

Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Final Environmental Impact Report

State Clearinghouse #2021110080

Volume 1: Comments and Responses on the Draft EIR



County of Santa Cruz

March 2024

Preface

This document is a project-specific environmental impact report (EIR) for the **Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project** (Project) proposed by the County of Santa Cruz (County), in coordination with the City of Capitola (City) and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). The Project is a 4.5-mile bicycle and pedestrian system proposed to extend along the RTC-owned railroad corridor from 17th Avenue on the west to State Park Drive on the east.

The County is the lead agency responsible for preparing this document in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This CEQA document is the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR or FEIR) for the Project and contains comments submitted by agencies, organizations, and individuals concerning the 2023 Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) for the Project, responses to those comments, and appropriate revisions to the Draft EIR and Appendices. In the revised Draft EIR, additions are shown with underline, and deletions are shown with ~~strikeout~~.

The Draft EIR was made available to the public and regulatory agencies for review and comment during a 60-day comment period between October 16, 2023, and December 15, 2023.

Section 15088 of the Guidelines implementing CEQA require that written responses be prepared for all significant environmental issues raised in written comments received on a Draft EIR during the public review period. Per CEQA Guidelines, Section 15132, the Final EIR shall consist of the following:

1. The Draft EIR or a revision of that draft
2. Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in a summary
3. A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR
4. The response of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process
5. Any other information added by the Lead Agency

This Final EIR has been prepared in compliance with the CEQA Guidelines and includes the following volumes (bound separately). This is Volume 1.

- Volume 1: Comments and Responses on the Draft EIR
- Volume 2: Draft EIR, October 2023 (Revised March 2024)
 - Executive Summary
 - Chapter 1. Introduction
 - Chapter 2. Project Description
 - Chapter 3. Environmental Impact Analysis
 - Chapter 4. Other CEQA-Required Sections
 - Chapter 5. Project Alternatives
 - Chapter 6. List of Preparers and References

Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11

- Volume 3: Draft EIR Appendices, October 2023 (Revised March 2024)

Appendix A. Project Design Plans

- A.1. Ultimate Trail Configuration
- A.2. Optional Interim Trail
- A.3. Design Option A: Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle
- A.4. Design Option B: Inland Side Grove to Coronado
- A.5. Tree Removal for Ultimate Trail Configuration
- A.6. Tree Removal for Optional Interim Trail
- A.7. Tree Quantity and Evaluation Summaries
- A.8. Tree Inventory for Ultimate Trail and Optional Interim Trail

Appendix B. NOP and Scoping Comments

Appendix C. Initial Study

Appendix D. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Appendix E. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Modeling Assumptions

Appendix F. Biological Resources

- F.1. Special-Status Plants and Wildlife Species with Potential to Occur
- F.2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Official Species List
- F.3. Observed Plant Species
- F.4. Avian Species Detected

Appendix G. Traffic Technical Memorandum

Comments and Responses on the Draft EIR

This volume includes a list of the agencies, organizations, and individuals who commented on the 2023 Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) prepared for the **Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project** (Project); the actual comments; and the responses to the comments in accordance with *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, Section 15088.

As the CEQA lead agency, the County of Santa Cruz (County), in coordination with the City of Capitola (City) and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), circulated the Draft EIR for a 60-day comment period that started on October 16, 2023, and ended on December 15, 2023. The County also held a hybrid (in-person and Zoom) public meeting on November 16, 2023, and accepted verbal comments, which were transcribed. All the comments received in writing and via email and verbally transcribed are referenced as *comment letters* or *commenters*.

The commenters are identified and numbered in **Table 1**, and the page number where the comment letter can be found is identified in the last column. The individual comments or issues raised by each commenter have been numbered in the right margin of the comment letter.

The responses immediately follow each comment letter. Each response begins with a brief summary of the comment, and then responds to the comment and indicates whether any revisions to the Draft EIR have been made.

Many comments are similar or address the same issue. For these comments, *master responses* have been developed. These are presented first, and when appropriate, responses to individual comments reference the master response.

Table 1 List of Commenters and Location of Comment Letters and Responses

Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
Public Agencies				
1	Erin Chappell, Regional Manager Bay Delta Region	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	12-13-23	51
2	Eyitejumade “Ade” Sogbesan, Utilities Engineer	California Public Utilities Commission	12-15-23	59
3	Irene Miranda, Air Quality Planner I	Monterey Bay Air Resources District	12-15-23	65
4	Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director	City of Capitola	11-16-23	69
Organizations				
5	Matt Farrell, Board Chair	Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail Trail	12-15-23	74
6	Charles Wilcox, Managing Member Kelly Dillon, Chair	Marianne’s Ice Cream, LLC Seacliff Business Partners	12-15-23	83
7	George Turk, President	Millenium Housing	12-13-23	87
8	Larry Bowler, President	Railroad Education and Preservation Society	11-14-23	89

Table 1 List of Commenters and Location of Comment Letters and Responses

Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
9	Melani Clark, CEO	Roaring Camp Railroads	12-13-23	92
10	Pauline Seales	Santa Cruz Climate Action Network	11-14-23	96
11	Emily Chorba, President	Seacliff Improvement Association	12-15-23	98
12	David Schonbrunn, President	Train Riders Association of California	11-14-23	101
Individuals				
13	Rosalee Schelstraete	—	10-16-23	103
14	E. Ariel Young	—	10-17-23	105
15	Ann Stadler	—	10-18-23	107
16	Daniel Spero	—	10-18-23	109
17	David Hoyle	—	10-18-23	111
18	Dusten Dennis	—	10-18-23	113
19	Jean Brocklebank	—	10-18-23	115
20	Mari Jo Pezzi	—	10-18-23	117
21	Terry Swinggi	—	10-18-23	119
22	David Wright	—	10-19-23	121
23	Erik Kayhart	—	10-19-23	123
24	Wayne Burnham	—	10-19-23	125
25	Ellen Martinez	—	10-24-23	127
26	Karl Knopf	—	10-26-23	129
27	Toby Fernie	—	10-27-23	131
28	John Danforth	—	10-28-23	136
29	Julie Lambert	—	10-28-23	139
30	Kevin Maguire	—	10-28-23	143
31	David Martin	—	10-30-23	147
32	Jean Brocklebank	—	10-31-23	149
33	Jonathan Evans	—	11-3-23	151
34	Kurt Rosenberger	—	11-3-23	153
35	M. McCarthy	—	11-3-23	156
36	Sara Allshouse	—	11-4-23	158
37	Jamilah Vittor	—	11-5-23	160
38	Bob Skinner	—	11-6-23	162
39	Brooke Elliott	—	11-6-23	164
40	Greg Goodere	—	11-6-23	166
41	David Date	—	11-6-23	169
42	Dwayne Dawson	—	11-6-23	171
43	Logan Cardoza	—	11-6-23	173
44	Ernesto Anguiano	—	11-7-23	175

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45	Carey Pico	—	11-8-23	177
46	Iwalani Faulkner	—	11-8-23	179
47	Martha Graham-Waldon	—	11-8-23	181
48	Neil Waldhauer	—	11-9-23	183
49	Peggy Kenny	—	11-9-23	185
50	Andrew Cumming	—	11-10-23 11-13-23	188
51	Bob Fifield	—	11-12-23	191
52	Brian Corser	—	11-12-23	193
53	Debbie Bulger	—	11-12-23	195
54	Russell Weisz	—	11-12-23	197
55	Kaki Rusmore	—	11-13-23	199
56	Richard Underwood	—	11-13-23	202
57	Tina Andreatta	—	11-13-23	205
58	Amy Meza	—	11-14-23	207
59	Andrew Hurchalla	—	11-14-23	209
60	AstroQuake	—	11-14-23	211
61	Bob Morgan	—	11-14-23	213
62	Bradley Burkhart	—	11-14-23	215
63	Carol Robertson	—	11-14-23	217
64	Celia Hursey	—	11-14-23	219
65	Curt Coleman	—	11-14-23	221
66	Cynthia Dzendzel	—	11-14-23	223
67	Dan Dion	—	11-14-23	225
68	David Pais	—	11-14-23	227
69	Dean Silvers	—	11-14-23	229
70	Deborah Secrest and Dean Price	—	11-14-23	231
71	Denise Ryan	—	11-14-23	233
72	Dianne Dryer	—	11-14-23	235
73	Don Lauritson	—	11-14-23	237
74	Donna Thomas	—	11-14-23	239
75	Dorelle Rawlings	—	11-14-23	241
76	Ellen Sevy	—	11-14-23	243
77	Eva Brunner	—	11-14-23	245
78	Frank Rimicci Jr.	—	11-14-23	247
79	Greg Graalfs	—	11-14-23	249
80	Jack Hunt	—	11-14-23	251
81	Jared Boggs	—	11-14-23	253
82	Jessica Evans	—	11-14-23	255

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
83	Joe Griffin	—	11-14-23	257
84	Joe Hall	—	11-14-23	259
85	Joel Isaacson	—	11-14-23	261
86	Joel Steinberg	—	11-14-23	263
87	John Ryan	—	11-14-23	265
88	John Matthews	—	11-14-23	267
89	Joe Martinez	—	11-14-23	269
90	Karl Forest	—	11-14-23	271
91	Kate Clark	—	11-14-23	273
92	Kenee Houser	—	11-14-23	275
93	Kristin Hart	—	11-14-23	277
94	Laura Jones	—	11-14-23	280
95	Lauren Casterson and Matthew Smith	—	11-14-23	284
96	Linda Neher	—	11-14-23	286
97	Lindsay Knights	—	11-14-23	288
98	Lisa Hochstein	—	11-14-23	290
99	Lisa Rose	—	11-14-23	292
100	Loren Kallevig	—	11-14-23	294
101	Loren White and Andrea Nance	—	11-14-23	296
102	Mark Ripley	—	11-14-23	298
103	Martha Graham-Waldon	—	11-14-23	300
104	Mary Alsip	—	11-14-23	302
105	Mary Anne Kramer-Urner	—	11-14-23	304
106	Mike Borg	—	11-14-23	306
107	Myles Corcoran	—	11-14-23	308
108	Patricia McVeigh	—	11-14-23	310
109	Pete Kennedy	—	11-14-23	312
110	Richard Stover	—	11-14-23	314
111	Roland Saher	—	11-14-23	316
112	Rosemary Kendall	—	11-14-23	318
113	Ross Clark	—	11-14-23	320
114	Kristen Raugust	—	11-14-23	322
115	Stephen Dudley	—	11-14-23	324
116	Tom Langan	—	11-14-23	326
117	William Cummings	—	11-14-23	328
118	Paula Bradley	—	11-14-23 12-15-23	332
119	Albi Romero	—	11-15-23	336
120	Alexis Konevich and Marc Bodmer	—	11-15-23	338

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
121	Allison Garcia	—	11-15-23	340
122	Donna Von Joo-Tornell	—	11-15-23	342
123	Douglas M. Thomson Sr.	—	11-15-23	345
124	dwde115@skyhighway.com	—	11-15-23	347
125	Ed Dickie	—	11-15-23	349
126	Elizabeth Lipton	—	11-15-23	351
127	Eve Roberson	—	11-15-23	353
128	Geri Lieby	—	11-15-23	355
129	Gretchen Riley O’Hearn	—	11-15-23	357
130	Jack McCourt	—	11-15-23	359
131	Jeffrey Smedberg	—	11-15-23	361
132	Jim Hudkins	—	11-15-23	363
133	John Carothers	—	11-15-23	365
134	Jon Kersey	—	11-15-23	367
135	Katherine McCamant	—	11-15-23	369
136	Lilinoe Manischalchi	—	11-15-23	371
137	Linda Garfield	—	11-15-23	373
138	Maria Gitin	—	11-15-23	375
139	Mark Johannessen	—	11-15-23	377
140	Marq Lipton	—	11-15-23	380
141	Maryjane Slade	—	11-15-23	382
142	Sarah Ringler	—	11-15-23	384
143	Steve Lustgarden and Susan Kauffman	—	11-15-23	386
144	Teresa Green	—	11-15-23	388
145	Teri Wiss	—	11-15-23	390
146	Terry Dietz	—	11-15-23	392
147	Val Cole	—	11-15-23	394
148	Wendy King	—	11-15-23	396
149	Kim G.	—	11-15-23 11-17-23	399
150	Casey Carlson	—	11-16-23	403
151	David Lieby	—	11-16-23	405
152	Deborah Christie	—	11-16-23	407
153	Eduardo Izquierdo	—	11-16-23	409
154	Gene Wood	—	11-16-23	413
155	Gloria Wells	—	11-16-23	415
156	Henry Hooker	—	11-16-23	417
157	James Cohen	—	11-16-23	419
158	Catherine O’Kelly	—	11-16-23	421

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159	Joyce Banzhaf	—	11-16-23	423
160	Leslie Nielsen	—	11-16-23	425
161	Molly Ording	—	11-16-23	427
162	Phillip Rupp	—	11-16-23	429
163	Sarah Church	—	11-16-23	431
164	Scott Roseman	—	11-16-23	433
165	Susan Martinez and Fred Geiger	—	11-16-23	435
166	Theo Kell	—	11-16-23	437
167	Vibha Akkaraju	—	11-16-23	439
168	Benjamin Babcock	—	11-17-23	441
169	Francesca Graziano	—	11-17-23	443
170	Frank Anderson	—	11-17-23	445
171	Gail Page	—	11-17-23	447
172	John Caletti	—	11-17-23 11-18-23	450
173	Eugene Tsuji	—	11-18-23	452
174	John Danforth	—	11-18-23	459
175	Felix Vayssiers	—	11-19-23	463
176	Jeffrey Whalen	—	11-19-23	465
177	Katherine Harasz	—	11-19-23	467
178	Ann Simonton	—	11-20-23	470
179	Cory Olson	—	11-20-23	472
180	Nancy Schultz	—	11-20-23	474
181	Ge Wood	—	11-20-23 11-29-23	477
182	Delphine Foo-Matkin	—	11-21-23	479
183	Michael Matkin	—	11-21-23	481
184	Terre Thomas	—	11-21-23	484
185	Bob Bartle	—	11-22-23	492
186	Darla Reiner	—	11-23-23 11-29-23	494
187	Curt and Marian Olin	—	11-24-23	496
188	Nina Donna	—	11-26-23	498
189	John Coha	—	11-27-23	500
190	Santhire V Menon	—	11-27-23	503
191	Heidy and Peter Kellison	—	11-28-23	506
192	Margaret Jade Wilson	—	11-29-23	510
193	Andrew Hall	—	11-30-23	512
194	Bob Caletti	—	11-30-23	514
195	Cynthia Dzendzel	—	11-30-23	516

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
196	Douglass Aumack	—	11-30-23	518
197	Jacqueline Long	—	11-30-23	520
198	Jennifer Young	—	11-30-23	522
199	Joan	—	11-30-23	524
200	John Biddick	—	11-30-23	526
201	Leslie Nielsen	—	11-30-23	528
202	Matthieu Hugues-Nuger	—	11-30-23	530
203	Mickey and Molly Ording	—	11-30-23	532
204	Richard Mick	—	11-30-23	534
205	Ron Nance	—	11-30-23	536
206	Bob Bartle	—	12-1-23	538
207	Mark Ripley	—	12-1-23	540
208	Christy Fairbairn	—	12-2-23	542
209	James Weller	—	12-2-23	544
210	Trician Comings	—	12-2-23	546
211	Mackenzie Cameron	—	12-3-23	548
212	Jeff Whalen	—	12-4-23	550
213	Meghan Arnold	—	12-4-23	552
214	Hil Hamm	—	12-5-23	554
215	Lauren Dubay	—	12-5-23	557
216	Nita Hertel	—	12-5-23	559
217	Suzan Howard	—	12-5-23 12-6-23	562
218	Sarah Ringler	—	12-7-23	564
219	Don Vollrath	—	12-8-23	566
220	Erin Wood	—	12-8-23	568
221	Jan McGirk	—	12-8-23	570
222	Jean Mahoney	—	12-8-23	572
223	Jill Corsiglia	—	12-8-23	574
224	Barry Scott	—	12-10-23	578
225	Diane Emigh	—	12-10-23	583
226	Joan Speckert	—	12-10-23	585
227	Anna Layher	—	12-11-23	587
228	Cameron Corry	—	12-11-23	589
229	Christine Miguel	—	12-11-23	591
230	Deborah Delaney	—	12-11-23	593
231	Denis Delaney	—	12-11-23	595
232	Diane Marvin-Koenig	—	12-11-23	597
233	Ed Williams	—	12-11-23	599

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
234	Edwin Pitts	—	12-11-23	601
235	George Wilson	—	12-11-23	603
236	Gustavo Castets	—	12-11-23	605
237	Jennifer Brown	—	12-11-23	607
238	Ken Sheldon	—	12-11-23	609
239	Marion A. Hottel	—	12-11-23	611
240	Nancy Delaney	—	12-11-23	613
241	Sarah Adams	—	12-11-23	615
242	Sean Abbey	—	12-11-23	617
243	Steve Gardner	—	12-11-23	619
244	Sue Haid	—	12-11-23	621
245	Tom Haid	—	12-11-23	623
246	Valerie Jensen Maass	—	12-11-23	625
247	Gloria Wenger	—	12-12-23	627
248	Richard Underwood	—	12-12-23	631
249	Sue Ginsburg Kaufmann	—	12-12-23	635
250	Jean Brocklebank	—	12-12-23 12-15-23	639
251	Barbara Garza-Brickley	—	12-13-23	642
252	Carey Pico	—	12-13-23	646
253	Cecelia Roddy	—	12-13-23	649
254	Duncan Coppedge	—	12-13-23	651
255	Fern Selzer	—	12-13-23	653
256	futurobuildnow@gmail.com	—	12-13-23	655
257	Gary Kehoe	—	12-13-23	658
258	holt.ibconsulting@gmail.com	—	12-13-23	660
259	Howie Schneider	—	12-13-23	662
260	John and Mary Lyn Villaume	—	12-13-23	664
261	Kaki Rusmore	—	12-13-23	666
262	Magdaleno Ojeda and Rocio Perez	—	12-13-23	668
263	Nancy Pawlowski	—	12-13-23	670
264	Randa Johnson	—	12-13-23	672
265	Robert Stephens	—	12-13-23	675
266	Teri Coppedge	—	12-13-23	679
267	Ben Gregg	—	12-14-23	682
268	Debbie Marlow	—	12-14-23	684
269	Diane Emigh	—	12-14-23	687
270	Don Vollrath	—	12-14-23	689
271	Eva Holt-Rusmore	—	12-14-23	691

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
272	Linda Wilshusen	—	12-14-23	693
273	Lynnwood Leroy Coppedge	—	12-14-23	695
274	Michael Lewis and Jean Brocklebank	—	12-14-23	699
275	Pedro and Martha Fregoso	—	12-14-23	705
276	Ralph Wood	—	12-14-23	710
277	Richard James	—	12-14-23	717
278	Ron Burke	—	12-14-23	722
279	Rory Anne Walsh	—	12-14-23	724
280	Sean Ages	—	12-14-23	727
281	Steve and Ann Cogliati	—	12-14-23	730
282	Aaron Johnson	—	12-15-23	732
283	Cami Corvin	—	12-15-23	734
284	Johanna Lighthill	—	12-15-23	742
285	Kim	—	12-15-23	749
286	Maria Reimuller	—	12-15-23	751
287	Michael Lewis	—	12-15-23	755
288	Nadene Thorne	—	12-15-23	760
289	Peter Walz	—	12-15-23	764
290	Phil and Marilyn Rockey	—	12-15-23	766
291	Samira Totah	—	12-15-23	768
292	Kevin Brickley	—	12-16-23	770
293	John Danforth	—	11-16-23	793
294	Judy Gettelson	—	11-16-23	794
295	Perry Scott	—	11-16-23	795
296	Saladin Sale	—	11-16-23	796
297	Stacy Croft	—	11-16-23	797
298	Brian Peoples	—	11-16-23	798
299	Brendan Bartle	—	11-16-23	799
300	Don Redman	—	11-16-23	800
301	Katharine Parker	—	11-16-23	801
302	Tina Andreatta	—	11-16-23	802
303	Rosemary Sarka	Roaring Camp	11-16-23	803
304	Brianna Burr	—	11-16-23	804
305	Sarah Church	—	11-16-23	806
306	Matt Farrell	—	11-16-23	807
307	Brian Sarnataro	—	11-16-23	808
308	Debra Young	—	11-16-23	810
309	Katie Kennedy	—	11-16-23	811
310	Brian Peoples	—	11-16-23	812

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Letter No.	Commenter	Affiliation	Date	Page No.
311	Terry Wood	—	11-16-23	813
312	Michael Lewis and Jean Brocklebank	—	11-16-23	814
313	Ben Vernazza	—	11-16-23	815
314	Terry Thomas	—	11-16-23	816
315	Brad Clausen	—	11-16-23	817
316	David Casterson	—	11-16-23	818
317	Deborah Christie	—	11-16-23	819
318	Diane Dreier	—	11-16-23	820
319	Charlie Wilcox King	—	11-16-23	821
320	Sally Arnold	—	11-16-23	823
321	Becky Steinbruner	—	11-16-23	824

Master Responses

Many comments are similar or concern the same issue, including the following:

- A. Tree Removal and Mitigation
- B. Measure D Clarification
- C. Right-of-Way Encroachments
- D. Capitola Trestle and Measure L Clarification
- E. Rail Operation and Railbanking
- F. Capitola Village Safety and Accessibility Concerns
- G. Privacy, Noise, and Security Concerns
- H. Width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Alternatives Analysis
- I. Requirement to Include All 3 Parts of Optional Interim Trail

For these comments, master responses have been developed. When appropriate, responses to individual comments reference the master response. The individual comments being addressed by the master response are noted in parentheses in the comment summary, but the master response may also address other individual comments not noted in parentheses.

Master Response A: Tree Removal and Mitigation

Several commenters expressed concern about tree removal and adverse effects on adjacent residents; aesthetics (loss of shade, scenery); biological resources (coast live oaks, wildlife); and increased wind, heat, and noise (1.1, 5.4, 10.2, 11.1, 29.1, 30.8, 35.1, 35.2, 36.2, 37.1, 38.1, 44.2, 50.2, 56.3, 80.2, 149.2, 154.1, 174.8, 177.2, 177.5, 180.1, 181.1, 184.6, 184.7, 184.14, 184.18, 189.1, 217.1, 232.1, 253.1, 265.6, 270.2, 272.2, 274.3, 277.6, 280.3, 284.2, 307.5, 308.1, 320.2). Several commenters suggest that a 12-foot-wide trail would result in less tree removal than the 16-foot-wide Ultimate Trail Configuration (184.5, 227.1, 284.11, 314.1). Some commenters are concerned about carbon sequestration and conflicts with the County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) (28.1, 36.2, 215.2, 274.3). Other commenters want expanded mitigation, on-site and off-site mitigation, advanced mitigation, replacement trees on publicly owned land at a minimum 4:1 ratio, and/or enhanced mitigation (1.1, 10.2, 44.2, 118.8, 248.2, 274.6). Lastly, one commenter requests a public meeting to discuss potential impact mitigation strategies (191.6).

Tree removal, including the numbers, types, and locations of trees that will be removed are presented in Biological Resources Section 3.3.4, *Project Impact Analysis*, Impact BIO-10, summarized in Tables 3.3-2, 3.3-8, 3.3-11, and 3.3-12 and depicted on Figures 3.3-1, 3.3-1a–h, 3.3-2, 3.3-2a–h, 3.3-5, and 3.3-5a–v. The tabular full tree inventory is presented in Appendices A.5 through A.8. The tables listed above also quantify impacts to native and non-native trees separately, for information purposes.

The comments and concerns regarding tree loss were noted and forwarded to Project decision makers for consideration.

Tree Removal Required to Meet Design Requirements. The tree removals are determined by the physical space needed to construct the trail infrastructure and maintain required offsets, grading extents for excavation and/or fill, drainage ditches, retaining walls, and similar features.

As stated in the approved Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network Master Plan, a multi-use paved path is a derivative of the Caltrans-defined Class I bike path. Unless otherwise noted, the terms “trail” and “path” in these responses and document are used synonymously to refer to paved bike/pedestrian multi-use facility defined by Caltrans as a “Class I Bikeway” (Bike Path) in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000, *Bicycle Transportation Design*.¹ A Class I bike path provides bicycle travel on a paved right-of-way, completely separated from any street or highway. A multi-use paved path permits a variety of users, in addition to bicyclists, including walkers, joggers, wheelchair users, and non-motorized scooter users. Per the MBSST, typical design may include paved surface of 8 to 12 feet wide or wider if right-of-way exists and/or high use is anticipated. Per Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000, the minimum paved width of travel way for a two-way bike path shall be 8 feet. Additionally, a minimum 2-foot-wide shoulder, composed of the same pavement material as the bike path or all-weather surface material that is free of vegetation, shall be provided adjacent to the traveled way of the bike path when not on a structure. Per Caltrans, the clear width of a bicycle path on structures between railings shall be not less than 10 feet, and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials allows the clear width of a bicycle path on structures to be not less than 8 feet. The Project meets or exceeds the minimum width requirements.

As stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials*, the minimum width of the majority of the Ultimate Trail Configuration is 12 feet, including paved shoulders; however, the trail width is reduced at stream crossings and areas with constrained right-of-way (ROW) within the rail corridor at the following locations:

- *10 to 12 feet – For the 200 feet approaching the eastern side of 17th Avenue (sheet CP-1.01)*
- *10 feet – For the 80 feet approaching the western side of 30th Avenue and 90 feet approaching the eastern side of 30th Avenue (sheet CP-1.07)*
- *10 to 11 feet – For the 50 feet approaching the western side of 38th Avenue and 80 feet approaching the eastern side of 38th Avenue (sheet CP-1.10)*
- *11 to 12 feet – For the section between 41st Avenue and 47th Avenue near Jade Street Park Jade (sheets CP-1.11 through CP-1.14)*
- *10 8 to 12 feet – For the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue (sheet CP-1.17)*
- *10 to 12 feet – For 425 feet between Stream 633 and Poplar Street starting approximately 450 feet east of Stream 633 (CP-1.35)*

Please note the above typographical error indicating 8 feet (approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue) has been corrected to 10 feet, as shown above and in Section 2.4.1. At no location along the formal paved trail is the width less than 10 feet. However, at some locations where the formal trail ends with a stop sign prior to a roadway crossing (such as the eastern approach to Monterey Avenue), the transition area where bicyclists dismount and walk across the street may be less than 10 feet.

The easement ranges from 30 feet to over 100 feet within Segments 10 and 11. The CPUC allows the trail to be as close as 8.5 feet minimum in constrained areas of tangent track and 9.5 feet minimum for curved track. Trail placement is based on both the minimum offsets from centerline of rail and the minimum trail widths. Based on topography, retaining walls, drainage ditches, and similar

¹ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000, *Bicycle Transportation Design*. <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/design/documents/chp1000-a11y.pdf>. Accessed February 2024.

features are required in several areas and impact adjacent tree roots. Minimum space for trail footprint and associated retaining walls coupled with the rail offsets necessitates tree removal.

Portions of the initial trail layout were along the edge of the ROW to provide the maximum offset from the existing rail. The trail design was refined to minimize tree removals, as stated in DEIR Section 3.3 (page 3.3-79):

The Ultimate Trail Configuration has been designed to minimize encroachment into sensitive habitat to the extent feasible, while still complying with California Public Utilities Commission requirements for trails along a rail corridor and Class 1 trail requirements for an Americans with Disabilities Act multipurpose trail. For example, the trail is located on a viaduct (instead of at grade with retaining walls) in several locations, including near monarch roost habitat along Escalona Gulch and New Brighton Creek, as well as between Borregas Creek and Stream 633 in Aptos. Moreover, the trail will use a clear span bridge over Rodeo Gulch.

Impacts on Biological Resources. As described in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, the Proposed Project (Ultimate Trail Configuration) would result in a loss of 803 (42%) of trees, including 583 City *Protected* and County *Significant* Trees, of which 400 are native species (see DEIR Table 3.3-11). Project stakeholders (including the County, City of Capitola, and RTC) will be responsible for implementing, and determining funding for, tree replacement mitigation in their respective jurisdictions and coordinating with other relevant agencies and private property owners as necessary. While the County acknowledges the need for replacement plantings for all removed trees in their jurisdiction, the precise location, species composition, and replacement ratio for impacted trees would be determined during Project permitting in coordination with the appropriate regulatory agencies,² including City and County Planning officials, and would be included in the final Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (MMP) for the Project. Refer to Mitigation Measure BIO-7b in Section 3.3 for a detailed description of the MMP. While the EIR calls for all trees to be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio, the EIR team expects that larger native trees (e.g., coast live oak), including those associated with sensitive habitat, would require in-kind replacement (i.e., same species) at a higher replacement ratio than smaller, non-native ornamental species (e.g., privet, acacia).

Due to the extensive replacement plantings required for mitigation, the majority of replacement plantings would likely occur off site in relatively close proximity to the rail corridor (i.e., between Hwy 1 and the Monterey Bay) and aggregated, where feasible, to form meaningful habitat assemblages for wildlife. The plantings would occur on suitable public and private properties that that would be identified during Project permitting and included in the MMP for the Project (See Mitigation Measure BIO-7b). While the majority of mitigation would aggregate plantings to create viable wildlife habitat and movement corridors as well as shade, individual or small groupings of trees could be located on public and private properties adjacent to the rail corridor, where property owners agree to the plantings. Additionally, mitigation in the form of native streetscape plantings will improve neighborhood aesthetics, enhance the urban forest, and sequester carbon and other environmental contaminants.

² As stated in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, mitigation area locations and final replacement ratios shall be determined in consultation with the relevant agencies as follows: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Coastal Commission (CCC), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), County of Santa Cruz, and City of Capitola. The Draft MMP shall be submitted to USFWS, CDFW, CCC, California State Parks, County, and City for review prior to formal adoption.

Table 3.3-11 Tree Removal Required for Construction and Operation of the Proposed Project, including native trees, Protected and Significant trees, and native Protected and Significant trees.

Tree Type	Existing Trees (>4" DBH) Total	Ultimate Trail (Trail next to Rail Line)		Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) ^a					
		Number	Percent ^f	Part 1		Part 3		Parts 1 + 3	
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Trees ^b	1883	803	42%	288	15%	669	36%	957	51%
Native Trees ^c	817	400	49%	121	15%	343	42%	464	57%
Protected and Significant Trees ^d	1453	584	40%	207	14%	501	34%	708	49%
Native Protected and Significant Trees ^e	598	280	47%	83	14%	250	42%	333	56%

^a Part 1 is implementation of the Interim Trail, which includes removal of the rail track and ties and construction of the Interim Trail on the rail bed. Part 2 is demolition of the Interim Trail and rebuilding of the rail line. Part 3 is construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, which would be the same as described for the *Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail next to Rail Line)* and Optional Interim Trail.

^b Total trees identified by the arborist in the Project corridor.

^c Native trees are those that occur naturally without being introduced directly or indirectly by humans.

^d City of Capitola Protected Trees and County of Santa Cruz Significant Trees are defined in Section 3.3-2. In general, Protected trees within the City limits are greater than 6 inches in diameter and County Significant Trees are greater than 20 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet above grade or located within a County sensitive habitat as defined by County Code, Chapter 16.34.

^e Native Protected and Significant trees are both naturalized and of sufficient size to be regulated by the City Community Tree Protection and Management Ordinance or County Significant Tree Ordinance.

^f The percent of trees removed are expressed for each tree type category (e.g., 400 native trees removed out of 817 native trees within the rail corridor equates to 49% of native trees removed for the Project).

The EIR team also recognizes that mitigation plantings would likely include smaller saplings or young trees, and the time to maturity varies by species. For example, coast live oak trees develop a mature canopy to provide meaningful wildlife and bird nesting habitat, as well as shade, within 20 years,³ while full maturity is not reached for approximately 60–80 years.⁴ Willows can be planted in mesic (wet) areas from cuttings and will mature in less than 5 years with adequate hydrology. Although mitigation plantings may not occur in advance of project implementation, mitigation plantings shall commence within one year of tree removal activities, or prior to tree removal when adequate funding and mitigation sites are identified.

For tree removals associated with a sensitive habitat type (i.e., oak woodland and forest, riparian, monarch roost site), Mitigation Measure BIO-7b calls for mitigation for impacts on sensitive habitats (including coast live oak woodland and forest and known and potential monarch roost habitat) at a minimum of no-net loss. The specific ratio for replacement will be determined in coordination with the County, City, and the resource agencies depending on the type of resource impacted and the type of mitigation proposed, as described in the following excerpt from Mitigation Measure BIO-7b (4th bullet) in the DEIR:

- *Such compensatory mitigation must occur as close to impacted areas as feasible and result in no net loss (minimum 1:1 replacement ratio) of sensitive habitat types, or their functions and values. In the Coastal Zone, mitigation ratios for ESHA typically start at 3:1 (creation/substantial*

³ California Native Plant Society (CNPS). 2024. "Coast Live Oak." Calscape. [https://calscape.org/Quercus-agrifolia-\(Coast-Live-Oak\)](https://calscape.org/Quercus-agrifolia-(Coast-Live-Oak)). Accessed February 2024.

⁴ Griffin, J.R. 1977. Oak Woodland. Pages 382–415 in: M.G. Barbour and J. Majors (eds.), *Terrestrial Vegetation of California*. Wiley, New York.

restoration: impact). This ratio is doubled for enhancement (6:1) and tripled for preservation (9:1); however, a minimum of 1:1 must include creation of in-kind ESHA habitat for any mitigation strategy.

Mitigation for tree removal associated with the Project would result in a minimum of no-net-loss of trees, as described in the following excerpt from Impact BIO-10 (under *Operation*) in the DEIR:

- *Due the importance for both habitat, visual screening from the urban landscape, and wind attenuation, all trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio. All City of Capitola Protected trees, County Significant Trees, and native trees will be replaced “in kind” at a location and ratio to be determined by the City Planning Department, County Environmental Coordinator, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. The City of Capitola typically requires 2:1 replacement to ensure post-removal canopy coverage of at least 15 percent. However, if post-removal tree canopy exceeds 30 percent, replacement plantings are not required.*

This language above is incorporated into Mitigation Measure BIO-7b as a stand-alone bullet, as follows:

- *All County Significant trees, Capitola Protected trees, and native trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio (“in kind” for native trees) at a location and ratio to be determined by the County Environmental Coordinator, City Community Development Department, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. Wherever feasible, tree replacement plantings will be situated to promote ecosystems services by replacing displaced habitat functions and values and/or enhancing remaining habitat. Where tree replacement plantings exceed a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio, additional plantings may be situated away from the Project area to enhance the urban streetscape with the design goals of beautifying neighborhoods (especially those with a disproportionate paucity of trees), reducing the urban heat island, and improving carbon sequestration. Urban streetscape features such as public or private greenbelts, medians, parking strips, and/or other similar available spaces with sufficient space may be used for replacement tree planting. Urban streetscape species composition may include coast redwood, coast live oak, tanoak, and buckeye in upland areas and white alder, box elder, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, and western sycamore in riparian habitats.*

Locations for all mitigation activities including tree replacement plantings will be determined as described in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b:

- *Project stakeholders including the County, City of Capitola, and RTC shall identify undeveloped public and private properties as potential mitigation areas. Acquisition could include direct purchase or placement of conservation easements on portions of parcels that are in close proximity to the impacted areas, that share similar ecological value with the impacted areas, that are otherwise constrained from development due to existing conditions (such as County aquatic and riparian setbacks, ESHA, steep slopes, etc.) and currently do not but could support native sensitive habitats (habitat creation) or would benefit from restoration, enhancement, or preservation, as needed to fulfill mitigation acreage and proximity requirements.*

Private properties are identified generally in the DEIR as potential sites for mitigation, and these may include properties adjacent to the rail corridor, to facilitate shading, if the City, the County, and private property owners agree to the proposed mitigation. Additional private parcels have been identified adjoining natural open space corridors including Rodeo Gulch Creek where further development is constrained by County of Santa Cruz sensitive habitat and riparian corridor setback requirements, but habitat restoration and tree planting would be permitted. Outreach to owners of suitable private properties is forthcoming.

Presently, there is limited available space within the Project area and RTC right-of-way (ROW) for on-site mitigation. The majority of the rail corridor is too narrow to restore mature trees without encroaching on the trail or rail line. However, limited tree replacement plantings (in combination with enhancement and/or restoration of oak savannah, native grassland, and ecotones⁵) could occur on-site where there is adequate space immediately adjacent to the trail. These locations may include where the trail crosses Rodeo Gulch, extends along Jade Street Park and along New Brighton State Beach, including within the Porter-Sesnon open space element of New Brighton State Beach. The possible on-site locations have been added to Mitigation Measure BIO-7b in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*.

All replacement tree plantings in open space areas and parklands along the rail corridor will be limited to native species that could occupy these areas naturally. For example, while coast redwood is common in Santa Cruz County, this species is not naturalized to the coastal terrace of New Brighton State Park; therefore, coast redwood will not be recommended for replacement plantings at this location.

In addition, on-site mitigation is proposed at Escalona Gulch, through the enhancement of monarch roost habitat as described in the discussion for Impact BIO-1b of the DEIR, as follows:

As a discrete component of Mitigation Measure BIO-7b [described under Impact BIO-7 (Sensitive Habitats)], the County of Santa Cruz shall work with property owners, including CDFW (Escalona Gulch) and State Parks (New Brighton State Beach and Borregas Creek) to develop a Monarch Roost Site Enhancement Plan for monarch roost sites near the rail corridor. Enhancement may include but is not limited to:

- *Protecting and maintaining the eucalyptus grove to support monarch roosting through maintenance of roost trees and wind buffer trees;*
- *Topping, thinning, and/or limbing of the grove, as needed, to allow sun penetration while preserving wind buffers and variable roost site conditions within the grove (i.e., sun, shade, and insulation from heat and cold);*
- *Planting of saplings [to develop wind buffers and promote growth of future roost trees (avoid senescence⁶)]; and*
- *Cultivating fall- and winter-blooming nectar plants.*

Implementation of this compensatory mitigation would be arranged through payment of in-lieu fees to the implementing body (i.e., CDFW or State Parks or mitigation contractor) or similar fiscal arrangement to be developed for the purposes of the Project.

Loss of Shade and Increased Winds and Heat. It is acknowledged that tree removal would result in localized loss of shade and increased wind and heat exposure. Loss of shade and changes in wind patterns and temperature were not analyzed in the DEIR and typically are not considered under CEQA unless Project impacts have the potential to result in a significant impact on the environment (e.g., the creation of a new wind tunnel through placement of tall building across from each other in an urban setting, or the loss of shade results in a significant impact to an environmental resource such as aesthetics or biology). Impacts associated with tree removal are not anticipated to result in the creation of a new wind tunnel. The potential changes on localized temperatures cannot be

⁵ A transitional area between to natural vegetation communities/habitat types such as Coast live oak forest and grassland. An ecotone has some of the characteristics of each bordering community and often supports species not found singularly in the overlapping communities.

⁶ “Senescence” is the age-related declines in woody plant communities that may be affected by physiological changes (e.g. reduced stem sap flow) in individual trees as well as the growing environment (e.g. drought) and interactions between these factors.

readily determined, would be speculative, and would vary by tree type, density, location, maturity, and other factors; and the extent of the area affected by tree cover also varies.⁷

The DEIR addresses tree removal under both aesthetics and biological resources; however, the loss of shade to any one home is not considered a significant impact on the environment (*Topanga Beach Renters Assn. v. Department of General Services* (1976) 58 Cal.App.3d 188, 195: “[A]ll government activity has some direct or indirect adverse effect on some persons. The issue is not whether [the Project] will adversely affect particular persons but whether [the Project] will adversely affect the environment of persons in general.”) The overall change in the visual environment resulting from tree removal is recognized in the DEIR in DEIR Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, Impact AES-1; and impacts to the local ecosystem from tree removal are addressed in the DEIR in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, as Significant and Unavoidable. As noted above, mitigation for tree removal requires replacement planting at a minimum of a 1:1 ratio and includes the possibility for replacement plantings to occur on private property adjacent to the rail corridor, if feasible (Mitigation Measure BIO-7b).

Loss of Carbon Sequestration and Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) Consistency. The DEIR recognizes that tree removal is part of project implementation and would result in the short- and medium-term loss of carbon sequestration, which is the process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. Refer to the discussion in under Impact GHG-2 in DEIR Section 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*.

Consistent with Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*, the potential impacts of the Proposed Project related to GHG emissions (discussed under Impact GHG-1) are focused on anthropogenic emissions that would result from project implementation, rather than changes to sequestration potential. As described in Section 3.6.3, Threshold A is specifically concerned with generation of GHG emissions, and Threshold B is specifically concerned with plans to reduce GHG emissions. This is consistent with Section VIII of Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Additionally, Section 15064.4, *Determining the Significance of Impacts from Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, requires only consideration of the net change in emission from project implementation; it does not require or suggest consideration of gains or losses of sequestration as a result of project implementation. As such, the DEIR correctly determines the Project’s significance under Impact GHG-1 based on the net change in emissions that would result from project implementation (Threshold A). Impact GHG-2 evaluates the potential for carbon sequestration to result in a conflict with the County CAAP (Threshold B). As discussed in this section, although the project would support CAAP VMT reduction goals, the anticipated tree removal would potentially interfere with implementation of CAAP Natural/Working Lands strategies. Tree loss was determined to be significant and unavoidable, even with implementation of biological resources mitigation measures, discussed above.

Noise. Regarding noise exposure from tree removal, it is uncommon for trees and vegetation to result in a noticeable change in noise. A vegetative strip must be very dense and wide for there to be any meaningful shielding effect.⁸ The trees and vegetation between receptors and the proposed trail corridor do not provide a particularly dense or wide vegetation strip that would provide meaningful existing noise attenuation. As such, loss of vegetation would not result in a potential impact related to noise exposure. The DEIR correctly evaluates the potential for the Proposed

⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Reducing Urban Heat Islands: Compendium of Strategies Trees and Vegetation. Accessed November 28, 2022. <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-06/documents/treesandvegcompendium.pdf>.

⁸ California Department of Transportation. 2013. Technical Noise Supplement to the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol. September.

Project to result in new sources of noise from trail construction and operation, and there would be no significant noise impacts to receptors, as described in DEIR Section 3.10, *Noise*.

Air Quality. Regarding localized exposure to additional air pollutants from tree removal, although air pollutants from vehicle exhaust is a health concern, it is speculative to conclude that tree removal as a result of the Project would result in a significant increase in air pollutant exposure. A study published by the USEPA identified varying effects of vegetation, including circumstances under which vegetation removal increased pollutant exposure. Vegetation type, height, and thickness, as well as built environment, influence the impact of vegetation on nearby pollutant exposure.⁹ The current effects to air quality by the vegetation proposed for removal cannot be readily determined. As such, loss of vegetation is not a potential impact related to air pollutant exposure. The DEIR correctly evaluates the potential for the Proposed Project to result in new sources of air pollutants from vehicle emissions in Section 3.2, *Air Quality*.

DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, has been revised to provide examples of on-site mitigation locations in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b. Additionally, DEIR Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Material* has been revised to correct the typographical error of 8 feet wide to 10 feet wide for the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue, as shown above.

Master Response B: Measure D Clarification

Several comments express concern about why the Project includes railbanking and the Optional Interim Trail given the results of the 2022 Measure D vote, and several commenters are confused about the difference between the 2016 Measure D sales tax for transportation and the 2022 Measure D Greenway measure (15.1, 23.1, 24.1, 49.1, 57.1, 58.2, 63.1, 66.2, 67.2, 72.1, 75.1, 76.1, 81.1, 84.1, 88.2, 90.2, 96.1, 98.2, 104.1, 104.2, 105.1, 116.1, 122.1, 126.1, 133.1, 139.1, 139.4, 140.1, 141.1, 150.1, 151.2, 165.1, 166.2, 169.1, 175.1, 176.1, 177.1, 177.2, 177.5, 178.1, 184.1, 199.1, 205.2, 209.1, 210.1, 214.1, 218.3, 226.1, 246.1, 264.1, 266.1, 272.3, 293.3, 296.2, 307.4, 318.1).

Why the Project includes the Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line), which requires railbanking. The County included the Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) because it was requested during the scoping process and because it was similar to the text of the Greenway Initiative (2022 Measure D).

During the scoping process in November 2021, the results of the 2022 Measure D vote were unknown. In order to provide maximum transparency to the public and decision makers about the designs and environmental impacts of the two alignments (Trail Next to the Rail Line and Trail on the Rail Line) and to build maximum flexibility for Project delivery into the environmental review process, the Optional Interim Trail was included as part of the Proposed Project as an optional first phase and therefore analyzed at a similar level of detail as the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

The inclusion of the Optional Interim Trail (and by association railbanking that would be required to implement the alignment) as part of the Proposed Project is independent from the results of the Measure D vote described below. The inclusion of the Interim Trail as part of the Proposed Project does not mean that decision-makers will decide to approve it. The Interim Trail is optional, and decision makers could vote to pursue it, or not. How the 2022 Measure D vote might impact decision makers is discussed below.

⁹ Deshmukh P, Isakov V, Venkatram A, Yang B, Zhang KM, Logan R, Baldauf R. The effects of roadside vegetation characteristics on local, near-road air quality. *Air Qual Atmos Health*. 2019 Mar 11;12:259–270. PMID: 32636958; PMCID: PMC7339705.

In order to implement the Optional Interim Trail, the tracks need to be removed. The tracks cannot be removed unless the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is railbanked. Therefore, railbanking is required as part of the Optional Interim Trail, and thus required to be discussed as part of the EIR. The results of the 2022 Measure D vote have no impact on the analysis of the Optional Interim Trail as part of the Proposed Project in the EIR, but they may influence the decision-makers' consideration of approval of the Project.

Railbanking is described in DEIR Section 1.2.4 and **Master Response E**.

2022 Measure D (Greenway Initiative). The 2022 Measure D (Greenway Initiative) was approved by County Election Officials in January 2022 and placed on the ballot in June 2022. The Greenway Initiative would have amended the County General Plan Circulation Element to support development of the Greenway through railbanking. The Greenway was defined as a “full multi-lane Greenway” that includes “two lanes of wheeled traffic on a paved path, a divider, and a separate walkway for pedestrians, with a shoulder on both sides” in the rail corridor (www.yes-greenway.org/initiative).

In June 2022, the 2022 Measure D (Greenway Initiative) did not pass; 73% of voters voted “no” on Measure D. The failure of Measure D did not result in any required action by the County or the RTC. Measure D was described as an advisory Measure which meant that it proposed edits to long-term planning documents and that its passage or failure did not obligate the County or the RTC to take a particular action, but that decision-makers would likely use the results to guide how they voted on related decisions (Elections Code, Section 9111, *Report Regarding the Santa Cruz County Greenway Initiative*).

2016 Measure D (RTC Transportation Sales Tax). Another Measure D appeared on the ballot in 2016. The 2016 Measure D proposed a comprehensive and inclusive package of transportation improvements funded by a 0.5 cent, 30-year sales tax. The 2016 Measure D did pass; over 2/3 of voters voted “yes” on the 2016 Measure D. The 2016 Measure D was also related to the development of the rail trail because 17% of funds were dedicated to the Active Transportation category, which included the development of the MBSST.

The fact that both the 2022 and 2016 Measures had the letter “D” identifier was an unfortunate coincidence that confused some voters and was determined by the order they qualified for the ballot relative to other Measures. The two measures were not related to one another.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Master Response C: Right-of-Way Encroachments

Several commenters express concerns about displacement of mobile homes and low-income families. Several commenters state that the mobile homes cannot be relocated and ask whether RTC evaluated the feasibility of relocation or alteration. Several comments question the number of relocations and the conclusion that impacts from displacement are not significant. Several comments ask who is responsible for moving the mobile homes (7.3, 30.7, 40.2, 42.1, 102.1, 170.2, 174.8, 207.1, 229.1, 234.1, 247.1, 250.1 through 250.6, 251.2, 257.1, 257.2, 258.2, 262.1, 265.8, 270.1, 275.1, 276.1, 276.2, 276.4, 283.5, 284.3, 284.13, 286.1, 288.5, 291.1, 291.3, 311.1, 311.2, 312.1, 319.1, 320.1). One commenter asks if there is a trail alignment that would not require the mobile homes to be moved (30.7). One commenter requests that the County and RTC coordinate with the owners and residents of Castle Mobile Estates to resolve encroachments (4.5).

CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation of social or economic impacts, such as the potential economic effects on low-income families or the

impacts of the displacement of mobile homes (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382). Therefore, the Draft EIR considers the impacts of the Coastal Rail Trail on the environment, including but not limited to aesthetics, air quality, noise, transportation, and displacement of people and housing.

The removal of mobile homes and structures encroaching in the RTC-owned ROW and in conflict with the trail was included in the Draft EIR for disclosure purposes. The mobile homes and structures encroaching into RTC-owned rail corridor ROW are unauthorized encroachments that will be addressed by RTC as part of a separate process. Additional information on addressing mobile home encroachments, as requested by several comments, is included below for informational purposes.

The trail and associated improvements would be located primarily within the RTC-owned rail corridor right-of-way (ROW), City road ROW, or County road ROW. As owner of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL), RTC completed a property boundary survey in 2023 and discovered that there are unauthorized encroachments within the RTC-owned ROW including in the vicinity of the Project. RTC must address encroachments on RTC publicly owned property to ensure no gift of public funds to an individual and/or private property owner. The unauthorized encroachments will be resolved by the RTC, per their Encroachment Policy, as part of a separate process. RTC will notify affected property owners and mobile homeowners of unauthorized encroachments. Options for addressing encroachments on publicly owned property include removal of encroachments, leases, licenses and rights-of-entry. RTC prioritizes addressing encroachments that: Impact the uses, operations, inspections and maintenance of the Branch Line ROW; Impact the implementation of projects by the RTC or RTC partner agencies on or in the vicinity of the Branch Line ROW; and/or Impact liabilities to the RTC. RTC is not responsible for relocating unauthorized encroachments and is not responsible for financing the removal of unauthorized encroachments. However, RTC could consider options for assisting affected mobile home residents.

The encroachments in conflict with Project construction include mobile homes and accessory structures that are primarily in Segment 10 (with one noted in Segment 11). To the north of the Project corridor, unauthorized encroachments include six mobile homes and four accessory structures at the Blue & Gold Star Mobile Home Park, located at 1255 38th Avenue in unincorporated Santa Cruz County. To the south of the Project corridor, unauthorized encroachments include five mobile homes and seven accessory structures at the Castle Estates Mobile Home Park, located at 1099 38th Avenue in the City of Capitola. Additional unauthorized encroachments that would be in conflict with the trail include: a portion of one accessory structure immediately north of the Project corridor west of Chanticleer Avenue, a portion of one structure of unknown use located immediately south of the Project corridor west of Thompson Avenue, a portion of two structures of unknown use located immediately north and south of the Project corridor just west of Jade Street Park, and portions of two accessory structures and two structures of unknown use located immediately south of the Project corridor between Monterey Avenue and Grove Lane (Segment 11). A total of 11 mobile homes, 14 accessory structures, and 5 structures of unknown use are known to be encroaching into the RTC-owned rail corridor without authorization from RTC and would be in conflict with the trail. As stated above, these encroachments will be resolved by the RTC, per their Encroachment Policy, as part of a separate process.

Should the County of Santa Cruz implement the Ultimate Trail Configuration alignment, encroachments in conflict with the Project must be removed prior to the Project going out to bid for construction, which is scheduled for winter 2025.

Should the County of Santa Cruz implement the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) alignment or the Trail Only Alternative (Alternative 1) alignment; and should the RTC determine the encroachments are

not in conflict with operations, inspections and maintenance, not in conflict with the implementation of other projects by the RTC or partner agencies, and do not impact liabilities to RTC; then the RTC could consider entering into leases to address the unauthorized encroachments, until Part 3 of the Optional Interim Trail is implemented, assumed to occur after 25 years. However, at any point, if the publicly owned property is needed for any public purpose, the leases would need to be terminated, and the encroachments would need to be removed. The current encroachment of mobile homes, accessory structures, and other structures into the RTC-owned rail corridor ROW is not authorized. There is no RTC agreement between the Blue & Gold Star Mobile Home Park, the Castle Estates Mobile Home Park, and/or other individual property owners to allow these encroachments. As stated above, the RTC will resolve these encroachments, per their Encroachment Policy, prior to Project implementation as part of a separate process. Because the encroachments are unauthorized, residents would not be considered “displacees” as defined by the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act.

The RTC will notify the respective property owners of the unauthorized encroachments in RTC-owned ROW as part of their encroachment resolution process. Depending on the nature of the encroachment, options for resolving encroachments may include immediate removal, removal within a specified period of time, possible modifications to the encroachment, and/or development of a lease, license, or right of entry at Fair Market Value. Additional discussions with the mobile home park property owners and impacted residents, as part of the RTC’s encroachment resolution process, will be necessary to coordinate encroachment removal on a case-by-case basis. Options for modification include, but are not limited to, physically moving the structures several feet outside the RTC-owned rail corridor ROW within the same mobile home park or property. If adequate space is not available to physically move an individual mobile home or structure, property owners could modify or replace the mobile home or structure with slightly smaller structures that fit within the respective lot on the mobile home park or owner’s property.

Mobile home modifications may require changes to utilities and foundations and mobile home relocation could require the purchase of new or smaller mobile homes to fit within the same space. Property owners could also seek to move a mobile home to other nearby mobile home parks that have space to accommodate them. These options are based on a high-level overview of mobile home encroachments extending into the RTC-owned rail ROW and the mobile home park configuration and may be subject to approval by the Office of Housing and Community Development. Removal of fencing encroaching on RTC-owned right of way and reconstruction of fencing on the RTC property line may require property owners and mobile homeowners to further consult with the Office of Housing and Community Development. Further study is needed to identify all potential options for mobile home relocation and site-specific solutions to address the unauthorized encroachments, and RTC will communicate with affected property owners and residents throughout the process. Implementation of potential options may be subject to approval by the Office of Housing and Community Development.

As previously mentioned, because the mobile homes, accessory dwelling unit and associated fencing encroachments are unauthorized, residents would not be considered “displacees” as defined by the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, and any additional mobile homes relocations not described in the DEIR would not result in significant impacts.

Therefore, as concluded in Section 3.15.9, *Population and Housing*, of the Draft EIR, the Project would not result in the displacement of substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Thus, for the purposes of the CEQA document, the impact is considered less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

In Chapter 2, *Project Description*, under *Right-of-Way (ROW)*, minor text revisions have been made for consistency with the aforementioned statements to clarify that the unauthorized encroachments will be resolved by the RTC in accordance with RTC’s Encroachment Policy as part of a separate process, and encroachments determined to be in conflict with the Project would be removed prior to Project construction.

Master Response D: Capitola Trestle and Measure L Clarification

Several commenters express confusion or ask questions about how a trail over Soquel Creek would be implemented under the Ultimate Trail Configuration or the Optional Interim Trail, such as conversion of the existing trestle or construction of a new trail bridge, whether both rail and trail could be accommodated on the trestle or a future bridge, and how it would be funded (30.2, 30.5, 30.6, 30.10, 30.11, 94.3, 94.5, 118.9, 144.3, 160.2, 174.2, 184.4, 184.6, 191.5, 214.1, 225.3, 242.2, 246.1, 277.2, 277.10, 278.3, 284.7, 284.9, 288.7).

Several commenters state that Capitola voters expressed their desire to keep the trail on the rail line through the passage of Measure L in 2018, and that the City of Capitola expressed their desire to keep the trail on the trestle and that the County should follow their recommendation (184.3 and 225.1).

Capitola Trestle Current Condition. The Capitola Trestle is currently out of service for rail use due to the need for structural repairs, and use by pedestrians or cyclists is prohibited. As noted in Section 2.6.2, the following structural repairs are required for any future use of the Capitola Trestle Bridge (trail or rail use). The Capitola Trestle is composed of five individual bridge segments. The two timber bridges (MP 15.89b and 15.89d) are in fair to poor condition. All bracings would be replaced, and approximately 30–40% of the vertical posts (or piles) would be replaced on the timber bridges (MP 15.89b and MP 15.89d). Minor rehabilitation would also occur on the wrought iron bridge (MP 15.89c), including replacement of the bridge’s bearings. Therefore, the Capitola Trestle cannot currently be used for either train service or for a trail and requires repairs before either use could be implemented. No funding is currently programmed for these improvements, and the RTC is currently pursuing improvements to SCBRL rail infrastructure as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project.

The RTC’s Capitola Trestle Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) includes more information on the Capitola Trestle. The FAQ can be found on the RTC website (https://scrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FAQ_Capitola-Trestle.pdf) and is also included below, after the master responses and before the individual responses.

Rail and Trail on Existing Capitola Trestle. Several commenters asked whether a cantilevered trail or similar design could be supported from the existing Capitola Trestle, similar to the cantilevered trail on the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge. As noted in Section 5.1.3, the County considered this alternative, but determined it was not feasible because the wrought iron bridge and timber trestles do not have adequate structural capacity to support a cantilevered bicycle and pedestrian bridge.

Accommodating Rail and Trail Bridge. Several commenters requested that the Ultimate Trail Configuration include a standalone trail bridge next to the existing Capitola Trestle. The RTC-owned rail ROW in the area of the Capitola Trestle complex is constrained. Constructing a standalone bicycle and pedestrian bridge next to the existing Capitola Trestle and within the rail ROW may not be feasible and would require significant engineering. Due to this space constraint, the engineering challenges of constructing a bridge spanning Soquel Creek, and the cost of constructing a new trail bridge over Soquel Creek, the County, in conjunction with RTC, excluded this from the Project. Instead, the RTC recommended that a bicycle and pedestrian trail bridge be combined with future

replacement of the Capitola Trestle. The RTC's Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Concept Report will evaluate the feasibility and cost of a combined rail and trail bridge to replace the existing Capitola Trestle. Funding for a combined rail and trail bridge has not yet been identified.

Capitola Trestle in Ultimate Trail Configuration. Due to the constraints noted above, the Ultimate Trail Configuration as proposed would direct trail users to sidewalks and bike lanes on streets through Capitola Village, rather than over the Capitola Trestle Bridge (see **Master Response F**). However, as described in Section 2.4.1, the Ultimate Trail Configuration includes Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle Bridge over Soquel Creek). Under this design option, the Capitola Trestle would be converted as described under the Interim Trail Configuration below to accommodate a bicycle/pedestrian path in place of the tracks, and trail users would continue on an interim trail between the Cliff Drive parking area and over the Capitola Trestle, to Monterey Avenue, rather than traveling through the Village.

Capitola Trestle in Interim Trail Configuration or Design Option A. Under the Interim Trail Configuration, or Design Option A, the Coastal Rail Trail would continue along the SCBRL over the Capitola Trestle which would be repaired and converted to trail use. Required repairs are noted above. The conversion of the trestle to trail use would require removal of the existing rails, decking and ballast, followed by installation of a fiber reinforced polymer (FRP) deck with a metal guardrail to support the trail (similar to that used on the San Lorenzo trail bridge). The structural support of the FRP deck would differ depending on the underlying existing bridge material/construction. The section at U-girder Wharf Road bridge (MP 15.89e) requires lightweight, load-bearing filler material in place of the existing rail ballast to support the FRP deck. The section at the timber trestle requires new steel framing above the existing timber cap beam to support the FRP deck. The section at the wrought iron truss requires new steel framing to support the FRP deck. The section at box girder (that extends over Capitola Avenue) requires lightweight load-bearing filler material in place of the existing rail ballast to support the FRP deck.

Since the conversion of the trestle to trail use would necessitate the removal of the rails, the bridge would not be able to be used for train service and railbanking would be required to remove the rails. Refer to **Master Response E** for a discussion regarding railbanking and trail construction. Should the rail line later be reactivated, the trail could be removed and the bridge converted back to rail use. The trail, in the Ultimate Trail Configuration, would then be routed through the Capitola Village until a combination rail and trail bridge is built as described above.

The potential impacts to historic resources of the bridge conversion and repair for trail use are noted in Draft EIR Section 3.4.4. Analyzing these impacts is required by CEQA, because the bridge conversion and repair is part of the Proposed Project (Optional Interim Trail and Design Option A).

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore, the Draft EIR does not include an analysis of impacts to historic resources for a repair of the trestle for rail use.

Project Alternatives. Additionally, three project alternatives were evaluated in DEIR Chapter 5, which include Alternative 1 (Trail Only) whereby the Capitola Trestle Bridge would be rehabilitated for trail users like Design Option A; Alternative 2 (Opposite Side of the Tracks) whereby trail users would be directed through Capitola Village like the Ultimate Trail Configuration; and Alternative 3 (No Project) whereby a trail would not be constructed, there would be no safety improvements through Capitola Village, nor rehabilitation of the Capitola Trestle. No scenarios considered in the

Draft EIR include constructing a standalone trail bridge on either side of the trestle due to the constraints noted above.

Measure L and Capitola Preference for Trail on Trestle. Several commenters state that Capitola voters expressed their desire to keep the trail on the rail line through the passage of Measure L in 2018 or that the City of Capitola expressed their desire to keep the trail on the Capitola trestle and that the County should follow their recommendation. Measure L has been codified in Chapter 8.72 of Capitola’s Municipal Code. Section 8.72.040 provides (a) “The city of Capitola, through its constituent departments, shall take all steps necessary to preserve and utilize the Corridor and Trestle for active transportation and recreation”; and (b) “No city of Capitola department, agency or employee shall expend any funds or resources related to the construction, reconstruction, operation, maintenance, financing, marketing, or signage for a detour of the Trail onto Capitola streets or sidewalks.” The Project does not implicate Measure L for two reasons. First, the Project does not “detour” the trail around the trestle. Rather, the trail – as designed by the County – will be routed through the Capitola Village. Second, the City of Capitola is not contributing any funds to the Project, and the proposed improvements in the Capitola Village would be built and maintained by the County. Therefore, the proposed routing of the Ultimate Trail Configuration through the Capitola Village does not involve the expenditure of any City funds or resources and thus does not conflict with Measure L. Notably, during review of the Draft EIR, the City of Capitola staff expressed a preference for Design Option A, with the trail located on the Capitola Trestle

The comments do not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comment is noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

In Section 5.1.3, *Alternatives Suggested during the Scoping Process*, under *Major Onstreet Improvements in Capitola Village*, minor text revisions have been made for consistency with the aforementioned statements to clarify Measure L.

Master Response E: Rail Operation and Railbanking

Several comments concern railbanking, the processes by which the SCBRL could be railbanked and the timeline for railbanking, how the railbanking process may affect the timeline for the trail construction, and that railbanking may delay development of rail transit on the SCBRL (9.5, 9.6, 29.1, 30.2, 30.4, 30.10, 30.11, 40.1, 58.1, 59.1, 60.1, 62.1, 65.2, 67.1, 68.2, 69.1, 74.1, 83.1, 118.2, 118.7, 160.2, 162.1, 174.7, 177.5, 181.2, 184.4, 191.2, 209.2, 214.1, 220.1, 221.1, 224.1, 224.2, 224.3, 224.4, 224.5, 224.6, 229.2, 249.1, 252.3, 252.4, 254.1, 256.1, 258.1, 264.1, 265.3, 265.5, 265.9, 267.1, 270.2, 272.1, 272.3, 274.1, 277.4, 283.1, 283.2, 284.6, 288.2, 288.4, 288.5, 288.6, 294.1, 295.1, 297.1, 298.3, 303.1, 304.1, 307.1, 307.2, 318.1).

Several comments note that the rail corridor purchase was funded by voter approved Proposition 116, which stipulated that the corridor be developed to have passenger rail service; railbanking conflicts with State Rail Plan; and question if this would prevent the rail line from being railbanked or having the tracks removed (57.2, 209.2, 214.1, 224.6).

Several comments address funding for passenger rail on the SCBRL and state that it should be a higher priority for the RTC (139.3, 139.5, 267.1, 267.2).

Several comments question how a trail and the rail line can be accommodated in the same corridor and ask about the required clearances for a trail next to freight or passenger rail; one commenter states that a 25’ clearance is required between passenger rail and a trail (11.2, 30.1, 30.10, 30.11, 289.1).

One commenter asks if railbanking the rail line is the quickest, most cost-effective way to develop a trail (30.4).

Several comments question the operations or feasibility and/or cost/benefit of passenger rail service on the SCBRL and/or question the timeline for implementation (7.2, 30.3, 162.1, 174.5, 177.5, 181.2, 184.4, 252.4, 256.1, 283.1, 288.2, 297.1, 298.3, 304.2, 307.2).

One commenter asks if the existing tracks and trestle would need to be replaced in order to implement passenger rail transit (30.2).

Several comments ask if the Project is relocating existing tracks or rebuilding new tracks; why the Project would spend funds to move the railroad tracks and associated rail infrastructure when the future use is undetermined; and that the tracks should be relocated when or if plans are approved for the future use of the tracks (40.2, 42.1, 177.5, 252.3, 265.3, 265.9, 287.1, 288.4, 288.6).

Several comments ask about noise and other environmental impacts of future passenger rail on the SCBRL (22.1, 270.2)

One comment asks if the Ultimate Trail would remain open or closed during construction of passenger rail service (227.4).

Railbanking Process and Timeline. Railbanking is required to remove the tracks. Since no sections of rail are being removed as part of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, railbanking is not required to implement the Ultimate Trail Configuration. As described in Section 1.2.4 under *Railbanking*, railbanking is required to implement the Optional Interim Trail because the Optional Interim Trail requires track removal. Comments related to why the EIR includes railbanking given the results of the 2022 Measure D vote are addressed in **Master Response B**.

Railbanking is a voluntary process whereby a freight railroad company and a trail agency enter into an agreement to use a rail corridor that has been approved for abandonment as a trail (or some other use, including passenger rail with trail) until some future time when the railroad might need the corridor again for freight rail service. Railbanking is a process that can involve the freight operator and must involve the rail property owner (RTC) and the Surface Transportation Board (STB). A freight operator can file for direct abandonment to the STB, and then RTC could file a petition with the STB to enter into railbanking negotiations, or RTC could petition with the STB for an adverse abandonment application to the STB to start the railbanking process. The amount of time necessary to railbank the rail corridor or resolve a contested adverse abandonment proceeding is unknown.

Since railbanking approves abandonment of the rail line for use as a trail until some future time when the railroad might need the corridor again for freight rail service, the Optional Interim Trail includes Parts 2 & 3 (which is removal of the Optional Interim Trail, construction of the tracks, and construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration) in order to analyze the whole of the Project, as required by CEQA.¹⁰ For each potential impact identified in Chapter 3 of the DEIR, a discussion is provided for each Part (1, 2, and 3) of the Optional Interim Trail, so the reader could understand the impact of each part individually, as well as collectively. Where comparisons are made between the Ultimate Trail and Interim Trail in Chapter 5 of the DEIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative, the discussions acknowledge the three parts, but must consider the whole of the Project.

¹⁰ CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126, requires “all phases of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment.” Therefore, the Draft EIR evaluates all phases of the proposed Project, including all three parts of the Optional Interim Trail throughout Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

There are many factors when considering the schedule for Project delivery, including, but not limited to policy directives, community support, funding and regulatory requirements. Railbanking is a regulatory requirement for construction of the Optional Interim Trail. Since the amount of time needed to railbank the rail corridor is unknown and railbanking is required to construct the Interim Optional Trail, it is unknown if building the Interim Trail would be quicker or more cost-effective than building the Ultimate Trail Configuration without railbanking, or if railbanking would delay completion of the Project.

Roaring Camp operates an excursion train between Felton and the Boardwalk in Santa Cruz, including the portion of the SCBRL between Chestnut Street and the Boardwalk. Should RTC railbank, RTC expects to offer Roaring Camp a long-term lease of the portion of the SCBRL that Roaring Camp uses to ensure that they can continue to run their recreational service between Felton and the Boardwalk.

Railbanking would not delay or prevent the development of rail transit on the SCBRL. Passenger rail transit could be developed on the SCBRL if the line is railbanked. Railbanking could ease the development of passenger rail transit on the SCBRL by removing the need to accommodate both heavy freight rail and lighter passenger rail on the SCBRL.

The RTC's Railbanking Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) includes a description of the railbanking process and effect of railbanking on passenger rail service. The FAQ can be found on the RTC website (https://sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Railbanking-Fact-Sheet-and-FAQ_final.pdf) and is also included below, after the master responses and before the individual responses.

Track and Rail Equipment Relocation. In the existing condition, the tracks are generally located in the center of the RTC-owned rail line ROW. In some locations there is insufficient space within the RTC-owned ROW to construct the trail next to the current rail track alignment. Therefore, the tracks must be relocated to accommodate constructing the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Relocated tracks and rail equipment are shown in Appendix A.1, Project Design Plans for the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Railbanking is not required to relocate the tracks.

The track and rail equipment relocation proposed as part of the Ultimate Trail Configuration is designed to accommodate both future freight use and future passenger rail transit use based on currently known and expected conditions, as well as current regulations governing freight and passenger rail. However, adjustments to the track may be needed in the future for passenger rail service and will be informed by the findings of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project.

To date, relocation of the tracks and rebuilding of rail infrastructure (signals, etc.) has been considered Project costs because it is the Project implementation that is requiring their removal and reconstruction. However, the RTC could decide to fund rail relocation from other funding sources or seek alternative methods for relocating the rail. Should the RTC vote to railbank the corridor, the rail relocation and rebuilding of rail infrastructure could be deferred to the implementation of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project.

As stated above, RTC developed a FAQ document related to railbanking that can be found on the RTC website and is also included below.

Proposition 116 and State Rail Plan. The voter-approved Proposition 116 (Clean Air and Transportation Improvement Act of 1990 – CPUC Section 99600 et seq.) stipulates that the rail line be used for “rail projects within Santa Cruz County which facilitate recreational, commuter, intercity and intercounty travel.” Proposition 116 is discussed in the DEIR in Section 1.2.1.

Acquisition of the SCBRL was funded primarily by Proposition 116 and other transit funds from the California Transportation Commission. Proposition 116 funding was approved by the California Transportation Commission with the condition that freight rail service continue as long as required by the federal STB and the institution of recreational passenger rail service. The California Transportation Commission conditions for freight rail service would no longer be required if the Surface Transportation Commission approved abandonment or railbanking of the SCBRL.

The State Rail Plan identifies Regional Rail between Santa Cruz and Pajaro/Watsonville as Mid-Term Plan Regional Goal. Railbanking would not conflict with the State Rail Plan because it would not preclude development of passenger rail service on the SCBRL.

Accommodating a Trail and Future Passenger Rail Service. Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. There would be no other changes in the existing rail corridor as a result of the Project, other than those described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, as they relate to Project implementation. However, several comments asked about future rail service and it is therefore addressed here to provide relevant information to the public.

A trail can be accommodated next to the tracks. Draft EIR Sections 2.4.1 and 2.6.1 describe what improvements are needed to accommodate a trail next to the tracks. Design plans in Appendix A for the Ultimate Trail Configuration show how a trail would be built next to the tracks. An 8'6" setback for both freight and passenger rail is the minimum setback from the centerline of tracks to the edge of vertical improvements. The closest vertical clearance from the rail centerline to the Project is the fence between track and trail, which is required by the CPUC in order to build a trail next to the rail line. A 25-foot setback is not required. The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project will develop an alignment for passenger rail within the SCBRL and consider the planned trail infrastructure. As noted in **Master Response D**, it is feasible to build a combination rail and trail bridge to replace the Capitola Trestle, thereby accommodating both uses. This approach is being studied in the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail (ZEPRT) Project.

The Administration Coordination and License agreement between the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission and St. Paul and Pacific Railroad states that the track would be at a Class 1 level for service covered by the agreement. Class 1 track does not permit speeds greater than 15 mile per hour for passenger trains or 10 miles per hour for freight trains.

The Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis provides information about options for passenger rail transit operations, including potential stations and travel times. The ZEPRT, currently underway by RTC, will build on the Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and further develop potential passenger rail transit operations scenarios.

The feasibility and cost/benefit of future passenger rail service on the SCBRL is outside the scope of the proposed Project. However, prior studies regarding rail transit service completed by the RTC, including the Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and associated Business Plan (2021), provide information about rail operations, potential funding sources, and implementation strategies to develop rail transit on the SCBRL.

In 2022, the RTC allocated Measure D funding and awarded a consultant contract to initiate a Project Concept Report for Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail on the SCBRL. The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Concept Report will include, but is not limited to, identifying a rail vehicle type for rail operations, developing the alignment for passenger rail along the rail ROW, conceptual rail transit operations plan and related facilities, ridership forecasts, and cost estimates. RTC has secured the funds necessary to complete the Project Concept Report and is seeking funds to fully fund the

preliminary design and environmental analysis, which will include an analysis of potential environmental impacts.

As stated above, no rail service of any type is proposed as part of this Project. Further, and the type of rail service and the associated details are too speculative at this time. Therefore the Draft EIR does not include an analysis of environmental impacts of passenger rail service. Environmental impacts of the ZEPRT Project will be analyzed as part of that project's environmental review process.

If the Ultimate Trail Configuration were to be constructed, the trail would not need to be removed for the passenger rail project. If the Interim Trail Configuration were to be constructed, the trail would need to be removed and rebuilt in the Ultimate Trail Configuration in order to fit both a train and a trail in the corridor.

If and/or when passenger rail service is constructed, any trail in the rail corridor would likely be temporarily closed where construction is occurring, with appropriate detours to streets and sidewalks or other trails.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Master Response F: Capitola Village Safety and Accessibility Concerns

Several commenters express safety concerns, including increased risk of injuries, with routing the Ultimate Trail Configuration along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village due to increased conflicts between vehicles and trail users (28.4, 28.5, 30.9, 40.3, 42.2, 50.3, 144.2, 174.2, 184.3, 225.2, 265.7, 278.3, 284.7, 284.9).

Several commenters express concerns about the ADA-accessibility of routing the Ultimate Trail Configuration through Capitola Village due to steep grades of the existing sidewalks, and one commenter proposed an alternative routing (4.4, 40.3, 144.2, 277.2).

