Visualizing Sustainable Transportation in Santa Cruz County

Phase 1 of the Visualizing Sustainable Transportation Project is nearly completed. The Owl viewers have been taken down, but the "Pocket Owls" for both the Soquel and the Westside Santa Cruz installations will be available online through March 1. If you have a phone or laptop with you right now, I would ask you to go to the project website at sccrtc.org/vis and click on either of the images at the top of the web page. That will take you directly to the pocket Owl. For Phase 2 of the project, staff is evaluating lessons learned in the first phase and working with staff at the City of Watsonville to coordinate with their Complete Streets planning effort soon to begin.

Santa Cruz Rail Tours – Daisy

In February 2016, the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) granted a license to Santa Cruz Rail Tours, LLC (SCRT) to operate the "Daisy" over the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. Daisy is a small, quiet, 6-passenger, self-contained rail vehicle. After entering into the appropriate agreement with the Santa Cruz & Monterey Bay (SC&MB) Railway and obtaining the approval of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Daisy operated for a short period in 2016. Because the Daisy operation is different from the typical operations that the FRA oversees and regulates, the FRA withdrew its approval and instituted additional requirements. Recently, SCRT fulfilled all of the additional requirements imposed by the FRA and is ready to begin operations once again.

The Daisy has been on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line between Santa Cruz and Aptos conducting inspections, maintenance, and trial runs. Carl Arnett, owner of Santa Cruz Rail Tours and the Daisy, reports that he is prepared to begin regular operations of the Daisy as soon as the rail grade crossing work at Trout Gulch Road in Aptos is completed. If you have not already, expect to see Daisy on the Rail Line between Davenport and Manresa State Beach. Photos of Daisy follow on page 2 of this report.

For more information go to http://scrailtours.com/index.html or email: info@scrailtours.com
Thank you Rachel Moriconi!

Today we recognize Rachel for her 20 years of dedicated service to the RTC. A resolution will be passed by the Commission.
SB 1: Debunking the Myths

The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB 1) is a long-term transportation solution that will provide new revenues for road safety improvements, fill potholes and repair local streets, highways, and bridges. SB 1 will provide transportation investments in every community, improving the quality of life for all Californians. SB 1 includes strict accountability provisions to reduce waste and bureaucracy and dedicates all funds to transportation improvements. Opponents of SB 1 are spreading false information and flat-out untruths full of potholes.

We want to cement the facts.

1. MYTH— Practically none of the SB 1 funds will be used to fix our roads.

   **FACT**

   SB 1 invests more than $5 billion annually directly for maintenance, repair, and safety improvements on state highways, local streets and roads, and bridges. SB 1 also provides investments in mass transit to help relieve congestion. In total, SB 1 will provide:

   - $1.5 billion for the State Highway Operations and Protection Program
   - $1.5 billion for local streets and roads
   - $400 million for bridge maintenance and repairs
   - $300 million for goods movement and freight projects
   - $275 million for congested corridors and relief management
   - $200 million for the Local Partnership Program to match locally generated transportation funds
   - $100 million for the Active Transportation Program to improve safety and expand access on streets, roads and highways for bicyclists and pedestrians.
   - $750 million for mass transit

2. MYTH— SB 1 funds go directly into the state’s General Fund, meaning there’s zero guarantee the money will be used to fund transportation improvement projects.

   **FACT**

   Revenues go directly into transportation accounts and are constitutionally protected.

   Article XIX of the California Constitution already protects the gasoline excise tax and vehicle registration fees, and a portion of the sales tax on diesel, and dedicates them to transportation purposes. This accounts for about 70% of the revenues generated by SB 1. ACA 5, a constitutional ballot measure which will go before the voters in June 2018, extends these same constitutional protections to the remaining 30% of new revenues generated by SB 1. It’s also important to remember, all gas tax moneys that were loaned in prior decades to the General Fund will have been repaid under SB 1.

Get the Facts @ fixcaroads.com | #RebuildingCA
3. MYTH— There is no oversight.

SB 1 creates a new Office of the Inspector General (IG) charged with overseeing projects and programs to ensure all SB 1 funds are spent as promised and to reduce bureaucracy, waste and red tape. The IG is required to report annually to the state Legislature.

Furthermore, SB 1 has significant accountability and transparency provisions designed to ensure the public has full access to information on how their tax dollars are being invested. Cities and counties must publicly adopt and submit to the state a planned list of projects and year-end reporting that accounts for every single dollar of SB 1 revenue they receive. Bottom line: SB 1 includes provisions to streamline projects by cutting red tape to ensure transportation funds are spent efficiently and effectively.

4. MYTH— SB 1 will not relieve congestion or add new lanes.

SB 1 dedicates hundreds of millions of dollars toward transportation improvements that will directly relieve congestion on our streets, roads and highways. For example, SB 1 contains funds to repair crumbling roads and freeways, which cause bottlenecks and traffic snarls.

SB 1 contains funds to improve interchanges and to invest money into intelligent transportation systems, such as ramp meters, speed management systems, etc. The congested corridors and freight funds will be used to relieve choke points, add capacity in corridors and get goods and people moving faster and safer. Finally, SB 1 restores funding to the State and Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP and RTIPS) which provide the state and every county with the capacity to continue to make necessary roadway and highway lane upgrades or improvements.

5. MYTH— California can dedicate existing General Fund revenues to fix transportation.

California has a combined need of over $130 billion over the next 10 years just to bring the state highway and local street and road systems into a good and safe condition. If we were to use funds from the General Fund, we would need to pull $130 billion from important areas like education, healthcare, public safety, and other programs that Californians rely upon.

SB 1 follows the user-pay model where everyone pays their fair share and all drivers pay a little more to fix the roads they drive on. It’s a responsible, accountable way to fix our roads.

Get the Facts @ fixcaroads.com | #RebuildingCA
6. **MYTH**— *California already has the highest gas tax in the nation.*

**FACT**

Figures from the Tax Foundation and the American Petroleum Institute show Pennsylvania tops out as the highest in the nation. California’s gas taxes haven’t been raised in more than 20 years and, as a result, transportation improvement funding simply hasn’t kept pace with inflation, leading to the backlogs of unfunded infrastructure. SB 1 changes that.

Since 2013, 26 states have increased gas taxes and other transportation revenues to fix their roads and bridges. In fact, of those 26 states, 17 are governed by Republicans.

7. **MYTH**—*California’s working families and businesses cannot afford this tax increase.*

**FACT**

California motorists currently pay $763 per year, on average, in extra vehicle repair costs due to wear and tear because of the poor condition of our roads. With SB 1, CA drivers will save money by driving on improved roads and will need fewer vehicle repairs.

8. **MYTH**— *According to polling, Californians oppose the gas tax increase. They will support a ballot measure to repeal SB 1.*

**FACT**

Polls consistently show voters are fed up with California’s bad roads and will support new revenues to get them fixed. If a repeal measure makes it on the November 2018 ballot, we are confident voters will want to want to preserve funding to provide safer roads and bridges, improve congestion, and fix potholes.

9. **MYTH**— *California Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed "diverting 30 percent of the funding" from the state’s gas tax increase "to non-road related projects like building parks and lifeguards."*

**FACT**

A percentage of the existing gas tax revenue related to fuel sales from boats, agricultural equipment, and other off-highway vehicles (quads, dirt bikes) has always gone toward supporting infrastructure related to these economic and recreational activities. The percent of gas tax revenues collected from these sources is two-percent (2%).

10. **MYTH**— *SB 1 funds are being diverted to CSU and UC for research.*

**FACT**

SB 1 directs $7 million (one-tenth of one percent of total SB 1 revenues) to CSU and UC transportation research institutions for research directly related to improving transportation technology, practices, materials, and impacts to the environment.

Get the Facts @ fixcaroads.com | #RebuildingCA
11. MYTH— Some of the funds raised by SB 1 will be used to repay outstanding loans from certain transportation funds.

All outstanding transportation loans are being repaid by the General Fund. In fact, the FY 2016-17 state budget already started to repay those loans. SB 1 requires all loans to be repaid by 2020.

12. MYTH— According to the state legislative analyst, Caltrans is overstaffed by 3,500 positions.

Caltrans staffing levels are currently at the lowest they’ve been in a decade. Additionally, SB 1 mandates that the California Department of Transportation “shall implement efficiency measures with the goal to generate at least one hundred million dollars ($100,000,000) per year in savings to invest in maintenance and rehabilitation of the state highway system.”

13. MYTH— SB 1 dollars will be diverted to fund high-speed rail.

No funds raised from SB 1 will be used to fund high-speed rail. California’s state-maintained transportation infrastructure will receive roughly half of SB 1 revenue: $26 billion. The other half will go to local roads, transit agencies and an expansion of the state’s growing network of pedestrian and cycle routes. There is no remaining balance that could be used for the high-speed rail project. A full overview of how the funds are allocated can be found here.
Addendums to Attachment 5
Supplemental Public Comments Received Regarding the
2018 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)
Additional comments, which were not previously included in Attachment 5.

