



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network

Fact Sheet
April 2011

Background

Interest in constructing a network of bicycle and pedestrian trails that take advantage of the magnificent Pacific coastline and the surrounding environment in Santa Cruz County has been growing over the past

decade. A variety of multi-use trail projects such as the Wilder Ranch Bike and Pedestrian Path in Santa Cruz, the Watsonville Wetlands Trail Network, the East Cliff Parkway, the Coastal Trail Network and the Rail/Trail have recently been built or proposed by local jurisdictions. All these projects share the goal of developing accessible bicycle and pedestrian trail facilities on or near the coast. The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is in the final stages of acquiring the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right-of-way from Union Pacific in order to preserve the corridor for future transportation purposes and for possible use as an accessible trail for bicyclists and walkers adjacent to the train tracks along portions of the 32 mile rail line.



The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network

Initially conceived by the Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Interagency Task Force, and championed by Congress Member Sam Farr, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network is envisioned to be a multi-use system of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that will encourage the public to enjoy and experience the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. A network of trails will connect the coast to other desirable destinations such as transit hubs, parks, commercial centers, and schools. Trail markers and interpretive exhibits will enhance the trail experience from Lovers Point in Monterey County to the San Mateo/Santa Cruz County line and will unify the trail as it passes through several jurisdictions. The trail will also be an important piece of the 1,300 mile statewide California Coastal Trail.

Master Planning for the MBSST Network

RTC staff is conducting a comprehensive Master Planning process that will include: developing goals and objectives; identifying and assessing possible segments; setting design options; soliciting and incorporating input from interested parties and the community at large; preparing cost estimates for construction; and performing environmental analysis of the Plan.

Part of the process will also be to inventory existing trail segments to link together (and upgrade where needed) segments that already exist with new trail segments. At the conclusion of the process, the RTC will identify a future network of trails that meets the needs of different users. Rather than a single route, this network of both “leisurely” and “express” routes will appeal to both commuters and recreational users alike, as well as to people



with various levels of physical ability. The inventory will identify both the opportunities and constraints of various segment alternatives taking into account considerations such as accessibility, managing traffic on mixed use trails, environmental constraints, and agricultural impacts. The result will be a list of short and long term projects to be constructed by the jurisdictions they pass through as funding becomes available.

Potential Trail Alignments

Part of the MBSST Network may be built within the rail line right-of-way. The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right-of-way extends 32 miles between Davenport and Watsonville Junction (Pajaro) in Monterey County. Any trail segments on the rail line right-of-way will be constructed adjacent to (not in place of) the train tracks, so that freight service may continue and future passenger rail service may be provided.

Planning Kick-Off

The RTC is kicking off the planning process in April, 2011. RRM Design, a consultant firm specializing in multi-use trail design, has been engaged to undertake development of the Master Plan and Environmental Review document.

Project Cost

A rough cost estimate to construct the MBSST Network is one million dollars per mile, assuming no right of way acquisition costs and/or significant environmental constraints. Depending on the requirements, characteristics and constraints of individual segments the cost may be significantly higher or lower. The trail segments to be developed will be determined as part of the MBSST Network Master Plan through a careful analysis of constraints and significant levels of public participation.

Funding

To date, close to \$7 Million has been secured for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network project in Santa Cruz County. Of that amount, approximately \$4.5 Million has been secured through federal appropriations and earmarks thanks to Congressman Sam Farr.

Public Input

As always, public involvement is integral part of all community transportation projects, including the development of the MBSST Network. An extensive public outreach program will be included as part of the development of the Master Plan and is anticipated to being in August, 2011.

Timeline of Activities

The approximate timeline for MBSST Network Project is 5 to 10 years:

Complete Purchase of Rail Right-of-Way	Spring 2011
Master Plan/Environmental Review	Spring 2011-2012
Obtain Funding	Ongoing
Detailed Design	1 to 2 years
Construction	2 to 6 years, beginning 2013



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