One commenter suggested that trail users should be routed onto Cliff Drive farther east and closer to the village at the coast-side parking area rather than at the proposed location at the end of the Cliff Drive Plaza under the Ultimate Trail Configuration. The commenter states that the proposed crossing location of Cliff Drive is near a blind curve and that the alternate location would improve safety (174.2).

One commenter expressed concern that City of Capitola's ban on skateboarding within the Capitola Village would result in skateboarders being unable to use the trail (265.7).

One commenter questioned whether or not routing trail users through the village is consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan. (277.1).

Safety Concerns. As discussed in Section 3.12.4 of the Draft EIR, under Impact T-2, existing user conflicts occur near the Project corridor on roadways, sidewalks, and crossings where pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic is intermixed. For the Ultimate Trail, in the City of Capitola between the Cliff Drive Parking Lot and Monterey Avenue (which includes the portion of the SCBRL that goes over the Capitola Trestle Bridge), trail users would be directed off the RTC-owned rail corridor and onto the existing on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks through Capitola Village. No new trail would be constructed through Capitola Village. Instead, wayfinding signage would direct trail users to the existing on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. As a result, the Project could increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village, which could increase existing user conflicts (i.e., conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, and/or bicyclists). The Interim Trail

and Design Option A: Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek would not route trail users through Capitola Village; rather, they would be routed across Capitola Trestle Bridge.

As described in Section 2.4.1, *Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail next to Rail Line)*, under *Cliff Drive Plaza/Capitola Village Connection* and shown on Figure 2-3 of the Draft EIR, as part of the Ultimate Trail, additional wayfinding signage and striping modifications would be implemented along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village on Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue to address the increased potential for user conflicts. Specifically, near the western portion of Segment 11, the trail ends in a plaza area connecting to Cliff Drive on the coastal side. Chicanes would be used along the trail approaching the plaza to slow bicycle and pedestrian traffic. From the plaza area, bicyclists and pedestrians using the Coastal Rail Trail would be directed with wayfinding signage to the existing on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks through Capitola Village along Cliff Drive, the Stockton Avenue Bridge, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue. There would be striping modifications to improve the visibility of the existing delineated bicycle lanes and safety for both bicyclists and pedestrians.

The additional wayfinding signage and striping modifications would improve the visibility of existing delineated bicycle lanes and improve safety for both bicyclists and pedestrians. Specifically, for an approximately 350-foot portion of Cliff Drive where pedestrians and bicyclists currently share the coastal-side Class II bicycle lane, the width of the existing bicycle and vehicular lanes would be revised to allow for demarcation of a separate four-foot-wide pedestrian path on the coastal side of the Class II bicycle lane. This would increase the roadway space dedicated to bicycle and pedestrians and would allow for separation of pedestrians and bicyclists where they are currently intermixed, thereby reducing the potential for conflict between users and increasing safety. In addition, the existing white striping would be re-painted and green pavement painting would be added to the existing Class II bicycle lanes, and white sharrow markings with green backgrounds would be installed along the Class III bicycle routes where bicycles and vehicles share the lane. Further, the improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure provided by the Project is expected to reduce vehicle trips in the vicinity of the Project. Therefore, although additional pedestrians and bicyclists could be added to Cliff Drive and Capitola Village along this segment of the Project alignment, the Project would not substantially increase hazards associated with user conflicts. Rather, Project improvements would generally be expected to offset any increase in potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles and/or bicyclists along the Project corridor by improving the existing interactions between all users through this area.

The improvements along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village included as part of the Ultimate Trail Configuration are intended to address the potential for increased user conflict resulting from construction of the Project. While there are existing safety issues along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village, CEQA requires that mitigation reduces impacts caused by the Project and does not require that the Project address existing deficiencies, unless the Project would exacerbate an environmental problem. (See *Cal. Building Industry Assn. v. Bay Area Air Quality Management Dist.* (2015) 62 Cal.4th 369, 387 (“*CBIA v. BAAQMD*”) [CEQA is solely focused on the impacts of a project on the environment, not of the environment on a future project’s users].) As explained above and in the DEIR, the Project would not substantially increase hazards associated with user conflicts. Therefore, additional improvements to address existing hazards within Capitola Village are outside the scope of Project.

Location of Cliff Drive Crossing. The proposed crossing of Cliff Drive in the Ultimate Trail Configuration was included because there is an existing City-installed crosswalk at that location, which was recently retrofitted with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons to improve visibility of

pedestrians and yield compliance. The existing crosswalk is located on a straight section of the roadway and avoids conflicts with the on-street parking. In contrast, the commenter's proposed location is on a curve in the roadway and would not improve safety as the commenter intends. Further, the proposed crossing of Cliff Drive is at a location where the trail grade and roadway grade are roughly aligned. The trail would be located above the roadway grade by approximately 9-feet at the commenter's proposed location, requiring ramps and retaining walls to bring trail users down to roadway grade. This additional construction and earthmoving would result in increased environmental impacts.

Accessibility Concerns. Several commenters expressed concern about the ADA-accessibility of routing the Ultimate Trail Configuration through Capitola Village due to the steep grades of the existing sidewalks and roadways. From the trail end at the Cliff Drive Plaza, the Project would construct a new ADA-accessible curb ramp to bring trail users from the plaza to the existing Cliff Drive roadway where a new 350' long, 4-foot-wide pedestrian pathway would be provided via striping modifications to Cliff Drive. At the end of the pathway, trail users would transition onto the existing sidewalks. ADA-compliant access would be provided via the existing sidewalks and curb ramps along Cliff Drive, Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue. At Monterey Avenue, trail users would utilize existing curb ramps to access the sidewalk and trail grade. Under the California Building Code, Chapter 11B-403, sidewalks that do not exceed the general grade established for the adjacent street or highway, are considered ADA-compliant. Therefore, the existing sidewalks and curb ramps through the village are ADA-compliant. Further, as noted above, CEQA requires that the Project reduce Project-related impacts and does not require that the Project address existing deficiencies. (See *CBIA v. BAAQMD, supra.*). Therefore, additional improvements to address existing ADA-accessibility issues are outside the scope of the Project.

Alternative ADA-Routing. One commenter (144.2) suggested routing trail users to the pedestrian and bike path over Soquel Creek at Rispin Mansion which has an accessible route rather than routing trail users through the Capitola Village. The suggested route is approximately 0.75 miles longer and therefore is unlikely to be used by most trail users.

Skateboarding Ban. The commenter is concerned that the City of Capitola's ban on skateboarders through the village would ban skateboarders from using this part of the trail. The City of Capitola Municipal Code prohibits skateboarding on the street sections and pedestrian ways through Capitola Village, including Cliff Drive, Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue. This would result in a skateboarder using the trail having to walk the portion of the Ultimate Trail Configuration that routes trails users onto Capitola Village streets. While inconvenient to these users, it would not impede them from using the trail.

Consistency with MBSST Network Master Plan. With respect to the Capitola Trestle Bridge and Capitola Village, Segment 11 is described in the MBSST Final Master Plan (Adopted November 2013, revised February 2014) on page 4-61 and in the MBSST Network Master Plan Draft EIR (June 2013) on page 2-24 as follows (with only very minor differences in wording): "The greatest challenge in this segment of the trail is the rail trestle crossing of Soquel Creek. . . . There are current discussions about improvements to this trestle bridge due to structural conditions. Coastal trail access through this area would continue on existing surface streets and sidewalks to cross Soquel Creek and navigate through Capitola Village." Therefore, the Ultimate Trail Configuration, which directs trail users through Capitola Village on streets and sidewalks rather than over the Capitola Trestle Bridge, is consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan that was analyzed in the EIR and approved by the RTC.

In conclusion, the Project is not expected to result in significant traffic impacts relating to trail user safety and ADA-accessibility. No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Master Response G: Privacy, Noise, and Security Concerns

Several commenters expressed concern about privacy, security, encampments, and increased need for law enforcement. In addition, several commenters request security fencing or a soundwall. Several commenters request information on the methodology used to determine the Project would not result in the need for additional police protection or law enforcement facilities (4.1, 40.1, 56.4, 94.3, 94.4, 94.6, 149.3, 149.4, 184.9, 184.10, 191.3, 191.4, 191.5, 248.5, 270.2, 280.4, 283.2, 283.3, 284.13, 285.2, 286.1, 313.1, 319.1).

Privacy. CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation of social or economic impacts, such as the potential effects on perceived loss of privacy (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382). The Project generally does not include fencing or other screenings to address privacy. Fencing along the RTC-owned ROW boundary may be included as part of the Project at some locations and could include chain-link or wood fencing. Should an adjacent property owner desire privacy from the existing rail line or the Project, they may place a barrier of their material choice outside the RTC-owned ROW. Barrier height and materials shall be consistent with applicable codes.

Fencing. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR, fencing and/or guardrails would be installed for safety in areas where drop-offs are over 30 inches and in proximity to vehicular traffic. The fencing and guardrails are expected to be constructed at 4 feet, 8 inches, in height. The Ultimate Trail Configuration could include safety fencing between the rail and trail to separate trail users from the rail, as needed. If determined necessary by the County or City, additional fencing and/or guardrails could be installed along the trail alignment for safety, security, and trespass prevention in accordance with the MBSST Network Master Plan.

Noise and Soundwalls. As noted in Section 3.10.4, the operation of the Project would not expose persons to or generate excessive noise levels. Operational noise levels along the trail alignment would be influenced by the sound of trail users talking, occasional animal sounds (e.g., dogs on leash), and occasional trail maintenance. In areas where trail use would overlap with existing active transportation and recreational facilities, such as through Capitola Village from Cliff Drive to Monterey Avenue, noise levels would be similar to existing conditions. Along the Project corridor where the trail would provide a new transportation and recreational facility, the new noise sources would be intermittent and typically limited to normal conversation. Normal conversation typically results in a noise level of 65 dBA Leq at 3 feet (Caltrans 2013) and attenuates to below 50 dBA Leq at 15 feet. Therefore, intermittent noise at conversational levels would not be considered excessive at nearby receptors.

The conclusion that typical trail users would generally not generate noise levels above normal conversation levels (65 dBA Leq at 3 feet) or result in noise levels that conflict with the City or County Noise Ordinances is consistent with Impact N-2 of the Final EIR for the Master Plan for the MBSST Network,¹¹ which concluded that intermittent and incremental noise caused by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, as well as maintenance activities, would not be expected to generate a measurable increase in ambient noise levels compared to existing conditions. Additionally, this conclusion is consistent with the California Department of Transportation noise analysis guidelines, under which recreational trails are typically considered a noise receptor in the same receptor

¹¹ Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission. 2013. Final Environmental Impact Report on the Master Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (SCH # #2012082075). November 7.

category as libraries and daycare centers.¹² Commenters have not identified a characteristic of the Proposed Project that would result in unusual recreational trail noise. A significant impact related to operation noise was not identified; therefore, no mitigation measures are required. As such, implementation of a noise barrier is not included in the DEIR. Potential noise impacts associated with future passenger rail service are addressed in **Master Response E**.

The Project generally does not include soundwalls, fencing, or other barriers along the ROW. Individual homeowners or property owners may place a barrier of their material choice outside the RTC-owned ROW. Barrier height and materials shall be consistent with applicable codes.

Security, Encampments, Law Enforcement. The assessment of impacts to public safety and services (DEIR Section 3.11, *Public Safety and Services*) is based on a review of emergency response, police protection services, and consideration of potential changes in the level of service that may be required as a result of the addition of a new trail along Segments 10 and 11 of the Project corridor. The analysis included consideration of Project features that would reduce the need for law enforcement. In addition, the County Sheriff's Office was consulted on the potential for the Project to result in increased need for law enforcement.

As indicated in DEIR Sections 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, and 3.11.4, *Project Impact Analysis*, the trail would be patrolled by the County Sheriff and Capitola Police Department (CPD), which would discourage illegal encampments and trespassing. As discussed in Section 3.11.4, under Impact PUB-2, if illegal encampments were established along the Project corridor, the County Sheriff or CPD would have the duty to both cite and relocate people who were illegally camping. The County would provide appropriate services for individuals that may include transitional shelters, permanent housing programs, and income and employment support. If ongoing illegal camping is identified along the Project corridor, regular patrol of the alignment by the County Sheriff or CPD would be instated to ward off the establishment of permanent illegal campers. Additionally, as discussed under Impact PUB-2, increased police access, lighting, fencing, and signage would aid in minimizing crime in the Project corridor and discourage vandalism and trespassing. Signage would be posted indicating that camping is prohibited, and loitering is prohibited from dusk to dawn. There would also be contact information on trail signage and City, County, and RTC websites for security, maintenance, vandalism, and refuse collection. Further, the Project would increase access for police patrol by clearing the areas around the existing rail and adding access points and a paved trail that could be traversed by law enforcement personnel, enhancing overall safety. In addition, there would be no new bathrooms added as part of the Project, which would help prevent vandalism and loitering around the facilities. As detailed in Draft EIR Section 3.11.4, under Impact PUB-2, with the Project safety features, increased access for law enforcement, and law enforcement patrols, the Project is not anticipated to result in a significant public safety or security risk.

As discussed in Draft EIR Section 3.11.4 under Impact PUB-2, the increased human activity along the Project corridor, including the potential for increased number of persons who are unhoused, loitering, or trespassing onto adjacent lands, could result in additional calls from the public for police protection or law enforcement service. While the Project could increase the need for police and law enforcement services, the Project would not require the construction of additional CPD or County Sheriff's stations or the expansion of services currently provided by the CPD or the County Sheriff's Office, because the Project would not result in an increase in population. Further, the potential for increased calls is not anticipated to require hiring additional personnel that would

¹² California Department of Transportation. 2020. Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol For New Highway Construction, Reconstruction, and Retrofit Barrier Projects. April.

require expansion of facilities (e.g., police/sheriff stations). Based on discussions with the County Sheriff's Office in May 2022, the Sheriff's Office predicts that the trail could improve safety because the lighting, fencing, and signage could reduce crime, the increased visibility along the Project corridor could reduce loitering and camping by unhoused individuals, and clearing the areas around the existing rail and adding access points could increase access for police patrol. In summary, the Project is not expected to result in the need for the construction or expansion of additional police protection or law enforcement facilities, as there are sufficient existing services to address infrequent occurrences of criminal activity.

In conclusion, no revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Master Response H: Width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Alternatives Analysis

Several comments express concern about Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and why it was designed to be 16 feet wide instead of 12 feet wide and if the latter width could reduce impacts (227.1, 274.2, 274.5, 276.6, 277.6, 284.8, 284.11, 287.3, 299.3, 314.1). Additionally, one of the comments states the DEIR is missing a narrower Trail Only alternative and doesn't meet requirements for a CEQA Alternative (277.3).

Width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only). The County decided to evaluate a 16-foot-wide Trail Only alternative for two primary reasons. First, during the NOP scoping process, the public expressed interest in evaluating and implementing only Part 1 of the Optional Interim Trail, which is 16 feet wide. Second, it was anticipated it could reduce at least one impact of the Ultimate Trail Configuration and Optional Interim Trail (e.g., less tree removal).

Consistent with Caltrans design guidance for a Class I multi-use trail and the multi-use paved path classification in the MBSST Network Master Plan, the desired trail width is 12 to 16 feet, with 16 feet wide being preferred where space permits to accommodate higher volumes of trail users. Therefore, for Alternative 1 (Trail Only), the trail is generally the preferred 16 feet wide and meanders away from the track center line where space allows to minimize impacts. Trail width is reduced to less than 16 feet (as narrow as 12 feet) in constrained locations along the trail corridor to further minimize construction impacts associated with retaining walls and other structures.

Alternatives Analysis. *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6(a), requires that an "EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the Project, or to the location of the Project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible. The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. There is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason. (*Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors* [1990] 52 Cal.3d 553 and *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* [1988] 47 Cal.3d 376)."

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(c), states, "The range of potential alternatives to the Proposed Project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. The EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed. The EIR should also identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the

scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. Additional information explaining the choice of alternatives may be included in the administrative record. Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are: (i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (ii) infeasibility, or (iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts."

Finally, "the range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a 'rule of reason' that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project" (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6[f]). Furthermore, "an EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative (*Residents Ad Hoc Stadium Committee v. Board of Trustees* [1979] 89 Cal. App.3d 274)" (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6[f][3]).

To merit analysis in an EIR, an alternative must be (1) potentially feasible, (2) capable of attaining "most" of the basic Project objectives, and (3) capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any of the significant effects of the Project. "Feasible" is defined as "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors" (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15364).

The Draft EIR includes sufficient information and analysis of the Proposed Project options and alternatives, as follows, to provide meaningful evaluation and comparison with the Proposed Project:

- 12-foot-wide trail, *Proposed Project: Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail next to Rail line)*, in Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*
- 16-foot-wide trail, *Proposed Project: Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail line) Part 1*, in Chapter 3
- 12-foot-wide trail, *Alternative 2: Rail with Trail on Opposite Side of Tracks*, in Chapter 5, *Project Alternatives*
- 16-foot-wide trail, *Alternative 1: Trail Only*, in Chapter 5

The County's process and rationale for considering alternatives and selecting those evaluated in the Draft EIR is explained in DEIR Section 5.1, *Development of Alternatives*.

Finally, it is logical that the reader and decision makers would be able to determine that the impacts of a 12-foot-wide trail (compared to a 16-foot-wide trail in the same location) would be substantially similar and slightly less impactful by reducing the trail width by 4 feet (2 feet each side). Therefore, omitting evaluation of Alternative 1 with a 12-foot trail (instead of a 16-foot trail) does not deprive the reviewers and decision makers of a meaningful evaluation to foster informed decision-making.

To provide additional information, the design team estimated that reducing the width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) from a 16-foot-wide trail to 12-foot-wide trail would result in removing approximately 241 trees instead of 288 trees. Although the tree removal impact would be reduced by approximately 47 trees (or 16%), the removal of 241 trees would still be considered a significant and unavoidable impact because native and Protected/Significant trees would be removed, and replacement trees would take many years to mature and provide ecosystems services.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Master Response I: Requirement to Include All 3 Parts of Optional Interim Trail

Several comments state the Optional Interim Trail should not include Parts 2 and 3, the EIR should not evaluate Parts 2 and 3, there needs to be a separate evaluation of impacts solely attributable to Part 1, and Part 3 should be evaluated as a separate project if and when it's considered feasible (174.7, 287.1, 288.1, and 307.1). Additionally, the EIR needs to do a better job of laying out the tradeoffs between the Ultimate Trail and Optional Interim Trail, and the Interim Trail is made to look worse because the EIR evaluation includes the Interim Trail and the Ultimate Trail (174.4).

The potential impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail are evaluated at an equal level of detail and presented throughout Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, enabling the reader to compare the potential impacts of both for the required environmental topics, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

CEQA requires an EIR consider and evaluate the whole of a project. *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126, states, "all phases of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment."

The Optional Interim Trail by definition is interim or temporary and thus has defined parts as described in Section 2.4.2: (1) removal of the rail and construction of the Interim Trail on the rail line, (2) removal of the Interim Trail and rebuilding the rail, and (3) construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration alongside the rail line. This requires railbanking, as described in Sections 1.2.4 and 2.4.2 of the DEIR (also refer to **Master Response E**).

Thus, in accordance with CEQA, the Draft EIR evaluates all phases of the proposed Project, including all three parts of the Optional Interim Trail. A discussion is provided for each part, so the reader can understand the impact of each part individually as well as collectively, in Chapter 3 (Sections 3.1.4, 3.2.4, 3.3.4, . . . 3.15.4), as follows: (1) Implementation of Interim Trail; (2) Demolition of the Interim Trail and Rebuilding of the Rail Line; and (3) Construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Additionally, to facilitate the comparison of impacts, the discussions include the "Combined Effect of Interim Trail Parts 1, 2, 3" and "Comparison of Proposed Project Impact with/without Optional Interim Trail."

Where comparisons are made between the Ultimate Trail and Interim Trail in Chapter 5 to identify an environmentally superior alternative, the discussions acknowledge the three parts, but must consider the whole of the project for the conclusions (as described above in this response).

The Chapter 3 introduction, *Approach to Project Analysis*, has been revised to clarify the CEQA requirements to analyze the whole of the project.



Capitola Trestle on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

Background

The Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) owns the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. The rail line is a freight rail line in need of structural repairs on several bridges, including the Capitola Trestle. The RTC, in partnership with local jurisdictions, is pursuing development of a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facility, referred to as the Coastal Rail Trail, within the rail right-of-way. The RTC is also pursuing development of passenger rail within the rail right-of-way as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail project.

The Capitola Trestle complex is comprised of 5 individual, but connected, bridges, each made of different materials. The Capitola Trestle provides an elevated rail crossing of Soquel Creek, Wharf Road, Riverview Avenue, and Capitola Avenue. Repairs to the Capitola Trestle complex are needed before the bridge is viable for freight or passenger service.

FAQS

Can a bicycle and pedestrian bridge be attached to the existing Capitola Trestle to provide bicycles and pedestrians access across Soquel Creek within the rail line right-of-way?

A bicycle and pedestrian bridge cannot be attached to the existing Capitola Trestle. The Capitola Trestle complex is made up of 5 bridges including two concrete spans, two multi-span open deck timber trestles, and an open deck wrought iron bridge that spans Soquel Creek. The wrought iron bridge and timber trestles do not have a location suitable to connect a cantilevered bicycle and pedestrian bridge and do not have adequate structural capacity to support the added weight. Therefore, a bicycle and pedestrian bridge, like the one cantilevered from the San Lorenzo River Trestle, is not feasible on the Capitola Trestle complex.

Can a separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge be constructed across Soquel Creek within the rail line right-of-way?

The rail right-of-way in the area of the Capitola Trestle complex is constrained. Constructing a stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian bridge next to the existing Capitola Trestle and within the rail right-of-way may not be feasible and would require significant engineering. Due to this space constraint, the engineering challenges of constructing a bridge spanning Soquel Creek, and the cost of constructing a new bridge (trail or rail bridge) over Soquel Creek, staff is recommending that a bicycle and pedestrian trail bridge be combined with replacement of a

new Capitola Trestle complex. The Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Concept Report will evaluate the feasibility and cost of a combined rail and trail bridge to replace the Capitola Trestle complex. To date, no cost estimate has been developed for a new combined rail and trail bridge to replace the current Capitola Trestle complex.

Can the Capitola Trestle bicycle and pedestrian trail be constructed on the existing Capitola Trestle?

The 2021 Capitola Railroad Bridge Repurposing Conceptual Study analyzed the feasibility of converting the Capitola Trestle from a rail bridge to a bicycle and pedestrian trail bridge. The Study determined that, from a constructability and engineering standpoint, the Capitola Trestle could be repurposed into a bicycle and pedestrian bridge if required structural repairs are completed, including the replacement of the wrought iron bearings, all the timber bracing, and 30-40% of the timber piles. After structural repairs are completed, the existing rails, decking, and ballast could be removed and replaced with a steel and fiber reinforced polymer deck system similar to that used on the San Lorenzo trail bridge. The study estimated that repair and repurposing of the bridge would cost approximately \$7 million in 2021 dollars.

What are the regulatory requirements to allow the repurposing of the Capitola Trestle to a bicycle and pedestrian bridge?

In order to be able to repurpose the Capitola Trestle to a bicycle and pedestrian bridge, the rail line would

either need to go through the regulatory process administered by the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) to be abandoned or railbanked. STB regulations designate a common carrier who has the obligation to provide freight rail service to potential customers. To remove the obligation, a freight railroad would need to apply to the STB for abandonment based on the lack of freight service and the high cost of repairs. Abandonment is not desired by the RTC since any right-of-way owned by easement and not fee title would revert to the underlying property owners. Railbanking is a method by which freight rail lines proposed for abandonment can be preserved for future freight rail use through interim conversion to trail use and other uses. If railbanked, the rail and ties could be removed, and the right-of-way would be preserved for potential re-activation of freight and other potential rail service.

How can the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line be railbanked to allow for repurposing of the Capitola Trestle to a bicycle and pedestrian bridge?

To abandon and railbank the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, the freight operator would need to file for direct abandonment with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) or an interested party could file for adverse abandonment. The RTC would need to both file a petition with the STB to enter into railbanking negotiations, and subsequently enter into a railbank agreement with the freight operator. The RTC would need to assume financial liability for preserving the rail line. Railbanking by means of a direct abandonment proceeding can be streamlined when there is no opposition. Another freight operator can make an Offer of Financial Assistance (OFA) to maintain the line and assume the legal obligation to provide freight service. A freight rail customer or the owner of a potential stranded line would have grounds to object to abandonment and railbanking. The STB will not refuse to issue a railbanking order based on third-party objections about the desirability or appropriateness of the proposed use. The best path to railbanking is to have the mutual support of all affected parties, including the freight operator, affected freight customers, and owners of potential stranded lines.

What other steps are required to develop an interim trail on the Capitola Trestle?

In addition to railbanking, several steps need to occur to develop an interim trail on the Capitola Trestle, including environmental review, design, permitting and securing funding. The Coastal Rail Trail Segment

10 & 11 Project environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will include evaluation of the Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail next to Rail Line) and an optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) and both are part of the Proposed Project. In addition, the Ultimate Trail Configuration includes a design option that would provide environmental clearance under CEQA for an Interim Trail on the Capitola Trestle as part of the Ultimate Trail Configuration to maximize flexibility. Therefore, an interim trail project on the Capitola Trestle will be environmentally cleared under CEQA as part of the proposed Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 environmental review, should the County of Santa Cruz certify the Segment 10 & 11 Final Environmental Impact Report. Once the interim trail is environmentally cleared, the project could enter the project design phase, should funding be available.

Is there funding for construction of an interim trail on the Capitola Trestle?

There is not approved funding for repurposing the Capitola Trestle for an interim trail. The County of Santa Cruz, in coordination with the RTC and City of Capitola, are developing the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11 project, which extends from 17th Avenue to State Park Drive in the unincorporated area of the County of Santa Cruz. A combination of local, state and federal funding is dedicated to construction of Segment 10 & 11 for the Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail next to Rail Line). The current funded project does not include funding for development of a trail across the Capitola Trestle.

What does the Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 funded project include for Capitola Village?

The Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11 project includes re-striping the existing bike lanes in Capitola Village and enhancing the Class II bike lanes with green thermoplastic striping, and enhancing existing sharrows on Class III roadways with green paint. The project also includes adding signage directing bicyclists and pedestrians through the Village to the Coastal Rail Trail. In addition, a roughly 350-foot-long section of Cliff Drive from the end of the trail to the start of the Cliff Drive sidewalk will be restriped to create a delineated pedestrian walkway and Class II bike lane on the coastal side of the roadway where bicyclists and pedestrians currently have to share the bike lane.



Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Railbanking on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

Railbanking is a method by which freight rail lines proposed for abandonment can be preserved for future freight rail use through interim conversion to trail use and other uses.

To preserve the national railroad system, the federal government established railbanking in 1983 through the National Trails System Act (Rails to Trails Act). The Rails to Trails Act provides an alternative to completely abandoning a railroad right-of-way by allowing a railroad to negotiate a trail use agreement with a prospective trail sponsor. The prospective trail sponsor must be willing to assume financial liability to preserve the rail line for future re-activation to freight rail use.

Most people associate railbanking with projects that remove the rails and repurpose infrastructure for a multi-use trail. When a railroad owns easements, the same property rights issues exist, regardless as to whether the trail replaces the rail or is built adjacent to the rail. Underlying landowners of rail easements can claim that rail easements do not include a trail, whether the rail is removed or not. However, if the corridor is railbanked, a trail can be built either adjacent to or in place of the rail line. In either case, freight railroad easements would be protected from reverting to underlying property owners.

Decisions as to where to build the trail and whether and when to pursue commuter rail is separate from railbanking. Railbanking does not require the rail to be removed. Under railbanking, the RTC can proceed with constructing either a rail-with-trail or a rail-to-trail project. The RTC has not taken any action to railbank the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

FAQs

Q1: What does it mean to abandon a rail line or portion of a rail line?

Abandonment of a rail line or portion of a rail line is a process through which railroads remove a rail line or portion of a rail line from the national freight rail network and jurisdiction of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) and eliminate the railroad's obligation to provide freight service over and along the rail line. After abandonment, any property where a railroad only owned an easement for rail purposes would revert to the underlying property owner.

Q2: What are the four transportation uses being considered for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line?

The branch line is part of the national freight rail network and has historically provided two uses, freight rail service and recreational (excursion) passenger rail service. The third proposed use is a multi-use active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian) trail along the full length of the right of way. Commuter passenger rail service between Pajaro and Santa Cruz is the fourth proposed use.

Q3: Is railbanking different from abandonment?

Yes. Although part of the abandonment process, railbanking stops short of abandonment.

Q4: Does railbanking only facilitate building trails?

No, railbanking would facilitate both implementation of commuter passenger rail service and any configuration of a trail on the branch line.

Q5: If railbanking makes light rail on the branch line easier, what is being banked?

The right-of-way would be “banked” for potential re-activation of freight rail service.

Q6: How would railbanking make it easier to implement commuter light rail?

The infrastructure and space needed to accommodate heavy freight rail and light commuter rail are different. Less infrastructure and space would be needed to implement light rail if the right-of-way is railbanked for freight. Scheduling and operations are also easier with only one type of rail on a line.

Q7: If the branch line were railbanked for potential freight re-activation, would any work on the line need to accommodate freight requirements?

No. Work on the line, including work for commuter rail and/or a trail would not need to be designed for freight rail standards; however, work must be done in a manner that does not jeopardize the integrity of the rail line for potential freight re-activation.

Q8: Who would be responsible for the cost of future freight re-activation?

This will depend in part on the terms of the interim trail use agreement that is negotiated, but generally, the freight rail operator who applies for re-activation would be responsible for the cost of re-purposing the corridor back for freight operations.

Q9: Would railbanking make it easier for RTC to implement a trail adjacent to the rail line?

Yes. Railbanking would allow the use of any easements that might be restricted to only rail to be expanded to include a trail adjacent to the rail line. The RTC would not need to acquire any additional property rights and would not need to construct the trail to meet freight rail requirements.

Q10: If the corridor is railbanked, could the RTC remove the rail and build an interim trail?

Yes, but removing the rail is not required.

Q11: Why is a trail in place of the rail referred to as an interim trail?

Since railbanking would be preserving the rail line for future re-activation of freight rail, any trail built on the existing rail alignment would likely need to be moved (or removed) if freight rail were reactivated.

Q12: If the corridor is railbanked, would the RTC be required to remove the rail and construct a trail in its place?

No. Railbanking only requires the trail manager to preserve the right of way for future freight re-activation. The rail can remain in place. A trail is only an option and is not required.

Q13: Why is the RTC discussing railbanking now?

The RTC's contract freight operator, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad (SPPR) submitted a notice of intent to terminate its agreement with the RTC and a notice of intent to abandon the line. Although SPPR has subsequently withdrawn the notice of intent to abandon the line, SPPR indicated that they reserve the right to file for abandonment at any time.

Q14: If the branch line is not railbanked, could a trail still be built on the rail line?

Yes, but the trail would need to be located adjacent to the rail line. Additional property rights would need to be obtained at locations where the RTC determines there are insufficient rights to build the trail, such as easements for rail purposes. If those property rights cannot be acquired, then those sections of the trail would need to be diverted off the SCBRL right-of-way and onto local streets.

Q15: What is the status of freight on the branch line?

There are about a half dozen active freight rail customers in Watsonville. There are no active customers north of Watsonville. The authorized freight operator (SPPR) has contracted with a local operator (Roaring Camp) to provide freight service to existing customers, but SPPR has indicated that they would still like to terminate its agreement with the RTC.

Q16: What needs to happen for the RTC to railbank the branch line?

Ideally, the freight operator (SPPR) would file for direct abandonment with the Surface Transportation Board (STB). The RTC would need to both file a petition with the STB to enter into railbanking negotiations, and subsequently enter into a railbank agreement with the freight operator. The RTC would need to assume financial liability for preserving the rail line. Railbanking by means of a direct abandonment proceeding can be streamlined when there is not opposition.

Another approach would be for a third party, such as the RTC, to petition the STB for an adverse abandonment. Adverse abandonment is more complicated and comes with a heavier burden to demonstrate that the public convenience and necessity require that the operator's common carrier obligations be extinguished. Adverse abandonment is not preferred.

Q17: Who might be able to prevent the branch line from being railbanked?

Another freight operator can make an Offer Financial Assistance (OFA) to maintain the line and assume the legal obligation to provide freight service. A freight rail customer or the owner of a potential stranded line would have grounds to object to abandonment and railbanking. The STB will not refuse to issue a railbanking order based on third-party objections about the desirability or appropriateness of the proposed use.

The best path to railbanking is to have the mutual support of all affected parties, including the freight operator, affected freight customers, and owners of potential stranded lines.

Q18: Can only a portion of a rail line be railbanked?

Yes. A portion of a rail line can be railbanked.

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State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



December 13, 2023

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov

Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11, Draft Environmental Impact Report, SCH No. 2021110080, Santa Cruz County

Dear Mr. Tidmore:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has received and reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared by the County of Santa Cruz (County) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 (Project), located in Santa Cruz County, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

CDFW submits these comments on the draft EIR to inform the County, as the CEQA Lead Agency, of potentially significant impacts to biological resources associated with the Project.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California’s **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the state. (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines, § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting these comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority over the Project pursuant to the Fish and

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The “CEQA Guidelines” are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW’s Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent the Project may result in “take,” as defined by state law, of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) or Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (Fish & G. Code, § 1900 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code will be required.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

California Endangered Species Act and Native Plant Protection Act

Please be advised that a CESA or NPPA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) must be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in “take” of plants or animals listed under CESA or NPPA, either during construction or over the life of the Project. “Take” means “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.” (Fish & G. Code, § 86). If the Project will impact CESA or NPPA listed species, early consultation with CDFW is encouraged, as significant modification to the Project and mitigation measures may be required to obtain an ITP. CDFW’s issuance of an ITP is subject to CEQA and to facilitate permit issuance, any such project modifications and mitigation measures must be incorporated into the draft EIR’s analysis, discussion, and mitigation monitoring and reporting program.

CEQA requires a mandatory finding of significance if a Project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species. (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21001, subd. (c) & 21083; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15380, 15064 & 15065). In addition, pursuant to CEQA, the Lead Agency cannot approve a project unless all impacts to the environment are avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels, or the Lead Agency makes and supports findings of overriding consideration for impacts that remain significant despite the implementation of all feasible mitigation. Findings of consideration under CEQA, however, do not eliminate the Project proponent’s obligation to comply with the Fish and Game Code.

Lake and Streambed Alteration

CDFW requires an LSA Notification, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq., for Project activities affecting lakes, streams, rivers, or associated riparian habitat. Notification is required for any activity that may substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow; change or use material from the bed, channel, or bank (including associated riparian or wetland resources); or deposit or dispose of material where it may pass into a river, lake, or stream. Work within ephemeral streams, drainage ditches, washes, watercourses with a subsurface flow, and floodplains is generally subject to notification requirements. In addition, infrastructure installed beneath such aquatic features, such as through hydraulic directional drilling, is also generally subject

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to notification requirements. Therefore, any impact to the mainstems, tributaries, or floodplains or associated riparian habitat caused by the proposed Project will likely require an LSA Notification. CDFW may not execute a final LSA Agreement until it has considered the final draft EIR and complied with its responsibilities as a responsible agency under CEQA.

Raptors and Other Nesting Birds

CDFW has authority over actions that may result in the disturbance or destruction of active bird nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections protecting birds, their eggs, and nests include section 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession, or needless destruction of the nests or eggs of any bird), section 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession, or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and section 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird). Migratory birds are also protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Fully Protected Species

Fully Protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, & 5515).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: The County of Santa Cruz in coordination with the City of Capitola and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission.

Objective: The Project involves construction of a new 4.5-mile multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail which would follow the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission owned railroad corridor from the eastern side of 17th Avenue to the western side of State Park Drive. The Project would extend through unincorporated Santa Cruz County and the City of Capitola (City). The Project would provide an accessible bicycle/pedestrian path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the rail corridor, consistent with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan. The draft EIR includes two potential alignments for the trail including the Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail Next to Rail Line), and an Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) as an optional first phase, for both Segments 10 and 11. With the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the trail would be located along the inland side of the railroad tracks. The Ultimate Trail Configuration is considered the preferred alignment by the Project proponents.

Timeframe: Construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration without the Optional Interim Trail would begin in 2026 and would continue for approximately 48 months. Construction of the optional Interim Trail would occur in 3 parts. Part 1, implementation of the Optional Interim Trail would occur between 2023 through 2027 and include

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environmental review, design, right-of-way process, and trail construction. Part 2, demolition of the trail and rebuilding of the rail line would occur between 2056-2060. Part 3, construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration would occur between 2060-2064.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND LOCATION

The Project extends 4.7 miles along the Regional Transportation Commission-owned Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line corridor in central Santa Cruz County, within the California Coastal Zone. The Ultimate Trail Configuration does not include development of an approximately 0.5-mile section of the rail corridor, which encompasses the Capitola Trestle Bridge. Instead, trail users would be directed off the rail corridor at Opal Street and Cliff Drive and onto existing on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks through Capitola Village. Therefore, the Ultimate Trail Configuration alignment is 4.2 miles long, and the Optional Interim Trail alignment is 4.7 miles long. The Project extends through developed portions of the County and City, including residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational land uses, as well as New Brighton State Beach open space. There are several aquatic features within the Project alignment including Rodeo Gulch, Soquel Creek, Escalona Gulch, Tannery Gulch, New Brighton Creek, Borregas Creek and its tributaries, Stream 633, and Flatiron Creek. There are many different habitat types within the Project footprint including coast live oak woodland and forest, mixed riparian forest, mixed evergreen forest, non-native forest, and coastal scrub and coastal terrace prairie.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the County in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project’s significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on biological resources.

COMMENT 1: Monarch Overwintering Habitat Loss

Issue: The draft EIR states that both the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail would have a significant and unavoidable impact on monarch butterfly autumnal and/or winter roost sites. The Ultimate Trail Configuration would permanently impact 2.05 acres of known and potential monarch roost habitat and remove 318 trees within known and potential roost sites. The Optional Interim Trail parts 1-3 would permanently impact 3.84 acres of habitat and remove 358 trees. The Project may also indirectly impact monarchs due to loss of buffer trees and nectar resources that can provide important wind shelter and food supplies. Direct and indirect Project impacts to monarch roost sites would substantially adversely affect monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) population recovery and further extirpation at these sites. Monarch butterflies require suitable overwintering habitat which includes wind protection and access to

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nectar resources. The loss of suitable overwintering habitat for monarchs would contribute to extirpation of western monarch populations.

Occurrences: Potential habitat is present along Rodeo Gulch, south of Xerces site #2982. Known roost trees and buffer trees located on CDFW property at Escalona Gulch (Xerces site #2985) would be impacted by the Project. Autumnal roost trees and wind buffer trees north of Xerces Site #3986 would be impacted by the Project. Buffer trees along Borregas Creek (Xerces Site #2987) would be impacted by the Project.

Evidence the impact would be significant: The western population of the monarch butterfly has declined by 95 percent of their historic level (Crone et al. 2019). In addition, the population dropped to a critical low level of less than one percent of its historic size in 2018 (Pelton et al. 2019), though it has since rebounded. The decrease in western monarch butterfly population size may be due to the loss of overwintering habitat and loss of its host plant (milkweed) (Pelton et al. 2019). Land conversion and pesticide use are also thought to be primary drivers of decline in the western population of the species (Crone et al. 2019). Protection of overwintering habitat is critical to the recovery of the species. The Xerces Society and partners including CDFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) highlight central coast areas where monarchs overwinter as the highest priority zone for actions targeting western monarch recovery (Xerces Society, 2023).

Recommendation: CDFW recommends that the Project avoid impacts to known and potential monarch roost habitat including buffer trees and nectar resources. The maintenance of trees and shrubs within 500 feet of these sites provides a buffer to preserve the microclimate conditions of the overwintering habitat. Alternatives to tree removal such as tree limbing and alternative trail alignment through known and potential monarch roost sites should be considered prior to tree removal to minimize potential impacts. Where tree removal cannot be avoided, CDFW recommends that a Monarch Roost Site Mitigation Plan is developed and included as part of the final environmental document.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: Avoidance and Protection of Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Sites. The Project shall avoid the removal of trees or shrubs within 500 feet of overwintering groves as recommended by the USFWS Section 7(a)(1) Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Recommendations (USFWS, 2023).

Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Qualified Biological Habitat Assessment and Wind Modeling. Trees selected for removal shall be evaluated by a qualified biologist for their potential impact to monarch roost habitat. Appropriate wind models shall be used to evaluate the potential loss of habitat suitability from changes to microclimate conditions necessary for monarch use. Known roost trees with active or historical documentation of monarch clustering shall be prioritized for avoidance. Buffer

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trees that would significantly alter the habitat suitability for autumnal and winter roosting if removed shall be prioritized for avoidance.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: Mitigation Plan Approval. The Project proponent shall submit a Monarch Roost Site Mitigation Plan for review and approval by relevant regulatory agencies including USFWS and CDFW. The plan shall be included as part of the Project environmental document. Appropriate mitigation may include the following:

1. Enhance roosting trees within overwintering sites by planting native insecticide-free trees (e.g., Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*), coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Torrey pine (*Pinus torreyana*), western sycamore (*Platanus acemose*), Bishop pine (*Pinus radiata*) and others, as appropriate for location). Enhance buffer habitat within 500 feet of roost sites by planting native trees as appropriate for location;
2. Conduct management activities such as tree trimming, selective thinning of small diameter trees, removal of downed wood, mowing, and grazing in monarch overwintering habitat to reduce fuel loads and minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire;
3. Conduct management and construction activities between March 1–September 30, outside of the estimated timeframe when monarchs are likely present;
4. Enhance native or non-invasive, insecticide-free nectar resources by planting fall/winter blooming forbs or shrubs within overwintering groves;
5. Avoid use of pesticides within overwintering groves and in a 500-foot buffer around them within the Project footprint, particularly when monarchs are present; and
6. Conduct grove monitoring or partner with organizations in the area monitoring for butterflies during the Western Monarch Counts each fall (end of November) and winter (beginning of January). Report when monarchs arrive and depart the groves each year (<https://www.westernmonarchcount.org/>).

CDFW recommends continued coordination to develop appropriate site-specific avoidance and mitigation measures for each potentially impacted roost site within the Project area.

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ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDDB. The CNDDDB online field survey form and other methods for submitting data can be found at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plantsand-Animals>.

FILING FEES

CDFW anticipates that the Project will have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary (Fish and Game Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089). Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project’s draft EIR. If you have any questions regarding this letter or for further coordination with CDFW, please contact Ms. Serena Stumpf, Environmental Scientist, at (707) 337-1364 or Serena.Stumpf@wildlife.ca.gov; or Mr. Wesley Stokes, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Erin Chappell
B77E9A6211EF486...
Erin Chappell
Regional Manager
Bay Delta Region

ec: Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH No.2021110080)

REFERENCES

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Xerces Society. 2023. Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation [Internet]. Western Monarch Call to Action. Available from: <https://www.xerces.org/western-monarch-call-to-action>. Accessed November 30, 2023

Commenter 1

COMMENTER: Erin Chappell, Regional Manager Bay Delta Region, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 1.0

The commenter explains their role as a Trustee Agency and regulatory authority with respect to the California Endangered Species Act, Native Plant Protection Act, Lake and Streambed Alteration, Raptors and Nesting Birds, and Fully Protected Species. The commenter also reiterates the project description, regulatory requirements, setting and location.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 1.1

The commenter references the DEIR's Significant and Unavoidable impact on monarch butterfly autumnal and/or winter roost sites and restates the impact acreages and locations of known roost sites as provided in the DEIR. The commenter also provides background information on the status of monarch populations, causes of declines, and identifies protection of overwintering habitat as critical to the protection and recovery of the species.

The commenter recommends that the Project avoid impacts to known and potential monarch roost habitat including primary roost trees, as well as wind buffer trees, shrubs, nectar plants, and microclimate conditions within 500 feet of roost trees. The commenter recommends alternatives to tree removal including tree limbing and alternative trail alignment through known and potential roost sites. In addition, the commenter recommends that a monarch roost site mitigation plan be developed and included as part of the FEIR.

Following are CDFW's recommended mitigation measures (in bold), with each measure followed by a summary of CDFW's comments and a response.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: Avoidance and Protection of Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Sites

The commenter cites USFWS Western Monarch Conservation Recommendations (USFWS 2023) that tree and shrub removal within 500 feet of overwintering groves should be avoided.

The DEIR has identified this potentially Significant and Unavoidable impact to known and potential roost sites for the monarch butterfly. The butterfly is discussed in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, in Section 3.3.1 (*Existing Conditions*) and Section 3.3.4 (*Project Impact Analysis – Impact BIO-1*). These impacts have been determined to be Significant and Unavoidable because tree removal is necessary to accommodate the California Public Utilities Commission safety requirements and Caltrans Class 1 trail width requirements that underly the trail design, as proposed. In order to meet these requirements, the Ultimate Trail or Optional Interim Trail cannot further avoid or reduce tree removal in or near monarch habitat, as shown on DEIR Figures 3.3-2b, 3.3-2e, and 3.3-2f and Figures

3.3-4b, 3.3-4e, and 3.3-4f and listed in Table 3.3-4 and Table 3.3-5 for each known or potential roost site. See also **Master Response A: Tree Removal**.

Therefore, the FEIR cannot be revised to incorporate the commenter's recommendation; however, the recommendation is noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration. As noted in the comment, the Lead Agency would be required to make and support findings of overriding consideration for these impacts. During construction, the minimum number of trees and other vegetation within 500 feet of known and potential monarch roost sites will be removed to accommodate the project.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Qualified Biological Habitat Assessment and Wind Modeling

The commenter recommends that a qualified biologist evaluate impacts associated with tree removal on known and potential monarch roost habitat (prioritizing known primary roost sites and buffer trees) and that wind models be used to assess loss of habitat suitability and changes to microclimate conditions.

Qualified biologists¹³ with EcoSystems West Consulting Group have conducted assessments of potential and known monarch roost sites, including buffer trees, within and near the proposed trail and have determined that proposed Project impacts associated with tree removal may modify habitat suitability. The Project biologists agree that conducting wind modeling on tree removal in or near monarch roost sites would provide useful information regarding changes to habitat suitability and microclimate conditions; however, this information is unlikely to change the Significant and Unavoidable determination, for the reasons provided above.

Recommendation Mitigation Measure 3: Mitigation Plan Approval

The commenter recommends that the Project proponent submit a Monarch Roost Site Mitigation Plan for review and approval by the relevant regulatory agencies including USFWS and CDFW. The plan may include the following components: 1) native tree planting and enhancement of buffer habitat within 500 feet of roost sites; 2) management of existing roost habitat; 3) timelines for construction to avoid roosting monarchs; 4) nectar sources; 5) avoidance of pesticides; and 6) grove monitoring. Finally, the commenter recommends continued coordination with CDFW.

Per Mitigation Measures BIO-7a and BIO-7c, construction activities would be confined to the development footprint, timed to avoid impacts to sensitive resources including monarch butterflies, and Best Management Practices would be implemented during construction. These measures would minimize impacts to monarch habitat during construction. In addition, Mitigation Measure BIO-7b prohibits the use of pesticides and herbicides for maintenance of the trail after construction.

The DEIR calls for the development of a Project Mitigation and Management Plan (MMP) (Mitigation Measure BIO-7b), which includes monarch roost and nectar sites and, specifically, a Monarch Roost Site Enhancement Plan (Mitigation Measure BIO-1b) to be incorporated into the MMP. However, as stated in the DEIR:

While the Project Mitigation and Monitoring Plan would include provisions for the enhancement of monarch habitat, the permanent loss of mature monarch roost trees, including buffer trees, cannot be adequately mitigated. This is because enhancement plantings would take many years to fully mature

¹³ EcoSystems West biologists Erin McGinty and Justin Davilla have 18 years and 16 years, respectively, assessing monarch roost habitat in coastal California and, for this Project, have consulted with Hilary Sardinas, CDFW Monarch Conservation Manager, Terris Kasteen, CDFW Environmental Scientist, as well as with John Dayton, entomologist and recognized monarch expert.

and provide adequate buffer quality and functions. In addition, mitigation sites for tree replacement planting are not readily available in locations that would benefit monarch roost habitat.

Therefore, as proposed, the Project would result in Significant and Unavoidable impacts on monarch roost sites. As noted in the comment, the Lead Agency would be required to make and support findings of overriding consideration for these impacts.

The DEIR seeks to reduce this Significant and Unavoidable impact to the extent possible through the MMP and specifically through Mitigation Measure BIO-1b, which directs the development of a Monarch Roost Site Enhancement Plan, as shown in italics below. Per the recommendations of the Commenter in Mitigation Measure 3: Mitigation Plan Approval, text underlined below has been added to Mitigation Measure BIO-1b in the DEIR to provide additional detail.

As a discreet component of Mitigation Measure BIO-7b [described under Impact BIO-7 (Sensitive Habitats)], the County of Santa Cruz shall work with property owners, including CDFW (Escalona Gulch) and State Parks (New Brighton State Beach and Borregas Creek) to develop a Monarch Roost Site Enhancement Plan for monarch roost sites near the rail corridor. Enhancement may include but is not limited to:

- *Protecting and maintaining the eucalyptus grove to support monarch roosting through maintenance of roost trees and wind buffer trees;*
- *Topping, thinning, and/or limbing of the grove, removal of downed wood, and/or management of understory vegetation, as needed, to allow sun penetration while preserving wind buffers and variable roost site conditions within the grove (i.e., sun, shade, and insulation from heat and cold), reduce fuel loads (to prevent catastrophic wildfire) and manage hazard trees;*
- *Planting of saplings [to develop wind buffers (which may include locally native trees¹⁴) and promote growth of future roost trees (avoid senescence¹⁵)]; and*
- *Cultivating fall- and winter-blooming nectar plants, including native or non-invasive forbs and shrubs.*
- *Grove monitoring (in partnership with Western Monarch Count, as applicable) during fall (end of November) and winter (beginning of January) monitoring periods and to record and report monarch arrival and departure dates.*
- *Continued coordination with CDFW, State Parks, and other resource agencies and organizations, as applicable for site specific mitigation measures and adaptive management, as needed.*

Implementation of this compensatory mitigation would be arranged through payment of in-lieu fees to the implementing body (i.e., CDFW or State Parks or mitigation contractor) or similar fiscal arrangement to be developed for the purposes of the Project.

As noted above, Mitigation Measure BIO-1b in DEIR Section 3.3 has been revised to include additional detail. All other recommendations are already contained within the DEIR.

¹⁴ The following trees are locally native to the rail corridor and may be planted to serve as buffer trees when suitable habitat is present respective of each species' habitat requirements: coast live oak, California bay laurel, California buckeye, willow species, elderberry species, and/or dogwood species.

¹⁵ "Senescence" is the age-related declines in woody plant communities that may be affected by physiological changes (e.g. reduced stem sap flow) in individual trees as well as the growing environment (e.g. drought) and interactions between these factors.

Response 1.2

The commenter requires that any special-status species and natural communities identified during Project surveys be reported to the CNDDDB, and notes that CDFW filing fees are payable upon lead agency filing of the Notice of Determination (NOD).

Novel occurrences of state and federal listed wildlife including those included on the CDFW Special Animals List; special-status plants including those with CNPS California Rare Plant Rankings 1-4; and CDFW Sensitive Natural Community Alliances and Associations will be recorded in the CNDDDB. The County will pay the required fee when filing the NOD.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102



December 15, 2023

Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue,
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project.
SCH#2021110080.

Dear Mr. Tidmore:

The California Public Utilities Commission's (Commission/CPUC) Rail Crossing Engineering Branch (RCEB) is taking this opportunity to address the County of Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and the County of Santa Cruz (County) Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project.

The project, detailed in the DEIR and associated documents, aims to create a 4.5-mile multi-use bike and pedestrian path along the RTC-owned railroad corridor from 17th Avenue in Live Oak to State Park Drive in Aptos, California. This is part of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan. It includes Segment 10 (1.5 miles) and Segment 11 (2.7 miles).

The project will have an immediate impact on the following highway-rail crossings:

Crossing Name	City	CPUC Crossing Number	DOT Crossing Number
17 th Avenue	Twin Lakes	137A-17.70	768248K
30 th Avenue	Opal Cliffs	137A-17.10	768249S
38 th Avenue	Capitola	137A-16.90	768250L
41 st Avenue	Capitola	137A-16.75	768251T
47 th Avenue	Capitola	137A-16.40	768252A
Prospect Ave. Ped	Capitola	N/A	970971N
Wharf Road	Capitola	137A-15.85-B	768253G
Riverview Avenue	Capitola	137A-15.80-BD	TBD
Capitola Avenue	Capitola	137A-15.75-B	768254N
Monterey Avenue	Capitola	137A-15.50	768255V
Grove Lane	Capitola	137A-15.20-X	768256C

2-0

2-0
 cont.

New Brighton Road	Capitola	137A-14.70-B	768257J
New Brighton Road	Aptos	137A-14.10-X	768258R
Estates Drive	Aptos	137A-13.75-X	768260S
Marvista Drive	Aptos	137A-13.30	768261Y
State Park Drive	Aptos	137A-13.00	768262F
State Route 1	Aptos	137A-12.85-B	768263M

RCEB staff offers the following comments:

I. Commission Requirements and Policy

The Commission is responsible for overseeing the safety of highway-rail crossings (crossings) in the state. This includes exclusive authority over these crossings' design, modification, and closure, as outlined in Public Utilities Code Section 1201 et al.

The Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project must adhere to various regulations set by the Commission. The project's design must align with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and Commission General Orders (GO's).

Essential compliance requirements identified by the Commission for this rail segment include:

- The Commission prohibits the use of Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at crossings. Instead, the project can implement pedestrian-activated LED W11-15 signs for minor roadways or full traffic signals for major roadways.
- Each crossing with automatic warning devices must have additional sidelights aimed at pedestrian paths, as required by the CPUC.
- The CPUC advises using off-quadrant Commission Standard 8 warning devices at each at-grade crossing.
- The CPUC mandates the removal of old rails used as barriers around warning devices at several crossings.
- For private crossings, the CPUC requires General Order 75 signs. Some private crossings currently lack these signs, as observed from Google Street View.
- Private crossings used by more than four parties (e.g., five or more residences) are classified as publicly used. The CPUC recommends installing automatic warning devices at each of these crossings.
- The CPUC must authorize any new rail crossings through a formal application process. This process includes the closure of existing crossings to permit new ones for this rail line. A list of crossings planned for closure is required for CPUC authorization of new crossings.

2-1

- The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires closing crossings in its inventory for rail-banked segments. Reopening these crossings requires CPUC authorization through a formal application process if the rail-banked segment is to be reactivated.
- To resume rail service in rail-banked segments, reopening crossings requires CPUC authorization, which is also obtained through a formal application process.
- Modification of any railroad crossings requires Commission authorization through the GO 88-B process.

The following GO's, among others, may also be applicable:

- GO 26-D (regulations governing clearances on railroads and street railroads with reference to side and overhead structures, parallel tracks, and the crossing of public roads, highways, and streets)
- GO 72-B (rules governing the construction and maintenance of crossings at grade of railroads with public streets, roads, and highways)
- GO 75-D (regulations governing standards for warning devices for at-grade highway-rail crossings)
- GO 88-B (rules for altering public highway-rail crossings)
- GO 95 (rules for overhead electric line construction)
- GO 118 (regulations governing the construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of walkways adjacent to railroad trackage and the control of vegetation adjacent thereto).

II. Specific Project Comments

• The CPUC mandates immediately closing and removing the stairway at Private Pedestrian Crossing DOT #970971N (Prospect Avenue Ped Crossing). This crossing does not meet the necessary criteria of providing access between two private properties or ensuring neither side is landlocked by the railway tracks. Instead, it seems to connect two public streets, making it an unauthorized public crossing. The CPUC, which has never authorized or reviewed this crossing, notes its lack of warning devices and a proper track surface. Under California Public Utilities Code 7537, the CPUC can determine the need and necessity for a crossing.

• For the intersection near Monterey Avenue, the CPUC suggests eliminating the stop control for northbound traffic on Monterey Avenue.

• At 41st Avenue, the CPUC requires the installation of traffic signals to manage the adjoining crosswalk at this crossing.

• New Brighton Road crossing should be classified as a public crossing due to its access to numerous residences. The current passive private crossing signs are deemed insufficient for the level of use at this crossing.

2-6

- Field Diagnostic meetings are required at all impacted or potentially new crossings prior to the implementation of the interim trail and the rail alignment in the Ultimate Trail Configuration. The Field Diagnostic Team consists of staff and representatives from the County, RTC, the City of Capitola, CPUC, Saint Paul & Pacific Railroad Company (SPP), and potentially the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and California State Parks(State Parks). This review includes a detailed analysis of the crossing. During the field diagnostic review, the Field Diagnostic Team evaluates appropriate hazard elimination recommendations and determines whether the project's development is feasible.

2-7

RCEB also recommends that the RTC add language that any future development adjacent to or near the railroad (ROW) is planned with the safety of the rail corridor in mind. The trail project may increase traffic volumes at highway-rail crossings and trail and bike intersections. This includes considering pedestrian circulation patterns or destinations with respect to railroad right-of-way (ROW) and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

2-8

Mitigation measures to consider should include but are not limited to planning for grade separations for significant thoroughfares, eliminating at-grade rail crossings to enhance public safety, upgrading existing at-grade crossings to handle increased traffic volumes, and installing continuous, vandal-resistant fencing or similar barriers to prevent trespassers from accessing the railroad ROW.

2-9

The Commission is the responsible agency under CEQA section 15381 regarding this project. As such, we appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to work with the County and RTC to improve public safety as it relates to rail crossings. We request that RCEB be informed of all developments associated with the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project. Meetings should be arranged with the Commission's RCEB staff to discuss relevant safety issues and conduct diagnostic reviews of any proposed and impacted crossing locations within the proposed Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project.

If you have any questions, please email Eyitejumade "Ade" Sogbesan at es3@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Eyitejumade "Ade" Sogbesan
Utilities Engineer
California Public Utilities Commission
Rail Safety Division
Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch

Commenter 2

COMMENTER: Eyitejumade “Ade” Sogbesan, Utilities Engineer, California Public Utilities Commission

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 2.0

The commenter provides a brief recap of the project description and identification of the roadway rail crossings.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.1

The comment identifies the commission requirements for this rail segment and applicable general orders, such as the required warning devices.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.2

The CPUC mandates closing and removing the stairway at the Prospect Ave pedestrian crossing.

The County is planning to apply for a Formal Crossing application at this location to formalize the existing and historic use of this crossing by members of the public.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.3

The CPUC suggests eliminating the stop control for northbound traffic on Monterey Ave.

The Segments 10/11 Project is not proposing any modifications to this intersection. The City of Capitola has applied for and received a GO-88B permit for the addition of a crossbike at this intersection, and it does not include removal of the stop sign.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.4

The CPUC requires installation of a traffic signal at 41st Ave.

This comment is inconsistent with the GO-88B approval that CPUC issued the County for 41st Avenue on January 31, 2023. The traffic engineer study shows that the crossing does not warrant a traffic signal. Current crossing design was reviewed at the field diagnostic and subsequently approved by CPUC.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.5

The New Brighton Road crossing should be classified as a public crossing, as the current passive private crossing signs are considered insufficient.

The existing subdivision utilizes the existing private crossing for access regardless of the trail's presence. This trail project didn't create, nor does it impact the subdivision's use of the private crossing.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.6

Field diagnostic meetings are required at all impacted or potentially new crossings prior to Project implementation.

The County plans to schedule field diagnostic meetings with CPUC staff in spring 2024.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.7

The Rail Crossing Engineering Branch (RCEB) recommends that the RTC add language that any future development (including pedestrian circulation patterns) near the railroad is planned with safety of the rail corridor in mind.

This comment is not related to the Project and would apply to City and County planning policies.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.8

The CPUC suggests considering grade separations for significant thoroughfares, upgrading or eliminating at grade rail crossings, and installing continuous vandal-resistant fencing to prevent trespassers from accessing the railroad ROW.

This comment is inconsistent with the GO-88B approvals that CPUC issued the County for 30th Avenue, 38th Avenue, 41st Avenue, 47th Avenue, and Mar Vista Drive at grade rail crossings that will be modified by the Project. GO-88B application addressed the grade separation request and provided rationale for why it is not practicable. Grade separation was deemed not necessary as evidenced by the GO-88Bs issued for the Project. CPUC approved fencing is included as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 2.9

The CPUC requests that the RCEB be informed of all Project developments and meetings held to discuss relevant safety issues and diagnostic review of proposed and impacted crossing locations within the Project limits.

This has been the County's approach to date and is the plan moving forward.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

December 15, 2023

Attn: Rob Tidmore Park Planner IV
County of Santa Cruz, Planning Department
Santa Cruz County Parks
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov
Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov

Re: MBARD comments on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

Thank you for providing the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) with the opportunity to comment on the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). MBARD has reviewed the Draft EIR and has the following comments:

Air Quality

○ **Fugitive Dust Control**

- While the project estimates PM₁₀ levels will be less than the significance threshold, further actions to reduce PM₁₀ while avoiding dust complaints from residents should be conducted. Any fugitive dust should be mitigated during construction, grading operation and soil transportation while maintaining compliance with MBARD Rule 402 (Nuisance) and MBARD CEQA Guidelines, Section 8.2 by implementing the following Best Management Practices as applicable:
 - Water all active construction areas at least twice daily. Frequency should be based on the type of operation, soil, and wind exposure.
 - Prohibit all grading activities during periods of high wind (over 15 mph).
 - Cover all trucks hauling dirt, sand, or loose materials.
 - Plant vegetative ground cover in disturbed areas as soon as possible.
 - Cover inactive storage piles.
 - Maintain at least 2'0" of freeboard in haul trucks.
 - Apply non-toxic chemical soil stabilizers on inactive construction areas (disturbed lands within construction projects that are unused for at least four consecutive days).
 - Apply non-toxic binders (e.g., latex acrylic copolymer) to exposed areas after cut and fill operations, or hydro-seed area.
 - Install wheel washers at the entrance to construction sites for all trucks exiting onto residential roads.

3-1

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

○ Rule 424

3-2

- MBARD recommends developing a Standard Operating Procedure to mitigate a situation where unknown subsurface or infrastructure asbestos-containing utility lines are exposed during construction work and need to be removed prior to continuing construction.
- MBARD notification is required at least 10 working days prior to regulated renovation or demolition activities of structures, railroad components and other infrastructure as part of the project. If old underground piping or other asbestos-containing construction materials are encountered during construction activities, Rule 424 may also apply. Rule 424 can be found online at [Asbestos Renovation & Demolition - Monterey Bay Air Resources District \(mbard.org\)](http://www.mbair.org/Asbestos-Renov-and-Demolition). Please contact Bronwyn Nielson, Air Quality Compliance Inspector, at (831) 718-8024, bnielson@mbard.org for more information regarding asbestos survey, notification requirements, and if subsurface asbestos containing pipe (ACP) removal is going to be part of the project scope in the future.

Construction Equipment

○ Internal Combustion Engines

3-3

- Any stationary piston-type internal combustion engine greater than or equal to 50 brake horsepower (bhp) requires a permit. Please contact MBARD's Engineering Division if there are any questions regarding the permitting process.
- To further reduce construction and operational emissions, MBARD recommends using cleaner than required equipment that conforms to ARB's Tier 3 or Tier 4 emission standards. We further recommend that whenever feasible, construction equipment use alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG), propane, electricity, or biodiesel. This would have the added benefit of reducing diesel exhaust emissions.
- If project construction uses portable equipment registered with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in the Portable Equipment Registration Program (PERP), MBARD must be notified within two working days of commencing operations when a registered unit will be at a location for more than five days. Portable equipment not registered with CARB may be subject to MBARD permit requirements.

Site Preparation

○ Brush Chipping

3-4

- If the proposed site preparation or construction involves the removal of existing trees and/or green waste disposal, chipping operations are MBARD's preferred method of disposal, rather than burning. Should any vegetation be disposed of via wood chipping, please make sure to contact MBARD's Engineering Division at (831) 647-9411 to discuss if a Portable Registration is necessary for the woodchipper being utilized for this project.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR for the Rail Trail project. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at (831) 718-8021 or imiranda@mbard.org.

Best Regards,

Irene Miranda

Irene Miranda
Air Quality Planner I

cc: Rich Stedman, Air Pollution Control Officer
David Frisbey, Planning and Air Monitoring Manager
Shawn Boyle, Planning Supervisor

Commenter 3

COMMENTER: Irene Miranda, Air Quality Planner I, Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD)

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 3.1

The commenter states that fugitive dust should be mitigated during construction in compliance with MBARD Rule 402 by implementing suggested Best Management Practices.

Thank you for the comments.

As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, best management practices will be identified in the construction bid documents and implemented during project construction to minimize dust and protect air quality. Best Management Practices include the applicable measures requested by the commenter.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 3.2

This commenter states that MBARD recommends developing a Standard Operating Procedure to address the potential presence of unknown asbestos-containing subsurface utility lines. The commenter also states that MBARD notification is required at least 10 working days prior to renovation or demolition activities of structures and railroad components. The commenter further states that Rule 424 may be applicable to the Project.

The Project would comply with all MBARD regulations, including those governing disturbance of asbestos-containing materials. As discussed under Impact HAZ-1 in Section 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, Project construction would adhere to MBARD Regulation IV, Rule 424 and Rule 439, which govern the proper removal, handling, and disposal of asbestos-containing materials (ACM) for demolition, renovation, and manufacturing activities in the Monterey Bay area. A licensed asbestos sampling company would perform an asbestos survey prior to demolition, in compliance with MBARD Rule 424. If the existing structures are found to contain ACMs or lead-based paints (LBPs), an Asbestos and Lead Survey Report would be prepared and would outline the recommendations and requirements for asbestos removal, and a trained and certified abatement personnel would perform abatement activities. In compliance with MBARD requirements, an MBARD notification would be submitted at least 10 working days prior to demolition activities.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 3.3

The commenter recommends using construction equipment that is cleaner than required and whenever possible to use alternative fuels. The commenter also notes potential permit requirements.

The Project would comply with all MBARD regulations and the design team (RRM Design Group) is to incorporate applicable MBARD standards into construction documents and specifications.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 3.4

The commentor suggests chipping operations to dispose trees and green waste, rather than burning.

Chipping trees is the County's preferred method of disposal.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
 420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010
 Website: cityofcapitola.org | Telephone: (831) 475-7300
 Katie Herlihy, Director

November 16, 2023

Rob Tidmore
 Parks Planner IV
 County of Santa Cruz
 979 17th Avenue
 Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

Thank you for the presentation to the City Council on October 26, 2023. I am writing on behalf of the City of Capitola to submit comments on the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Environmental Impact Report (EIR). We appreciate the County's efforts in planning and implementing the rail trail project and would like to provide input on five items related to the project.

4-1



1. **Additional information on Law Enforcement.** Provide additional information on the methodology used to make the finding that the project would not result in the need for additional police protection or law enforcement facilities to maintain existing service levels and response times.

4-2



2. **Environmental Protection Design Considerations:** We commend the County's commitment to environmental sustainability within the project. One item of concern is the very tall retaining walls proposed on the seaward side of Park Avenue. We ask the County consider materials and design that would reduce the impact of the large retaining walls on wildlife.

4-3



3. **Reference the RTC's Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail within the EIR.** The City understands the RTC's Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail is a separate project from the current project currently being analyzed. However, the future project for the passenger rail and subsequent replacement of the trestle should be mentioned in the EIR.

4-4



4. **Sidewalk on Cliff Drive and Accessibility through the village:** We understand that the trail ends on either end of the Capitola Trestle and that pedestrians walking on the trail will utilize existing sidewalks through the village. The City is requesting the County consider adding a sidewalk along Cliff Drive in the area with no sidewalk and ADA improvements through the Village to benefit pedestrians utilizing the trail.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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Katie Herlihy, Director

- 4-5
5. **Coordination with Castle Mobile Estates Owners:** We understand that several mobile homes in Capitola encroach into the rail corridor and the unauthorized encroachments will be resolved by the RTC pursuant to their Encroachment Policy, independent of the proposed project. We request that the County and RTC coordinate with the impacted residents to ensure effective communication to address concerns. We recommend an ongoing, transparent communication strategy that keeps residents informed about project updates, construction timelines, and any potential disruptions.

Thank you for considering our input on Segments 10 and 11 of the Rail Trail EIR. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure that the rail trail project enhances the quality of life for residents in both the City of Capitola and the broader Santa Cruz County community.

Sincerely,

Katie Herlihy
Community Development Director

Commenter 4

COMMENTER: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director, City of Capitola

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 4.1

The commenter requests additional information on the methodology used to determine the Project would not result in the need for additional police protection or law enforcement facilities to maintain existing levels of service.

Thank you for the comments.

For this comment, refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on methodology for evaluating impacts to law enforcement. As discussed therein, the assessment of impacts to public safety and services is based on a review of emergency response, police protection services, and consideration of potential changes in the level of service that may be required as a result of the addition of a new trail along Segments 10 and 11 of the Project corridor. The analysis included consideration of Project features that would reduce the need for law enforcement. In addition, the County Sheriff's Office was consulted on the potential for the Project to result in increased need for law enforcement. As concluded in Section 3.11.4, the Project has the potential to increase demand for law enforcement services. However, the increased demand would not require construction or expansion of additional law enforcement facilities because there are sufficient existing services available to accommodate any increase in demand.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 4.2

The commenter is concerned that the proposed tall retaining walls on the seaward side of Park Avenue may impact wildlife and requests consideration of materials and design that would reduce the impact.

The DEIR authors concur that portions of the rail line currently serve as a de factor corridor for wildlife movement. Trail design, including retaining walls and viaducts, and trail operation, are likely to impact wildlife movement and cannot be fully mitigated; therefore, these impacts were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable.

A description of wildlife movement in and near the Project Area and potential impacts to wildlife movement are discussed in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. Section 3.3.1, *Existing Conditions (Wildlife Movement)*, describes wildlife movement from local to regional scales, while Impact BIO-9 addresses impacts on wildlife movement, with Table 3.3-10 summarizing these impacts. Measures to reduce these Significant and Unavoidable impacts are included in the DEIR; Mitigation Measure BIO-7a, Mitigation Measure BIO-7c, and Mitigation Measure BIO-8a protect wildlife and habitat during construction, and Mitigation Measure BIO-7b calls for the develop of a Mitigation and Management Plan for the project, including strategies to protect wildlife movement.

In certain locations, proposed retaining wall designs (e.g., along Park Avenue and along Tannery Gulch in New Brighton State Beach) perch the trail above the rail line with guard rails on top for safety. This combined height is likely to constrain wildlife movement (restrict wildlife from crossing the trail) and direct wildlife along the trail (either above, on, or below the trail). As stated in DEIR

Section 2.4.1 under *Fencing and Guardrails*, “the fencing and guardrails are expected to be constructed at 4 feet, 8 inches, in height and consistent with the fencing types identified in the MBSST Network Master Plan or used in other rail trail segments. To promote wildlife movement, the bottom of the proposed fence would be 16 inches above finish grade. Guardrails would have no gaps exceeding 4 inches.” Multiple design alternatives were considered in order to reduce the height and length of retaining walls and were ultimately dismissed to reduce environmental impacts. Wildlife species may move under fencing, jump over or attempt to jump over fencing, climb retaining walls, jump/fall off retaining walls, and/or may move along the constrained area until reaching a crossing or opening across the trail. The authors acknowledge this impact to wildlife movement. Along Park Avenue, the longest retaining wall north of the trail is approximately 1,473 feet (0.28 miles) and south of the trail is approximately 944 feet (0.18 miles). Along New Brighton State Beach, the longest retaining wall is 1,001 feet (0.19 miles). Wildlife would be able to cross the trail after these distances.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 4.3

The commenter states RTC’s Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail should be mentioned in the EIR. RTC’s Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project is specifically referenced in Section 1.2.2, *Rail Operation and Maintenance*, of the Draft EIR. Additionally, passenger rail is included in Chapter 4, Table 4-1, List of Cumulative Projects, as follows: Rail Service. The RTC is planning for development of electric passenger rail transit service on the SCBRL.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 4.4

The City would like the County to consider adding a sidewalk along Cliff Drive where there is no sidewalk and ADA improvements through the village.

The County acknowledges the City’s request. Unfortunately, the Project budget is unable to accommodate this additional scope. Refer to **Master Response F** regarding planned Project improvements in Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 4.5

The City requests the County and RTC coordinate with the owners and residents of Castle Mobile Estates regarding resolution of the unauthorized encroachments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration. The comment does not

relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.



December 15, 2023

To: Rob Tidmore

From: Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail

Re: Comments on Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project – Draft EIR

Dear Rob,

5-1 Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail Trail (FORT) thanks you for the opportunity to offer comments on the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Draft Environmental Impact Report. Based on the presented analysis, we consider the Ultimate Trail to be the Environmentally Superior Alternative. While this work presents two different methods (with two different results) of determining the Environmentally Superior Alternative, we believe that the determination that the Trail Only option minimizes significant and unavoidable impacts is flawed.

5-2 The analysis of the Trail Only option considers the impact of conflict with Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Master Plan Policy 1.2.4, “develop[ing] the trail so future rail transportation service along the corridor is not precluded,” to be less than significant, but this determination is not made with any quantitative basis. This conflict with the MBSST Master Plan should be amended to be a significant and unavoidable impact.

5-3 The analysis of the Trail Only option also leaves out the impact on Greenhouse Gas Emissions of permanently removing the option of rail service. While this analysis has avoided considering the impact of rail service because it is equally likely with the Ultimate Trail or the Optional Interim first phase, that cannot be said about the Trail Only Alternative. There is substantial analysis already conducted by the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission on this topic that should be considered. The 2021 Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis forecasted a daily reduction of 22,020 Vehicle Miles Traveled for Light Rail Service resulting in a yearly reduction of 1,482 Metric Tons of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. This is a significant factor that should be considered in the analysis of the Trail Only option, as the lack of rail service is distinguished in the Trail Only option compared to the Ultimate Trail configuration or Optional Interim Trail stage options.