From: Gary Lindstrum
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2017 7:35 AM
To: Daniel Nikuna
Subject: No funding for traffic light at Aptos Creek Road

Dear Daniel Nikuna,

I am asking that the request for just a few dollars under $3,000,000.00 to install the stop lights at Aptos Creek Road be rejected. These concessions to Swenson Developer and the other developers is getting out of hand. Work is currently under way at Trout Gulch and Soquel Drive that is another concession tax payers are having to pay for and that one is costing us almost $2,000,000.00! Enough is enough! If these Developers want to get involved with these projects then they are going to have to be responsible for ALL improvements necessary and stop asking tax payers to cover the cost. Tax payers need their roads fixed, fire departments funded fairly, water systems up dated so they can share water between water departments and get us out of our critical drought conditions, fences along the rail road line need repairs and so on and on and on. There is going to be a tax payer revolution in this county soon if you people don't get your priorities straightened out. This county is headed in the wrong direction and if it isn't changed soon it WILL be changed by the citizens of this county via votes, citizen initiatives, measures, recalls, and protests. I implore you to reject the funding for the stop light project at Aptos Creek Road and Soquel Drive.

Disappointed in current county politics and direction,

Gary Lindstrum
Aptos resident for over 50 years

From: Al Hughes
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 10:16 AM
To: Info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Item #25 Aptos Creek Road traffic light

RTC Members:

I strongly object to this traffic light. I understand the cost is multi-millions of dollars.

There would be no discussion of a traffic light where it not for the Developers building the Aptos village project. They caused the discussion, they must pay for the light should it be approved.

Every school in Aptos has credit card information on there home page begging for funds. Community members are fund raising with cake sales etc.. It is embarrassing to see millions for lights and zero for schools.

I must demand your reasoning for even suggesting you asking the taxpayers to pay and not the developers.

Trout Gulch at $3,000,000 and this proposed light at $2,000,000 that boarders on madness.

With respect,
Al Hughes/ Aptos
From: Curt Simmons []
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 9:00 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

Below is the form letter from Bike Santa Cruz County, which I fully support. I also wanted to say that I am a bike commuter. I enjoy the great feeling one gets while riding and I don't have to carve out time to go to the gym to exercise. So many people living relatively close to work or school do not choose to bike. By making it easier and safer to bike, we would increase ridership, reduce congestion on the roads and improve general health for very little cost.

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County's application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:
Open Streets events have been proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits
Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities
Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,
Curt Simmons
Santa Cruz

From: Drew Perkins []
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 10:32 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: support open streets

Hello,

I'm writing to encourage the commission supports funding open streets events. They are a great way to demonstrate how amazing car free transportation options can be for the community and help people open up to the idea of walking or biking to get around. The more we can make getting around by bike or foot safe and easy in our community, the less time we need to spend in traffic when we do need to drive, and the less we need to spend on extremely expensive automobile infrastructure.

Thanks,
Drew
From: Aaron Zachmeier  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 10:56 AM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County’s application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:

1. Open Streets events have been shown to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits
2. Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities
3. Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff’s recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action’s bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,

Aaron Zachmeier  
Instructional Designer  
University of California Santa Cruz

From: Monica Pielage  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:07 AM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

Open Streets is a vital and fabulous event! I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County’s application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods. Three reasons to support Open Streets events: Open Streets events have been proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits. Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities. Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings. Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff’s recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action’s bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,

Monica Pielage  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
From: Donna Riggs  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:55 AM  
To: info@scrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County's application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:
1) Proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits
2) Foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities
3) Return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,
Donna Riggs
Registered Voter, Westside SC
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

---

From: Bart Coddington  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 3:59 PM  
To: info@scrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events in Santa Cruz County

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County's application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

I have worked at almost every Open Streets event since Saskia Lucas put on the first one on West Cliff Dr in 2012. I am now 73 years old and very much enjoy the good feelings one gets at these events. Every year I see families meeting friends they have not seen in a while - so they stop and talk right in the middle of the street. Every year I get to want children having a ball working on the center yellow line down the streets, something they can do nowhere else. I plan in riding my bike and helping out with Open Streets for many years to come.

Even if one comes without a means of personally powered transportation, they get exposed to all that is available as other citizens go up and down the street. Every year I see something new. Also, for some folks it may be their first time on a Metro bus and may encourage them to actually use one.

Everything at an Open Streets event as the capability of igniting a spark in a person - that maybe they can do something different.

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely, [Your Name]
From: Grace Voss  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 5:36 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

Open Streets events are a truly wonderful celebration of families and bicycles...almost every October several thousand people attend the Open Streets event on West Cliff Drive, and all you see at this event is a series of happy faces!...it's a joy to all to be able to use the full street for walking, bicycling, skating and other modes of transportation...

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County's application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events: 1) Open Streets events have been proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits; 2) Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities; 3) Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's Bike to Work incentive program.

Sincerely,  
Grace Voss

From: Cathy Asmus  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 5:56 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear RTC,

Bicycling is 100% sustainable and encourages public health. Please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County's application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:  
Open Streets events have been proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits  
Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities  
Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,  
Catherine Asmus
From: Susan Cook  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 6:34 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Open Streets

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

Open Streets is a wonderful thing and I ask you to continue with the necessary funding. I live on the Westside of Santa Cruz and it is fantastic to see neighbors out with the kids on West Cliff, without cars. I am sure the folks in Watsonville are experiencing the same enjoyable event.

Susan Cook

From: Nils Tikkanen  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 7:13 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to request that you fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County’s application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:

- Open Streets events have been proven to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits
- Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities
- Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff’s recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action’s bike to work incentive program.

Sincerely,
Nils Tikkanen, county resident

From: Doug Huskey  
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 3:15 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Agenda item #23 : Funding for Transportation Projects - Comments

I support the staff recommendations for funding as provided in Staff Report Attachment 2:


Regards,
Doug Huskey
Westside Santa Cruz
From: Colleen Young  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 9:43 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Please support Open Streets events!

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County’s application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. I have attended Open Streets for several years and strongly support these events having better funding. It’s so important to support these types of events, where the community comes together in a safe, fun environment that promotes alternative transportation.

Additionally, I urge you to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville and Ecology Action's bike to work incentive program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Colleen Young
Santa Cruz

From: Gina Cole  
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 3:33 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Cc: Paul Baker; Linda Khamoushian; Open Streets Santa Cruz County; Darlene D. Torres  
Subject: Please support funding Bike Santa Cruz County’s Open Streets Events

Dear Regional Transportation Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund Bike Santa Cruz County’s application for Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding for Open Streets events in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Sustained support is what allows Open Streets events to provide important transportation programming that shifts daily commute trips from cars to alternative methods.

Three reasons to support Open Streets events:
1. Open Streets events have been shown to lead to long-term behavior changes in cycling and walking habits, which are some of the best ways to improve a person’s health and well-being, as well as provide a healthy alternative to as sedentary lifestyle.
2. Open Streets events foster community and civic pride by showcasing business and non-profit activities!
3. Open Streets events return public spaces to the people by providing safe, free, outdoor active recreation in urban settings. These one day events may be the portal for many more people to explore their community on foot or on wheels.

Additionally, I urge you, to increase RTC staff's recommendation for funding for all bike improvements in Watsonville, including the newly proposed bike park and pump track in Watsonville’s Pinto Lake County Park, and Ecology Action's Bike to Work incentive program.

Sincerely,
Gina Gallino Cole

Gina Gallino Cole  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Pajaro Valley Prevention & Student Assistance, Inc.  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
www.pvpsa.org
From: Charles Paulden
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 6:39 PM
To: General Info
Subject: Re: Notice of Public Hearing: Funding for Transportation Projects

If you are funding pathways, please remember that the EPA wants Porous Pathways for people and the environment

Soak Up the Rain: Permeable Pavement | US EPA
What is Green Infrastructure? | US EPA

From: bikerick
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 10:08 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: comment on RTC 12-7-2017 agenda Item 23 RTIP spending

Dear Commissioners: I urge you to support the staff recommendation to commit funding to the Pacific Avenue sidewalk project (#12). Any of you who have been in the vicinity of the Sanctuary Exploration Center and Las Palmas Taco Bar on lower Pacific Avenue are probably aware of the current transportation problem. There is a short gap without a sidewalk but with diagonal parking. The result is that pedestrians walk in the street, behind the parking vehicles and in the path of where bikes travel. This behavior then forces bikes to swerve into the vehicle travel lane. In short, the area is a mess -- with potential conflicts among motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. There have been several recent improvements in the area – the bike lanes on Beach Street, the Pacific/Beach/Wharf roundabout, the new sidewalk and pedestrian plaza at the Sanctuary Center – with the rail trail and Wharf entrance redesign coming. The proposed Pacific Avenue sidewalk project is needed to complete circulation improvements in this highly congested area.

The staff report indicates that there are already sidewalks on the other (west) side of Pacific Avenue. However, pedestrians on the east side of the street currently lacking a sidewalk – being there to access businesses, their vehicles, or the beach area -- are unlikely to cross over to the other side for this short distance. And, actually requiring pedestrians to cross over to the west side sidewalk and then back would likely increase conflicts.

As to priorities, this is one of those low-key, relatively inexpensive projects that hopefully can be accomplished quickly, without controversy. Please support the staff recommended allocation.

