

COMMUNITY TRAFFIC SAFETY COALITION

of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



www.sctrfficsafety.org ♦ www.facebook.com/sctrfficsafety ♦ CTSC@santacruzcounty.us ♦ (831) 454-7551

March 10, 2025

Board of Supervisors
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean St #500A
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I am writing on behalf of the Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) regarding the proposal to permit on-site consumption in cannabis lounges and at cannabis farms in Santa Cruz County. While we understand the need to balance innovation and regulation, we also recognize the importance of addressing the potential public safety risks associated with cannabis consumption and impaired driving. According to the CDC, cannabis use can impair important skills required for safe driving, including impairing coordination, distorting perception, and slowing one's reaction time and ability to make decisions.

The following national and state-wide crash statistics highlight the growing need to take a proactive approach to mitigate the risks of impaired driving:

- In the US, the percentage of fatalities involving cannabis and cannabis plus alcohol increased from 9.0% in 2000 to 21.5% in 2018, and 4.8% in 2000 to 10.3% in 2018, respectively ([Trends in Cannabis Involvement and Risk of Alcohol Involvement in Motor Vehicle Crash Fatalities in the United States, 2000-2018, PubMed](#)).
- A study done by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that examined more than 4,000 drivers who were seriously injured in crashes found that 25% tested positive for cannabis ([Update to Special Reports on Traffic Safety during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency: Fourth Quarter Data \[Traffic Safety Facts\], NHTSA](#)).
- The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) states that people who drive immediately after using marijuana may increase their risk of getting into a crash by 25% to 35% ([Drug-Impaired Driving, OTS](#)).

States that have implemented testing and tracking for cannabis involvement in crashes include Washington State and Colorado. Below are cannabis-related crash statistics for both states:

- Among drivers involved in fatal crashes between 2008 and 2016 in Washington, 44% tested positive for two or more substances with alcohol and THC being the most common combination. ([Marijuana Use, Alcohol, and Driving, Washington Traffic Safety Commission](#))

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- According to Colorado's Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA), 24% of drivers who were involved in fatal crashes in 2020 tested positive for cannabis and other drugs not including alcohol. Thirteen percent tested positive for a combination of cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs ([The legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact, RMHIDTA](#)).

The statistics below help to demonstrate the problem of cannabis use and impaired driving in Santa Cruz County:

- According to the 2024 DUI Place of Last Drink Survey in Santa Cruz County, 9% of the 668 people surveyed indicated that on the day of their arrest, they had used cannabis. This is nearly 1 in 10 individuals (DUI: Place of Last Survey Results, Applied Survey Research).
- In 2023, 15% of crashes in Santa Cruz County were caused by driving or bicycling under the influence of alcohol or drugs ([Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System provisional data, TIMS](#)).

Given the public health risks associated with cannabis consumption and impaired driving, the CTSC strongly recommends that on-site cannabis consumption in lounges and at farms be held to the same or higher standards of regulation as bars. To help ensure public safety, we recommend the following safety policies:

- Comprehensive staff training where employees receive specialized training to recognize the signs of impairment, in addition to how to monitor consumption responsibly and how to take appropriate actions to prevent patrons from driving while impaired.
- Increased law enforcement training in cannabis impairment detection.
- Providing transportation information and options to on-site consumers.
- Social norms campaigns designed to promote safe rides and prevent impaired driving.

By implementing these safeguards, the county can minimize risks and protect both patrons and the broader community from the dangers of impaired driving.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Our goal is to work together toward safer transportation for all county residents.

Sincerely,

Tawn Kennedy, Co-Chair
Community Traffic Safety Coalition