5-4 There does not seem to be any quantitative basis to weigh the primary benefit of the Trail Only option, the lessening of tree removal, against the primary distinguishing impact, the removal of Monarch Habitat. It seems equally valid to conclude that the impact to the endangered Monarch Butterfly should be given larger weight than unendangered trees when tree removal can be mitigated through replanting.

5-5 Of additional interest in this document are the historic evaluation of the railroad and comments from the California Coastal Commission (CCC). The Historic Evaluation concludes that the non-original ties and ballast contribute to the “feeling and association of the property as a historic railroad.” The CCC tells us that they support rail service by stating “it therefore is extremely important that [the SCBRL] is used to its full sustainable transportation potential.”

5-1

Based on the identified issues with the analysis, the historic nature of the physical infrastructure, and the expressed support from state agencies, we consider that the Environmentally Superior Alternative based on Significant Unavoidable Impacts is actually the Ultimate Trail Solution.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matt Farrell, Board Chair
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail Trail

Commenter 5

COMMENTER: Matt Farrell, Board Chair, Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail Trail

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 5.1

FORT considers the Ultimate Trail to be the environmentally superior alternative.

Thank you for all your comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 5.2

The commenter states that the Alternative 1 (Trail Only) conflict with the MBSST Master Plan Policy 1.2.4 (developing the trail so future rail transportation service is not precluded) should be identified as a significant and unavoidable impact, rather than less than significant.

In DEIR Section 5.2.1, *Alternative 1 (Trail Only) under Land Use and Planning*, the impact discussion for Alternative 1 states the following, in comparison with the Proposed Project:

*Alternative 1 would also be consistent with most (39 of 45) of the applicable County and City land use policies (described in Section 3.9, Land Use and Planning), and inconsistent with County General Plan Policies 5.1.6, 5.10.3, 5.10.8, and 5.18.8 and City of Capitola General Plan Policies OSC-6.2 and OSC-6.9....The evaluation in Section 3.9 considered policies of the County of Santa Cruz General Plan, the City of Capitola General Plan, the Santa Cruz County Active Transportation Plan, and MBSST Network Master Plan....Alternative 1 would not be consistent with Policy 1.2.4 of the MBSST Network Master Plan, which intends to develop trail in a way that does not preclude future rail service along the rail corridor, because Alternative 1 assumes permanent removal of the rail. **Overall, because Alternative 1 would be consistent with most of the applicable City and County land use policies, this impact is considered less than significant.***

The rationale for the conclusion is stated in the last sentence (bold). The overall impact conclusion is based on the overall consistency with most policies, not inconsistency with one particular policy.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 5.3

The commenter states that the Alternative 1 (Trail Only) analysis should evaluate the impact of permanently removing the option of rail service.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. As such, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions related to rail operation are not an impact of the Project. Additionally, no rail service is currently occurring on the Project segments. As a general rule, environmental impacts are assessed based on the existing environmental conditions as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation is published (*CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15125[a][1], 15126.2[a]). A

lead agency may use projected future conditions (beyond the date of Project operations) baseline as the sole baseline for analysis, only if it demonstrates with substantial evidence that use of existing conditions would be either misleading or without informative value to decision makers and the public (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.2[a][2]). As described in Section 1.2.2, *Rail Operation and Maintenance*, the Project area has been identified as a potential public transit corridor, but no plans have been proposed or funding identified (also refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operations). The DEIR appropriately analyzes the potential for the Project and alternatives to result in impacts related to GHG emissions compared to existing conditions. An objective of the Project is to develop a trail that does not preclude rail service; however, rail service is not a component of the Project, and maintaining the rail line does not necessitate that future rail service would be provided. Nor does maintenance or reconstruction of railroad facilities as part of the Project or alternatives necessitate future rail service. As such, the contribution of speculative future rail operation to changes in regional GHG emissions is not considered as a potential impact of the Project or any alternative.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 5.4

The commenter questions the qualitative (not quantitative) analysis of Trail Only with respect to biological resources (impacts on monarch habitat vs. tree removal).

The commenter is correct that this alternative analysis was done qualitatively, as allowed by CEQA (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6[d]), although tree removal, including along Escalona Gulch, was quantified. At Escalona Gulch, the Trail Only alignment would remove 55 fewer trees (42 instead of 97 trees). The Trail Only impact to the monarch roost habitat was determined to be greater than the Ultimate Trail at Escalona Gulch, and still Significant and Unavoidable, based on the proposed removal of important wind buffer trees on the inland side of the tracks.

The Trail Only impact associated with tree removal, although less than the Ultimate Trail, was still determined to be Significant and Unavoidable because of the reasons provided in DEIR Section 5.2.1 under *Biological Resources*, which also references the analysis in the Section 3.3. The reasons include replacement trees would take many years to mature and provide adequate buffer quality, functions and values for the monarch roost sites and wildlife movement, and the availability of suitable mitigation sites within proximity to the Project corridor is limited. Project biologists agree with the commenter that weighing the impacts to sensitive monarch roost habitat versus non-native tree (eucalyptus) removal is challenging. The biologists determined the Trail Only alternative was environmentally superior to the Ultimate Trail considering the extent of impacts to sensitive biological resources.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 5.5

The commenter summarizes the conclusions of the historic evaluation of the SCBRL, and notes that the Coastal Commission supports rail service through their statements to use the SCBRL to its full sustainable transportation potential.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

T0: Rob Tidmore, Project Manager/Park Planner
979 17th Avenue,
Santa Cruz, CA 95062 or via email to
BY Email: RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov

Cc: Cal Trans, Santa Cruz RTC, Santa Cruz County Public Works, et al.

From: Marianne’s Ice Cream, et al

Re: Comments on Draft EIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project, 17th Avenue to State Park Drive, submitted: December 15, 2023

Personae:

Marianne’ Ice Cream, LLC owns and operates a business at 218 State Park Drive, Aptos, CA 95003 which is directly affected by the work contemplated on this project, along with other property holders along this corridor. We see that Environmental Impact Report draft for the project known as Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11, SCH #: 2021110080, is inadequate in that it does not address, individually and collectively, the incremental, aggregate, and/or synergistic, effects of this project and other projects also affecting shared downstream facilities and related parties or resources. We specifically see that the impacts to drainage infrastructure and facilities as well as the related public safety impacts are negligently handled in this document and must be fully analyzed. We expect that adequate analysis will necessarily result in adopting recommended solutions addressing the impacts noted as concerns below.

On Page 49 in the Table 2-1. Local Coastal Program Consistency Analysis, County of Santa Cruz 1994 General Plan and Local Coastal Program the EIR states: “Policy 5.4.3: Water pollution from urban runoff. Review proposed development projects for their potential to contribute to water pollution via increased storm water runoff. Utilize erosion control measures, on-site detention and other appropriate storm water Best Management Practices to reduce pollution from urban runoff; and Policy 5.7.1. Impacts from new development on water quality. Prohibit new development adjacent to marshes, streams and bodies of water if such development would cause adverse impacts on water quality which cannot be fully mitigated.”

Unfortunately, the breaking of the projects listed below into their individual scopes of work, as well as the arbitrary geographic division of sections 11 & 12, with borders at State Park Drive, allows for a cursory review to suggest that the stormwater effects might be minimal, for this reason a cumulative approach to this concern is required for a dutiful and responsible analysis.

Santa Cruz County Design Standards and CalTrans Design Standards both dictate that a project of this scope must address increased flow through mitigation, which in this case would be well addressed by designing a higher capacity enclosed pipe to handle this storm water.

The Initial Study Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 discusses the requirement of mitigation to address storm runoff in downstream consequences on page 47, states

“However, the Project could result in minor changes to localized drainage patterns from the new impervious paved trail surface. As described under (b) above, construction of Segments 10 and 11 would result in 26,690 square yards of new impervious surfaces compared to existing conditions, which would increase amount of surface flow...”

6-1

6-1
cont.

The necessity of this mitigation just downstream of the end of Section 11 and in Section 12 is not addressed in the confluence of these projects. This oversight must be addressed with the cumulative effect of the above projects addressed. The Hydrology study neglects to address the consequences of downstream impacts in its contemplation of various configurations within the sections 10 and 11 bounds. Please incorporate the comments from the Seacliff Business Partners in the exhibits below as additional comments regarding the inadequate nature of the dividing up of the project.

There is an inadequate drainage facility running through our grounds (See exhibit) which is significantly fed by the areas where this project work will be done. We ask that the impact report consider and address this problem in its findings and recommendations.

We note the following actual or potential effects that should be considered beyond the need to upgrade the deteriorated channel to handle new flows:

- Environmental Concerns- Increased flows will result in more erosion and pollution in the Bay.
- Public Safety- This facility routinely floods and generates a severe current and sump which erodes and poses a risk to life if a person should fall or be swept into the channel¹. The channel crosses private lands through a county easement that has long since overflowed its bounds. In addition to the direct effects of the work both while underway, and more importantly, after completion, the additional rail trail facility exposes our community and our visitors to a terrible risk from an open stormwater channel that is crumbling.
- Economic Development- The uncertain nature of this channel currently inhibits development of at least five lots in “downtown” Seacliff:
 - Marianne’s Ice Cream wants create a green space in the front of the store and needs the public utility of the drainage addressed to provide parking in the rear. This will provide significant beautification of the Seacliff gateway entrance and providing much needed relief on village parking (short more than 180 spots according to the Village Plan).
 - Empty lots and the Seacliff Center RV Trailer Park are held in limbo from being improved or developed. In fact, the deterioration of the pipe is displacing campers and threatens to displace more of them.

6-2

The following projects are currently in the works that will increase storm water flow through a combination of more, larger, or cleaner pipes and/or an increase of impervious surfaces:

- Santa Cruz 1 Roadside Safety and Drainage System Improvements- On State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County 05-SCR-1-PM 8.2/26.0 Project EA 05-1J960, Project ID 0518000093 State Clearinghouse Number 2022070450
- SR 1 Auxiliary Lanes Freedom Blvd. to State Park Dr and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project
- State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County and the City of Capitola between State Park Drive and Bay Avenue/Porter Street 05-SCR-1-10.54-13.44 EA 05-0C733/Project ID 0518000116 SCH Number 2019100143

6-3

¹ We need only reflect on the terrible loss of 5-year-old Kyle Doan near Paso Robles last winter to recognize that this problem must not be ignored. A responsible assessment of impacts of the project work should include addressing and/or undergrounding the stormwater channel in Seacliff between the railroad and Center Ave parallel to State Park Drive.

- Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11, SCH #: 2021110080,

In addition to these combined effects of these projects, the trend in environmental factors with more frequent and more intense storms, must be addressed in a combined manner not individually. We do not see that the cumulative effects on the peak volume of stormwater flow through the drainage section in Figure 1 from all of these changes have been considered and the findings are therefore not accurate.

The EIR should contain a discussion of increased flows, particularly when considered cumulatively with the projects above. The discussion should be detailed, with a factual basis for conclusions. This analysis should consider and incorporate the risk of liability from a death or injury from peak stormwater flow in the area of concern given its contiguous proximity to the Rail Trail and community serving resources. This discussion should include a recommendation that the effects on the downstream area noted above must be managed with Caltrans and/or Santa Cruz County Design Criteria and BMPs for a permanent facility.

We make these comments and requests in reflection of our significant concerns for the safety and welfare of our community and the recognition that the scope of this problem is beyond the ability of individual property owners to address, given the myriad sources of the water and the breadth of new activity directly and indirectly enabled by these projects.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles Wilcox
Managing Member
Marianne's Ice Cream, LLC

6-3
cont.

Exhibits:

TO: Lara Bertaina, Senior Environmental Planner
Department of Transportation
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
BY Email: lara.bertaina@dot.ca.gov

Cc: Cal Trans, Santa Cruz RTC, Santa Cruz County Public Works, et al.

From: Seacliff Business Partners

Re: Comments on Environmental Impact Report Draft for- Highway 1 Auxiliary Lanes and Bus-on-Shoulder Improvements —Freedom Boulevard to State Park Drive— and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project, submitted. June 2, 2023

Personae:

Seacliff Business partners is a 501c6 community group comprised of the merchants of Seacliff CA. We are excited about the upcoming improvements to our community contemplated in the project known as:

State Route 1 Auxiliary Lanes and Bus-on-Shoulder Improvements—Freedom Blvd. to State Park Dr.—and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CALIFORNIA DISTRICT 5 – SCR – (8.1/10.7) EA 05-0C73

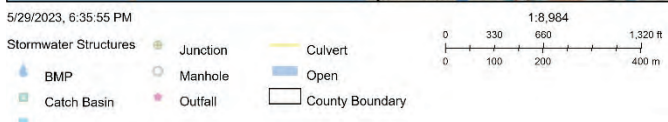
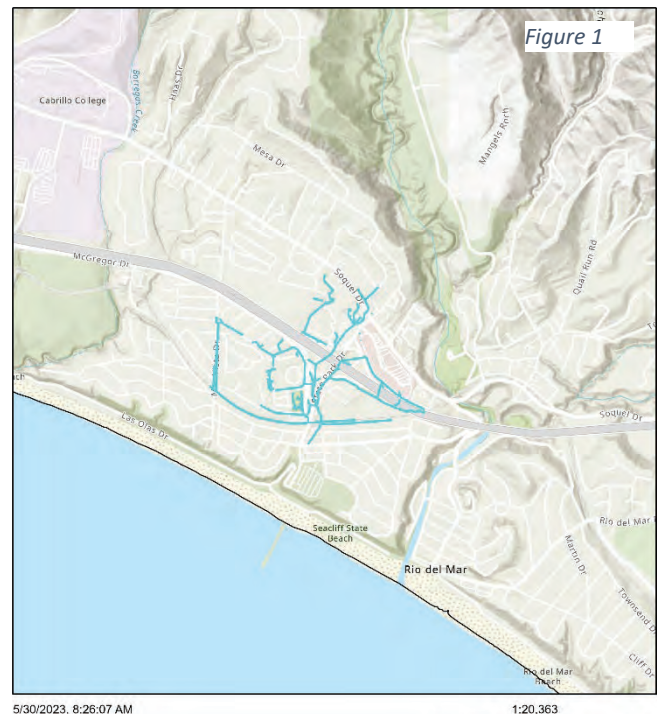
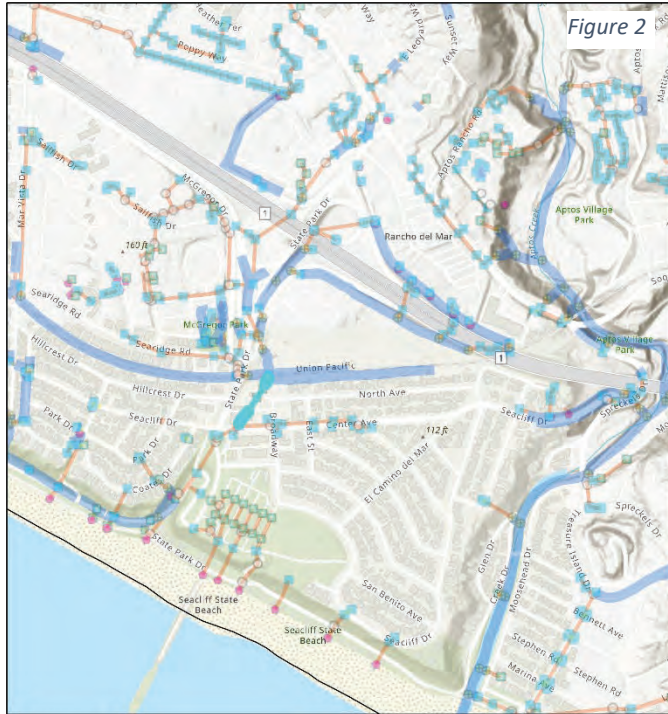
While we are pleased to see these important projects getting underway, we are particularly concerned about a certain aspect that directly effects our membership and the community we serve.

There is an inadequate drainage facility running through our town which is significantly fed by the areas where this project work will be done. This facility routinely floods and generates a severe current and sump which erodes and poses a risk to life if a person should fall or be swept into the channel. The channel crosses private lands through a county easement that has long since overflowed its bounds. In addition to the direct effects of the work both while underway and more importantly after completion, the additional rail trail facility exposes our members and our community to a terrible risk from an open stormwater channel. We need only reflect on the terrible loss of 5-year-old Kyle Doan near Paso Robles last winter to recognize that this problem must not be ignored. A responsible assessment of impacts of the project work should include addressing and/or undergrounding the stormwater channel in Seacliff between the railroad and Center Ave parallel to State Park Drive. We ask that the impact report consider and address this problem in its findings and recommendations.

Below please find specific comments and analysis of the EIR and related project documentation to bolster this request and provide more specific opportunity for action.

6-4

EIR analysis: The EIR does not adequately address the consequences of this project alone or with related or concurrent projects and problematic conditions associated with an apparently unconsidered aspect of the stormwater facilities affected by the project(s). We are expressing grave concern about the adequacy of the structures (or lack thereof) that occur between the rail line and Center Ave in Seacliff (highlighted in Figure 1 in light blue below). The drainage lines highlighted in Figure 2 show the areas draining through the highlighted flow in Figure 1.



6-4
cont.

The following projects are currently in the works that will increase flow through a combination of more larger and cleaner pipes and an increase of impervious surfaces:

- Santa Cruz 1 Roadside Safety and Drainage System Improvements- On State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County 05-SCR-1-PM 8.2/26.0 Project EA 05-1J960, Project ID 0518000093 State Clearinghouse Number 2022070450
- SR 1 Auxiliary Lanes Freedom Blvd. to State Park Dr and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project
- State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County and the City of Capitola between State Park Drive and Bay Avenue/Porter Street 05-SCR-1-10.54-13.44 EA 05-0C733/Project ID 0518000116 SCH Number 2019100143

Between the projects contemplated in the EIR draft and the additional projects for auxiliary lanes and drainage improvements on Rte. 1 up to Bay & Porter as well as section 11 of the Rail Trail, Bus on Shoulder, et.al., we are expressing concern that the cumulative effects on the peak volume of

stormwater flow through the drainage section in Figure 1 have not been responsibly calculated and considered.

The Notice of Preparation (Sep. 22) for this EIR states on page 6,

- (1) "The project is anticipated to result in an increase of impervious surfaces, which has the potential for long-term water quality impacts during project operations."; ... and
- (2) "Land Use and Coastal Zone - Portions of the project area are located in the Coastal Zone, and the project may potentially affect resources protected by the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), California Coastal Act, and the Santa Cruz County Local Coastal Plan. A Coastal Development Permit pursuant to the California Coastal Act is anticipated to be required. The draft EIR/EA will provide information on potential impacts and identify appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce impacts on sensitive resources in the Coastal Zone, such as biological resources, water quality, parks and recreational resources."

On Page 49 in the Table 2-1. Local Coastal Program Consistency Analysis, County of Santa Cruz 1994 General Plan and Local Coastal Program the EIR states: "Policy 5.4.3: Water pollution from urban runoff. Review proposed development projects for their potential to contribute to water pollution via increased storm water runoff. Utilize erosion control measures, on-site detention and other appropriate storm water Best Management Practices to reduce pollution from urban runoff; and Policy 5.7.1. Impacts from new development on water quality. Prohibit new development adjacent to marshes, streams and bodies of water if such development would cause adverse impacts on water quality which cannot be fully mitigated."

Unfortunately, the breaking of the projects listed above into their individual scopes of work as well as geographic sections with border at State Park Drive allows for a cursory review to suggest that the stormwater effects might be minimal, for this reason a cumulative approach to this concern is required for a dutiful and responsible analysis.

Based on the comments in P 109-112, The EIR should contain a discussion of increased flows, particularly when considered cumulatively with the projects above should be detailed, with a factual basis for conclusions. This analysis should consider and incorporate the risk of liability from a death or injury from peak stormwater flow in the area of concern given its contiguous proximity to the Rail Trail and community serving resources. Tis discussion should include a recommendation that the effects on the downstream area noted above must be managed with Caltrans and/or Santa Cruz County Design Criteria and BMPs for permanent facility.

Santa Cruz County Design Standards and CalTrans Design Standards both dictate that a project of this scope must address increased flow through mitigation, which in this case would be well addressed by designing a higher capacity enclosed pipe to handle this storm water.

The study in the EIR,

PRELIMINARY GEOTECHNICAL DESIGN REPORT SCCRTC- STATE ROUTE 1 AUX LANES AND BUS ON SHOULDER (FREEDOM BOULEVARD TO STATE PARK DRIVE) COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA
05-SCR-1-PM R8.1/10.7 EA: 05-0C734

6-4
cont.

6-4
cont.

ignores the effect of increased flow on downstream storm water facilities and the erosion effects there of (PP26-27). This oversight must be addressed with the cumulative effect of the above projects addressed. On p 103 the study does not differentiate that amount of stormwater resulting from impervious additions that will be directed to the stormwater systems that drain directly to the Monterey Bay (including the area of concern above) rather than to Soquel or Aptos creeks.

We make these comments and requests in reflection of our significant concerns for the safety and welfare of our community and the recognition that the scope of this problem is beyond the ability of individual property owners to address, given the myriad sources of the water and the breadth of new activity directly and indirectly enabled by these projects.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Dillon

Chair

Seacliff Business Partners

Commenter 6

COMMENTER: Charles Wilcox, Managing Member, Marianne’s Ice Cream, LLC
Kelly Dillon, Chair, Seacliff Business Partners

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 6.1

The commenter states that the Draft EIR does not adequately address the individual and cumulative impacts to drainage infrastructure and related public safety. In addition, the commenter states there is an inadequate drainage facility running through their grounds, suggests designing a higher capacity enclosed pipe to handle stormwater, and requests the impact report consider and address the problem and cumulative effects of Segments 11 and 12.

Thank you for the comments.

As discussed in DEIR Section 3.8.4, *Project Impact Analysis*, once constructed, the Project would result in an additional square footage of new impervious surfaces from the new or replaced trail surfaces that could result in minor changes to localized drainage patterns that are insignificant. Preliminary-level analysis shows the approximately 19.4-acre drainage area west of State Park Drive would increase runoff by about 0.1 cfs (cubic feet per second), which is equivalent to a 0.2% increase compared to existing conditions. Since the runoff increase is less than 1%, Santa Cruz County Public Works Department notes no additional improvements are needed for the drainage system to accommodate stormwater from the trail’s construction.

All off-site flows would match existing condition drainage patterns. In general, stormwater would surface flow from the new and replaced impervious surfaces into the existing drainage system or natural material swale included in the trail design. The analysis in DEIR Section 3.8.4 concluded that the Proposed Project would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. The Proposed Project as a whole would result in improvements to the existing flooding issues compared to existing conditions throughout the project area with the addition of proposed storm drain pipes, swales, and system connections where none currently exists as described in DEIR Section 2.6, *Project Construction*. Therefore, a higher capacity pipe is not required to handle stormwater.

DEIR Section 4.1, *Cumulative Impact Analysis*, addresses the potential cumulative impacts for the Rail Trail Segment 10 and 11 Project. DEIR Table 4-1, List of Cumulative Projects, provides the list of cumulative projects that were considered in the discussions for each environmental topic, including hydrology and water quality, for the Project’s cumulative analysis. The Highway 1, State Park Drive to Freedom Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes, Bus-on-Shoulder, and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project are listed in DEIR Table 4-1 as a cumulative Project.

DEIR Section 4.1.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, concluded that cumulative projects identified in DEIR Table 4.1 could result in a substantial number of new impermeable surfaces that could increase runoff of stormwater pollutants, reduce groundwater recharge, and increase stormwater flows that would contribute to a cumulative increase in impacts on water quality. However, the analysis determined that cumulative projects would be subject to federal, state, and local regulations (e.g., the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit) that are designed to reduce stormwater runoff from Project sites by promoting infiltration, minimizing impervious, and requiring a no-net increase in flows over the existing condition through hydromodification processes

to improve water quality. Further, because the impact of the Proposed Project is less than significant, the Project contribution to a cumulative impact would not be substantial; therefore, the Draft EIR did not recommend any additional stormwater management beyond what was identified as part of the Proposed Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 6.2

The commenter notes that there are actual or potential effects that must be examined beyond the need to upgrade the deteriorated channel on the commenter's property. Specifically, the comment states that increased flows could result in increased erosion and pollution.

As stated in **Response 6.1**, all off-site flows as a result of implementation of the Project would match existing condition drainage patterns and would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. As discussed in the DEIR, stormwater treatment devices (e.g., gross solids removal device, hydrodynamic separators, trash screens, and flow through water quality treatment devices) could be installed, as determined appropriate by the County, with the proposed storm drain system to treat off-site and/or on-site flows. The inclusion of stormwater drainage features and treatment devices would reduce the risk of water degradation on and off site from soil erosion and other pollutants related to operational activities.

In addition, the comment states that the drainage facility routinely floods which could result in a public safety impact due to a facility that regularly floods. As stated in **Response 6.1**, all off-site flows as a result of implementation of the Project would match existing condition drainage patterns and would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. The Project would not contribute to increased flows in this drainage channel.

Furthermore, the comment states that the uncertain nature of the channel on their business property currently inhibits the economic development of additional lots in Seacliff. As stated in **Response 6.1**, all off-site flows as a result of implementation of the Project would match existing condition drainage patterns and would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. *CEQA Guidelines*. Section 15131, specifically states that "economic or social effects of a project shall not be treated as significant effects on the environment." CEQA defines "environment" as "the physical conditions which exist within the area which will be affected by a proposed project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, noise, objects of historic or aesthetic significance" (California Public Resources Code, Section 21060.5). An EIR project analysis is limited to those socioeconomic issues that could result in a direct change to the physical environment. Therefore, the economic development effect to the businesses due to the uncertainties of the off-site drainage channel are not considered environmental issues and are not required to be analyzed.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 6.3

The commenter notes other projects in the works that will contribute to cumulative effects and states the EIR should include a discussion of increased flows, identifying the cumulative impacts and recommendations for a permanent facility.

As discussed in **Response 6.1**, DEIR Section 4.1 provides a cumulative impact analysis based on the list of cumulative projects identified in DEIR Table 4-1, which included the State Route 1 Auxiliary Lanes Freedom Boulevard to State Park Drive Project and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project, and the State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County and the City of Capitola between State Park Drive and Bay Avenue/Porter Street as identified by the commenter.

In response to this comment, DEIR Table 4-1 was updated to include the Santa Cruz 1 Roadside Safety and Drainage System Improvements – On State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County project as identified in the comment. The project proposed by Caltrans would restore multiple drainage culverts, rehabilitate numerous lighting elements, and install several Transportation Management Systems and pavement areas along State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County. All cumulative projects identified in DEIR Table 4-1 would be subject to federal, state, and local regulations (e.g., the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit) that are designed to reduce stormwater runoff from project sites by promoting infiltration, minimizing impervious surfaces, and requiring a no-net increase in flows over the existing condition through hydromodification processes to improve water quality. With the cumulative projects' compliance with applicable laws and regulations and their incorporation of required construction and operational best management practices, no significant cumulative impact is anticipated. As such, no additional permanent facilities beyond what are currently proposed by the Project as described in DEIR Section 2.6, *Project Construction*, are required.

Table 4-1 in DEIR Section 4.1 has been revised to include the Santa Cruz 1 Roadside Safety and Drainage System Improvements – On State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County project.

Response 6.4

This comment is a letter that **Commenter 6** attached to their comments. The letter is from the Seacliff's Business Partners to Caltrans with comments on the Environmental Impact Report for the Highway 1, State Park Drive to Freedom Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes, Bus-on-Shoulder, and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project. The comment letter is on a separate project but similarly provides comments related to an inadequate drainage facility running through the town that routinely floods, poses a risk to people, and is fed by the areas near the proposed Highway 1 project. As discussed in **Response 6.1**, the Project does not contribute to a cumulative impact related to hydrology and water quality. This comment does not raise a significant environmental issue regarding the adequacy or accuracy of information provided in the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [George Turk](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment to the Coastal Rail Trail EIR
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 11:38:21 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

We're the non-profit owner of Castle Mobile Estates, a 107-space affordable housing community in Capitola that will be heavily impacted by the proposed Rail Trail project.

7-1 | Of the alternatives being considered, it appears that the "trail only" option has the least negative environmental impact. Far fewer trees are removed, there's less earth movement (and associated emissions) and, as noted in the EIR, "it would provide for a broader range of reasonable alternatives." It would also greatly reduce the need to remove existing structures, which in our case might result in the removal of 4-10 affordable housing units.

7-2 | If we're reading the EIR correctly, the only reason to retain the existing rail is to hold on to the hope that in 30-40 years, money might be available to replace the tracks with new ones, and potentially have passenger travel on those lines. Do you really think that's likely to happen? What would the impact be 40 years from now, as that area becomes even more developed?

7-3 | The EIR states (Sec. 3.15.9) that the project "would not result in the permanent displacement or relocation of people." That's clearly not true. As noted above, our community alone could lose 4-10 homes, and some of the mobile home parks along the easement would experience even greater losses of homesites. The statement that "no mitigation is required" is false. The homes in question can't be relocated to other sites. I should add that our community was funded with \$2M in governmental funding--\$1M each from the City of Capitola and Santa Cruz County. Those badly-needed affordable units would be lost.

7-4 | Given the choice between a Trail Only option that has minimal environmental or human impact, and the Ultimate Trail plan that hurts the environment more and requires the removal of homes in order to preserve the idea that train service might be back in 40 years...we would hope the County would choose to preserve the State-mandated affordable housing and vote for the Trail Only option.

George Turk
President

Commenter 7

COMMENTER: George Turk, President, Millenium Housing

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 7.1

The commenter states that it appears the Trail Only option has the least negative impacts and would reduce the need to remove existing structures, including four to 10 housing units.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 7.2

The commenter opines the only reason to retain the existing rail is to hope in 30–40 years money may be available to replace the tracks and potentially have passenger rail, and asks if this is likely to happen and what the impact would be as the area becomes more developed.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 7.3

The commenter states that the Draft EIR incorrectly states the Project would not result in the permanent displacement or relocation of people because the Project would displace mobile homes. The commenter also states that the statement that no mitigation is required is false because the mobile homes cannot be relocated.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 7.4

The commenter supports the Trail Only alternative.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: rrcpres@yahoo.com
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Protect and preserve the rails
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:16:44 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

This E-mail is in support of protecting and preserving the historic Santa Cruz Branch Line. For many citizens, particularly those who are handicapped, access to the natural environment of the coast is enhanced by utilization of the rails via tourist railroad operations and recreational railroaders track inspection rail cars. Offering rides to the general public by rail encourages their appreciation for the role of railroads in the development of the nation.

Hon. Larry Bowler, California State Assemblyman (1992-1998) and President of Railroad Education and Preservation Society

8-1

Commenter 8

COMMENTER: Larry Bowler, President, Railroad Education and Preservation Society

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 8.1

The commenter supports protecting and preserving the SCBRL.

Thank you for the comments.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.



December 13, 2023

Mr. Rob Tidmore
Park Planner
Department of Community Development & Infrastructure/Santa Cruz County Parks
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Dear Mr. Tidmore:

9-1

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project (Project). Roaring Camp, through its subsidiary, the Santa Cruz, Big Trees and Pacific Railway, operates passenger rail service between Felton and the Santa Cruz Boardwalk, utilizing a portion of the Santa Cruz Branch Line (Line). It also assists the freight operator on the line, Progressive, with operations in the segment that is open for service in the Watsonville area.

The Line represents the only connection between Roaring Camp and the national rail system. Besides the need for future commuter and excursion services on the line, Roaring Camp needs the line to transport rail equipment. It is essential that the potential for the future reopening of the rail line be preserved.

9-2

The Draft EIR presents two major alternatives, the "Ultimate Project Configuration" (Trail with Rail) and the "Optional Interim Trail" (Trail on Rail, future construction of Ultimate Project in 30 years). There are a couple of design options, one of which, Design Option A, would have the trail utilize the Capitola trestle as part of the Trail with Rail option, thereby preventing its use for rail service. There are important practical differences between the two alternatives, particularly with regard to the prospects for reinstating rail service on the Line.

9-3

Section 1.2.2 of the document addresses "Rail Operation and Maintenance," and describes the current status of the freight rail operation. It is Roaring Camp's hope that the efforts initiated by means of the planning studies described in this section and in Section 1.2.4 can be fully funded and will support the eventual re-initiation of passenger service on the Line, as well as the operation of freight service on the portion of the line that is currently unused.

9-4

As you know, CEQA generally requires agencies to avoid design alternatives when the implementation of those alternatives is remote and speculative. (*Residents Ad Hoc Stadium Committee v. Board of Trustees* (1979) 89 Cal. App.3d 274; CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6.) While we appreciate your willingness to consider a range of potential project alternatives here, we urge you to not recommend adoption of design alternatives that prevent the re-introduction of rail service until many decades in the future. The assumption that rail service can resume so far in the future is inherently speculative. We therefore encourage you to proceed with the Project as described in the Draft EIR.

Abandonment/Railbanking

9-5

Section 1.2.4 also discusses the topic of Railbanking, which it notes would be required if either the Optional Interim Trail or Design Option A were pursued. Railbanking is a method of utilizing rail right of way for trail use, while theoretically preserving the ability of a freight carrier to resume freight operations in the future. However, railbanking would allow the removal of the rail infrastructure from the line and would severely delay, if not foreclose, the prospect of passenger rail service on the line. Railbanking is only available as part of the federal Surface Transportation Board's consideration of an application to abandon a rail line. At this time, the existing freight operator has no intention of filing for abandonment, so an abandonment could only be pursued by means of an "adverse abandonment" application, brought by a third party for force the abandonment of a line.

An adverse abandonment action is disfavored by the Surface Transportation Board, and here would likely result in a contested proceeding that would likely take years to resolve. Section 1.2.4 seems to indicate that the Optional Interim Trail was likely included to satisfy a requirement in CEQA that a range of alternatives be considered as part of an EIR. Since this does not appear to be a feasible approach, we trust the County will approve the Ultimate Trail Configuration, so that the Project can proceed in a timely fashion. This is of particular concern since, while the alternative for the Optional Interim Trail includes the replacement of the rail, it does not appear to identify funding for that rail replacement and therefore would create a significant obstacle to the ultimate use of the line for rail service.

9-6

We also have some technical comments to the Draft EIR. One comment is that the document's description of the construction duration for the Optional Interim Trail will take less time in some places (pages ES-3 and 2-32) but the same 48 months as the Ultimate Trail Configuration (top of Table 2-3). These statements need to be clarified.

9-7

We also have some technical comments to the Draft EIR. One comment is that the document's description of the construction duration for the Optional Interim Trail will take less time in some places (pages ES-3 and 2-32) but the same 48 months as the Ultimate Trail Configuration (top of Table 2-3). These statements need to be clarified.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our thoughts on the Draft EIR and this important project. We would appreciate their careful consideration.

Sincerely,



Melani Clark
CEO, Roaring Camp

Commenter 9

COMMENTER: Melani Clark, CEO, Roaring Camp Railroads

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 9.1

The commenter states the SCBRL represents the only connection between Roaring Camp and the national rail system, Roaring Camp needs the line to transport rail equipment, and the rail line should be preserved.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.2

The comment states that the Draft EIR presents the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail, as well as a couple of design options, and they have practical differences regarding rail service on the rail line.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.3

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment states that Section 1.2.2 describes the current status of the freight rail operation, and that Roaring Camp hopes the planning studies can be fully funded and will support the re-initiation of passenger service on the line, as well as freight service on the portion of the line that is currently unused.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.4

The commenter does not support design alternatives that prevent the re-introduction of rail service until many decades in the future.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.5

The commenter notes that Draft EIR Section 1.2.4 discusses the topic of railbanking which would be required for the Optional Interim Trail or Design Option A. The commenter also notes that railbanking would delay or prevent the prospect of passenger rail service on the SCBRL altogether. The commenter also notes that the freight operator on the SCBRL has no intention of applying for abandonment, so railbanking could only be pursued by means of an adverse abandonment application.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.6

The commenter states railbanking the corridor via an adverse abandonment action is likely to take years to resolve and that they trust the County will approve the Ultimate Trail so the Project can proceed in a timely fashion. The comment also states that there does not appear to be funding identified for rail replacement for the Optional Interim Trail which would create an obstacle to the ultimate use of the line for rail service.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 9.7

The commenter seeks clarification on the construction duration of the Optional Interim Trail because the document states less time in some places (pages ES-3 and 2-33) but the same 48 months as the Ultimate Trail in Table 2-3.

The estimated construction duration of the Optional Interim Trail is consistent in all three places, but it is presented in years on pages ES-3 and 2-33 and in months in Table 2-3.

As presented on pages ES-3 and 2-33, the duration for the Optional Interim Trail is 4 years for each of the three parts:

- 1) Implementation of the Optional Interim Trail: 2023–2027 (4 years)
 - 2023–2025 – Complete environmental review, design, and ROW process
 - 2026–2027 – Trail construction
- 2) Demolition of the Optional Interim Trail and Rebuilding of the Rail Line: 2056–2060 (4 years)
- 3) Construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration: 2060–2064 (4 years)

As presented in Table 2-3, the duration is 48 months (4 years) for each of the three parts.

Table 2-3 Construction Estimates for Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line)

Construction Information	1) Implementation of the Interim Trail	2) Demolition of the Interim Trail and Rebuilding of the Rail Line	3) Construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration
Construction Duration ^a	48 months	48 months	48 months
Construction/Alignment Length ^b	4.7 miles total (1.5 miles – Segment 10, 3.2 miles – Segment 11)	4.7 miles total (1.5 miles – Segment 10, 3.2 miles – Segment 11)	4.2 miles (1.5 miles – Segment 10, 2.7 miles – Segment 11)

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

From: [Pauline Seales](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [SC CAN discussion](#); info@railandtrail.org
Subject: Rail Trail Sections 9,10
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:33:30 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore

I am writing on behalf of the more than 1800 members of Santa Cruz Climate Action Network.

More than 73% of county voters soundly defeated 2020 Measure D which proposed rail removal. Therefore we are surprised and dismayed at this new attempt to remove rails. Please approve the ULTIMATE TRAIL with NO RAIL REMOVAL - Option B

With segment 7 phase 1 in daily use, phase 2 close to completion and segments 5, 8 & 9 in planning , it makes no sense to change the plans for section 9/10.

Any rail removal - rail banking - will take longer to complete the trail and ultimately be much more expensive. After the 2020 vote on measure D, any rail removal without full voter approval would be highly undemocratic.

Additionally we request that necessary tree removal be mitigated by planting in other county areas at a 4:1 ratio. This will compensate for loss of CO2 removal about 5 - 10 years after planting.

Pauline Seales for Santa Cruz Climate Action Network scruzclimate.org

10-1

10-2

Commenter 10

COMMENTER: Pauline Seales, Santa Cruz Climate Action Network

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 10.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration with no option for rail removal.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 10.2

The commenter requests that tree removal be mitigated by planting at a 4:1 ratio in other County areas.

The approach for tree mitigation is presented in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, Impact BIO-10 and Mitigation Measure BIO-7b: Develop Project-Specific Biological Resources Mitigation and Management Plan for Impacts to Biological Resources Resulting from Trail Construction and Operation.

Tree replacement ratios would be specified during Project permitting in consultation with the County and City and trees would be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio. The County typically requires 3:1 replacement for Significant trees (which includes all trees in ESHA). Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, main bullet #7 details tree replacement guidance, as follows:

- *All County Significant trees, Capitola Protected trees, and native trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio (“in kind” for native trees) at a location and ratio to be determined by the County Environmental Coordinator, City Community Development Department, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. Wherever feasible, tree replacement plantings will be situated to promote ecosystems benefits and services by replacing displaced habitat functions and values and/or enhancing remaining habitat. Where tree replacement plantings exceed a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio, tree replacement plantings may be situated to enhance the urban streetscape with the design goals of beautifying neighborhoods (especially those with a disproportionate paucity of trees), reducing the urban heat island, and improving carbon sequestration. Urban streetscape features such as public or private greenbelts, medians, parking strips, and/or other similar available spaces with sufficient space may be used for replacement tree planting. Urban streetscape species composition may include coast redwood, coast live oak, tanoak, and buckeye in upland areas and white alder, box elder, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, and western sycamore in riparian habitats.*

Also refer to **Master Response A**, Tree Removal and Mitigation.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: info@seacliffimprovement.org
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: EIR Comment for Segment 11 from the Seacliff Improvement Association
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 10:30:56 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Rob,

The Seacliff Improvement Association (SIA) represents 350 households in Seacliff and our bylaws require us to improve public works and preserve our neighborhood's natural resources. Following are our concerns about how this segment affects our residents.

11-1 The Ultimate trail configuration of Segment 11 through Seacliff to State Park Drive has some significant and unavoidable impacts on Seacliff listed in the EIR. The negative effect on scenic vistas by removing 803 mature trees for the Ultimate trail and 288 for the Interim is inconsistent with our county tree removal policy. It creates an adverse effect on Monarch butterflies that conflicts with ordinances protecting their habitat. The parklet, created and maintained by Seacliff residents, at the corner of the Mar Vista Drive crossing would be removed to make way for the Ultimate trail and most trees along Poplar Street here would be removed.

11-2 Currently, at least 75 homes and apartment buildings directly adjacent to the rail line will lose access to the Ultimate trail due to the required fencing dividing the trail from their homes. Many who walk the corridor through Seacliff have also wondered how a trail can fit alongside the tracks. Because the width of some of the Ultimate trail is less than the minimum 8 ft required of a Caltrans Class 1 bikeway there is a potential for user conflicts in these constrained sections.

11-3 We welcome the construction of this segment of the trail so residents can enjoy traveling to other neighborhoods without using their cars. We request a review of the above concerns so our community natural resources are minimally impacted and we have access to, and enough space on the trail to use it.

Kind regards,
Emily Chorba
Seacliff Improvement Association President

Commenter 11

COMMENTER: Emily Chorba, President, Seacliff Improvement Association

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 11.1

The commenter expresses concern about the impact of tree removal on scenic vistas, states that tree removal is inconsistent with the County tree removal policy, and cites the impacts on monarch butterflies and the conflict with County and City ordinances that protect this species.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment is noted. As designed, proposed trail impacts associated with tree removal and on the monarch butterfly were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable in the DEIR, Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, Impact BIO-1 and Impact BIO-10. Best management practices and avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts on these resources and mitigation measures to compensate for the losses are identified in Mitigation Measure BIO-1a, Mitigation Measure BIO-1b, Mitigation Measure BIO-7a, Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, and Mitigation Measure BIO-7c.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 11.2

The commenter states that homes in the Seacliff area will lose access to the Ultimate Trail due to the required fencing dividing the trail from their homes.

The commenter states that homes would lose access to the Ultimate Trail, but there is currently no legal access to the rail corridor, so the Project would not result in a reduction of access to the trail. In the Seacliff area, residents will be able to access the trail at Estates Drive, an informal trail connection at Poplar Street, at Mar Vista Drive, and at State Park Drive.

As stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Fencing and Guardrails*, the Ultimate Trail Configuration could include safety fencing to separate trail users from the rail, as needed. Safety fencing separating the trail from the rail would not be needed unless and until rail service is restored on the rail line. Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 11.3

The commenter is concerned about the width of the Ultimate Trail Configuration being reduced to less than 8 feet in some areas and the potential for user conflict in these constrained sections.

As described in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials* (beginning on page 2-14), the typical width would be 12–14 feet. It would be primarily 12 feet but widens to 14 feet between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch where there is additional space to improve access to key destinations near this part of the project area.

The width would be reduced to less than 12 feet at the following six locations, which are identified in the bulleted list (on page 2-15). However, there would be no portions of the trail that would be

reduced to less than 10 feet. The typographical error indicating 8 feet in the fifth bullet has been corrected as shown below:

- *10 to 12 feet – For the 200 feet approaching the eastern side of 17th Avenue (sheet CP-1.01)*
- *10 feet – For the 80 feet approaching the western side of 30th Avenue and 90 feet approaching the eastern side of 30th Avenue (sheet CP-1.07)*
- *10 to 11 feet – For the 50 feet approaching the western side of 38th Avenue and 80 feet approaching the eastern side of 38th Avenue (sheet CP-1.10)*
- *11 to 12 feet – For the section between 41st Avenue and 47th Avenue near Jade Street Park Jade (sheets CP-1.11 through CP-1.14)*
- *10 & 12 feet – For the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue (sheet CP-1.17)*
- *10 to 12 feet – For 425 feet between Stream 633 and Poplar Street starting approximately 450 feet east of Stream 633 (CP-1.35)*

The planned trail widths of the Ultimate Trail Configuration (12 feet wide) and the Optional Interim Trail (16 feet wide) meet the MBSST Network Master Plan trail classification of a Class I bikeway.¹⁶ Based on the design criteria for Class I bikeways, the minimum combined paved width would be 12 feet, including paved shoulders, or narrower at structures for stream crossings and areas with constrained ROW within the rail corridor, as allowed in the Caltrans Chapter 1000 Bicycle Transportation Design (July 1, 2020) and California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.¹⁷ An 8-foot wide trail would not meet these requirements and provide sufficient room for the anticipated users.

DEIR Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Material* has been revised to correct the typographical error of 8 feet wide to 10 feet wide for the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue, as shown above.

Response 11.4

The commenter welcomes the construction of this segment (Segment 11) and requests a review of the aforementioned concerns (**Responses 11.1–11.3**).

Comment noted. The decision-makers will review and consider the comments received and responses to those comments.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

¹⁶ A Class I bikeway is defined as a multi-use paved path that is separated from any street or highway and permits a variety of users (including bicyclists, walkers, joggers, wheelchairs, and scooters), per the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000, *Bicycle Transportation Design* (Caltrans July 1, 2020: 1000-1-15).

¹⁷ Trail paved widths may be reduced with the recommended striping per Caltrans Chapter 1000 Section 1000.3 (3) Clearance to Obstructions and recommended bicycle warning signs in CA MUTCD Chapter 9 Section 9B.19 Other Bicycle Warning Signs.

From: [David Schonbrunn](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail environmental
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:49:19 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

12-1 |

We continue to strongly support the near-term return to service of the Branch Line. As a result, we are very opposed to serious consideration of interim designs that would require railbanking. These could only proceed as a refusal to comply with the public will expressed in its vote on Measure D. We see no reason to treat these alternatives at the same level of scrutiny as the principal alternative.

Thank you,

--David

David Schonbrunn, President
Train Riders Association of California (TRAC)
P.O. Box 151439
San Rafael, CA 94915-1439

415-370-7250 cell & office
President@calrailnews.org
www.calrailnews.org

Commenter 12

COMMENTER: David Schonbrunn, President, Train Riders Association of California

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 12.1

The commenter supports near-term return to service of the SCBRL and is opposed to consideration of interim designs that would require railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Rosalee Schelstraete](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Keep the ULTIMATE TRAIL PLAN
Date: Monday, October 16, 2023 10:46:11 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

13-1

- Do not remove the tracks
- Do what the voters decided and keep the tracks
- Complete the Ultimate Trail Plan
- Stop trying to do a trail only when the majority of voters do not want it.

Commenter 13

COMMENTER: Rosalee Schelstraete

DATE: October 16, 2023

Response 13.1

The commenter supports keeping the tracks and completing the Ultimate Trail Configuration

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [ariel y](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project
Date: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 10:43:28 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

As a resident of Santa Cruz County since 1993, I would like to comment that I believe the benefits to the people of our county of the Rail & Trail plan are worth the environmental impacts described in the October 2023 Draft Environmental Impact Report for sections 10 & 11. I love it that the lighting will be "dark sky compliant" as this is so important to nocturnal wildlife!

I really hope you stick with Rail & Trail and do not do the interim rail banking. It seems like a terrible idea to tear up the railroad tracks and then have to re-build them for us to have train service again (someday - I hope!)

Thank you,
E. Ariel Young
Ben Lomond, CA

14-1

Commenter 14

COMMENTER: E. Ariel Young

DATE: October 17, 2023

Response 14.1

The commenter supports rail & trail and opposes interim railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [ANN STADLER](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:03:06 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

15-1

Hello Rob! Please explain to me why the tracks would be removed? I thought we voted against that and that we were moving ahead with the trail AND the tracks.
Ann Stadler

Commenter 15

COMMENTER: Ann Stadler

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 15.1

The commenter asks why the tracks would be removed, as they thought we voted against that and were moving ahead with trail and tracks.

Thank you for your comment. See **Master Response B** for more information.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Daniel Spero](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail public comment
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 4:12:28 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

16-1

Don't put the trail thru Capitola village, put it over the trestle to avoid all the traffic!

Daniel

Commenter 16

COMMENTER: Daniel Spero

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 16.1

The commenter supports putting the trail on the Capitola Trestle Bridge, rather than through Capitola Village.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Hoyle](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail report
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 12:06:52 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please register my vote as a person who voted for measure D but upon learning how many more trees have to be eliminated to accommodate the rail part, I no longer want a rail. Build the trail only please.

Other reasons for no rail: less idling cars waiting for a train to pass, no accidents with train vs car/bike or person and a huge savings of money.

Sincerely,

David Hoyle
831-818-4018

17-1

Commenter 17

COMMENTER: David Hoyle

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 17.1

The commenter supports Trail Only (no rail).

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dusten Dennis](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Approve EIR for Segments 10 and 11
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 9:02:38 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob Tidmore

18-1 |

I have reviewed the EIR and plans for segments 10 and 11 of the Rail Trail. PLEASE move forward and approve them and start construction work ASAP.

Thank You,

Dusten Dennis
920 Cayuga St.
Santa Cruz CA 95062

Commenter 18

COMMENTER: Dusten Dennis

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 18.1

The commenter supports Rail Trail and would like construction to start as soon as possible.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jean Brocklebank](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Michael Lewis](#)
Subject: Segment 10/11 EIR
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 9:13:28 AM

CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Hi Rob ~

Michael and I would like to arrange to review the DEIR at Parks, presumably in the conference room upstairs. We'll need a minimum of an hour the first time, perhaps more. We have done a cursory review of the humungous 1,474 page document and online review only will be unhealthful.

May we schedule this with you and if so, here are two dates for our first visit that would be good for us:

Monday 10/23 from 1 -3 pm
Thursday 10/26 from 1 - 3 pm

Jean

P.S. Is there a copy of the EIR at the Capitola Library and the Live Oak Library?

19-1

Commenter 19

COMMENTER: Jean Brocklebank

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 19.1

The commenter requests to review the Draft EIR at the Parks Dept and asks if there are copies at the Capitola Library and Live Oak Library.

Thank you for the comment.

Copies of the Draft EIR were made available to the public at Santa Cruz County Parks Office, the Santa Cruz County Government Center, Capitola Library, and Live Oak Library.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Garrett Smart](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Mari Jo Pezzi](#)
Subject: RE: MariJo Pezzi contribute ideas to rail trail
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 2:57:27 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

The Rail Trail is a great plan. We feel that the railroad tracks should be left in place with the trail alongside it. If the tracks were removed and then in the future if motor traffic was greatly increased, it might be wise to have an alternative mode of transportation. I'm sure the cost of replacing the rails would be great, so why not just leave them in place?

As a side note, we watch the traffic as it is now (presently) from 3-6 pm going through the village from where Capitola Road and East Cliff end, it is quite congested. Also Highway 1 at these hours. We've been at this location for 30+ years and have seen an increase in auto traffic. The trains that ran through here were never a problem. Therefore, the rails may become useful someday to carry those who commute through the village- a commute by rail to work and from work from Aptos? Watsonville? Rio Del Mar? Relieving the number of cars not only on Hwy.1 but also the surface streets. Thank you for permitting me to give my opinion.

Sincerely,

Mari Jo Pezzi

1504 Wharf Road

Capitola

20-1

Commenter 20

COMMENTER: Mari Jo Pezzi

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 20.1

The commenter supports the Rail Trail and feels the tracks should be left in place with the trail alongside. The commenter also notes the traffic has gotten worse through the village and on Highway 1, and the trains that ran through were never a problem.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Terry Swinggi](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project, EIR
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 5:29:27 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Rob Tidmore,

21-1 |

Where can I locate how intersections between the current Rail Line and the roadways it crosses?

For Example:

Right of Way

Currently the train has Right of Way over vehicle and pedestrian traffic.
Who or what will control Right of Way without any Trains?

21-2 |

- What will happen with existing controls?

Signals and Signage

Currently the railroad controls and maintains the existing lights, sound, gates, etc. Operation is automated.
I believe Signs and their Installation are controlled by Local Authority.

21-3 |

- What overall Agency will determine and pay for changes?

Thanks,

Terry

Commenter 21

COMMENTER: Terry Swinggi

DATE: October 18, 2023

Response 21.1

The commenter asks where they can locate intersections between the current rail line and the roadways it crosses.

Thank you for the comments.

The locations where the trail crosses roadways are presented in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 under *Roadway Crossings*.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 21.2

The commenter states the train currently has the right of way over vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The commenter asks who or what will control the right of way without any trains, and what will happen to the existing controls?

The RTC owns and maintains the RTC-owned right of way. Planned utility installations are described in Section 2.6 under *Rail Realignment and Utility Relocations and Installations* and in the design plans included in Appendix A.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 21.3

The commenter states that currently the railroad controls and maintains the existing lights, sound, gates, etc. and operation is automated. The commenter asks what overall agency will determine and pay for changes, presumably to the railroad equipment.

The RTC owns and maintains the RTC-owned right of way. The RTC's Administration, Coordination, and License Agreement with the common carrier transfers maintenance within the freight easement, including equipment, to the common carrier once initial repairs are completed by the RTC. Any modifications to the railroad equipment proposed as part of the Project would be made and paid for by the Project and reviewed and approved by the RTC as the owner of the rail line and coordinated with the rail operator.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Wright](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Concerned about noise
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023 1:05:46 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I'm pretty concerned about the noise from the bells which will be ringing all the time.

How many decibels do the bells make?

How many houses will have to hear them?

Are the trains going to make noise? Are they going to have to have their own horn? What is the decibels of the horns?

22-1

Commenter 22

COMMENTER: David Wright

DATE: October 19, 2023

Response 22.1

The commenter is concerned about noise from the (train) bells that will be ringing all the time. The commenter asks: How many decibels do the bells make? How many houses will have to hear them? Are the trains going to make noise? Are there going to have to have their own horn? What is the decibel of the horns?

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Thus, the Project would not result in noise from the train. The RTC is pursuing a Project Concept Report for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail Trail Project. An environmental analysis of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project would include a noise analysis. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Erik Kayhart](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Seg 10/11
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023 8:13:53 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

The county already voted on this with landslide results. The Ultimate Trail is the only option. The rail line is needed for transit and to connect to the rest of the state network.

23-1

Commenter 23

COMMENTER: Erik Kayhart

DATE: October 19, 2023

Response 23.1

The commenter states the County voted on this with landslide results, the Ultimate Trail in the only option, and the rail line is needed for transit and to connect to the rest of the state network.

Thank you for the comment. Refer to **Master Response B** for Measure D Clarification.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [WAYNE BURNHAM](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023 9:35:17 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I was under the impression with the last measure passed that there will be no option for rail banking. Why is rail banking even in this report since Santa Cruz voted to move forward with light rail. This is ridiculous to still keep offering this option of rail banking. It keeps postponing the ability to actually start construction with light transit.

Sincerely,
Wayne Burnham
8314193260

24-1

Commenter 24

COMMENTER: Wayne Burnham

DATE: October 19, 2023

Response 24.1

The commenter asks why railbanking is being considered since Santa Cruz voted to move forward with light rail.

Thank you for your comment. Refer to **Master Response B** for Measure D clarification.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ellen Martinez](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Interim Trail is Preferred
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 2:04:26 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please build the Interim Trail. Do NOT build the Ultimate Trail. Do NOT run the trail through the Village of Capitola. If the Interim Trail is built, the Capitola Trestle can be reinforced and used.

25-1 I

Commenter 25

COMMENTER: Ellen Martinez

DATE: October 24, 2023

Response 25.1

The commenter supports Interim Trail and opposes the Ultimate Trail and running the trail through the village.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Karl Knopf](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: In favor of Rail Trail
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2023 6:45:42 PM

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26-1 |

I support the rail trail !!!
Please pass it we have been waiting for years to have a safe and pleasant bike path !!!

Karl Knopf Of Capitola

Commenter 26

COMMENTER: Karl Knopf

DATE: October 26, 2023

Response 26.1

The commenter supports the rail trail.

Thank you for the comment

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Toby Fernie](#)
 To: [RailTrail](#)
 Subject: Capitola Rail Trail Inclusive Park Question
 Date: Friday, October 27, 2023 9:11:01 AM
 Attachments: [R3FX-30069-S1-02_Pres \(2\).pdf](#)
[Garvey Ranch Park Renderings Compressed - City of Monterey Park \(1\) \(4\) \(1\) \(1\).pdf](#)
[Sequoia Park - Monterey Park - Compressed \(1\) \(1\) \(4\) \(1\) \(1\).pdf](#)
[Marinwood Nature Theme Renderings - Compressed \(1\) \(4\) \(1\) \(1\).pdf](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi Rob,

I hope that you're having a nice week and happy Friday! I am a local Monterey resident and recently listened to the Capitola City Council meeting. Wanted to congratulate you on the work that you've accomplished thus far for the rail trail project.

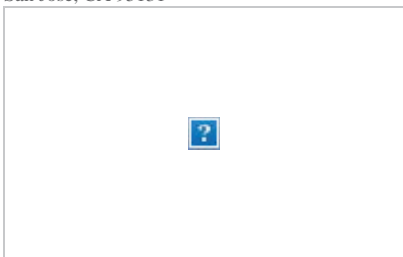
My name is Toby and I am the local project manager for Zoom Recreation. Zoom offers turnkey services for design, manufacturing and installation of playground equipment, shades, shelters, site amenities and outdoor fitness equipment. We offer a fully recycled line of playground equipment, ADA fully accessible equipment and thematic units.

Would you be available for a phone or Google Meets call? I'd also be happy to stop by your office with coffee or lunch in the upcoming weeks. Would be great to see if there is any way we can help with this project or any others upcoming. I've attached some renderings of our themed playgrounds and one of our fully inclusive playgrounds.

[You can find a link here to some of our recent projects.](#)

[A link to some of our company resources and catalogs.](#)

Thanks,
Toby Fernie CPSI
Project Manager | Northern California
 831.233.0586
 LIC # 1067651 (A, C61/D34)
 DIR # 1000655676
www.zoomrecreation.com
 2570 N First St. 2nd Floor Suite 200
 San Jose, CA 95131



27-1

Commenter 27

COMMENTER: Toby Fernie

DATE: October 27, 2023

Response 27.1

The commenter is offering their services for design, manufacturing and installation of playground equipment, site amenities, and outdoor fitness equipment.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Danforth](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Attn: Rob Tidmore, Comments on Draft EIR for Rail Trail Project Segments 10 and 11
Date: Saturday, October 28, 2023 12:03:08 PM
Attachments: [Initial Comments on Environmental Impact Report for SC Trail.docx](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

Attached and below please find my comments on the Draft EIR for this project:

Best wishes,
John Danforth

Initial Comments on Draft EIR for Proposed SC Bike/Pedestrian Trail

John Danforth
4735 Nova Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Please accept this as my initial set of comments on the draft EIR for this project. I am submitting these comments on October 28, 2023.

I can see that an enormous amount of effort has gone into the EIR -- and into the many diagrams showing the demolition and the construction required for this project. My great thanks to all who contributed to this work.

What this extensive work shows, however, is a project sharply at odds with its stated purpose. Please reconsider this project -- or limit it for now to just the more limited, interim version.

The materials provided are extremely dense and detailed and I am sure I have missed some points and – perhaps – made some errors. But I think, on the whole, my reading is correct. I am limiting my comments (at least for now) to segments 10 and 11, the portions closest to my home, which are the parts I know best. By way of background, my wife and I have lived at this address (adjacent to Jade Park) for six years. We use the park most days and we also walk up and down Cliff Drive and around Depot Hill most days. We also walk along the existing railroad tracks frequently – often going to or from New Brighton Beach. So we know this area extremely well.

28-0

1. **Extensive destruction of mature trees.** Among the most troubling aspects of this plan is the contemplated removal of what appear to be hundreds of mature trees. These will not be replaced for decades, if ever. The aesthetic impact will be horrific. Especially in segment 11, the trees currently along the train tracks are gorgeous. Close to Brighton Beach they provide a lush green tunnel that is truly wonderful (and a nice contrast to the relatively barren portions of this trail elsewhere in the County).

In an era of escalating climate change, the planned demolition of this area is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing with mature trees, especially in urban and semi-urban areas.

There used to be an expression (attributed to the Pentagon) during the Vietnam War: “We had to destroy the village in order to save it.” That saying applies here. The proposed pedestrian/bike path is intended to encourage greater use of the outdoors. But proposed demolition for that path destroys much of what we already have.

2. **Possible error in the Draft EIR re planned tree removal.** The Draft EIR gives two different numbers for the interim plan and the ultimate plan in terms of how many existing trees will be removed under each. But it gives a *larger* number for the interim plan. This makes no sense.

The interim plan (with the planned pedestrian/bike path on top of the existing tracks) is much narrower than the ultimate plan (with the pedestrian/bike path alongside the tracks). A narrower project should – logically -- require the removal of fewer trees, not more

Both numbers of removed trees are excessive and should, frankly, be enough to put an end to this project – using either version. But one key objective, in any event, should be to reduce how many trees are lost. It should be a small fraction of the numbers presented so far. And if, as I suspect, the narrower, interim version actually involves the removal of fewer trees than that is an argument in its favor. There are others as well. Please see below.

3. **The wasted funds, wasted effort, increased disruption, and – likely -- depressed property values that will result from moving the train tracks closer to housing before there is any need to do so.** As I understand it, one major feature of the ultimate plan for segment 10 is that the existing tracks will be moved closer to the homes on Nova Drive that back onto Jade Park. We live in one of those homes. Our immediate neighbors (many of them elderly) live in others.

28-1

28-2

28-3

This is an awful idea for several reasons. Some of them exist irrespective of our specific circumstances.

First, moving the tracks closer to our home will not only likely depress our property value, it will also remove vegetation along our back property line, significantly reducing the privacy of our home (and of our neighbors' homes) at a time when (with the increased traffic of a pedestrian/bike lane) that privacy is needed more than ever.

Second, there is the wasted money (and the unnecessary added disruption and time delay) required to pull up and then immediately move and replace the train tracks. At present, those tracks are not being used. They have not been used for years – certainly not for all the years we have lived here. And there is (to my understanding) no economically viable use case for the tracks currently. Nor is there likely to be one in the foreseeable future (for reasons that we can discuss, but that include the distance of the existing track route from any major population or job or transit centers).

I understand many hope that this will change. But it is – frankly -- ridiculous to pay for (and do) this work today (and incur all of the downsides that it will generate) for highly-unlikely, hoped-for benefits in the future. If circumstances change in the future (which seems a long way off at best), then the tracks can be moved at that time.

Finally, there is the real possibility that, in the future, even assuming the existing right of way can someday be used in an economically viable way, the existing tracks will be obsolete for future transportation solutions. We cannot know. But one can imagine, for example, light rail solutions that run on rubber tires (better from a noise perspective) and that therefore need a different track.

All of the above are further arguments for the interim plan, not the ultimate plan, if this project is to proceed at all.

4. **The traffic mess – and likely hazards – that will result from not using the Capitola Trestle and pushing more bikes and pedestrians onto Cliff Drive.** One other difference between the interim and ultimate plans involves the Capitola Trestle. The interim plan includes its use. The ultimate plan does not.

For starters, not using the Trestle is a terrible waste of a valuable resource, simply from an aesthetic viewpoint. The view out from the trestle down the river, across the bridge, across the lagoon and out to sea is spectacular. It will be a highlight (I think *the* highlight) of the proposed pathway.

What a shame to go immediately to the ultimate version of the path and lose this

28-3
cont.

28-4

gorgeous resource.

(Those who argue in favor of directing more business into Capitol Village probably greatly overestimate how much business will come from users of the new pathway. In any event, these concerns can be largely met by signage and an adjacent bike path leading down Monterey from the Trestle into the village.)

But there are very serious safety concerns also. Cliff Drive is already overly congested – especially on nice days and during rush hours. The existing space on the shoulders (especially the shoulder closest to the water, where most folks want to walk) is already too narrow (and too close to traffic) for its existing usage. It is already overcrowded with cyclists, dog-walkers, other pedestrians, skateboarders, folks backing out of parking spots, and an increasing number of folks using electric bikes. If you divert traffic from the proposed pathway to this area in order to feed that traffic through Capitola Village you add to this chaos. There will be increased injuries along this road – and I fear fatalities as well.

For these reasons as well, if this proposed pathway is to be built at all, the interim plan offers a much better solution. It not only does not add congestion to Cliff Drive, it promises to actually offer a partial solution. It will *divert* foot and bike traffic to relieve that Cliff Drive congestion, taking pedestrians and cyclists further away from the car traffic that now (all too often) speeds up and down Cliff Drive, headless of crosswalks and other traffic controls.

5. **Other traffic and safety threats.** It appears that at least the ultimate plan poses other threats as well by reconfiguring pedestrian crosswalks and other traffic controls in the area where Cliff Drive turns into Portola Drive, East Cliff Drive and 47th Street. I urge great caution here.

Already there are numerous hazards in this area – from folks ignoring stop signs, ignoring the “no right turn” sign on 47th, and using side streets (including Nova Drive and streets in The Jewell Box neighborhood) as speedy shortcuts to get to 41st and/or Capitola Drive. Please add traffic controls that will reduce these hazards and do not remove the ones we already have.

Thank you for your attention to these comments. **Bottom line: this project now – from the Draft EIR and the accompanying diagrams -- appears to be highly destructive. It should be abandoned. But if it must go forward, the interim plan is far and away the better option.**

Commenter 28

COMMENTER: John Danforth

DATE: October 28, 2023

Response 28.0

The commenter provides an introduction to their comments, acknowledging the effort that has gone into the EIR, the Project is at odds with its purpose, and the materials are dense.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.1

The comment states there would be extensive destruction of mature trees, which would have long term negative impacts on aesthetics and climate change.

These impacts are acknowledged in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. As designed, proposed trail impacts associated with tree removal were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable in the DEIR in Impact BIO-10. As state in the DEIR, replacement trees would take many years to mature and provide similar aesthetic and ecological functions and values, and the availability of suitable mitigation sites within proximity to the Project corridor is limited. Best management practices, and avoidance and minimization measures to reduce tree removal impacts and to compensate for the losses are identified in Mitigation Measure BIO-7a, Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, and Mitigation Measure BIO-7c. See also **Master Response A: Tree Removal**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.2

The commenter states there is a possible error in the Draft EIR because the interim plan is much narrower and should require removal of fewer trees. The commenter also states that the amount of tree removal of either scenario should put an end to the project.

As described in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 under *Trail Width and Materials*, the typical width of the Ultimate Trail Configuration is 12 feet, and the typical width of the Optional Interim Trail is 16 feet. Refer to **Master Response H** for trail width requirements and rationale.

As described in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, Impacts BIO-1 and BIO-10 (and elsewhere) under *Comparison of Proposed Project Impact with/without Optional Interim Trail*, the Project with the Optional Interim Trail would have a larger footprint (Table 3.3-5) and greater tree removal (Table 3.3-4) overall than the Project without the Optional Interim Trail. Because tree removal would occur on both sides of the tracks, particularly at Escalona Gulch, tree removal impacts associated with the Interim Trail would be greater than those for the Project. This is also described in Section 5.3 (Table 5-5).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.3

The commenter opposes moving train tracks closer to housing because it will reduce property value, remove vegetation, reduce privacy, is a waste of money, and the tracks will be obsolete for future transportation solutions (e.g., light rail).

The relocated train tracks (rail and ties) would be constructed of the same material as the existing train tracks. CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation of social or economic impacts, such as the potential effects on property values and perceived loss of privacy (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382). Also refer to 1.2.2 *Rail Operation and Maintenance* regarding possible future rail alternatives and **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.4

The commenter supports the Interim Trail and using the Capitola Trestle Bridge because of the aesthetic views it would provide and because of safety concerns of routing the trail through Capitola Village since Cliff Drive is already overly congested.

The commenter's support of the Interim Trail is noted and will be forwarded to decision makers for consideration. Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.5

The commenter states that the Ultimate Plan may create other traffic and safety hazards through the reconfiguration of pedestrian crosswalks and other traffic controls where Cliff Drive turns into Portola Drive, East Cliff Drive, and 47th Street. The commenter requests that the Project include traffic controls to reduce existing hazards in these locations.

The proposed crossing improvements were developed in consultation with the traffic and rail engineers based on existing and anticipated peak volumes for pedestrians and vehicles, and the posted speed limit. The proposed crossing configuration has been approved by the CPUC and includes high visibility striped crosswalk, high visibility advanced signage, and yield lines.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 28.6

The commenter states that the Project should be abandoned because it appears to be highly destructive, but if it must go forward, the Interim Plan is the better option.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Julie Lambert](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR comments
Date: Saturday, October 28, 2023 2:30:07 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

29-1 |

The rail project is not financially feasible. Please do not destroy over 1000 mature trees for this folly.

I support Alternative 1.

Julie Lambert, Aptos

Commenter 29

COMMENTER: Julie Lambert

DATE: October 28, 2023

Response 29.1

The commenter supports Alternative 1 (Trail Only), does not think the Project is financially feasible, and does not want over 1,000 trees destroyed.

Thank you for the comment. Refer to DEIR Section 1.2.4 for information on funding and **Master Response A** for information on tree removal and mitigation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Kevin Maguire <kmaguire831@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 28, 2023 11:10 AM
To: RailTrail <RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>; gblakeslee@sccrtc.org; Pedersen, Alexander <apedersen@ci.capitola.ca.us>; jclarke@ci.capitola.ca.us; ybrooks@ci.capitola.ca.us; thekristenbrown@gmail.com; margauxkeiser@gmail.com
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project, Ultimate, Ultimate, Interim plans...

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello City Council, RTC and Project Manager.

My name is Kevin Maguire. I have lived at 838 Monterey Ave, Capitola, CA 95010 for over 48 years. I have two sons ages 15 and 10.

I was in attendance at the council meeting this past Tuesday. And have some questions and comments.

1. First off some facts if they can be clarified.
 1. The corridor is not big enough for running a passenger train and a rail trail, correct?
 - a. So, we will never have both correct? Only one can exist?

30-1

30-1
cont.

30-2

30-3

30-4

30-5

30-6

30-7

30-8

30-9

- b. Due to minimum 25' setback from live tracks to a pedestrian path?
 - c. The corridor is not big enough to support both?
2. If a passenger train is ever going to be put into service, All tracks and the Trestle will need to be replaced, correct?
- a. Any Rail trail would then be removed and would no longer exist?
3. Cost of passenger train, ROI, how many stops (Seascape, Seacliff, Capitola, Pleasure Point, Harbor, Boardwalk, UCSC, etc) would make this more of a tourist thing and not really replace transportation.
- a. Logistics of finding parking at one of those stops, where to put those depots, cost of my family of 4 to ride the train to the Boardwalk, compared to \$6 in gas to drive there. 10-15min in my car compared to 40-60 min on the train with all the stops. Doesn't make it an alternative mode.
4. If we cant have both, doesn't Rail banking or covering the tracks, allow the quickest, cost effective way to put up a trail to bridge the gap and get people to use it sooner?
5. If we use the existing Trestle as a Trail, would we not have to replace it?
6. If its replaced by a Train, again there is not enough room for two Trestles, so we would divert trail traffic through the Village (dangerous Capitola with all those cars), then send people over the Trestle, then send them back permanently though the village if a Passenger Trestle is built. Correct?
7. If we use the whole corridor, then the mobile homes might not have to move?
8. Park Ave to Grove Ln. there are no houses on that side of the street, I was confused by the grade of the Trail, and that part not being next to the tracks. Also, would all those Eucalyptus trees be removed? Why would we need underground shoring if no houses, that was in the statement of the two designs.

Riding a bike down Monterey Ave into the village is ok before you reach the bottom of the hill and stop sign. Then traffic is backed up, a Bike lane appears but Cars are almost hitting me all the time when I move from the road to the bike lane. On a bike, or E-Bike. You normally dont stay in the middle of the road with traffic while not moving on a bike. That would add to the backup and traffic problems. And not safe with the amount of cars in the village.

My 15 year old has a Class II E-bike upto 20 MPH. But he will soon be driving and is planning on ditching his E-bike. I will inherit that. He wont bike again really. A Passenger train will not replace his car. But a Trail can offset other peoples use.

30-9
cont.

Having a continuous trail from one end to the other will connect Capitola to the rest of Santa Cruz. My family could Bike to the Boardwalk, or Crows Nest Thursday night concerts, Or go shopping by bike on 41st. Ride from here to Wilder Ranch...

Again I was confused about the Trestle and the Ultimate Plan vs Interim plan vs the Ultimate Ultimate plan.

If the Trestle is a Trail now, will that keep the trail open and alive forever?

Sounds like a hassle and a waste if we make it a trail, and then take it away from people never to return. Why would we do that?

30-10

If we build a Trail along side the tracks, only to lose that IF a passenger train ever returns. Is that correct thinking? Im sure people dont understand those facts. Am I correct in thinking that way?

If so, lets Bank, Remove, whatever to the tracks and use the whole corridor as a trail.

If we cant have both, people want a trail.

Waiting for your response.

Best

Kevin Maguire

Commenter 30

COMMENTER: Kevin Maguire

DATE: October 28 and November 6, 2023

Response 30.1

The commenter has several questions: Is the corridor big enough for a passenger train and a rail trail? Can both exist?

Thank you for the comments.

The rail corridor is wide enough in most locations to have both a trail and rail. The design plans for the Ultimate Trail Configuration in Appendix A.1 illustrate the right-of-way accommodating both the tracks and a trail Also refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail operation.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.2

The commenter has several questions: If a passenger train is going to be put into service, all tracks and the trestle will need to be replaced, correct? Any rail trail would then be removed and no longer exist?

Refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail operation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.3

The commenter states that the cost of passenger train would make this more of a tourist thing and not an alternative transportation mode.

Refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail operation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.4

The commenter asks, if we can't have both, doesn't railbanking or covering the tracks allow the quickest, cost effective way to put a trail to bridge the gap and use it sooner?