Thanks,
Rick Hyman
Santa Cruz
From: Anna Kammer
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 9:10 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Public Comment for 2018 RTP

Dear Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission,

My name is Anna Kammer, and I am a resident of Watsonville. I am writing to urge you to support the transportation projects, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements, proposed for the South County and Watsonville region.

As an avid cyclist and bicycle commuter, I know firsthand how desperately needed these improvements are. The Holohan and East Lake intersection is especially in need of renovation, as this intersection is used by students walking or biking to school, as well as car traffic. With the high incidence of pedestrian/vehicle collisions in Watsonville, these improvements will make the project areas safer for all road users.

Thank you so much for your consideration to fund these South County projects!

Sincerely,

Anna Kammer
Unified Corridor Investment Study (UCS) - Draft Step 1 Analysis
(Ginger Dykaar and Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planners)

Supplemental Public Comments
Received between December 1 and December 6 2017

From: Brian Peoples
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 3:45 PM
To: gdykaar@sccrtc.org
Cc: Zach Friend; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; info@sccrtc.org; lmenendez@sccrtc.org
Subject: Freight Service in Watsonville

Ginger,

For Scenario A, Freight service should be included just like Scenario C.

---

Brian Peoples

From: Brian Peoples
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 5:43 AM
To: Regional Transportation Commission
Cc: Ginger Dykaar
Subject: Comment on RTC Meeting for Dec 7th

RTC,

Please find a copy of Trail Now Newsletter on subjects for the December 7th RTC meeting. People can sign-up for our newsletter by going to TrailNow.org.

Best regards,

Brian Peoples
Executive Director
REBUTTAL TO RTC ARTICLE ON RAIL-TRAIL TRUTHS & MYTHS
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) Executive Director recently wrote an article on the Coastal Corridor. We want to make sure we provide some clarification on statements made within the article.

The 2015 Passenger Train Study cost taxpayers over $125K and the original intent was to determine if a train would work along the Coastal Corridor. RTC Staff now stating that the study was a “theoretical analysis” and was not intended to make a determination if a train is possible is confusing and disingenuous. The statement that there was never an intent to use “low-tech trains moving at dangerous speeds through our neighborhoods” is confusing. If Diesel Motor Units (DMUs) were not the plan for rail, then why was this outlined as the scope of work for the study? The fact is, DMUs were used for the basis of the study because they were the only train system that could possibly be affordable. According to the RTC Consultant, electric trains would be $30M per mile and not realistic. The 2015 Passenger Train Study results showed a train was not economically viable and would have no impact on Highway 1 traffic. One real informative output of the study showed that it was not practical to have more than 60 trains a day travelling fast through our neighborhoods.

On the issue of rail-banking, it is an actual process regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration for “reserving” a property for future rail operations. It is not “theoretical” but is an actual federally regulated process and allows for a property to be returned to railroad operations. Yes, it is true that most railroads do not return to rail service because it is not economically practical. We believe the RTC and train advocates have been using this “if we pull the tracks, we will never have a train in the future” as a scare tactic. We agree that there will never be a train along the Coastal Corridor.

Construction of a world-class rail-trail will take time, due to planning and environmental review, approval by the Coastal Commission, etc. The issue is that RTC Staff has misled the public with the claim that removal of tracks will take longer than building a trail next to the tracks. For any new trail construction, whether it is rail-with-trail or rail-to-trail, the design, engineering, EIRs and public reviews will need to occur. Today the North Coast Rail-Trail from Wilder Ranch to Davenport is demonstrating the requirements to conduct a public review process and rebuffs the idea that the current rail-with-trail is a “shovel ready project”. RTC Staff has again used a scare tactic that if we don’t “stick with the plan, it will take years longer for a trail”. We contend that if we stick to the current rail-with-trail plan, it will take decades longer and cost millions more than building a rail-to-trail.

Using Measure D funds to pay back the State the $11 million that it provided to purchase the rail corridor is not “currently in the RTC plan”. However, Measure D funds can be used to pay back the State once RTC Board approves such allocation.


DOWN-SELECTIONS ON UNIFIED CORRIDOR INVESTMENT STUDY
On December 7th, RTC will down-select the number of scenarios to be evaluated in the Unified Corridor Investment Study. Down-selecting to a reduced number of scenarios ensures the project is on-schedule, detailed analysis can be performed on the remaining scenarios and the final recommendation is affordable for Santa Cruz County. We believe that enough evidence has been produced to show that a train along the Coastal Corridor is not economically viable, would have no impact on traffic congestion and is not socially acceptable to the local neighborhoods. Modeling of transit along the Coastal Corridor will be done for Bus Rapid Transit, so there is no need for such modeling for a train.

We recommend down-selecting Scenario A and C:

**Scenario A:**
- Highway 1 HOV Alternative Lanes
- Metering On-ramps
- San Lorenzo River Bridge widening
- Mission Street Intersection Improvements
- Bus Rapid Transit lite (faster boarding, transit signal priority)
- Parking moved from Soquel Drive to improve bike and transit options
- Increased frequency of transit with express service
- Intersection improvements for auto traffic
- Rail-to-Trail along Coastal Corridor (separating bicyclist from pedestrians)

**Scenario C:**
- Highway 1 Auxiliary Lanes
- Bus Rapid Transit lite (faster boarding, transit signal priority)
- Increased frequency of transit with express service
- Intersection improvements for auto traffic
- Rail-to-trail along Coastal Corridor
- Bus Rapid Transit on Coastal Corridor

**NEIGHBORHOOD TALK IN SEASCAPE**

A talk is being scheduled in Seascape for Saturday, December 2nd to discuss the Coastal Corridor and the great opportunities for our community to build a world-class rail-to-trail. Everyone is invited. To learn of time and location, please send email to brian@trailnow.org.
From: Gail McNulty
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 7:46 AM
To: Ginger Dykaar; Regional Transportation Commission
Cc: George Dondoro; Luis Mendez; Zach Friend; cchase@cityofsantacruz.com; John Leopold; ryan.coonerty@santacruzcounty.us; bruce.mcpherson@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; rlj12@comcast.net; Sandy Brown (sbrown@cityofsantacruz.com); Donald Hagen; ed bottorff; Bertrand, Jacques; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; Venter, Frederik; jimmy.dutra@cityofwatsonville.org; Alex Clifford; Barrow Emerson; tim_gubbins@dot.ca.gov
Subject: Greenway’s Response to UCIS Step 1 Results

Dear Ginger and Grace,

Thank you for all of your work on the UCIS.

Greenway looks forward to more opportunities to participate in Step 2 of the study.

Please include our comments regarding the Step 1 results and our suggestions for Step 2 (attached) in the meeting packet for Thursday.

Thank you,

Gail McNulty
Executive Director
Santa Cruz County Greenway

www.facebook.com/SCCGreenway
831-824-4563
Dear Ginger and Grace:

As you know, Santa Cruz County Greenway is a growing group of citizens who want to spend our tax dollars wisely to build a wide, separated Greenway on the rail corridor as the backbone of a carefully-planned protected bicycle and pedestrian network while focusing our county’s transit efforts on improving the METRO bus system.

The fact that "Bike and Pedestrian Trail" on the rail corridor is the most popular component of every scenario in the UCIS Step 1 Scenario Analysis Results is no surprise. However, had RTC staff and Kimley-Horn clearly differentiated between trail-only and rail-with-trail, the results would be more accurate and informative. In their current form, the Step 1 results fail to show the differences between cost, environmental impact, and transportation potential for these two dramatically different plans.

By unnecessarily clouding the differences between trail-only and rail-with-trail, this step of the process has failed to meet the RTC’s stated goals for the UCIS to "focus on developing a sustainable transportation system which seeks to maximize benefits in terms of the natural environment, economic vitality and health and equity."

In keeping with Greenway’s goal to improve METRO—BRT Light, increased transit frequency, and bike and pedestrian improvements were among the next most popular options. METRO already moves three times the number of daily passengers than the train is projected to move in the 2015 RTFS’s best case scenario.

Buses serve more people because they go where trains cannot. Transportation equality cannot be achieved in our county without improving METRO.

Although we agree large-scale buses and bicycles in one lane is not a safe plan, it seems premature to eliminate a dedicated bus lane on Soquel/Freedom without further study. Meeting our county’s sustainability goals will require some efforts to prioritize transit over cars.
In order to justify the time and taxpayer dollars invested in this study, it is imperative that Step 2 analysis:

1. Studies trail-only (using the existing railbed and trestles to build a wide pathway that safely separates bicycle and pedestrian traffic) independent of the rail-with-trail plan.
2. Shows a side-by-side analysis of trail-only v. rail-with-trail addressing objective cost, transportation value, environmental impact, community support, and technological feasibility and constraints.
3. Clearly shows the planned and potential on-street detours that will result with a rail-with-trail plan and the negative impact that these will have on promoting bicycling to the many potential bike riders who would like to bike more often but don’t feel safe doing so now. (Our popular Bike to School and Work Days show how many people would choose bikes over cars daily if it were a safe option.)
4. Provides accurate estimates for the number of bicycle and pedestrian users that could be safely accommodated on a 20-26 foot wide path that separates cyclists from foot traffic v. a 8-12 foot wide mixed-use path.
5. Provides a more realistic cost estimate for building the MBSST plan (including necessary excavating and retaining walls) based on cost overruns from Segment 7.
6. Accurately communicates the above information to the public and gives them opportunities to show whether they support trail-only or rail-with-trail.
7. Replaces “Intersection improvements for autos” with “Intersection improvements for bicycle safety.” Auto traffic flow measures should not be implemented at the expense of the pedestrian experience.
8. Includes protected bike lanes on Soquel/Freedom as part of every scenario.
9. Takes a more proactive approach to all potential bus improvements in an effort to suggest realistic transit improvements that could be implemented for relatively low costs prior to the onset of highway construction.
10. More accurately reflects the findings from county’s prior rail feasibility studies.

