

**From:** Stanley Sokolow

**Sent:** Thursday, October 13, 2016 4:46 PM

**To:** [info@sccrtc.org](mailto:info@sccrtc.org)

**Subject:** Comment on item #4 on agenda of the 10/20/2016 RTC meeting -- Great Trail Report

Dear Commissioners,

I offer the following for your consideration when you evaluate the extensive "Great Santa Cruz Trail Report". I am a frequent bicycle rider, 80% for utilitarian reasons and 20% for pure recreation, so I am looking forward to having an excellent bicycle trail on the rail corridor. I can appreciate the yearning of the Trail Now people for a trail-only corridor which is wide enough to provide separation of the bicycle riders from the walkers, which is what the Great Trail proposal is trying to achieve. However, this corridor is a valuable resource to be shared by all of the Santa Cruz County residents and visitors. Our greatest transportation problem, in my observation, is the congestion on Highway 1 during the commuter periods. The Great Trail proposal will do little to alleviate congestion there.

The data in the Report shows the estimated number of bicycle users on the southern reach 3 of the trail would be 236 existing users plus 147 new users, a total of 383 users. The 147 new users, assuming that all of them are currently commuting from Watsonville by car and that they all convert into bicycle commuters, would certainly not make a dent, not a blip, in the congestion on the freeway, which starts in the northbound morning direction around the San Andreas / Larkin Valley interchange, the northern edge of reach 3. The 147 users just will not take enough cars off of the freeway to help south county commuters.

In Denmark, cycling is a very important part of the overall transport, which is different from many other countries. On average, Danes aged 10-84 years make 0.47 bike trips per day, with an average length of 3.2 km per trip. The Danes make 16% of their trips by bicycle. In the city of Copenhagen, which has many excellent bicycle-only trails and bridges, the bike share is 33% of trips. Compared to cycling levels among other countries in western Europe and North America, Denmark is in the upper end together with Germany and the Netherlands. At the low end are the United States and the United Kingdom. So we can look to Denmark as model for what we can strive to achieve.

Data from the Danish National Travel Survey fact sheet about bicycle travel in Denmark shows that In Denmark, 87% of all trips and 57% of the overall driven kilometers on bike are made up of trips that are shorter than 5 km (3 miles). Only 4% of the trips are longer than 11 km (6.8 miles). [<http://www.cycling-embassy.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2011-2013-Fact-sheet-cycling-in-DK-1.pdf>]

In the central region (reach 2), the Great Trail Report estimates that 1614 new bicycle users would switch from other modes of travel to the bicycle trail. This region is approximately the same as the scope of study in the 2015 DEIR for the Highway 1 HOV/TSM project. Assuming that half of those new bicycle riders are currently commuting by car on Highway 1, this 807 reduction in the 104,000 trips made daily on Highway 1 would be insignificant. Moreover, of those 104,000 trips, 25% are made on Highway 1 to get to Highway 17 for commuting to Silicon Valley, and those certainly are not going to ride their bikes to Silicon Valley via the coastal trail. Nor are the commuters in Watsonville going to ride their bicycles over 20 miles each way to reach jobs in the central county, nor will it help the businesses in south county who provide services to the central populated area and necessarily drive their trucks on the freeway.

The data from Denmark reveals how likely the bicycle trail will reduce local trips in region 2, which is the most congested section of Highway 1. The distance from say the Santa Cruz Metro Transit Center in downtown Santa Cruz as an average central point to Cabrillo College by bike via Soquel Drive is approximately 10 km. Using the rail corridor is a more circuitous route, so it would be more than 10 km. A trip from the Metro Center to Capitola Mall via the Santa Cruz River Bikeway (levee road) and Brommer is approximately the same distance as it would be if using the rail corridor, 7 km. Both of these trips are above the 5 km distance that encompasses 87% of the Denmark trips. The greater distance makes it less likely that people will use their bicycles instead of some other mode of travel. Some will, but the usage drops significantly as the distance increases above 5 km (3 miles). People who drive less than 3 miles to work probably are not using the freeway anyway at this time. So the trail is not going to make a significant draw-down of commute traffic on the freeway even in the most congested section.

A bicycle/pedestrian trail on the rail corridor is certainly a good thing for the quality of life in Santa Cruz County, as you have already demonstrated your awareness by proceeding to plan and build it. However, to devote all of the corridor to that one small segment of our population, as important as it is, instead of sharing the corridor with a rapid transit alternative to driving by car on Highway 1, would neglect the needs of commuters by car and bus who deserve an alternative to being stuck in slow traffic on the freeway.