Refer to **Master Response E** for information on railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.5

The commenter asks, if we use the existing trestle as a trail, wouldn't we have to replace it?

Refer to **Master Response D**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.6

The commenter asks, if the trestle is replaced by a train, there isn't enough room for two trestles so we would divert trail traffic through the village, then send people over the trestle, then back through the village if a passenger trestle is built, correct?

Refer to **Master Response D**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.7

The commenter asks, if we use the whole corridor, then the mobile homes might not have to move?

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 30.8

The commenter states that from Park Ave to Grove Lane, there are no houses on that side of the street, they are confused by the grade of the trail adjacent to the homes and ask if the all the eucalyptus trees would be removed? They also ask an unclear question about underground shoring.

There are houses on the coastal side of the railroad ROW from Monterey to Grove Lane. Under the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the trail will be built on the coastal side of the tracks, and the grade of the trail varies in relation to the grade of the homes that toward the coast, or south of the trail). In some places, the trail is almost level with the existing grade, and in other areas it is depressed.

Most of the eucalyptus on the inland side of the tracks would not need to be removed for the Ultimate Trail Configuration. For the Interim Trail Configuration, most of the tree removals are located on the inland side of the railroad tracks, which would result in more eucalyptus being removed along Park Ave, but neither alignment would require removal of all the eucalyptus trees along Park Ave. The tree removals are shown in Appendices A.5 and A.6.

The question about shoring is unclear. The double wall system was proposed for the Ultimate Trail Configuration in order to avoid the need for ground anchors under adjacent property that would be required for taller walls.

The comments do not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 30.9

The commenter opines about riding a bike into the village, using his son's e-bike, and being able to bike to various locations.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 30.10

The commenter states they are confused about the trestle, the Ultimate Plan, and the Interim Plan and poses several questions about the Capitola Trestle and whether a trail and rail can both be accommodated in the SCBRL.

Refer to **Master Response D** and **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 30.11

The commenter has several questions: When is the Final EIR? What are the minimum setbacks for a walkway adjacent to a passenger train? If a train is to use a new trestle, is it correct to say there will never be a trail on a trestle next to it in Capitola (as there is no room for two trestles and can't have a 60' wide trestle)?

The Final EIR is planned for release in March 2024. Refer to **Master Response D** and **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Martin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail
Date: Monday, October 30, 2023 1:30:51 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

I am for continuing with the Rail and Trail project as originally proposed and voted on. Our towns must be connected with a state of the art rail system, populated by electric trolley cars. This what residents need.

We do NOT need a trail, that would mainly cater to tourists and weekenders

Thank you,

David Martin | Reliability | 408-242-6957

31-1

Commenter 31

COMMENTER: David Martin

DATE: October 30, 2023

Response 31.1

The commenter supports the Project.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

-----Original Message-----

From: Jean Brocklebank <jeanbean@baymoon.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 11:46 AM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Pre-comment comments

CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Hi Rob ~

We spent some time yesterday with the EIR. Good lighting and nice location, if a bit loud (children below and constant coming and going of Parks staff). We plan to return.

It sure is better to view details of the diagrams from the downloaded pdf, where one can zoom into the details, even on my small laptop screen, unlike with the printed page!

I thoroughly read the Executive Summary (ES).

I was surprised to see that the ES does not give the width of the Optional First Phase of the 12' wide Ultimate Trail, as it does with the Alternative 1 Trail Only (16'). The ES also does not say whether the tracks will be removed via railbanking for the Optional Phase 1 Interim trail, as it does state for Alternative 1 Trail Only. One has to dig deeper (p.84, p. 87) to clarify these two omissions of the ES. That should not have had to be the case. A simple proof-reading of the ES would have made it obvious that both pieces of information were glaringly missing.

Whether or not those omissions were deliberate, to me they have the appearance of being so. Allow me to explain.

Using 'railbanking' in the description of Alternative 1 Trail Only is an immediate red flag for opposition to that alternative. And not giving the 16' width of the Optional First Phase interim trail makes it seem like the same 12' wide trail will be built, causing one wonder why build such a narrow trail down the center line.

The problem with the omissions in the ES is that most people, including the media, tend to use the ES, rather than dig deeper into a 1,747 page document. May I suggest that you make the omissions clear at the Nov. 16 public meeting?

Sincerely,
Jean

32-1

Commenter 32

COMMENTER: Jean Brocklebank

DATE: October 31, 2023

Response 32.1

The commenter states that the Executive Summary did not provide the width of the optional first phase (Interim Trail) nor state whether the tracks will be removed via railbanking, as it does for Alternative 1 Trail Only. The commenter suggested the information be made clear at the November 16 public meeting.

Thank you for the comment.

The Executive Summary in the Draft EIR provides the typical trail width for both the Ultimate Trail Configuration (page ES-2, third paragraph, last sentence) and the Optional Interim Trail (page ES-2, seventh or last paragraph, last sentence).

For the Final EIR, a sentence has been added to the end of these paragraphs to clarify that railbanking is not required for the Ultimate Trail Configuration and is required for the Optional Interim Trail. This information was also provided in the presentation for the public meeting held November 16, 2023. Additionally, a sentence has been added to the end of each paragraph describing the three project alternatives to clarify that railbanking is not required for Alternatives 1, 2, or 3 (on pages ES-4 and ES-5).

The Executive Summary of the Draft EIR has been revised for clarification, as described above.

From: [Jonathan Evans](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support rail to trail
Date: Friday, November 3, 2023 10:29:22 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear County staff,

As a resident of Live Oak who frequently walks and bikes through Santa Cruz and Capitola I support a rail to trail configuration in whatever format provides the most efficient construction and ability to integrate future rail.

Thank you,
Jonathan Evans
95062

33-1 |

Commenter 33

COMMENTER: Jonathan Evans

DATE: November 3, 2023

Response 33.1

The commenter supports a rail to trail configuration that provides the most efficient construction and ability to integrate future rail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kurt Rosenberger](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: EIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11
Date: Friday, November 3, 2023 12:47:11 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

34-1 |

I am writing to voice my support for the Ultimate Trail Option for the Rail Trail segments 10 and 11. The Ultimate Option is the only option that makes any sense - it is wasteful to build something that will only be torn up again later, and it will take longer. We need to move forward with the Rail Trail, people are clamoring to use it! Build the trail, keep the rail!

Thanks

Kurt Rosenberger

Commenter 34

COMMENTER: Kurt Rosenberger

DATE: November 3, 2023

Response 34.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: M. McCarthy <mmccarthy65@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 3, 2023 5:27 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Rail Trail along Park Ave

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello, I'm sorry to bother you but I am not brightest man and I am having trouble reading your plans of Segment 11. Are you wanting to take out all the Eucalyptus trees along Park Ave from Monterey Ave to Wesley St in Capitola? Thank you M. McCarthy

35-1

From: M. McCarthy <mmccarthy65@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, November 6, 2023 8:50 PM

To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Subject: Re: Rail Trail along Park Ave

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Thank you for replying, Mr. Tidmore.

There are quite few homeowners and renters that are very concerned about the Eucalyptus being removed. As I am sure you are already aware, those trees block a very large amount of wind to dozens of homes and apartments. Also, we have two eagles nesting in those trees as well. I am all for the trail, but not if it will remove homes to so many kinds of birds and protection from some nasty winter winds. Let's just hope it does not come to that...

Besides, I want to be able to catch a ride on a rail "bus" and take in the sights.

35-2

Commenter 35

COMMENTER: M. McCarthy

DATE: November 3 and November 6, 2023

Response 35.1

The commenter asks if all the eucalyptus trees will be removed along Park Avenue from Monterey Ave to Wesley St in Capitola.

Thank you for the comments.

Most of the eucalyptus along Park Ave would not need to be removed for the Ultimate Trail Configuration. For the Interim Trail Configuration, most of the tree removals are located on the inland side of the railroad tracks, which would result in more eucalyptus being removed along Park Ave, but neither alignment would require removal of all the eucalyptus trees along Park Ave. The tree removals are shown in Appendices A.5 and A.6.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 35.2

The commenter states there are quite a few homeowners and renters concerned about removing the eucalyptus trees along Park Ave because they block wind and have eagles nesting.

The potential impacts of tree removal, including impacts to nesting birds, are addressed in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. Refer to the discussion for Impacts BIO-1 and BIO-4.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [sara allshouse](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: EIR section 10/11
Date: Saturday, November 4, 2023 8:12:08 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

36-1 | Hello Rob, I am writing in concern of the EIR and the meeting that's going to take place on November 16. From my understanding there hasn't been a decision made on which approach is going to be taken. We live by Jade Street park with the tracks behind our property. So it impacts us what decision is made concerning where the tracks would be placed.
36-2 | Another huge concern is the removal of the "Allee" of trees and numerous other large trees. The bike path can be narrowed to protect our treasured trees. My understanding is our environment needs the oxygen to help fight climate change that all trees provide. It would be environmentally and aesthetically discouraging.

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Commenter 36

COMMENTER: Sara Allshouse

DATE: November 4, 2023

Response 36.1

The commenter states that a decision on the Project has not been made, and the decision concerning where the tracks are placed would impact them.

Thank you for the comments.

A decision on the Project will be made by the County as lead agency, after the County certifies the Final EIR in March 2024.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 36.2

The commenter is concerned about tree removal and states the path can be narrowed to protect the trees, which provide oxygen to fight climate change.

The potential impacts of tree removal are addressed in Sections 3.1, *Aesthetics*; 3.3, *Biological Resources*; and 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*, of the Draft EIR. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal, mitigation, and carbon sequestration.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Jamilah Vittor <jvittor@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 5, 2023 9:14 PM
To: Regional Transportation Commission <info@scrtc.org>
Subject: Save the trees re: Rail-Trail project

I wanted to let you know how strongly I oppose the destruction of hundreds of trees that is planned as part of the rail-trail project. Our large, mature trees are treasures of Santa Cruz County. We are losing trees from one end of the county to another, due to project after project. Highway widening, solar projects, new construction, etc. It is criminal to destroy so many trees.

Jamilah Vittor
Corralitos, CA

37-1

Commenter 37

COMMENTER: Jamilah Vittor

DATE: November 5, 2023

Response 37.1

The commenter opposes the destruction of trees for the Project and other projects in the County.

Thank you for the comment.

The potential impacts of tree removal are addressed in the Draft EIR. The Project impacts are addressed in Sections 3.1, *Aesthetics*; 3.3, *Biological Resources*; and 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*, and the cumulative Project impacts are addressed in Chapter 4, *Other CEQA-Required Discussions*. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Bob Skinner](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail comments
Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 9:56:44 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

38-1



Good morning, Rob: We are excited to see the first steps being taken to advance the rail trail. There is little doubt the bike and running trail will greatly enhance the quality of life for many living in the coastal villages that make up our county. We live in Aptos and the concept of being able to E bike or run along the trail is a game changer. I also think it will increase property values. I would say the only negative aspect of the EIR is the large number of trees that have to be removed , however , that was known at the time people voted on the proposal.

38-2



The only other comment I have is we are hopeful the light rail never happens as that would be an unfortunate consequence and certainly a huge waste of money.

-Bob Skinner-

Commenter 38

COMMENTER: Bob Skinner

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 38.1

The commenter states they are excited about the Project, as it will enhance the quality of life and increase property values. The only negative aspect is the large number of trees to be removed.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 38.2

The commenter opposes light rail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Brooke Elliott](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for Ultimate Rail Trail
Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 9:05:47 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

39-1



I support the Ultimate Trail Configuration and would like to see it constructed as soon as possible. The EIR is well done and aware of all the impacts of the project.

Brooke Elliott
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 39

COMMENTER: Brooke Elliott

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 39.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and would like to see it constructed as soon as possible, and states the EIR is well done.

Thank you for the comment.

The comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: greg.goodere
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments of Draft EIR for Proposed SC Bike / Pedestrian trail
Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 1:09:36 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Rob Tidmore:

My wife and I would like to comment on the proposed SC bike / pedestrian trail running behind our home at 4757 Nova Dr, Santa Cruz, CA. My wife's family has owned this property since 1967 and has been using this "family" home for 56 years. My wife and I have been coming to the "Capi" house together since the early 1980's and purchased 100% ownership in 2012. We really enjoy this property, as well as Jade Street Park and all the other amenities of this area.

40-1 | The one negative has been the continued graffiti on our back fence butting up to the railroad tracks. We support the planned use for a bike and pedestrian trail but strongly oppose movement of the train tracks closer to our property, particularly when there is space to move them closer to the park. We like to know the county's plan to provide additional security, noise reduction/sound barrier and compensation for loss of property value if you move the train tracks closer to our home. We would also like to better understand how the county plans to handle the graffiti issue if this trail runs behind our property.

40-2 | As we understand, there are no proposed plans for continued rail service along this stretch of tracks. So, why would the county wish to spend funds moving these tracks that may not fit the underdetermined future track use? It would seem to us that the county should be spending money on these tracks when or if plans are approved and properly funded for track use which would then determine the type of train track required.

40-3 | Additionally, we realize that there would be a positive economic impact to Capitola if the users of this trail were routed through the town and not along the trestle, which would provide the trail user with panoramic view of the area. However, routing these trail users through Capitola could cause undue hardship on those pedestrians with health issues that don't allow them to walk up or down steep inclines into and out of town. There are probably significant safety issues when this flow of bikers and walkers move through the town, particularly heading out of town toward Santa Cruz. Utilizing the trestle (eliminating the steep walk into and out of town) seems to be a viable option to those individuals with health (movement) issues.

Thank you for your work on this project and taking the time to review our concerns.

Cathy and Greg Goodere
4757 Nova Dr
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 40

COMMENTER: Greg Goodere

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 40.1

The commenter supports the planned trail but opposes moving the tracks closer to their property on Nova Drive near Jade Street Park and states that there is more space to move the tracks inland. They want to know the County's plans for additional security, noise reduction, compensation for reduced property value, and graffiti on their fence.

Thank you for the comments.

The alternative of locating the trail on the coastal side of the tracks and relocating the tracks to the inland side, as suggested by the commenter, was analyzed as a Project alternative in the Draft EIR Chapter 5 and determined to have greater environmental impacts.

Refer to **Master Response E** for information on future train service that is part of a separate project. Refer to **Master Response G** for additional information on noise, and security.

Graffiti abatement would be included as part of the Operations and Maintenance for the trail, as described in DEIR Section 2.5.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 40.2

The commenter states they understand there are no proposed plans for continued rail service along this stretch of tracks and asks why the County would spend funds to move the tracks without a plan in place.

Refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 40.3

The commenter acknowledges the positive economic impact of routing trail users through Capitola Village but expresses concern about potential hardships for pedestrians with health issues on steep inclines. The commenter also mentions safety issues related to the flow of bikers and walkers, and suggests that using the trestle could be a viable alternative.

CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation economic impacts (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382). However, the comment about positive economic impacts is noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village. As discussed therein, the Ultimate Trail includes additional wayfinding signage and striping modifications along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village on Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue to address the increased potential for user conflicts resulting from the Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Date](#)
 To: [RailTrail](#)
 Subject: Coastal Rail Segments 10 & 11 for the DEIR
 Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 3:01:47 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

How did a train become Santa Cruz's hot button issue?

The simple answer is Traffic.

Since the mid-century Hwy 1 widening projects, Santa Cruz has tripled in population and the emergence of Silicon Valley brings tens of thousands commuters north along the corridor.

But could a converted freight line resolve all of our transportation woes?

It really comes down to financing. Is a County that struggles to maintain roads, or restore Metro routes, truly in a position to engage a decades long, multi-billion dollar investment?

And what about the trail?

The Segment 9 EIR reports detail massive concrete platforms, teetering 12' above the rail line, approaching \$30 million/mile.

A cost of nearly 3x/mile the current widening of Hwy 1!

It's clear that the decision is not between and Train or a Trail, rather a Trail or Nothing.

A trail that would grant youth a safe corridor to school.

A trail that gives residence an alternative to sitting in HWY 1 traffic.

A trail that separates pedestrians and disabled from fast moving e-bikes.

A trail that actually conforms to federal safety guidelines and set backs.

A trail that can be completed in our lifetime.

41-1

Commenter 41

COMMENTER: David Date

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 41.1

The commenter opines that a train became a hot button issue because of increased population and traffic in the area, and lists the benefits that a trail would provide.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dwayne Dawson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR
Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 12:48:54 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

I wanted to write you to briefly address the proposed “ultimate trail” and the plans to move forward with aspects of this project before a viable train is planned/budgeted.

It is my understanding that there is a proposal to move the current tracks to create enough space for a trail alongside the tracks. This plan may be well intended, but is misguided for a number of reasons:

- **Rail Service** – There is currently no plan or budget for rail service along the corridor. Spending money to move tracks without a viable plan is foolhearty.
- **Old Tracks** – Even if there were a viable plan, the current tracks are old and cannot be used by modern rail.
- **Displaced residents of manufactured home parks** – Manufactured housing is one of the last affordable housing options for many in our community. The widening of the corridor would require displacement of a number or residents or moving their homes at significant cost.
- **Diversion of bicycle/foot traffic through Capital Village** – The main point to a trail along the corridor, from my perspective, is that it creates a safe path to that bikes/pedestrians do not have to interact with trucks/autos, however the ultimate trail diverts bikes/pedestrians through Capitola village. Not only does this create a challenge for some to climb the hill out of the village, but it also forces bikes to be in close proximity to cars in a very congested village. This is very dangerous.

There are many other reasons that I continue to list that illustrate the misguided idea of an ultimate trail, but the fact remains that this is no plan or budget a viable rail line down the corridor. Spending money, displacing people and cutting down trees to create a widened corridor for a train simply doesn’t make sense.

For now, an interim trail down the middle of the corridor makes sense so that it can be used now. If there comes a time when a train is actually viable, then we can explore an ‘ultimate trail’, but for now let’s focus on what we can do to use the trail today.

Thanks for listening.

Dwayne Dawson

42-1
42-2
42-1
42-3

Commenter 42

COMMENTER: Dwayne Dawson

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 42.1

The commenter is concerned about moving the current tracks when there is no plan or budget for rail service, the tracks are old, and it will displace residents.

Thank you for the comments. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. Refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail service. Refer to DEIR Section 1.2.4 for funding information.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 42.2

The commenter states that the Ultimate Trail diverts bicycles and pedestrians through Capitola Village, which creates a challenge for some to climb the hill and forces bikes to be close to cars.

Refer to **Response 40.3** for a discussion on accessibility of the rail trail.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 42.3

The commenter supports the Optional Interim Trail for now.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Scnationalsc](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR Comments
Date: Monday, November 6, 2023 10:44:53 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

I am writing to you today to express some concern over the draft EIR from sections 10 and 11 of the Costal Rail Trail. As a 21 year old I fear that the project is taking shortcuts in the name of finances which will cause massive financial burdens in the future.

Specifically I am talking about the proposition of Railbanking parts of the trail in order to save money. I fear that this will only slow down the process further as noted in the EIR the feasibility of rail banking is already under question and notes that the process is complex. I also fear that if the tracks are removed for an interim trail future planners may argue that it is cost prohibitive to restore the tracks and this will further burden the building of future rail lines.

Preservation and renovation of the current rail corridor is extremely important to me as a Santa Cruzian who will be around for decades. As our city grows the need for affordable and easy public transportation will only grow. Rail is a great option as noted extensively throughout your website. While it is easy to take shortcuts and let future generations figure out how to reverse those mistakes I implore you to keep the rail line untouched until funding comes along to completely restore it.

Santa Cruz is already struggling with congestion and despite many peoples objections to the rail line I personally believe that it is the future of our county.

Thanks you for your time,
Logan Cardoza

43-1

Commenter 43

COMMENTER: Logan Cardoza

DATE: November 6, 2023

Response 43.1

The commenter supports preservation and renovation of the rail line in the corridor and opposes railbanking and an interim trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ernesto Anguiano](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project EIR Comment
Date: Tuesday, November 7, 2023 8:34:29 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

44-1 | I'm writing to share my comments on the EIR. I wholeheartedly support the construction of this segment of the Rail and Trail in the Ultimate configuration, taking into consideration the impacts outlined in the EIR.

44-2 | Regarding the impact analysis on trees in sections 3.1-13, I've noticed that there are multiple trees slated for removal in the ultimate configuration, with some mention of potential replanting. To gain a clearer understanding, I would appreciate more specific information about the types of trees and the habitats being affected. It's possible that many of the trees in question are eucalyptus trees, which are invasive, flammable, and harmful to various wildlife species. It is also not clear what the current condition of the trees that would need to be removed in the report (are they unhealthy?). As such, I believe that removing these trees may actually be beneficial in some cases. Replacing them with native trees would likely prove more ecologically beneficial. I think more information about these trees is needed.

44-3 | In past EIRs for the rail trail, concerns have been raised about the substantial tree removal and its potential impact on greenhouse gas emissions. I suggest that this section of the report should encompass data on the reduction in greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution (e.g., noise, light, oil, and tire pollutants) resulting from the increased use of the trail by pedestrians, cyclists, and alternative forms of transportation compared to car usage. Or it could refer to the anticipated reduction in vehicle miles traveled mentioned in other parts of the report. This information would provide a more comprehensive view of the project's environmental benefits.

Thank you,
Ernesto Anguiano

Commenter 44

COMMENTER: Ernesto Anguiano

DATE: November 7, 2023

Response 44.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 44.2

The commenter requests more specific information about the types of trees and habitats being affected, and states that replacing unhealthy non-native trees with native trees could be beneficial.

Tree removal, including the numbers, types, and locations of trees that will be removed are presented in DEIR Section 3.3.4, *Project Impact Analysis*, Impact BIO-10. The information is summarized in Table 3.3-2, Table 3.3-8, Table 3.3-11, and 3.3-12, and depicted on Figure 3.3-1, Figures 3.3-1a–h, Figure 3.3-2, Figures 3.3-2a–h, Figure 3.3-5, and Figures 3.3-5a–v. The full tree inventory is presented in Appendices A.5 through A.8. The tables listed above also quantify impacts to native and non-native trees separately, for information purposes. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 44.3

This comment recommends that the Draft EIR include data on the decrease in GHG emissions and other pollutants resulting from use of the trail instead of cars for transportation.

The potential reduction in criteria pollutant emissions and GHG emissions from a reduction in vehicular travel is included as a beneficial effect of the Project in Section 3.2, *Air Quality*, and Section 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*. Section 3.15.3, *Energy*, discusses the potential for the Project to result in a reduction in fuel use. However, as described in CEQA Statute 21002.1, the purpose of an environmental impact report is to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the Project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided. The benefits of a project are to be considered by the lead agency when determining whether to approve a project with significant potential environmental impacts (CEQA Statute 21081). As such, the potential benefits of the Project do not need to be quantified in the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR correctly provides a conservative analysis of the potential impacts of the Project, and the potential beneficial effects of the Project will be considered by the County of Santa Cruz in their decision regarding Project approval.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Carey Pico <carey.pico@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 9:14 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Re: Seg.10 & 11 DEIR: how to understand project construction emissions

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Let me ask in a clearer way, should one compare the value in each column in 2.2 "Construction Emissions by Year, Unmitigated" with that of 2.1 " Construction Emissions Compared Against Thresholds"?

For example, the Annual unmitigated threshold for the last column (CO2e) is 2.530 for section 2.2. If I scroll to the bottom of 2.1' table, the 2029 value 1,125 (I'm understand this to be in metric tons). Is that the anticipated total emissions for 2029 for this project?

Thanks
Carey

On Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 09:02:40 PM PST, Carey Pico <carey.pico@yahoo.com> wrote:

Mr. Tidmore
Could you please explain how to interpret construction emissions shown in the DEIR for Segments 10 & 11? For example, does it provide annual projected CO2 emissions for each trail scenario. Focusing on one, say, "3.3 Linear, Grading & Excavation (2026) - Unmitigated" (see p.1260 of pdf), how do I understand how much CO2 the construction equipment will create each year? Are the numbers posted a daily/annual limit or are those projected outcomes? For one unfamiliar with it, it's unreadable (or did I miss the detailed explanation somewhere?).

Thank you for any clarification you can give
Carey

831-688-7755 (landline/no text)

45-1

Commenter 45

COMMENTER: Carey Pico

DATE: November 8, 2023

Response 45.1

The commenter requests an explanation of Project GHG emissions as presented in Appendix E to the Draft EIR. Specifically, the commenter asks how to determine how much carbon dioxide would be produced by construction equipment in each year, and the difference between Sections 2.1, 2.2, and 3.3 in the California Emissions Estimator Model Output.

Thank you for the comments.

Table 2.1 in DEIR Appendix E provides maximum amount of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions calculated to occur in any construction year. In the case of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the maximum emissions would occur in Year 2027. Table 2.2 provides the total emissions per year. 1,125 metric tons (MT) CO₂e is the total emissions for Year 2029, including on-site equipment and off-site vehicle trips associated with construction. The maximum value presented in Table 2.1 (2,530 MT) is shown again in Table 2.2 because it is the total emissions for Year 2027. It is the only year presented in Table 2.2 because it is the highest calculated emissions for any of the four construction years for this scenario. CO₂e emissions for construction equipment only are provided in the detailed emissions breakdowns in Section 3 of the CalEEMod output files, Construction Emissions Details. In Section 3, the total annual emissions from construction equipment and vehicle emissions by construction activity are presented per calendar year of each activity. Total annual emissions for each calendar year from the activities presented in Section 3 are the annual emissions presented in Table 2.2.

Applicable values from the CalEEMod outputs in Appendix E are summarized for the reader in Section 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*. For example, as stated under Impact GHG-1 for the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the estimated total emissions for the Project's 48-month construction period are 7,363 MT CO₂e, which is the total annual CO₂e emissions for all four construction years from Table 2.2 of the CalEEMod output.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Iwalani Faulkner](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Re: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10+11 DEIR Public Meeting Location
Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 1:04:12 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

I will plan to attend the meeting. I've had some last minute endorsement forums and events pop up as I am running for County Supervisor, but if all is clear, I will be there. Thanks for all of your hard work.

I apologize for not being able to attend the recent Capitola meeting. If I could have been there I would have. I am very excited for the outcome of that meeting.

Best regards,
Lani Faulkner

46-1

Commenter 46

COMMENTER: Iwalani Faulkner

DATE: November 8, 2023

Response 46.1

The commenter states that they plan to attend the public meeting and thanks the County for the hard work.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Martha Graham Waldon](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail is the best option
Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 4:58:31 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC & County Planners;
I support the Ultimate Trail - Rail With Trail design option. This is clearly the right choice to balance the values of environmental protection and increased mobility and future access to improved rail transit.
Sincerely,
Martha Graham-Waldon

47-1

Commenter 47

COMMENTER: Martha Graham-Waldon

DATE: November 8, 2023

Response 47.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Neil Waldhauer](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment on Environmental impact for Trail segments 10 and 11
Date: Thursday, November 9, 2023 7:15:29 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I'm a resident of Santa Cruz, and I use the current trail several times a week. I'm looking forward to the construction of the trail through the county, and I will use it in preference to driving when I can.

That said, I want to make sure to build the trail in a way that does not interfere with starting passenger rail service. Please support the Ultimate trail as the way to do the project. Please do not support Design Option A, which I feel would delay starting passenger rail service.

thanks and best regards,
Neil Waldhauer

48-1

Commenter 48

COMMENTER: Neil Waldhauer

DATE: November 9, 2023

Response 48.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration. The commenter does not support Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek) because they feel it would delay starting passenger rail service.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Peggy Kenny](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on the EIR for Segments 10 and 11
Date: Thursday, November 9, 2023 4:14:48 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

49-1 | I am strongly in favor of building the trail next to the rail line. It is the fastest, most cost-effective way to achieve a usable trail, and preserve the very desirable possibility for transit along this corridor. The citizens of Santa Cruz County have voted repeatedly, and strongly, in favor of the rail + trail configuration, and I cannot understand why this matter is not settled.

49-2 | I am equally strongly opposed to the option called "Railbanking." That name is very misleading, implying that the rails will still be there (they will not) and can easily be reactivated (not possible). This is a costly and time-consuming delay tactic, favored primarily by those who have vested interests in avoiding a rail line near their homes - homes they purchased in full knowledge that a rail line was nearby.

49-3 | We do not know yet what transit possibilities will become available with the advances in technology. What we do know is that widening the freeway will not ease congestion there, and will not benefit anyone who does not own a car. We further know that it is absurd and insulting to assume that South County residents will bike or walk to jobs or events in mid- and North-County in all kinds of weather, and all times of the day and night.

49-3 | I urge the RTC to stop the endless time-wasting dithering over options, and get moving on both the trail and transit. If the trail can be implemented incrementally, why not the transit? "If you build it, they will come." Let the lucky people in the important north part of the County start enjoying the benefits of both trail and transit, and we lesser folk in the mid-and South-County can dream of the day when it is available to us, too.

Above all, please take some steps to restore the citizens' belief in the ability of their government to actually improve their lives. The more government entities delay, and the less they deliver, the more citizens decide that government is of no use to them, and the less involved they become. This County is notorious for delays of years, and delivery of very, very little.

Thank you,

Peggy Kenny

Commenter 49

COMMENTER: Peggy Kenny

DATE: November 9, 2023

Response 49.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration. The commenter also states the citizens voted and they cannot understand why this matter is not settled.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for Measure D Clarification.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 49.2

The commenter opposes railbanking and states the term is misleading, implying the rails will still be there.

Railbanking is described in DEIR Section 1.2.4. Also refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 49.3

The commenter opines about the future transit possibilities and urges the RTC to move forward with both trail and transit.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jim Cumming](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on Draft EIR for proposed Bike / Pedestrian Trail
Date: Friday, November 10, 2023 8:03:55 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Andrew Cumming
4605 Nova Dr.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Attn; Rob Tidmore and the RTC Board

50-1 **Please accept this email as my full support and agreement with the comments submitted by my neighbor John Danforth dated Oct. 28,2023.**

A major concern is the removal and destruction of hundreds of healthy and mature trees. I submitted a proposal to remove an oak tree behind my property along the rail line several years ago and it was struck down by another citizen within 30 minutes of posting the public notice on the tree. I assume the opinions of the local citizens regarding appreciation of native trees has not changed. I foresee a big problem and major litigation with your "Ultimate Trail "proposal.

50-2 Most of the voters had no idea of the severe impacts the project will have in Sections 9 and 10. The Ultimate trail design is unsightly and cumbersome to navigate with chain link steel fences and concrete walls like a big city subway that is not in line with the Santa Cruz values and mindset. The completion of the West Santa Cruz sections put blinders on the voters thinking it would be that way throughout the rail corridor.

50-3 **Routing an increased amount of bicycle and e-bike traffic through the streets of Capitola is ludicrous !**

It is already extremely dangerous for bicyclists to blend with erratic visitor automobile traffic in Capitola on their cell phones looking for restaurants,shops, bikinis and parking spaces instead of safe driving. I agree with John Danforth that a huge increase in injuries and deaths will result if that traffic plan proceeds as proposed, Using the existing Capitola trestle as a bike path makes perfect sense. The rapid increase of sales and usage for electric bikes, skateboards, and alternate transportation is very apparent in Santa Cruz as it is worldwide. *Please don't ignore that fact hoping for a highly unlikely future train system and embrace usage of the existing rail corridor now.*

50-4 **Like other cities worldwide, Santa Cruz can capture increased revenues through ecotourism with a world class bike path along our Monterey Bay Sanctuary coastline NOW !**

I support the interim trail proposal to be completed very quickly to assist in getting motorists out of their cars and using more eco friendly bicycles, e bikes and alternative transportation in the next several years, versus dragging it out for several more decades

50-4
cont.

and destroying our sensitive bird and wildlife habitat in the process.

I plan to live and enjoy my entire lifetime in this beautiful place I call home and pass it on to my children. Please don't destroy that dream with a bad project that will force me to sell my home and move out of the area as so many native Californians are now doing.

Thank you for considering my concerns and I look forward to further discussions.

Andrew (Jim) Cumming

From: Jim Cumming <jcumming60@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, November 13, 2023 8:32 PM

To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>; John Danforth <jdanforth@gmail.com>

Subject: Comments on Draft EIR for proposed Bike/ Pedestrian Trail Sections 10 & 11

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Mr Tidmore

I sent an email last Friday Nov. 10th regarding my objections to the Draft EIR and supporting the opinions in another email submitted by my neighbor John Danforth.

By mistake I mentioned sections 9 and 10, but meant to address sections 10 & 11 in my comments. Unfortunately, I have a work conflict and likely will not be able to attend the meeting this coming Thursday Nov. 16 th.

My opinion is that the ultimate trail configuration has many serious flaws and will be subject to endless litigation.

Everyone can see that **the railroad line HAS BEEN ABANDONED** and is now wasted land with no freight or plans for freight in the future.

Please be realistic and **go forward with railbanking and the interim trail in sections 10 & 11.**

Please confirm that my email and comments have been received and will be considered,

Thank you,
Andrew Cumming
4605 Nova Dr.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

50-5

Commenter 50

COMMENTER: Andrew Cumming

DATE: November 10 and November 13, 2023

Response 50.1

The commenter states his support and agreement with comments submitted by John Danforth dated October 28, 2023 (commenter 28).

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to the comments and responses for **Commenter 28**.

Response 50.2

The commenter is concerned about tree removal and does not support Ultimate Trail Configuration

Tree removal is addressed in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 50.3

The commenter is concerned about routing increased bike traffic through Capitola and supports using the existing Capitola Trestle Bridge.

Refer to **Master Response F**, Capitola Village Safety Concerns.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 50.4

The commenter supports the Interim Trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 50.5

The commenter clarifies in his comments above that he is referring to Segments 10 and 11 (not Segments 9 and 10) and reiterates his comments opposing the Ultimate Trail Configuration and supporting the Optional Interim Trail.

Thank you for the clarification and reiteration of your comments. Although the commenter states his “objections to the Draft EIR,” there are no specific comments regarding the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Bob F](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Why Wait Forever (for the Real World to Expose Truths)???
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023 11:14:49 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Why is year after year being spent trying to justify squeezing in a single track to resuscitate a known very expensive implementation that over 100 years ago was intended for only slow-moving freight and tourist trains? (Also realize that anything in the real world that involves passengers frequently encountering a patchwork of "sidings" and transfers that will make travel far slower than BART-like systems with at least two tracks or circular systems that properly connects populated areas, will not be tolerated by impatient commuters.) Why “donate” endless millions into the pockets of those connected to this specialized rail dependency that can never be made expeditious or even safe? (See Santa Cruz Good Times 2/23/22 and many others.)

51-1

Rather than waiting forever, why are we continuing to tolerate a saturation of traffic on Highway 1? Let’s be open to **ALL** forms of transportation. For starters, by genuinely encouraging the saturation of electric bicycles upon the corridor, even those who never ride a bicycle would benefit. (Consider that for every bicycle, one car could be removed from the nearby highways.)

Also, it can be made easier on everyone by opening up the entire transportation corridor for bicycles capable of 30 MPH to easily enter or exit at any intersection at any time of any day. Such a totally asynchronous approach allows the ideal convenience because everyone can travel on their own schedule – all at the same time!

51-2

An Interim Trail would immediately provide a safe means to encourage the most environmentally favorable means of transportation, benefit so many more than just ourselves AND save millions in the process.

Bob Fifield
Aptos
(831) 662-3238

Commenter 51

COMMENTER: Bob Fifield

DATE: November 12, 2023

Response 51.1

The commenter opines about the futility of planning for passenger rail transportation due to constraints inherent in the corridor and states that a better alternative would be a wider trail that can accommodate more electric bikes.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 51.2

The commenter supports the Optional Interim Trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Brian Corser](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Rail Trail
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023 11:37:42 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

I would like to voice my support for the Ultimate Rail Trail. It provides superior environmental protection, increased mobility and future access to rail transit. It is a well thought out solution that will be will utilized for decades to come.

Thank you,

Brian Corser

52-1



Commenter 52

COMMENTER: Brian Corser

DATE: November 12, 2023

Response 52.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Debbie Bulger](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Please build ultimate trail ASAP
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023 8:43:09 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

I am looking forward to walking and biking on the Ultimate trail from 17th Avenue to State Park Drive.

Building the Ultimate trail will provide the community with an Active Transportation Corridor much faster than the wasteful option of ripping out the tracks then putting them back later. **We need both a rail choice and a bicycle/ped choice** if we want to get people out of their cars.

We must do everything we can to reduce VMT in light of Climate Change.

I love the rail trail on the Westside of Santa Cruz. Keep expanding.

Regards,

Debbie Bulger

53-1

Commenter 53

COMMENTER: Debbie Bulger

DATE: November 12, 2023

Response 53.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Russell Weisz](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the Ultimate Trail Configuration: Rail with Trail
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023 7:54:48 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

The Ultimate Trail Configuration (Trail Next to Rail Line or Rail with Trail) was found to be environmentally superior because it requires less ground disturbance overall, especially protecting monarch butterfly habitat. I support it.

I oppose Design Option A because:

- It will require more time to construct the trail (due to the abandonment process);
- The Capitola City Council has supported the provision of improved bicycle and pedestrian access to and through Capitola Village;
- Railbanking our rail line makes it unlikely/next to impossible that we will see rail transit in the next 10 years as planned by the State of California.

thanks,
Russell Weisz
319 Laguna St.
Santa Cruz CA 95060
831-246-1770

54-1

Commenter 54

COMMENTER: Russell Weisz

DATE: November 12, 2023

Response 54.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration, and opposes Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek).

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kaki Rusmore](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: DEIR for segments 10 & 11
Date: Monday, November 13, 2023 10:12:34 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore and others concerned,
I am writing to voice my support for the Ultimate Trail in segments 10 & 11, and to oppose Design Option A. I live in this area, have walked the trail lines many times, and recognize the folly of abandoning the rail lines, as Design Option A would require. As I am sure you are abundantly aware, the public of Santa Cruz Co. has made very clear that this community wants a passenger rail system to be built as soon as possible, and to incorporate a bike/pedestrian trail in that process. All studies have shown that rail transit in our county is the most environmentally sound option. The Capitola City Council has made clear that they are interested in improving bicycle transit in and through the village, which would be an integral part of a design option that prioritizes the rail. While I recognize that some environmental disturbance is unavoidable in the construction process, the long-term benefits far outweigh those costs.

Warm regards,

Kaki Rusmore
Aptos

55-1

Commenter 55

COMMENTER: Kaki Rusmore

DATE: November 13, 2023

Response 55.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration, and opposes Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek).

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Received November 13, 2023

From: Richard Underwood

Pine Tree Lane Neighborhood

Aptos, CA

To: Rob Tidmore

RE: Comments on Segment 10 and Segment 11 Rail Trail

56-1

I am not a biologist, geologist, engineer, or lawyer, but I do approach the so-called environmentally superior build as one who believes the sanctuary in Sanctuary Trail needs to reflect the marine sanctuary and fully consider the ongoing and future impact on those who live or own property adjacent to the proposed trail: this is not one of two very slow freights circa 1975, or a wobbly Christmas train, but a high use high volume transportation corridor.

56-2

The executive summary uses the term, "R.T.C. owned rail corridor," but as deeds show, the R.T.C. does not own the entire corridor; in some places the R.T.C. possesses rights, perhaps, but does not own in-fee. Please clear this issue up, be transparent about it, and legitimately survey both segments 10 and 11, and provide visual representation—stakes, maybe story poles etc— so the scope and scale of the project can be seen by those that live or own property adjacent to the project, or already walk the corridor. Any final EIR must include these stipulations. (Somehow 35 feet has morphed into 100.5 feet behind our family home.)

56-3

Tree loss is a real concern and choosing between 800 something trees and one thousand something trees is not the only issue. The final EIR needs to address specifically *why* trees are being removed (e.g. retaining walls, viaducts, scenic views, etc.), *how* they will be removed, how they and other debris will be transported away, and the specific environmental impact of these activities. If you have witnessed a logging operation, you have seen, heard, and smelled the impacts. Along sections of Segment 11, such debris has been accumulating for decades exacerbating fire risk to adjacent properties and to the State Park. An underbrush fire lit by an illegal camper threatened homes along Segment 11 as recently as August of this year.

56-4

Finally, let me ask some questions:
What about security measures?
What about noise abatement? This should not be left up to the property owner at their own expense.
What about privacy?

56-5

What about disrupting the deer, owls, red tails, eagles, skunks, raccoons, and all of the other critters whose lives meld with ours, and will these disruptions result in permanent changes to the ecology of the sanctuary? Please do make these considerations part of any final E.I.R.
Sanctuary is, at minimum, just as important as trail in any cost benefit analysis, and in any “environmentally superior build.”

Commenter 56

COMMENTER: Richard Underwood

DATE: November 13, 2023

Response 56.1

The commenter states they believe the Sanctuary Trail needs to reflect the marine sanctuary and fully consider the impact on adjacent properties.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 56.2

The commenter seeks clarification on rail corridor ownership.

As described in DEIR Chapter 1, the RTC purchased the SCBRL from Union Pacific in 2012. The RTC holds a mix of fee and easement ownership interest in the SCBRL.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 56.3

The commenter is concerned about tree loss and states the Final EIR needs to address why trees are being removed, how the trees and other debris will be removed, and the impact of these activities.

The tree removals are determined by the physical space needed to construct the trail infrastructure and maintain required offsets, grading extents for excavation and/or fill, drainage ditches, retaining walls, and similar features. The trail design team revisited the alignment several times to minimize the tree removal to the extent feasible, while still meeting Class I requirements for trail width and CPUC requirements for distance from the rail. Tree removals will be done by a qualified tree removal contractor under the supervision of an arborist and the construction management team. Contractor to follow applicable MBARD standards regarding disposal of trees and green waste. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation.

Response 56.4

The commenter asks about security measures, noise abatement, and privacy.

As stated in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, trail maintenance would be based on jurisdiction, and Segments 10 and 11 extend through both unincorporated County and the City of Capitola. There are currently no proposed plans for providing security measures, noise abatement, or privacy other than planned fencing and routine law enforcement. Also refer to **Master Response G**, and **Response 40.1**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 56.5

The commenter asks about disrupting wildlife and permanent changes to the ecology.

Impacts to biological resources, including wildlife and wildlife movement are addressed in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, including determinations of Significant and Unavoidable impacts on monarch butterfly roost habitat and wildlife movement, and associated with tree removal. Cumulative impacts associated with this project along with other recent and upcoming projects are addressed in Section 4.1.4.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Tina Andreatta](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [RTC](#)
Subject: Please support the ULTIMATE Trail on Segments 10 and 11 as it is superior with protections for our Monarch Butterflies.
Date: Monday, November 13, 2023 2:49:34 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob and Members of the RTC,

Santa Cruz County voters and residents have consistently made it clear to support the ULTIMATE Trail - Option B - No Rail Removal. The ULTIMATE Trail is superior with protections for our Monarch Butterflies.

In the last election over 73% of Santa Cruz County voters overwhelmingly rejected Option A to replace the rail line with trail only.

Railbanking conflicts with the Caltrans State Rail Plan and would delay the trail project by several years.

Must we be reminded again and again that the majority of funding for acquisition of the rail corridor was provided by California and Santa Cruz County voter approved Proposition 116 which specifically stipulates that it is for “rail projects within Santa Cruz County that facilitate recreational, commuter, intercity and intercounty travel.” The California Transportation Commission released funds to the RTC with the condition to initiate recreational passenger rail service and to follow all Proposition 116 requirements. The tracks cannot, as has speculated, be removed and replaced with a trail only.

California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP 2050) aims to advance social equity by actively directing support, resources, and protections to disadvantaged communities, and ensuring that the highest quality transportation options are available to those who need them most. The disparities that disadvantaged communities experience today are due in part to exclusion from transportation planning, engagement, and the decision-making processes.

Sincerely,

Tina Andreatta
Aptos, CA 95003

57-1

57-2

Commenter 57

COMMENTER: Tina Andreatta

DATE: November 13, 2023

Response 57.1

The commenter states that Santa Cruz County voters support the Ultimate Trail, Option B (No Rail Removal) and rejected Option A (replace rail line with trail only).

Thank you for the comments.

The purpose and results of Measure D are clarified in **Master Response B**. As described in Chapter 2, the Ultimate Trail Configuration would locate the trail alongside the rail as described in Section 2.4.1 (and detailed in Appendix A.1). The Ultimate Trail Configuration has two design options (refer to page 2-14), including Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle Bridge over Soquel Creek) whereby trail users would use the trestle bridge rather than diverting from the rail corridor through Capitola Village, and Design Option B (Inland Side of Tracks between Grove Lane and Coronado Street in Capitola) whereby the trail would be on the inland side instead of the coastal side of the tracks.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 57.2

The commenter states that railbanking conflicts with the Caltrans State Rail Plan and would delay the Project, and states that the majority of the funding used to acquire the SCBRL was provided by Prop 116 that stipulates it is for rail projects.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Amy Meza](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail support
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:10:23 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

58-1

I'm not sure I'll be able to attend the Rail Trail Public Meeting this Thursday, 11/16/23. In case I'm unable to attend, I'd like to register my support for the Rail Trail combination and state that I strongly oppose removal of existing rails, which would eliminate the rail transit element of the overall plan.

58-2

Furthermore, I find it unconscionable that a vocal minority opposed to rail transit in our county continue to push their agenda after multiple ballot measures and referendums have clearly shown that a majority of Santa Cruz County residents favor the Rail Trail solution.

Sincerely,
Amy Mitchell Meza
Santa Cruz County resident and homeowner
Watsonville

Commenter 58

COMMENTER: Amy Meza

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 58.1

The commenter supports the Rail Trail combination and opposes removal of existing rails.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 58.2

The commenter is frustrated a vocal minority continues to oppose rail transit after multiple ballot measures and referendums.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Andrew Hurchalla](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail In SC County
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:37:10 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello Project Manager Tidmore,

I want to reach out and give my support for the Ultimate Trail plan.

Any sort of track demolition will completely up root what will help make this County come together. Railbanking will essentially put this great plan into hibernation.

With this County spread out as much as it is, a transit system using the current rail is the only logical solution to commute issues. I live in Aptos, and would absolutely use it over driving 1. But if it turns into a single trail system for pedestrians and bikes, how many residents is that really helping?

A rail transit system could solve many issues, but diverting from that will continue what everyone already knows; the current systems aren't big enough, and adding only bicycle/walking trails alone isn't a logical solution for residents commuting from Watsonville to SC every day, which is in the thousands.

I am hoping we don't lose focus on the Ultimate Trail, which is the only reasonable plan to help fix many issues.

-Andrew Hurchalla

59-1

Commenter 59

COMMENTER: Andrew Hurchalla

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 59.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and opposes track demolition and railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [AstroQuake](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: the Rail Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:52:26 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello and Good Morning Mr. Tidmore

I am not able to come to your meeting, but our family all supports the entire Rail Trail, using both the existing train tracks that run through the county, as well as a walking/bicycling trail directly adjacent to the tracks.

We absolutely oppose removal of track, because we all know how that ends.. once its gone, its not coming back..

The train is what we need, the trail is gravy.

Have you sat in traffic on highway 1 in the morning? or afternoon? The entire Rail Trail project needs to happen sooner, not later..

We also oppose the idea of wasting a bunch of money building multiple temporary trails while never actually finishing the main project.. The Train..

Do it right the first time, Fix the tracks, add the trail where it belongs, next to the rails, that way people can ride the train as well as as safely walk or ride, or run as they please..

Do it now. The idea of temporary trails, are a waste of time, energy and money, not to mention, everything to do with railbanking is a waste of time energy and money.. the only ones who win are the workers with nepotism benefits, its wasting time and money for everyone else.

It will be a fantastic day to be able to safely ride the train into Santa Cruz, and completely avoid the nightmare traffic on highway 1..

not to mention, living near the beach, when the weather is nice, to be able to ride bicycles to work, school, shopping, the Rail Trail combo is perfect..

make it happen sooner, not later..

thanks for your help

Love

60-1

Commenter 60

COMMENTER: AstroQuake

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 60.1

The commenter supports the Rail Trail and using the existing tracks, and opposes removal of the tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Bob Morgan](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail Preference--Segments 10 &11
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:04:41 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

ATTN: Mr. Tidmore,

I am a county resident living in Live Oak and am an enthusiastic supporter of the Ultimate Rail Trail Proposal for the transit corridor along segments 10 and 11. This 4.5 mile section of the complete rail/trail is an essential component of the transit corridor and will be best used as an element of the complete SC County Ultimate Trail proposal from Pajaro station to Bonny Doon.

Thank you for you work.

Best regards,

Bob Morgan.

3135 Artimus Lane, SC 95062; 831-454-6290

61-1

Commenter 61

COMMENTER: Bob Morgan

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 61.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Bradley Burkhart](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate rail trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:05:57 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please do not tear out rail tracks or cover them for the 17th Ave to state park section of the Railtrail. I ONLY support the bike trail in combination with the light rail transit option!

I live in Santa Cruz.

Sent from my iPhone

62-1



Commenter 62

COMMENTER: Bradley Burkhart

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 62.1

The commenter supports the trail in combination with the light rail transit option and opposes removing the rail tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Carol Robertson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:47:28 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I strongly support the Ultimate Trail project and urge you to support the completion. Measure D affirmed that there's strong public support for Rail Trail.

Sincerely
Carol Robertson
280 Moore St
Santa Cruz

Sent from my iPhone

63-1



Commenter 63

COMMENTER: Carol Robertson

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 63.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and states that Measure D affirmed there is strong public support for Rail Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Celia Babcock](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: supporting ultimate trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:08:50 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear community,

I live in Live Oak and work in Capitola. I support the Ultimate Rail Trail. I just got a \$3000 bill to fix my car so it could pass smog. I took the bus which I dont normally do. I suggest that everyone try taking a bus for a week. Maybe someday conditions will make it so that you cannot drive a car. There is another whole world possible beyond driving in cars. We need to make a lot of changes to make this doable and safe for everyone. We know that climate change is asking us to make these changes. Not everyone can drive a car for many different reasons and you find that out when taking the bus. Having the Ultimate Rail Trail is a future where we have options for everyone to have reliable, affordable safe transportation.

Thanks so much.

Celia Hursey

64-1

Commenter 64

COMMENTER: Celia Hursey

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 64.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and opines about the need to make changes, not everyone being able to drive a car, and the Ultimate Trail provides transportation options.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Curt Coleman](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Build the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:02:55 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

I support building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.

I support using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

I oppose any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.

I oppose building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thank you for your service to the community,

Curt Coleman
Resident of Santa Cruz

65-1

65-2

Commenter 65

COMMENTER: Curt Coleman

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 65.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 65.2

The commenter opposing any design requiring railbanking, track removal, and building an Interim Trail or Trail Only on the rail corridor.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Cynthia Dzendzel](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Opposition to tearing up the tracks
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:08:36 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

66-1



Please oppose any plan to tear up the tracks along the rail corridor between Davenport and Watsonville, before train service is established there. Tearing up the tracks will make it much more difficult and expensive in the long term to use that corridor for public transportation. That would be unfair to those who live in Watsonville and work in Santa Cruz and currently spend too much time sitting on Highway 1. It would also be unfair to seniors and persons not physically able to walk or ride a bike, or who do not wish to be exposed to the weather.

66-2



We need public transportation accessible to all. That must include not only walking and bike paths, which are essential, but vehicles such as trains, to accommodate those unable or unwilling to drive. Continuing to widen freeways ensures that quality of life will deteriorate for all. The rail corridor was engineered for trains, and the voters emphatically expressed their will to preserve it for that purpose.

66-3



The current plan to build the trail and leave the tracks in place is what voters want!

Thank you.

Cynthia Dzendzel
5600 Lincoln Way
Felton 95018

Commenter 66

COMMENTER: Cynthia Dzendzel

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 66.1

The commenter opposes any plan to remove the tracks along the rail corridor between Davenport and Watsonville.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 66.2

The commenter states that we need public transportation accessible to all, including vehicles such as trains to accommodate those unable or unwilling to drive; the rail corridor was engineered for trains; and the voters emphatically expressed their will to preserve it.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 66.3

The commenter supports the plan to build the trail and leave the tracks in place.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dan Dion](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments regarding Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 Draft
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:41:30 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Greetings Mr. Tidmore.

67-1 | I am writing to express my support for the ultimate trail option for segments 10 and 11. We should stick to the award winning Coastal Rail Trail Plan which includes retaining the rail line intact. In order to support climate change adaptation goals, we should strive to utilize the tracks for rail transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz. Railbanking and interim or trail only ideas are wasteful options needlessly costing us millions and decades of legal and administrative delays for no rational reason.

67-2 | The voters of the county have spoken clearly and loudly on this matter - supermajorities in all SC County districts support keeping the rails and building the trail. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,
Dan Dion
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 67

COMMENTER: Dan Dion

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 67.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and using the tracks for rail transit to support climate change goals, and states that railbanking, Interim Trail, and Trail Only are wasteful options.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 67.2

The commenter states the voters spoke loudly and support keeping the rails and building the trail.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Pais](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail project from 17th Ave to State Park Drive
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:12:26 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Rob,

68-1

I support building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail. This will increase bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village. I also support using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

68-2

I oppose any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board. I also oppose building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

68-1

As a resident of Santa Cruz, I believe that having a continuous ultimate trail is the best long term strategy and allows for the most flexibility within the corridor.

--
Thanks,

David Pais

Commenter 68

COMMENTER: David Pais

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 68.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks intact, and states it will increase bike and pedestrian safety in Capitol Village.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 68.2

The commenter opposes any design requiring railbanking because it would put the entire Project at risk and hurt Roaring Camp, and opposes building Interim Trail and Trail Only.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dean Silvers](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail plus trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:30:56 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear County Officials,

Please approve the proposal to continue to build the rail plus trail's next segment--from 17th to Live Oak. Ripping out the current tracks and so-called "rail banking" are foolhardy, especially in light of freeway traffic, climate change, and also the need for alternative means of transportation. I look forward to the day when I will have more options (besides a bus or car on a crowded freeway or surface streets) to move around our county,

Thank you,
Dean Silvers
316 Myrtle St.
Santa Cruz, CA
95060

69-1

Commenter 69

COMMENTER: Dean Silvers

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 69.1

The commenter supports rail plus trail and opposes removing the current tracks, and railbanking.

Thank you for the comment. Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Deborah Secrest](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: to Robert Tidmore
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:33:34 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

My husband and I are other concerned neighbors are going to the meeting on Thursday the 16th.

We looked at the EIR report and couldn't decide whether there was a proposed detour along segment 11. We live at the TradeWinds Mobile Home park and our house is within a few feet of the RR tracks.

We are of course hoping for a detour, but it was unclear to us if that's a proposed solution for the fact that our segment is so narrow, there's no way we can see both a rail & trail going through. (If we could choose, we would pick a train over the trail).

Do you have any information about detour proposals?

We're hoping that this might be made clear at the meeting this Thursday.

Thanks for any information you might have,

Sincerely,
Deborah Secrest & Dean Price
(831) 476-5438
secrestdeborah@gmail.com

70-1

Commenter 70

COMMENTER: Deborah Secrest and Dean Price

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 70.1

The commenter seeks clarification of if there is a proposed detour around the Trade Winds Mobile Home Park. They are concerned about adequate room for both rail and trail and would pick a train over the trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The Project does not include a detour around Trade Winds Mobile Home Park, located on Jade Street between 41st and 47th Avenues, adjacent to the railway. For both the Ultimate Trail Configuration and Optional Interim Trail, trail width would be reduced to 11 to 12 feet in this location due to ROW constraints and freight rail setbacks from the rail centerline and vertical elements, as described in Section 2.4.1 of the EIR. A connection to the trail would be available at Jade Street Park, directly east of Trade Winds Mobile Home Park.

A detour around Trade Winds Mobile Home Park was considered but ultimately dismissed because it is inconsistent with MBSST Network Master Plan objectives to provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design along the Santa Cruz Branch Line railroad corridor and because it would disrupt connectivity to Jade Street Park, a key recreation destination. Refer to Section 5.1.5 of the EIR.

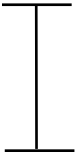
The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Denise Ryan](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Chris Lincoln O'Connell](#)
Subject: Fully support the ULTIMATE trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:05:41 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

71-1



My name is Denise Ryan. As a mom and entrepreneur who has lived in Capitola for 35 years, I fully understand how essential alternative forms of transportation (RAILS & TRAILS!) are to the future of our beautiful environment. We have a responsibility to protect the very special place we live for the sake of future generations.

Please support the RAIL & TRAIL!

Thank you,
Denise Ryan

Commenter 71

COMMENTER: Denise Ryan

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 71.1

The commenter supports rail and trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dianne](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on DEIR Segments 10 & 11
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:33:05 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

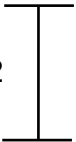
To: Rob Tidmore, County Planning Dept.
Re: Comments on DEIR Segments 10 & 11

72-1



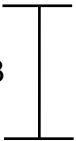
I support building the "Ultimate Trail" **and** passenger rail transit on the corridor. That plan was supported by 73% of County voters who in 2022 voted against tearing up the rail tracks and replacing them with an "interim" trail.

72-2



I strongly oppose railbanking anywhere along the corridor. It would guarantee long delays for trail and rail construction, bring legal complications, be wasteful, as well as jeopardize funding for the trail adjacent to the tracks. Funding for tearing up a trail in the future to build rail transit would be next to impossible.

72-3



Santa Cruz County desperately needs new transportation alternatives that are efficient, quiet, zero emission, safe and available to all. Significant funding from State and Federal sources will come if we stay on track with both rail transit and the corridor trail. And it's the best thing our community can do to slow the climate crisis.

Let's move forward quickly with the Ultimate Trail and passenger rail service!

Dianne Dryer
Thurber Lane
Santa Cruz County

Commenter 72

COMMENTER: Dianne Dryer

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 72.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and passenger rail transit in the corridor, and states the plan was supported by County voters.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 72.2

The commenter opposes railbanking anywhere along the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 72.3

The commenter states that Santa Cruz County desperately needs new transportation alternatives that are efficient, quiet, zero emission, and available to all; and that state and federal funding will come if we stay on track with both rail transit and the corridor trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Don Lauritson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: SUPPORT for the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:26:49 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Mr. Tidmore,

I cannot attend the RTC meeting this Thursday so am sending this email in support of the Ultimate Trail. It leaves the existing tracks intact and is the fastest, least expensive, and lowest impact option for the trail. I live near Harbor High and experience the overwhelming car-centric traffic jams each day. Our urban area needs as much multiple-mode right-of-way as we can get for a better future.

Our County desperately needs the trail and future rail to supplement the overcrowded Highway 1 and all our local streets. We must transition to multiple modes of transit. I oppose any design which requires rail banking as it will set this project back and may kill it totally.

Thank You,

Don Lauritson

73-1

Commenter 73

COMMENTER: Don Lauritson

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 73.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the existing tracks intact, and opposes any design which requires railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Donna Thomas](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: support the "Ultimate Trail"
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:49:00 AM

****CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I am writing to state that I hope you consider the will of the people to build the "ULTIMATE TRAIL"

NO RAILBANKING

I see this as the best way to insure we get a trail in the shortest amount of time and avoid lengthy legal battles.

Donna THomas
260 15th Ave
Santa Cruz



Creek above Chilnualna Falls

74-1

Commenter 74

COMMENTER: Donna Thomas

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 74.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking because it is the best way to get a trail in the shortest amount of time.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Dorelle Rawlings](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: We need the ultimate trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:40:23 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi,

Like the majority of other residents of Santa Cruz county, I support, and we voted for, both rail and trail. This county wants the trail to be complete next to the existing tracks, so we can one day have rail service here in our county.

Thanks,
Dorelle

75-1



Commenter 75

COMMENTER: Dorelle Rawlings

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 75.1

The commenter supports and states we voted for both rail and trail.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ellen Sevy](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: no rail banking
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:36:23 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

As the voters have decided please continue to build the bike path rail trail but no rail baking.

Thank you
Ellen
Santa cruz westside 47 years

76-1 |

Commenter 76

COMMENTER: Ellen Sevy

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 76.1

The commenter supports building the rail trail as the voters decided and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D and **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

From: [Eva Brunner](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Build the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 7:47:19 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello -

I am writing today in full support of the Ultimate Trail over any alternative that includes rail banking or tearing out the tracks. The Ultimate Trail plan is the least expensive and fastest way to get the trail done. I would also like to see increased bicycle and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village. I'm very, very interested in the eventual use of the tracks for transit between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Railbanking will not get us there any faster or cheaper. We need increased safe transit options that include train transit.

Thank you,
Eva Brunner
Santa Cruz

--

77-1

Commenter 77

COMMENTER: Eva Brunner

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 77.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and increased bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, opposes railbanking or removing the tracks, and states we need increased safe transit options that include train transit.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

From: [Frank Rimicci Jr.](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Mid county rail with trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:05:51 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Greetings from Corralitos, I am writing today to request that the ultimate trail continue to be the option to be built and the reasons being that the option for rail transit in the future remains in place. Also, The trail which provides recreation and a safe way for folks to get to jobs, schools, parks and other destinations will become a reality sooner than other trail options. Another reason to build the ultimate trail is the less environmentally disruptive footprint. Please let Us not waste the future option for rail transit for Our residents and visitors. If rail is forgone for an interim trail the likelihood of it returning is near zero. The inadequate highway one has no more room for additional widening for more cars. We know that the state and federal government want to shift funding from auto infrastructure to public transportation projects. We have a rail bed in place which makes Us excellent candidates for transportation funding. We have seen success in securing mega grants and likely will continue to do so. The demonstration of the hydrogen light rail vehicle on Our existing tracks showed Us the opportunity We have to build the trail and keep the rail option available. If We have no options to driving the highway, We can expect gridlock to consume many hours of time that folks could be spending with family and friends, recreating and such. The SCCBRL was purchased for transit and trail, Let's follow through and see it built that way, as We see on the completed segments. Thanks, Frank Rimicci Jr. Corralitos

78-1
78-2

Commenter 78

COMMENTER: Frank Rimicci Jr.

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 78.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail because it provides for rail transit in the future, a safe way for people to travel, will become a reality sooner, and is less environmentally disruptive.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 78.2

The commenter opines if rail is forgone for an interim trail, the likelihood of it returning is near zero, the highway has no more room for cars, the state and federal government want to shift funding from auto infrastructure to public transportation projects, and the SCBRL was purchased for transit and trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Greg Graalfs](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for full Rail Trail and opposing Railbanking
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:34:22 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

79-1

I am writing to fully support the ultimate Rail Trail and to have this necessary work completed. It is vitally important to have the trail build and to also allow for the rail. As we continue to widen highways, we need to promote the safe option of biking and bike trails as well as support rail. I have travelled to Japan regularly and there everyone rides bikes — including grandmothers with their grandkids on the bike — to ride into town for taking kids to school and shop and, importantly, get to the train station to travel into the city centers. It is possible. We now have new bike trails coming in Davenport. Putting my bike on a train and getting out to Davenport would be such a wonderful experience.

I am opposed to railbanking, which is just a bait and switch tactic. And the full trail and rail should be promoted.

Let's move into the future with fully supported alternative transportation options.

Gregory T. Graalfs
1549 Willow Court
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
650-279-7718
gtgraalfs@gmail.com

Commenter 79

COMMENTER: Greg Graalfs

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 79.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Rail Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jack Hunt](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on Adoption of EIR
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:13:26 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Thank you for your thoughtful environmental proposal.

80-1

Please adopt the rail trail with the railroad tracks removed to allow comfortable safe transit for both pedestrians and motorless bicycles. The wide difference in the relative speeds of bicycles and pedestrians increases the likelihood and the users' fears of dangerous collisions. The wider path allowed while the rail area is utilized for both bicyclists and pedestrians, before the expensive railroad work on bridges and right of ways can possibly be done, will more quickly facilitate unique transportation and recreational opportunities.

80-2

The corridor should be an invitation to carefree exercise and relaxation, not a perilous shortcut for only nominally differentiated motorcycles. Motorized bicycles have increasingly morphed, legally or not, into the equivalent of gas powered motorcycles. They fly by people powered vehicles creating the same collision issues as those between pedestrians and bicycles, but at even more dangerous speeds. There is adequate space for motor driven cycles on the public streets. Coexisting on paths wisely set aside for human powered transportation discourages the healthy exercise uniquely available on a bike.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jack Hunt
Aptos

Commenter 80

COMMENTER: Jack Hunt

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 80.1

The commenter supports a trail with the railroad tracks removed to allow for a wider path for pedestrians and motorless bicycles.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 80.2

The commenter opines that motorized bicycles have morphed into the equivalent of gas-powered motorcycles, there is adequate space for motor-driven cycles on public streets, and paths should be for human powered transportation.

As stated in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, under *Trail Use*, the ADA-accessible trail is intended for pedestrians and bicyclists. Electric bicycles with a rating limited to 20 mph would be allowed in accordance with California law (Assembly Bill 1096).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jared Boggs](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail Plan
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:44:48 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To Whom It May Concern,

I urge you to support the ultimate trail plan. Please stay the course and move forward with the plan supported by the majority of our citizens and recommended by the professionals. Whether or not train service comes to be, this is the wisest plan to pursue.

Sincerely,
Jared Boggs

81-1 |

Commenter 81

COMMENTER: Jared Boggs

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 81.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration to move forward with the plan supported by the majority of our citizens.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [JRE](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I oppose railbanking, support the trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:25:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

I'm writing to express my opposition to any trail plans that require railbanking the line. Please build the trail next to the tracks and then through Capitola Village for now, until a new bridge can be built to accommodate both rail and trail.

Adding the trail through the village will be a wonderful asset that will improve bike and pedestrian safety and encourage visitors to leave their cars at home. I love to ride my bike to the village, although the ride feels unsafe over the Morrissey bridge and around Twin Lakes. I'd love it even more with a trail.

Someday soon I want to be able to take my bike on the train to Watsonville and then ride my bike home to the Westside, stopping in Capitola for dinner!

Regards, Jessica

Jessica Evans
Santa Cruz, 95060

82-1

Commenter 82

COMMENTER: Jessica Evans

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 82.1

The commenter supports building the trail next to the tracks and through Capitola Village until a new bridge can be built to accommodate both rail and trail, and they oppose any trail plans that require railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joe Griffin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Public Meeting
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 6:35:34 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

83-1 |

I am writing in support of the ultimate trail and of leaving the tracks in place. I oppose any attempt at railbanking and building an interim or trail only alternative.

Thank you,

Joe Griffin
160 Belmont Street
Santa Cruz

Commenter 83

COMMENTER: Joe Griffin

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 83.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks in place, and opposes any railbanking and building an Interim or Trail Only alternatives.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail operations and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joe Hall](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: info@railandtrail.org
Subject: Opposed to rail banking
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:55:03 AM

CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Hello

I've read a little about the rail trail plans out here in Live Oak and find it very exciting that in the future we will be able to take our bikes and ride into Santa Cruz and Capitola safely. At the same time, I keep hearing proposals on rail banking for the rest of the rail line to the South County.

I'm not sure why I am reading about this since we've already voted on this and by a large margin the community wants to maintain the rail lines for the time being.

Please keep working on the rail trail proposal. Every segment makes a big difference and don't get distracted from that goal.

Joe Hall

84-1

Commenter 84

COMMENTER: Joe Hall

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 84.1

The commenter supports the rail trail plans. They also state they keep hearing proposals on railbanking for the rail line to South County and are not sure why, since we already voted on this.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The three EIRs prepared for Segments 8 and 9, Segments 10 and 11, and Segment 12 all include an Optional Interim Trail, so the scenario is covered in the EIR, but it will be up to the local agency decision makers to decide.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joel Isaacson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail and trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 1:05:45 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I'm writing to express my support for both the trail and the future trail. I stand against rail banking.
Joel Isaacson
Santa Cruz

Sent from my iPhone

85-1



Commenter 85

COMMENTER: Joel Isaacson

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 85.1

The commenter supports both the “rail and the future trail” and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [jfbergs](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:16:03 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC,

Concerning the upcoming November 16th RTC meeting regarding the mid county's rail and trail. I oppose wasting money on an interim trail and/or rail banking this portion or any portion of the Santa Cruz Rail and Trail. Please proceed with planning and constructing a multipurpose Trail along side functioning light rail transit.

Sincerely,
Joel Steinberg
Resident of 95060

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S21 5G, an AT&T 5G smartphone

86-1

Commenter 86

COMMENTER: Joel Steinberg

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 86.1

The commenter supports a trail alongside functioning light rail transit, and opposes an interim trail or railbanking any portion.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Ryan](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: supporting the Ultimate Trail and opposing railbanking.
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:18:33 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please think long term of what our long term transportation needs are and will be in the future. Just try driving on the freeway for a week and you will come to your senses. It is currently a slow, slow moving anxiety ridden exercise and only getting slower and worse, not faster. Pretty soon we will be able to walk faster than cars. Ultimately, we will need to supply a good light rail system to move us about in the county to handle the growing population needs.
thanks you for your "Ultimate" support!!!
John E Ryan

87-1

Commenter 87

COMMENTER: John Ryan

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 87.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, opposes railbanking, and states that we need a good light rail system to move us about the County.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Matthews](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail public meeting comments
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:20:19 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Greetings,

88-1 | My name is John Matthews and I live at 931 Paget Ave. My home is within 100 yards of the rail/trail corridor and I am writing to strongly endorse the current plan of building a multi-use trail alongside the existing rail lines.

88-2 | First, I would like to acknowledge the work that has already been done to study this effort along with the consistent support of the voting public for both rail transit and a walking/bicycle path. As a former elected official, I appreciate the long and thorough effort that public bodies have to go through getting to this point. Despite the continued opposition to the current plan by a vocal minority, the people have spoken through numerous public forums and elections. To discount these voices in favor of a politically connected minority would be doing not only a disservice to our community but would constitute a betrayal of public trust.

88-3 | Please do not move forward with any action related to "railbanking" or removal of the existing tracks. As transport becomes more impacted through growth we need a viable connection to the outside world. Public and private bus service can only do so much, and with the advent of high speed rail connecting our region with Southern California and beyond, losing the "spur" that will link us to it would be a tragedy.

88-1 | For me, as a homeowner and tax payer, the addition of the project as envisioned with both rail and bike/pedestrian access is a major factor in continuing to live where I do. I have seen the progress on the westside of Santa Cruz and can hardly wait for the same thing in my neighborhood. I was excited to see the notification signs going up along the tracks recently as I know this is a major step forward in the process.

88-3 | Again, please move forward with the existing plan as designed through public consensus and confirmed by the voters. **DO NOT** go forward with any plan consisting of "railbanking", track removal, interim, or trail only alternatives.

Regards,

John Matthews
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 88

COMMENTER: John Matthews

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 88.1

The commenter supports building a multi-use trail alongside the existing rail lines.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 88.2

The commenter states they appreciate the effort to study the Project and the consistent support of the voting public for both rail transit and a walking/bicycle path.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 88.3

The commenter opposes any action related to railbanking, removal of the existing tracks, and the Interim Trail and Trail Only alternatives.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joe Martinez](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:45:40 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

All,

Please RailBank our Santa Cruz rail corridor and save all of us tax payers some money. Rail banking will protect the corridor for future use if required.

The Ultimate Trail is too expensive, unsafe, substandard, and isn't good for the environment.

The Interim Trail is cost effective, safe, and good for the environment.

Do the right thing.

Jose Martinez
Santa Cruz County

Sent from my iPhone

89-1

Commenter 89

COMMENTER: Joe Martinez

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 89.1

The commenter supports railbanking and the Interim Trail, and opposes the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Karl Forest](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Please Support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:19:49 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rod Tidmore.

90-1
90-2

I am writing you as the County Rail Trail Planner to ask that you and other decision-makers support the development of the "Ultimate Rail Trail" as has been expressed overwhelmingly by the community, and to oppose railbanking and wasteful track demolition. I understand a public meeting addressing this is scheduled for Thursday, November 16 and I would like to voice my opinion as I will be unable to attend.

My name is Karl Forest and I live at 516 Oak Drive in Capitola.

90-1

I see the need to support rail transit as an addition to the public transportation system in Santa Cruz County, and removing tracks as the trail is built is the best way for this **not** to happen. From what I understand, leaving the tracks will be the fastest and least expensive way to expand our transportation system while building a first-class trail. We need both.

I would like to voice my support for:

- Building the "ultimate trail" and leaving the tracks.
- Address bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village.
- Planning for the least expensive and quickest way to use the tracks for rail transit.

90-2

I oppose:

- Railbanking due to potential legal battles, hurting Roaring Camp, and problems due to past and future funding from state and federal levels.
- Continued opposition from special interest groups when the people of Santa Cruz have spoken clearly over and over again that we want a rail-trail system as quickly and economically as possible.

Thank you for listening and for registering my opinion.

Karl Forest

Commenter 90

COMMENTER: Karl Forest

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 90.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and addressing bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village because it is the least expensive and quickest way to use the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 90.2

The commenter opposes railbanking due to potential legal battles, hurting Roaring Camp, and problems due to past and future funding from state and federal levels. The commenter also opposes continued opposition from special interest groups when the people have spoken.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D and **Master Response E** for information about railbanking and rail service.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kate Clark](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Support
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:41:40 AM
Attachments: [Screen Shot 2023-11-14 at 9.30.54 AM.png](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore:

Thank you for your work on the Rail Trail project. I cannot attend the in-person or Zoom meetings, therefore, I wanted to send you my thoughts in support of the rail trail and my opposition to rail banking.

I agree with these statements:

91-1
91-2

- **SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.**
- **SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- **OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

I regularly enjoy the existing trails and am eager to enjoy the full experience once the project is complete.

-Kate Clark
Santa Cruz City Resident for 45 years

Commenter 91

COMMENTER: Kate Clark

DATE: October 19, 2022

Response 91.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 91.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building an Interim Trail or Trail Only alternatives.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kenee Houser](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:53:30 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

92-1 |

I am unable to attend the meeting on Thursday and am writing in **support of the Ultimate Trail.**

Thank you for all you do.

