

February 7, 2019

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR THE PROPOSED NORTH COAST RAIL TRAIL**

PROJECT SUMMARY AND LOCATION. The Proposed Project would be a 7.5-mile multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail proposed by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) to extend along the railroad corridor from Wilder Ranch State Park on the south to Davenport on the north in unincorporated Santa Cruz County. The Proposed Project would comprise the majority of Segment 5 of the larger Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network, for which a Master Plan was adopted and a programmatic environmental impact report (EIR) was certified.

The bicycle and pedestrian trail would include a paved path with striping, parallel unpaved path and shoulder. The EIR evaluates two trail alignments, the Proposed Project (Coastal Side) and Alternative 1 (Trail Only), at an equal level of detail. The Proposed Project (Coastal Side) would largely be located on the coastal side of the existing railroad tracks, and the railroad tracks would remain in place and would not be improved as part of the Proposed Project. Under Alternative 1 (Trail Only), the railroad tracks and ties would be removed, and the multi-use trail would be located on the rail bed. The EIR also evaluated Alternatives 2 (Inland Side), 3 (Farmers' Alternative), and 4 (No Project) in comparison to the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project and Alternatives 1-3 would all include improvements to three existing parking areas: Davenport Beach, Bonny Doon Beach, and Panther/Yellowbank Beach.

2018 DRAFT EIR AND PUBLIC REVIEW. The RTC prepared a Draft EIR pursuant to requirements of the State Guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) due to potential significant adverse effects as a result of implementation. The EIR prepared for the proposed project discusses and identifies potential impacts, mitigation measures to reduce impacts, residual impacts, and monitoring requirements. The EIR identifies significant and unavoidable project-level impacts (i.e., mitigation would not reduce the impact to a less than significant level) to historical resources for Alternatives 1 and 3. The EIR does not identify significant and unavoidable project-level impacts for the Proposed Project or Alternative 2. However, the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1-3 would result in significant and unavoidable cumulative impacts to traffic.

The RTC solicited comments on the adequacy and completeness of the analysis and proposed mitigation measures described in the Draft EIR. The 45-day public comment period was from August 9 to September 24, 2018. Two public meetings were held during the comment period, on August 22nd in Santa Cruz and on August 23 in Davenport. The RTC has reviewed and addressed all comments received on the Draft EIR.

2019 FINAL EIR. The Final EIR for the Project includes: comments submitted by agencies, organizations, and individuals concerning the 2018 Draft EIR and responses to those comments (Volume 1); and appropriate revisions to the Draft EIR (Volume 2); and Appendices (Volume 3). The Final EIR is available on the RTC website at <https://sccrtc.org/projects/multi-modal/monterey-bay-sanctuary-scenic-trail/north-coast-rail-trail/>, at the RTC's Santa Cruz office (1523 Pacific Ave, Santa Cruz). Starting February 12, 2019, copies will also be available at the downtown Santa Cruz and Watsonville public libraries (224 Church Street, City of Santa Cruz and 275 Main Street #100, City of Watsonville, respectively), and at the Davenport Resource Service Center (150 Church St, Davenport). In accordance with CEQA, the review of a final EIR should focus on the responses to comments on the draft EIR, and there is no formal process or requirement for reviewing or responding to comments on the final EIR.

NEXT STEPS. The RTC will hold a public hearing scheduled for March 7, 2019, 9:30 a.m. at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers (701 Ocean Street, 5th Floor, Santa Cruz) to consider whether to certify the Final EIR and make a decision on the Project by selecting a preferred alignment. Prior to making a decision on the Project, the RTC would be required to certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; that the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body, which reviewed and considered the information contained therein prior to making a decision; and that the Final EIR reflects the RTC's independent judgment and analysis. Once the Final EIR is certified, the RTC would be in a position to make Findings for each of the significant effects, which would explain that changes (e.g., mitigation) have been required to lessen the significant effect, or that there are considerations that make the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in Final EIR infeasible. If, after the adoption of such findings, the proposed project or alternative under consideration would still have significant unavoidable effects, the RTC would also be required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations before selecting an alignment. After considering the Final EIR and in conjunction with making Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations, the RTC may decide whether or how to approve or carry out the Project. If the Project or an alternative is approved, the RTC will have to adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to ensure compliance with all adopted mitigation measures under the RTC's control.