Thank you for helping to ensure that the UCIS study produces meaningful data to help guide our county’s transportation future. We are hopeful that this process will become more transparent and accurate during Step 2 and would welcome the opportunity to participate in a public oversight committee with this goal in mind.

Sincerely,

Santa Cruz County Greenway
From: Dan Denevan
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:24 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Rail to Trail

Passenger rail has never been a good idea for cities the size of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Aptos.
The likelihood of 2/3 of voters approving a half cent sales tax to pay for it is zero.
The Metro and BRT on a wiser Highway One is the only form of mass transit that makes sense for our area.
Sometimes you have to ignore your political base of vocal, emotional train supporters and do the sensible thing.
Thanks, Dan Denevan

From: Della Davis
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:25 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Letter re: Dec 7 Public Hearing Transportation

Della Davis
La Selva Beach, CA 95076

Dec 4, 2017

Re: Include trail-only option for SP rail right-of-way in the Uniform Corridor Investment Study

Dear Committee,

As a long term resident of Capitola, Aptos, or La Selva Beach I have long been interested in seeing the railroad right-of-way used in the best interests of the general community.

Many of the people in various groups I belong to, and my church agree that the trail-only option is the best bet. We are very excited about the plans to have a 2-way bicycle path, and then to have a separate pedestrian path. We also discuss how great it would be for young families, us older folks and the disabled, because it is relatively flat, with only a slight grade. It is ADA complaint and will be accessible by all.

I am requesting that "Trail only option" become a formal option on the RTC Uniform Corridor Investment Study.

Thank you,
Della Davis
From: David Giannini  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 12:10 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Important Considerations for Rail Corridor Use

Please add my voice to those calling for the inclusion of a "Trail Only" option which must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans. Let us move more individuals toward active transportation with the Trail being a backbone for the county's non-greenhouse gas creating transportation. Two lanes of fast moving traffic and one lane of foot traffic is so much more efficient than mixed use. In addition, let's enhance the most socially equitable transportation infrastructure, the Metro and add efficiencies to the Hwy 1 corridor and get Santa Cruz County moving!

Thank you,

--

David Giannini  
Santa Cruz city resident

-----Original Message-----
From: Enda  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 2:03 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Unified Study

I strongly believe Trail only should be studied independently of Rail with Trail in step two of the unified study so that we can all transparently view the differences including the costs. I walked the several mile portion of the proposed rail trail between Capitola and Manresa State Beach and strongly believe that a trail only is really the way to go. However, I recognize that reasonable people can differ so I want to make sure that we make an informed and rational decision based on actual facts. Thanks, Enda Brennan

Sent from my iPhone

-----Original Message-----
From: Brian Brunelli  
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 3:21 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: 12/7/17 vote

Please, do not continue studying train viability along the coastal corridor. Numerous studies have shown the train to be a costly boondoggle. There is no money to support a train, and there are no riders for it. A train will not help anyone. Rip up the tracks, build a multi-use trail that will be used extensively, and widen the highway. Forget about the train, and help the people of south county with transportation NOW.

Brian Brunelli  
Aptos
---Original Message---
From: Jim W. Blain [mailto:jimx@pacbell.net]
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 8:45 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Public Comment for 2018 RTP

Future plans should include connecting the existing rail lines between Santa Cruz and Monterey. This would provide an excellent link for the tourist as well as public transportation for more than 70 miles. In addition, the railroad would be available in the event of an emergency situation, should main highways and air transportation be limited or impossible due to a local, natural or national disaster. Further, the railroad would be connected to the main line at Watsonville for additional Amtrak service across the United States.

The Petaluma Smart cars are good examples of a comfortable mode of public transportation. Rail transportation will provide revenue whereas rail removal and conversion to a linear county park will cost millions of tax money and years to finish. Further, a 32 mile paved trail has limitations and usage during in inclement weather especially winter and night time. Hard to envision bikers and hikers using the trail during these times. What about personal safety and liability issues? What about concerns of potential gang violence in remote areas?

Rail banking concept is a bad idea and not very successful. Once rails are out on a route like this, they will never return. Imagine trying to get environmental permits to relay a railroad in this county after a long absence.

On the other hand, adding a trail along the track from Santa Cruz via Wilder Ranch to Davenport would be a good asset for tourism, not to mention it would compliment existing Roaring Camp rail activities and focus tourism where it belongs, at the Board Walk.

Santa Cruz County, including Monterey is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. We need to be thinking out-of-box, not looking through a stove pipe when it comes to our transportation needs. Look at how long it took to add a lane to Highway 1. Let's not throw away the rail transportation asset for a 32 mile long bike and foot path.

Jim Blain
Scotts Valley, CA
831-438-2673
-----Original Message-----
From: Robert Hull
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 10:01 PM
To: Regional Transportation Commission
Subject: Input for 12/7 mtg.

Members of the RTC,

    The time for study is over. We need to make improving CA-1 the
immediate and first priority for RTC projects. Please stop funding
feasibility studies of the branch line.
    Robert Hull
    Scotts Valley

From: Bob Landry
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 5:09 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: MBSS Investment Study

Dear SCRTK Board Members,

I am writing to strongly urge you to include the Greenway option in your study of the best use of the
former rail corridor. I have heard that it is not being studied and I'm sure that is an oversight on their
part as there is definitely public support and enthusiasm for this idea.

I'm sure you are aware that we will not have a train in that corridor for at least 20 years.
It would be a terrible wasted opportunity to not use the space for an Active Transportation
Expressway in the mean time. Think of the allure of a continuous level bike path spanning our
county, safe from deadly interactions with cars. It would quickly become an alternative backbone to
our county's transportation skeleton.

Greenway has a petition with over 5000 voters signatures in support of their proposal.
I have a lot of friends that vote and we all think that the Greenway proposal is the best use of the
former rail line. Please do the right thing, Please direct Mr. Dondero and his staff to include this
reasonable and economical option in their investment study.

Sincerely,

Bob Landry
Santa Cruz

From: Steven Shieffer
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 6:20 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Rail

Please know that there are many, many of us that support having a train along our corridor as
another form of travel in our community. Along with a trail, we see this as a no brainer.
Please keep an eye out for our future needs. Thank You.
Steven Shieffer
From: Doug Huskey
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 11:39 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Comments on Agenda Item 24 - UCS Scenarios

Hi,

I believe that we need to include a Trail Only Scenario in the UCS. The Trail Only option would

- allow for a full trail the length of the corridor without diverging to public streets
- would be safer for bicyclists, pedestrians, dog walkers, and handicapped users
- would allow a separated (by striping or raised rubber curb or landscaping) trail for bicycles and ebikes which travel at 2x to 3x the speed of other users (safer for everyone)
- would accommodate the growing number of bicycle and especially ebike commuters to schools, colleges and work places in the county
- would save money and be less costly than restoring the rail system
- does not need to stop work on portions of the trail currently funded, but may influence the design of that work
- is more beautiful, sustainable and safer than other options
- creates a trail that would actually be a destination for visitors and tourism

Thank you for including my comments in the discussion.

Regards,
Doug Huskey
701 Highland Ave.
Westside Santa Cruz

-----Original Message-----
From: Liza McHugh []
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 7:09 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Green Way Project

The railroad tracks are walked on every day. Why not make this route beautiful. I grew up in the town of Clayton and now live in Santa Cruz. In Clayton, you could ride with your family without fear of cars for miles. I can only imagine the joy of having the same instead of the train tracks.

The idea of an active train running through the already impacted intersections of our communities just leaves me bewildered.

Please take this letter as a vote of two, for supporting the Green Way trail.

Thank You,

Brian and Liza McHugh
Dear RTC,

I am a Capitola resident and I ride through the congested Capitola village with my 3 year old on the back of my bike to get to pleasure point. I dream of riding on the bike path from new brighten over the trestle overlooking the Monterey bay and think how easy, quick, and beautiful it would be. There would be a fast commuter bike path that would cut through town, taking cars off the streets and putting much of the community on their bikes, because of the easy and safety of this path. Frankly, I would ride my bike more if there was a path removed from the road and I think many families would do so as well.

I truly feel that it is unrealistic to place a train and a rail in the same location. First of all, it would not be safe, and secondly, it seems like there isn't any space for both. Third, a trail only will help traffic congestion. I am urging you to please STOP spending taxpayer money on rail studies and repairs! We need REALISTIC, affordable, alternatives to gridlock NOW! Build Greenway and a protected bike and pedestrian network, and make METRO work better.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

Malia Horn

-----Original Message-----
From: Robert Hull []
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 10:01 PM
To: Regional Transportation Commission
Subject: Input for 12/7 mtg.