Kenee

Commenter 92

COMMENTER: Kenee Houser

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 92.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kristin Hart](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail comments
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 6:04:12 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm not able to make the public meeting this Thursday, so wanted to write in and express my comments. As someone who has grown up in Santa Cruz and is raising my own children here, it is of my utmost concern that we create safe, multimodal trails that divert the reliance on vehicle transit in this county.

Specifically, I:

93-1
93-2

- **SUPPORT building the multimodal trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- **OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thank you,
Kristin Hart
Aptos Resident

Sent from Gmail Mobile

Commenter 93

COMMENTER: Kristin Hart

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 93.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 93.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building an Interim Trail or Trail Only alternatives.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Laura Jones](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: EIR Rail / Trail Comments from Sea Ridge Rd. owner
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:33:47 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Mr. Tidmore,

The backyard of my condo on Sea Ridge Rd. abuts the inland side of the rail/trail track now under discussion.

As the proposed project is actually, literally, in my back yard, I have several concerns related to negative affects of light, sound and potential safety concerns and eminent domain.

Lighting: the proposed 70' light standards (stadium height), at 100' distances, even shuttered, will cast a perpetual light on my property and obscure the night sky and negatively impact wildlife.
.Recommendation: **eliminate lighting.**

1. In regard to lighting: while your signage will say "dawn to dusk" usage, by lighting it all along the path, you are encouraging usage **24 hrs/day** and not exclusively for those very, very few people going to jobs at 2 am.

a. Where is the study showing state park, preserved land, and even other nearby trails like the Campbell/Vasona Trail; the Guadalupe River Trail; the Wetlands on the Bay having lighted trails? They don't. How many people do you envision using this trail after midnight? How many of the estimated 500-1500 users will be on the trail at night? Would like you to **omit lights** from your proposed plan at least along the trail but allowed at railroad crossing like at intersection with State Park Drive.

2. Related to the 24 hr. usage is the impossibility, as it is currently proposed, to restrict access to motorcycles or other noisy, fast vehicles. I am attaching two pictures that I took Oct. 31, 2023 on the **locked trailhead to prevent car** access at the Willow Glen trailhead to the "Campbell/Vasona Trail." (Curci Drive near Meridian Ave) The second photo shows the speed limit allowed by the Campbell/Vasona Trail at 15 mph (not 20 mph which is full throttle for a class of ebike.)

3. **Sound:** the condos along Sea Ridge Rd. from Mar Vista to State Park Drive, consisting of the most populous section along the trail, already experience the "canyon" affect of noise on the rail track. Walkers' conversations are clearly heard as sound reverberates to the condos above and adjacent Hillcrest street. Are you intending to do a survey to determine and set a decibel reading that protects our property owners' right for reasonable enjoyment of our properties for a trail that abuts our back yards? Will construction material (asphalt/concrete) for the trail consist of **noise-muffling material**? Please indicate.

Besides "muffling" construction equipment, later when the trail is in use, how is the RTC going to do ongoing decibel monitoring to maintain a reasonable noise level that protects our right to enjoyment of our adjoining properties? Will you control access if it is too noisy? What will these preventive measures look like. Would like to see **action plan on sound disturbances issue.**

4. **Safety:** the Campbell/Vasona trail employs police on bikes to patrol. The EIR purports that no additional safety/security forces will be necessary. That is not acceptable - will the 13+ condos on Sea Ridge take on the duty of first responders as groups (possibly inebriated) cause various disturbances on the trail after dusk? or the accidents that will inevitably happen with unbridled speeders encountering pedestrians? **Action plan for public view** for safety needs to be completed.

94-1
94-2
94-3
94-4

94-4
cont.

"No camping - loitering" on trail: according to the EIR, these will be the restrictions. The attached photos from the Campbell Trail do not show the tents lining the Curci trailhead but there are several. Please do a field trip and walk the Guadalupe Trail downtown San Jose and the Campbell Trail to determine safety of public in conjunction with tents obstructing the trails. Will the sheriff be actively engaged on a daily basis to assure free and undisturbed public access? Why hasn't the San Jose police kept their trail free and clear? Please find out these answers and develop Santa Cruz County **action plan for public view.**

94-5

5. **Eminent Domain:** when will the condo owners along Sea Ridge be informed of the amount of land that the County/RTC will acquire from us to build the "inland" trail? Where is the report showing the Trail / property survey lines for Sea Ridge condos?

94-6

Conclusion: Of the choices extended by the EIR, my personal choice would be "do no harm to the environment" - don't build. But realistically I realize you have the funds, so please mitigate the deleterious affects to adjoining property owners, especially the condo owners and tenants on Sea Ridge regarding light, sound and safety and inform us of the monetary compensation we can expect.

Laura Jones 325 Sea Ridge
laura_jones_99@yahoo.com

Commenter 94

COMMENTER: Laura Jones

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 94.1

The commenter states that the proposed lighting will cast light on the commenter's property and obscure the night sky and negatively impact wildlife. The commenter requests that lighting be eliminated. The comment further states that nighttime lighting encourages use of the trail 24 hours per day.

Thank you for the comments.

Lighting spillover onto private property is not specifically considered environmental impacts under CEQA because CEQA focuses visual impacts on public spaces. However, CEQA requires analysis of whether or not a project would create a new source of substantial light that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. An analysis of light and glare was analyzed in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, of the Draft EIR. As discussed therein, the Coastal Rail Trail would be built in a predominately urbanized area that has existing street lighting and light emitted from existing buildings. The Project could include new lighting sources for the safety of trail users. Any new lighting would be "dark sky compliant" meaning that it would minimize light pollution and offensive glare by directing light downward so it would reduce spillage onto properties adjacent to the trail and rail ROW. Additionally, overhead lighting would use house side cut-offs where applicable and light projection photometrics based on light-mounting height to minimize impacts to adjacent properties and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas. Because lighting would be dark sky compliant and directed away from adjacent properties, it would not obscure the night sky. Lighting would not negatively impact wildlife because it would be wildlife-friendly, directed downward and away from environmentally sensitive habitats, and consist of light spectrum frequencies that are less disruptive to wildlife. In addition, any new lighting would be required to adhere to applicable lighting regulations in City and County codes. County Code, Section 13.11.074(D), includes lighting design requirements for site and building design, and Section 9.70.320 includes lighting requirements related to street and road safety. Capitola Municipal Code, Section 17.96.110, includes lighting criteria, which states that lights shall be placed to direct downward and deflect light away from adjacent lots and public streets prevent adverse interference with the normal operation or enjoyment of surrounding properties. These criteria would reduce lighting impacts associated with potential lighting added the trail alignment. The design of the lighting would ensure that the Project would not create a new source of substantial light that would adversely affect day or nighttime views.

The trail would not be closed to all bicycles or pedestrians at night. As stated in Section 2.6, *Operation and Maintenance*, of the Draft EIR, the normal operating hours would be dawn to dusk, with public "pass through" at all times to allow for early morning and evening commuting and transportation use. The signage would include the hours of use and recommend that "pass through" trail users use a light and reflectors after dusk and before dawn. The proposed lighting is a safety feature to provide safer access to the users access the trail at night. In addition, the lighting would minimize crime in the Project corridor, discourage vandalism and trespassing, and reduce loitering and camping by unhoused individuals.

The commenter's preference to eliminate lighting is noted, and hereby forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 94.2

The commenter is concerned about motorcycle access on the trail.

As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, motorized vehicles are not allowed on the trail. County Sheriff's or Capitola Police Department (depending on jurisdiction) are responsible for enforcement of any regulations along the trail corridor.

The comments on other trail systems do not relate to the Coastal Rail Trail Project or the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 94.3

The commenter expresses concern regarding the potential noise impacts of trail use during operation, asks whether specific measures would be implemented, and requests an action plan to mitigate sound disturbances.

On-going noise monitoring, specific noise-muffling surfaces, and access control are not proposed as part of the Project. The commenter has not identified a characteristic of the Project that would result in unusual recreational trail noise.

Potential noise impacts were evaluated in DEIR Section 3.10. A significant impact related to operation noise was not identified; therefore, no mitigation measures are required. As such, implementation of an action plan for sound disturbances is not included in the DEIR. Refer to **Response 149.3**. Also refer to **Master Response G** for noise concerns.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 94.4

The commenter cites other trails with loitering and unhoused individuals. The commenter asks if the Sheriff will assure free and undisturbed public access. The commenter further asks why the San José police have not kept their trail free of unhoused individuals.

Refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on concerns about unhoused individuals. As discussed therein, the trail would be patrolled by the County Sheriff and CPD, which would discourage illegal encampments and trespassing. If illegal encampments were established along the Project corridor, the County Sheriff or CPD would have the duty to both cite and relocate people who were illegally camping.

The comments on other trail systems do not relate to the Coastal Rail Trail Project or the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 94.5

The commenter would like to know when condo owners along Searidge will receive notice of land to be acquired and would like to see report showing surveyed property lines.

The current trail design does not require additional ROW along Sea Ridge. RTC ROW lines are shown on plans. Refer to Appendix A, CP-1.37 through CP-1.40.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 94.6

The commenter prefers no Project but asks the aforementioned issues of lighting, sound, and safety be addressed and would like to be informed of monetary compensation.

Please refer to **Master Response G** for information on privacy, noise, and security. As noted in **Response 94.5**, no ROW is needed from private property owners along Searidge, therefore no monetary compensation to residents is contemplated as part of the Project. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Lauren Casterson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR Public Meeting - Comments
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:51:55 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm not able to make the public meeting this Thursday, so wanted to write in and express my comments. Please let me know if there's anywhere else I can submit them. As someone who has grown up in Santa Cruz and intends on raising a family here, it is of my utmost concern that we create safe, multimodal trails that divert the reliance on vehicle transit in this county.

Specifically, we:

95-1
95-2

- **SUPPORT building the multimodal trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- **OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.

Thank you,
Lauren Casterson & Matthew Smith
Aptos Residents/Homeowners

Commenter 95

COMMENTER: Lauren Casterson and Matthew Smith

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 95.1

The commenter supports building the multimodal trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 95.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Linda Neher](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for trail next to tracks
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 1:19:44 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I strongly support the Ultimate Trail next to the tracks and am opposed to railbanking.
Our county's previous vote made our choice clear!
Linda Neher
Resident of Santa Cruz County since 1969
Sent from my iPhone

96-1

Commenter 96

COMMENTER: Linda Neher

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 96.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, opposes railbanking, and states our County's previous vote made the choice clear.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [lindsay.knights](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Re: Rail Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:26:08 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore,

As a resident of Santa Cruz County, I would like you to consider my opinions in regard to the Rail Trail :

97-1
97-2

- **I SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **I SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **I SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- **I OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **I OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thank you,

Lindsay Knights

Commenter 97

COMMENTER: Lindsay Knights

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 97.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety through Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 97.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building an Interim Trail or Trail Only alternatives.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Lisa Hochstein](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:22:39 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore

98-1

I am writing in support of the building the Ultimate Trail as the best and most efficient way to achieve the vision of a multi-use, county connection for our transportation and recreational needs. Creating real transportation alternatives, including eventual transit on the corridor, is consistent with existing Climate Action Plans and is the responsible choice as we think of the future we are leaving for our children and grandchildren.

98-2

Any option that involves railbanking will delay and undermine this project that has wide support throughout Santa Cruz County. The "interim trail" and "trail only" options go against the preferences expressed by the majority of voters and will result in significant disruptions to the wonderful progress already made.

Please move ahead with this important piece of infrastructure without being distracted by a small but vocal (and well-funded) minority.

Sincerely,
Lisa Hochstein
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 98

COMMENTER: Lisa Hochstein

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 98.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail as the most efficient way to meet County transportation and recreation needs, creating transportation alternatives that include eventual transit consistent with Climate Action Plans.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 98.2

The commenter opposes any option that involves railbanking and the Interim Trail and Trail Only options because it goes against preferences expressed by voters.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Lisa Rose](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: The Ultimate Rail Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:01:11 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob,

I know there's a meeting this week to discuss the Rail Trail project from 17th Ave to State Park Drive.

Please count me as another staunch supporter of the Ultimate Rail Trail concept. I live not far from the section currently under construction (Neary Lagoon) and walk across the trail and tracks several days a week. And I walk the trail from the Bay Street intersection to the western end of the trail at least once a month. I LOVE this trail and the entire concept of maintaining both rail and trail.

I just returned from four days in Amsterdam where the metro runs smoothly on streets full of pedestrians. No trouble at all! I hope I get to ride the metro on our rail trail before I expire.

Sincerely,
Lisa Rose

99-1

Commenter 99

COMMENTER: Lisa Rose

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 99.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Rail Trail concept.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Loren Kallevig](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:57:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

100-1
100-2

I SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
I SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
I OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, and be opposed by Caltrans.
I OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. It would be a risky waste of resources.
Regards,
Loren Kallevig
170 West Cliff Drive # 29
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Commenter 100

COMMENTER: Loren Kallevig

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 100.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 100.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking with track removal, and the Interim Trail or Trail Only alternative.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Loren White](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for Rail and Trail plan for Live Oak-State Park building phases
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:59:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

I will be unable to attend the upcoming townhall on the Rail Trail plans for Live Oak to Aptos, but wanted to make sure I was down on record as being opposed to any plans that advocate for ripping out the existing tracks and/or "rail banking."

With our local population ever increasing and traffic becoming untenable, we need as many alternatives as possible for people to get from one part of the county to the other. As such, ripping out the current rail line or doing any steps that hinder building out a transit rail are wrong headed and should be avoided. I know it will take a long time for the train to be up and running but this just means we need to very vigilant that we do not take steps in the short term that slow things for the train in the long term.

My household supports building the bike trail now w/o taking steps that slow or complicate the development of a train in the future! We need a multifaceted approach to dealing with the traffic and overcrowding. Building a trail that won't allow for a future train is a big mistake.

Thanks for your consideration on this matter.

Regards,
Loren White and Andrea Nance
Life long SC County residents and currently homeowners in Live Oak

101-1

Commenter 101

COMMENTER: Loren White and Andrea Nance

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 101.1

The commenter is opposed to any plans that require removing the existing tracks and/or railbanking. They further state that we need a multifaced approach to dealing with traffic, and building a trail that will not allow for a future train is a big mistake.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mark Ripley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Question
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:15:16 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

102-1 |

After viewing the maps for sections 10 and 11 of the rail trail I noticed that 2 of the 3 options go through my house. Are there any plans to tear down citizen's homes if they are in the path of the rail trail? Thank you.

Mark Ripley
1255 38th Avenue, Space 16
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Commenter 102

COMMENTER: Mark Ripley

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 102.1

The commenter states that 2 of the 3 options go through their house, and asks if there are any plans to tear down citizen's homes if they are in the path of the rail trail.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Martha Graham Waldon](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support the Rail and Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 6:07:49 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

103-1

Dear Rob Tidmore & County Planners;
I support the Ultimate Trail - Rail With Trail design option. This is clearly the right choice to balance the values of environmental protection and increased mobility and future access to improved rail transit.
Please leave the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive way to build the trail and ultimately rail. Oppose any design that requires railbanking which would put both the rail and trail project funding at risk. Thank you.
Sincerely,
Martha Graham-Waldon

Commenter 103

COMMENTER: Martha Graham-Waldon

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 103.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks intact, and they oppose any design that requires railbanking which would put Project funding at risk.

Thank you for the comment. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mary Alsip](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:35:33 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear County planning

thank you so much for allowing the public to comment on the EIR for the rail trail. Although I haven't had time to read everything, I want to give you my full support to keep all of the rails in place, and to do whatever it takes to build the trail alongside the rail..., I thought the voters were very clear about this, I am shocked that a vocal minority can keep shaking the chain and causing undue consternation.

Please build the trail alongside the rail as quickly as possible!!

Please do everything you can to keep all of the rails in place, so that a future generation can design an amazing Transportation solution.

Thank you very much.
Sincerely Yours, Mary Alsip

104-1

Commenter 104

COMMENTER: Mary Alsip

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 104.1

The commenter supports keeping all the rails in place and building a trail alongside the rail. The commenter adds they thought the voters were clear about this.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Baymoon](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I Support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 4:16:54 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

105-1



Please continue moving forward with the Ultimate Trail process to provide the people of Santa Cruz County and beyond with a viable Rail & Trail. We overwhelmingly voted to support this and do not want money and time wasted on so-called alternatives that include destroying and/or removing the rails. Rail banking and rail destruction would set us back keeping us forever reliant on cars and jammed highways for transportation in this county. We voted for the Ultimate Trail. Let's not lose sight or ground on this!

Thank you,
Mary Anne Kramer-Urner (she/her/hers)

Commenter 105

COMMENTER: Mary Anne Kramer-Urner

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 105.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, opposes railbanking and rail removal, and states we voted for the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mike Borg](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Planning Hearing
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:55:37 AM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Mr. Tidmore, et al:

106-1
106-2

Regarding the planning meeting for the segment of the Rail Trail from 17th Ave to State Park Drive, and as a resident of the Seacliff area of Aptos, I wanted to express my support for building the trail next to the existing tracks, while leaving the tracks intact, as has been done on all areas of the rail corridor where the trail is either finished or underway. I support the building of the “ultimate” version of the trail and leaving the tracks intact. This is the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail. I support increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village. I support using the tracks for Rail Transit 106-1 Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between. I oppose any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board. Removing the rails would also remove an already-existing method of fighting wildfires (firefighting trains) and conducting evacuations from remote areas of Santa Cruz County. I oppose building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Michael Borg
corradoborg@gmail.com
(408) 505-0365
298 Barkentine Ct.
Aptos, CA 95003

Commenter 106

COMMENTER: Mike Borg

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 106.1

The commenter supports building the trail next to the existing tracks, leaving the tracks intact, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 106.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking with track removal, and the Interim Trail or Trail Only alternative.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Myles Corcoran](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: We want the ultimate rail and trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:02:59 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Please don't consider rail banking seriously.

107-1 |

We have the tracks. I have walked most of them. Let's get them back in use for our community with a nice trail alongside.

Thank you,

Myles F. Corcoran

Commenter 107

COMMENTER: Myles Corcoran

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 107.1

The commenter supports putting the tracks in use with a trail alongside.

Thank you for the comment.

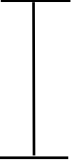
The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Pmcveigh](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:52:54 AM

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108-1



I am so glad to see that the rail trail planning is proceeding from seventh to state park. I recognize this is a difficult area to build a rail trail. however continuation of the planned rail trail through to its final destination, is very important for the future of this community. Please proceed with plans to build the rail trail along side the train tracks. It is important that the train tracks must remain in place.
Thank you for your continued work on this very important issue

Have a good day
Patricia Mc Veigh
Parker Street.
95065

Commenter 108

COMMENTER: Patricia McVeigh

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 108.1

The commenter supports keeping the tracks in place and building the trail alongside the tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Pete Kennedy](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail + Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:32:45 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please continue your focus on the Ultimate Trail, including the rail. Studying other options is a political distraction.

We are building hundreds of not thousands of apartments up here in Santa Cruz, and our transportation future depends on the rail.

We're doing our part, building it. I wish Capitola would step up and do theirs for a change!

The people have spoken. Build the rail now.

Pete Kennedy
Chair, City of Santa Cruz Planning Commission (writing as a citizen)
LEED AP

109-1

Commenter 109

COMMENTER: Pete Kennedy

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 109.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, including the rail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Richard Stover](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:07:15 AM

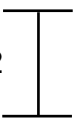
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110-1



I strongly support completing the Coastal Rail Trail as soon as possible. The ultimate trail is the fastest, least expensive, and least environmentally damaging option. I do not support rail banking for any reason. Please do not support any project that involves rail banking, which wastes time and money and diverts us from the goal of eventually having transit on the rail corridor.

110-2



Both the federal and state governments look favorably on our rail with trail project, and that is where the funding will come to complete the trail and build the rail.

I use the new trail in Santa Cruz all the time. Please keep moving forward with the trail while preserving the rail corridor.

Thanks,

Richard Stover

Commenter 110

COMMENTER: Richard Stover

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 110.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes any project that involves railbanking.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 110.2

The commenter states the federal and state governments look favorably on rail with trail and that is where future funding will come to complete the trail and build the rail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Roland Saher](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail!
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:46:06 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

111-1

I strongly support the Ultimate Trail and equally strongly oppose the banking of the rails!
Roland Saher, Live Oak

Commenter 111

COMMENTER: Roland Saher

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 111.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes banking the rails.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [rosemary_kendall](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Keep "Ultimate Trail" plan
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:58:29 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

To Rob Tidmore, Co.Rail/Trail Planner,

I'm excited to have the "Ultimate Trail" corridor from 17th Ave to State Park Dr. The fastest, least expensive and best use of resources is to continue on the planned "Ultimate Trail" leaving tracks in place. It's imperative to move ahead and begin the construction of this next leg through Live Oak and Capitola. People love riding any way they can to avoid the traffic jams 7 days a week. This will be a valued route and will increase safe riding space.

Please know that I feel strongly about beginning the "Ultimate Trail" corridor and my family and friends feel the same way.

Thank you.

Rosemary Kendall
zzzkendall@gmail.com

112-1

Commenter 112

COMMENTER: Rosemary Kendall

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 112.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks in place.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ross Clark](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support rail and trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:57:34 AM

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113-1 |

Rob I am a west sider that is very much in support of the ultimate trail and oppose any rail banking.

Thank you. Ross Clark 110 las Ondas ct SC.

Sent by iOwl

Commenter 113

COMMENTER: Ross Clark

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 113.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes any railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

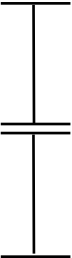
No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Stephanie Raugust](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:53:58 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

114-1

114-2



Keep the railroad tracks and build the ultimate trail. Together.
Make this only transportation corridor left in the County, available to all people and many forms of transportation.
Do not be fooled by the false flags and red herrings that are presented as obstacles that can be resolved fairly reasonably.
Please, help get rid of single occupancy vehicle trips on an already congested and backed up Highway One.
Time to install alternative forms of mass transportation.
Time to embrace less climate change inducing forms of transportation.
It's time.
Please have the courage.
Kristen Raugust

Sent from my iPad

Commenter 114

COMMENTER: Stephanie Raugust

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 114.1

The commenter supports keeping the railroad tracks and building the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 114.2

The commenter supports getting rid of single occupancy vehicle trips on Highway 1, installing alternative forms of mass transportation, and embracing less climate change inducing forms of transportation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Stephen Dudley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Attention Mr. Tidmore
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 9:56:59 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore:

115-1 |

The county has made great progress in moving along the Rail Trail concept which preserves the rail line for not only future transit use, but maintains the rail connection which is very important for the Roaring Camp & Big Trees operation.

115-2 |

I urge the County to approve constructing what is known as the "Ultimate Trail" along with preserving the rail line. In the long run this would seem to be the most efficient expenditure of funds and it is also consistent with the will of the voters as expressed some months ago.

Sincerely,

Stephen Dudley

Commenter 115

COMMENTER: Stephen Dudley

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 115.1

The commenter states the County has made great progress in moving along the rail trail concept, which preserves rail for future transit use and maintains the rail connection for Roaring Camp and Big Trees operation.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 115.2

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and preserving the rail line.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Tom Langan](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Writing in support of the rail trail
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:30:21 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello Mr. Tidmore,

116-1

I just wanted to drop you a quick line stating my support for the ultimate rail trail. I believe that the combined rail trail is by far the best plan, and fully oppose any plan that requires railbanking, an interim trail, or only a trail. The voters have spoken on this issue on multiple occasions, and I feel the continued stonewalling by certain interested factions is unethical and a waste of those like you who have been working on this so diligently and taxpayer's time and money.

Thank you for your time and have a great day,
Thomas Langan

Commenter 116

COMMENTER: Tom Langan

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 116.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes any plan that requires railbanking, an Interim Trail or Trail Only. The commenter also states that the voters have spoken on this issue.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [William Cummings](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Meeting
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 10:22:06 PM

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117-1

I support the Ultimate Trail and oppose Rail Banking !!

Thank you,
William (Bill) Cummings.

Commenter 117

COMMENTER: William Cummings

DATE: November 14, 2023

Response 117.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Paula Bradley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR Segments 10 & 11 - public comment
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:28:13 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

118-1

I am a resident of Capitola and an avid cyclist.

118-2

I support proceeding with the approved Ultimate Rail Trail Plan without delay. Despite what the Greenway people continue to say, the Interim Trail and rail banking are a dead end. Rail Banking will result in years of legal issues and delays and negatively impact Roaring Camp operations, risk both rail and trail project funding, be opposed by Caltrans and likely be rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board. If the tracks are removed property owners with a rail easement on their property may be able to apply for Federal compensation (tax payers dollars) and therefore the purpose for the easement.

118-3

I support bicycle and pedestrian improvements in Capitola while the trestle issue is analyzed and a future solution can be identified. We will still ride to and through Capitola, these improvements are long overdue to make walking and biking in Capitola safer.

118-4

The best and fastest way forward for a multi-use trail is to proceed with the Ultimate Rail Trail and not waste time and money on an interim trail that will be difficult and costly to remove in the future. We need to preserve the option of zero-emission public transit on the Rail corridor for County residents and visitors and the environment.
Thank you

[Paula Bradley \(she/her\)](#)
[P. O. Box 1146 Capitola CA 95010](#)
[mobile \(831\) 345-5482](#)

Paula Bradley
P O Box 1146
Capitola CA 95010

December 15, 2023

Rob Tidmore, Park Planner IV

County of Santa Cruz

Department of Community Development and Infrastructure and Santa Cruz County Parks

979 17th Avenue

Santa Cruz CA 95062

SUBJECT: Coastal Rail Trail Draft EIR Segments 10 and 11, public comments

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

The following are my comments:

- 118-5 | 1. The Trail Only option analysis is not consistent with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Master Plan Policy 1.2.4, "develop[ing] the trail so future rail transportation service along the corridor is not precluded,". It is determined to be less than significant potential impact but should be amended to be a significant and unavoidable impact if the rail corridor is only used as a multi-use trail and not for a clean energy public transportation (electric passenger rail). In the transportation analysis, the beneficial effect of the Project (reduced VMT) is substantially reduced with a trail only project.
- 118-6 | 2. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions impact analysis is ambiguous as it does not distinguish between the benefit of the Ultimate Trail project with a clean energy public transportation use on the rail corridor vs. a trail only use. The beneficial effect (page 414) only includes the trail only with a bicycle and pedestrian trail use which substantially reduces the reduced VMT benefit. The 2021 Transit Corridors Alternatives Analysis forecasted a daily reduction of 22,020 Vehicle Miles Traveled for Light Rail Service resulting in a yearly reduction of 1482 Metric Tons of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- 118-7 | 3. Rail Banking
Concerning the discussion in the Project Description on rail banking (page 59) which is necessary for Optional Interim Trail Design Option A: The representative for the Roaring Camp railroad, Rosemary Sarka, has publicly commented that Roaring Camp, the freight rail operator, has no

118-7
cont.

intention of filing for abandonment and that they would adamantly object to any effort for adverse abandonment of the rail line. Therefore, the estimated time to through the rail banking process of 2 to 3 years is probably unrealistic given the opposition from the operator and the public (74% of the voters opposed Measure D for trail only. This delayed process will also result in missed critical deadlines for funding the Coastal Rail Trail. Also stated is that there is no guarantee in regarding outcome with the federal STB. Property owners with a rail easement may be able to file for compensation if the rail easement is no longer needed with a trail only.

118-8

4. Biological Resources –

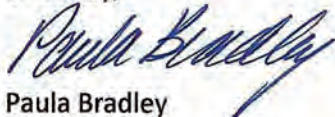
Please add to the biological mitigation measure (BIO-7b) and as part of the Biological Resources Mitigation Management Plan that for tree replacement of significant and protected trees, that replacement trees are required to be monitored by a qualified arborist for 5 years to ensure that they are not only alive but are thriving. Any dead trees should be required to be replaced. The EIR states that tree replacement as a mitigation measure is uncertain to be successful since replacement trees may not mature. Trees and plantings will not reach a similar canopy size as an existing tree unless they are nurtured for at least two years or more. Performance standards are needed for replacement trees. To plant trees and not monitor their health is a wasted effort and will not result in an effective mitigation measure. All too often most replantings do not survive two years.

118-9

5. Cultural Resources

In Project Impact Analysis 3.4.4 (page 362), The Capitola Trestle Bridge historical evaluation does not include if the trestle bridge is required to be replaced with the construction Ultimate Trail configuration, only diverting trail users through the village. The EIR only discusses that with Optional Interim Trail and Option A (page 364), no changes other than rehabilitation for a multipurpose trail, as a less than significant potential impact. This is not consistent with Santa Cruz County General Plan policy 5.20.3 Development Activities (page 513), and Capitola General Plan policy LU-2.1 Historic Structures (page 517) and Land Use & Planning LUP-1, as less than significant.

Sincerely,



Paula Bradley

Commenter 118

COMMENTER: Paula Bradley

DATE: November 14 and December 15, 2023

Response 118.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Rail Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.2

The commenter states that railbanking will result in years of delay and legal issues, negatively impact Roaring Camp operations, and risk Project funding.

Refer to **Master Response E**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.3

The commenter supports the bike and pedestrian improvements through Capitola while the trestle issue is being addressed.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.4

The commenter supports Ultimate Rail Trail, opposes an interim trail, and states the option for zero-emission public transit in the corridor needs to be preserved.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.5

The commenter states that, in the project alternatives analysis, the Trail Only alternative should be considered a significant and unavoidable impact if the rail corridor is not used for clean energy public transportation, and the beneficial effect would be greatly reduced.

This is not an established or commonly used threshold for evaluating impacts and determining the significance in accordance with the *CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. The Methodology and Significance Thresholds* and are outlined throughout Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis* (see Sections 3.1.3, 3.2.3, 3.3.3, etc.). Also refer to **Response 44.3**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.6

The commenter states that, in the project alternatives analysis, the greenhouse gas emissions analysis does not distinguish between the benefit of Ultimate Trail Configuration vs. Alternative 1 (Trail Only) because the Trail Only alternative should include a discussion of the potential vehicle miles traveled (VMT) benefits and associated emissions from future light rail service.

Refer to **Response 5.3**. As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, and clarified in **Master Response E**, no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project, and no rail service currently is currently provided on the Project segments. As such, GHG emissions related to trail operation are not an impact of the Project. Consistent with *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15125[a][1] and 15126.2[a]), the DEIR appropriately analyzes the potential for the Project and alternatives to result in impacts related to GHG emissions compared to existing conditions. Maintenance or reconstruction of railroad facilities as part of the Project or alternatives does not necessitate that future rail service would be provided. As such, the contribution of speculative future rail operation to changes in regional GHG emissions is not considered as a potential impact of the Project or any alternative.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.7

The commenter states that the estimated 2- to 3-year time frame indicated for railbanking would delay the Project and that the outcome at the STB is uncertain.

Refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.8

The commenter states that, in the biological resources analysis, monitoring should be added to the biological mitigation measure (BIO-7b).

In Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, of the DEIR, Mitigation Measure 7b, main bullet #13 states:

- *Long-term quantitative and qualitative monitoring and reporting, including consideration of carrying capacity analysis and alternative approaches, and documenting the ability to meet or surpass performance criteria.*

The monitoring period would be determined in coordination with the project stakeholders (including the County, City of Capitola, and RTC) and regulatory agencies and is typically a minimum of 5 years.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 118.9

The commenter states that, in the cultural resources analysis, the Capitola Trestle Bridge historical evaluation does not state if the trestle bridge is required to be replaced with the construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. The comment states that the rehabilitation of the Capitola Trestle Bridge is not consistent with the County General Plan policy 5.20.3 or Capitola General Plan policies LP-2.1 or LUP-1.

The Ultimate Trail Configuration does not require replacement of the Capitola Trestle Bridge. As discussed in DEIR Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the Ultimate Trail Configuration would not include the approximately 0.5-mile section of the rail corridor from Opal Street to Monterey Avenue (which encompasses the Capitola Trestle Bridge) in the City of Capitola. Instead, trail users would be directed to use the existing on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks extending through Capitola Village.

However, for the Optional Interim Trail, as well as Ultimate Trail Configuration Design Option A: Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek, the trail would cross Capitola Trestle Bridge instead of directing users to bicycle lanes and sidewalks through Capitola Village. As described in DEIR Chapter 2, the trail on Capitola Trestle Bridge would require structural repairs and replacement of the ballast, tracks, and ties with FRP deck; however, replacement of the Capitola Trestle Bridge would not be required.

Consistency with County General Plan policy 5.20.3 and Capitola General Plan policy LP-2.1 was discussed in Tables 3.9-2 and 3.9-3, respectively, in Section 3.9, *Land Use*, of the Draft EIR. These policies encourage protection, enhancement, and/or preservation of historic resources. As summarized in Tables 3.9-2 and 3.9-3, and discussed in detail in Section 3.4, *Cultural Resources*, of the Draft EIR, the Optional Interim Trail would involve structural repairs to the Capitola Trestle Bridge to accommodate a bicycle and pedestrian trail. However, Project elements would not result in the material impairment of this resource such that it would no longer convey its significance. Therefore, implementation of the Project would be consistent with the County and City policies cited by the commenter.

The Capitola General Plan does not contain a policy LUP-1. Therefore, for purposes of this response, it is assumed that the commenter is referring to Goal LU-1: Maintain and enhance Capitola's distinctive identity and unique sense of place. As discussed in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, of the Draft EIR, for the structural repairs to Capitola Trestle Bridge, the visual impact at the Capitola Trestle Bridge would not substantially affect the aesthetics of the bridge because the replacement materials for reinforcement and new materials used for the trail would be of similar color and appearance as the original materials for aesthetic continuity. Therefore, the repairs to Capitola Trestle Bridge would not degrade the Capitola's distinctive identity and unique sense of place and the Project would not conflict with Capitola General Plan Goal LU-1.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Albi Romero](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for UltimateTrail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 11:06:51 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello Rob Tidmore,

119-1 |

I support building the ultimate trail and using the tracks for rail transit. I'm an instructor at Cabrillo College, and feel that having dependable public transit independent of road traffic is an equity, access, and retention issue for our students and employees. To that end, like the majority of voters, I oppose plans that involve railbanking or trail only options.

Thank you for your time and attention,
-Albi Romero
Chemistry Instructor
Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers Chief Negotiator and COPE Chair

Commenter 119

COMMENTER: Albi Romero

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 119.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and using the tracks for transit, and opposes plans that involve railbanking and trail only options.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Alexis Konevich](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: In support of rail AND trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:31:50 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm not able to make the public meeting this Thursday, so wanted to write in and express my comments. My husband and I are thrilled to settle down and start a family in Santa Cruz County. We look forward to supporting multimodal transportation and recreational trails to serve the needs of EVERYONE in our community.

Specifically, we:

SUPPORT building the multimodal trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.

SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.

SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.

OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive.

These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thanks,
Alexis Konevich + Marc Bodmer, Soquel

120-1
120-2

Commenter 120

COMMENTER: Alexis Konevich and Marc Bodmer

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 120.1

The commenter supports building the multimodal trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 120.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking, the Interim Trail, and Trail Only on the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Allison Garcia](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 9:09:54 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

I'm writing to voice my support for the Rail Trail. I live on the Westside and walk and ride the trail there almost daily. It is more than sufficiently wide to accommodate the numerous pedestrians, cyclists and strollers. I would love to be able to take a train some day along our coast, but honestly I'm afraid I might be dead by then. But having a continuous trail, with the prospect of rail (no railbanking) in the future, should be the goal. The sooner the better.

Thank you,

Allison Garcia

121-1

Commenter 121

COMMENTER: Allison Garcia

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 121.1

The commenter supports the rail trail, thinks the rail trail on the west side is sufficiently wide, and would like to use a train in the future.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: donna-marie.von.joo-tornell
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: In Favor of Rail and Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:20:09 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To Whom It May Concern;

Hopefully the Regional Transportation Commission has listened to the majority of voters in Santa Cruz County. Just to be clear, I am one of the majority who voted to have and support creation of the full Rail and Trail across the county.

122-1
122-2
122-3

- **I SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **I SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **I SUPPORT using the tracks for RailTransit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- **I am very OPPOSEd to any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **I OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trailbuilding. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thank you for listening.

Regards,
Donna Von Joo-Tornell
Live Oak area resident of Santa Cruz

Donna Von Joo-Tornell Artistic Director Atelier 5: A Modern Dance Co. Passion, poignant movement, connections...

Commenter 122

COMMENTER: Donna Von Joo-Tornell

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 122.1

The commenter states they hope the RTC listened to the majority of the voters, and they are one of the majority who voted to have the rail and trail across the County.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 122.2

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 122.3

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking, the Optional Interim Trail, and Trail Only on the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Douglas M Thomson Sr.](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Secondary Pedestrian/Bike Path along Hwy1
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 8:27:18 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To who it may concern.

A few years ago, I purchased a property located on Cabrillo College Drive next to Park Avenue Soquel Ca. 95073. Since then, I have observed several near miss auto verses pedestrian/cyclist collisions along the narrow road from Park Avenue to the Cabrillo College campus and other nearby areas in this busy section of the tri city area.

Poor planning and improper maintenance over the years have made matters worse as the edge of the roadway is too narrow and should be redesigned to provide safe passage in the area.

I have studied the area and see that it is possible to install a single Pedestrian/Bike path along the Hwy1 side of the road, rather than installing two bike lanes and two sidewalks from State Park Drive to Park Avenue.

The path could be installed on one side of the road along Hwy 1 with a 12-inch curb designed to protect against vehicle traffic collisions.

The path could also connect to the proposed Rail Trail project, the Mar Vista Overcrossing and at the intersections of Park Avenue and State Park Drive or futher towards 41st Avenue.

Since we already own the land along Hwy 1, we should install an additional Pedestrian/Bike Path along the edge of Hwy1.

Installing the path will help us to achieve our goal of reducing our carbon footprint, the reduction of vehicle traffic in the area along with the need to provide additional parking in the already busy area that serves Aptos, Soquel and Capitola.

Keep in mind that Cabrillo College will be building additional housing on campus and our County has plans to add additional housing in the area.

The additional housing will increase traffic significantly. Installing the path will reduce traffic and make travel in the area much safer, with less pollution and the need to add additional parking as a bonus.

Please meet with our Counties Transportation Engineers and other County Officials to conduct a preliminary study to see if my suggestion is achievable.

123-1

123-1
cont.

I believe that this solution will help us to address our growing need to provide more alternative means of transportation in our County while reducing our carbon footprint and the need to provide vehicle parking etc.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Take care.

Very Respectfully,

Douglas M. Thomson Sr.

Retired Distinguished Naval Veteran

Commenter 123

COMMENTER: Douglas M Thomson Sr.

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 123.1

The commenter suggests installing a single pedestrian/bike path along the narrow road from Park Avenue to Cabrillo College (specifically along the Highway 1 side) and other nearby areas, and states this new path could also connect to the proposed Project, the Mar Vista overcrossing, and other intersections of Park Avenue and State Park Drive.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the Proposed Project, either the Ultimate Trail Configuration or the Optional Interim Trail, or the design options and project alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIR.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: dwde115@skyhighway.com
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Banking
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 2:18:49 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

124-1 |

I want the train with the trail. Please keep the tracks, I love to ride the train maybe use bike on the way back. It's nice to have a train that moves people with out creating lots of cars making traffic jams that add to the warming gasses EVs or gas vehicles.

Commenter 124

COMMENTER: dwde115@skyhighway.com

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 124.1

The commenter supports the train with the trail and keeping the tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ed Dickie](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Comment
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 11:08:42 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

The transit alternatives between Monterey County and Santa Cruz county are lacking and any segment of the SC rail/trail is an important part of the solution. Salinas continues to grow and provide housing needed for the labor force that commutes to Santa Cruz. Highway One gridlock through SC County is do in large part to this commuter pattern. Please consider the larger Monterey Bay traffic and commute profiles when making any decisions that involve tearing out rails even if “temporary.

Regards,
Ed Dickie

Sent from my iPhone

125-1



Commenter 125

COMMENTER: Ed Dickie

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 125.1

The commenter states that transit alternatives between Monterey County and Santa Cruz County are lacking, and any segment of the rail trail is an important part of the solution.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [LIZ EMAIL](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Keep the rail!
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 12:41:55 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

At no point has the voting public agreed to any rail banking along the future Rail/Trail project. Both rail and trail need to be part of this project. Please stop putting out untenable options such as rail banking.

Elizabeth Lipton
109 Manresa Dr
Aptos, CA

126-1

Commenter 126

COMMENTER: Elizabeth Lipton

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 126.1

The commenter states that both rail and trail need to be part of the Project, and at no point has the voting public agreed to railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Eve Roberson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Public Meeting
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 9:39:53 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
Attn: Rob Tidmore

127-1

Although I cannot attend the Nov. 16 public meeting I want to express my strong support for the Ultimate Trail and opposition to railbanking. Leaving the tracks in place now is the most reasonable over-all way to expedite this vital project and is the most cost-effective and efficient way to assure what we need:

A reasonable and sensible link between Santa Cruz and Watsonville which is desperately needed to protect our environment. Railbanking is a wasteful distraction from a project the voters have overwhelmingly approved.

Please stand by what the voters want!
Thank you.

Eve Roberson
609 Frederick St. #120, Santa Cruz 95062

Commenter 127

COMMENTER: Eve Roberson

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 127.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks in place, and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [geri lieby](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Public Meeting
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 3:42:17 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

I wholeheartedly support the points below. We need trail and rail. It’s what the voters voted for.

128-1

- **SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

128-2

- **OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

geri lieby
glieby@gmail.com

Commenter 128

COMMENTER: Geri Lieby

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 128.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 128.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking, the Interim Trail, and Trail Only on the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [G Ohearn](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail supporter
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 5:25:42 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear County Rail Trail Planner, Rob Tidmore

129-1

I favor your support to build the “ultimate” trail, leaving the tracks intact. Study shows this as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build a sustainable trail for continuous use by pedestrians and bicycle riders. Further, please urge actions appropriate to increase safety for bicycle and foot use in Capitola Village and to take advantage of existing tracks for rail transit between Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

129-2

I urge you to oppose building a 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require wasteful resources railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. I don't want this rail-banking process to destroy the existing Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, making the future option of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive.

Thank you,
Long time resident and property owner,
Gretchen Riley O’Hearn
234 Walnut Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 129

COMMENTER: Gretchen Riley O’Hearn

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 129.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the existing tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 129.2

The commenter opposes building an Interim Trail or Trail Only anywhere on the rail corridor, and using the railbanking process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jack McCourt](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail proposal
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 4:14:41 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jack and I'm a 21 year old living in Boulder Creek. I was born and raised here in our beautiful Santa Cruz county.

I say lets keep our county beautiful! Support the Ultimate Trail option! Car-centric planning has decimated our environment, our municipal finances, and our personal finances. The average cost of car ownership is over 10,000\$ a year! I would love to live in an area where public transit is more readily available and reliable.

Thank you,
-Jack McCourt

130-1

Commenter 130

COMMENTER: Jack McCourt

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 130.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and would like to live in an area where public transit is more readily available.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jeffrey Smedberg](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on EIR for Trail Segments 10 & 11
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 6:21:18 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

County Rail Trail Planner, Rob Tidmore

Rob,

I cannot attend the public comment meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for Trail Segments 10 and 11 of the Rail & Trail on Thursday, November 16. Please add my comments to those received at the meeting.

I fully support the Ultimate Trail design which will construct the Rail and Trail together. Through Capitola, this design leaves the rail on the trestle and enhances the trail through Capitola. I oppose Option A which would remove tracks from the trestle and delay the possibility of commuter rail far into the future.

--

-Jeffrey Smedberg
170 Hagemann Ave
Santa Cruz 95062

131-1

Commenter 131

COMMENTER: Jeffrey Smedberg

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 131.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design to construct the rail and trail together, and opposes Design Option A that would remove the tracks from the trestle.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [James Hudkins](#)
To: [RailTrail](#); [James Hudkins](#)
Subject: In favor of the Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 12:14:44 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

132-1

I am in favor of the Rail Trail. I support building the best rail and oppose the legally risky railbanking and bad track demolition, This will be better for all users including historical preservation. I am a Rail Fan and like the track left in place.

132-2

I'd like to see the Rail Transit between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. I rode that route many years ago and would like to ride it again. I occasionally ride the train from Santa Cruz to Felton and the narrow gauge steam train at Felton. I have walked the entire rail line from Olympia to Santa Cruz and then up to Davenport as well as most of the way toward Watsonville.

Jim Hudkins

Commenter 132

COMMENTER: Jim Hudkins

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 132.1

The commenter supports rail trail and opposes railbanking and track demolition.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 132.2

The commenter would like to see rail transit between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Carothers](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: 17th to State Park Drive
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 7:32:50 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi

I live near State Park Drive, and I would like to see the ultimate rail trail design be the one that is executed. It's crazy that you are even taking public input given that we've already voted for you to create the ultimate rail trail, which excludes rail banking, and other actions that diminish the system. This whole project should've been completed years ago!

Sincerely,

John Carothers.

133-1



Commenter 133

COMMENTER: John Carothers

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 133.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design and does not think the County should be taking public input given they already voted for the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jon Kersey](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 3:09:13 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob,

I have been riding a bicycle for transportation and recreation in Santa Cruz County for almost 50 years. I've become a senior citizen while listening to discussion(s) concerning the pros and cons of the rail trail. I strongly support the Ultimate Trail and oppose rail banking. Let's move forward with the rail trail without further delay or expense.

Best Regards,
Jon Kersey

134-1 |

Commenter 134

COMMENTER: Jon Kersey

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 134.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Katherine McCamant](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail and trail please.
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 6:36:55 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Thank you for your consideration. I am a 40 year resident and homeowner in Santa Cruz. I am thrilled with the future of walking from my westside house to get on a trolley or train in the future and being able to access most of coastal Santa Cruz county. These are not my words following, but I agree wholeheartedly with them!

135-1

- **SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact** as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- **SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.**
- **SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit** from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

135-2

- **OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.** Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- **OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only'** anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Sincerely,
Katherine McCamant
Sent from my iPad

Commenter 135

COMMENTER: Katherine McCamant

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 135.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 135.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building the Interim Trail or Trail Only.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Noe "nDale](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: support for the mid county rail trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 6:57:33 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

136-1 |

My husband and I are unable to attend the public meeting, but would like to express our support for the Mid County Rail Trail. I just returned from Seattle where King County has an extensive rail-trail system as part of the Great American Rail Trail. I'm sure you have heard of it. It is something of great pride to the people of King County. It would be awesome if we could emulate part of what they have achieved so far.

Thank you,
Lilinoe Manischalchi

Commenter 136

COMMENTER: Lilinoe Manischalchi

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 136.1

The commenter supports the Mid-County Rail Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Linda Garfield](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Please no railbanking or tearing out the tracks
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 2:17:47 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Mr. Rob Tidmore,

I'm writing to let you know that I strongly oppose the removal of tracks and/or railbanking along the entire length of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

I strongly support the use of the line for a light rail project from Watsonville to Santa Cruz to Roaring Camp in the San Lorenzo Valley, with stops along the way. I'm a senior citizen who would greatly benefit from having this as a transportation resource. I live in Boulder Creek and find it increasingly difficult to drive to Santa Cruz and then south on Highway 1 due to the constant traffic backups.

Our roads in the San Lorenzo Valley are often in need of major repairs due to fire, wind storms, landslides, and washouts. As it's the main artery in and out of the valley, when it's damaged and closed, we are essentially cut off. Having another transportation option, like the rail line, will provide a means to bring in needed supplies, medical personnel, and provide an escape route if roads are impassable. These are not imagined threats, but very real based on recent disasters in our area.

I do support the companion trail to the rail line, but not at the expense of creating a "temporary trail" by railbanking/tearing out the existing tracks. Please continue moving forward with the Rail and Trail project.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Regards,
Linda Garfield
Boulder Creek, Ca.

137-1
137-2
137-3
137-4

Commenter 137

COMMENTER: Linda Garfield

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 137.1

The commenter opposes removing the tracks or railbanking along the entire length of the SCBRL.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 137.2

The commenter supports the use of the line for a light rail project from Watsonville to Santa Cruz to Roaring Camp.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 137.3

The commenter opines about the roads in San Lorenzo Valley needing repairs and the benefits of having another transportation option like the rail line.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 137.4

The commenter supports the companion trail to the rail line but not at the expense of creating a temporary trail by railbanking or removing the existing tracks, and supports moving forward with the rail and trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Maria Gitin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 7:27:33 PM

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138-1

As a long time resident of South and Mid-County, my main concern is that the trail disrupts drivers as little as possible in terms of crossings, stop signs, that the plan is realistic about a train not being feasible through Mid-County and that no discretionary funding is spent on this project. Santa Cruz County has 77 roads and many bridges, retaining walls and other infrastructure needs that are a far higher priority for the majority of residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this comment.

Maria Gitin Torres

Maria Gitin Aptos Resident, Capitola Mail
PO Box 216
Capitola, CA 95010

“This Bright Light of Ours: Stories from the Voting Rights Fight”
www.thisbrightlightofours.com

Commenter 138

COMMENTER: Maria Gitin

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 138.1

The commenter is concerned about the trail disrupting drivers in terms of crossings, wants the plan to be realistic about a train not being feasible through mid-County, and does not want discretionary funding spent on this Project because there are higher priority infrastructure needs.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mark Johannessen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments re Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11 DEIR
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 7:50:24 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

139-1 | In June 2022 the community was asked in Measure D whether to essentially stop all planning for rail along the Santa Cruz Branch Line, or support the continued planning and implementation of clean, quiet electric rail transit along the Branch Line. 73% of the county said NO to that measure, which in this political environment is a mandate and reflects the community's desire to have rail along the Branch Line implemented now.

139-2 | The County has recently approved its housing element update which requires 4,634 new housing units from 2023-2031. Priorities include affordable housing (for our teachers, students, locally employed workers), senior housing, and other higher density housing, all located near high quality high density public transportation. That type of public transportation is exactly what a rail line, with a sensibly sized emission free rail system, would provide.

139-3 | As it stands now, funding for the rail and trail is detailed in the SCCRTC's 5-year funding program. That plan in its current iteration does not adequately reflect the urgency of providing real transit solutions along the branch line to our residents and more funds need to be allocated to the next steps of planning for implementation.

139-4 | Obviously, pursuing any plan that would delay the implementation of rail along the Branch Line, such as rail banking, would only be detrimental to the county meeting any of these other goals, and in addition would be in direct conflict with the community's expressed desire to implement rail along the Branch Line now.

139-5 | Finally, the discussion about costs of rail on the Branch Line should not be separated from the discussions on costs involved with meeting the county's other goals, including transportation for jobs to and from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, meeting environmental goals, removing congestion along Highway 1, and supporting more housing opportunities..

Mark Johannessen

Commenter 139

COMMENTER: Mark Johannessen

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 139.1

The commenter states that the County's vote on Measure D reflects the community's desire to have rail along the SCBRL.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 139.2

The commenter states that the County recently approved its Housing Element Update requiring 4,634 new housing units, and priorities include locating housing near high-quality, high-density public transportation, which is what a rail line would provide.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 139.3

The commenter states that funding for the rail and trail is detailed in RTC's 5-year program, and that plan does not adequately reflect the urgency of providing transit solutions along the branch rail line, and more funds are needed.

Refer to DEIR Section 1.2.4 for funding information and to **Master Response E** regarding rail operation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 139.4

The commenter states that any plan like railbanking that would delay implementing rail along the Branch Line would be detrimental to the County meeting these other goals and would be in conflict with the community's expressed desire to implement rail along the Branch Line.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 139.5

The commenter states that the costs of rail on the Branch Line should not be separated from the discussion of costs involved with meeting the County's other goals, including transportation for jobs, environmental goals, removing congestion along Highway 1, and more housing opportunities.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Marq Lipton](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Don't remove rail from the rail trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:29:30 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

140-1



Our community overwhelmingly voted to keep the rail.
So, please keep the rail.
No to rail banking.
Thank you.
Marq Lipton
109 Manresa Dr
Aptos, CA

Commenter 140

COMMENTER: Marq Lipton

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 140.1

The commenter states our community voted to keep the rail, and they support keeping the rail and oppose railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [mj.slade](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: No rail banking!
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 2:03:28 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore,

I am a 35 year resident of Aptos. I have voted every election to keep our rail. The rail initiatives have passed 3 times, but yet, here we are still fighting to keep our rail line and not bank the rail.

As you can see, I am in the travel industry. I sell travel all over the world. I marvel at the wonderful rail in Europe & other countries. I just returned from a rail journey in Scandinavia. Fabulous. I send back photos from electric rail in Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Canberra. We could have the same here in Santa Cruz county. In Aptos, only half the housing is going in behind the Bay View hotel. We desperately need rail in Santa Cruz county! Have you commuted to Aptos after 2P ? Highway 1 is a parking lot. In the AM, Highway 1 is a parking lot the other direction. Santa Cruz county was not built for future growth and hence our dilemma.

I believe that an electric rail will make life so much more enjoyable & meet the needs of our community.

I worked as a travel agent for 15 years at AAA Capitola. I never used the freeway to go or come from work. One day, leaving work in the summer, I'm in a long line of cars going into Capitola. I looked over and saw the train. What a beautiful ride....going into Capitola and then on to New Brighton, Rio Del Mar. My thought , people should be on the rail, especially me! I would use it. Our wonderful tourists would use it. I think it would also enhance pedestrian and bike safety within Capitola village.

Please honor the Santa Cruz county voters! No railbanking. No interim or trail only along our beautiful rail corridor....the rail corridor should be utilized for the most usage. Please keep our rail....we need passenger rail most!

BTW, has anyone thought about using the existing rail for the Murray bridge retrofit? I am a member of the Santa Cruz yacht club and people are concerned about how they are going to get around during the retrofit. Wouldn't it be a good use of the rail, to have some type of rail service for these people living in the Seabright and yacht harbor areas? I know it wouldn't be beautiful electric rail....but it could help them get around. We could have pictures of the upcoming electric rail in the future.

Thank you for your assistance!

Maryjane Slade, CTA,DS
Andiamo Travel
CST-2143038-40
"To Travel is to Live"
-Hans Christian Anderson
Ph: 831.688.5264
mjsriodel@yahoo.com

141-1
141-2
141-3
141-4

Commenter 141

COMMENTER: Maryjane Slade

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 141.1

The commenter states they voted in every election to keep the rail, the rail initiatives have passed 3 times, yet we are still fighting to keep the rail line and not bank the rail.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 141.2

The commenter opines about rail in other countries, the traffic in Santa Cruz County, and how people should be on the rail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 141.3

The commenter supports rail and opposes railbanking, an Interim Trail, and Trail Only.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 141.4

The commenter asks about using the existing rail as a means to get around during the Murray Bridge retrofit.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. Repairs to the rail line are needed in some locations to operate passenger rail, and these repairs are not scheduled to be completed prior to the Murray Bridge retrofit project. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ringler](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Vehicle traffic in the county has outgrown the roads.....
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 2:21:20 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear County Rail Trail Planner Rob Tidmore,

Santa Cruz needs to join the 21st century and many parts of the rest of the world by utilizing our train tracks for mass transportation.

Vehicle traffic in the county has outgrown the existing roads and highways. There are too many potholes to keep up with the repairs. If we can get even some vehicles off the road, it would be a good thing for all of us. Help us get trains. Thanks for listening.

Sarah Ringler
814 Cynthia Dr.
Watsonville, CA

142-1

Commenter 142

COMMENTER: Sarah Ringler

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 142.1

The commenter supports using the train tracks for mass transportation and states vehicle traffic has outgrown existing roads and highways.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Steve Lustgarden](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: We support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 11:17:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Planner Tidmore,

As you proceed with planning for the segment of the rail trail between State Park Drive and 17th avenue, know that we -- along with the VAST majority of people in this County -- fully support the Ultimate Trail, along side the existing railroad tracks. We strongly oppose any further consideration of the railbanking option.

Thank you for accepting our feedback on this important planning process.

Steve Lustgarden
Susan Kauffman
Santa Cruz.

143-1

Commenter 143

COMMENTER: Steve Lustgarden

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 143.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail alongside the existing railroad tracks and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Teresa Green](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail EIR
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 4:33:22 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Rob,

As a resident of Capitola I am very interested in the Rail Trail for segments 10 and 11. I have read a good part of the EIR and have the following comments.

144-1

1. I am opposed to rail banking. It is too complicated, may not be approved and if the endgame is truly to put the trail over the Capitola Trestle, it just ends up costing more and taking more time. I am in favor of the Ultimate Trail plan which seems like the best option at this time.

144-2

2. However, I do have concerns about diverting the trail for bikes and pedestrians through Capitola Village. I walk the village several times a week, and it is not really conducive to having additional traffic through there. I believe the EIR said 500 - 1500 users per day were expected. How many of those would be expected to travel through Capitola? In particular, on weekends, Stockton Ave and Capitola Ave. are packed with cars and pedestrians. Adding to that would be dangerous in my opinion. Furthermore, Monterey Ave is very narrow and the bike lane seems in poor shape and inadequate for this level of use. Most of the path for the diverted trail would not be ADA compliant - it's too steep. Not sure why the diversion was not taken through the Rispon Mansion property which already has an ADA compliant pedestrian path and bike path over the creek.

144-3

I am all for getting the trail built. With the Optional Interim Trail, putting in the trail takes 4 years, demolition of it takes 4 more years and construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration takes 4 years. Estimated completion in 2064. I will be 113 years old then and don't think I will be getting much use out of it! Let's transfer all that money and time over to the RTC to fix the trestle and build the Ultimate Trail now.

Thanks for your consideration

Teresa Green

Commenter 144

COMMENTER: Teresa Green

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 144.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 144.2

The commenter is concerned about diverting bikes and pedestrians through Capitola Village, which is not conducive to having additional traffic, and has several questions. Of the 500–1,500 daily trailer users, how many would be expected to travel through Capitola? Monterey Ave is narrow, bike lanes are in poor shape, and most of the path is steep and not ADA compliance and wonders why the diversion was not taken through the Rispin Mansion property which has an ADA compliance pedestrian and bike path over the creek.

Refer to **Master Response F**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 144.3

The commenter supports transferring money to the RTC to fix the trestle and build the Ultimate Trail now.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [tfwiss](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support of Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:16:12 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Rob Tidmore
County Rail Trail Planner

145-1
145-2

I **SUPPORT** building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.

I **SUPPORT** increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.

I **SUPPORT** using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

I **OPPOSE** any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.

I **OPPOSE** building a 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Thank you!

Namaste,
Teri Wiss
1215 Odyssey Ct
Santa Cruz

Pronouns: she/her

Please consider the environment:
REFUSE, REDUCE, RECOVER, REUSE, RE-PURPOSE, REPAIR, and RECYCLE.

With gratitude and respect to: The Amah Mutsun, Uypi, Zayante, Ohlone, and other Indigenous people and all the ancestors & relations who stewarded & continue to care for these stolen lands currently known as Santa Cruz City & County.

Commenter 145

COMMENTER: Teri Wiss

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 145.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike/pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 145.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building the Interim Trail or Trail Only on the rail corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [ttd](#)
To: [RailTrail](#); [Terrance Dietz](#)
Subject: Rail road trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:49:39 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

146-1

Hello. Please continue the great job you are doing in keeping our great rail road rails intact and ready for train rides to Watsonville and beyond. I also want to try biking to Watsonville on my non electric bike and getting a train ride back to Westside Santa Cruz. Thanks Terry Dietz

Commenter 146

COMMENTER: Terry Dietz

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 146.1

The commenter commends keeping the rails intact and wants to try biking to Watsonville and riding a train back to west side Santa Cruz.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

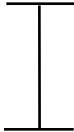
No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Val Cole](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Input on Mid-County Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 9:08:16 AM

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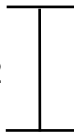
Dear Commissioners,

147-1



Thank you for your continued work on the Rail Trail — I enjoy every week riding my bike to run car-free errands on the Westside, and look forward to expanding my journeys with the completion of upcoming sections heading to the Boardwalk and also all the way out to Davenport. It is a wonderful and developing asset to our community, and a great way to enable us to safely travel without adding more carbon to the atmosphere.

147-2



I support the Ultimate trail design for the upcoming sections 10 and 11 in and around Capitola. In addition, I also support increased safety measures for cyclists and pedestrians in Capitola Village. We should continue our progress building-out the trail, avoid wasteful rail banking, and preserve the tracks for low-carbon rail whenever that becomes feasible. Future generations will thank us for this!!

147-3



Finally, congratulations to all involved in securing the amazing amount of public funding to build the rail-trail. For all the taxes we pay, its nice to see some of the funding come back to make this wonderful project a reality in Santa Cruz County.

Val Cole

Commenter 147

COMMENTER: Val Cole

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 147.1

The commenter enjoys riding his bike on the west side, looks forward to the completion of upcoming sections, and thinks it is an asset to the community and a great way to travel safely without adding more carbon.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 147.2

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design and the increased safety measures for cyclists and pedestrians in Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 147.3

The commenter congratulates all in securing funding to build the rail trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Wendy King](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Bike and pedestrian safety!
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 7:45:46 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

greetings,

148-1 |

I am writing in support of building the ‘ultimate’ trail from 17th to State Park Drive. I support building the path alongside the existing rail tracks. I do not support rail banking, nor removing the tracks - first for the future possibility of rail transportation between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, and second because rail banking would entangle the project in legal issues that would slow down building the bike/pedestrian path.

148-2 |

I regularly use the westside bike and pedestrian path, along with many other bikers and pedestrians. The rail trail is safer, and nicer, for bikers and pedestrians, than if we had to use the road with car and truck traffic.

Thank you for all your work,
Wendy King
Santa Cruz

Commenter 148

COMMENTER: Wendy King

DATE: November 15, 2023

Response 148.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail and building the path alongside the tracks, and opposes railbanking and removing the tracks.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 148.2

The commenter uses the westside bike and pedestrian path and states the rail trail is safer and nicer than using the road with car and truck traffic.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: kimg@napanet.net
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments On Draft EIR for segments 10 & 11
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 4:32:13 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please consider the comments below regarding the Draft EIR for segments 10 & 11.

I agree with the County regarding the following **ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR TRAIL CHOICE OF "TRAIL ONLY"**:

- **"Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Impacts.**
- Using this measure, the County considers **Alternative 1 (Trail Only) to be environmentally superior because it results in substantially less tree removal:"**
- Ultimate Trail Configuration – 803 trees
- Optional Interim Trail – 957 trees
- Alternative 1 (Trail Only) 288 trees

149-1

Comment 1.

800 + trees to be removed in segment 11 seems excessive and concerning. In the draft EIR the County recognizes that to remove TREES is a significant effect and would have adverse effects on the environment / species / habitats. "4.3 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS", 4.4 SIGNIFICANT & UNAVOIDABLE EFFECTS" It is important to note that in a TRAIL Only situation these effects would be lessened. This IS NOT a risk that anyone should be having in the Marine Sanctuary. We have a trail that many use now on the old railroad tracks. Enhance that trail with the (Trail Only) option, or the Interim Trail option. It is important to note that both trail only and interim trail in phase 1 remove the least amount of trees at 288. With the trail in it's current configuration / location, the access to the McGregor Pump & Skate park would be safer as well.

149-2

Has there been any imaging to show how the area would look without the trees? Also, has the impact to the cliff and erosion been considered anywhere along the corridor, especially along park avenue where the bluff is already eroding into the water.

Comment 2.

Privacy and noise impacts to homes along the corridor should be considered along the trail line. I notice in the design plans that there are retaining walls shown where elevation change exists, but no walls where there is not much elevation change. I addressed this concern before and my comments have gone unanswered, or considered in the current plans.

149-3

As there are no privacy or sound concerns now, there will be impacts with the addition of the paved trail or any future rail.

The privacy of any homes that look upon the trail should be considered. RTC should bear the cost for the privacy / sound walls as this is their project plan not the homeowners. We are perfectly happy with walking the railroad as folks have done for years in the county. **As the project will be created by the RTC, the RTC should bear the cost of the walls throughout the project.**

149-4

A gentleman from Depot Hill addressed this concern at the Zoom meeting where the project design plans were rolled out, he spoke for all of the homes adjacent to the project. His comments were spot on for the concerns of many. I believe his master bedroom looks upon the railroad / trail. Our Deck, Living Room, 1 bedroom and 2 bathrooms look upon the project area

Comment 3.

The trail itself should roll out as soon as possible, with the railroad itself being banked for future use. Since the tracks will need to be removed anyway, why compromise the trail especially through segments that require a narrower trail to accommodate both rail with trail. This would also allow for less destruction to the environment and a larger safer trail.

Comment 4.

I notice that mention of sea level rise and storm flooding is made on 3.6-21 with regard to design proposal of Ultimate Trail. It states that, "These walls would NOT provide additional coastal armoring that would potentially exacerbate coastal flooding." The discussion does not take into account that in current storms water flows like a river on the railroad tracks behind New Brighton Beach and Pine Tree Lane area.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kim G.
Pine Tree Lane Resident

Written comments may also be submitted to the County by mail to Rob Tidmore, 979 17th Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062, or by email to RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov. All comments must be received by 5 p.m. on December 15, 2023.

From: kimg@napanet.net <kimg@napanet.net>
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 9:37 AM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: FW: RE: Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR Public Meeting Confirmation

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

-----Original Message-----
From: kimg@napanet.net
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 9:21am
To: Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcounty.gov
Cc: railtrail@santacruzcountyca.gov
Subject: RE: Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR Public Meeting Confirmation

There were terrible technical difficulties with your virtual meeting last night. I attended the meeting virtually and had my hand raised during both question periods and in the first online comment when asked to speak they were unable to hear me. I reconfigured some things...even re-joined the meeting and had my hand raised during the entire 2nd comment period and NO ONE called on me or unmuted me to to speak.

Your process for virtual public participation is not working properly. I spoke with several folks that had the same experience that I did. Kim & Natalie had comments that were not heard.

Please advise.

Commenter 149

COMMENTER: Kim Geddes

DATE: November 15 and November 17, 2023

Response 149.1

The commenter agrees Trail Only is the environmentally superior choice, and that Trail Only as well as Interim Trail part 1 removes the least number of trees.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.2

The commenter asks if there has been any imaging to show how the area would look without trees and asks if the impact to the cliff and erosion has been considered anywhere along the corridor, especially along Park Avenue.

There has been no imaging or photo-simulations prepared to show what the area would look like without trees. As described in DEIR Section 3.5.1, the RTC hired a consultant to prepare a coastal bluff erosion study. The study analyzes the potential risk of bluff erosion, including consideration of sea level rise, in this area. The information would be used to inform the final project alignment during the Coastal Development Permit review process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.3

The commenter is concerned about privacy and noise impacts to homes along the corridor as a result of trail and future rail use.

Potential noise impacts are analyzed in DEIR Section 3.10, *Noise*. The conclusion that typical trail users would generally not generate noise levels above normal conversation levels (65 dBA Leq at 3 feet) or result in noise levels the conflict with the City or County Noise Ordinances is consistent with Impact N-2 of the Final EIR for the Master Plan for the MBSST Network,¹⁸ which concluded that intermittent and incremental noise caused by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians as well as maintenance activities would not be expected to generate a measurable increase in ambient noise levels compared to existing conditions. The commenter has not identified a characteristic of the Project that would result in unusual recreational trail noise.

Additionally, refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. As such, impacts related to noise because of rail service are not a potential impact of the Project. Rail service is considered in the cumulative discussion in Section

¹⁸ Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission. 2013. Final Environmental Impact Report on the Master Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (SCH # #2012082075). November 7.

4.1.12, *Noise*. As discussed in this section, operation of the trail would result in minimal and incremental noise from human conversations. As such, the Project contribution to ambient noise impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

The proposed walls in the Project are for retaining purposes only; not privacy or noise control. Refer to **Master Response G** for additional information on privacy, noise and security concerns.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.4

The commenter states that the privacy of homes that look upon the trail should be considered, and the RTC should bear the cost of privacy/sound walls.

Privacy and noise are addressed in **Master Response G** and **Response 149.3**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.5

The commenter supports a trail as soon as possible with the railroad being banked for future use.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.6

The commenter states the discussion of sea level rise and storm flooding in Section 3.6 (page 3.6-21) does not take into account that in current storms water flows like a river on the railroad tracks behind New Brighton Beach and Pine Tree Lane area.

The analysis of sea level rise and storm flooding in Section 3.6, Impact GHG-3, is based on data from the Coastal Resilience Program web mapping tool and County and City Coastal Climate Change Vulnerability Reports. The predicted risks are mapped by The Nature Conservancy based on best available prediction tools and data. As discussed in this section, the trail is anticipated to experience flooding. However, the Proposed Project would not exacerbate potential hazards from exposure because trail flooding would not result in displacement. Additionally, the Proposed Project as a whole should improve existing drainage and flooding issues compared to existing conditions throughout the Project area by adding proposed storm drain pipes, swales, and system connections where none currently exist.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 149.7

The commenter states there were technical difficulties with the 11/16/23 public meeting, and they were not called upon.

The County (Rob Tidmore) acknowledged the technical difficulties in a response email on 11/17/23 and encouraged the commenter to submit comments in writing. The County also stated they tried several times

to unmute and connect with the commenter, but there appeared to be problems with the commenter's microphone, given that the rest of the attendees were able to provide their verbal comments.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Casey Carlson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Supporting Ultimate Trail and Rail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 9:34:40 AM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Dear Rob,

I'm writing to support the Ultimate Trail and keeping the rail. I hope to see a train in my lifetime (I'm a "fingers crossed" healthy 65).

Being in La Selva Beach, we feel isolated with car trips nigh impossible during commute hours. Having a train and a trail would so help accessibility in our community. My housemate works at Cabrillo, but he often takes his bike with an attached tow cart as it can take 30 minutes or sometimes more to get to Cabrillo from La Selva Beach. This is a 6 mile drive.

Our small street, Mar Monte Ave. is often bumper to bumper in the morning with commuters avoiding the highway.

-The voters of Santa Cruz overwhelmingly support the rail/trail option.

-There should be NO railbanking. Keep our rail AND keep building the trail.

I would love to get on my bike and ride along the trail to see friends in Capitola and Santa Cruz, and someday, I hope to be able to hop on a hydrogen train to get to Santa Cruz.

I signed up for the Zoom meeting tonight, but I'll be late so I'm sending this to make sure you get my comment.

Thank you very much,

Casey Carlson
307 Mar Monte Ave
La Selva Beach, CA
831 419 9054

150-1

Commenter 150

COMMENTER: Casey Carlson

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 150.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and keeping the rail, and opposes railbanking. The commenter also states a train and trail would help accessibility in the community, and the voters of Santa Cruz support the rail/trail option.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [David Lieby](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10-11 Draft EIR
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 8:39:32 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To: County of Santa Cruz Department of Community Development & Infrastructure Santa Cruz County Parks

Attn: Rob Tidmore

Re: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10-11 Draft EIR

Dear Commissioners,

I am bothered by the environmental and financial impact of the interim solution for the trail part of the Rail Trail.

151-1

Removing the rails and covering a lot of ground with pavement and concrete that, by being “interim”, will be torn up and disposed of later is not a very environmentally friendly approach. It also appears that going through the process of rail banking would slow down the process. Adding an additional stretch of time will not serve the people who desperately need a means of getting from one end of the county to the other. I have talked to people who live in the Watsonville area who commute to work at restaurants who would love to have a reliable rail system to get to work.

151-2

Delaying the process only raises the cost and the clock is running. The citizens of the county have been repeatedly voting to get this done.

Sincerely,
David Lieby
310 Everson Dr.
Santa Cruz, 95060

Commenter 151

COMMENTER: David Lieby

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 151.1

The commenter is bothered by the environmental and financial impact of the interim solution. The commenter also states it appears railbanking would slow the process, and people who live in the Watsonville area and commute would love to have a reliable rail system to get to work.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 151.2

The commenter states the citizens of the County have been repeatedly voting to get this done.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Deborah Christie](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Re: Safety concerns
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 6:29:05 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Previous email is from Deborah Christie

On Thu, Nov 16, 2023 at 6:28 PM Deborah Christie <mountainhigh58@gmail.com> wrote:

152-1

What is being considered with the multi-use trail to mitigate safety concerns with the combination of E bike speed and those who walk dogs, those with baby strollers, and pedestrians.

There are sections that don't seem wide enough to accommodate users that include the "mindlessness" of untrained/lacking trail sharing etiquette E bike riders.

Commenter 152

COMMENTER: Deborah Christie

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 152.1

The commenter asks what is being considered with the multi-use trail to mitigate for safety concerns with the combination of users, and there are sections that do not seem wide enough to accommodate users that may include users that are untrained or lack etiquette.

Thank you for the comment.

The trail is a Class I multi-use facility as defined by Caltrans. A multi-use trail permits a variety of users, in addition to bicyclists, including walkers, joggers, wheelchair users, and non-motorized scooter users. As described in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials* (beginning on page 2-14), the typical width would be 12–14 feet. The width would be reduced to 10 feet at six locations, which are identified in the bulleted list on page 2-15. Trail etiquette signage would be installed to help guide safe trail use. As noted in Section 2.4.1 under *Signage*, trail etiquette signage would be installed with speed limit and operational guidance, and other signage would be installed as determined necessary for public safety.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [eduardo izquierdo](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: ultimate trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 2:28:41 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I am a west side city resident and i support the Ultimate trail design and leaving the rail intact.

Eduardo izquierdo 326 Van Ness Ave SC

153-1

Commenter 153

COMMENTER: Eduardo Izquierdo

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 153.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design and leaving the rail intact.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [G Wood](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: trail and trees
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 9:59:24 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

My name is Gene Wood and I live in Big Sur. My parents have a house a block away from the tracks in between 7th and 17th, this is where I grew up, and still spend alot of time at. Ive walked these tracks to school, to work, and to friends houses 1000's of times from 41st to downtown, I have even hopped the train a number of times - when it was running - to downtown or all the way north up Hwy1, often times when walking I would also have a bike or a skateboard, but I would take the tracks carrying them even though it was difficult, because it was the most direct route. If that corridor was paved smooth as a kid all those years it would have been a dream.

