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PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
809 Center Street • Room 206 • Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • www.cityofsantacruz.com
Lee Butler, Director

September 14, 2021

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN EIR AND SCOPING MEETING

RE: Rail Trail Segments 8 and 9 Project

To Interested Agencies and Persons:

The City of Santa Cruz, as the lead agency, is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and hosting a public scoping meeting on the project described herein. Please respond with written comments regarding the scope and the content of the EIR as it may relate to your agency's area of statutory responsibility or your areas of concern or expertise. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project, if any is required.

The focus of this notice and the scoping meeting is specifically to gather input on potential environmental issues and project alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental review process, not the merits of the project itself or the project design. There will be future opportunities for community input on the schematic plans.

*Responses are due within 30 days of the receipt of this Notice, as provided by State law, and thus should be received no later than **Friday, October 15, 2021, 4:00 PM.*** The contact person's name and address are listed below. Please include the commenter's name, agency or organization (if applicable), phone number, and email (typed or written legibly) in your response.

City of Santa Cruz CEQA Project Webpage

www.cityofsantacruz.com/railtrail89

or

Nathan Nguyen, P.E., Project Manager

City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department,

809 Center Street, Room 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

nnguyen@cityofsantacruz.com

If emailing, to ensure receipt of your comment/question, please use the following **subject line**: "RAIL TRAIL 8/9"

1. Project Location and Description

The **Rail Trail Segments 8 and 9 Project** is a 2.2-mile bicycle and pedestrian system that extends along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) corridor, from the Beach Street/Pacific Avenue Roundabout on the west to the eastern side of 17th Avenue on the east, excluding the recently constructed San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge Improvements (**Figure 1**).

Segment 8 (0.6 mile) is comprised of a Class IV on street bicycle system and pedestrian sidewalk improvements. Segment 9 (1.6 miles) is comprised of a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail. The Project purpose is to provide an accessible bicycle/pedestrian path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the existing rail corridor, consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan.

The project is part of the larger Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network, for which a Master Plan was adopted and a programmatic EIR was certified in 2013 by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). In 2014, the RTC made minor revisions to the Master Plan and prepared an EIR addendum. The Master Plan was prepared to establish a continuous alignment, including a bicycle and pedestrian trail along the RTC-owned SCBRL, for the length of Santa Cruz County. Information from the Master Plan EIR will be used where appropriate in this EIR for Segments 8 and 9.

The EIR for Segments 8 and 9 will evaluate the proposed project, called *Rail with Trail*, as well as a *Railbank with Trail* alternative, at an equal level of detail. When an alternative is evaluated at an equal level of detail, CEQA requires that the lead agency identify a preferred alternative. The City considers the proposed project, *Rail with Trail*, the preferred alternative for purposes of environmental review.

- **Proposed Project: Rail with Trail.** The multi-use trail would be located on the inland side of the railroad tracks. For Segment 8, between the Roundabout and the existing ramp to the San Lorenzo River Trestle Trail, the Project generally includes improvements to the existing Class IV Cycle Track for bicycles and sidewalk for pedestrians that extend along Beach Street, adjacent to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk amusement park. The remaining portion of Segment 8 along the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge was constructed in 2019, is 10-feet-wide, and requires no improvements.

For Segment 9, from the east side of the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge to the east side of 17th Avenue, the trail would be 10-12 feet wide (but may be reduced to 8 feet in areas with existing constrained conditions) and would continue to be on the inland side of the tracks, with safety fencing between the trail and the tracks.

- **Alternative 1: Railbank with Trail.** The Segment 8 portion of the trail, from the Beach Street/Pacific Avenue Roundabout to across the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge, would be the same as described above for the proposed project.

For Segment 9, from the east side of the San Lorenzo Trestle Bridge to the east side of 17th Avenue, the multi-use trail would be located generally along the rail centerline, and the existing tracks and ties would be removed to enable construction of the trail. The trail width would be determined during preliminary design, with the goal of reducing significant project effects in accordance with CEQA Guidelines (Sec 15126.6).

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

2. Project Applicant

Nathan Nguyen, P.E., Project Manager
City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department,
809 Center Street, Room 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 420-5188, nnguyen@cityofsantacruz.com

3. Probable Environmental Effects of the Project.

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

4. Scoping Meeting

Pursuant to the public participation goals of CEQA, as set forth in particular in Public Resources Code section 21083.9, subdivision (a), the City will host an EIR Scoping Meeting at the date, time and location indicated below to gather additional input on the scope of the EIR analysis.

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

5:00-6:30 PM

Zoom Webinar Link: <https://rrmdesign.zoom.us/j/87554617851>

Zoom Webinar ID: 875 5461 7851

Call-in Options via Telephone: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 408 638 0968

5. Contact Person Name and Phone Number:

Nathan Nguyen, P.E., Project Manager
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Figure 1. Rail Trail Segments 8 and 9 Project Location Map