You have previously studied a passenger train in the rail corridor and major changes to Highway 1 to provide HOV lanes. I have recently proposed in a letter to you another alternative, the use of the rail corridor for a single guided busway to provide a route for bus rapid transit to bypass the congested Highway 1 in the commute direction, in addition to the bicycle/pedestrian trail. I believe the busway with its setbacks will be narrower than the train tracks with their required setbacks, thus allowing a wider bicycle trail without making major excavation and building large retaining walls. The guided busway system would have other advantages over rail transit, as my letter explained.

I urge you not to abandon the rail corridor as a solution to our county's need for rapid transit that we can afford in the not too distant future. If, after detailed study of the alternatives, you determine that rapid transit on the rail corridor is completely out of reach by our county, now and in the future, then sure, go ahead and build a Great Trail, but I don't think you will reach that conclusion. I would not oppose using the space of the rails for a temporary bicycle/pedestrian trail in places where there isn't sufficient width to have both a trail and a train or busway until the rapid transit infrastructure can get started, but the cost of building and removing a temporary paved path that eventually is replaced by a path on new pedestrian bridges should be factored into the calculations of feasibility.

Thank you for consideration of my opinion,

Stanley M. Sokolo

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**From:** Amelia Conlen  
**Sent:** Friday, October 14, 2016 1:13 PM  
**To:** General Info  
**Subject:** Letter re: 10/20 Transportation Policy Workshop

Hello,

Please forward the attached letter to Commissioners in advance of next Thursday's TPW.

Thank you,

Bike Santa Cruz County Board



October 14, 2016

Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Ave  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: October 20, 2016 meeting of the TPW - Presentation of the Great Santa Cruz Trail Group Study

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Bike Santa Cruz County Board, I am writing to express support for the Regional Transportation Commission's stated direction to pursue a rail-with-trail project. The Coastal Rail Trail is our organization's #1 priority for new bike infrastructure in the county, and we are thrilled that 8 miles of the trail are already funded and in progress.

We have serious concerns about the impact that removing the train tracks would have on the trail project. Issues such as Prop 116 funding, approvals from Iowa Pacific and the federal government, and the need for a revised Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan and EIR could all cause significant delay to the trail project if the option to remove the tracks is pursued.

Bike Santa Cruz County supports further exploration of the options for passenger rail service in the county and we encourage the RTC in its efforts to build the trail in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hochstein  
Board Chair, Bike Santa Cruz County

**From:** Mark Mesiti-Miller  
**Sent:** Monday, October 17, 2016 9:03 AM  
**To:** [info@sccrtc.org](mailto:info@sccrtc.org)  
**Subject:** Letter regarding 10/20 Transportation Policy Workshop

Greetings,

Please forward the attached letter to all the Commissioners in advance of Thursday's TPW.

Thank you,

Mark Mesiti-Miller, P.E.

October 17, 2016

Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Ave  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: October 20, 2016 meeting of the TPW Presentation of the Great Santa Cruz Trail Group Study  
Dear Commissioners,

The privately funded Great Santa Cruz Trail Group (GSCTG) document submitted as a "study" for consideration offers no objective analysis that their proposed wider split trail will attract any more users than the currently proposed multi-use trail that is 2 to 6 feet wider than the average width of rail trails across the USA.

More importantly, the GSCTG document offers no objective data or analysis that a Trail Only (TO) option will solve our number one regional transportation problem of commuting gridlock along Highway 1 and spillover to adjacent surface streets.

The proposed TO option will not reduce congestion on Highway 1, will not reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled and will not reduce Green House Gases any more than the currently proposed multiuse trail alongside the existing railroad tracks as envisioned by the Monterey Bay Scenic Trail Master Plan adopted by every jurisdiction in the County and endorsed by Federal and State representatives.

Further, the GSCTG document does not reflect the rigor, data or objective analysis expected from a professional, third party expert. Rather, this document offers speculative statements amounting to imaginative opinion and is primarily a marketing piece intended to sell a single point of view.

Lastly, it is unclear who authored the document as there is no signature on the document and no definitive explanation of authorship. The only reference to authorship is found on the very last page where acknowledgements include the GSCTG and Nelson Nygaard (NN). The GSCTG appears to consist of nine members listed with their respective organizational affiliations implying authority/expertise but with an asterisk warning "the organizations listed do not imply endorsement by the organization." While NN is acknowledged with a marketing quote from its web page, it is not explicit what role NN played in the preparation of the document.

