



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and two scoping meetings for the **North Coast Rail Trail Project**. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the project identified below. The RTC would like input on the scope of the environmental issues and alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR. Responsible agencies may need to use the EIR to be prepared by the RTC when considering permits or other approvals for the project, and trustee agencies should plan to review and comment on the EIR with respect to trust resources within their jurisdiction. The Federal Highway Administration's Central Federal Lands (CFL) Division will be the lead on project implementation and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance.

**PROJECT NAME:** North Coast Rail Trail Project

**PROJECT LOCATION/ADDRESS:** The **North Coast Rail Trail Project** is a 7.5-mile Class 1 multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail proposed to extend along the RTC-owned railroad corridor from Wilder Ranch State Park on the south to Davenport on the north in unincorporated Santa Cruz County (**Figure 1**). The project comprises Segment 5 of the larger Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network, for which a Master Plan was adopted and a programmatic EIR was certified in 2013. The Master Plan was revised in 2014, along with an addendum to the EIR. Information from the Master Plan EIR will be used where appropriate.

**DUE DATE FOR COMMENTS:** Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to this NOP must be sent at the earliest possible date and received no later than **Monday, October 16, 2017, 4:00 PM**. In accordance with CEQA, this represents 30 days from receipt of the NOP, which was distributed on September 13, 2017.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The **North Coast Rail Trail** project includes a 7.5-mile Class I multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail along the RTC-owned railroad corridor from Wilder Ranch State Park on the south to Davenport on the north. The trail would generally be 20 feet wide and comprised of a 12-foot-wide paved surface and unpaved shoulders. The project also includes parking improvements at the Davenport Beach lot (existing dirt lot) and Yellowbank/Panther Beach lot (existing dirt lot) where 30-50 formal parking spaces would be provided in addition to restrooms, bike racks, benches, and an ADA-accessible route to the trail. Additionally, the project would include access from the current Bonny Doon Beach lot to the future trail and improvements for crossing State Route (Highway) 1 at Davenport. The parking lots and the highway crossing would encroach within the Caltrans right-of-way. Project construction activities would include land clearing, grading, paving and striping for the trail and parking lots.

Consistent with the trail alignment identified in the MBSST Master Plan and evaluated in the Master Plan EIR, RTC's proposed project would locate the trail along the coastal side of the railroad tracks. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project, as well as a rail-to-trail alternative as described below, at an equal level of detail.

- Proposed Project. The trail would be constructed primarily on the coastal side of the railroad tracks and include safety fencing between the trail and tracks, as presented in the MBSST Master Plan. The proposed project would require property rights from the California State Parks for portions of the trail outside the RTC right-of-way.

This is considered by the RTC as the preferred alignment for purposes of environmental review.

- **Alternative 1: Rail-to-Trail Alignment.** The trail would be generally located along the same alignment, but involve the removal of the existing railroad tracks and ties to enable construction of the trail on the current track alignment. This alternative would be entirely within RTC right-of-way and would result in a “trail only” project.

As required by CEQA, the RTC will also consider other project alternatives, which must meet most of the project objectives while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant impacts of the proposed project. As part of this scoping process, the RTC is soliciting input from agencies and the public on additional alternatives that should be considered for evaluation within the alternatives section of the EIR. Comments regarding suggested alternatives should include a clear description in narrative and graphic formats to the extent possible. Comments on this subject will be most helpful if they include the author’s thoughts regarding how well they might meet the requirements of CEQA.

**PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:** Although, at this very early stage of the environmental review process, it is impossible to know with certainty the precise nature and extent of the environmental effects that will be identified as preparation of the Draft EIR gets underway, it is possible to identify key categories of environmental effects that the proposed project will implicate. These include Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology/Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Recreation, Transportation/Circulation, and Tribal Cultural Resources.

**PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS:** Pursuant to the public participation goals of CEQA, as set forth in particular in Public Resources Code section 21083.9, subdivision (a), the RTC will host two EIR Scoping Meetings to gather additional input on the scope (content and focus) of the EIR analysis. The dates, times, and locations of the scoping meetings are below.

Wednesday September 27, 2017 5:30-7:00 PM (5:45 brief presentation)	Davenport	Pacific Elementary School Blue Multipurpose Building (behind main school entrance) 50 Ocean Street Davenport, California 95017
Thursday September 28, 2017 5:30-7:00 PM (5:45 brief presentation)	Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz Police Station Community Room 155 Center Street Santa Cruz, California 95060

**COMMENTING ON THE SCOPE OF THE EIR:** The RTC welcomes agency and public input regarding environmental factors potentially affected (listed above) and project alternatives to be considered for evaluation. All written comments will be considered and must be submitted by Monday, October 16, 2017, 4:00 pm.

Please direct your written comments to:

**Cory Caletti, Sr. Transportation Planner**  
**Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission**  
**1523 Pacific Avenue**  
**Santa Cruz, California 95060**  
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Figure 1 - North Coast Rail Trail Alignment North



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Fig 1 North Coast rail Trail Alignments North



Figure 2 - North Coast Rail Trail Alignment South



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Fig 2 North Coast rail Trail Alignments South