At first hearing that this smooth trail was being considered made me glad. Instead of trudging the tracks you could glide down with no worry of cars for miles. Alongside the tracks are apples, plums, lemons, guavas and enough blackberries to fill buckets when the time is right. The majestic trees and bushes make it feel like a nature walk, these are some of things that truly make the tracks great. By the time you get to pony park you can really feel the old soul of santa cruz. Where it has been left relatively untouched.

The people who are tolerant of tearing down all these trees have not lived and touched and created a relationship with these trees who have seen me and this city grow. The trees are living beings and they feel like family and are a part of me. Call me a hippy if you will. These trees are legally protected for a reason.

Many cities would die for a riparian corridor greenbelt like this, that supports so much wildlife and creates fresh air and here we are planning on destroying it.

All that is needed is one lane of smooth pavement, over the

154-1

tracks plus a few feet on each side, That's it, that would make it better, that would do the trick, having crossing lights and and painted lines etc., are all just fluff on top. The main problem is smooth vs bumpy railroad tracks,

To pave one mile is about 20 grand so to pave 5 five miles should cost around 100,000 dollars, but lets say we want the extra smooth stuff for small skateboard wheels, so we'll double it to 400,000, with 8 people they could pave one mile in a day, so in one work week this could be done and finished for - lets just round up to a half a million dollars and instead of a week we'll give them a month, and thats it, were done, you take out zero trees, zero bushes everything is exactly the same but paved!

Now the main problem is the RailTrail governing body decided that it would be bad to leave the tracks in the ground and cover them with asphalt because they would eventually rot. But they intend to leave them in the ground anyway. If they were covered with gravel they would remain dry and take a lifetime or more to rot, in any case if a dip occurs it can be patched.

And now with the advent of the electric bike people can zip easily where they need to go without having to bring their bike on a train, disabled people can have electric wheelchair carts, there could even be golf cart transportation for people with special needs. People could get exactly where there going without waiting for other people, and they could stop midway and pick a blackberry or sit under a tree and watch the people pass,

Its a million times safer than a road even without center dividing lines. People generally know how to go around each other when they have to. There could be electric bike rentals for the price of a train ticket.

A Train would cost millions and millions, in the name of being economical, it would cut down thousands of trees, in the name of being eco friendly. It would be noisy, dangerous and probably not used much. We don't need more condominiums along a rail line,

154-1
cont.

giant apartment buildings are not pleasant to live in or be around.

The Interim trail is on the right track but it should be flexible to be as narrow as 8 feet in spaces where there are trees or other difficulties to navigate, it could also go around and through trees. We just need some smooth ground (and maybe some pump track sections for bike and skateboard fun). For half a million dollars in one month, that's less than one percent of what is intended to be spent, and a thousand times faster, and then we don't need the grant for 100 million dollars, - but it seems like that might be what this is really about.... Money, that's what this comes down to, over 100 million dollars, and they want a piece of the pie.

While the rail-trail obviously has extremely deep pockets and huge monetary influence over this city and council. I know that the people involved aren't coming from a place of evil, but from the vantage point of a local civilian that is what it looks like.

I would like to ask and receive a response as to why the tracks can't be paved over directly, considering it would create much less ground disturbance, much less waste, and they could potentially be uncovered for a train if the time ever did arise (which seems unlikely) if it was covered with gravel first?

What are the bad possible scenarios that led to the abandonment of this idea? What would be the harm if the tracks eventually rot over a 30-100 years? Would the trail still be usable with rotten wood far below it?

Thank you

G

Commenter 154

COMMENTER: Gene Wood

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 154.1

The commenter opines about growing up in the area and walking along the tracks with majestic trees and bushes, prefers one lane of pavement over the tracks with no tree removal, and states a train would be noisy, dangerous and not used much.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 154.2

The commenter states the Interim Trail is on the right track but should be flexible to be as narrow as 8 feet, and they further state the rail trail has deep pockets and monetary influence over the City and council.

Refer to **Response 11.3**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

DEIR Section 2.4.1, under *Trail Width and Materials*, has been revised as shown above to correct the typographical error. For the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue, the trail width would be reduced to between 10 to 12 feet (not 8 to 12 feet).

Response 154.3

The commenter asks why the tracks cannot be paved over directly and then uncovered for a train if the time arises, why this idea has been abandoned, and would the trail still be usable with rotten wood far below it.

Paving directly over the tracks is not feasible due to the high potential for differential settling of the existing rails, ties, and ballast that could result in failure of trail pavement built directly on the tracks.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [FREDRIC OR GLORIA WELLS](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 2:20:50 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

155-1
155-2
155-3

I support the "Ultimate Trail" next to the tracks - meaning I want the hike/bike trail built as quickly as possible.

I also support keeping the rail line open for future use as a transit option: not only for those who especially need it, like the elderly and handicapped, but also for those who may not have a car like younger people and students.

I oppose "rail banking", which only leads to extra costs and delays in almost all scenarios which might arise. I understand these extra costs and delays are very likely to be substantial.

The sooner the trail gets built, the sooner it can be used. Everyone (almost) wants a hike/bike path - let's get it done ASAP! It's good for the environment and our health & well-being to get people out of their cars and using the hike/bike trail.

Gloria Wells
2905 Old San Jose Road
Soquel, CA 95073

Commenter 155

COMMENTER: Gloria Wells

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 155.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail next to the tracks and keeping the rail line open for future use as a transit option.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 155.2

The commenter opposes railbanking which leads to extra costs and delays.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 155.3

The commenter wants the trail built as soon as possible because it is good for the environment, health, and gets people out of their cars.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Henry Hooker](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Stay the Course
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 2:11:53 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Rob,

156-1 |

Count me as an enthusiastic supporter of the rail AND trail, and skeptical of all railbanking plans that continue to be pushed by a minority of our community who do not see the need to pursue this important long-term addition to our transportation future.

Thanks for your ongoing work for the rail trail.

Sincerely,

Henry Hooker
Santa Cruz

Commenter 156

COMMENTER: Henry Hooker

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 156.1

The commenter supports the rail and trail, and is skeptical of all railbanking plans.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [James Cohen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 9:38:47 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

To Santa Cruz Country Supervisors

As a long time resident of Santa Cruz County in the pleasure point area, I fully support building the ultimate trail. Traffic has increased dramatically over the last several years. Santa Cruz desperately needs better access to bike and pedestrian trails to get around the county. I also support light rail between Santa Cruz and Watsonville. I oppose rail banking, removal of the existing tracks, or an interim trail which would cause any delays of the ultimate trail or railway.

Best Regards
James Cohen
163 Star Ln
Santa Cruz CA 95062

157-1
157-2

Commenter 157

COMMENTER: James Cohen

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 157.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and light rail between Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 157.2

The commenter opposes railbanking, removal of the existing tracks, or an Interim Trail which would delay the Ultimate Trail or railway.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: CATHERINE O' KELLY
To: RailTrail
Subject: PLEASE DO NOT TEAR OUT THE RAIL TRACKS!
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 10:21:38 AM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

158-1

I had to move out of the county I loved and lived in for 50 years due to high and higher rent! But I still stay in touch and have friends in beautiful Santa Cruz County. I thought this rail/trail issue was solved long ago? Now I see that some people want to remove the rail tracks! Anyone who thinks that way is blind to the future! An electric transportation system is the best way to get from Watsonville to Davenport! This should be a very high priority for every elected politician in the county!

158-2

My parents (long deceased) used to come to Santa Cruz in the 1920's and 1930's on the train that went from Los Gatos through the mountains to the beach/boardwalk. I have lots of photos of them and lots of other folks enjoying the pleasures on your coastal town. But some county officials blew up the tunnels and guaranteed that no trains would go that route again, with the advent of the automobile and better roads.

In the 1950's I came to Santa Cruz on the Suntan Special which ran from San Jose to Pajaro and into Santa Cruz. There was even a brass band that met the train! Yes, I long for the "good old days," and lament what I see happening in the town I used to love so much (referring to the high-rise condos and the plans to ruin the wharf!).

J. Catherine O'Kelly
(formerly a happy resident of your County!)

Commenter 158

COMMENTER: Catherine O’Kelly

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 158.1

The commenter thought the rail/trail issue was solved long ago, does not want the rail tracks removed, and thinks that electric transportation is the best way to get from Watsonville to Davenport, which should be a high priority for elected politicians in the County.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 158.2

The commenter opines about the train that went from Los Gatos to Santa Cruz, and the Suntan Special which ran from San José to Pajaro to Santa Cruz.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [joyce banzhaf](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 1:44:22 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

159-1 not railbanking. Joycie Banzhaf, 112 Anita St, Santa cruz 95060

Commenter 159

COMMENTER: Joyce Banzhaf

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 159.1

The commenter opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Leslie Nielsen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Clarifying question from tonight's public input meeting
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 8:11:59 PM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Hi Rob,

I am a capitola resident and a CVWBIA (Capitola Village and Wharf Business Improvement Area) board member.

I attended the meeting tonight and got sidetracked at 5:55pm when you were talking about the County board of sups approving (or not) the EIR in March 2024.

You shared in response to a question - "that is an important question and they may not make the most important decision that night"

Can I get a recording of the meeting tonight or can you tell me what the question was, and "most important decision" topic was specifically?

We are clearly dancing around the Design Option A issue, and it will be important for Capitola business owners, so I want to represent what I heard correctly.

Thank you,
Leslie

160-1
160-2

Commenter 160

COMMENTER: Leslie Nielsen

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 160.1

The commenter seeks clarification on a question raised at the 11/16/23 public meeting, to which Rob Tidmore replied “that is an important question and they may not make the most important decision that night” (in March 2024).

Thank you for the comments.

The County (Rob Tidmore) contacted the commenter and shared a recording of the presentation to address the question.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 160.2

The comment states we are dancing around the Design Option A issue, which will be important for Capitola business owners.

The Ultimate Trail Configuration Design Option A would result in an interim trail (tracks removed and railbanking) on the Capitola Trestle Bridge, rather than diverting trail users through Capitola Village. Refer to **Master Response D** for more information.

After the Board of Supervisors certifies the Final EIR, they may approve the Project and make a decision on which alignment to pursue. This will need to be approved by the RTC as owner of the rail corridor. If they decide to pursue the Ultimate Trail Configuration and add Design Option A, this would result in an Interim Trail (tracks removed after railbanking) on the Capitola Trestle Bridge, rather than sending trail users through the village. In order for Design Option A to be feasible, the RTC would need to approve moving forward with railbanking of the SCBRL. Refer to **Master Response E** for additional information. If the Board decides not to pursue Design Option A, this would result in trail users traversing through Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Molly Ording](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Capitola City Council](#); [Jessica Kahn](#); [Dennis Norton](#); [Tina Andreatta](#); adally@ci.capitola.ca.us
Subject: Your IMPORTANT consideration Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11...another huge very local benefit!
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 12:11:01 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Valued & APPRECIATED Transportation Leaders!

I am very disappointed at not being able to attend your meeting in person as the subjects you are discussing are of great import to ourselves and our MANY neighbors on Monterey Avenue, in Capitola Village! Beyond our long-time, strong advocacy for this critical transportation & environmentally favorable component in our very fortunate County, we have an in-person and vital interest in supporting the part of the plan that is being called “The Ultimate Trail..” Most specially, the portion that comes up from the Village along Monterey Avenue and connects with the rail & trail at the top of Monterey & Park Avenues.

As long time residents along this overly used & abused corridor (speeders & motorcycles specifically) we have LONG advocated for methods to DETER, SLOW and QUIET the traffic..none too successfully, unfortunately! However, I have ben studying methods of both slowing and diverting traffic and I strongly believe that the wise conversion of the portion of Monterey-Park to become way more bicycle and pedestrian friendly, as well as safe & quiet as part of the “Ultimate Trail” will hugely benefit all users, residents and the Capitola community as a whole! There are already raised and separate sidewalks on both the North & South sides of Monterey from Capitola Avenue to Park Avenue to accommodate pedestrians, wheelchairs, etc. etc. If portions of the uphill & downhill lanes were green striped and portions dedicated & marked for bicyclist’s it would absolutely deter cut-through car traffic & SLOW the vehicles speeding up and down Monterey!. Re structuring in this manner this portion of the “Ultimate Trail” & Monterey Avenue would absolutely make it slower and safer for ALL! ALL would be the beneficiaries... residents, pedestrians, bicyclists as the emission emitting automobile traffic would absolutely be reduced! This has been demonstrated in countless other streets and neighborhoods though the ”slow streets” concepts, green striping, etc. and plans that are being increasingly adopted!

Enough said! But I cannot tell you how we encourage you to vote in favor of these changes resulting from the adoption of the “Ultimate Trail!! Not only is our rail with trail going to be a HUGE environmental and transportation success but many of us who live along the arterials & our communities will also hugely benefit. I strongly urge your support and will be watching!

MOST Sincerely, from long time & long-suffering...but HOPEFUL... Capitola Residents!

Molly & Mickey Ording
218 Monterey Avenue
Capitola, Ca. 95010

161-1

Commenter 161

COMMENTER: Molly and Mickey Ording

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 161.1

The commenter is disappointed to miss the 11/16/23 public meeting and supports the Ultimate Trail and the improvements through Capitola Village, especially the portion along Monterey Avenue, stating it will deter cut-through car traffic and slow vehicles on Monterey Avenue.

Thank you for the comment.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Phillip Rupp](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Input on Rail Trail in Santa Cruz County
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 6:36:48 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

This is my comment for the Public Review period on the Rail Trail.

162-1

For the past ten years I along with others have learned from RTC studies that keeping the railroad will be expensive and not have the use demand to pay the ongoing cost so tax payers will have to foot the bill. I have used the trail that the City of Santa Cruz has built and find it unsafe in many areas due to restriction of size.

162-2

162-3

I favor railbanking the railroad and building the Interim Trail. This will allow the necessary area for safe use by all users, minimize the amount of environmental destruction to build the trail, and create the best trail for recreational use.

Phillip Rupp
Capitola, CA

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Commenter 162

COMMENTER: Phillip Rupp

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 162.1

The commenter states that they have learned from RTC studies that keeping the railroad will be expensive and not have the use demand to pay for the ongoing costs.

Thank you for the comments.

Relevant studies are discussed in DEIR Section 1.2, *Project Background*. Also refer to **Master Response E**.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 162.2

The commenter states they have used the trail the City of Santa Cruz built and find it unsafe in many areas due to restriction of size.

Segment 7 Phase 1 (Santa Cruz Rail Trail) was built per Class I standards, as defined by Caltrans.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 162.3

The commenter supports railbanking the railroad and building the Interim Trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Sarah Church
To: RailTrail
Subject: Thank you! - and Comment on Draft EIR for Rail Trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 8:55:13 PM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

163-1
163-2

I have been so impressed with all the public engagement around the draft EIR for the Rail Trail - big thanks to you and all County staff for your hard work to allow so much engagement on this important issue. I'm writing to show support for the county to accept the EIR and move toward the Ultimate Trail, without Option A (avoiding the delay and process of railbanking, which will not maximize the benefit of our incredible local assets to our mobility, climate, and livability goals).

163-3

As a resident of 26th Avenue near Portola, I can't wait for Segment 10 to come zipping and toot-tooting nearby. My husband and I often ride bikes downtown or to Capitola to see friends and family along what will become this lovely route.

The EIR showed that the Ultimate Trail compares similarly or favorably in terms of environmental impact to other options - with the important benefit of a bit of added protection for our monarch butterflies. When you add in the zoom-out greenhouse gas emission reduction benefits of residents switching to rail and trail, the benefits of the Ultimate Trail are dazzling! If there is a way to emphasize in the report the overall GHG reduction benefits that go along with the Ultimate Trail projections, I think this will help convey the full picture of all the good that will be brought by this option to our community. VMT reductions, as well as idling reductions due to reduced traffic, should factor in. With the housing that will be added to the community, new public transit-adjacent residents might opt not to use a car at all - I wonder if this rosy picture can be captured in projections! Possibly, as the Sustainability Plan for the county is adjusted to require fewer parking spots per unit, averages for cars and car trips might be adjusted down - provided there are transit options such as the Ultimate Trail and/or increased bus service.

163-4

As for what else to include in the EIR... I think this can be added in later on, but I'd love to see use of, and accounting for, the lowest GHG options in road materials, such as warm mix asphalt, where applicable. Our local community, so battered by the wildfires and storms worsened by climate change, deserves the top-notch environmental approaches. In many cases, such advancements can also be cost-effective (as in the case of warm-mix asphalt).

All my best,
Sarah Church
531 26th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA

Commenter 163

COMMENTER: Sarah Church

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 163.1

The commenter appreciates the public engagement around the Draft EIR.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 163.2

The commenter supports the County accepting the EIR and supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration without Option A (which would build an interim trail on the Capitola Trestle Bridge, rather than diverting trail users through Capitola Village).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 163.3

The commenter opines about using the trail, the Ultimate Trail comparing similarly or favorably compared to other options, and the overall VMT and GHG (greenhouse gas) reduction benefits.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 163.4

The commenter suggests using low GHG options in road materials, such as warm mix asphalt, where applicable.

Warm mix asphalt is an acceptable paving material option, per Caltrans, and will be considered by the decision makers as the plans are finalized.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Scott Roseman](#)
To: [RailTrail](#); info@sccrtc.org
Cc: rskoenig@gmail.com
Subject: thoughts on Segments 10 and 11
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 4:10:44 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I hope that I am not too late to provide some comments for the commissioners for tonight's discussion on Segments 10 and 11. Here's what I'd like to say.

First and foremost, let's put politics aside and consider what's best for the community. I know that this has been a very divisive issue and continues to be so.

164-1

My main point would be that, given that there is now a direction that the county is heading in, primarily focused on preserving the tracks to make way for their eventual use for a commuter rail, and building a trail that is placed next to the tracks, let's consider that it might be in our community's best interest to move forward with a request to rail bank so that, where it makes the most sense, such as in the instance of the Capitola trestle, that the current trestle could be used, in the "interim," for a continuous trail. We all know that making the trestle available for any kind of train is an extraordinary expense and not likely any time in the near future. It does no harm to make the request for rail banking and, if rail banking is then allowed, it does not require the tracks to be removed, and the RTC can continue to build the Ultimate trail, with the option to use the Capitola trestle temporarily (for as long as no plans for a train are developed) and for any other areas where it might make sense. Again, please put politics aside, and consider our community first, the safety of our cycling community, and, in particular, our younger generations.

Thank you.

Scott Roseman
2330 Antonelli Court
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
MB 831.334.2444
scottlikespopcorn@gmail.com
STAND UP TO JEWISH HATE

Commenter 164

COMMENTER: Scott Roseman

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 164.1

The commenter states that since the County is focused on preserving the tracks for eventual use for commuter rail and building a trail next to the tracks, the County should consider railbanking in areas where it makes the most sense, such as the Capitola Trestle, so it can be used in the interim for a continuous (i.e., the Ultimate Trail with Design Option A).

Thank you for the comment.

As described in DEIR Section 2.4.1 for the Ultimate Trail Configuration, Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek) provides for use of the Capitola Trestle (with the tracks removed and the trail on the rail centerline), while constructing the Ultimate Trail Configuration (trail alongside the tracks) along the rest of the alignment. Design Option A was analyzed throughout DEIR Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, providing environmental clearance for this option.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [fred geiger](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 7:07:41 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi Rob. We Want to express our support for rail along with trail, as 74% of the voters did in the election measure. Take care,
Susan Martinez and Fred Geiger.

165-1

Commenter 165

COMMENTER: Susan Martinez and Fred Geiger

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 165.1

The commenter supports rail along with trail as 74% of the voters did in the election measure.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Theo Kell](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail configurations
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 5:25:13 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob,

166-1

I regret that I could not make it to the DEIR meeting in person today, but I wanted to give input on the EIR and configurations. It would be disappointing and irresponsible of the RTC to select the "Interim trail" option and/or design option A (converting the Capitola Trestle to a trail path).

The EIR demonstrates that the ultimate trail is more environmentally responsible. Furthermore, the interim trail would seemingly take longer, requiring railbanking/abandonment of the line. Railbanking the train line and converting Trestle to a path reduces the chances of ever having high-quality rail transit in the county.

166-2

The RTC's ideas for a future trestle carrying both rail and trail are the "ultimate" configuration - we shouldn't compromise along the way on infrastructure that could last for generations. The voters of the county have overwhelmingly shown through public meetings, elections, and the failure of Measure D in 2022 that we want the most optimal version of rail and trail.

Thank you,
Theo Kell

Commenter 166

COMMENTER: Theo Kell

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 166.1

The commenter opposes the Interim Trail and/or Design Option A (converting the Capitola Trestle to trail path), and states the Interim Trail would take longer, require railbanking, and reducing the chances of having rail transit in the County.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 166.2

The commenter states the ideas for a future trestle carrying both rail and trail are the ultimate configuration, and the voters have shown they want the optimal version of rail and trail.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Vibha Akkaraju](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for Ultimate Rail Trail
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 10:34:16 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob,

I am writing you today to show my support for the Ultimate Rail Trail project. Also, I would like to voice my opposition to any design that requires railbanking or track demolition for the following reasons: It will cause delays, mire us in legal battles, and be wasteful. I also oppose the idea of a wasteful "interim trail" or "trail only."

Thanks for your time,
Vibha Akkaraju

167-1 |

Commenter 167

COMMENTER: Vibha Akkaraju

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 167.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes any design that requires railbanking, an Interim Trail, or Trail Only.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Benjamin Babcock](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate trail
Date: Friday, November 17, 2023 12:10:18 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

168-1

I support the ultimate trail and oppose railbanking. Do I need to say more at this point?

Cheers,
Ben

Commenter 168

COMMENTER: Benjamen Babcock

DATE: November 17, 2023

Response 168.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Francesca Graziano](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on the RailTrail
Date: Friday, November 17, 2023 2:03:16 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

I am writing **in support of the RailTrail project and against rail banking.**

169-1

The public voted. We want the trail with the rail, and the trains to help alleviate all carbon pollution from the enormous traffic driving between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. We want to do everything we can to reduce greenhouse gases and accommodate our service workers getting around the county. The most affordable housing is in South County, requiring most people to commute on the freeway by car or bus. Let's get the HE trains here and a train that serves all people, not just those who ride bikes. Rail banking would be a mistake! We already decided that in the election.

Yours truly,

Francesca Graziano
2655 Brommer St #21, Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Commenter 169

COMMENTER: Francesca Graziano

DATE: November 17, 2023

Response 169.1

The commenter supports the Project and opposes railbanking, states the public voted, and trails will alleviate carbon pollution from the traffic driving between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Buzz Anderson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Rail Trail input
Date: Friday, November 17, 2023 7:50:06 AM

CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Rob,

When planning the Rail Trail please use the Capitola Trestle as part of the trail. I grew up in Capitola and used the trestle to get from Capitola School to the neighborhoods on the west side of Soquel Creek—safe and expeditious. The trestle should be used for active transportation (biking and walking). It’s the best thing for our community and would serve the most people. Also, please do not displace any low income housing (mobile homes) when constructing the trail. That would be counter-productive!

Lastly, rail banking has been used successfully in hundreds of communities across our country. It is not the great satan that the train advocates claim. It has many advantages that far outweigh any minimal shortcomings.

Sincerely,
Frank Anderson
831-566-2100

170-1
170-2
170-3

Commenter 170

COMMENTER: Frank Anderson

DATE: November 17, 2023

Response 170.1

The commenter supports using the Capitola Trestle as part of the Rail Trail (Ultimate Trail Design Option A).

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 170.2

The commenter opposes displacement of any low-income housing (mobile homes) to construct the trail).

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 170.3

The commenter states railbanking has been used successfully in hundreds of communities across the country.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [gail page](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: No tp Railbanking
Date: Friday, November 17, 2023 5:24:34 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Sir:

Please don't consider ripping out a potential asset for the future of public transportation.

Railbanking has never worked to replace rails.

It is so sad to see the wide medians, stripped of their tracks in Los Angeles, running down to the beach. Citizens at one time were able to go by trolley from the Valley to the Beaches until the fossil fuel industry consigned them to Carmageddon.

At one time one residents could take the train from San Jose to the beaches of Santa Cruz, until the industry made sure the tunnels were dynamited shut.

Please keep all options open for the future.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

gail page

171-1
171-2

Commenter 171

COMMENTER: Gail Page

DATE: November 17, 2023

Response 171.1

The commenter opposes removing a potential asset for future public transportation and states railbanking has never worked to replace rails.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 171.2

The commenter opines about tracks removed in Los Angeles and that at one time residents could take the train from San José to Santa Cruz.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Caletti](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rails
Date: Friday, November 17, 2023 3:54:36 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,
Just wanted to throw my 2 cents in here, that I am very interested in the region keeping the train tracks in place, and hopefully using them for rail transit sooner rather than later. I love the bike/ped pathway and hope we keep going with that, but without removing the resource of the tracks.
Many thanks,

John Caletti

Caletti Cycles
Custom bicycles handcrafted in Santa Cruz, CA
caletticycles.com 831-426-0575
Instagram: @caletticycles

Member: 1% For The Planet - *We give 1% of sales to nonprofits working to protect and restore the environment.*

172-1

From: [John Caletti](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rails
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 1:03:34 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

Just wanted to throw my 2 cents in here, that I am very interested in the region keeping the train tracks in place, and hopefully using them for rail transit sooner rather than later. I love the bike/ped pathway and hope we keep going with that, but without removing the resource of the tracks.

Many thanks,

John Caletti

Caletti Cycles
Custom bicycles handcrafted in Santa Cruz, CA
caletticycles.com 831-426-0575
Instagram: @caletticycles

Member: 1% For The Planet - *We give 1% of sales to nonprofits working to protect and restore the environment.*

Commenter 172

COMMENTER: John Caletti

DATE: November 17 and November 18, 2023

Response 172.1

The commenter supports keeping the train tracks and hopes that they can be used for rail transit.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 172.2

The commenter supports keeping the train tracks and hopes that they can be used for rail transit.

This is the same as **Comment 172-1**.

Refer to **Response 172.1**.

From: [Eugene Tsuji](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: railbanking
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 10:20:04 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello

173-1 |

I am an avid cyclist, guy stuck in traffic and pedestrian when possible. I wish to add rail commuter to that list. Please support the ultimate trail and finally put an end to the railbanking idiocy

thanks
Eugene Tsuji

Commenter 173

COMMENTER: Eugene Tsuji

DATE: November 18, 2023

Response 173.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Danforth](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Re: Attn: Rob Tidmore, Further Comments on Draft EIR for Rail Trail Project Segments 10 and 11
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 8:29:33 AM
Attachments: [Follow up Comments on Environmental Impact Report for SC Trail.pdf](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

It was good to meet you briefly after this week's meeting on this topic. The following (and attached) are my further comments on the draft EIR -- expanding on points I briefly made at the meeting and incorporating (and responding to) inputs from others at the meeting.

Best wishes,
John Danforth

Post 11/16/23 Meeting Comments on Draft EIR for Proposed SC Bike/Pedestrian Trail, Segments 10 and 11.

**John Danforth
4735 Nova Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95062**

Please accept this as my follow-up set of comments on the draft EIR for this project. I previously submitted comments on October 28, 2023. I incorporate those by reference and stand by them. This follow-up – hereby submitted on November 18, 2023 -- focuses on new issues raised in the November 16, 2023 public hearing on this topic.

1. Missing Documentation and One Safety Suggestion.

Again, I can see that an enormous amount of effort has gone into the draft EIR. My great thanks to all who contributed to this work. However, I still think – as I said at the November 16 meeting – that a critical part of the project (which may be *the* critical part of the project from a safety perspective) needs to be much better

174-1

174-2

documented. I am focusing on a part of Segment 11 that starts about a block from my home – in an area I walk by at least twice every day -- where the trail (in the “Ultimate” version) circumvents the Capitola Trestle and (essentially) dumps pedestrians and cyclists onto the busy road (Cliff Drive) above Capitola Village.

At present, the way this critical part of the “Ultimate” trail would work is still unclear. Indeed, from what we now know, it looks like it most certainly will not work, at least not without hugely increased risks of injury (or worse) to all who use the new trail, and/or Cliff Drive and/or walk in Capitola Village.

One minor change might improve things in this one area (even if, as I hope will not be the case, the “ultimate” plan is now selected): have folks on the trail cross over Cliff Drive further east, further up the Cliff Drive hill and nearer the upper, Coast-side parking area. People will, in any event, want to walk along the cliff as much as possible. This helps with that. And this at least improves sightlines for cyclists, cars and pedestrians. So there is a better chance (still not great given current vehicle speeds and the bad habits of many cyclists and electric bike riders) that they will stop for one another. Currently, the proposed crossing across Cliff drive is near a blind curve. Cars and bikes (especially electric bikes) run through that cross walk at excessive speeds all the time, even when the warning lights are blinking. This happened to me as a pedestrian just yesterday at a very close intersection, Stockton and Riverview.

Presently, as I said, there are gaps in the diagrams for this critically dangerous section. *See e.g.* the gap between CP-1.16 and CP-1.17. The only diagram that exists is apparently the satellite shot, WF-1.00. By itself it is hard to make out. For example, is the plan to remove parking in Capitola Village and along Monterey? That is unclear. So are other details.

Also, more generally, apart from this gap in the documentation, I would like to see clearer indications of where retaining walls and fences are proposed. I live adjacent to Jade Park and I am especially concerned about walls, retaining walls, and fences in that part (between 41st and 47th Street) of Segment 10.

2. **My main follow-up point about the EIR: the EIR needs to do a much,**

much better job of laying out the actual tradeoffs between the interim and ultimate plans.

My main follow-up point about the EIR is simply this: It does not adequately address the elephant in the room: ***On the one hand, the ultimate plan promises massive, immediate and irreparable disruptions (including evicting families, moving tracks, greatly heightened traffic risks, and the immediate, unnecessary loss of hundreds of trees). On the other hand, it does this immediate damage in exchange for what are highly-laudable but (frankly) highly-unlikely (probably “pie-in-the-sky”) transportation hopes for “the future.”***

174-4
cont.

The draft EIR essentially ignores this central issue. Indeed, as currently drafted, the draft EIR obscures this problem by conflating the impacts that will result from the ultimate and interim plans.

Core to the problem is that the draft EIR evaluates the “interim” plan only by assuming that it will inevitably (and, in effect, immediately) transition to the “ultimate” plan. So the interim plan is made to look much worse since the draft EIR’s evaluation of interim plan impacts includes both the relatively modest impacts from the interim plan itself PLUS the far more draconian impacts of the “ultimate” plan. This seems akin to letting the water out of a fishbowl and then complaining that the fish died. Of course the interim plan looks worse from this perspective.

How can this be fixed?

First, there needs to be a detailed and careful risk adjustment analysis to reflect the high likelihood that the interim plan will never transition to the ultimate plan. The ultimate plan’s supporters themselves say this is the case. They complain that rail banking is unlikely or impossible. And they argue that, in any event, once the public enjoys a “trail only” solution it will not want to then place a train next to the trail. (I think this is a good thing, frankly, and reflects, among other things, what a bad idea it is in the first place to put a train next to a trail that we hope will be heavily used.)

174-5

And beyond what the ultimate plan supporters themselves admit, there are other reasons why the transition from the interim plan to the ultimate plan is neither inevitable or, indeed, even likely.

There is simply no current or reasonably foreseeable use case (either practically or financially) for a train. The EIR needs to evaluate this with a close focus on all relevant metrics. For example, our populations are not dense enough. And there are no major population centers near the trail that would feed workers (*via* a train) to employment centers near the trail. And to the extent some small number of people do end up using the train to get to work, there is no indication that that will take enough people off of Highway 1 to make a difference. Nor is there any indication (to my knowledge) that the commute hours of those people coincide with the worst traffic on Highway 1.

Take the example that an “ultimate” plan supporter used in the meeting last week: The Santa Cruz Boardwalk.

The Boardwalk is indeed a relatively significant employment center (perhaps the *only* relatively significant employment center) near the train route. I think that that person misspoke somewhat but meant to say that 85% of Boardwalk workers live in Watsonville. I don’t know if this number is true. Assume it is. In all likelihood, however, those workers probably number in the low hundreds at most. How many of them commute to the Boardwalk during peak commute hours? Probably a much, much smaller number given the Boardwalk’s seasonal business and its typical hours of operation. So building a train for these workers, even assuming they use it, will do little or nothing to help pay for the train -- or to alleviate traffic on Highway 1.

Then there is the configuration and location of the train/trail. That too means that the transition from the interim plan to the ultimate plan is highly unlikely. There will be terrible traffic delays and risks at the many street crossings. And there will be great risks at the multiple locations where (as we now know, thanks to the draft EIR) the train tracks and the trail switch sides. (Bicycles, for example, tend not to stop at stop signs. Electric bikes – growing exponentially in use – are even worse. This is simply reality.). As someone said last night, government officials have a duty to avoid or mitigate known risks. The County faces liability otherwise. My guess is that, when push comes to shove, even if economically feasible (which likely isn’t going to happen – either in terms of the cost of building the train or the cost of

174-5
cont.

174-6

subsidizing it), the train next to the trail will be too risky to actually install and run.

174-6
cont.

The EIR needs to carefully evaluate these and other contingencies that, in the aggregate, make the transition from an interim plan to an ultimate plan extremely unlikely. I submit that the likelihood of such a transition is so low that added adverse environmental impacts from such a transition can be treated as effectively zero. For this reason, there needs to be a separate evaluation of impacts solely attributable to the “first stage” of the interim plan. That means, for example, about 600 fewer trees will be destroyed (maybe more, since the interim plan seems to be much more flexible in terms of occasionally narrowing the trail to reduce the number of trees removed). But whatever percentage risk exists for this transition, the EIR needs to grapple with the issue, not ignore it.

174-7

And there is more. The EIR also needs to evaluate the environmental benefits that stem, in any event, from the *delay* of adverse impacts if they are indeed delayed until after a transition from the interim to the ultimate plan. Think of this, if you will, as the “time value” of deferring environmental impacts for a significant period of time. Currently, the EIR treats the post-transition impacts of the interim plan as though they were going to happen at the same time as the impacts of the ultimate plan. This is simply not the case. Even if there is a transition from the interim to the ultimate plan, that transition is probably decades away. So the incremental additional adverse impacts from that transition are also decades away, and that delay has tremendous value.

174-8

To see this, look at a couple of issues that came up at this week’s meeting.

If the ultimate trail is built now through Segment 10 it will evict from their homes a large number of folks in at least one mobile home park. The number given last night was 30 families. It certainly makes a huge difference to these families if they are forced from their homes now or, say, thirty years from now.

(It is not an answer to suggest -- as someone did -- that these families can simply sue their mobile home park. I am a lawyer and have been involved, as a lawyer and as a client, in lots of litigation over the years. Litigation simply takes too long and is too expensive to help at all in this scenario. And, in the meantime, the 30 families

will have been evicted from their homes and will have, as one person explained last night, lost all of the investment they made in them. Mobile homes are not really mobile, especially older ones in a crowded city.

The same inescapable logic applies to the massive tree loss that will accompany immediate adoption of the ultimate plan. Enjoying those trees (some of them quite old and legally protected) for thirty more years has tremendous value compared to cutting them down immediately. The EIR does not reflect this. It needs to.

Thank you again for your time on this draft EIR, and on the project in general, and on the meeting this week.

John Danforth
4735 Nova Drive

174-8
cont.

Commenter 174

COMMENTER: John Danforth

DATE: November 18, 2023

Response 174.1

The commenter notes that they made comments at the 11/16/23 public meeting and submitted comments on 10/28/23 (**Commenter 28**).

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.2

The commenter is concerned that the Ultimate Trail Configuration diverts trail users through Capitola Village rather than using the Capitola Trestle. They state it is unclear how it would work, and there are gaps in the diagrams (CP-1.16 and CP-1.17). They are concerned about safety and suggest the crossing across Cliff Drive be located further up the Cliff Drive hill.

Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.3

The commenter requests clearer indications of where walls, retaining walls, and fences are proposed in Segment 10 between 41st and 47th Streets

There are no proposed walls of any kind between 41st and 47th. Fencing is required by CPUC in between the trail and the track (southern side of the trail) for safety. The northern side of the trail does not have any fencing. Refer to the bottom right corner of CP-1.11 – CP-1.14 for a typical trail section on each sheet, graphically showing the proposed trail improvements.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.4

The commenter states the EIR needs to do a better job of laying out the tradeoffs between the Ultimate Trail and Optional Interim Trail, and that the Interim Trail is made to look worse because the EIR evaluation includes the Interim Trail and the Ultimate Trail.

Refer to **Master Response I** regarding the requirement to address all three parts of the Optional Interim Trail.

The Chapter 3 introduction, *Approach to Project Analysis*, has been revised to clarify the CEQA requirements to analyze the whole of the project.

Response 174.5

The commenter states that there needs to be a “risk adjustment analysis” to reflect the likelihood the Interim Plan will not transition to the Ultimate Plan. The commenter further states there is no current or reasonably foreseeable use case for a train.

The timeframe between the Interim Trail and the Ultimate Trail for purposes of analysis is identified in Section 2.6.2, which states, “It is estimated by the RTC, County, and City that the Optional Interim Trail could be in operation for approximately 25–30 years, recognizing that this is an interim or temporary condition driven by freight activity and that it could be longer or shorter than estimated below for purposes of analysis.

There is no requirement under CEQA to undertake the “risk adjustment analysis” requested by the commenter. Lead agencies may exercise their substantial discretion to define their proposed projects to meet stated project objectives, as the County has done here. Moreover, the “risk” asserted by the commenter is already considered in the County’s evaluation of both the Optional Interim Trail and the Ultimate Trail. If circumstances beyond the County’s control result in the features of the Ultimate Trail never being realized, the impacts of operating the Interim Trail have been fully analyzed and disclosed. CEQA does not require the assumption of a worst-case scenario, but here, the uncertainty about which the commenter is concerned is already accounted for in the County’s analysis. Regarding foreseeable use for a train, refer to **Master Response E** regarding.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.6

The commenter states the configuration and location of a train/trail will result in traffic delays and risks at the street crossings, and the government has a duty to avoid or mitigate known risks. The commenter also states the EIR needs to evaluate these and other contingencies that make the transition from an interim plan to an ultimate plan unlikely.

The potential environmental effects on transportation in the vicinity of the project corridor, including potential hazards, are addressed in Section 3.12, *Transportation*, of the DEIR. The analysis concluded the potential effects are less than significant with no mitigation required for reasons described therein.

As explained above in **Master Response F**, CEQA does not require a lead agency to reduce or rectify existing hazards or impacts to which the proposed project does not substantially contribute or exacerbate. (*CBIA v. BAAQMD, supra.*) To the extent there are risks at street/rail crossings, those are part of the existing environment, but are not caused by or made worse by the project, as explained in the transportation impacts analysis in DEIR Section 3.12.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.7

The commenter states that there needs to be a separate evaluation of impacts solely attributable to the first [part] of the Interim Plan.

Refer to **Master Response I**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 174.8

The commenter states the EIR needs to evaluate the environmental benefits that stem from the delay of adverse impacts (of the Ultimate Trail being built later), such as evicting people from their homes in at least one mobile home park and tree loss.

As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process, but the displacement of a small number of illegal encroachments is not a cognizable CEQA impact that warrants a different conclusion of significance in the EIR or a consideration of the alleged benefits of delaying the resolution of those encroachments. Moreover, CEQA does not require a lead agency to analyze or consider phasing a long-term project over time. (*Santa Rita Union School District v. City of Salinas* (2023) 94 Cal.App.5th 298, 341 [“there is no authority requiring an EIR to phase a decades-long project such as a land-use plan and CEQA does not require analysis of individual phases of projects”].)

From: [eyvye](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment on Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 & 11
Date: Sunday, November 19, 2023 1:22:26 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

175-1

Hello, I am writing to express my support for the 'ultimate trail' that leaves the tracks intact and my opposition to railbanking or 'interim trail' and 'trail only' plans that remove track. The 'ultimate trail' plan is the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail. We want the trail to have rail mass transit as the voters have expressed. Please make the voters' vision a reality. Thank you,
Felix Vayssieres

Commenter 175

COMMENTER: Felix Vayssieres

DATE: November 19, 2023

Response 175.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail that leaves the tracks intact and opposes railbanking, Interim Trail, and Trail Only plans that remove the track. The commenter also states they want to have rail mass transit as the voters have expressed.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jeffrey Whalen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail/trail
Date: Sunday, November 19, 2023 8:52:23 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

176-1

Rob, as 4th generation Santa Cruz and Santa Clara county family, and property owners in Felton and in Aptos for over 80 years (and the fact that the vote to save the rails passed) the trail **AND** the light-rail must be built together.

I ride my bike in Santa Cruz county whenever I can, however the need for a train is evident every evening on highway 1.

Don't be as shortsighted as Santa Clara county was by ripping out the tracks over the last 50 years, and now facing a tremendous infrastructure problem, not to mention the increased cost to build anything that connects to anything else.

people that just arrived in Santa Cruz county over the last 20 years seem to be the most vocal in their NIMBY ism.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely, Jeff whalen, Los Gatos and Aptos, Ca.

Commenter 176

COMMENTER: Jeffrey Whalen

DATE: November 19, 2023

Response 176.1

The commenter states that the trail and light rail must be built together. The commenter also states that the vote to save the rails passed, and do not be shortsighted as Santa Clara County was by ripping out the tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Katherine Harasz](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Fwd: Comment on Draft EIR for segments 10 & 11 of Coastal Rail Trail
Date: Sunday, November 19, 2023 8:37:07 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

177-1 | I am registering my dissent and comment on the ultimate trail option as the recommended option in the draft EIR for the above referenced project.

177-2 | First and foremost, I oppose removal of mature coastal live oaks. While all trail options involve tree removal, the trail over rail option reduces tree removal significantly (p. 3.1-15). I believe the trail over rail option has not been given due consideration as required under CEQA due to a perception that the political mandate of voters trumps environmental degradation.

177-3 | Second, I question statements regarding electric bikes, scooters and such up to 20 MPH on the trail (p. 2-24). I realize you will likely try to impose some kind of speed control on devices of all types with signage, I still believe bicycles are incompatible with pedestrian and on-leash dogs. I believe the safety and operational issues associated with this commingling is well known from the use of the already constructed Santa Cruz line.

177-4 | I understand the need to accommodate users that need electric devices to travel, but those that can should be encouraged to use available bike lanes already in existence on the street. Funds should be set up to actively and consistently enforce speed limits that are compatible with pedestrian and on-leash dogs. Are these operational costs funded?

177-4 | Third, trash receptacles and dog waste materials should also be included in operation and maintenance funds. The proximity to the coast makes this of vital importance. Are these operational costs funded?

177-5 | Finally, I question the wisdom of investing public dollars on the “ultimate” recommended option when the fiscal viability of an operational commuter train is currently unfunded. I hope that your legal counsel will provide robust analysis of the binding impact of the Proposition which is apparently being interpreted to require preservation of the physical rail line. It is my understanding as a voter that the Proposition only established the voters’ intention regarding a General Plan designation for the land. No one voted on being assessed or taxed on supporting an operational commuter train. To spend unnecessary public dollars, remove 500 mature trees that would otherwise not need to be removed, because a divided political will tipped in one direction in an election that did NOT involve actually funding the construction and operation of a commuter train is absurd and unlawful given the requirements of CEQA.

Thank you for your time and attention to these comments.

Katherine Harasz
921 Columbus Dr, Capitola, CA 95010

Commenter 177

COMMENTER: Katherine Harasz

DATE: November 19, 2023

Response 177.1

The commenter opposes the Ultimate Trail as the recommended option in the Draft EIR.

Thank for you the comments.

It should be noted that the purpose of the Draft EIR is to provide information and disclose the environmental impacts. When two projects or project alternatives are being analyzed at an equal level of detail in the EIR, as is the case with the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail, CEQA requires the lead agency (County) identify a preferred alternative. As stated in Chapter 2 (page 2-1), “the Ultimate Trail Configuration is consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan alignment and is considered the preferred alignment and approach by the County.”

Response 177.2

The commenter opposes the removal of mature coastal live oaks and states the trail over rail option reduces tree removal significantly and has not been given due consideration as required by CEQA due to a perception that the political mandate of the voters trumps environmental degradation.

It is assumed the commenter refers to the Optional Interim Trail as the “trail over rail” option, which has been analyzed at an equal level of detail as the Ultimate Trail Configuration throughout the EIR. Although CEQA does NOT require this alternative alignment be analyzed at an equal level of detail as the preferred alignment, the County provided an equal level of analysis in the spirit of full disclosure and to allow meaningful comparison. Also refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D.

Response 177.3

The commenter questions statements regarding electric bikes and scooters up to 20 mph, believes bicycles are incompatible with pedestrian and on-leash dogs, believes there are safety and operational issues with comingling, and thinks electric devices should be encouraged to use bike lanes in the street.

The commenter is correct in that the planned trail allows electric bikes and scooters up to 20 mph, and there will be signage as well as local law enforcement. As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, motorized vehicles are not allowed on the trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 177.4

The commenter asks if the operation and maintenance costs, including enforcement of speed limits and trash/dog waste collection, are funded.

Maintenance and operations of existing Segments of the Rail Trail are funded through a combination of Measure D-Active Transportation funding and funding from the local jurisdiction(s). A similar funding strategy is expected for this Project. Prior to awarding a contract for construction, the RTC and County will negotiate a maintenance agreement that will detail maintenance responsibilities and funding sources. As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, County Sheriff's or Capitola Police Department (depending on jurisdiction) are responsible for enforcement of any regulations along the trail corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 177.5

The commenter questions investing public dollars on the Ultimate Trail when a train is currently unfunded, and states that no one voted to spend public dollars on a train or to remove trees.

The commenter is correct in that there is not currently funding to construct and operate a train, and there was not a vote to fund a train. The Project does not include rail service of any kind. Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D. Refer to **Master Response E** for information about future passenger rail service.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ann Simonton](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail future
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 9:14:20 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore, Thank you for your service as our County's Rail Trail Planner.

178-1

I am writing to you today to remind you that the majority of our county voted for BOTH Rail and Trail.

178-2

Please don't consider rail banking as an alternative to keeping the rail intact. Please build the "ultimate" trail and leave the tracks intact as this will provide the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail. We need your support for increasing bike and pedestrian safety into and out of Capitola Village. Citizens of this county hope to use the Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between in the not too distant future.

178-3

Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay.

Railbanking could put both rail and trail project funding at risk, and funding would be rejected by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board. Don't open that can of worms.

These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line more difficult and expensive. Your work using rail banking designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were to restore the tracks.

178-1

Remember our county's citizens recently voted to keep both RAIL and TRAIL together. We need you to carry that intent forward.

Wishing a wonderful holiday season as you ponder your decisions.

Ann Simonton

48 year resident of Santa Cruz, bike rider, and train enthusiast

Commenter 178

COMMENTER: Ann Simonton

DATE: November 20, 2023

Response 178.1

The commenter states the majority of the County voted for both rail and trail.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 178.2

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks intact to provide the fastest, least expensive, and lowest impact way to build the trail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 178.3

The commenter opposes railbanking to remove the tracks on the Capitola Trestle or elsewhere on the rail line because it would put Project funding at risk, delay the Project, and make future rail more difficult and expensive.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Quitzon Inc](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: LPO
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 10:58:35 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Sir/Adam,

I hope you're doing well. I'm interested in phrasing your rods and had a few questions before making a decision. Could you please provide me with the following information?

1. Price: What is the cost of Product?
2. Availability: Are Products currently in stock?

I appreciate your help in providing these details. Looking forward to hearing from you soon!

Best regards,

Cory Olson
Head of Procurement

179-1

Commenter 179

COMMENTER: Cory Olson

DATE: November 20, 2023

Response 179.1

Comments are illegible. It appears the commenter is asking 1) about the cost of the Project or products to build the Project and 2) if the product is currently available in stock.

Thank you for the comment.

CEQA does not require evaluation of economic impacts, nor disclosure of Project costs. This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Nancy Schultz](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: trees
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 9:51:50 AM

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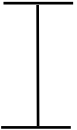
To whom it may concern:

180-1



I was dismayed by the article in Aptos Times stating that this trail project required cutting down 804 trees! I am a walker and would very much like a safe trail to walk in. But, at a time when the climate crisis is rampant and the county has yet to encourage or engage in the Million Trees project, it seems foolish to cut down any trees.

180-2



Perhaps the project should restore tracks/trail with a light rail alongside a gravel walking path. Can't we learn to thrive alongside nature's paths. Do we need more cement poured which adds to the climate crisis. Who plans these projects? Is it in the best interest of contractors, architects, engineers because it certainly is not for the common good. Please, rethink what you are doing to exacerbate the climate crisis.

N. Schultz

Commenter 180

COMMENTER: Nancy Schultz

DATE: November 20, 2023

Response 180.1

The commenter is dismayed the Project requires cutting down 804 trees.

Thank you for the comments.

The amount of tree removal is identified throughout the DEIR, including Tables 3.3-6 in Section 3.3.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 180.2

The commenter suggests restoring the tracks/trail with a light rail alongside a gravel walking path and asks if we need more cement adding to the climate crisis.

As stated in Section 2.3, *Project Purpose and Objectives*, “the project purpose is to provide an ADA-accessible bicycle/pedestrian path. . . .” As noted in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials*, to meet ADA requirements, the path would be designed as a Class I bikeway, which is defined as a multi-use paved path that is separated from any street or highway and permits a variety of users (including bicyclists, walkers, joggers, wheelchairs, and scooters), per the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Highway Design Manual, Chapter 10000, *Bicycle Transportation Design* (Caltrans July 1, 2020: 1000-1-15).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [G Wood](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Respect nature
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 5:37:16 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

181-1

Think of the person on the ground having to cut down these magnificent trees, to have to leave a gaping wound through the middle of Santa Cruz. And whats to be done with these trees, tossed in a wood chipper, at the dump. These valuable trees that could be used to build houses, that are already homes to many animals. Instead there will be a bleeding trench with a railroad that will probably never be used again. It's a disgusting plan that will kill so much life along the way.
Ge Wood

From: [G Wood](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: One way track
Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2023 6:58:55 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

181-2
181-3

So has anyone thought about how this train can only go in one direction at a time? And that it is twenty miles from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, if the train stops every mile (which is really not very convenient, considering how far walking a mile is) and for at least a minute or two people get on and load there e-bikes or wheelchairs, your looking at bare minimum 45 minutes one way. More likely an hour, and then an hour back.

So the train will only run every 2 hours.... That does not seem like anyone will be planning there day around walking to the train to go just as slow as highway traffic, Just pave the tracks, and if it ever come down to it, you can exnay the bike route and put a two electric bus.

Commenter 181

COMMENTER: Ge Wood

DATE: November 20 and November 29, 2023

Response 181.1

The commenter laments cutting down trees, asks what will be done with the trees, and states they could be used to build houses and they are home to many animals.

Thank you for the comments.

The impact of tree removal on wildlife is addressed in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. Once cut, the trees would be removed and disposed by the construction contractor. Contractor to follow applicable MBARD standards regarding disposal of trees and green waste.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 181.2

The commenter asks about the train going in one direction at a time, estimates the time it will take for stops and to get from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, and states the train will only run every 2 hours.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 181.3

The commenter suggests paving the tracks and if the time comes, get rid of the bike route and add electric bus(es).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Delphine Foo-Matkin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Written comments for Rail Trail public meeting 11/16/23: I support the "Ultimate" Trail
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 7:46:37 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To Mr. Rob Tidmore, County Rail Trail Planner,

182-1
182-2

I'm writing to express my support for building the "ultimate" trail and leaving rail tracks intact. I do not support any design that requires railbanking, nor do I support building an "interim" trail or a "trail only" option anywhere on the rail corridor.

182-1

I want increased bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, as well as use of the tracks for rail transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and in between.

As an avid biker who bikes around town for errands and leisure 4 to 5 times a week, I'm looking forward to seeing the portion of the rail trail built in my neighborhood of Live Oak.

Thanks for your time and consideration,
Delphine Foo-Matkin

Commenter 182

COMMENTER: Delphine Foo-Matkin

DATE: November 21, 2023

Response 182.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks intact, increased bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village and use of the tracks for rail transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 182.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and an Interim Trail or Trail Only anywhere on the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Michael Matkin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support building the "Ultimate" Rail Trail now!
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 7:44:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

183-1
183-2

I was not able to attend the public meeting on Nov 16th, but wanted to voice my strong support for building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the rail tracks intact - it's been through extensive study and planning already and I'm convinced that's it's the fastest, least expensive and lowest impact way to complete our much-needed trail! I'm a regular bike commuter and I can't wait for the trail to be completed in its entirety, but immediately in Capitola Village. We need safer ways for cyclists and pedestrians to travel around the city. I also strongly support keeping the option open for rail transit between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, which will never happen if rail banking is attempted. I also firmly oppose any interim trail or trail-only designs anywhere in the rail corridor.

Thank you for your consideration and your work on this important project.

Best,

Michael Matkin
755 14th Ave, #103 Santa Cruz, CA 95062
(831) 239-2831

Commenter 183

COMMENTER: Michael Matkin

DATE: November 21, 2023

Response 183.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail and leaving the tracks intact, as it has been through extensive study and planning and is the fastest, least expensive, lowest impact way to complete the trail. They also support keeping the option open for rail transit between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 183.2

The commenter opposes any Interim Trail or Trail Only designs anywhere in the rail corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Support for the Optional Interim Trail

Submitted by: Terre Thomas
516 Park Avenue
Capitola, CA

November 21, 2023

184-1

1) It is important to include in the EIR all of the past ballot measures pertaining to the Rail/Trail proposal, including the dates, jurisdiction, the proposers, and the outcome, including the vote numbers. How will it be determined, and by whom, whether the optional Interim Trail is constructed first, or the Ultimate Trail Configuration? If the OIT is approved, then who determines how long it will be used?

184-2

184-3

2) Apparently, in 2018, Capitola residents approved their preference to keep the trail on the trestle in Capitola, rather than have it meander through the Village. That seems more prudent, because the disabled and elderly could never navigate the Cliff road or Monterey Avenue with their steep inclines. Plus how can Capitola be expected to accommodate all the increase in traffic on Stockton, Capitola Avenue and Monterey, especially in the summer?

184-4

3) I did not notice where it says who will pay to restore the trestle in order to accomodate the weight of train traffic in the future. That would be a very expensive undertaking! Who will that be?

4) I also didn't notice anything about depots or stops along any rail line. Who will be responsible for that cost? Are there any proposed locations? Who will run/maintain them all? Where are all these "connections" to schools, parks, beaches, community centers and commercial centers? Are they only at street intersections? Who will be paying for other access points? Where will they be proposed? Who will pay to construct them?

184-5

5) How much wider will the construction area be beyond the proposed path width itself? How much more vegetation will be disturbed? Does the path only have to be 16 feet wide? Especially along Park Avenue? If it is only 12 feet wide, would that reduce the number of trees slated for removal? Why can't pedestrian and bicycle traffic be routed along Park Avenue itself, instead of being elevated along the Depot Hill side of the track? There are adequate bike lanes, and a relatively new sidewalk from Monterey Avenue all the way up to Coronado Street. That would totally eliminate the need to remove all those trees in the Escalona Gulch Wind Corridor, a much needed solution to the Monarch Butterfly population struggling to reestablish itself.

184-6

184-7

6) Regarding tree removal, keep in mind that when trees are cut down, the roots will eventually die, and subject hillsides to sluffing off into the rail/trail. Who will be cleaning up that mess? Who is getting all the lumber from all the proposed tree removal? Is it budgeted for getting rid of all the vegetation proposed for removal? Has it been calculated as to how much oxygen generation will be lost when all that greenery is gone?

184-8

184-9

7) Which brings me to the point: Who will be using the trail besides pedestrians and bicyclists? The EIR states the trail will be open from Dawn til Dusk. Really? Our concern is that it will become an enticement for vagrants, possible thieves, and drug users. I say a concern, because it is stated that that maintenance and patrolling responsibilities fall →

- 184-9 cont. on local jurisdictions. Our local officers rarely have time to deal with all the speeders on Park Avenue from their cars! I don't believe that 20 foot high lighting every 100 feet will sufficiently deter anyone, but may be an annoyance to people living along the corridor. And who will be paying the electricity bill for that? Is any privacy fencing being budgeted for them? I'm sure that those living along the rail/trail would like to retain some sort of privacy in their homes. Who wants trail users taking short cuts through their yards?
- 184-10
- 184-11 8) Who will be responsible for patrolling and maintaining the path, and how often? Is that budgeted for by all the local jurisdictions? Leaves, twigs, and pods could pose a danger to wheeled vehicles, so there will be a lot of debris and litter to remove on a regular basis. I don't believe that a garbage can at street intersections will be sufficient.
- 184-12 9) I am not sure that a metal cable fence will be safe enough for children and animals, especially on the trestle. I would like to see the fencing restudied for better safety.
- 184-13 10) Why allow ANY motorized vehicles on the path? 20 mph is just too fast, and dangerous to everyone else. Motorized vehicles belong on the street. They should be banned.
- 184-14 11) It states in the Draft EIR that there is no money budgeted for landscaping. How is it proposed to replace the hundreds of trees slated for removal? Why not along the corridor where they will be removed, instead of some other random location?
- 184-15 12) It is stated that the "trail would be constructed in generally the same location" as existing tracks and ties. Where would it deviate? And by how much?
- 184-16 I do not support holding out for rail transportation in the foreseeable future.
- 184-17 Inflation is making the cost of this proposal skyrocket. Is it still doable?
- 184-18 If something has to happen, I support the Optional Interim Trail over the existing line at a 12 foot width in places where tree removal could be reduced. For instance, Park Avenue is not a huge corridor for destination travel. This will necessitate the minimal amount of disturbance, especially in the Escalona Gulch Monarch Habitat Wind Corridor.

I assume that all comments submitted will be thoroughly addressed in the final EIR.

Respectfully submitted,

Terre Thomas
516 Park Ave.
Capitola, CA

50 year Capitola resident
former Capitola Planning Commissioner
Degree in Horticulture
Architectural and Landscape Designer

Commenter 184

COMMENTER: Terre Thomas

DATE: November 21, 2023

Response 184.1

The commenter states that the EIR should include all past ballot measures pertaining to the rail trail including dates, jurisdiction, the proposers, and the outcome.

Thank you for the comments.

There is no requirement in the *CEQA Guidelines* for an EIR to include all past ballot measures pertaining to the project or similar projects. For informational purposes, DEIR Section 1.2.4 discusses relevant actions and considerations since adoption of the MBSST Network Master Plan EIR in 2013, including relevant studies and project funding. Also refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D and **Master Response D** for clarification on Measure L.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.2

The commenter asks how it will be determined and by whom if the Optional Interim Trail is constructed first or the Ultimate Trail Configuration, and how long the Interim Trail would be in use.

As noted in DEIR Section 1.3, *CEQA Environmental Review Process*, the lead agency is responsible for certifying the EIR and making a decision on the Project. The County Board of Supervisors, as the governing body of the County as lead agency for the Project, will make the decision about which alignment (Ultimate vs Interim) to pursue after certification of the Final EIR. This decision will need to be approved by the RTC as the owner of the rail line. The amount of time the Interim Trail would be in use is unknown since it depends on external factors such as the reactivation of freight or the implementation of passenger rail service on the SCBRL. As noted in DEIR Section 2.6.2, the Interim Trail was estimated to be in use for 25–30 years for the purposes of environmental analysis, but the actual duration could be shorter or longer.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.3

The commenter states that apparently in 2018 Capitola residents approved their preference to keep the trail on the trestle rather than through the village, and asks how they can accommodate the increased traffic.

Refer to **Master Response D** for information on the Measure L vote referenced in the comment and **Master Response F** for information on traffic impacts Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.4

The commenter asks several questions about the rail and train, such as who will pay to restore the trestle to accommodate the train, who will pay for the stops along the rail line and where will they be, who will run/maintain them, etc.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for information about rail operation and **Master Response D** for information about the Capitola Trestle.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.5

The commenter asks how much wider the construction area is beyond the proposed path, how much more vegetation will be disturbed, if the [Interim] Trail has to be 16 feet wide, and if the number of tree removals would be reduced, particularly along Park Avenue, if it was 12 feet wide.

The construction area is wider than the planned path, and this is shown in the project designs (DEIR Appendix A) and accounted for in the impact analyses, including tree removal, in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, which addresses both temporary and permanent impacts of the project.

To clarify proposed trail widths, the Ultimate Trail is typically 12 feet wide, as stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials*. The Optional Interim Trail and Trail Only (Alternative 1) are typically 16 feet wide, as stated in Section 2.4.2 and 5.2.1 respectively.

Reducing the width of the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) or Trail Only (Alternative 1) from 16 feet to 12 feet would reduce the amount of tree removal. Although not based on engineering plans and calculations, a general qualitative estimate indicates that approximately 47 additional trees may be protected in place overall along the entire trail alignment, including approximately 3 additional trees along Park Avenue near Escalona Gulch. Therefore, reducing the width of the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) or Trail Only (Alternative 1) from 16 feet to 12 feet would not reduce impacts below a significant and unavoidable level. Please also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation.

Clearing and grubbing beyond the trail boundary is typically referred to as temporary impacts necessary to construct the trail. Areas subject to temporary impacts can be expected to regrow within 1 year vegetation of a similar stature to what preceded construction. Tree removal beyond the boundary of the trail may be required if the trees pose a safety hazard to the trail or if access is needed to construct critical trail infrastructure. Impacts from tree removal are considered permanent impacts.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.6

The commenter asks why pedestrian and bike traffic cannot be routed along Park Avenue to eliminate the need to remove trees in the Escalona Gulch area.

Routing pedestrians and cyclists out of the rail corridor and onto a roadway is inconsistent with Project objectives 1 and 4 as noted in DEIR Section 2.3, to “provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design along the Santa Cruz Branch Line . . .” and to provide a trail separate from roadway traffic. As noted in DEIR Section 5.1.4, *Four Design Options: Monterey Avenue to Grove Lane (Inland Side)*, several design options were considered for this area, including locating the trail adjacent to the roadway and the option to route cyclists onto a Class 1 bikeway at road grade along Park Avenue, and keeping pedestrians on a narrower trail along the rail line. Both options increased environmental impacts and were therefore dismissed from further consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.7

The commenter states tree removal will subject hillsides to sluffing into the trail and asks who will clean that up, who gets the lumber from tree removal, and who pays for it.

Trail maintenance (including debris removal) will be performed by County and City maintenance staff. Tree removals will be done by a qualified tree removal contractor under the supervision of an arborist and the construction management team. Contractor to follow applicable MBARD standards regarding disposal of trees and green waste.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.8

The commenter asks if how much oxygen generation will be lost because of vegetation removal has been calculated for the Project.

Changes to the production of oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis is not an environmental impact typically considered in a CEQA analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIR, the County uses the language from the inquiries set forth in Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines* to fashion thresholds for analyzing the potential impacts of the Project. The commenter has not presented evidence that changes to oxygen generation because of vegetation removal would constitute a potential impact in accordance with CEQA.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.9

The commenter is concerned that the trail will become an enticement for “vagrants, possible thieves, and drug users” because it would be open from dawn until dusk. The commenter states that the local officers currently do not have time to patrol. The commenter also states that the proposed lighting would be an annoyance to people living along the rail corridor.

Refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on security concerns and law enforcement. Refer to **Response 94.1** for a discussion of lighting impacts on adjacent properties.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.10

The commenter asks who will be paying for the electricity for the Project lighting and if privacy fencing being budgeted.

Electricity for the trail lighting would be supplied by existing service for the streetlights. Therefore, the cost of lighting the trail would be paid by the local jurisdiction that manages the streetlights in the area. The trail lights would be LEDs and thus the cost of electricity to light the trail is expected to be minimal. Refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on privacy fencing.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.11

The commenter asks who will be responsible for patrolling and maintaining the path and how often.

As stated in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, trail maintenance would be based on jurisdiction, and Segments 10 and 11 extend through both unincorporated County and the City of Capitola. There are currently no proposed plans for providing security measures, noise abatement, or privacy other than planned fencing and routine law enforcement.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.12

The commenter is concerned about the safety of a metal cable fence especially on the trestle and would like to see fencing restudied for better safety.

Trail fencing is consistent with the MBSST's fence details. Wherever vertical drop offs occur, such as next to a wall or along a trestle, code compliant guardrails will be provided.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.13

The commenter does not want any motorized vehicles on the path, as 20 MPH is too fast.

As stated in Section 2.5, electric bicycles with a rating limited to 20 MPH would be allowed in accordance with California law (Assembly Bill 1096). According to AB 1096, electric bicycles are no longer regulated like mopeds, and the same rules of the road apply to both e-bikes and human-powered bicycles. E-bikes that go up to 28 mph are not allowed on paths.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.14

The commenter asks how trees that are removed will be replaced, how tree replacement will be funded, and why tree replacement cannot be located along the corridor where they will be removed.

The Project stakeholders (including the County, City of Capitola, and RTC) will be responsible for the costs associated with tree replacement, and the cost will come from project funding. Refer to DEIR Section 1.2.4 for information on project funding.

Because the rail corridor will be built-out with rail and trail, very little available space remains for on-site replacement plantings; however, New Brighton Beach, particularly, the Porter-Sesnon element of New Brighton Beach provides some opportunity for on-site tree replacement. Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, of the DEIR addresses tree removal in Impact BIO-10 and tree replacement in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, main bullet #7 as follows:

All County Significant trees, Capitola Protected trees, and native trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio ("in kind" for native trees) at a location and ratio to be determined by the County Environmental Coordinator, City Community Development Department, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. Wherever feasible, tree replacement plantings will be situated to promote ecosystems benefits and services by replacing displaced habitat functions and values and/or enhancing remaining habitat. Where tree replacement plantings exceed a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio, tree replacement plantings may be situated to enhance the urban streetscape with the design goals of beautifying neighborhoods (especially those with a disproportionate paucity of trees), reducing the urban heat island, and improving carbon sequestration. Urban streetscape features such as public or private greenbelts, medians, parking strips, and/or other similar available spaces with sufficient space may be used for replacement tree planting. Urban streetscape species composition may include coast redwood, coast live oak, tanoak, and buckeye in upland areas and white alder, box elder, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, and western sycamore in riparian habitats.

Refer to **Master Response A** regarding on-site mitigation.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.15

The commenter asks about the statement that the "trail would be constructed in generally the same location" as the existing tracks and asks where it would deviate and by how much.

The trail will be constructed in generally the same location as the existing tracks and may need to meander or narrow in constrained areas. Precise locations would be determined when the final designs are developed.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.16

The commenter does not support holding out for rail transportation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.17

The commenter states that inflation is making the Project cost increase and asks if it is still doable.

The commenter is correct that Project costs have increased. Prior to making a decision about which alignment to pursue, the Board of Supervisors will receive information on updated cost estimates and options for delivering the Project within the existing budget, or options to explore additional funding sources.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 184.18

The commenter supports the Optional Interim Trail on the existing line at a 12-foot width in places where tree removal could be reduced, such as in Escalona Gulch along Park Avenue.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration. No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: bob bartle <bobbartle@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2023 7:25 AM
To: mstarkey@santacruzca.gov; Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Rail Trail Sections 10 and 11

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I have reached out to express my thoughts and concerns regarding the Rail Trail as it is planned and implemented through the areas that I am familiar with and have used for the last sixty years. I have sent my thoughts and observations throughout the years, starting in 2019 to Nathan Nguyen, City Engineer. I am reaching out to you. I sent an email to Nathan Nguyen and was advised that he is no longer the lead on this project for the city. I originally copied those on the list below; sierraclubsantacruz@gmail.com, CentralCoast@coastal.ca.gov, EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcountyca.gov, info@parks.ca.gov, info@coastal-watershed.org

I feel, are all shareholders and that decisions made by the SCCRTC could be in conflict with their Mission Statements and objectives as protectors of our environment. I feel that they are valuable resources.

The Coastal Commision is also monitoring and providing valuable guidance for the protection and enhancement of the California coast. The Rail Trail is within their realm and the protection of habitat adjacent to the Coastal zone is also their responsibility. There are numerous waterways that run beneath and beside the Rail Trail. The creeks all feed to the ocean through wetlands and riparian corridors that have been protected over the years.

The watersheds affected by the Rail Trail are also an area of concern. The Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Department and the Coastal Watershed Council are resources that should be consulted. The current storm runoff is absorbed by the rail lines, I hope they could offer some guidance to the planners in protecting and enhancing our watershed and returning more resources into our aquifers.

The Rail Trail will run adjacent and through California State Parks land. The State Parks are committed to not allowing adjacent properties to adversely affect park lands. The stretch through New Brighton State Park is an area that I feel would be important to have input from the state park commision in providing for the most seamless transition from the Rail Trail Development and the adjacent park lands. The Parks have been protected from development for our benefit and for future generations.

185-1

185-2

The environmental impact on this green belt corridor should address the squirrels, crows, red tail hawks and the various other raptors, herons, coyotes, rabbits, gophers and the other creatures along with the influx of humans that the planners are hoping for, planning for. I appreciate your continued effort to create a usable trail and hope that you can allow it to remain a green belt that other urban areas wish they had. Thanks,

Bob Bartle
1077 Brommer St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
bobbartle@gmail.com

Commenter 185

COMMENTER: Bob Bartle

DATE: November 22, 2023

Response 185.1

The commenter lists several agencies whose mission is to protect the environment and should provide input on the Project, including Sierra Club, Coastal Commission, Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Department, Coastal Watershed Council, and California State Parks.

Thank you for the comments.

The agencies are on the County's distribution list and were notified of the Project and provided the opportunity to provide input on the Project when the Notice of Preparation that an EIR is being prepared was released on November 5, 2021, and when the Draft EIR was made available for public review between October 16 and December 15, 2023. Additionally, the County has coordinated with Coastal Commission staff and California State Parks staff on several occasions to get their input on Project design and reducing impacts.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 185.2

The commenter states the environmental impact on the green corridor should address the squirrels, crows, red tail hawks, and various other wildlife.

The Draft EIR discloses the environmental impacts on wildlife in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [G Wood](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Already settled
Date: Thursday, November 23, 2023 9:50:08 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

186-1

It's obvious by the way at the planning commission has devised the documents. By showing a picture of the interim trail without the train tracks, and then, including the amount of destruction, environmentally that is involved in having the train tracks replaced, which is separate from the interim trail- is misleading. it is obviously being portrayed in this light purposefully so that it will pass through the Chamber of Commerce, and somehow permits will be obtained to destroy this ecosystem by skewing the facts with deliberate misrepresentation. This is an unjust and a legal action being taken by the Chamber of Commerce because the vote was fraudulent , if people knew if people had known what the true implications of what they were voting for it would've most certainly had a different outcome.

It seems hopeless, because trying to convince the rail trail people that it is utterly evil to take out 1000 trees in the name of eco-friendly and environmentally conscious. It's like in the movie avatar where the tractors are coming in and destroying the forest. They are the bad guys clearly but to them they are doing good things. It's like trying to convince a republican that Donald T is a criminal. Or trying to convince a Democrat that Anthony F was in cahoots with Donald. It's completely impossible.

Santa Cruz is permitting big developers to rape this county for money there is no upside to having more crummy apartment buildings for more people to come and live in this town. It's only beneficial to the people who are making million dollar deals. It's actually making things worse in guise of making things better.

Darla Reiner

Commenter 186

COMMENTER: Darla Reiner

DATE: November 23 and November 29, 2023

Response 186.1

The commenter opines that the Planning Commission and/or chamber of commerce has devised the documents and presentations in a misleading manner, this is an unjust action because the vote was fraudulent, and other statements.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Marian Olin](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Santa Cruz County Rail Trail
Date: Friday, November 24, 2023 8:56:09 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

TO: Rob Tidmore, County Rail Trail Planner

FROM: Curt and Marian Olin

In advance of the meeting to be held on December 15, to discuss the rail-trail segment between 17th Avenue and State Park Drive, we would like to again express our support of rail and trail, and state our opposition to railbanking or pulling out the tracks.

As residents of the Seacliff area near State Park Drive, we are very excited about the progress being made on the rail-trail. Thank you for all of your work on this project.

Curt and Marian Olin

187-1

Commenter 187

COMMENTER: Curt and Marian Olin

DATE: November 24, 2023

Response 187.1

The commenter supports rail and trail, and opposes railbanking or pulling the tracks.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Nina Donna](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rob Tidmore
Date: Sunday, November 26, 2023 3:23:06 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

I call mid-County home, and live near Arana Gulch. And what happens about the *rail & trail* is important to me. As an urban cyclist, I use those pathways for my travels to downtown SC and beyond. When I have guests overnighting, at some point we will walk along paths to Seabright Beach overlook, walk to dinner on Seabright, or the Pleasure Point area.

Let's move on with the trail along the rail lines, but **hang onto the rail**. There is still hope for rail as public transport. If they can do it in Albuquerque and all over Europe, what's holding California back?

California is a leader in equatibility, conservation and sustainability. **Just say no to railbanking** and anything that stops our eventual progress.

Ms Nina Donna

188-1

Commenter 188

COMMENTER: Nina Donna

DATE: November 26, 2023

Response 188.1

The commenter supports the trail along the rail line, keeping the rail in hopes of public transport, and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: iredbiker_santacruz
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR for RailTrail
Date: Monday, November 27, 2023 11:51:55 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore, County Rail Trail Planner,

First, I want to thank you for all your work on the Rail Trail here in Santa Cruz.

I did get a chance to review the draft EIR, and even though I did not read all of it, there were a couple of things that stood out to me.

189-1 | I actually have ridden my bike the entire length of the two segments involved in this report. Although there are exceptions, a lot of the Rail Trail is sandwiched between solid fences bordering the adjacent properties. Some of the report discusses the harm to the view shed caused by the removal of trees in this corridor. I'm not sure who's view is being impinged upon, since the removal of the trees will open up views from the corridor, and also allow better views from outside the corridor.

189-2 | The people who are calling for the railbanking of the corridor are unfamiliar with how tracks are maintained and upgraded. There are specialized machines that run on the existing tracks that refurbish the ballast, the ties, and the rails. And the existing rails are very high quality, since they were used to carry heavy hopper cars loaded with cement. If the tracks are removed it will be much more expensive and disruptive to the neighborhoods to replace them. This is why I oppose any railbanking of any part of the corridor.