Before the GSCTG document and its proposed TO scenario can be seriously considered by the RTC, the following minimum actions must occur.

First, make public the details of the process followed in retaining NN, including the solicitation under which the services of NN were first sought, the proposal submitted by NN in response to *Page 10/3* the solicitation, and the final full agreement between NN and the GSCTG or the party responsible for retaining NN.

Second, the GSCTG document must be subjected to a thorough peer review by a qualified and experienced outside third party expert retained by the RTC through an open public process. The resulting peer review must also be subject to public review and comment.

Lastly, the GSCTG document itself must be subjected to full public review and comment. Given the dramatic change a TO use of the corridor represents from the Rail and Trail use adopted by the Monterey Bay Scenic Trail Master Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report, the public should be given at least 90 days to review and submit comments.

Even a cursory review of the GSCTG document challenges their supposition that a TO use of the rail corridor is superior as 4 of the 5 "Case Studies of Signature Trails" cited on pages 21 and 22 are trails adjacent to existing railroad tracks. The fifth example was never ever a rail corridor. In fact, 3 of the 5 cited case studies have active rail uses on segments of the adjacent tracks. In my opinion, the "Signature Trails" selected by the GSCTG actually support the current plan of rail and trail within the existing corridor.

Accordingly, the RTC should proceed judiciously before taking any action or basing any decision about the corridor on this document.

The responsibility of RTC is to provide transportation infrastructure and networks that improve mobility for all residents of the entire County. Whether the ultimate use of the corridor is passenger rail with a multi-use trail, bus rapid transit with a multi-use trail or some other future technology with a multi-use trail, no objective analysis exists to support a TO option as the highest and best use of the corridor.

The existing rail corridor is the only corridor besides Highway One capable of linking north and South County with an economical mass transit system that would relieve Highway 1 congestion. Adding any kind of efficient mass transit system to the existing Highway One corridor would be far more expensive (2-5 times) than utilizing the already existing rail road tracks. Thus, tearing out the tracks before thoroughly evaluating all reasonable options for the rail corridor would be irresponsible, short-sighted and a tragic loss of an incredibly valuable public asset.

Sooner or later, a solution to our regional transportation needs must be developed. Already, traffic congestion is among the top regional issues on any survey taken. It is getting and will continue to get worse. According to the US Census Bureau, the County's population grew by 11,784 people in the five years between 2010 and 2015 and as of July 2015, the County's population totaled 274,146. To put the growth of 11,784 persons in perspective, consider the population of the entire City of Capitola is only 10,200. According to your 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, less than 20 years from now (2035), the County's population will grow to 308,582 an increase of another 34,436 people (almost 3.5 times Capitola).

It is a matter of social, economic and environmental justice to responsibly address our long term regional transportation needs, especially as residents seek affordable housing further and further away from employment centers.

The RTC's principal responsibility is to thoroughly explore options and thoughtfully make decisions for moving the most people possible in an environmentally sustainable and efficient network of transportation options while meeting State mandated GHG reduction goals and the intent of the

Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan adopted in 2014 as well as the County's Climate Action Strategy adopted in 2013.

In conclusion, I trust the RTC will weigh the relevance of the GSCTG study cautiously and only after completing a rigorous due diligence effort. Anything less would be a violation of the sacred public trust.

Respectfully,



Mark Mesiti-Miller  
Professional Civil Engineer C40945  
33 year resident of Santa Cruz

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**From:** Barry Scott  
**Sent:** Monday, October 17, 2016 6:15 PM  
**To:** Regional Transportation Commission  
**Subject:** Regarding a recent Trail Only study produced by Nelson/Nygaard

Dear RTC staff and commissioners,

The Great Santa Cruz Trail Group commissioned the Nelson/Nygaard report and uses it as a promotional tool to influence public opinion and decisions made regarding use of the rail corridor.

I've carefully reviewed the report and compared its assumptions to the highly detailed FEIR and award winning MBSST Master Plan and wish to report the highlights of my findings, attached.

Any document such as this "report" should be subjected to independent peer review, or dismissed outright as a highly biased privately commissioned advocacy piece. Please let's move on with the process that's been in place for so many years and not let a narrow interest group force further delays and costs.

