5 FTE start-up coordinator as an ATP NI start-up program. In the first 12–18 months, Option D (contracted delivery) provides the fastest path to programming activity while internal capacity is being built. The contract scope should be aligned to ATP-eligible NI activities: education events, bike rodeos, safety audits, encouragement campaigns, route mapping, and evaluation. The sustainability plan submitted with the ATP application must demonstrate how core coordination costs will transition to local line-item funding by year three.
6. Collaborate with local stakeholders to develop a plan for transitioning core coordination funding to a stable local line item by year three. California examples show that long-term stability requires a

local funding anchor. For Humboldt County, the most defensible long-term anchor is a combination of eligible LTF 2% Bicycle and Pedestrian Set-aside funds (subject to the 5% TDA cap on education and encouragement use, which must be quantified against the current fund apportionment), City of Arcata and potentially other city general fund or sales tax contributions, and interagency cost-sharing under a formal agreement. The position should be reclassified from grant-funded temporary to permanent line item no later than the start of the third program year. Target: funding plan adopted by July 1, 2027.

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Appendix A: Funding Sources Summary Table

See Section VI above for the full funding sources comparison table.

Appendix B: California SRTS Staffing and Funding Models

Example	Host / Fiscal Sponsor	Staffing Structure	What It Illustrates
Bay Area Regional SRTS (OBAG)	Regional MPO/CMA ecosystem	OBAG funds ~\$6M/year in regional SRTS grants to cities, counties, and CTAs for program implementation, K–12 safety training, outreach, and safety audits	Regional pooled federal-aid funding translatable to staff-supported programming
Alameda County SR2S	County transportation commission (Alameda CTC)	Internal SR2S Program Manager + multidisciplinary consultant team; funded with Measure B + federal CMAQ + Surface Transportation Program	Long-term stability via local sales tax + federal funds; contracted delivery at scale
San Mateo County SRTS (C/CAG)	County CMA	C/CAG funds county Superintendent of Schools for implementation; FY 2021–22 contract: \$830,000; task-order structure with monthly arrears payments	School-district-housed implementation financed through transportation agency
San Francisco SRTS NI (OBAG 2)	City + public health partnership	Non-infrastructure scope includes staffing, school assessments, education/encouragement, and evaluation; local match expectations apply	Staff-heavy NI programming embedded in federal-aid regional framework
SANDAG School Commuter Program	Regional agency	Regional-level programs provide direct school support funded within TransNet ecosystem	Regional staff/services functioning as SRTS capacity without school-by-school hire
Marin County Bicycle Coalition / TAM (SR2S)	Nonprofit (MCBC) under contract to county transportation authority (TAM)	Program Director, Education (0.8 FTE) oversees team of eight part-time staff; serves ~60 school communities; manages primary TAM government contract	California nonprofit-hosted model; directly applicable benchmark for compensation and scope; current posting confirms active labor market for this role

Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Log

Organization	Date	Primary Contact
Open Door Community Health Centers	1/7/2026	Sarah Ross, COO
Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods	2/17/2026	
County of Humboldt		Natalie Arroyo, 4 th District Supervisor
City of Arcata, Engineering Department	2/20/2026	Netra Khatri
HCAOG (staff)	3/12/2026	Brendan Byrd, Amy Eberwein
Humboldt County DHHS	3/17/2026	Ashley Gephart
Humboldt Area Foundation (via Melanie Williams outreach)	3/9/2026	Ali Lee

Appendix D: Comparable Position Summary

Comparable positions reviewed span transit agencies, councils of governments, school districts, municipal transportation departments, nonprofit transportation advocacy organizations, and state public health departments. Minimum qualifications consistently include a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience, two to three years of relevant field experience, a valid driver's license, and demonstrated communication and program management skills. Compensation ranges reflect significant geographic variation: from \$41,600 per year at a rural Idaho transit agency to \$141,482 at the City of Palo Alto. The MCBC/TAM Program Director, Education role (\$66,600–\$74,900 at 0.8 FTE; \$83,250–\$93,600 annualized at 1.0 FTE) provides the most directly relevant California nonprofit benchmark. The North Coast Region BLS wage proxies (Health Education Specialist at \$62,660, Urban and Regional Planner at \$83,980, and Project Management Specialist at \$95,140) represent the most defensible basis for Humboldt County cost modeling.