189-3 | Others are decrying the plan to have the trail drop down into Capitola. As a bicyclist, I actually enjoy stopping and taking a break on the Esplanade. Maybe I'll even buy a cup of coffee or get a snack at one of the many businesses there. And since one of the main reasons I ride is to get exercise, I don't mind climbing out of Capitola. Also, I feel very safe riding my bike in Capitola, because car traffic is usually at a standstill anyway!

189-4 | As you can see, I'm all for building the Ultimate Trail, and against tearing out the tracks and railbanking the corridor. With all the talk about adding more dense housing, often without parking for cars, there is no better time than now to plan for the future that includes clean rail transit and safer bicycle commuting routes.

Thank you so much for your work and for considering my opinions,

John Coha
209 Mountain Way
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Commenter 189

COMMENTER: John Coha

DATE: November 27, 2023

Response 189.1

The commenter argues that while the EIR emphasizes harm to views due to tree removal, they contend that the removal of trees will actually enhance views from within and outside the corridor, providing improved visibility.

Thank you for the comments.

The analysis of aesthetic impacts in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, of the Draft EIR addresses impacts to existing views from publicly accessible vantage points. Therefore, views from the proposed trail are not considered pursuant to the requirements of CEQA. As discussed under the *Trees* subheading under Impact AES-1 in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, following the removal of trees required to construct the rail trail, spaces left by the removed trees could improve distant views of Monterey Bay and the Santa Cruz Mountains (scenic vistas) but could degrade localized views (scenic resources). Tree removal would, therefore, make the alignment more visible from some of the adjacent roadways, and the expected changes to views would be moderate to substantial. Due to limited available space remaining within the corridor after construction, only a very limited portion of trees can be replaced on site within the rail corridor. The remaining trees would be planted elsewhere within proximity to the rail corridor either as urban street trees or as mitigation for sensitive habitats and wildlife movement corridors. The exact location of replacement trees is uncertain at this time, and timing of growth to maturity equivalence to the trees that would be removed cannot be predicted with certainty. Therefore, despite required tree replacement, the tree removal would affect public views of the Project corridor, degrade existing local scenic resources that include mature trees, and disrupt existing scenic vistas of mature vegetation. Therefore, impacts to scenic resources and vistas due to tree removal were determined to be significant and unavoidable.

This is a conservative conclusion because aesthetics impacts are inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. Some viewers may perceive that removal of trees would enhance views of the corridor by removing obstructions, while other viewers may perceive that removal of trees would degrade existing views. The commenter's opinion that the rail trail will improve views from the corridor is noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 189.2

The commenter opposes railbanking and states the tracks are high quality and there are specialized machines that refurbish the tracks.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 189.3

The commenter states that they enjoy riding through Capitola Village and feels it is safe.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 189.4

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes removing the tracks and railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Santhire V Menon <vatheni.menon@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 12:57 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: RAIL TRAIL EIR input

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Rob,

My husband and I live in 410 Hillcrest Drive in Aptos.

190-1 |

1. We are in favor of converting the entire tract for a trail only option. The Mickelson Trail in South Dakota, where the State was able to convert more than 100 miles of railroad tract to a trail only option, has proven to be very successful.

We vote for Alternative 1 (Trail Only)

Thank you.
santhire menon

Commenter 190

COMMENTER: Santhire V Menon

DATE: November 27, 2023

Response 190.1

The commenter supports Alternative 1, Trail Only.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Heidi <Heidy@cwo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2023 2:06 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Segments 10 and 11 EIR comments

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Heidy and Peter Kellison
302 Fanmar Way
Capitola, CA 95010
heidy@cwo.com; peter@clearadvocacy.com
530-386-2647; (916) 541-9959

November 28, 2023

Rob Tidmore, County of Santa Cruz
RTC
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Dear Mr. Tidmore

We are writing to address the EIR pertaining to the development of Coast Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11. Our comments discuss our immediate neighborhood, encompassing the entirety of Fanmar Way between Capitola and Monterey Avenues. We will reference the EIR’s “Ultimate” and “Optional” alternatives, where “Ultimate” represents the trail next to rail configuration and “Optional,” suggests trail on the rail line, which requires railbanking and associated measures.

First, we must express our current limited understanding of the intricate process, the various proposals, and the extensive 1,400 page EIR. The EIR has proven to be substantially confusing as it appears to exclude the half-mile section adjacent to Fanmar, which is apparently included in an “Ultimate” project when rail and trail are discussed. If we are correct, in all discussions under the “Ultimate” alternative, Fanmar is absent from the impact maps. Consequently, we are left uncertain as to whether a second EIR would be required should trestle construction be eventually funded, rendering the Segment 11 right-of-way behind Fanmar pertinent. If a second EIR would not be required, how do we evaluate and respond to the current EIR? We would like to know our obligations for responding to the legal process and 60-day comment period.

191-1

191-2 | Secondly, we are confused by the inclusion of the Optional alternative, largely because of what we understand are formidable requirements like railbanking for trail on rail, which may prove unfeasible. Nevertheless, we appreciate the inclusion of Fanmar-related maps under this scenario.

191-3 | Acknowledging the enormity of this project and the realization that our neighborhood constitutes a tiny fraction of the overall, Fanmar faces significant challenges given our modest property sizes, the elevation of the RTC with respect to our homes, and close proximity to the project. For example, passersby can currently peer directly, at eye level, into our bedroom. This would not be sustainable with a steady stream of people. Consequently, we are reaching out to emphasize our community’s fundamental needs under any scenario.

- 1. **Privacy:** Our residents have a reasonable expectation of privacy, a principle of law the EIR does not appear to address.
- 2. **Public Safety:** EIR language states *“The project would not result in the need for additional police protection or law enforcement facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios or response times.”* We would like to know the basis for this statement, particularly considering the Fanmar right-of-way is challenging to access, potentially increasing fire risk, and already attracts occasional nefarious uses due to its remote geography. It is difficult to envision how an influx of people into the area would not lead to public safety concerns that may require additional local resources. Capitola must proactively plan for any future budgetary impacts and residents must take appropriate measures to plan for personal mitigation.
- 3. **Noise:** Given the close proximity of our homes, the current way noise propagates in our area, and the potential for more abrupt, varied, and round-the-clock disturbances (particularly during weekends when bars close), it is hard to envision adapting to the unpredictability of noise a trail may generate without mitigation. We request a masonry wall to address noise, privacy, and safety issues.

191-4 | While we understand our input is unlikely to alter the course of the RTC corridor’s development, we genuinely hope for an opportunity to engage in an on-site meeting with our residents. Such a meeting would facilitate a deeper understanding of the potential impacts (for all stakeholders) and allow for more comprehensive discussions about mitigation strategies. Over the last several years, following this issue has been frustrating due to the corridor’s complexities. Everyone involved is doing their utmost, but our small segment and unique circumstances have not received the intensity of consideration we believe is merited.

191-5 | Thank you for considering our lengthy comments.

191-6 | Best Regards,
Heidy and Peter Kellison
302 Fanmar

Commenter 191

COMMENTER: Heidi and Peter Kellison

DATE: November 28, 2023

Response 191.1

The commenter finds the EIR confusing and states it appears to exclude the half-mile section adjacent to Fanmar Way in Capitola, and they wonder if a second EIR would be required if trestle construction is funded. They also ask how to evaluate the current EIR if a second EIR is required, and would like to know their obligations for responding in the 60-day comment period.

Thank you for the comments.

Fanmar Way is located along the south side of the rail corridor, between Capitola Avenue and Monterey Avenue, as it extends through Capitola Village. As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and shown with corresponding design plans in Appendix A, the Ultimate Trail Configuration would direct trail users to streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village, rather than use the rail corridor; and the Optional Interim Trail would use the rail corridor by removing the tracks and building an interim trail in their place.

Figure 2-3 in the Draft EIR shows the location of Fanmar Way relative to both the route of the Ultimate Trail Configuration through Capitola Village on streets and sidewalks, and the route of the Optional Interim Trail along the existing rail corridor.

The potential environmental impacts of both the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail on the surrounding area (including Fanmar Way) are analyzed at an equal level of detail throughout the Draft EIR, which was made available for public review between October 16-December 15, 2023. Therefore, a second EIR (e.g., subsequent or supplemental EIR) is not required unless there are Project changes that result in new or substantially more severe impacts than those identified in the original EIR.

CEQA requires a minimum 45-day review period for EIRs, and the County provided a longer 60-day review period. There is no legal obligation for the commenter to review the EIR.

Response 191.2

The commenter states they are confused by the inclusion of the Optional Interim Trail because they understand there are formidable requirements like railbanking.

The Optional Interim Trail was analyzed in the Draft EIR, in addition to the Ultimate Trail Configuration, to provide information about the environmental impacts of this scenario, as requested by members of the public and to provide decision-makers with information about both scenarios so they can make an informed decision. The railbanking process is described in Section 1.2.4 of the Draft EIR. Also refer to **Master Response E**.

Response 191.3

The commenter is concerned about privacy, notes that passersby (on the rail corridor) can peer into their bedroom (on Fanmar Way), and the EIR does not appear to address this.

It should be clarified that the rail corridor where it passes along Fanmar Way in Capitola Village would not be used for the Ultimate Trail Configuration, which diverts trail users outside the rail corridor to streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village (as shown on DEIR Figure 2-3). However, the trail would be located along this portion of the rail corridor if one of the following alignments are selected: Optional Interim Trail, Design Option A of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, and Alternative 1 Trail Only. The EIR analysis is focused on the physical environmental topics outlined in Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*, and is not required to address the subjective privacy concerns of adjacent property owners. Such concerns can be addressed through voluntary actions by a concerned property owner, such as installing fences, landscaping screens, interior curtains and blinds, or other property modifications. Also refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 191.4

The commenter would like to know the basis for determining “the project would not result in the need for additional police protection or law enforcement facilities to maintain acceptable service ratios or response times.” The commenter states that the Fanmar Way ROW is challenging to access, increases fire risk, and attracts nefarious uses.

Refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on impacts to law enforcement. As discussed therein, the Project has the potential to increase demand for law enforcement services. However, the increased demand would not require construction or expansion of additional law enforcement facilities because there are sufficient existing services available to accommodate any increase in demand. Existing issues related to access, fire risk, and nefarious uses within the Fanmar Way ROW in Capitola is not within the purview of the Coastal Rail Trail Project to address. Refer to **Master Response G** for a discussion on security and access for law enforcement related to the Coastal Rail Trail. As discussed therein, the trail would be patrolled by the County Sheriff and CPD, which would discourage illegal encampments, trespassing, and nefarious activities. If illegal encampments were established along the Project corridor, the County Sheriff or CPD would have the duty to both cite and relocate people who were illegally camping. Further, the Project would increase access for police patrol by clearing the areas around the existing rail and adding access points, enhancing overall safety. As discussed in Section 3.15.13, *Wildfire*, of the Draft EIR, there is ongoing vegetation trimming and removal along the RTC-owned rail corridor, which would continue. Once the trail is constructed, there would be additional routine maintenance of vegetated portions of the trail, including weed removal, tree/shrub trimming, and fallen tree removal that would prevent overgrowth that could potentially fuel fires.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 191.5

The commenter requests a masonry wall to address noise, privacy and safety issues (along Fanmar Way).

Refer to **Master Response G**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 191.6

The commenter requests a meeting to discuss potential impacts and mitigation strategies.

The Project team can hold an on-site meeting with neighbors during the final design process after a decision on which alignment to pursue is made by the Board of Supervisors.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [MargaretJade W](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail volunteers/lighting
Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2023 12:48:52 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob,

I hope you and your family are all doing well. I ran by a sign with your email in Capitola & I'm so excited about the Rail trail work/progress. I was curious if there was a way to involve the trail designing volunteers/schools?/just regular volunteers etc. to expedite trail production? I certainly would be happy to volunteer on occasion to help this project. If such a group already exists, I would love to learn about it. Also, it may already be included, but I am hoping for some kind of lighting, particularly in the remote sections of the trail, (Live Oak, to Aptos etc.) as I imagine biking might be a little scary in the dark. Thanks so much & have a great day.

Margaret

MJ Wilson (831) 359-2817

192-1
192-2

Commenter 192

COMMENTER: Margaret Jade Wilson

DATE: November 29, 2023

Response 192.1

The commenter is excited about the Project and asks if there is a way to volunteer to expedite trail production.

Thank you for the comments.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to utilize volunteers in the construction of the trail, but the County may explore options for using volunteers to help maintain the trail after construction.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 192.2

The commenter is hoping for some kind of lighting, particularly in the remote sections of the trail.

As described in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Features/Lighting*, the project includes lighting as determined necessary for trail user safety, either from existing light sources along adjacent roadways and crossings, or by installing new 20-foot-tall light fixtures every 100 feet. On bridges and viaducts and in environmentally sensitive areas, there would be low-level lighting, similar to that on the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge. Any new lighting would be “dark sky compliant” in that it would minimize light pollution and offensive glare by directing light downward so it would reduce spillage.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Andrew Hall](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail Design
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 5:19:56 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Mr. Todmore,

I'm writing a public comment on the EIR for Segments 10 & 11 - 17th Avenue to State Park Drive (4.7 mi). I support of the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit. I oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal. Please continue to move forward this important improvement to our county and make our area cleaner and safer for traveling residents.

Best,
Andrew Hall
115 lighthouse Ave
Santa Cruz, ca

Beware of typos, composed with whimsical thumbs!

193-1

Commenter 193

COMMENTER: Andrew Hall

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 193.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: bcaletti@pacbell.net
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support for the Ultimate Trail Design
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 11:06:46 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear County Rail Trail Planner Rob Tidmore,

I would like to ask that you support the **Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and that you **oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. As you probably know these things are overwhelmingly supported by the local residents.

Thanks, Bob Caletti

194-1

Commenter 194

COMMENTER: Bob Caletti

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 194.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Cynthia Dzendzel](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 9:48:50 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore,

195-1

Please support the Ultimate Trail and reject any proposal to remove, rail bank or pave over the existing rails.

195-2

The rails are necessary to preserve the right of way for future public transportation, ideally a light rail or trolley such as the Coast Futura demonstrated a few years ago.

The cost to our community to restore the right of way, if it is given up for any interim solution, would just be too high. There are many examples, locally and in other communities, of how difficult and expensive it would be.

There is a reason why the City of Santa Cruz had to guarantee that the train would never be stopped from using the tracks through town, when the City paved around the tracks to create the existing streets now mainly used for cars. We are the benefactors of our predecessors' foresight, as we still have the intact right of way from Watsonville to Davenport. Any threat to the continuity of that right of way should be strongly resisted.

Pedestrians and cyclists can easily be diverted from the railroad right of way for short distances. Trains and other public transportation will serve the disabled, children, commuters and others who are not physically able to walk or cycle, especially during inclement weather. They will be a boon to local businesses and tourism, by unclogging our streets and reducing the pollution, noise and chaos caused by so many automobiles.

195-1

Now is the time to take advantage of State support for local public transportation and ensure that we will have the best options for Rail *and* Trail.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Cynthia Dzendzel
5600 Lincoln Way
Felton 95018
831-335-7519

Commenter 195

COMMENTER: Cynthia Dzendzel

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 195.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes any proposal to remove, railbank, or pave over the existing rails.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 195.2

The commenter opines that rails are necessary to preserve the right of way for future public transportation, the cost would be too high if it is given up for any interim solution, we are the benefactors of an intact right of way, and trains and other public transportation will serve those not physically able to walk or bike and will be a boon to local businesses and tourism.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Douglass Aumack](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail Design Support
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 9:46:54 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

196-1
196-2

Greetings and a quick email to share that I support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit and public use. Further I oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal as these "right of ways" were and are a private/public property agreement in the best interests of the public. Originally for commerce but today for transit be it recreational or commerce, these rails are important and should continue to serve the public. Consider the ongoing nightmare in Southern California where the Pacific Electric (yes electric red cars) was abandoned and right of ways converted. Current transportation alternatives there are near impossible to recreate and very expensive, yes a long term bad decision.

Thank you for your consideration....

Commenter 196

COMMENTER: Douglass Aumack

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 196.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit and public use, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking and track removal.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 196.2

The commenter opines the rails are important and should continue to serve the public, and laments in Southern California where Pacific Electric (rail cars) were abandoned and the right of way converted.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jacki Long](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: support the Ultimate Trail Design
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 2:43:39 PM


****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

I am writing in support of the ultimate trail design for segments 10 & 11 on the rail to trail project.

Thank you,
Jacqueline Long

Santa Cruz resident

197-1 

Commenter 197

COMMENTER: Jacqueline Long

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 197.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jennifer Young](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail/Trail Support
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 10:19:14 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello Mr. Tidmore,

I am writing to let you know that I support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and I oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you,
~Jennifer Young
Ben Lomond

198-1 |

Commenter 198

COMMENTER: Jennifer Young

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 198.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joan](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail/trail
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 9:27:17 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please continue to follow the will of Santa Cruz County voters and support keeping all rails in place and building a trail near it. Thank you, Joan Hamilton
Sent from my iPad

199-1

Commenter 199

COMMENTER: Joan

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 199.1

The commenter supports keeping all rails in place and building a trail near it to follow the will of the voters.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [John Biddick](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Trail
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 9:31:18 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

200-1

I support the Ultimate Trail design from 17th to State Park Drive and to points further south. A trail next to a rail line will be a game changer. I live in Rio del Mar near the rail line and look forward to a useable trail and a possible light rail in the future.
John Biddick

Commenter 200

COMMENTER: John Biddick

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 200.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design from 17th to State Park Drive and points further south, and looks forward to a usable trail and possible light rail in the future.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Leslie Nielsen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Fwd: Clarifying question from tonight's public input meeting
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 11:35:52 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Re-sending as I have not received a response.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Leslie Nielsen** <lpbeach21@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2023 at 8:11 PM
Subject: Clarifying question from tonight's public input meeting
To: <RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Hi Rob,

I am a capitola resident and a CVWBIA (Capitola Village and Wharf Business Improvement Area) board member.

I attended the meeting tonight and got sidetracked at 5:55pm when you were talking about the County board of sups approving (or not) the EIR in March 2024.

You shared in response to a question - "that is an important question and they may not make the most important decision that night"

Can I get a recording of the meeting tonight or can you tell me what the question was, and "most important decision" topic was specifically?

We are clearly dancing around the Design Option A issue, and it will be important for Capitola business owners, so I want to represent what I heard correctly.

Thank you,
Leslie

201-1

Commenter 201

COMMENTER: Leslie Nielsen

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 201.1

The comments are duplicative of the commenter's submittal on 11/16/23.

Refer to **Responses 160.1 and 160.2.**

From: [Matthieu Hugues-Nuger](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Public comments on EIR
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 12:51:48 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

202-1 |

I support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and I oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal. California must invest in clean transportation, using corridors not susceptible to traffic.

Best regards,

Matthieu Hugues-Nuger
112 Cedar Street
Santa Cruz CA 95060

Commenter 202

COMMENTER: Matthieu Hugues-Nuger

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 202.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Molly Ording](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Our support!
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 7:03:04 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

203-1



As long time Capitola residents, we FULLY support the continuation of Rail us Trail through Capitola (we live just above Monterey Avenue!) via the “ ultimate trail” & village and on to & thru New Brighton, Seacliff & Aptos South!!

OUR community desperately needs it, we demand it and our planet requires it! Please...do the right thing first us ALL!

Mickey & Molly Ording
218 MONTEREY Avenue
Capitola, Ca. 95010
831/334-5559

Sent from my iPhone

Commenter 203

COMMENTER: Mickey and Molly Ording

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 203.1

The commenter supports Rail Trail through Capitola via the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.


The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Rich Mick](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: leave the rails
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 7:28:33 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

204-1 

Please support leaving the existing rails in place.

Thank you,
Richard Mick
119 Wilkes Circle
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Commenter 204

COMMENTER: Richard Mick

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 204.1

The commenter supports leaving the existing rails in place.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Ron Nance](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Keep the rails where they are and build the trail
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2023 9:36:32 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi Rob

I am deeply **oppose to rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal. Please keep our infrastructure for the train/lightrail in tact as is. We voted for light rail and expect our representatives to follow through for us. We cannot continue driving for 30 to 45 minutes from Freedom Blvd. to down town Santa Cruz all year long. The light rail will give thousands of us retirees living to the south of the city to once again enjoy the city too.**

Best regards,



Ron Nance
President

Mobile: [408 416 1040](tel:4084161040)



Fusion Brand Communications, LLC
[PO Box 353](#)
[Aptos, CA 95001-0353](#)
Visit: fusionbrand.agency

Commenter 205

COMMENTER: Ron Nance

DATE: November 30, 2023

Response 205.1

The commenter opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal and supports keeping the infrastructure for a train intact.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 205.2

The commenter states we voted for light rail and expect our representatives to follow through.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: bob bartle <bobbartle@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2023 1:22 PM
To: mstarkey@santacruzca.gov; Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Cc: sierraclubsantacruz@gmail.com; CentralCoast@coastal.ca.gov; Environmental Health <EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcountyca.gov>; info@parks.ca.gov; info@coastal-watershed.org
Subject: Rail Trail Interim construction

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

206-1

Please note that as tracks are removed from areas as part of the Rail Trail Interim construction where the trail will occupy the rail line that train traffic will not be possible and that fencing that prevents residents from crossing the tracks at long established points will not be needed and should not be included in the construction until the ultimate configuration becomes constructed.

Commenter 206

COMMENTER: Bob Bartle

DATE: December 1, 2023

Response 206.1

The commenter states that, as tracks are removed as part of the Interim Trail, train traffic will not be possible and fencing will not be needed and should not be included until the Ultimate Trail Configuration is constructed.

Thank you for the comment.

If the Optional Interim Trail is approved and constructed, fencing and/or guardrails would be installed for safety in areas where drop-offs are over 30 inches and in proximity to vehicular traffic, as stated in Section 2.4.2 under *Fencing and Guardrails*. Once constructed, the Ultimate Trail Configuration could include safety fencing to separate trail users from the rail, as needed, as stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Fencing and Guardrails*.

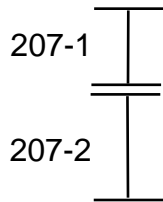
No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mark Ripley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Segment 10 and 11 Questions
Date: Friday, December 1, 2023 10:40:04 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

My name is Mark Ripley and I live next to the railroad tracks in segment 10 of the rail trail project. I am looking forward to this opening but have questions about some parts I have read about online.



1. The two widest options for the trail are shown going through my house. Will any homes be torn down to make the trail?
2. The section behind my house has trees that block the view of the graffiti along the trail, but since they are scheduled to be cut down this will make the graffiti visible. What steps are being taken to keep the trail clean and clear of graffiti and trash?

These are my main concerns and I hope to hear back from you about them.

Thank you for your time.

Mark Ripley
1255 38th Ave., Space 16
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
831-462-2302
marksripley@yahoo.com

Commenter 207

COMMENTER: Mark Ripley

DATE: December 1, 2023

Response 207.1

The commenter states the two widest options for the trail are shown going through their house, and they ask if any homes will be torn down to make the trail.

Thank you for the comments.

The commenter made a similar comment in 102.1. Refer to **Response 102.1** and **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Response 102.1** and **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 207.2

The commenter asks what steps are being taken to keep the trail clean and clear of graffiti and trash.

As stated in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, under *Trail Maintenance*, trail maintenance responsibility would be based on jurisdiction (the County of Santa Cruz and the City of Capitola), and general maintenance activities include graffiti removal and trash/recycling collection and disposal.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Christy Fairbairn](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the Ultimate Trail Design
Date: Saturday, December 2, 2023 11:57:53 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore and the County Rail Trail Planning Team,

I am a resident of Santa Cruz and I support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit and I oppose rail abandonment, rail banking, and track removal. The continuation of the rail trail will open up more safe pathways our active community of all ages to walk, run, and bike. Like many other residents of Santa Cruz county, biking is my main mode of transportation and it's important to have safe bike paths, which we are lacking. The Rail Trail is a big step forward and I look forward to a future where I can ride my bike on dedicated bike paths from Davenport to Watsonville.

Thank you for all your work in making this a reality,
Christy

208-1
208-2

Commenter 208

COMMENTER: Christy Fairbairn

DATE: December 2, 2023

Response 208.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 208.2

The commenter opines that continuing the rail trail will provide more safe pathways for the community, is a big step forward, and they look forward to biking on dedicated paths from Davenport to Watsonville.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [James Weller](#)
To: info@scrtc.org; [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the ULTIMATE Trail on Segments 10 and 11
Date: Saturday, December 2, 2023 3:09:40 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob Tidmore and RTC commissioners,

209-1

We, the electorate of Santa Cruz County have made it unmistakably clear that we want both rail and trail in the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line - that's the ULTIMATE Trail - Option B - No Rail Removal. The ULTIMATE Trail is the superior option in every way.

The voters have spoken.Greenway's Measure D was defeated by a vote of 73% to 27% overall and by a bigger margin in some districts. We want the rails to stay in place, and to be improved - toward eventual development of a passenger rail transit system.

There is no need or purpose for "rail banking." Any move in that direction will be overwhelmingly repudiated.

209-2

Must we be reminded again and again that the majority of funding for acquisition of the rail corridor was provided by California and Santa Cruz County voter approved Proposition 116, which specifies that funding is for "rail projects within Santa Cruz County that facilitate recreational, commuter, intercity and intercounty travel."

The California Transportation Commission supplied funds to the RTC on the condition to initiate recreational passenger rail service. The tracks cannot be removed and replaced with a trail only.

Please keep all this in mind, and do nothing to block or delay rail transportation funding opportunities.

You are the custodians of a functional railroad branch line. Do your duty to preserve and protect that public transportation asset from conversion to other purposes - now and at all times.

Sincerely,

James Weller
1970 46th Avenue
Capitola CA 95010

Commenter 209

COMMENTER: James Weller

DATE: December 2, 2023

Response 209.1

The commenter states the electorate made it clear they want both rail and trail in the branch rail line, which is the Ultimate Trail Option B No Rail Removal, and there is no need for railbanking.

Thank you for the comments.

For clarification, Design Option B of the Ultimate Trail Configuration is to locate the trail on the inland side of the tracks (instead of the coastal side) between Grove Lane and Coronado Street in Capitola, and there would be no rail removal. **Also refer to Master Response B.**

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 209.2

The commenter states that the majority of funding to acquire the rail corridor was provided by voter approved Proposition 116, which specifies the funding is for rail projects.

Refer to Master Response E. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Trician Comings](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11
Date: Saturday, December 2, 2023 9:56:36 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore, County Rail Trail Planner

I have been following this issue and watched the November 16th meeting.
I fully support the Ultimate Trail configuration.
I adamantly oppose Design Option A.

Because you are familiar with all the reasons, I won't go into them.

We are so excited to see the great progress on Trail AND Rail.
The Measure D defeat should tell you what Santa Cruzans want and don't want.

Sincerely,

Trician Comings
Long-time homeowner and bicyclist
Santa Cruz

210-1

Commenter 210

COMMENTER: Trician Comings

DATE: December 2, 2023

Response 210.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and opposes Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek). They also state the Measure D defeat should tell you what Santa Cruzans want and do not want.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Mackenzie Cameron](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Sunday, December 3, 2023 2:04:24 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi there, adding my voice in support of our rail trail and *against* railbanking.

I would love to see the tracks used again for transit and enjoy the walking and biking trails we've built alongside.

Do not take the tracks away - evidence teaches we'll never get them back.

Thank you!

Mackenzie Cameron
Downton santa cruz resident

211-1

Commenter 211

COMMENTER: Mackenzie Cameron

DATE: December 3, 2023

Response 211.1

The commenter supports rail trail, opposes railbanking, and would like to see the tracks used again for transit.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jeff Whalen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail and trail
Date: Monday, December 4, 2023 7:49:50 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

212-1

Dear Rob, as a homeowner in Rio Del Mar for over 60 years (built by my dad in 1960) my family fully supports the building of the trail AND the light RAIL, from Santa Cruz to Aptos and beyond.

This transportation corridor is key and vital to our community as witnessed by the horrendous increase in traffic on highway 1 and contiguous surface streets that has increased exponentially the last 15 years, not to mention the last 60.

Future congestion would be mitigated by mass transit from aptos in the south (east) to the north (west) in Santa Cruz and benefit us all (and the next generation) by providing an efficient and less polluting alternative to driving on highway 1.

We oppose rail banking or removal of any tracks and support a trail and rail system on segments 10,11, & 12.

Thank you, jeff Whalen
220 lake court, aptos, ca

Sent from my iPad

Commenter 212

COMMENTER: Jeff Whalen

DATE: December 4, 2023

Response 212.1

The commenter supports a rail and trail system on Segments 10–12, opposes railbanking or removal of the tracks, and notes this transportation corridor is vital and future congestion would be mitigated by mass transit.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Meghan Arnold](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on Rail & Trail 17th Ave to State Park Drive.
Date: Monday, December 4, 2023 2:55:02 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hi Rob,

I am writing to give comment on the planning for the Rail & Trail from 17th Ave to State Park Drive.

213-1
213-2
213-3

- SUPPORT building the “ultimate” trail and leaving the tracks intact as the fastest, least expensive, and lowest-impact way to build the trail.
- SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.
- SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.
- OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking. Attempting to railbank in order to remove the tracks from the Capitola trestle or from anywhere else on the line would put the entire project at risk of legal battles and years of delay. Railbanking with track removal would hurt Roaring Camp, put both rail and trail project funding at risk, be opposed by Caltrans, and is likely to be eventually rejected by the Federal Surface Transportation Board.
- OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor. These track-removal trail designs would require railbanking, causing delay or stoppage of trail building. They would require the destruction of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and make the future of establishing rail transit on the line immensely more difficult and expensive. These designs would eventually need to be torn out and relocated if we were ever to restore the tracks.

Planning robust transit infrastructure is essential for the future of our county to combat climate change and ensure a better quality of life for future generations.

Regards,
Meghan Arnold
200 California St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060

meghan arnold | a creative and professional creative professional
mcarnold@gmail.com | www.meghanarnold.com | [linkedin](#) | [instagram](#) | [calendly](#)
pronouns: she/hers

Commenter 213

COMMENTER: Meghan Arnold

DATE: December 4, 2023

Response 213.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 213.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and building an Interim Trail or Trail Only anywhere on the rail corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 213.3

The commenter states that planning robust transit infrastructure is essential for the future of our County to combat climate change and ensure better quality of life.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Hil](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support the Ultimate Trail
Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 10:18:06 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Rob Tidmore,
Our county needs the Rail Trail and I support the Ultimate Design.
It's frustrating to keep coming back and stating this fact after our county voters so soundly defeated Greenway and their delusional approach to this important resource, our rail corridor. Won't we lose millions of funding if we rail bank?
Good work on what's been built so far, and I am really looking forward to enjoying the new sections that are finished and starting construction in 2024.
Thanks,
Hil Hamm

214-1

Commenter 214

COMMENTER: Hil Hamm

DATE: December 5, 2023

Response 214.1

The commenter supports Rail Trail and the Ultimate Trail Design, states it's frustrating restating this after county voters defeated Greenway, and asks won't we lose millions of funding if we railbank.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response D** regarding clarification on Measure D and **Master Response E** regarding information on railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Lauren Dubay](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Advocacy for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11
Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 8:17:45 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore,

215-1

I am writing to express my strong endorsement for the development of Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 in Santa Cruz County, emphasizing the considerable environmental benefits associated with this vital project.

215-2

As a concerned resident who lives along the Coastal Rail Trail Segment 10 (at 30th Ave.) and an advocate for sustainable development, I am particularly encouraged by the following aspects of the Coastal Rail Trail initiative:

Biodiversity Conservation: In some cases, the removal of trees may be part of a larger conservation strategy. For example, creating wildlife corridors or protected areas alongside transportation routes can help maintain or enhance biodiversity by providing habitats for various species. Proper planning and execution can minimize disturbances to local flora and fauna while providing opportunities for residents and visitors to appreciate and connect with our diverse ecosystem which I trust the board will take into consideration.

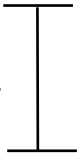
Environmental Stewardship: Coastal Rail Trail presents an opportunity to promote environmentally friendly transportation alternatives. By encouraging non-motorized modes of transit, we can significantly reduce carbon emissions, contributing to the county's efforts to combat climate change and preserve our unique ecosystem by reducing the reliance on traditional fossil fuel-based transportation.

Economic Advantages Beyond County Limits: The availability of a reliable trail network can influence urban planning decisions and alleviate housing pressures within city limits. By facilitating easier access to housing beyond the county by contributing to the development of sustainable and affordable housing options. Commuters from neighboring areas may find the Coastal Rail Trail an attractive alternative, fostering economic growth and reducing urban congestion in the process.

215-3

While expressing my support for the Coastal Rail Trail, I want to address concerns about potential noise and vibrations during the construction phase. It is important to note that homeowners residing on or near a railway were likely aware of the possibility of construction-related disruptions when they purchased their homes. Responsible urban planning involves weighing the long-term benefits for the community against temporary inconveniences.

215-4



I am not in favor of the Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) because I fear that opponents of the Coastal Rail Trail may exploit this as an opportunity to permanently abandon the rail tracks. It is crucial to ensure that any interim measures do not compromise the potential for future rail infrastructure.

215-1



I understand the importance of thorough deliberation in decision-making, and I firmly believe that supporting Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 with the Ultimate Trail Configuration is the best path forward for our community.

Thank you for your dedicated service to Santa Cruz County. I trust that your decision will reflect the positive impact this project can have on our community's well-being.

Lauren Dubay
510-396-4612
LaurenDubay@gmail.com

Commenter 215

COMMENTER: Lauren Dubay

DATE: December 5, 2023

Response 215.1

The commenter supports development of the Coastal Rail Trail with the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 215.2

The commenter opines regarding biodiversity conservation (sometimes removing trees may be part of a larger conservation strategy), environmental stewardship (non-motorized transit can reduce carbon emissions), and economic advantages beyond County limits.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 215.3

The commenter states concerns about potential noise and vibration during construction, and notes weighing long-term benefits against temporary inconveniences.

The Draft EIR addresses construction-related noise and vibration in Section 3.10, *Noise*. Refer to the discussion for Impacts N-1 and N-3.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 215.4

The commenter opposes the Optional Interim Trail and does not want to compromise the potential for future rail infrastructure.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Nita nita](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: rail/trail support
Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 8:59:49 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello,

I am a strong supporter of the rail and trail project. I think it is imperative to do whatever is within our reach to maintain the rail option. I am opposed to "railbanking" as I think it is not a reliable assurance that rail lines will be replaced. It is an expensive and risky alternative that misleads the public. In these increasingly frightening times of climate crisis it is more important than ever to support mass transit and the greener option of rail travel. We must assure that it is achievable and affordable because these opportunities will not reverse themselves if they are squandered now.

Please support a vision for rail transit in our county today by supporting the rail/trail development.

thank you
Nita Hertel

216-1

Commenter 216

COMMENTER: Nita Hertel

DATE: December 5, 2023

Response 216.1

The commenter supports the Project and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Suzan Howard](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment on EIR
Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 2:52:27 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

217-1

Destruction of our trees, habitats for our endangered monarchs and other species is short-sighted. This paving plan is simply unconscionable. It would destroy as many trees as those lost in the Camp Fire. My entire neighborhood in Aptos is strongly opposed to such wanton violence against the very reason we pay exorbitant property taxes and why we live here. My family goes back 5 generations here. This scheme for easy access is simply too destructive of our beautiful county.

From: [Suzan Howard](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Re: Comment on EIR
Date: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 12:18:17 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Sent from my iPad

> On Dec 5, 2023, at 2:52 PM, Suzan Howard <suzanhoward7@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Destruction of our trees, habitats for our endangered monarchs and other species is short-sighted. This paving plan is simply unconscionable. It would destroy as many trees as those lost in the Camp Fire. My entire neighborhood in Aptos is strongly opposed to such wanton violence against the very reason we pay exorbitant property taxes and why we live here. My family goes back 5 generations here. This scheme for easy access is simply too destructive of our beautiful county.

217-2

Commenter 217

COMMENTER: Suzan Howard

DATE: December 5 and December 6, 2023

Response 217.1

The commenter states that the destruction of trees and habitats is short-sighted.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 217.2

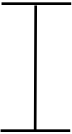
This is the same as **Comment 217-1**.

Refer to **Response 217.1**.

From: [Ringler](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail and Trail
Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023 4:23:52 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

218-1



Dear Rob Tidmore, I'm writing to express how badly our south county region needs transportation that does not rely on our roadways. Maintaining the rails allow for small trams to carry people across the county leaving the highways and roads for trucks, tourists and vehicles carrying loads. It helps people who have to work but still can't afford a car too. Also, the tracks are located such that the majority of local people can easily access them.

218-2



I have visited Monterey where the tracks have been removed. It is great for tourists and people who can ride bikes and walk. Not every one fits into that category and in the case of Santa Cruz County, many south county residents work in north county.

218-3



The people have already voted and support the rail and trail. Removing the tracks will just add to the traffic problems and add more congestion. As more tourists get back on the road and drive hwy. 1, it will only get worse, if you can imagine, than it is now. Thanks for listening,

Sarah Ringler
814 Cynthia Dr.
Watsonville

Commenter 218

COMMENTER: Sarah Ringler

DATE: December 7, 2023

Response 218.1

The commenter states how badly our South County region needs transportation that does not rely on roadways, and maintaining the rails allows for small trams to carry people across county.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 218.2

The commenter states they have visited Monterey where the tracks have been removed which is not good for people who cannot ride bikes and walk.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 218.3

The commenter states that the people have already voted and support the rail and trail, and removing tracks will add to traffic problems and congestion.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Don Vollrath](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I Vote no to rail trail due to environmental concerns
Date: Friday, December 8, 2023 10:51:48 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

My name is Don Vollrath and I am a home owner and resident of Santa Cruz County. It is my understanding this is my opportunity to vote for no rail trail as I believe it will negatively impact my residency and the environment.

219-1

Commenter 219

COMMENTER: Don Vollrath

DATE: December 8, 2023

Response 219.1

The commenter opposes the rail trail because it will negatively impact their residency and the environment.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Erin Wood](#)
To: info@sccrtc.org
Cc: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: keep the tracks, we want more public transportation :)
Date: Friday, December 8, 2023 4:04:08 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

220-1

I live by the tracks on the Westside and wanted to email to urge you to keep the tracks and proceed with implementing a cross-county lightweight electric tram. I would use a train a lot, I cannot bike as many places as I would like due to chronic health issues. Thanks for taking my comment into consideration!

~Erin
Redwood Street Resident, UCSC Graduate, and Licensed Acupuncturist

Erin Wood (she/her) L.Ac., M.S.
Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine
510.717.WOOD
www.erinwoodacupuncture.com

I currently live in Santa Cruz County, California, the traditional homelands of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

Herbal Wellness Check-Ins Virtually
Monday & Wednesday Afternoons, Fridays All Day in
Boulder Creek, in the heart of the Santa Cruz Mountains

Commenter 220

COMMENTER: Erin Wood

DATE: December 8, 2023

Response 220.1

The commenter supports keeping the tracks and a cross-county lightweight electric tram/train.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jan McGirk](#)
To: [RailTrail](#); info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Keep the rails!
Date: Friday, December 8, 2023 3:31:25 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Ron and committee

221-1

Please proceed with the cross county light electric tram project. I understand that funding already is in place and that it would be feasible to run this on existing Branch rail tracks between Watsonville & Santa Cruz. Commuters would welcome this option and it would address our increasing traffic congestion on Highway One and parking problems. More than 70 percent of voters in our recent election voted not to rip out existing rails. Many of us are annoyed by repeated delays and obstructions by Trail Only die-hards. Local government needs to step up for us tax paying citizens and take action.

Sincerely,
Jan McGirk
Portola Dr, Santa Cruz 95062

Commenter 221

COMMENTER: Jan McGirk

DATE: December 8, 2023

Response 221.1

The commenter supports keeping the tracks and a cross-county lightweight electric tram/train.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, of the Draft EIR and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Contact Request Form <admin@sccrtc.org>
Sent: Friday, December 8, 2023 12:59 PM
To: Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>
Subject: New submission from Contact Form

This Contact Request Form has been submitted by a member of the public to <http://sccrtc.org/contact-us/>.

Name

Jean Mahoney

Email

jmahoney2028@gmail.com

Subject

Place trail correctly corridor

Your Message

The trail plans on Corridors 10 and 11 as they stand now encroach on being too close to my fence and homeowners property lines. Where the trail plans are now "compromised" the solution is definately to build the trail down the center of the corridor. This solution does not influence any future rail plan or design. There are many segments along that part of the corridor that have no inches to spare on either side of the existing and antiquated tracks .Please, RTC, keep our residents and their homes secure by altering the plans for Segments 10 and 11 to build the proposed trail down the center so that it would benefit all.

I live on Buckingham Lane by 30th Avenue and the place where the plans are now is way too close to my fence and you will disturb many plants roots and perhaps put and end to the trees and bushes growing in my yard. Build that part of the trail in the center of the corridor

Jean Mahoney
3035 Buckingham Lane
Santa Cruz 831 331 7432

222-1

Empty form area with alternating light blue and white horizontal bands.

Commenter 222

COMMENTER: Jean Mahoney

DATE: December 8, 2023

Response 222.1

The commenter (who lives on Buckingham Lane near 30th Avenue) is concerned the trail plans (Ultimate Trail Configuration) being too close to their fence and property line and supports building the trail down the center of the corridor (Optional Interim Trail or Trail Only).

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: jillcorsiglia@yahoo.com
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: I vote no rail trail
Date: Friday, December 8, 2023 10:44:03 AM

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223-1

As a resident and homeowner in Santa Cruz county I vote no on rail trail due to the environmental impact that will affect residents and the environment please accept this as my submission in this regard.

Sincerely Jill Corsiglia
Homeowner, Santa Cruz county
831 588 5558 c

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Commenter 223

COMMENTER: Jill Corsiglia

DATE: December 8, 2023

Response 223.1

The commenter opposes the rail trail due to the environmental impact that affects residents.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Barry Scott](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Robert Tidmore](#)
Subject: Comments RE: DRAFT EIR, Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11
Date: Sunday, December 10, 2023 11:34:59 AM
Attachments: [Comments- DEIR Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10-11 B. Scott.docx](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob, other project managers,

Please see my attached letter and add it to the collection of public comments on the Draft EIR.

Thank you,

Barry

To:
Rob Tidmore
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Sunday, December 10, 2023

RE: Comments on Draft EIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11

Dear Rob and others,

224-1 | The value of a mixed-use public transit and active transit facility in one combined project cannot be overstated, but the comparison between the impacts of each requires attention to details, especially the long-term impacts of removing useful infrastructure capability for short and long-range transit, freight, and resiliency provided by a rail line.

224-2 | Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies:
This section should mention the federal Surface Transportation Board which holds authority over the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, and which can prevent railbanking required for the Interim Trail alternative.

224-3 | Chapter 1, Introduction, Project Description:

224-3
cont. | Clearly describe “railbanking” including scenarios that may trigger future trail relocation to accommodate rail/transit use and the various steps required and include an explanation of the legal requirements from the Surface Transportation Board.

224-4 | Under “Land Use Transportation”:
The corridor should be used to its full sustainable Land Use transportation potential. Accordingly, the evaluation of railbanking or similar alternatives should document potential impacts on the long-term development of complete multi-modal transit options.

224-5 | The DEIR will need to evaluate in detail how the “Optional Interim Trail” alternative will affect the feasibility of reintroducing rail along this corridor at a future date so that reviewers can better understand the implications of the decisions being made now.

224-6 | Consistency with state and regional passenger rail plans should be explored and included as these will certainly be impacted by which alternative is selected. The Ultimate Trail permits the implementation of passenger rail transit connected with the state rail network at Pajaro, where the Transportation Agency for Monterey County is building a station that permits passengers from our rail line to board their Salinas to Gilroy passenger service project. The “Optional Interim Trail” which removes the rail line eliminates that option for the near term, putting rail operations off by decades.

224-6 | The Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line is included in the Mid-term vision of the Caltrans California State Rail Plan, “**Regional Service in Santa Cruz with connections to the statewide network at Pajaro/Watsonville**”, and this consideration should be more fully described in the DEIR and the impacts associated with passenger service more carefully explored ¹.

224-7 | Under “Alternatives”:
The DEIR should identify the preferred alternative that is most protective of coastal resources, complies with other Coastal Act policies such as minimizing VMT, and provides for a continuous, safe, and scenic trail system.
Toward a fuller understanding of the relative benefits of the Preferred Alternative, “Ultimate Trail” and the “Optional Interim Trail” alternative, the findings in the most recent RTC-Commissioned studies should be incorporated into the DEIR. These include the Unified Corridor Investment Study ², and the Transit Corridor Alternatives Study ³.

224-8 | Zero Emission Passenger Rail Service is being studied now⁴ and to be implemented we

224-8
cont. |

cannot permit the construction of a temporary “Optional Interim Trail”, only to be removed later.

Please incorporate the above considerations into the Final EIR documents so that our community and our agencies can make fully informed decisions about the best long-term use of our rail infrastructure.

Thank you,

Barry Scott

Footnotes:

1: <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/rail-mass-transportation/documents/california-state-rail-plan/20230309-casrp-public-dor-guidance.pdf#page=35>

2: <https://www.sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/UCS-Final-January2019.pdf>

3: https://sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/TCAA_RNIS-Passenger-Rail-Business-Plan-DRAFT.pdf

4: <https://sccrtc.org/rtc-receives-3-45-million-in-state-funding-for-zero-emission-passenger-rail-trail-project/>

--

Barry Scott

Office: 831.612.6574

Mobile: 209.482.5663

Commenter 224

COMMENTER: Barry Scott

DATE: December 10, 2023

Response 224.1

The commenter states that “the value of a mixed-use public transit and active transit facility in one combined project cannot be overstated, but the comparison of impacts requires attention to details, especially the long-term impacts of removing useful infrastructure.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. The analysis of the Optional Interim Trail evaluated the potential environmental impacts of removing the rail line in accordance with the topics outline in *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix G. This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.2

The commenter states that the *Lead, Responsible and Trustee Agencies* section (Section 1.3.1) should mention the federal STB which holds authority over the Santa Cruz Branch Rai Line and prevent railbanking required for the Interim Trail alternatives.

DEIR Table 2-4, Anticipated Approvals, Permits, and Agreements Required for Proposed Project, includes the STB as an additional approval requirement for the Optional Interim Trail. Section 1.3.1, *Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies*, will be revised to clarify this as well with the following sentence: “Additional requirements for Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) include federal Surface Transportation Board approval for abandonment of freight surface.” Also refer to **Master Response E** for clarification on railbanking.

The following sentence has been added to the end of Section 1.3.1, following the list of agencies: “Additional requirements for Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) include federal Surface Transportation Board approval for abandonment of freight surface.”

Response 224.3

The commenter states that Ch 1, Introduction should clearly describe railbanking including scenarios that may trigger future trail relocation to accommodate rail/transit use and the various steps required and include an explanation of the legal requirements from the Surface Transportation Board.

Section 1.2.4, *Subsequent Actions and Considerations*, includes a description of railbanking and the required approval of the Surface Transportation Board. Also refer to **Master Response E**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.4

The commenter states the evaluation of railbanking should document potential impacts on the long-term development of complete multi-modal transit options.

Refer to Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, of the Draft EIR and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore, CEQA does not require detailed analysis. However, “rail service” was considered in the analysis of potential cumulative environmental impacts in Chapter 4, *Other CEQA-Required Discussions*. Refer to Table 4-1, List of Cumulative Projects under Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.5

The commenter states the Draft EIR will need to evaluate in detail how the Optional Interim Trail will affect the feasibility of reintroducing rail along this corridor at a future date.

Refer to Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, of the Draft EIR and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore, CEQA does not require detailed analysis. However, “rail service” was considered in the analysis of potential cumulative environmental impacts in Chapter 4, *Other CEQA-Required Discussions*. Refer to Table 4-1, List of Cumulative Projects under Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.6

The commenter requests a discussion of consistency with state and regional passenger rail plans, and notes that the SCBRL is included in the mid-term vision of the Caltrans California State Rail Plan and that the Ultimate Trail permits implementation of passenger rail transit connected to the Transportation Agency for Monterey’s station in Pajaro.

Refer to **Master Response E**. No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.7

The commenter states the EIR should identify the preferred alternative that is most protective of coastal resources, complies with other Coastal Act policies such as minimizing VMT, and provides for a continuous safe trail system.

CEQA does not require the lead agency to identify a preferred alternative that is the most protective of coastal resources, most compliant with Coastal Act policies, or the identified “environmentally superior alternative” in the project alternatives analysis.

According to CEQA case law, when more than one project option or project alternatives are being analyzed at an equal level of detail in the DEIR, as is the case with the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail, the lead agency (County) should identify a preferred alternative. (See *Washoe Meadows Community v. Dept. Of Parks and Recreation* (2017) 17 Cal.App.5th 277, 288-

289.) As stated in Chapter 2 (page 2-1), “the Ultimate Trail Configuration is consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan alignment and is considered the preferred alignment and approach by the County”. This identification of a preferred alignment has nothing to do with tree removal counts.

As stated in Section 5.3, *Environmentally Superior Alternative, CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6, requires an environmentally superior alternative be identified that is not the “no project,” but does not instruct how a lead agency must determine which of the alternatives besides the no project alternative is environmentally superior.

The County chose two methods for identifying an environmentally superior alternative: (1) Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Project Impacts, and (2) Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics. Tree removal counts are only considered in the first method, as the significant and unavoidable impacts identified for Aesthetics, Biological Resources, and Greenhouse Gas emissions are due to tree removal. The amount of ground disturbance is the primary consideration in the second method.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 224.8

The commenter states that Zero Emission Passenger Rail Service is being studied now and to be implemented we cannot permit the construction of the Optional Interim Trail only to be removed later.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Rail Trail c/o Santa Cruz County

Comments on Rail Trail Environmental Impact Report Segments 10 and 11, from Sentinel articles dated Oct 18 and Oct 25, 2023.

Capitola city staff has "told the County of SC, that it prefers the design option placing the trail on top of the trestle". What is the reason behind you not following what the City staff has recommended? As, this project "runs through multiple jurisdictions and, as such" is "a joint project of Santa Cruz County, the City of Capitola, and the Regional Transportation Commission". What the City of Capitola staff told the County of SC, should be followed in the planning of Trail Segment 11. "Though Santa Cruz County is the lead agency for the project, Capitola is considered a "responsible agency" that has some discretionary approval or permitting power". If the city staff is the "responsible agency", why can't they be listened to?

225-1

In the Nov 2018 election, Capitola Voters voted yes to Measure L: Capitola Greenway Initiative. 52.13% to 47.87%. The Initiative read "shall the Capitola Municipal Code be amended to Direct Capitola constituent departments to take all steps necessary to preserve and maintain the Capitola segment of the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission's Rail Corridor and Trestle over Soquel Creek for bicyclists, pedestrians and other human powered transportation, and to prohibit expenditures to route bicyclists, pedestrians and other human powered transportation from the rain corridor to streets and sidewalks". This initiative has not been followed. What is the reasoning behind not following what the voters in the city of Capitola have said yes to? Let's do the trail over the trestle.

Concerns of the Trail Segment 11 (Capitola Village):

- that there are no bike lanes on all the surface streets in Capitola Village.
- on Cliff Drive there is a sidewalk only on one side of the street. Sidewalks are necessary for pedestrians, strollers, wheelchairs, both directions, going uphill as well as downhill.
- Monterey Ave only has a bike lane on the uphill side of the street.
- thus, bicyclists will have to "share the road" cars. Families with small children on small bikes will be on the city streets with cars, or on sidewalks. A safer place for them is on the trestle where there is no vehicle traffic.
- safety of the public is of concern here. The trail is meant to encourage the public to be out of doors. Road safety issues will discourage them from using the trail.

225-2

Yes, the multiuse bicycle and pedestrian trail is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. But how can this be achieved with "human powered transportation", bicyclists, pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers, families with small children on small bikes, by moving them down off the rail track bed, and dumping them all onto city streets? This is not a safe way to "encourage and provide recreational, active transportation, environmental opportunities" for the public. Keeping the trail up on the rail bed and trestle is the only way to achieve this. The Capitola Police Department has put up signs on the sidewalks in the village on Capitola Ave, stating that the sidewalk is for "Pedestrians only no bicycles or motorized vehicles". Is there a problem here already? There will be more bicycle traffic with the trail going through the village.

"Human powered transportation". This includes wheelchairs. I just cannot see anyone in a wheelchair that is "human powered", going up and down Monterey Ave from and to Capitola Village. As well as going up and down Cliff Dr and then through the parking lot on the inland side Cliff Dr, or arriving in the

225-2
cont. | parking lot on the ocean side of Cliff Dr. This does not encourage the public to be out of doors. There are too many vehicle traffic safety issues here.

225-3 | Yes, I know the project is fully funded from a grant from the CA Transportation Commission. And, that the trail crossing over the trestle is not funded by this grant. But somehow that could be funded as well. The safety of the public using the trail should be of such great importance that funds could be acquired. Somehow funds were found to add a trail to the trestle by the Boardwalk going over the San Lorenzo River. Why can't we do the same in Capitola?

With Concerns,

Diane Emigh
506 Mc Cormick CT
Capitola, CA 95010
gardenkatz@yahoo.com

Cc:
Santa Cruz Sentinel
Rod Tidmore, Santa Cruz County Parks Dept.
Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission
Santa Cruz County Planning Department
Capitola City Council
Capitola City Staff

Commenter 225

COMMENTER: Diane Emigh

DATE: December 10, 2023

Response 225.1

The commenter asks why the County does not follow City staff recommendation to locate the trail on top of the Capitola Trestle

Thank you for your comments.

Refer to **Master Response D** for more information about the Capitola Trestle and trail. Recommendations from Capitola City staff and commenters will be forwarded to decisionmakers for consideration.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 225.2

The commenter lists specific safety concerns of diverting trail users to streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village and expresses support for locating the trail on the rail bed and trestle.

The Optional Interim Trail, Design Option A of the Ultimate Trail, and Trail Only would all locate the trail on the Capitola Trestle instead of diverting trail users through the village like the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village. As discussed therein, the Ultimate Trail includes additional wayfinding signage and striping modifications along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village on Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue to address the increased potential for user conflicts resulting from the Project. The commenter's support of the trail on Capitola Trestle is noted and forwarded to decisionmakers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 225.3

The commenter recognizes Project funding does not cover the trail crossing the trestle and suggests finding additional funds in light of safety, noting funds were found to add a trail to the San Lorenzo River Trestle.

Refer to **Master Response D** for more information about building a trail on the Capitola Trestle.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Joan Speckert](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail
Date: Sunday, December 10, 2023 2:16:03 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Rob and members of the RTC,

226-1
226-2
226-1

My name is Joan Speckert and I support the ultimate trail. I have been traveling in Switzerland and Italy for the last 2 months and took trains every day. Sometimes numerous trains per day. Regional as well as international. It is a cost effective, energy efficient way to travel.

Many will argue we don't have enough people who will utilize the train. But most of the trains I took passed through villages with populations of around 5000 residents. Some trains even had playgrounds on them and children ride for free to and from school as well as events. Many of the trains had bicycle/ pedestrian paths next to them.

It's time to change the culture of transportation in Santa Cruz. Get people out of their cars or at least reduce household dependency to one car.

The residents of Santa Cruz County voted in favor of keeping the tracks and moving forward with Rail and Trail by 73 percent. Please listen to the voters and let them know they are being heard... thank you

Sent from my iPhone

Commenter 226

COMMENTER: Joan Speckert

DATE: December 10, 2023

Response 226.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and states that residents voted in favor of keeping the tracks and moving forward with rail and trail.

Thank you for your comments.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification regarding Measure D.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 226.2

The commenter opines about trains being a cost-effective, energy-efficient way to travel, most of the trains they took in Europe passed through villages with populations of ~5,000, and it is time to change the culture of transportation in Santa Cruz.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Anna Taylor and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 19. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Anna Taylor

227-1

Commenter 227

COMMENTER: Anna Layher

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 227.1

The commenter (who lives in Villa Santa Cruz Mobile Home Park and abuts the rail corridor) supports the Optional Interim Trail Part 1, including reducing the width from 16 feet to 12–14 feet to save trees and reduce impacts.

Thank you for the comment.

The commenter is concerned about the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, specifically the loss of 803 trees, associated wildlife habitat, realigning the railroad bed closer to their property and the associated noise, visual, air quality impacts and expense of long-term maintenance.

Refer to **Master Response H**. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is CAMERON CORRY and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 25. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Cameron K Corry

228-1

Commenter 228

COMMENTER: Cameron Corry

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 228.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

December 11, 2023

Dear Regional Transportation Commission,

I am a 72 year old retired senior citizen on a fixed income and owner and resident of a mobile home that has been identified within Castle Mobile Estates as a unit encroaching on railway property. I do not have the financial means to lose my home and may end up with the growing list of homeless within the County of Santa Cruz if that were to happen.

As a response to the severe housing problem in the state, in October 2023 California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bipartisan package, 56 bills, into law to support the development of affordable housing including streamlining the approval process. Moving forward with the RTC's plan to resurrect a railroad displacing residents is not in favor with public opinion under the homeless crisis and state government mandates affecting the County of Santa Cruz.

Personally the psychological and financial affects are already taking a devastating toll on me as I read that the County of Santa Cruz, whose gross incompetence of their zoning/building/compliance departments created this problem, is offering no options of mitigation to the low income mobile homeowners, largely senior citizens, low income, and Hispanic.

I question the actual environmental impact of resurrecting such a short rail line. Who is going to use this line? How many cars is it going to really get off the road vs how much more additional exhaust a train produces along residential areas. The trail alternatives will successfully offer alternate transportation for commuting, including electric bikes, along the same length of passageway, without any air pollution produced.

The option of moving mobile homes to an alternate site is simply non existent.

I urge the RTC and the County of Santa Cruz to do the right thing for the people of the county and choose an alternative to displacing low income, senior citizen, and Hispanic residents in our communities.

Sincerely,

Christine Miguel
1099 38th Ave, Space 77
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Commenter 229

COMMENTER: Christine Miguel

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 229.1

The commenter (who lives in Castle Mobile Estates in a unit encroaching on the railway property) is concerned about being displaced, and states displacing residents is not in favor with public opinion under the homeless crisis and state government mandates.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 229.2

The commenter asks who is going to use such a short rail line, how many cars will it get off the road, and how much additional exhaust a train produces.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. However, as described in the Draft EIR Section 1.2.4, the RTC has conducted several studies since the MBSST Network Master Plan and Master Plan EIR were completed in 2013, including: Rail Transit Feasibility Study (2015), Unified Corridor Investment Study (2019), Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis (2021), and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (2022). Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding future rail operations.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Deborah Delaney and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 16. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,

Deborah Delaney

230-1

Commenter 230

COMMENTER: Deborah Delaney

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 230.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 227.1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is DENIS DELAMAY and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 16. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,

231-1

Commenter 231

COMMENTER: Denis Delaney

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 231.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 227.1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: [Diane Koenig](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR
Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 3:51:41 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Santa Cruz County Rail Trail and Parks Department,

I am writing to express my support of the Optional Interim Trail, Alternate 1, and my opposition to Alternate 2.

The EIR states that 1,000 trees will be cut down for the Alternate 2, rail and trail! That would be a tragedy for Santa Cruz to lose so many native trees and habitat for the birds and monarchs. Whereas Alternate 1, would be a useful and beautiful scenic path that people could use now!

Thank you for keeping Santa Cruz Green.

Sincerely,

Diane Marvin-Koenig

2417 Shoreview Dr.
Santa Cruz, Ca 95062

232-1

Commenter 232

COMMENTER: Diane Marvin-Koenig

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 232.1

The commenter supports the Optional Interim Trail and Alternative 1 (Trail Only), and opposes Alternative 2 (Rail with Trail on Opposite Side of Tracks) because it would remove 1,000 trees.

Thank you for the comment.

For clarification, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would remove the least number of trees (288 trees), whereas the Optional Interim Trail would remove 957 trees (Part 1: 288 trees + Part 3: 669 trees). The Ultimate Trail Configuration would remove 803 trees, and Alternative 2 would remove 1,000 trees.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Ed Williams and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 23. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Ed Williams

233-1

Commenter 233

COMMENTER: Ed Williams

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 233.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 227.1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: EDWIN PITTS <airsantacruz526252@att.net>
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2023 12:19 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Rail/Trail Encroachment Issues

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

234-1



After reading the final EIR I was struck with the complete lack of consideration for possible impact on humans...we have a very extensive and inclusive collection of animal, insect, tree and vegetation groups, as well as soil, noise, and light elements highlighted, but the impact of the project on us is referred to as "less than significant" ...("we" are encroachments living along the project.
I hope to see and hear a different tone from the commission.

Commenter 234

COMMENTER: Edwin Pitts

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 234.1

The commenter states that the EIR fails to consider possible impacts on humans.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is *George Wilson* and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space *21*. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, *George Wilson*

235-1

Commenter 235

COMMENTER: George Wilson

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 235.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: [Gustavo Castets](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: my support to the "Ultimate Trail" opposing "railbanking and track demolition"
Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 11:59:45 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

To: Mr Rob Tidmore
Office: County Rail Trail Planner
About: my support to the "Ultimate Trail" opposing "railbanking and track demolition"

By this means I want to add myself to the majority of residents who oppose railbanking and track demolition.

This is what I support:

I SUPPORT building the "ultimate" trail and leaving the tracks intact.

I SUPPORT increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village.

I SUPPORT using the tracks for Rail Transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and points between.

This is what I oppose:

I OPPOSE any design that requires railbanking.

I OPPOSE building a wasteful 'interim trail' or 'trail only' anywhere on the rail corridor.

Thank you
Gustavo Castets
Watsonville resident

236-1
236-2

Commenter 236

COMMENTER: Gustavo Castets

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 236.1

The commenter supports building the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, increasing bike and pedestrian safety in Capitola Village, and using the tracks for rail transit from Watsonville to Santa Cruz.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 236.2

The commenter opposes any design that requires railbanking and an Interim Trail or Trail Only anywhere on the corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jenny Brown](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Keep rail-trail plan intact
Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 6:23:54 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,

237-1 |

Just reaching out to voice my strong support for the longstanding plan to work towards a much needed rail-trail for Santa Cruz county.

Thank you,
Jennifer Brown

Commenter 237

COMMENTER: Jennifer Brown

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 237.1

The commenter supports rail-trail for Santa Cruz County.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

Ken Sheldon

My name is _____ and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 15. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Ken Sheldon

Thank you,

238-1

Commenter 238

COMMENTER: Ken Sheldon

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 238.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is *Marien Hottel* and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 33. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, *Marien A. Hottel*

239-1

Commenter 239

COMMENTER: Marion A. Hottel

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 239.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Wendy Delaney and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 18. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,

240-1

Commenter 240

COMMENTER: Nancy Delaney

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 240.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Sarah Adams and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 24. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Sarah Adams.

241-1

Commenter 241

COMMENTER: Sarah Adams

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 241.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: Sean Abbey
To: RailTrail
Subject: Public Comment: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project Draft EIR
Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 12:55:26 PM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Thank you for taking this public comment on Segments 10 and 11 of the Coastal Rail Trail. I want to voice my support for moving directly to the Ultimate Trail option for all portions of both segments. I support this because it demonstrates commitment to a vision where the rail line is used for zero emission public transportation. While it would of course be possible to remove an interim trail, it will force a difficult political question of whether to remove a trail that may be popular locally, but is not nearly as valuable to the larger community as a light rail corridor. The added benefits that maintaining the track for a light rail corridor would include:

- 1. Preventing legal disputes that could arise during the rail banking process
- 2. Aligning the county with the 2018 California State Rail Plan.
- 3. Creating a traffic free route for public transit, which aligns with Santa Cruz County CAAP Strategies T-1 and T-4.
- 4. Create a spine of reliable public and active transit that could allow for increased housing density to be built around it. While it would be beyond the scope of this EIR to capture, the benefits of this spine would be tremendous because it would reduce the emissions and land demand of every person able to live along this corridor. This is a strategy specifically called out in County CAAP strategy T-1.
- 5. To the Capitola Trestle, directing cyclists and walkers through Capitola Village, instead of across the trestle, would be a boon to the small businesses located there. I was confused about whether a "No Build" option was being considered for this portion. It appeared to me that Option B was to build another bridge on the inland side of the trestle, but I may have been misunderstanding. I would encourage the portion of the rail trail that is interrupted by the trestle to be connected with improved walking and biking infrastructure through Capitola Village.
- 6. If the intent is to move to the ultimate Trail eventually, it will be far cheaper, faster, and less environmentally harmful to build it now. Project costs will continue to climb the longer the project takes, so every effort should be made to build the final project quickly.

Thank you again for taking my comment on Segments 10 and 11 of the Coastal Rail Trail and thank you for all the work you are doing to get this project built!

Thank you,

242-1

242-2

242-1

Commenter 242

COMMENTER: Sean Abbey

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 242.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail because it demonstrates commitment to a vision where the rail line is used for zero emission public transportation, and the commenter lists several benefits of maintaining the track for a light rail corridor.

Thank you for the comments.

As described in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, the Proposed Project does not include rail service of any type. The Ultimate Trail Configuration would retain the tracks, while the Optional Interim Trail would temporarily remove the tracks. Also Refer to **Master Response E**.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 242.2

The commenter states that directing cyclists and walkers through Capitola Village would be good for the small businesses located there, and that they are confused about whether a “No Build” option being considered for this portion and if Option B would build another bridge on the inland side of the trestle.

The Ultimate Trail Configuration as proposed would direct trail users to sidewalks and bike lanes on streets through Capitola Village, rather than over the Capitola Trestle Bridge which requires repairs to support any use. However, as described in Section 2.4.1, the Ultimate Trail Configuration includes two design options that were evaluated in the Draft EIR.

With Design Option A (Interim Trail on Capitola Trestle Bridge over Soquel Creek), the Capitola Trestle would be rehabilitated to accommodate a bicycle/pedestrian path in place of the tracks, and trail users would continue on an Interim Trail between the Cliff Drive parking area, over the Capitola Trestle, to Monterey Avenue, rather than directing trail users through the village.

With Design Option B (Inland Side of Tracks between Grove Lane and Coronado Street in Capitola), the trail would be located on the inland side of the tracks instead of the coastal side in this section. Additionally, three project alternatives were evaluated in Chapter 5, which include Alternative 1 (Trail Only), whereby the Capitola Trestle Bridge would be rehabilitated for trail users like Design Option A; Alternative 2 (Opposite Side of the Tracks), whereby trail users would be directed through Capitola Village like the Ultimate Trail Configuration; and Alternative 3 (No Project), whereby a trail would not be constructed, there would be no safety improvements through Capitola Village, nor rehabilitation of the Capitola Trestle.

No scenarios considered in the Draft EIR include constructing a second bridge on the inland side of the trestle.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is STEVE GARDNER and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 20. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Steve Gardner

243-1

Commenter 243

COMMENTER: Steve Gardner

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 243.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,
My name is SUE HAID and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 13. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you, Sue Haid

244-1

Commenter 244

COMMENTER: Sue Haid

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 244.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 11, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,
My name is Tom HAID and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 13. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration. I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,



245-1

Commenter 245

COMMENTER: Tom Haid

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 245.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: [Jensen Maass](#)
To: info@scrtc.org; [RailTrail](#)
Subject: EIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 project
Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 1:40:11 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore and RTC Commissioners,

As a resident of Santa Cruz County for over 40 years, I think it's time that we address the issues the residents of this County are facing. First and foremost, the rail/trail issue. I have voted 3 different times for our transportation infrastructure issues, Prop 16 (1990), Measure D (2016) and No on D (2022) which all 3 passed, because the residents of Santa Cruz County overwhelmingly voted for them.

As a result we still do not have a resolution to our transportation issues. Santa Cruz County has been allocated monies from the State and Federal Government to pursue the rail/trail plan and yet it is still being held up.

What is not being taken into consideration, is the impact a rail/trail would have on commuters that live in rural parts of this County. As residents we deserve to have what we voted for and not be encumbered by the few that do not want the rail/trail.

I've heard how widening CA 1 is going to alleviate traffic. That is something to be seen. The more lanes we have the more cars there will be. With the rail/trail we won't have that kind of commuter traffic congestion.

It only makes sense to proceed with the rail/trail process (not rail banking) and give the people of Santa Cruz County what they voted for. Thank You for your time.

Sincerely,

Valerie Jensen Maass
Soquel, CA 95073

246-1

Commenter 246

COMMENTER: Valerie Jensen Maass

DATE: December 11, 2023

Response 246.1

The commenter supports rail/trail (not railbanking) and states they have voted 3 times for it (Prop 16 in 1990, Measure D in 2026, and Measure D in 2022 which all passed), the County has been allocated state and federal funds for it, and it will alleviate commuter traffic congestion.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D and other initiatives.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [gloria wenger](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Trail project
Date: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 9:28:13 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Mr. Tidmore, Park Planner IV,
Department of Community Development & Infrastructure:

I live along the rail line, in the Castle mobile home park. The proposed rail trail project affects me. It also affects my neighbors, as well as residents in the mobile home park adjacent to Castle, the Blue and Gold mobile home park. There is no extra space within these mobile home parks to relocate a mobile home to. We are essentially packed in like sardines.

This proposed project affects me personally. I work full time, but have extreme pain in my body due to rheumatoid arthritis, and I have significant mobility issues. I do not have the financial or the physical ability to purchase another mobile home, or to relocate.

So, I am writing on my own behalf, and my neighbors in the Castle mobile home park, as well as the Blue and Gold mobile home park. This affects many people and their homes. Please take people and their homes, their housing, into consideration. Can you come up with some creative solution or alternative to displacing people from their homes?

Thank you.

Gloria Wenger,
Resident, Castle Mobile Home Park
1099 38th Avenue, Santa Cruz

Sent from my iPhone

247-1

Commenter 247

COMMENTER: Gloria Wenger

DATE: December 12, 2023

Response 247.1

The commenter (who lives along the rail line in the Astle Mobile Home Park) states the rail trail project affects them and other residents in mobile home parks, they do not have the means to purchase another mobile home or relocate, and requests a creative solution or alternative to displacing people from their homes.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

12 December 2023

To Whom this Concerns/ Mr. Tidmore :

As I dig deeper into the E.I.R. and gather more facts, the Ultimate Trail is beginning to resemble a chapter in the 1.6 billion dollar Central Subway debacle in San Francisco: less about (green) transportation and more about politics, savvy marketing, and an ongoing gravy train (pun intended).

248-1

So please scale it down; I support the interim trail as the lesser of two evils, and I hope the Supervisors do as well. Dilapidated tracks denoted as a “historical resource”? If ever there is a commuter train, those tracks are gone anyway.

Polar Express? Iowa Pacific? Ho, ho, ho...no more drunk Santas please.

But If this is really about a greenway trail, cover the tracks and keep it simple; work with the environment rather than deforest it, destroy habitat, and cut a brutal swath through the coastal sanctuary. The Draft EIR is riddled with the refrain “significant but necessary,” with respect to the deforestation, loss of habitat, and other likely permanent damage to the sanctuary’s ecology. Necessary?

248-2

- Figure out a way to more effectively minimize tree loss; too many trees are taken in both Interim and Ultimate.
- How about re-forestation and tree planting: can you address in specifics?
- Figure out better ways to minimize habitat damage and mitigate said damage.
- This is a path, a “greenway”—not an e bike freeway—please keep that in mind.
- Where will all the water go—especially in Segment 11?

248-3

The construction of the trail is obviously a key component of the issue, but the ongoing use and maintenance of any trail is significant and especially for many property owners adjacent to the proposed trail.

248-4

In particular, several properties on the East end of Pine Tree Lane will be impacted more negatively than others. The proposed trail(s) are less than a stone’s throw from these properties, and it is incumbent on RTC to grant full consideration to safety, security, privacy, property rights and quiet enjoyment of said properties not as an afterthought, but prior to any move forward on the project.

248-5

Some kind of permanent security fencing (photo included) or sound wall should be installed and paid for by RTC, and not left to the property owner as mentioned by one of your senior planners. This kind of fencing was installed to protect private property along the Bay Trail in San Diego. While RTC has the right to construct a trail, and the public to use such a trail, RTC has an obligation to help secure adjacent properties from the vast changes in use being proposed in the corridor, and the high volume of users of any trail decided upon by the County.

248-5
cont.

In an environment of *Martin v. Boise*, the ability to control encampments on public property and thereby the security of properties adjacent to a trail is limited. How will this be managed? How will my home be protected? To what public agency or government should I turn when I see campfires? When needles are tossed into my yard? How will users of the trail deal with this issue?

The larger question of 24/7 security and law enforcement must here be asked.

248-6

Which herbicides will be used for maintenance, how often, and will property owners be informed in advance—will the owners of the trail be liable for damage to home gardens and landscape and any health related issues that crop up from the use of such herbicides? What about my pets? What about wildlife? The draft EIR makes clear mention of said herbicides.

248-7

What about noise abatement?

What about lighting?

Garbage receptacles?

General maintenance?

248-8

24/7 access to trail? Security, again...

There are more concerns; this is not NIMBY, because it already is. I, and I am sure I speak for others with similar concerns all along the corridor that have a right to security and to something resembling the life we are accustomed to living.

Thank you for reading and listening to my concerns.

Best regards,

Richard Underwood

rvu22000@yahoo.com



San Diego Bay Trail - Security fencing for residences

Commenter 248

COMMENTER: Richard Underwood

DATE: December 12, 2023

Response 248.1

The commenter supports the Optional Interim Trail and opposes the Ultimate Trail. They also question the dilapidated tracks denoted as a historical resource.

Thank you for the comments.

For clarification, as described in Section 3.4, *Cultural Resources* (Impact CR-1), the Santa Cruz Railroad is a historic-era railroad that is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources for its association with the development of Santa Cruz County. The primary character-defining feature of the resource is its alignment, not the tracks, The alignment is unique given it predates much of the surrounding development and extends through commercial and residential neighborhoods rather than industrial zones. The alignment is also unique because it features sharp turns, which are representative of its initial development as a narrow-gauge line in the 1870s. The ballast, rails, earthen embankments, and wood railroad ties are considered secondary character-defining features because while largely replaced and not original historic fabric, they contribute to the sense of feeling and association of the property.