Warm regards,

Barry Scott  
*State Program Director*  
The NEED Project  
[www.need.org](http://www.need.org)

Barry Scott  
Rio Del Mar Blvd. Aptos, CA 95003

The Great Santa Cruz Trail Group commissioned the Nelson/Nygaard report and uses it as a promotional tool to influence public opinion and decisions made regarding use of the rail corridor. I've carefully reviewed the report and compared its assumptions to the highly detailed FEIR and award winning MBSST Master Plan and wish to report these findings:

The corridor goes where it needs to go to be successful as a rail-to-trail AND as a rail-with-trail. Pages 5-8 make the case that the corridor is extremely well placed through a density of homes, schools, businesses and development that make it an ideal location for a trail only design. Proximity to homes and employment, and bikesheds and walksheds are discussed. *That same data confirms that the corridor is perfectly suited to public transit or, better still, transit + trail.*

"On-street Detours":

Page 9, "Rail with Trail Constraints" is where this report departs from providing an objective overview of our current rail-trail design. This section mentions "on-street detours" that might be required for a trail if the tracks remain in place, completely ignoring the extensive design work that's already been done, described in the Master Plan and Final EIR documents.

"Constrained Areas":

Pages 10-12 include maps that describe 51 "constrained areas" identified by "field observations". Included among these are 14 "farmland constraints", a term that's new to the rail trail conversion community. The same pages erroneously understate Right of Way (ROW) widths which are readily available at the RTC ARCGIS webpage. It's surprising that professional consultants like Nelson/Nygaard would make such egregious errors, all with the effect of painting the MBSST as more challenging than it is.

"Level of Traffic Stress" and "Out of Direction Travel":

Page 14 includes maps of what this report claims would be extensive "out of direction travel" routes if the MBSST design somehow failed to address a design constraint. The top map shows unlikely detours through Wilder Ranch State Park; the center map shows a 3-mile detour up the San Lorenzo River to Riverwalk crossing; and the bottom map shows a very unlikely 9-mile detour from Seascape all the way to Lee Road in Watsonville.

"Pedestrian and Bicycle User Experience"

Page 26 compares trail-only and rail-with-trail scores under a "lowest impact" assumption, meaning the study disregards the improvements and actual trail dimensions described in the Master Plan and FEIR. The report cites widths of 8' where the current design is 12'-16'. The scores should be recalculated based on valid widths.

As a final measure of the reports' credibility, pages 29 and 31 include sidebars that appear to quote New York Times and Rails-to-Trail articles, but these appear to be fabricated statements not found at the source links included. I refer you to the letter below, sent by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Western Regional to the RTC in response to one such error and other statements found in the report.

I urge RTC commissioners and staff to treat the Great Santa Cruz Trail report with a critical eye.

Best regards,





Western Regional Office  
436 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 416  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Tel 510.992.4662

[www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)

August 17, 2016

Regional Transportation Commissioners and Staff  
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Dear Commissioners and Staff,

On behalf of Rails to Trails Conservancy, I would like to submit comments on the *Great Santa Cruz Trail* report, which studies the potential for a trail-only option along the Santa Cruz Branch Line as an alternative to the rail-with-trail project that has been moving forward. The report raises some important issues to be considered by local policymakers. Our *America's Rails with Trails* report, which reviews the experience of rail-with-trail projects from across the country, was cited several times. I would like to clarify several items in the report where our study was cited, as they may lead readers to an incorrect understanding of our position on the Santa Cruz project and on rail-with-trail projects in general.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy strongly supports the development of all rail trail projects, including both rail-to-trail and rail-with-trail, but we do not take a position on whether rail service is appropriate for a particular community. *America's Rails-with-Trails* was undertaken to demonstrate that in corridors where jurisdictions have elected to operate rail service that trails may also be viable, and to document the practices that have been employed on these projects throughout the country.

Regarding the references to our report in the *Great Santa Cruz Trail* report:

- 90% of rail-trails are in trail-only corridors (p. 21) – This is accurate, but should not be taken to mean that trail-only projects are inherently preferable. As our study found, the number of rail-with-trail projects around the country has grown significantly.
- “The average setbacks between rail and trail is 20-30 ft. in Rail-with-Trails corridors, with higher speed trains yielding larger setbacks or safety separations.” (p. 22) This is accurate as a general statement, but it should be noted that there are numerous examples of trails located immediately adjacent to light rail corridors (e.g. Minneapolis and Denver), where rail service operates at high frequency and relatively high speed. As with other rail-with-trail projects, project designs have incorporated measures to address safety concerns (typically fencing).
- Sidebar on p. 31: These comments are incorrectly attributed to our *America's Rails-with-Trails Report*. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has not taken a position on the viability of transit service in Santa Cruz County.