Members of the RTC,

    The time for study is over. We need to make improving CA-1 the immediate and first priority for RTC projects. Please stop funding feasibility studies of the branch line.
    Robert Hull
    Scotts Valley
-----Original Message-----
From: Tara Larson []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 6:03 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Greenway comments

This city is not bike friendly. We desperately need a bike and pedestrian trail to connect each area. This will hugely reduce traffic for both work commutes and tourist travel between beaches and towns. We should strive to make it sustainable with permeable paths and an abundance of native plants- it should be beautiful, highly useful- and can become ICONIC as one of the most beautiful bike/walk trails in the country. PLEASE approve the greenway bike and pedestrian trail for further consideration. It is the best option for cleansing and restoring our beautiful community!
Sent from my iPhone

From: Devin Kato []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 6:42 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Trail

Hello,

I wanted to write in whole-hearted support of a pedestrian/bike trail without the train.

As a local emergency physician, we see many bicycle accidents and pedestrians struck by vehicles that could potentially be avoided with a safer route alternative.

As a father of two young children and occasional cyclist I would cherish the option of a safe off-street location to walk and bike. Currently, we are limited to short areas near East and West Cliff and often drive down to Monterey for better bike trail options.

As a community member living near the train line, I would not want trains running through our neighborhood, nor do I think that it would significantly help our transportation issues. I also, believe that we are wasting time and precious money (and threatening to waste more) continuing to study a choice that seems clear.

Thank you for considering my input,

Devin Kato, MD
Capitola, CA

From: Tom Brady []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 7:54 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Stop Rail Study -Build the trail

Please stop spending taxpayer money on rail studies and repairs! We need realistic, affordable, alternatives to gridlock now, not a commuter train that serves no one, and a budget that is impossible to fund. Build a protected bike and pedestrian network, and make METRO work better. Fix the four miles of Hwy 1 to solve the congestion. A train is not the answer.

Thanks,

Tom
Tom Brady
Soquel, CA 95073
RTC Commissioners,

A Trail-Only scenario must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans in terms of cost, environmental impact, and the likelihood of encouraging a growing population of bicycle and e-bike commuters.

Consequently, the only scenarios you should consider evaluating are Scenarios A and C. Any further funding of studies to evaluate the feasibility of a train are a waste of our tax dollars.

In addition, how long will our coastal corridor go unused? For most of you the corridor will have remained vacant for your entire term as members of the RTC. That’s not a something to be proud of given you want to continue serving our community.

Joe Martinez  
Aptos

-----Original Message-----
From: Dean Cutter []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 8:45 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Cc: Lauren Cutter
Subject: rtc railroad meeting Dec 7

Dear RTC,

Because I have to be at work, teaching at New Brighton Middle School, I cannot attend your meeting. However, the objective of your meeting is very important to me.

On December 7th, you are voting to on scenarios to study for the future use of our abandoned railroad. I urge you to consider looking into a scenario which coverts the tracks to a dedicated bike and pedestrian route in your study. A train from Watsonville to Davenport is not practical, according to the RTC projections, due to expense and low ridership. In addition, a train will greatly diminish the practicality of a bike route or pedestrian path. In many locations, such as the Capitola Trestle, a train will permanently relegate routes permanently off limits to anyone not able to pay a fee to ride the train. The route of the proposed train is impractical. Residents will use their cars, rather than bikes or the train, to get to many desirable locations, because a bike is dangerous to use in town, and the train stops far from most locations where businesses or residents are located. A train track will keep it more convenient to drive.

Again, I urge you to add a dedicated bike/pedestrian path with no train to your potential objectives to study. It is the democratic option. It should be afforded to those thousands of us in the community who are interested in this option. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dean Cutter  
Santa Cruz, CA  
95062
From: Nadene Thorne []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 8:55 PM
To: Scrrtc Info
Subject: Request to Add Trail ONLY to Studies in the Unified Corridor IS

Trail-Only must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans in terms of cost, environmental impact, and the likelihood of encouraging a growing population of bicycle and e-bike commuters. This was not proposed or considered when Measure D was written and passed, but since then over 5000 county citizens have signed Greenway's petition supporting a trail only (NOT rail-with-trail), and innumerable individuals support the concept as elucidated by the TrailNow.org website.

We urge you to listen to the county voters and formally add the trail only proposal to the studies in the UCIS.

Thank you,
Nadene Thorne
Santa Cruz CA 95060

---- Original Message ----
From: steven mendivil []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 9:22 PM
To: info@scrrtc.org
Subject: RTC rail discussion

I would like to voice my opinion that support of Greenway and Trail Now proposals Rail-banking and installing a bike and pedestrian trail would be the best value for local citizens.

Unfortunately I am not able to attend the Thursday meeting but wanted to lend myself.

My best regarded

Steven Mendivil
Santa Cruz, Ca 95062

From: Rachel Van Cott []
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 10:38 PM
To: info@scrrtc.org
Subject: Railroad Studies

Dear RTC,

On December 7th, you are voting to on scenarios to study the future use of our abandoned railroad. I urge you to consider looking into a scenario which coverts the tracks to a dedicated bike and pedestrian route in your study. A train from Watsonville to Davenport is not practical, according to to the RTC projections, due to the expense and low ridership. In addition, a train will greatly diminish the practicality of a bike route or pedestrian path. In many locations, such as the Capitol Trestle, a train will permanently relegate routes permanently off limits to anyone not able to pay a fee to ride the train. The route of the proposed train is impractical. Residents will use their cars, rather than bikes or the train, to get to many desirable locations because a bike is dangerous to use in town, and the train stops far from most locations where businesses or residents are located. A train track will keep it more convenient to drive.
Again, I urge you to add a dedicated bike/pedestrian path with no train to your objectives to study. It is the democratic option. It should be afforded to those thousands of us in the community who are interested in this option. Thank you.

Kind regards,

Rachel

-----Original Message-----
From: Craig Wilson
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 5:46 AM
To: info@scrcrtc.org
Cc: diane lopez
Subject: Rail Input

RTC:

I support Trail only development of the railroad corridor. My reasons are simple but compelling:

1. Repair costs of rail and bridge infrastructure are prohibitive. I oppose spending millions of dollars on a system that is a century old.

2. I do not believe the rail will be widely used for regular commuting. Local people will not go to a rail depot, ride, and then go to their destination point.

3. The trail can be developed quickly and inexpensively and will be immediately used by local people for both bike commutes and recreation. One only has to look at the immediate success of the Arana Gulch path for evidence.

Thank you for your consideration.

Craig Wilson
Soquel

From: Molly Shaw
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 5:57 AM
To: info@scrcrtc.org
Subject: Please include a dedicated bike/pedestrian path in your study

Dear RTC,

On December 7th, you are voting to on scenarios to study the future use of our abandoned railroad. I urge you to consider looking into a scenario which coverts the tracks to a dedicated bike and pedestrian route in your study. A train from Watsonville to Davenport is not practical, according to to the RTC projections, due to expense and low ridership. In addition, a train will greatly diminish the practicality of a bike route or pedestrian path. In many locations, such as the Capitola Trestle, a train will permanently relegate routes permanently off limits to anyone not able to pay a fee to ride the train. The route of the proposed train is impractical. Residents will use their cars, rather than bikes or the train, to get to many desirable locations because a bike is dangerous to use in town, and the train stops far from most locations where businesses or residents are located. A train track will keep it more convenient to drive.

Again, I urge you to add a dedicated bike/pedestrian path with no train to your objectives to study. It is the democratic option. It should be afforded to those thousands of us in the community who are interested in this option. Thank you.
Sincerely,

Molly Shaw
Santa Cruz, CA 95010
Molly Shaw, Ed.D.
6th Grade Science, New Brighton Middle School
Science Department Chair, Teacher on Special Assignment (Science Curriculum Development)
Lecturer, University of California, Santa Cruz
Ca Teach NBMS // 250 Washburn Avenue // Capitola, CA 95010-3730
p: (831) 464-5660 // f: (831) 464-5515

From: Teal Basile []
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 7:00 AM
To: info@scrrtc.org
Subject: Railroad vote

Dear RTC,

On December 7th, you are voting on to scenarios to study the future use of our abandoned railroad. I urge you to consider looking into a scenario which coverts the tracks to a dedicated bike and pedestrian route in your study. A train from Watsonville to Davenport is not practical, according to to the RTC projections, due to expense and low ridership. In addition, a train will greatly diminish the practicality of a bike route or pedestrian path. In many locations, such as the Capitola Trestle, a train will permanently relegate routes permanently off limits to anyone not able to pay a fee to ride the train. The route of the proposed train is impractical. Residents will use their cars, rather than bikes or the train, to get to many desirable locations because a bike is dangerous to use in town, and the train stops far from most locations where businesses or residents are located. A train track will keep it more convenient to drive.

Again, I urge you to add a dedicated bike/pedestrian path with no train to your objectives to study. It is the democratic option. It should be afforded to those thousands of us in the community who are interested in this option. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Teal Basile
1758 King St
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

From: Joseph Ward []
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 7:04 AM
To: info@scrrtc.org
Subject: RTC

No more taxpayer money on rail studies and repairs! Hwy 1 traffic congestion is over the top. This should be your priority! Widen it! Not more studies on how to put a train for tourists on our tracks. Tear out the tracks and build a walking biking trail. Something that will really serve the community.

Joe Ward
Watsonville

From: Lauren Cutter
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 7:17 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: Letter in support of Trail Only study for rail corridor

Hello,
I am requesting that the commission include Trail Only for a stand-alone scenario in the Unified Corridor Investment Study. I urge you to consider a complete review of a scenario which converts the tracks to a dedicated bike and pedestrian route in your study. A train from Watsonville to Davenport is not practical, according to to the RTC projections, due to expense and low ridership. In addition, a train will greatly diminish the practicality of a bike route or pedestrian path. In many locations, such as the Capitola Trestle, a train will permanently relegate routes permanently off limits to anyone not able to pay a fee to ride the train. The route of the proposed train is impractical. Residents will use their cars, rather than bikes or the train, to get to many desirable locations because a bike is dangerous to use in town, and the train stops far from most locations where businesses or residents are located. A train track will keep it more convenient to drive.

Again, I urge you to add a dedicated bike/pedestrian path with no train to your objectives to study. It is the democratic option. It should be afforded to those thousands of us in the community who are interested in this option.

Thank you.

Lauren Cutter
Santa Cruz, CA

-----Original Message-----
From: andrea ratto
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 7:29 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Trail only option

Please include me in the overwhelming number of county citizens who support the trail only option. We live in Corralitos and are victims of traffic gridlock almost always when we travel to and from Santa Cruz. However the train will do next to nothing to alleviate this problem in its present proposed evolution. Additionally the cost will be exorbitant to repair and maintain now and in the future, and will proclude the possibility of any trail in most of Santa Cruz county due to the narrow corridor.

When we read that Santa Cruz is talking about cutbacks due to shrinking reserves (?really?) how can anyone justify wasting money on a tourist train that will not benefit the general population? We saw what happened to the "Christmas Train". Will we ever recover the lost revenue from that failure?
Sincerely,
Andrea Ratto

From: Rick Hyman
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 8:04 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: comment on RTC 12-7-2017 agenda item #24 -- Corridors study

Dear Commissioners: Please ensure that necessary bike infrastructure maintenance and improvements occur along the Soquel-Freedom corridor no matter what scenario prevails.
under the Unified Corridor Investment Study. Please see my previous November 8, 2017 email explaining this request posted in the “all comments received on the draft Step 1 analysis from the public … on the UCS webpage” (https://sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/02_AllComments_August-November2017.pdf).

I am pleased that staff has somewhat incorporated my suggestions into their current recommendations. “Intersection improvements for bikes/pedestrians,” “bike share, bike amenities,” and “improved bike/pedestrian facilities throughout urban area closing gaps in network” are projects to be evaluated in all four scenarios to remain.

Do make one correction -- please delete “throughout urban area.” I am not sure what you would consider non-urban and it may be that all bike lane gaps fall within what you would consider “urban,” but as a matter of policy there should be no distinction as to where gaps should be eliminated on such a major corridor.

I also remain concerned that the word “evaluate” is being used, implying that such projects could still be found worthy. It is appropriate to further evaluate whether extra space can be found or created on all or segments of the roadway to accommodate “buffered/protected bike lanes.” But bike lane maintenance and other improvement measures need no further debate – they are largely already planned for in the Regional Transportation Plan and local plans, required by Complete Streets mandates, and necessary to ensure safe and convenient bicycling along the corridor.

Similarly, it is appropriate to further evaluate intersection improvement measures that prioritize bicycle travel through them. But again, other measures that allow cyclists to more safely and effectively navigate intersections need to be installed - further evaluation is unwarranted. Same goes for bike share, which is already slated to start in the City of Santa Cruz, and for bike amenities, since bike parking should always be required and added where lacking.

As you finalize direction for further Soquel/Freedom corridor work, please ensure that wording is clear regarding what is appropriate to evaluate and what bike infrastructure maintenance and improvements need to occur, regardless of the outcome of the U CIS. This could be accomplished by adding a sentence along the lines of, “Maintenance of bicycle infrastructure, upgrading of bicycle facilities to minimum standards, closing bike lane gaps, implementing measures to ensure safe bicycle passage through intersections, providing bike parking and bike sharing, and completing any other bicycle projects already planned” are not included in the projects for evaluation [in the U CIS], rather they will be assumed to occur in all scenarios."

Thank you,
Rick Hyman

-----Original Message-----
From: Nels Westman
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 8:42 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Public Comment RTC Meeting 12/9 Item 24

By every measure of common sense the RTC has an obligation to the people Santa Cruz County to study the Option of Trail Only as the best, most feasible and
most cost effective use of the corridor. The RTC needs to be much more realistic in recognizing that the prospect of operating a viable light rail system in a semi-rural county like Santa Cruz is a fantasy—a staggeringly expensive fantasy. Using the corridor now for a well-designed, state-of-the-art bike and pedestrian corridor which we actually can afford and which would become a reality in the next few years makes so much common sense that the only responsible thing for the RTC to do is to include Trail Only as an independent and free standing option to be included in the UCS.

Thank you.

Nels Westman
Capitola

From: Jim Dixson
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 8:47 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: 12/7/17 RTC Meeting Comment - No More Train Studies
Importance: High
We respectfully ask the RTC to discontinue any further study of running a train along the Coastal Corridor.

There have already been enough studies that indicate that this is not economical feasible. While I am not opposed to subsidized public transportation, it is clear to me that Santa Cruz County does not have the population to support a rail solution. Where will the money come from to pay for it, both initially and operationally?

We also don’t think it is fiscally prudent to continue spending money on rail upgrades and crossing improvements when the final decision to even have a train has yet to be made. If we do continue to “study” a train, the argument to stop the improvements still holds.
Respectfully,

Jim Dixson & Tish McGlynn
Aptos

-----Original Message-----
From: Ralph Cutter []
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 9:08 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Turn rails to trails - common sense, please

Dear RTC-
What are you smoking? Unless the Kaiser refactory reopens and needs lime from Davenport, or Santa Cruz decides to log redwoods inside Cowell State Park, operating a rail service will need to be supported with tax dollars far above and beyond the current levy. We simply can’t afford the expense of a play train when we have so many other more important and pressing issues such as procuring a source of fresh water, repairing our aged sewage system, dealing with the homeless, and lack of affordable housing. The numerous rail road crossings through the City of Santa Cruz will only contribute to the congestion of a transportation hub already in failure mode.

A foot/bike path is the affordable and sensible alternative to a subsidized play train that will require millions of tax dollars to construct and never ending millions to maintain.
Sincerely submitted,

Ralph Cutter
14140 Sunrock Rd
Nevada City, CA 95959
(530) 264-6884

From: David Doolin
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 9:30 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Rail Trail

To whom it may concern
I am a Santa Cruz Resident and Business Owner. I strongly urge the RTC to consider and implement the Greenway plan for the trail. As a business owner I look forward to all of the economic activity that the trail will promote as soon as it is converted. In addition I am concerned about the incredible cost and that the trail as rail option will never be economically viable at best or at worst old world technology that won’t be relevant in today’s world. As a resident I am excited to use the trail to ride and hike in a safe, clean and environmentally efficient way around our expanded community. Please stop putting your head in the sand, catering to your own self-interest and think about the people of Santa Cruz. Consider the Greenway plan

David Doolin,
San Jose, CA 95113

From: Robert Morgan
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 9:54 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Comment for UCS phase 1

Dear Commissioners,

I am very concerned that the Unified Corridor Study Phase 1 has not successfully represented my voice—as well as other community members’ thoughtful feedback—and am asking the Commission to set up a community collective, a community stakeholder committee of various organizations, knowledgeable consultants and RTC staff. This committee would be facilitated by a professional skilled in effectively leading various constituencies through a forum-like, reflective decision making process to arrive at a more in-depth analysis of infrastructure options in our county’s various transit corridors.

The on-line surveys I participated in seemed to offer very broad options unconnected with a vision of sustainable transit alternatives as we move forward with plans to improve and expand our transit. For example, the surveys did not further a discussion of the community values we hold as residents in the county—do we believe HOV and aux lanes along the highway 1 corridor, will improve drivers’ commutes? Is there evidence that these build-outs will lessen peak hour congestion? Everything I read about highway expansion says that increasing capacity does not improve commuting time. How will these changes affect street intersections and traffic that exits from a larger freeway? I live in Live Oak and experience dangerous and congested traffic now with the Soquel, Park Avenue and the 41st exits when driving south. The off-freeway intersections cannot manage the volume of traffic produced by these exits. How will greenhouse gas emissions increase with a build out? Will enlarging the footprint increase Vehicle Miles Traveled in the county? These questions were not addressed in the surveys, and merely scratch the surface of a thoughtful dialogue among community stakeholders that has not yet been given a chance to happen.

These are complicated transportation issues with will affect our county and our decedents forever. They deserve a thorough vetting among residents in an atmosphere of thoughtful discourse.

Robert Morgan
From: Wheeler Edwards []
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 10:01 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Greenway - the common sense decision!!