We at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy are very excited about the development of the coastal trail in Santa Cruz County. It has the potential to become a major destination and provide significant benefits to the community, and we look forward to supporting this effort as the development of the trail continues.

Sincerely,

Barry Bergman  
Manager of Trail Development  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Western Region Office

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**From:** brucesawhill  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 18, 2016 5:27 PM  
**To:** info@sccrtc.org  
**Subject:** letter for 10/20 T

Hi Yesenia;

Enclosed please find a letter from Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail (FORT) for distribution at the October 20 TPW meeting.

Thank you,  
Bruce Sawhill  
Chair, FOR&T

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Dear Commissioners,

In response to the Great Santa Cruz Trail Group Study suggesting a Trail Only use of the existing Santa Cruz Branch Line rail corridor, Friends of the Rail & Trail is writing to express our support for preserving the existing tracks and building the currently planned trail alongside. Don't rush prematurely to exclude rail transit options from our transportation future. A thorough and comprehensive analysis of rail transit options should be conducted before making any long-term decisions regarding this valuable public asset. The RTC's recent Rail Feasibility Study does not constitute a comprehensive analysis, but rather highlights the need for one.

We are concerned that a vote to take out the tracks may cause significant delay and add significant costs to the sections of trail already funded. The award-winning Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan — based on building the trail and maintaining the rail - was adopted in 2014 with resolutions of support from every coastal jurisdiction in the county. A programmatic EIR has also been completed, enabling work to begin on the trail as soon as funding is in place. With private and public contributions to get the lowest cost sections of trail built, 25% of the trail is already funded and will be open two years from now. If the current plan changes, construction of the funded sections may be significantly delayed. Delay of the trail would be a disservice to the entire community.

Future options are for us to protect for future generations. Everybody wants to use resources wisely. Our community has a long future ahead, and it's our duty to leave our children and future Santa Cruzans as many resources as possible to ensure a sustainable quality of life. Sustainable transportation belongs in the same stratum as clean air, clean water, and nourishing food. Preserving the rail option for future generations is easy, we can just leave them in place and build the rail trail alongside. Preserving the rail option doesn't compromise our current, award-winning Rail Trail plans to improve safety and efficiency for cyclists and pedestrians.

Please build the trail now and save the tracks for later. Generations to come will thank you for it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Sawhill".

Bruce Sawhill  
FORT Board President

**From:** Sierra Club Santa Cruz  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 19, 2016 9:06 AM  
**To:** George Dondero; info@scrtc.org  
**Subject:** October 20, 2016 RTC meeting, agenda item #4 on the Great Santa Cruz Trail study



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP  
Of The Ventana Chapter  
P.O. Box 604, Santa Cruz, CA 95061  
<https://ventana2.sierraclub.org/santacruz/>  
e-mail: [sierraclubscantacruz@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclubscantacruz@gmail.com)

October 19, 2016

Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Ave  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: October 20, 2016 RTC meeting, agenda item #4 on the Great Santa Cruz Trail study

Dear Commissioners:

The Sierra Club emphatically supports the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan, widely adopted in 2014, which plans for rail-with-trail on the public rail corridor. That plan allows for a multi-modal transportation system that includes passenger rail.

We also observe that the Rail Transit Feasibility Study completed in November 2015 concluded that the combination of both rail and trail appears feasible, and merits additional study.

Unfortunately, the Great Santa Cruz Trail study proposes a project that would literally "derail" these plans.

We're concerned that removing the existing tracks would have an adverse impact on the first eight miles of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail project currently underway and scheduled for completion in 2018. Any decision to remove the existing tracks would result in delays as the RTC works to resolve issues such as the repayment of Prop 116 funding, renegotiating the ten year agreement with Iowa Pacific, obtaining permission from the federal government to remove the tracks, and the required revision to the existing MBSSTN Master Plan and the associated EIR.

We support the existing rail-with-trail approach for a multitude of reasons, including diversifying away from reliance on the Highway 1 corridor, meeting the transportation needs of more residents, reducing per-person energy demand from mechanized travel, and thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Sincerely,

Greg McPheeters  
Chair, Santa Cruz Group, Sierra Club

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