I firmly believe that the honorable members of the RTC staff, and County Commissioners want what is best for the citizens and visitors to our wonderful county. Please take a moment to consider the following.

It has been proven time and time again that a GREENWAY brings both aesthetic, economic and sustainability to both rural and metropolitan areas. If you doubt it...simply research Railstorails.org or TrailLink.com to expose yourself to what Santa Cruz could offer in conjunction with the Monterey Scenic Trail!!

Please STOP spending taxpayer money on rail studies and repairs! Build a Greenway and a protected bike and pedestrian network, and focus on improved METRO solutions. If you provide a viable, reliable metro BUS network, people will follow as an easy alternative to private vehicle gridlock.

Trail-Only must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans in terms of cost, environmental impact, and the likelihood of encouraging a growing population of bicycle and e-bike commuters."

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Wheeler Edwards

From: Aaron Cole
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 10:10 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Please Study Trail Only Option!

I have been using and biking the train tracks in this county for the better part of 3 decades. I grew up 2 blocks from the tracks and used them to safely get from La Selva Beach to Seascape to play with friends at a young age because my parents (for good reason) forbade me from riding on San Andreas Road. I currently live in Seabright, 2 blocks from the tracks with my wife and 2 young sons Oliver and Wes, ages 4 and 5. We're stuck between the Harbor Bridge and the East Cliff hill. Now it's possible for us to cross the River bridge, but with a bike trailer we're too wide a load, but we are able to use the River path and access it from the trail off Buena Vista Ave, a very safe option we are grateful for. I have been bicycle commuting with Oliver and Wes for the last 4 years, riding them in a trailer to the Westside before dropping them off at daycare and riding up to work at UCSC. The first half of our ride is along the river where we watch the birds and seals with no worry of getting stuck from behind by a car or truck. I wouldn't do the same if I had to travel East, as I don't feel safe riding with a bike trailer along Murry, Eaton, or East Cliff. Every once in a while the thought of getting hit by a car with them in tow enters my mind and the feeling in the pit of my stomach is what nightmares are made of. I'm sure you can imagine. I have no doubt that I'll eventually get hit and my only hope is that I'm not with them when it happens.

Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in Santa Cruz is objectively bad. While most of the roads we ride have bike lanes, I'd like to take a moment to describe our experiences using
them. Even in the best case, most bike lanes are sandwiched between parked cars and through traffic, leaving them regularly occupied by parking cars, drivers pulling out, and most fearsome of all, car doors. On garbage day (once each week) the lanes are completely obstructed with trash and recycling cans, and anytime there is road construction, which I'm grateful for but nonetheless, the bike lane is obstructed by orange signs warning drivers of the construction ahead. What it really comes down to, even for those roads with bike lanes, is that they are no lanes at all, but rather the remainder of the road, whatever is left over, after factoring in car lanes, parking spaces, and sidewalks. How many people do you know that feel safe riding on Mission, Soquel, Water, Laurel, among so many others?!! Now for the rest of the roads that don't even have bike lanes, or where parking is permitted in the shoulder, cyclists regularly have to merge into traffic with little warning or choose between riding in the road or on the sidewalk. Painting a 'sharrow' on the street does nothing to effectively make cyclists safe from vehicles.

Whether taking a bus, train, ferry, or otherwise, public transportation is public transportation. There needs to exist a massive cultural shift in Santa Cruz County for me to even believe for a moment that a train would be marginally viable. What would it take for someone in Rio Del Mar to drive to a train station, park, wait, pay, ride, and then walk somewhere when they could just drive? And even then, if people are willing to sacrifice a little bit of personal freedom for the greater good, why not just enhance Metro service and cycling infrastructure? What do you intend to do about the last mile problem? People still need to get from their home to the train and from the train to their destination. And what about parents that need to go to work, but also pick up kids, run errands, and shuttle around to after-school activities? It has been shown in studies time and time again that dedicated bicycle infrastructure increases bicycle ridership. REAL safe places for cyclists to travel long distances is what it's going to take to make a difference.

Please, I beg of you, consider studying a trail-only option for the coastal corridor so that current and future generations can enjoy all this area has to offer without feeling the need to get in a car, a problem I'm certain will persist even with a train running on those tracks.

Very Truly Yours,
Aaron Cole

Aaron Cole, GISP
GIS Programmer Analyst, Assistant Director
Center for Integrated Spatial Research
University of California, Santa Cruz
office: ISB 425
mobile: 831-428-2548
From: Piet Canin  
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 10:05 AM  
To: George Dondero; Ginger Dykaar; Grace Blakeslee  
Cc: Kirsten Liske; Jim Murphy  
Subject: EA and FORT UCS Step 2 letter to the RTC

Dear George, Ginger and Grace,  
Please accept the attached letter from EA and FORT regarding the UCS Step 2 community and stakeholder group engagement process. This letter pertains to the December 7th RTC Commission meeting UCS agenda item. Thank you for all your good work on this important transportation study.

Piet Canin | Vice President Transportation  
EcologyAction | EcoAct.org  
Direct (831) 515-1327 |
12/5/2017

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

Dear George Dondero,

Ecology Action and Friends of the Rail & Trail (FORT) applaud the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for their leadership and work in advancing the Unified Corridor Study (UCS) as they plan for more sustainable, environmental, healthy, and equitable transportation solutions for our county. The UCS will provide our community with the comprehensive analysis, data, and a forum for public input in guiding future transportation investments.

Ecology Action and FORT have been, and continue to be, a strong supporter of the RTC and the public process the organization is leading our community through regarding the utilization of the county’s main three north/south transportation corridors. We have encouraged engagement by all parties in this public process. We have also strongly discouraged all parties from reaching premature conclusions about the feasibility, cost and timelines of any of the options under consideration. In short, we have encouraged all parties to trust and engage in the public UCS process being led by the RTC. We believe that this is the best approach for our community to design and plan the use of these three transportation corridors.

As the UCS moves to a more qualitative and intensive study of selected transportation projects, EA believe that a transparent, open and inclusive process is critical for community, stakeholder and decision maker buy in. As the RTC staff report indicates there is much public interest and disagreement regarding transportation options within the coastal rail corridor. Most agree that there is tremendous sustainable transportation potential within this under-utilized north/south corridor. To assure this potential is realized in a timely manner, EA encourages the RTC to not only focus on the data gathering and comprehensive analysis but also take the time to plan and implement a well thought out public engagement process that assure the UCS analysis is accepted as rigorous, thorough, transparent, and unbiased. By taking the time to establish these process standards and allow for public engagement the RTC will gain greater public acceptance of the final Unified Corridor Study results. If too many in the public feel excluded and doubtful of the UCS process they will have reason to distrust the UCS conclusions.

We commend the RTC staff for recommending adding two sets of focus group meetings with community organizations during the Step 2 analysis. This is a great way to gain more community
buy-in and trust in the process with more engagement. It appears from the timeline that these meetings will not be held until the fall of 2018. We would recommend that the first set of stakeholder group meetings take place earlier in the Step 2 process. Beyond these two sets of meetings it is unclear what the public and stakeholder group engagement will be for the Step 2 analysis. It would be great to have more clarity and details of the planned community stakeholder group engagement process.

Thank you for your work on this critical local study as transportation impacts almost all facets of daily life, elicits strong and divergent opinions, and has significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Sincerely,

Jim Murphy
CEO
Ecology Action

Mark Mesiti-Miller
Board President
Friends of the Rail & Trail
From: Pete Haworth
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 11:03 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Trail Only

I am not able to attend the RTC meeting on Thursday but I wish to express my strong desire that trail-only be one of the options to be considered for further study by the RTC.

It is my strong belief that passenger rail will be disruptive, hugely expensive for all county residents not just the few that choose to use it, and will have hardly any effect on local traffic issues other than tourist use.

Trail-Only must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans in terms of cost, environmental impact, and the likelihood of encouraging a growing population of bicycle and e-bike commuters.

Peter Haworth
Soquel

-----Original Message-----
From: Tanya &Tony Bennett []
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 11:53 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Trail, but no rail

Hello,

I live in Rio Del Mar. The roads here are worse than most 3rd world countries (and I have visited several). The roads are literally crumbling, potholed, and so patched that I almost need 4 wheel drive. Aptos Beach Dr, Spreckles, and Townsend Dr are 3 examples of really poor roads. I have to drive these every day.

How in the world is it economically feasible to spend MORE money on researching rail when you cannot find the resource to fix the roads, no matter how much tax money is thrown your way. This is ridiculous.

Please STOP spending taxpayer money on rail studies and repairs! We need realistic, affordable, alternatives to gridlock NOW! Build Greenway and a protected bike and pedestrian network, and make METRO work better. Pull out the tracks and make a bike/pedestrian path.

I believe Trail-Only must be studied independently of Rail-with-Trail in Step 2 of the UCIS so that the public, RTC staff, and commissioners can fully understand the dramatic differences between the two plans in terms of cost, environmental impact, and the likelihood of encouraging a growing population of bicycle and e-bike commuters. With the New Leaf market going into Aptos Village, and the additional housing, but only 2 narrow entry/exit points, having a pedestrian/bike option is essential. Stop spending millions on a new train crossing for this boondoggle.
I have studied and read the information over the past 7 years, and have never seen a financially sound scenario for train. This process just goes on and on, with more money being spent, for a project that is NOT financially sound. Just pull the plug already. Please do your job!!

Thank you,
Tanya Bennett
Aptos, CA 95003

From: Stanley Sokolow
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 11:53 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Item 24 (UCIS) on Agenda of Dec 7: Legal ramifications of changing the use of the rail corridor

Dear Commissioners:

Yesterday evening I participated in a discussion program broadcast on radio station KSCO 1080 AM about the potential future uses of the Santa Cruz County Branch Rail Line corridor. In that discussion, the issue of rail banking and property rights of landowners adjoining the right-of-way came up. One question involved whether abandonment of the railroad use of the corridor, as would be involved in your Unified Corridors Investment Study (UCIS) Step 2 Scenario A, would cause parts of the right-of-way to revert to the ownership of adjoining property owners. This could be the case if the right-of-way in those parts was acquired as an easement rather than as fee simple. A court case was mentioned where the jurisdiction that created a trail on an abandoned railroad right-of-way was held liable to the adjoining property owners for millions of dollars in compensation for taking their property in the right-of-way for public use as a trail. Another issue was whether "rail banking" would protect the County from such claims on our corridor.

I know that the RTC obtained a legal opinion from Woodside Consulting Group in 2005 as to whether the Surface Transportation Board would approve an RTC application for abandonment of the railroad line. The opinion was that yes, the RTC would most likely be allowed to abandon the railroad use of the corridor. But that letter did not reach the issue of property rights of adjoining land owners.

In Director Dondero's report to your Commission on December 8, 2016, he outlined the steps involved in abandoning the railroad use, removing the tracks, and building a trail only or a trail with BRT. One legal step he mentioned involved negotiating with the California Transportation Commission (CTC) over the amount of purchase money that the RTC would be required to pay back to the CTC since abandonment of the railroad use would not comply with the terms of the CTC grant under Proposition 116. (In separate communication between the RTC and CTC, the CTC indicated that the RTC could repay the purchase grant and then be free to do what it wishes with the right-of-way.) However, no mention was made of any legal issue regarding property rights of adjoining land owners. This may imply that the RTC acquired the right-of-way in fee simple, but I haven't seen any written evidence of that. On the contrary, the discussion of the legal boundaries of the right-of-way mentions that an essential step is:
Survey property boundaries to verify ownership and deal with encroachments. This step is essential regardless of when the trail is built and whether the rail stays in place. Property records on many parcels in the corridor lack clarity and specifics that must be researched through titles and any surveys that were recorded. New surveys must be done and encroachments will need to be addressed through a variety of efforts which could include negotiation and legal action. Estimated time: 2 years. Estimated cost: $5.4 MM. [Emphasis added.]

In 2006, the general counsel of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy published an article "Rails-to-Trails Conversions: A Review of Legal Issues." In that commentary, the complications of property rights were discussed:

Many rail-trail conversions are “railbanked” under Section 8(d) of the National Trails Systems Act, often called “the Railbanking Act” or the “Rails-to-Trails Act.” This important federal law, enacted by Congress in 1983 to preserve established railroad corridors for interim trail and future rail use, preempts state or local laws that are inconsistent with these goals. Some rail-trail conversions take place after the corridors have been legally “abandoned” and, therefore, are subject to the vagaries of state law in resolving ownership disputes. ... State law rarely had a clear answer to the question of who owns a railroad corridor and the effect of conversion into a trail. The possibility of costly and time-consuming “quiet title” litigation disputing a trail manager’s ownership of a corridor was a significant disincentive to making the significant investment in a rails-to-trails conversion.

The Railbanking Act was the federal solution to the complications. However, the legal commentary continues:

While legal challenges to the ownership or use of railbanked trails are preempted by the railbanking law, aggrieved landowners are not left without a remedy: They may still file a “takings” claim under the federal Tucker Act against the United States under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which requires the government to pay “just compensation” if it “takes” private property for a public use.

I presume the takings claim under the Tucker Act applies to rail corridors that were originally acquired by federal land grants, but I believe that any state or local government can be liable to a property owner if property is taken for public use without just compensation. If the portions of the Santa Cruz County right-of-way that are converted to a trail only or a trail-with-busway were acquired by the County as easements, might the County be liable for just compensation to owners of the property underlying those easements?

It seems to me that before the RTC spends any further staff time and consultant fees on modeling the scenarios which involve abandonment of part or all of the railroad service on portions of the corridor (Scenarios A, B, C, D, and F), the RTC should conduct the title searches and obtain a legal opinion regarding these issues of potential monetary compensation to owners of adjoining property who may in fact own land within the right-of-way corridor.

Stanley Sokolow
From: Glenn SaltzMD  
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 1:36 PM  
To: info@sccrtc.org  
Subject: NO MORE rail/train studies along the Santa Cruz Coastal Corridor

To the SCCRTC;

As a concerned Aptos citizen and physician interested in the health of our aging population and the well being of all, I implore you to STOP wasting precious time and $ with repeated studies involving trains or rail. Only evaluate transportation scenarios A and C that don't involve trains or rails.

Tracks are a hazardous liability and anchor the SCCRTC to the past instead of a future with a beautiful and functional trail corridor without trains or rails. There are thousands of testimonials of delighted citizens nationally with Rail-to-Trail conversions- enjoying nature without the noise, pollution or obstruction of tracks or trains.

Please be responsive to the facts and health of your constituents. Punting with more studies only wastes more taxpayer time and money. There is no justification for noisy, polluting, expensive and dangerous trains on our trail corridor resource. We want a pedestrian trail and greenway for non-motorized transportation ASAP, and not more studies for trains.

Dr. Glenn Saltz

From: Stanley Sokolow  
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 2:20 PM  
To: George Dondero; Singer Dykaar  
Subject: Additional information about the property rights issue I mentioned in my email to the RTC this morning

Since it's after the noon deadline to submit an additional email for distribution to the Commissioners tomorrow morning, I'm sending this to you so you can prepare if called upon to respond to my email sent this morning.

The US Supreme Court case Presault v. ICC, which was cited in the Rails-to-Trails article mentioned in my email to the RTC today, has a page in Wikipedia. It explains that even though the railroad thought it acquired the right-of-way with a fee-simple deed, the land owner Presault actually only granted an easement. The railroad's purchase deed was faulty. According to the court, Presault was owed monetary compensation for the taking of his property when the rails were removed and the trail was built and used. Wikipedia explains:

The court first considered if the rights to use the land were under an easement contract, which is how it was effectively used, or if it was under a fee simple, as it nominally was. In this regard the court found that the railroad had in fact procured an easement and not a fee simple. The court then deliberated on the nature of the easement.

Easements can be passed from one title holder to another. However, it generally must follow certain conditions such as:

1. Operations must continue and be unabandoned
2. The easement is for a particular purpose and must remain operable only for this same purpose.

On both of these conditions the court deliberated and made findings crucial to the case. One, they found that when the railroad dismantled the track in 1975, they had effectively abandoned
their right of easement, regardless of having not filed an abandonment order. Therefore any easement pertaining to the use of this rail track became void.\footnote{\url{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preseault_v._United_States}}

Secondly the function of the land in question was being used for a different purpose, and therefore could certainly not hold up under easement terms. Fee simple terms would have permitted this, but the court had already determined that the terms of the contract were certainly under an easement.\footnote{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preseault_v._United_States}

This shows that the RTC should have examined the validity of the purchase deeds by which Union Pacific acquired the right-of-way to be sure it was acquiring the land itself and not just an easement over the land. If that was not done, as the Exec. Director's December 8 2016 report implies, it should be done immediately, it seems to me.

Stan
Future plans should include connecting the existing rail lines between Santa Cruz and Monterey. This would provide an excellent link for the tourist as well as public transportation for more than 70 miles. In addition, the railroad would be available in the event of an emergency situation, should main highways and air transportation be limited or impossible due to a local, natural or national disaster. Further, the railroad would be connected to the main line at Watsonville for additional Amtrak service across the United States.

The Petaluma Smart cars are good examples of a comfortable mode of public transportation. Rail transportation will provide revenue whereas rail removal and conversion to a linear county park will cost millions of tax money and years to finish. Further, a 32 mile paved trail has limitations and usage during inclement weather especially winter and night time. Hard to envision bikers and hikers using the trail during these times. What about personal safety and liability issues? What about concerns of potential gang violence in remote areas?

Rail banking concept is a bad idea and not very successful. Once rails are out on a route like this, they will never return. Imagine trying to get environmental permits to re-lay a railroad in this county after a long absence.

On the other hand, adding a trail along the track from Santa Cruz via Wilder Ranch to Davenport would be a good asset for tourism, not to mention it would compliment existing Roaring Camp rail activities and focus tourism where it belongs, at the Board Walk.

Santa Cruz County, including Monterey is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. We need to be thinking out-of-box, not looking through a stove pipe when it comes to our transportation needs. Look at how long it took to add a lane to Highway 1. Let's not throw away the rail transportation asset for a 32 mile long bike and foot path.

Jim Blain
Scotts Valley, CA
831-438-2673