The commenters support for the Optional Interim Trail is noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 248.2

The commenter states the Draft EIR is riddled with the refrain “significant but necessary” with respect to tree removal, loss of habitat and other damage to the sanctuary’s ecology; and states the need to minimize tree loss, address specifics for tree planting, and figure a better way to minimize and mitigate damage.

As described in the Section 3.3.4, *Project Impact Analysis* introduction under *Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, for each potential impact, one of the following significance determinations is made and presented in bold: No Impact, Less than Significant, Less than Significant with Mitigation, and Significant and Unavoidable. In Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, impacts associated with effects on monarch habitat (Impact BIO-1), wildlife movement (Impact BIO-9), and tree removal (Impact BIO-10) were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable. Also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation. The purpose of the EIR is to disclose the environmental impacts. The Lead Agency will determine whether there are overriding considerations for impacts determined to be Significant and Unavoidable.

Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, of the DEIR addresses tree removal in Impact BIO-10 and tree replacement in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, main bullet #7 as follows:

- *All County Significant trees, Capitola Protected trees, and native trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio (“in kind” for native trees) at a location and ratio to be determined by the*

County Environmental Coordinator, City Community Development Department, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. Wherever feasible, tree replacement plantings will be situated to promote ecosystems benefits and services by replacing displaced habitat functions and values and/or enhancing remaining habitat. Where tree replacement plantings exceed a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio, tree replacement plantings may be situated to enhance the urban streetscape with the design goals of beautifying neighborhoods (especially those with a disproportionate paucity of trees), reducing the urban heat island, and improving carbon sequestration. Urban streetscape features such as public or private greenbelts, medians, parking strips, and/or other similar available spaces with sufficient space may be used for replacement tree planting. Urban streetscape species composition may include coast redwood, coast live oak, tanoak, and buckeye in upland areas and white alder, box elder, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, and western sycamore in riparian habitats.

Also refer to **Master Response A**.

Response 248.3

The commenter asks where the water will go.

As described in Section 2.6, *Project Construction*, under *Stormwater Drainage*, in general stormwater would surface flow from the new impervious surfaces into the existing drainage system (i.e., existing culvert, pipe, and/or creek), proposed drainage system, and/or natural material swale included in the trail design. Refer to this discussion for more detail, as well as the impact discussion in Section 3.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality* (Impact HYD-3).

Response 248.4

The commenter states the ongoing use and maintenance of any trail is significant for property owners adjacent to the trail.

As described in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, trail maintenance responsibility would be based on jurisdiction. Portions of the trail are within both the County and City of Capitola, and the rail corridor is owned by the RTC. General maintenance activities anticipated for the trail include tree/shrub trimming, fallen tree removal, graffiti removal, trash/recycling collection, trail inspection and repairs. Refer to the list in Section 2.5. Adjacent property owners would not be responsible for trail maintenance.

Response 248.5

The commenter states it is incumbent on RTC to consider safety, security, privacy; they ask about encampments and law enforcement; and they suggest some kind of permanent security fencing or sound wall.

Refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security concerns.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 248.6

The commenter asks which herbicides will be used for maintenance, how often and will property owners be informed.

Prior to awarding a contract for construction, the RTC and County will negotiate a maintenance agreement that will detail maintenance responsibilities and funding sources. If the County becomes responsible for maintaining the trail, no herbicides will be used. If the RTC becomes responsible for maintaining the trail, RTC will evaluate the use of herbicides to manage vegetation. No

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 248.7

The commenter asks about noise abatement, lighting, garbage receptacles, and general maintenance.

Regarding noise, refer to the impact discussion in Section 3.10, *Noise*, whereby operation noise is determined less than significant and construction noise is determined less than significant with mitigation.

Regarding lighting, refer to Section 2.4.1, *Trail Features/Lighting*, for planned lighting, and Section 3.1, *Aesthetics* (Impact AES-3), and Section 3.3, *Biological Resources* (Impact BIO-9), for a discussion of potential impacts of lighting.

Regarding garbage receptacles, refer to Section 2.4.1, *Trail Features/Trash Receptacles*, for the specific locations additional trash receptacles, including recycling receptacles and dog waste stations, are planned.

For general maintenance, refer to Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, for a description of responsibility and planned maintenance activities.

From: [Sue Kaufmann](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: info@scrtc.org
Subject: Draft EIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11
Date: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 4:16:57 PM

CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Dear Mr. Tidmore and RTC Commissioners,

Without further delay, complete the construction of Coastal Trail Segments 10 and 11.

Without further delay, complete the 32 mile Coastal Trail.

Plus immediately repair and replace the tracks and implement zero emission light passenger rail, connecting us with rest of California.

January 2022 San Lorenzo Valley Fire Chiefs urged the county not to abandon freight service on the Felton Branch Line, or the Santa Cruz Branch Line. These rail lines ensure there is a rail connection for Santa Cruz County and the rest of California, which may critical in providing an essential route to the San Lorenzo Valley and other areas during future fire emergencies related to climate change, severe drought, and catastrophic wildfires.

Sincerely,

Sue Ginsburg Kaufmann
Capitola, CA 95010

249-1

249-2

Commenter 249

COMMENTER: Sue Ginsburg Kaufmann

DATE: December 12, 2023

Response 249.1

The commenter requests completion of Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11, the 32-mile Coastal Trail, track repair and replacement, and implementation of zero emission light passenger rail.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to Draft EIR Sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.4, as well as **Master Response E**, for a discussion of the RTC's studies and plans regarding rail service.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 249.2

The commenter states that in January 2022 the San Lorenzo Valley Fire Chiefs urged the County not to abandon freight service on the Felton Branch Line or the Santa Cruz Branch Line.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Jean Brocklebank](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment #1 on Segment 10 & 11 DEIR
Date: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 11:25:40 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

- 250-1 | Has the RTC looked within mobile home parks to determine whether or not there are any opportunities for creating new spaces on which to relocate homes that currently encroach into the ROW?
- 250-2 | What is the threshold for whether the number of people or housing units is determined to be "substantial?" Where is this definition of substantial impacts to people found?
- 250-3 | If the alternatives of building the trail down the center of the corridor, whether the DEIR's Alternative 1 or the proposed project Ultimate Trail Phase One are chosen, then there will be much more time to figure out if and how the Encroachment Policy can implement either "avoidance" and/or "minimization" of harm to mobile home park residents and park owners as well.

Jean Brocklebank
First District resident

From: [Jean Brocklebank](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comment #2 on Segment 10 & 11 DEIR
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 11:15:42 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

250-4

On p. 646 (3.15.9 Population and Housing) the DEIR informs decision-makers how relocation will be accomplished in mobile home parks, "*regardless of the Project, as part of a separate process prior to trail construction in this area.*"

Comment: Since the RTC has owned the rail corridor for over 11 years, this separate process should have begun 10 years ago, so park property owners (and homeowners renting the lots on said properties) would have had years of awareness of the situation, instead of what might be called the last minute.

250-5

Section 3.15.9 continues:

"As part of this process, property owner options include but are not limited to **physically moving the mobile homes several feet** outside the RTC--owned rail corridor ROW and within the same mobile home park; if adequate space is not available to physically move an individual mobile home, **property owners could modify or replace the mobile home with a slightly smaller structure that fits within respective lot in the mobile home park or elsewhere on the owner's property, or they could move the mobile home to another nearby mobile home park that has space to accommodate it.**"

Comment: By what research or onsite observation of installation of manufactured homes in the county's parks were these suggestions derived? This is not disclosed in the DEIR.

250-6

Section 3.15.9 continues further:

"... the RTC would implement avoidance and minimization measure in accordance with their Encroachment Policy to reduce impacts to property owners and residents.

Comment: Not stated in the EIR is whether RTC Encroachment Policy 17 ("*Any encroachments onto the Branch Line shall be resolved by removal of the encroachment or conversion of the encroachment to a long-term lease, license or right of entry.*") and/or Policy 20 ("*... Depending on the nature of the encroachment, and at the sole discretion of the RTC, options may include: a. Immediate removal; b. Removal within a specified period of time; c. Possible modifications to the encroachment; and/or d. Development of a lease, license, or right of entry at Fair Market Value.*") are considered "avoidance" or "minimization" measures if either the Optional Phase One Interim Trail or Alternative 1 Trail Only are built initially instead of the Ultimate Trail.

250-2

Section 3.15.9 summarizes:

"In summary, the Project would **not result in the displacement of substantial numbers** of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant (Threshold B). No mitigation is required."

Comment: The DEIR lacks a definition of "substantial numbers of existing people or housing." What is the threshold for whether the number of people or housing units is determined to be "substantial?"

Jean Brocklebank
Live Oak area of Santa Cruz 90562

Commenter 250

COMMENTER: Jean Brocklebank

DATE: December 12 and December 15, 2023

Response 250.1

The commenter asks if the RTC looked within mobile home parks to determine if there are opportunities to relocate homes that current encroach into the ROW.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 250.2

The commenter queries the threshold defining when the impact on the number of people or housing units is deemed “substantial.” As stated under *Impacts and Mitigation Measures* in the Chapter 3, a “significant effect” is defined by *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15382, as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the Project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significant.” The County and City have not adopted numeric thresholds to determine the significance of displacement of people and housing.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 250.3

The commenter states that there would be more time to resolve the encroachment issue if Alternative 1 Trail Only or Ultimate Trail Phase One (meaning Optional Interim Trail Part 1) is chosen.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 250.4

The commenter states the relocation process for mobile homes encroaching in the rail corridor should have started years ago.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

Response 250.5

The commenter asks how the suggestions for mobile home property owners (e.g., moving mobile homes, replacing with smaller mobile home) mentioned in Section 3.15.9 were derived.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

Response 250.6

The commenter states that the EIR does not explain whether RTC Encroachment Policy 17 and/or Policy 20 are considered avoidance or minimization measures if either Optional Interim Trail Phase One or Alternative 1 Trail Only are built instead of the Ultimate Trail.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The RTC Encroachment Policy (<https://sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/LeaseUse-Policy-2020.pdf>), including Policy 17 and Policy 20, is an existing RTC requirement and therefore considered a regulatory requirement, not mitigation. These policies apply whether or not the Coastal Rail Trail is implemented.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Barbara Garza-Brickley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: [Barbara A Garza-Brickley](#)
Subject: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 9:20:45 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC Commissioners,

251-1

I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.**

With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part.

251-2

I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities.

251-3

The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts.

With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garza-Brickley
Aptos

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Commenter 251

COMMENTER: Barbara Garza-Brickley

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 251.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comments.

For clarification, the Proposed Project does not include rail service of any type.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 251.2

The commenter states they are confident the RTC can resolve the encroachment issue.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Carey Pico](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments for the DEIR of Segments 10 and 11
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:26:40 PM
Attachments: [Pico_DEIR for Segments 10 and 11 comments.pdf](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

To whom it may concern:

Below are my comments for the DEIR of Segments 10 and 11. Also, I've attached a pdf with the same comments.

Thank you for your attention to this matter
Carey Pico, Ph.D.

=====

DEIR Comments by Carey Pico, Ph.D. of Aptos:

There are two important issues related to constructing the 4.20 miles of segments 10 and 11 of the Coastal Rail Trail (aka MBSST) under the "Ultimate" (aka trail-with-rail) plan. Both issues are a result of the plan to construct the trail alongside the railroad tracks rather than a "trail-only" (aka interim trail).

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->The Ultimate trail construction of both segments 10 and 11 combined will produce **excessive carbon dioxide (CO2) which will lead to global warming**. Here are the details:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->According to the actual trail design, fitting the 4.2 miles of trail to accommodate the tracks requires excavating a space 15-20 feet into hillsides, necessitating 12,652 ft (2.4 miles) of retaining walls up to 15-foot high. The emissions from the heavy construction, cement for the 230,000 cubic feet of concrete walls and post bases, 35,723 ft (6.77 miles) of steel support posts, and tree removal will result in over 13,000 tons of CO2 being put into the atmosphere for this project alone. (Note: tree CO2 is calculated for a 30-year period using 48 lbs. of CO2 were not absorbed for a year per tree.)

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->The premise of constructing a trail to is to preserve the track area for a potential commuter train. One would expect this proposed commuter train would more than offset the trail's CO2 creation by reducing automobile usage. Although this train is projected to cut 22,000 daily driving miles (translating to less than 1,000 tons of saved CO2 annually), it's not enough. Accounting for the train's own CO2 creation (304 tons/yr.) from the generation of its electricity use, it would take 29 train-years would add 7,222 tons of CO2 (based on Tables 5.20 and 5.21 for the LRT in the TCAA study) to offset the trail's 4.2 miles' construction emissions. This is based on the state's 2035 expectation that California will have 12.5M EV cars on the road and that the ratio of EV's to combustion cars applies to Santa Cruz County (note: this reduces the CO2 reduced in Table 5.21 to 461 tons of CO2 per year, where I've made the

252-1

assumption CO2 is the only greenhouse gas in that table).

• The Ultimate trail (rail-with-trail) plan for Segments 10 and 11 must be put into context with the overall strategy for the coastal rail trail. For example, portions of Segments 7 and 18 were constructed as such and Segment 9 has a similar Ultimate trail design. Specific to the 1.5 miles of Segment 9, if constructed it too would add 7,222 tons of CO2 and add 16 train years to the total time required the proposed train must run. In total, to counter the CO2 produced by the Ultimate trail's Segments 9-11 a train must run 45 years just for these three segments amounting to 6.7 miles.

• Furthermore, constructing the remaining planned 23 miles of trail through similar terrain (on average) means it would take well over a century, perhaps two centuries, of LRT train operation to see enough greenhouse gas savings to make up for the trail's construction.

• One should expect some year between 2160 and 2260 before any proposed train could counter the trail's CO2 creation. This is based on the County's trail Environmental Impact Report estimate that 2060 is when a train could be put into service, recognizing it could be longer or shorter than estimated. Regardless, even if it were tomorrow, the century-long payback period into the 2100's would be far too long to meet the 2050 zero carbon emissions goal of the Paris Agreement.

2. WHEN A TRAIL COSTS MORE THAN A FREEWAY LANE, SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG!

• Would it shock you to learn the combined 4.2 miles comprising Segments 10 and 11 trail price is \$20 million per mile? How about \$29M per mile for Segment 10's one and one-half mile starting east from 17th Ave to 47th Ave? All this is gleaned from the trail applications to the California Transportation Commission. Now, compare this with the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit's (SMART) recently finished 21 miles of its rail-trail for \$2.7M per trail mile. Boy, aren't we smart!

• As to a freeway lane, our new Highway 1 freeway project is \$12M per lane mile for fourteen lane miles (seven miles of freeway, lanes on both sides). Has Santa Cruz completely lost sight of fiscal responsibility for our taxpayer dollars? At this rate, our full 32-mile rail-trail project, estimated in 2015 to cost \$121M (\$3.8M per trail mile), will rise to HALF A BILLION dollars!

• Supporters of the half-billion-dollar rail-trail argue the high cost is worth it to keep the train tracks in place, just in case we MIGHT GET a commuter train someday. If so, that someday will be when our county metro area reaches a population close to 1 million - the population level that every other commuter light rail in the United States serves. For our county, that's over a century away.

252-3

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Worse, our railroad tracks are 150 years old and can NEVER be used for any future commuter train because of their age and condition. So why keep them? Keeping these tracks from the 1870’s with no future purpose has caused this 4.2-mile rail-trail project to skyrocket from its original \$19M estimate in 2015 to \$85M today. It’s not alone. The West Side’s rail-trail two-mile section tripled from its original \$6M estimate to \$30M (both include overhead expenses) as is the planned Segment 9 (from \$3.9M in 2015 to\$46M today; note: \$5M and 60% overhead for the San Lorenzo Bridge was removed from the MBSST estimate because it’s been constructed already).

252-4

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->It’s been over a decade since we purchased the rail corridor, done over 30 train studies costing millions, and still have no realistic plan for an actual affordable commuter train. The latest 2021 RTC study priced the 30-year net cost of the proposed commuter train with its required bus connectors at \$1.8 BILLION in today’s dollars - up from \$616M in 2015 also in today’s dollars.

252-5

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Some have said cost doesn’t matter, that the state money is flowing and who cares, they should think again. The rail-trail fund has already run out of cash for any more trail as clearly stated by the RTC staff in its September meeting, “...staff estimates that there is insufficient Measure D capacity to fund construction and maintenance of remaining trail segments, without additional local funding.” Read that as “new taxes we will all pay” for the cost of a rail-trail that has completely spiraled out of control.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->So, this is where we are: the City of Santa Cruz has soaked up all the Measure D trail money and is getting everything that it wanted including a trail up the North Coast for its residents’ recreation while South County including Watsonville, La Selva, and Aptos gets no trail (and no train!) - just a mural on the wall of a railroad trestle. Is this the new definition of social equity in Santa Cruz?

252-2

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->And, yes, when a trail costs more than a freeway lane, something is definitely wrong.

Commenter 252

COMMENTER: Carey Pico

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 252.1

The commenter states the Ultimate Trail Configuration will produce excessive carbon dioxide based on commenter-calculated Project construction emissions and the potential for these emissions to be offset by light rail operation.

Thank you for the comments.

It is unclear how the commenter estimated the construction emissions for the Project provided in this comment. As discussed under Impact GHG-1 in Section 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*, the GHG emissions from the Ultimate Trail Configuration without the Optional Interim Trail are projected to be 7,363 MT CO₂e. If the Optional Interim Trail were to be implemented, construction of all three parts is calculated to result in 14,316 MT CO₂e. Project emissions were calculated using the CalEEMod model, based on the methodology and assumptions outlined in Section 3.6.3 and Appendix E of the Draft EIR. The commenter has not provided evidence of an inaccuracy in Project construction emissions modeling.

The commenter inaccurately indicates that the premise of constructing a trail is to preserve the track area for potential commuter train use. Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. As outlined in Section 2.3, *Project Purpose and Objectives*, the project purpose is to provide an ADA-accessible bicycle/pedestrian path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the existing rail corridor. An objective of the Project is to develop a trail that does not preclude rail service; however, rail service is not a component of the Project and maintaining the rail line does not necessitate that future rail service would be provided.

As such, the potential impact of future rail service on regional GHG emissions is not included in the Project GHG analysis, or analysis of Project alternatives, and would not be appropriate to include because it is not part of the Project. The Draft EIR does not rely on the potential for future rail service to offset temporary GHG emissions from Project construction in making determination regarding the significance of Project GHG emissions in Section 3.6 of the Draft EIR. As outlined in Section 3.6, the significance of Project emissions is determined based on whether the Project would result in a net-increase in anthropogenic emissions during Project operation compared to existing conditions, consistent with guidance from the California Air Resources Board 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. Additionally, the construction of other trail segments is considered in the cumulative analysis of the Project in Section 4.1, *Cumulative Impact Analysis*, of the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 252.2

The commenter compares the cost of Segments 10 and 11 with the cost of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit's rail trail and freeway lanes.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 252.3

The commenter states the tracks are 150 years old, cannot be used for future commuter rail, and is increasing costs for the rail trail—so why keep them.

Refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 252.4

The commenter states it has been over a decade since we purchased the rail, done over 30 train studies, and there's still no plan for affordable commuter rail.

Refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 252.5

The commenter states the rail trail fund is out of cash for more rail trail as stated by the RTC staff in its September meeting, that the City of Santa Cruz used all the Measure D trail money, and South County gets no trail, asking if this is social equity.

Refer to DEIR Section 1.2.4 for project funding information.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Cecelia Roddy <cecelia_rodde@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 6:37 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Coastal Rail Trail Segments Segments 10 and 11: Nope

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253-1



Hello Mr. Tidmore,

I do not support either configuration for these segments: it is arrogant for people to present the removal of these trees, including the protected trees, and the trail's encroachment on monarch butterfly habitat as acceptable. The increase of exposure to hazardous materials seems to be just fine with these trail proponents too.

Please count me as a County resident who is strongly opposed to these proposals.

Sincerely,

Cecelia Roddy

Commenter 253

COMMENTER: Cecelia Roddy

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 253.1

The commenter opposes either configuration for the trail because of the tree removal and encroachment on monarch habitat.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Duncan Coppedge](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Please support the Ultimate Trail Design RE segments 10 and 11
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 1:35:50 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

254-1

It's come to my attention that there's a push to deviate from the ultimate trail design plan due to some trees and other obstacles. After looking into it, I think continuing to support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, is the right call. Please avoid rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thanks,
Duncan

Commenter 254

COMMENTER: Duncan Coppedge

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 254.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design which preserves the tracks for electrical rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail service and trains.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Fern Selzer](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Yes for Ultimate trail design
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:08:51 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

RTC Commissioners

I support Ultimate trail design and I strongly oppose rail abandonment, rail banking and any track removal. It is important to think in the long term, not just about what we can afford now. We can't afford to lose the tracks!

Thanks for your work.

Fern Selzer

Aptos

255-1

Commenter 255

COMMENTER: Fern Selzer

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 255.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and any track removal.


Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: futurobuildnow@gmail.com
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: We want our train now
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 4:06:04 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

256-1 

Hello when we start building the train?
Sent from my iPhone

Commenter 256

COMMENTER: futurobuildnow@gmail.com

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 256.1

The commenter asks when we will start building the train.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail service and trains.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Gary Kehoe](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Public Comments
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:10:13 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

I'm concerned about the area of the trail by 38th Ave. and the Blue and Gold and Castle Mobile Home Parks. I live in Blue and Gold and I could see this becoming quite a big problem and affecting our future in possible negative ways. I agree with this following statement suggesting alternatives to displacing mobile homes as the option:

"The Draft EIR (p. 646) for 10 & 11 suggests how relocation be accomplished in mobile home parks: "physically moving the mobile homes several feet," ... "replace the mobile home with a slightly smaller structure" ... "or move the mobile home to another nearby mobile home park ...").

None of those ideas are realistic. A mind-numbing EIR conclusion is that since "the Project would not result in the displacement of substantial numbers of existing people or housing ... the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation is required."

Two alternatives exist. Building the Optional First Phase of the Ultimate Trail (12' – 16' wide) or Alternative 1 (12' – 16' wide Trail Only), both down

257-1

257-2

the center of the corridor, could result in no
dislocation of homes or residents."

Please consider this . Thank you so much for your
time.

Gary Kehoe

1255 38th. Ave # 47

Santa Cruz, Ca.

{in Blue and Gold Mobile Home Park}

Commenter 257

COMMENTER: Gary Kehoe

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 257.1

The commenter expresses concern about the Blue and Gold and Castle Mobile Home Parks and agrees with the alternatives to displacing mobile homes but does not think they are realistic. The commenter disagrees the impact would be less than significant.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 257.2

The commenter supports building the optional first phase of the Ultimate Trail or Alternative 1 (Trail Only) because both would be down the center of the corridor and could result in no displacement of homes or residents.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: holt.ibconsulting@gmail.com
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 4:10:53 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sent from my iPhone

258-1
258-2

Commenter 258

COMMENTER: holt.ibconsulting@gmail.com

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 258.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail design, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and opposes rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal because emissions need to be reduced, and because funding is in hand.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail service and trains.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 258.2

The commenter states they are confident the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of affected residents and hold mobile home park owners accountable.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

From: [Howie Chaim Schneider](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:58:21 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear RTC Commissioners,

I am writing to support the Ultimate Trail Design, which preserves the tracks for future electric rail transit, and opposing rail abandonment, rail banking, and track removal. We need to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part.

I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

\Thank you,

Howie Schneider
Aptos, CA

259-1

Commenter 259

COMMENTER: Howie Schneider

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 259.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

From: [John Villaume](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Subject line: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:20:02 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

260-1

I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,

John and Mary Lyn Villaume
9457 Monroe Avenue
Aptos, CA 94057

And the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers (and sisters), we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.- Thomas Merton

Commenter 260

COMMENTER: John and Mary Lyn Villaume

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 260.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

From: [Kaki Rusmore](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 8:47:07 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,

Kaki Rusmore
Aptos

261-1

Commenter 261

COMMENTER: Kaki Rusmore

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 261.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

From: [Karina Ojeda](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Cc: citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us
Subject: Raild Road Project concerns
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 11:59:57 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Magdaleno Ojeda
CASTLE MOBILE ESTATES
1099 38th Ave Space 87
Santa Cruz CA 95062

12/12/2023

To whom it may concern: The County Regional Transportation Commission

I Magdaleno Ojeda and Rocio Perez; residents of Castle Mobile Estates, 1099 38th Ave space 87. We are writing to let you know about the impact the Railroad project would have on our home. I would like to start by saying that we are a hard-working family that with a lot of sacrifice and effort we managed to buy this mobile. Exactly 2 years ago, we replaced our old mobile at Castle Mobile Estates, we still have a long way to go to finish paying off the debt of our new mobile home.

Life here in Santa Cruz is not easy, particularly the cost of living in the area. We have lived at Castle Mobile Estates for 8 years, is what we have always dreamed of and we are happy to be able to live in this area. Learning about this RailRoad situation has caused us great concern, anxiety, even insomnia knowing that the project they have, could cause a great impact on our life such as being displaced or relocated.

The Railroad project would affect our small backyard, which is where our dog plays, it also affects the relocation of our outdoor storage(shed), which reduces parking for our vehicles, and again being displaced from our home would result in a high impact. Please consider not displacing or relocating us, we are not encroachments like the project says, we are humans trying to survive and to have a place to call home.

Sincerely,

Magadaleno Ojeda and Rocio Perez

262-1

Commenter 262

COMMENTER: Magdaleno Ojeda and Rocio Perez

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 262.1

The commenters (who live in Castle Mobile Estates and abut the rail corridor) are concerned about being displaced or relocated.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 13, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is **Nancy Pawlowski** and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobil Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 17. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail, Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,



2435 Felt Street, Space
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

263-1

Commenter 263

COMMENTER: Nancy Pawlowski

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 263.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 227**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 227**.

From: [Randa](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail- get it built!
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:09:53 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Please support the Ultimate Plan to complete the rail trail as we voted for. I firmly oppose rail banking, real abandonment, and track removal and any other boondoggle to stall the plan.

Thank you,

Randa Johnson

Aptos homeowner and longtime Santa Cruz county resident.

Sent from my iPhone

264-1



Commenter 264

COMMENTER: Randa Johnson

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 264.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Plan to complete the rail trail they voted for, and opposes railbanking, rail abandonment, and track removal.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail service and trains.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision-makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [ROBERT STEPHENS](#)
To: [RailTrail; info@sccrtc.org](mailto:info@sccrtc.org)
Subject: EIR Comments on Rail Trail
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 11:29:53 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Rail Trail EIR Comments

Dear RTC Commissioners:

265-1 | Please accept my comments on the EIR for the rail trail segments 10 and 11. I want to strongly urge you to choose the alternative 1, the "Interim Trail" because it will lead to a better trail and will have less environmental damage.

265-2 | One on the biggest environmental tragedies with this whole issue is Watsonville gets no trail or money for a trail. Everything is for north county, yet Watsonville is lacking in parkland and open space according to the November 2017 Trust for Public Land Park Score for Santa Cruz County. Why is this? It can't be money, as there seems to be lots for this trail. I can't believe the Watsonville representatives on the RTC keep allowing this to happen.

265-3 | I am very concerned about the Rail Trail EIR. First, you need to decide if a train will be in the corridor at all and if so, when? Building any type of trail before this decision is made, makes no sense. This is a classic case of "putting the cart before the horse." If a train is going to happen, when will this happen? If the date is too far out, it makes sense to go with an interim trail, as we need to use this wonderful asset as soon as possible and a lot can change in the future.

265-4 | This report did not really evaluate an interim trail, as you assumed it would be removed for the ultimate trail later. You did not really study an alternative; you just studied the same trail built with different timelines. I thought the whole purpose of an EIR was to study alternatives. Also, a real "interim trail" could be built to fit as best as possible in the corridor, so the width would vary according to the topography. Your study did not look at the environment impacts of a true interim trail.

265-5 | The Interim trail would require rail banking, which is exactly what the past RTC Director, Guy Preston, recommended should happen. The report makes a big mistake about how soils contaminates would be dealt with for the interim trail. This is not really an issue as covering and capping the old rail line with a geotextile fabric and asphalt will solve this problem, as this has been done in many rails to trails conversions across the nation. This in fact, would cause less soil disturbance than the ultimate trail which must move the tracks in many places and build retraining walls in the corridor. The EIR did not look at this issue correctly.

265-6 Our current corridor has over 804 trees slated for removal. This is huge, as these trees are in an urban setting and provide habitat and shelter for many species. 584 of the trees planned for removal are classified as “protected”. These trees are not like the ones being removed from the freeway widening, as they are not small, recently planted, behind a chain-link fence and next to a freeway. Many are large, majestic trees in quite neighborhoods. The rail corridor in fact acts a wildlife corridor that runs from one end of our county to the other.

Removing any of these trees will have impacts on views, monarch butterflies, other insects, birds, and many animal species besides birds. Removing these trees will impact monarchs’ overwinter sites. Tree removal will influence wind currents which will in turn effect nesting birds and monarch butterflies. All of this is not necessary, if a true interim trail is selected.

265-7 The ultimate trail is not really a trail in Capitola and would be extremely dangerous. There currently are no sidewalks entering the city from the north, so having a trail here will create a conflict between walkers and bike riders especially those riders going downhill at high speeds. The City of Capitola has already ban skateboards from the village, so this will now ban skateboarders from using this part of the trail.

265-8 I am also concerned about the removal of so many lower income homes with the ultimate trail plan. The fact that this was treated “not significate” is shameful.

265-9 Please consider the destruction that the ultimate trail could cause, without even knowing if a train will financial or practically work on our single freight line.

Sincerely,

Robert Stephens
Aptos, CA

Commenter 265

COMMENTER: Robert Stephens

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 265.1

The commenter supports Alternative 1, the Interim Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

For clarification, the Optional Interim Trail is an optional first phase of the Proposed Project and thus includes three parts: (1) rail removal and Interim Trail construction, (2) removal of the Interim Trail and rebuilding the rail, and (3) Ultimate Trail Configuration construction. Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would permanently remove the rail and construct the trail in its place.

Response 265.2

The commenter states that Watsonville gets no trail or money for a trail, and everything is for north county.

The Proposed Project is Segments 10 and 11, which would provide a trail between 17th Avenue and State Park Drive in mid-County. Segment 18 extends through the City of Watsonville and is partially constructed. The intent of the RTC, County, and City of Watsonville is to implement the full Coastal Rail Trail, extending from Davenport in the north to Watsonville in the south, as described in Draft EIR Section 1.2, *Project Background*.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.3

The commenter states that it needs to be decided if a train will be in the corridor, and that building any type of trail before this decision makes no sense.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on rail service and trains.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.4

The commenter states that the EIR did not really evaluate an interim trail because it assumed it would be removed for an Ultimate Trail later, and did not really study an alternative, just the same trail with different timelines.

Refer to **Response 227.1** for an explanation of the Optional Interim Trail and how it was evaluated in the Draft EIR. Refer to Chapter 5, *Project Alternatives*, for an explanation of all the alternatives

considered and an evaluation of the project alternatives evaluated, including: Alternative 1 (Trail Only), Alternative 2 (Opposite Side of the Tracks), and Alternative 3 (No Project).

Response 265.5

The commenter states that the Interim Trail would require railbanking, and the report mistakenly states the Interim Trail would cause more disturbance of contaminated soils than the Ultimate Trail, which must move tracks in many places and build retaining walls.

The commenter is correct that the Interim Trail requires railbanking, as stated in the first paragraph in Section 2.4.2. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on railbanking.

The Interim Trail would cause more disturbance of potentially contaminated soils than the Ultimate Trail Configuration because deeper, more extensive excavation is required, as stated in Section 2.6.2 under *1) Implementation of the Interim Trail*, and as described in Section 3.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, under *Comparison of Proposed Project with and without Optional Interim Trail*.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.6

The commenter states that there are over 804 trees slated for removal, including large majestic trees and 584 “protected” trees. The commenter notes that these trees are in an urban setting and provide habitat for many species, and the rail corridor acts as a wildlife corridor. The commenter states that tree removal will impact views, monarch butterflies and other wildlife species, and will impact wind currents. The commenter states that these impacts can be avoided with a true interim trail.

The impacts of tree removal on views and biological resources are disclosed in the Draft EIR Sections 3.1, *Aesthetics*, and 3.3, *Biological Resources*. These sections, as well as Tables 2-2 and 2-3 in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, also disclose how many trees would be removed with implementation of the Ultimate Trail Configuration (803 trees) and the Optional Interim Trail (288 trees during part 1 + 669 trees during part 3 = 957 trees). As described in the Executive Summary and Chapter 5, *Project Alternatives*, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would require the least amount of tree removal (288 trees).

As stated in **Master Response A**: tree removal, including the numbers, types, and locations of trees that will be removed are presented in Section 3.3.4, *Project Impact Analysis*, Impact BIO-10, summarized in Table 3.3-2, Table 3.3-8, Table 3.3-11, and 3.3-12, and depicted on Figure 3.3-1, Figures 3.3-1a–h, Figure 3.3-2, Figures 3.3-2a–h, Figure 3.3-5, and Figures 3.3-5a–v. The tabular full tree inventory is presented in Appendices A.5 through A.8.

In DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, a description of monarch roost habitat, the monarch butterfly, and wildlife movement in and near the Project Area are discussed. In Section 3.3, impacts associated with tree removal (Impact BIO-10) and on the monarch butterfly (Impact BIO-1) were described and were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable. The DEIR authors concur that portions of the rail line currently serve as a de facto corridor for wildlife movement. Trail design, including tree removal, retaining walls and viaducts, and trail operation, are likely to impact wildlife movement and cannot be fully mitigated; therefore, these impacts were also determined to be Significant and Unavoidable (Impact BIO-9). Impacts on other wildlife species including birds are also identified in Section 3.3.

Measures to reduce these Significant and Unavoidable impacts are included in the DEIR; Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through Mitigation Measures BIO-8 protect habitat and wildlife during construction, while Mitigation Measure BIO-7b calls for the develop of a Mitigation and Management Plan for the project, including strategies to mitigate for tree removal, to enhance monarch habitat, and to protect wildlife movement to the extent feasible. However, these impacts cannot be reduced to less-than-significant.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.7

The commenter states that the Ultimate Trail is not really a trail in Capitola, and would be dangerous because there are no sidewalks entering the City from the north. The commenter states that the trail would create a conflict between walkers and bike riders. The commenter also states that skateboarders would be banned from using the trail because Capitola does not allow skateboards in Capitola Village.

The commenter is correct that the Ultimate Trail Configuration would divert trail users from the rail corridor to bike lanes and sidewalks on the street system through Capitola Village, rather than continuing along the rail corridor and over the Capitola Trestle which requires repairs for any use. However, the commenter incorrectly states that skateboarders would be banned from using the trail. The trail would encourage the use of non-motorized transportation, which could lead to increased use of bicycles and other non-motorized modes of travel, including skateboards.

Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village. As discussed therein, the Ultimate Trail includes additional wayfinding signage and striping modifications along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village on Stockton Avenue, Capitola Avenue, and Monterey Avenue to address the increased potential for user conflicts resulting from the Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.8

The commenter is concerned about the removal of lower income homes with Ultimate Trail and that this was treated as not significant.

CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation economic impacts or impact to low-income families (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382). However, displacement of people and residences was addressed in Section 3.19.4, *Population and Housing*, of the Draft EIR. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 265.9

The commenter states the Ultimate Trail could cause destruction without even knowing if a train will financially or practically work on the single freight line.

Refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operation.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Teri Coppedge](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:15:49 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my **support of the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,
Teri Coppedge
(Aptos homeowner)

The most valuable possession you can own is an open heart. The most powerful weapon you can be is an instrument of peace. -Carlos Santana, musician (b. 20 Jul 1947)

266-1

Commenter 266

COMMENTER: Teri Coppedge

DATE: December 13, 2023

Response 266.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

From: [Ben Gregg](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail/Rail
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 3:50:21 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Growing a Light Rail System

Draft EIR notwithstanding, we should do nothing to hinder the development of a rail system in Santa Cruz County. We all understand that, regardless of what is being said publicly, the ‘Optional Interim Trail’ is intended to stall or eliminate the possibility of using that portion of the rail line.

As Santa Cruz continues to grow and build housing without automobile parking the demand for improved public transportation will grow exponentially. Presently there isn’t sufficient demand or potential ridership to justify a large scale light rail system, There is, however, a need, a desire and a demand for limited service from at least Aptos into Santa Cruz and North to Davenport.

Most people in this area are not familiar with light rail and would take some time and encouragement to embrace it. As automobile congestion continues to worsen and more housing is built without available parking, the demand for public transportation will grow. As ridership increases we can move forward with track improvements, better stations, added turnouts, additional trolley cars and eventually service to Aptos, Watsonville and Davenport.

As with any public transportation system a Light Rail line will grow and respond to the needs of our community. The community in turn will adapt to the rail system by locating traffic generators along the rail line.

Over time the Light Rail line will become the centerpiece, the backbone, of an integrated transportation system connecting busses, bicycles, pedestrians, automobiles and even air taxi service.

So how do we get there?

We could begin rail service from the Capitola area. Two battery powered trolley's could provide a reasonable level of service along that corridor. We can build about six passenger platforms at key locations and for transfer to existing Metro service. With the construction of the passenger platforms, we could start service almost immediately. Of course some of the tracks and crossings are in need of repair but the recent Coastal demo proved that it is possible.

All of this growth will take time and money, but we will never achieve our goal if we do not start. We cannot wait 20 years, then decide we need a great transportation system, We must be proactive, we must plan for our future, let us not waste this opportunity.

We should spend our public funds wisely and conservatively, if we need any consultants we

267-1

267-1
cont.

need them to help guide us in implementing rail service. We should not spend our money on consultants that will write hundreds of pages of pros and cons of rail service. If we permit it consultants will drain our funds with endless written discussions of varying opinions. We need to focus on the issue, the people of Santa Cruz County want a rail and trail. All effort should be directed toward that goal.

267-2

We should accept the Ultimate Trail Configuration and move forward with the trail project and a limited light rail service.

Commenter 267

COMMENTER: Ben Gregg

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 267.1

The commenter supports developing a rail system in Santa Cruz County. They state the demand for improved public transportation will grow as traffic worsens, and over time a light rail line will become the backbone of an integrated transportation system connecting other modes. The commenter provides suggestions for beginning rail service from the Capitola area, states we should be proactive and spend our public funds wisely and conservatively, and states that funds spent on consultants should be to help implement rail service, rather than analyzing the pros and cons.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail service.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 267.2

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Configuration and moving forward with the Project and a limited light rail service.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail service.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Debbie Marlow](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Letter on Draft EIR
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 4:04:38 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Mr. Rob Tidmore
December 11, 2023
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Debra Marlow and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobile Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space26. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,

Debra S Marlow

2435 Felt Street, Space 26
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

268-1

Commenter 268

COMMENTER: Debbie Marlow

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 268.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 227**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 227**.

Santa Cruz County Planning Department
 701 Ocean Street
 4th Floor
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Comments on Rail Trail Environmental Impact Report Segments 10 and 11, from Sentinel articles dated Oct 18 and Oct 25, 2023.

Capitola city staff has "told the County of SC, that it prefers the design option placing the trail on top of the trestle". What is the reason behind you not following what the City staff has recommended? As, this project "runs through multiple jurisdictions and, as such" is "a joint project of Santa Cruz County, the City of Capitola, and the Regional Transportation Commission". What the City of Capitola staff told the County of SC, should be followed in the planning of Trail Segment 11. "Though Santa Cruz County is the lead agency for the project, Capitola is considered a "responsible agency" that has some discretionary approval or permitting power". If the city staff is the "responsible agency", why can't they be listened to?

In the Nov 2018 election, Capitola Voters voted yes to Measure L: Capitola Greenway Initiative. 52.13% to 47.87%. The Initiative read "shall the Capitola Municipal Code be amended to Direct Capitola constituent departments to take all steps necessary to preserve and maintain the Capitola segment of the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission's Rail Corridor and Trestle over Soquel Creek for bicyclists, pedestrians and other human powered transportation, and to prohibit expenditures to route bicyclists, pedestrians and other human powered transportation from the rain corridor to streets and sidewalks". This initiative has not been followed. What is the reasoning behind not following what the voters in the city of Capitola have said yes to? Let's do the trail over the trestle.

Concerns of the Trail Segment 11 (Capitola Village):

- that there are no bike lanes on all the surface streets in Capitola Village.
- on Cliff Drive there is a sidewalk only on one side of the street. Sidewalks are necessary for pedestrians, strollers, wheelchairs, both directions, going uphill as well as downhill.
- Monterey Ave only has a bike lane on the uphill side of the street.
- thus, bicyclists will have to "share the road" cars. Families with small children on small bikes will be on the city streets with cars, or on sidewalks. A safer place for them is on the trestle where there is no vehicle traffic.
- safety of the public is of concern here. The trail is meant to encourage the public to be out of doors. Road safety issues will discourage them from using the trail.

Yes, the multiuse bicycle and pedestrian trail is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. But how can this be achieved with "human powered transportation", bicyclists, pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers, families with small children on small bikes, by moving them down off the rail track bed, and dumping them all onto city streets? This is not a safe way to "encourage and provide recreational, active transportation, environmental opportunities" for the public. Keeping the trail up on the rail bed and trestle is the only way to achieve this. The Capitola Police Department has put up signs on the sidewalks in the village on Capitola Ave, stating that the sidewalk is for "Pedestrians only no bicycles or motorized vehicles". Is there a problem here already? There will be more bicycle traffic with the trail going through the village.

269-1
cont.

"Human powered transportation". This includes wheelchairs. I just cannot see anyone in a wheelchair that is "human powered", going up and down Monterey Ave from and to Capitola Village. As well as going up and down Cliff Dr and then through the parking lot on the inland side Cliff Dr, or arriving in the parking lot on the ocean side of Cliff Dr. This does not encourage the public to be out of doors. There are too many vehicle traffic safety issues here.

Yes, I know the project is fully funded from a grant from the CA Transportation Commission. And, that the trail crossing over the trestle is not funded by this grant. But somehow that could be funded as well. The safety of the public using the trail should be of such great importance that funds could be acquired. Somehow funds were found to add a trail to the trestle by the Boardwalk going over the San Lorenzo River. Why can't we do the same in Capitola?

With Concerns,

Diane Emigh
506 Mc Cormick CT
Capitola, CA 95010
gardenkatz@yahoo.com

Cc:

RailTrail@santacruzcountyca.gov

Capitola City Council

Capitola City Staff

Santa Cruz Sentinel

Rod Tidmore, Santa Cruz County Parks Dept.

Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission

Commenter 269

COMMENTER: Diane Emigh

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 269.1

The comment letter is duplicative of **Commenter 225**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 225**.

From: jillcorsiglia@yahoo.com
To: [Don Vollrath](#); [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Rail trail letter from Don Vollrath, resident, Santa Cruz county
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 10:15:31 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

To whom it May concern,
Subject Rail trail:

270-1

I have been a resident at Castle Mobile Estates, space #86 for over a decade. My mobile home was placed on leased land around 1970.

I bought my home with extensive remodeling when I purchases it, never knowing it was a possibility it was encroaching on RTC property.

270-2

Regarding the upcoming election on the rail trail, I vote for a trail only, as a good use of the corridor, and for those who would enjoy it.

However, I do not desire a train in my backyard as it invades the peace & privacy of everyone. (Riders on the train can look into the backyards of those of us who live along corridors of Santa Cruz county). Additionally the railroad contributes to much negative environmental impact of trees animals and noise.

As long as the trail can be created with respect to the environment & privacy of the residents who live in our community and county such as myself, I will vote for trail only.

Sincerely Don Vollrath, owner/resident of Castle Estates Mobile home Park, and Santa Cruz county resident.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Commenter 270

COMMENTER: Don Vollrath

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 270.1

The commenter (who lives at Castle Mobile Estates) did not know their home is encroaching on RTC property.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 270.2

The commenter supports Trail Only if it can be created with respect to the environment and privacy of residents, and they do not want a train in their backyard as it invades privacy and contributes to negative impacts on trees, animals and noise.

Refer to **Master Response G** regarding concerns for privacy and security.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operations.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Eva Holt-Rusmore](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segments 10 & 11 Trail Plan
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 10:48:55 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal.**

With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts.

With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,

--
Eva Holt-Rusmore
(she/ her/ hers/ ella)
831-251-0996

Let's chat! ;Charlemos!
[My scheduling calendar/ Mi calendario para agendar](#)

271-1

Commenter 271

COMMENTER: Eva Holt-Rusmore

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 271.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

From: [Linda Wilshusen](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: County of Santa Cruz DEIR Comments, Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 9:57:18 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore -

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIR for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 in the County of Santa Cruz, Live Oak and Capitola. Please accept the following comments:

272-1

“Interim” Trail requires railbanking. The “interim” trail project alternative, and the “optional interim” trail included as part of a separate project alternative, both need a full description of rail line abandonment and railbanking in the final EIR. This comment echoes a California Coastal Commission comment on the *Notice of Preparation* for this DEIR (12/7/21, pdf p.1087). A federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) abandonment and railbanking determination would be required to implement any “interim trail” option described in this DEIR or elsewhere. Given unlikely STB approval of railbanking under the circumstances that would be present for such a determination, the “Ultimate” Trail is the only viable build alternative in the final EIR.

272-2

Trees are a valuable renewable resource. The DEIR identifies a preferred alternative based on counting trees. We are all grateful that trees flourish in our county: oaks, redwoods, bay, eucalyptus, cottonwood, fir, acacia, etc. The beautiful trees that the County planted in Live Oak, when redevelopment funds built sidewalks and streetscapes in our urban but unincorporated Live Oak and Soquel neighborhoods, are now mature; ironically, there's no money to maintain them when they vigorously outgrow their location. Poison oak also flourishes here, but we don't count P.O. plants in our EIRs. As Highway 1 widening projects have demonstrated, trees are expendable when the perceived objective outweighs the view. Tree counting is not a good way to decide what's best for our future.

272-3

The historic significance of the coast rail line is a valuable and nonrenewable resource. The *Historic Resource Evaluation Report* prepared for the Highway 1 Widening Project State Park - Freedom Blvd. (Kara Brunzell, April 2023, referenced in this Segment 10-11 DEIR on p. 3.4-12/pdf p.362) offers robust evidence that the coast rail line (Santa Cruz Railroad) was, for over a century, and still is, a fundamental aspect of how and why things developed as they have in our county: where people settled, what resources were commercialized (and depleted), how our local tourism industry came into being and flourished (or not), and why half of our our county's population continues to live within 1 mile of the coast rail line. People get this: it's why over 70% of county voters want to see a trail AND passenger rail service along the coast rail line.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my comments. Thank you too for the County's public information efforts to ensure adequate public notice about this DEIR.

Sincerely,

Linda Wilshusen, Live Oak
SCCRTC Executive Director 1985-2005

Commenter 272

COMMENTER: Linda Wilshusen

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 272.1

The commenter requests the Final EIR include a full description of rail line abandonment and railbanking that would be required to implement any Interim Trail option. The commenter also states that given the unlikely STB approval of railbanking, the Ultimate Trail is the only viable build alternative.

Thank you for the comments.

Railbanking is described in Section 1.2.4 of the Draft EIR. Also refer to **Master Response E** for more information on railbanking.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 272.2

The commenter states the Draft EIR identifies a preferred alternative based on County trees, and that is not a good way to decide.

Refer to **Response 224.7**.

Response 272.3

The commenter states there is robust evidence that the coast rail line is a historic resource, people understand this, and it is why County voters want to see trail and passenger rail service along the coast rail line.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** for information on rail operation and **Master Response B** for clarification on Measure D.

The commenter correctly states that the Santa Cruz Railroad is considered a historic resource. As detailed in Section 3.4, *Cultural Resources* (Impact CR-1), the Santa Cruz Railroad is a historic-era railroad that is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources for its association with the development of Santa Cruz County. The primary character-defining feature of the resource is its alignment, which is unique given it predates much of the surrounding development and extends through commercial and residential neighborhoods rather than industrial zones. The alignment is also unique because it features sharp turns, which are representative of its initial development as a narrow-gauge line in the 1870s. The ballast, rails, earthen embankments, and wood railroad ties may also be considered secondary character-defining features because while largely replaced and not original historic fabric, they contribute to the sense of feeling and association of the property.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Lynnwood Leroy Coppedge](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segments 10&11 of Rail & Trail plan
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 10:13:13 AM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear RTC Staff and Commissioners:

273-1

I **oppose rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal and support the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves tracks for electric rail transit. I'm sure the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that support families who might be affected and can surely hold mobile home park owners accountable for any illegal building activities. With funding available to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the **Ultimate Trail Design**.

Sincerely,

L Leroy Coppedge
Ashland, Oregon

Commenter 273

COMMENTER: Lynnwood Leroy Coppedge

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 273.1

The commenter includes the same comments as **Commenter 251**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 251**.

From: [Jean Brocklebank](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Segment 10 & 11 DEIR Comments
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 12:32:04 PM
Attachments: [DEIR Segment 10 & 11 comments.pdf](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Comments on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 DEIR submitted to the County of Santa Cruz by Michael Lewis and Jean Brocklebank 14 December 2023

The following comments are based on a thorough review of the DEIR. There is so much duplication of materials in the DEIR. We have presented, herein, some basic concerns on adequacy, analysis, conclusions, and feasible mitigation.

Purpose and Objectives of the Project

Objectives of the proposed project flow from the objectives and goals of the MBSST Master Plan. **Alternative 1** meets the Purpose and all seven Objectives of the proposed project, including:

Objective 1: "Provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design along the Santa Cruz Branch Line railroad corridor and connecting spur trails in Santa Cruz County (Master Plan Objective 1.1)." **Alternative 1** meets the "continuity in design objective, whereas the proposed project, which takes the route out of the corridor onto streets does not.

Objective 2: "Develop the trail so future rail transportation service along the corridor is not precluded." Removing the rails and ties from the corridor **cannot be considered permanent** and therefore **does not preclude future rail**, since the rails can be rebuilt at any time in the future, the same as under the Optional Interim Trail.

Objective 4: "Maximize safety and serenity for experiencing and interpreting the sanctuary and landscapes by providing a trail separate from roadway vehicle traffic (Master Plan Goal 1). "This is especially important with regard to Segment 11, because the Ultimate Trail requires users of the trail to **leave the safety of the trail and go into traffic on the streets and sidewalks** of the City of Capitola. Depending on the steepness of the slope of the trail into and back out of Capitola, manual wheel-chair users will have difficulty. Additionally, since Capitola excludes skateboarding (Municipal Code [12.52.010](#)) in the area planned for the Ultimate Trail, those using a skateboard as a transportation device on the rail trail, will have to carry their device through Capitola. Electric skateboards are heavy.

EIR Errors Concerning Alternative 1 (Trail Only)

Unfortunately, the DEIR (Page 26, ES-4) states Alternative 1 results in the rails being "permanently" removed, even though, as with the Proposed Project's Optional **Interim** Trail, the DEIR assumes a trail can be removed and rails rebuilt to accommodate electric passenger

274-1

274-1
cont. | rail in the future, when determined to be feasible. EIR use of the word "permanently" for Alternative 1 is therefore incorrect and gives a false perception of the the Alternative 1 trail for decision-makers. The word "permanently" or "permanent" should be removed from the EIR.

274-2 | On Page 696, 5-14, Alternative 1 is described with a "typical width of 16 feet wide in the center line of the corridor, narrows to 12 feet wide at approaches to roadway crossings." There is no justification provided for the choice of a 16 foot width. Since the Proposed Project (Ultimate Trail) specifies a maximum width of 12 feet, reduced to 10 feet or less at stream crossings, and meets Caltrans specifications for Class I bike/ped trail, there is no reason why the Alternative 1 trail could not also be 12 feet wide, reduced to 10 feet or less at stream crossings as well. Or even 12' - 14' wide. Less width translates to less environmental impact. The same reasoning holds true for the Optional First Phase Interim Trail of the proposed project.

Additionally, there is no justification provided for restricting the Alternative 1 trail to be built in the center of the corridor. The trail could be built anywhere in the corridor where it would create the least impacts to biological resources. For instance, reduced trail width and choice of trail placement in the corridor would significantly reduce the impact on Monarch butterfly roosting habitat at Escalona in Segment 11.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change (Page 667, 4-17)

274-3 | The EIR focuses only on comparison of GHG emissions and VMT reduction. The comparison of loss of carbon sequestration from removing trees does not consider the loss of carbon sequestration from removal of trees less than 4" in diameter, understory vegetation, living soil removed or the C02 emissions of manufacturing steel and/or wood retaining walls filled with a cement product (concrete).

The GHG section references outdated global climate change studies (IPCC 2013) and a non-technical web page written by the California Office of Attorney General that contains broken links to outdated 2013 state-wide climate impact studies. The section does not reference current studies on projected local climate change impacts.

The GHG section does not analyze the environmental impact of the increased **heat island effect of removal of trees and understory and addition of manufactured walls and an asphalt trail**. This missing analysis is true of the proposed project and its alternatives.

274-4 | Finally, the proposed reduction in VMT and vehicle greenhouse gas emissions is speculative and not supported by data, offering no quantitative basis for comparison.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

274-5 | The choice of Environmentally Superior Alternative (Page 737, 5-55) is based on the following two measures, which result in two competing determinations of environmental superiority:

- “Using the measure of Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Impacts, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) was determined environmentally superior because it results in substantially less tree removal.”

- “Using the measure of Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics, the Ultimate Trail Configuration is considered environmentally superior because it requires less ground disturbance overall.”

274-5 cont. The identification of the environmentally superior alternative as the Ultimate Trail, using the measure of Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics, is **based solely on the unjustified** specification of Alternative 1 as a 16 foot wide trail in the center of the corridor, thus creating more ground disturbance than the 12 foot wide Ultimate Trail. If trail width for Alternative 1 is specified to the same criteria as the Ultimate Trail, Alternative 1 would be the environmentally superior alternative under both of the above measures.

In order to accurately compare the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project (Ultimate Trail) with the alternatives, Alternative 1 should be redefined as a mostly 12 foot wide trail, constructed within the corridor where it would cause the least amount of environmental impacts, with no reference to **permanent** removal of the rails and ties.

Tree Removal (Page 26 ES-6)

- Ultimate Trail Configuration – 803 trees
- Optional Interim Trail – 957 trees
- Alternative 1 (Trail Only) – 288 trees
- Alternative 2 (Rail with Trail on Opposite Side of Tracks) – 1,000 trees

274-6 Lacking from the DEIR are well-defined mitigation measures (for replacing 803 trees and the habitat that will be destroyed by the Ultimate Trail) that are feasible, fundable or enforceable. At least with a narrower Alternative 1 Trail, placed to reduce tree removal from 288 to a lower number (e.g., Monarch butterfly habitat in Capitola), mitigation might be more feasible.

In the current era of biologically depauperate circumstances, the County of Santa Cruz acknowledges that the felling of 803 trees, countless other smaller diameter trees not inventoried, and all vegetative understory, causing significant environmental impacts to a plethora of sensitive or endangered mammalian, avian, reptilian, and insect species *is a substantial, significant environmental impact and declares:*

274-7 "Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Impacts. "Using this measure, the County considers Alternative 1 (Trail Only) to be *environmentally superior* because it results in **substantially less tree removal.**"

We agree.

Michael Lewis, PhD
Jean Brocklebank

Commenter 274

COMMENTER: Michael Lewis and Jean Brocklebank

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 274.1

The commenter states that Alternative 1 (Trail Only) meets the project purpose and all seven objectives, including Objective 2 (*Develop the trail so future rail transportation service along the corridor is not precluded*). The commenter also states that removing the rails and ties cannot be considered permanent and therefore does not preclude future rails since the rails can be rebuilt at any time, and states that describing the removal as “permanent” should be removed from the EIR.

Thank you for the comments.

In DEIR Section 5.2.1, the description of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) has been revised to clarify that it *assumes* the rail removal is permanent, as opposed to stating that the removal is permanent, since the commenter is correct that construction of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) may not preclude reinstatement of rail. An assumption of permanent removal for Alternative 1 was included in the Draft EIR in order to provide a meaningful distinction between the Optional Interim Trail, where rail removal is temporary, and to reduce potential impacts.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 274.2

The commenter states that there is no justification provided for the trail width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) to be 16 feet, nor the Optional Interim Trail, and it could be 12 feet to reduce impacts; and there is no justification for restricting Alternative 1 to the center of the corridor.

Refer to **Master Response H** for a discussion on the width of Alternative 1.

Response 274.3

The commenter states that the EIR focuses only on comparison of GHG emissions and VMT reduction, the loss of carbon sequestration does not consider removal of trees less than 4” diameter, the climate change studies referenced are outdated, and the GHG section does not analyze the impact of the increased heat island effect.

The tree inventory for the DEIR used the Caltrans designation of a “large tree” defined as “plants which at maturity have trunks 4 inches or greater in diameter, measured above the ground.” There are numerous small trees, shrubs, and other herbaceous vegetation within the rail corridor that are not quantified by this study.

Refer to **Master Response A** regarding changes to carbon sequestration as a result of tree removal and increased heat island effect. The Draft EIR correctly focuses on anthropogenic emissions from Project operation in the quantitative analysis in Section 3.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change*, under Impact GHG-1. Sequestration is considered as it relates to applicable GHG reduction plans under Impact GHG-2, and quantification of changes to sequestration is not needed to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed project. Additionally, the Project does not rely on 2013 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change studies or a California Office of the Attorney General

website to determine the potential impact of the Project related to climate change impacts under Impact GHG-3. Predicted climate change risks are based on data from the Coastal Resilience Program web mapping tool¹⁹ and County and City Coastal Climate Change Vulnerability Reports.²⁰

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 274.4

The commenter states the proposed reduction in VMT and vehicle GHG emissions is speculative and not supported by data.

As discussed under Section 3.12.3 in Section 3.12, *Transportation*, the methodology for analyzing VMT impacts followed the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research technical guidance on addressing VMT in CEQA documents (titled *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA*). The OPR's technical guidance identifies several criteria that may be used to identify types of projects that are unlikely to have a significant VMT impact and can thus be "screened" from further analysis, including small projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 vehicular trips per day. Further, OPR provides a list of projects that are not likely to lead to a substantial or measurable increase in vehicle travel and do not require an induced travel analysis, including addition of new or enhanced bike or pedestrian facilities on existing streets/highways or within existing public rights-of-way and addition of Class I bike paths, trails, multi-use paths, or other off-road facilities that serve non-motorized travel.

As discussed under Impact T-1 in Section 3.12, *Transportation*, the Project would provide a bicycle and pedestrian trail which is anticipated to result in a net reduction of VMT within the vicinity of the Project corridor, as the trail would provide an alternative means of travel. The Project would result in an overall improvement to the existing circulation system due to the reduction in vehicular traffic and the option for alternative transportation modes. Therefore, any increase in vehicular trips to the trail by recreational users would be offset by the availability of the alternative travel mode, and the Project would result in an overall improvement to the existing circulation system. Furthermore, the Project does not include the addition of parking or bathroom facilities, both of which could generate additional trips to the Project corridor. For these reasons, the Project is not anticipated to generate trips through the addition of parking or bathroom facilities, induce travel by increasing vehicular capacity, or result in a net increase in VMT. Because the Project is not anticipated to increase total daily vehicle trips during operation, the Project would meet OPR, County, and City small Project screening criteria of fewer than 110 vehicular trips per day and a quantitative analysis of VMT is not warranted.

Similarly, the Draft EIR does not quantify the potential reduction in GHG emissions related to VMT reduction because a project-specific VMT was not quantified. However, active transportation routes are generally regarded as a strategy to reduce VMT. As discussed under Impact GHG-2 in Section 3.6, decreasing fossil fuel use from transportation is a key goal in the County's CAAP, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (AMBAG 2045 MTP/SCS), and the 2022 Scoping Plan, including through an increase in active transportation and bicycle infrastructure. The Project is part of the Monterey Bay

¹⁹ Nature Conservancy. 2023. Coastal Resiliency Program Mapping Portal. <https://maps.coastalresilience.org/>. Accessed October 2023.

²⁰ Central Coast Wetlands Group. 2017. Santa Cruz County Coastal Climate Change Vulnerability Report and City of Capitola Coastal Climate Change Vulnerability Report. June.

Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network, which is specifically identified as an alternative transportation route important to reduce VMT in the AMBAG 2045 MTP/SCS.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 274.5

The commenter states that identifying the Ultimate Trail as the environmentally superior alternative when using the measure of Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics, is based solely on the unjustified specification of Alternative 1 as a 16-foot-wide trail, thus creating more ground disturbance than the 12-foot-wide trail. To accurately compare the environmental impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration with the alternatives, Alternative 1 should be redefined as mostly 12 feet wide with no reference to permanent removal of the rails and ties.

Refer to **Master Response H** for a discussion on the width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and the alternatives analysis. Refer to **Response 274.1** regarding removal of the term “permanent.”

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 274.6

The commenter states the Draft EIR is lacking well defined mitigation measures for tree removal, and notes that with Alternative 1 (Trail Only), mitigation for replacing fewer trees might be more feasible.

Refer to **Master Response A** regarding further information on tree removal and mitigation.

The impacts of tree removal on views and biological resources are disclosed in the Draft EIR Sections 3.1, *Aesthetics*, and 3.3, *Biological Resources* in the impact discussions for Impact AES-1, Impact BIO-7, and Impact BIO-10. The discussion in Impact BIO-10 acknowledges that the identified mitigation (Mitigation Measures BIO-7a, BIO-7b, and BIO-7c) would not reduce the impacts to a less than significant level due to the substantial number of trees planned for removal, the inability to mitigate the majority of tree removal on site, and the number of years required for trees to mature. Also refer to **Master Response A**. As stated in **Master Response A**: tree removal, including the numbers, types, and locations of trees that will be removed are summarized in Table 3.3-2, Table 3.3-8, Table 3.3-11, and Table 3.3-12, and depicted on Figure 3.3-1, Figures 3.3-1a–h, Figure 3.3-2, Figures 3.3-2a–h, Figure 3.3-5, and Figures 3.3-5a–v. The tabular full tree inventory is presented in Appendices A.5 through A.8. The tables listed above also quantify impacts to native and non-native trees separately, for information purposes.

DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, addresses tree removal in Impact BIO-10 and tree replacement in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, main bullet #7 as follows:

- *All County Significant trees, Capitola Protected trees, and native trees will be replaced at a minimum 1:1 ratio (“in kind” for native trees) at a location and ratio to be determined by the County Environmental Coordinator, City Community Development Department, and/or other responsible regulatory agencies. Wherever feasible, tree replacement plantings will be situated to promote ecosystems benefits and services by replacing displaced habitat functions and values and/or enhancing remaining habitat. Where tree replacement plantings exceed a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio, tree replacement plantings may be situated to enhance the urban streetscape with the design goals of beautifying neighborhoods (especially those with a disproportionate paucity of trees), reducing the urban heat island, and improving carbon sequestration. Urban streetscape features such as public or private greenbelts, medians, parking strips, and/or other*

similar available spaces with sufficient space may be used for replacement tree planting. Urban streetscape species composition may include coast redwood, coast live oak, tanoak, and buckeye in upland areas and white alder, box elder, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, and western sycamore in riparian habitats.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 274.7

The commenters agree that using the measure of “Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Impacts,” the County considers Alternative 1 (Trail Only) to be environmentally superior because it results in less tree removal.

The commenter is correct in that using the measure of “Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Impacts,” the County considers Alternative 1 (Trail Only) to be environmentally superior, as stated in Section 5.3.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Martha Fregoso](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: DEIR comments
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 7:16:15 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob,

I trust this email finds you well. Our names are Pedro and Martha Fregoso, and we are residents of Blue and Gold Star Mobile Home Park located at 1255 38th Ave, (SPC 20) writing to express our concerns and seek clarification regarding the rail trail project and the associated draft environmental impact report.

Our family have been proud residents of this location since 2005, and unfortunately, our mobile home is among those "encroaching" on the rail corridor. It has come to my attention that, due to the historical placement of our mobile home park beyond property boundaries, we are now facing potential displacement.

Understanding the complexities involved, I am seeking clarity on the responsibility for relocating the affected homes. As this situation is not of our making, I believe it is crucial to establish whether the mobile home property owner is indeed accountable for facilitating the relocation of affected homes.

Our concern stems from the fact that uprooting our lives, built over the years with hard work and dedication, is an immense challenge, especially considering our age – I am 57, and my husband is 60. Financially, we are not equipped to handle such a life-changing event that was not a result of any fault on our part.

It has also come to my attention that information regarding this matter has not been adequately communicated, leaving us in the dark about the process and our rights in this situation. I am reaching out to you to seek confirmation on the following:

1. Is the mobile home property owner responsible for coordinating and financing the relocation of affected homes?
2. Can you confirm the procedures and steps that will be taken to ensure affected residents are informed and involved in the decision-making process?
3. What resources or support will be made available to residents like us who find themselves in this challenging situation?

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter. Your assistance in providing clarity on these issues will go a long way in alleviating our concerns.

Thank you for your dedication to our community, and I sincerely hope that we can count on your support during this challenging time. I look forward to your prompt response.

Best Regards,

275-1

Pedro and Martha Fregoso
Blue and Gold Star residents

Commenter 275

COMMENTER: Pedro and Martha Fregoso

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 275.1

The commenters (who live in Blue & Gold Star Mobile Estates and abut the rail corridor) are concerned about being displaced or relocated, would like to understand the process and responsibility for relocating the affected homes, and have the following specific questions: 1) Is the mobile home property owner responsible for coordinating and financing the relocation of affected homes? 2) Can you confirm the procedures and steps that will be taken to ensure affected residents are informed and involved in the decision-making process? 3) What resources or support will be made available to residents like us who find themselves in this challenging situation?

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

From: [ralph wood](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Draft EIR written comment
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 3:56:13 PM
Attachments: [RTC DEIR Written Comment.pdf](#)

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi Rob,

Here is my submission for the EIR, I am also attaching a PDF in case that makes things easier.

Thanks,
Terry Wood

I am a resident at Blue & Gold Star MHP.

By any means of acquisition those who control &/or lay claim to the railway corridor, private or public (government), take on all existing encumbrances, legal obligations, responsibility, and liability to keep and maintain the railway corridor.

For decades, residences within mobile home parks along the railway corridor have lived in an open, notorious, and continuous manner and have had uninterrupted use of the claimed encroachments proposed by the RTC survey.

Though reportedly not, by most standards, this would be a prescriptive use case. Surveys of these mobile parks will either justify the trueness of the RTC's survey or may conclude an overlap of claimed boundary lines. Such surveys may still need discovery.

Whether knowingly or by neglect, inclusively both park owners/managers, and State (HCD) officials participated in purporting the legitimacy of the given lot lines (stakes or markers) within these parks. No notice of encroachment, nor restrictions were ever produced to homeowners/residents, particularly when new homes were being placed on these prescribed lots.

Not until full legitimacy of the FULL project be completely realized (funds, complete plans, and solutions to issues residential, environmental, and economic) **should** homeowners within encroachments be forced to be relocated. See section 3.15-8 Population and Housing Threshold B.

Do the Least Harm must be the goal. Instead of forcing everyone out just to discover the project wasn't realistic and funds ran out prematurely, park residents, who rent the lot on which their home is installed, should not be relocated until absolute legitimacy of the full project is verifiably accomplished.

The diagrams in the DEIR Appendix make it very clear which parks and which homeowners

276-1

276-2

276-3

will be affected if the Ultimate Trail is approved and built.

The DEIR 3.15-8 (pdf page 646) explains relocation to be accomplished in mobile home parks:

"There may be existing structures that encroach into the RTC--owned ROW that conflict with the trail. These unauthorized encroachments will be resolved by the RTC per their Encroachment Policy, regardless of the Project, as part of a separate process prior to trail construction in this area. As part of this process, property owner options include but are not limited to **physically moving the mobile homes several feet** outside the RTC--owned rail corridor ROW and within the same mobile home park; if adequate space is not available to physically move an individual mobile home, **property owners could modify or replace the mobile home with a slightly smaller structure that fits within respective lot in the mobile home park or elsewhere on the owner's property**, or they could **move the mobile home to another nearby mobile home park that has space to accommodate it**. Because the encroachments are unauthorized, residents would not be considered "displacees" as defined by the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act. However, the RTC would implement avoidance and minimization measure in accordance with their Encroachment Policy to reduce impacts to property owners and residents.

"In summary, the Project would **not result in the displacement of substantial numbers** of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant (Threshold B). No mitigation is required." The DEIR ES-5 (pdf page 27) states "**The potential impacts of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed at a lesser level of detail, as allowed by CEQA**".

Basic HCD codes and regulations have not been taken into account regarding placement of homes within mobile home parks and to what degree of impact to park and residents will be entailed in the DEIR's relocation options. Real impacts to residents in mobile home parks along the rail corridor have been excluded, and far exceed the reported ~10 homes estimate to be relocated.

Whether by ignorance or convenience, the section is as stated "...analyzed at a (significantly) lesser level of detail..." thoroughly discounts the much higher level of impact. This whole section needs a more in-depth and realistic analysis for decision-makers to make objective informed solutions to such impacts.

As such the EIR conclusion must to be elevated from "Less than Significant" to either Less than Significant with Mitigation or Significant and Unavoidable as laid out in the DEIR ES-5 (pdf page 5).

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

The residents of Santa Cruz County are proud of our county being a beacon for preserving

276-3
cont.

276-4

276-5

276-5
cont. | nature and the environment. Most, if not all impacts listed in the DIER as “Significant and Unavoidable Impacts” are in fact significant, and AVOIDABLE. Excluding Alternative 3 (No Project). Alternative 1 (Trail Only) minimizes significant and unavoidable impacts and is the environmentally superior alternative.

From the DEIR page ES-7 (pdf page 29)

“Alternative 1 (Trail Only) has a wider construction footprint that disturbs both sides of the tracks (16-foot-wide trail instead of 12-foot-wide trail) and extends an additional 0.5 mile (by continuing the trail in the rail corridor, rather than directing users to the on-street system through Capitola Village)...”

276-6 | Considerations to take into account: instead of disturbing the environment by man-aging nature by ways of cutting down trees and geoscaping in those area’s let the trail narrow, just like in nature, as people do on hiking and biking trails. Promoting preservation, education, and civics all at the same time. To minimize the construction footprint of Alternative 1 a variable width of 12' - 16' wide throughout Segment 10 & 11 is possible. According to the EIR, in some cases, it is even required. **Missing from the DEIR** is an alternative of a Trail Only that is narrower, while maintaining a width of a Class I bike/ped trail as specified by CalTrans.

“...rail demolition increases risk of hazardous materials exposure, and permanent removal of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line increases impacts to identified historic resource. “

276-7 | For concerns of hazardous materials exposure an alternative would be to build a trail over the existing rails. If appropriately done, the historic preservation of the rails as a historic resource is safeguarded for future use.

Part or stated Project Purpose and Objectives include:
DEIR ES-4 (page 26 pdf)

- Minimize trail impacts to private lands, including agricultural, residential, and other land uses (Master Plan Objective 1.5)
- Minimize trail impacts to sensitive habitat areas and special-status plant and animal species (Master Plan Objective 1.4, Policy 1.4.1)
- Comply with requirements of local, state, and federal agencies with jurisdiction

276-8 | If the EIR is truly beholden to its stated purpose for a path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the existing rail corridor and its environmental objectives then it must report a conclusion of Alternative 1 (Trail Only).

Ralph Terry Wood

Commenter 276

COMMENTER: Ralph Wood

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 276.1

The commenter (who is a resident at Blue & Gold Star Mobile Home Park) states that for decades residences have had uninterrupted use of the claimed encroachments, surveys are needed, park owners and others unknowingly or by neglect participated in the legitimacy of the given lot lines, and no notice of encroachment or restrictions were every produced to homeowners/residents.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

Response 276.2

The commenter states there should be no relocations unless the project is completely realized (funds, completed plans, and solutions to residential, environmental, and economic issues).

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

Response 276.3

The commenter references diagrams in Appendix A and impact discussion in Section 3.15.9 (not Section 3.15.8 as indicated in the comment).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 276.4

The commenter states that impacts to residents in mobile homes far exceeds the reported ~10 homes estimated to be relocated. The commenter further states that basic California Housing and Community Development codes and regulations have not been considered regarding placement of homes in the park; the section (3.15.9) discounts the impact and needs more analysis; and the conclusion should be elevated to less than significant with mitigation or significant and unavoidable. The comment also states that the Project alternatives should be analyzed at a more in-depth level of detail.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. Regarding the commenters claim that Project alternatives should be analyzed at a more in-depth

level of detail, pursuant to the requirements of CEQA, alternatives do not need to be described or analyzed at the same level of detail as the Proposed Project (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6[d]). However, alternatives need to be described in enough detail to allow a comparative analysis of the alternatives against the Proposed Project. Contrary to that asserted by the commenter, the analysis of alternatives in Chapter 5, *Project Alternatives*, provides sufficient detail to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the Project and to allow the decision makers to make a decision on the Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 276.5

The commenter states that most of the impacts listed in the EIR as “Significant and Unavoidable” are avoidable, and Alternative 1 minimizes significant and unavoidable impacts and is environmentally superior.

The Draft EIR identifies several impacts associated with tree removal as significant and unavoidable. Refer to **Response 274.6**.

Response 276.6

The commenter states the Draft EIR is missing a narrower Trail Only alternative that is a variable 12–16 feet.

Refer to **Response 274.5**, as well as **Master Response H** regarding Alternative 1 (Trail Only) width.

Response 276.7

The commenter states that to address concerns of hazardous materials exposure, an alternative would be to build a trail over the existing rails.

As described in Section 5.1.4, the County considered an alternative called “Interim Trail with Rail Preservation,” whereby the alternative would include FRP deck installed over the existing tracks and ties, with the intention of preserving the rail, rather than temporarily removing the rail. This alternative was dismissed from further consideration and evaluation because of design challenges and because it would not reduce a potentially significant impact.

Response 276.8

The commenter lists three of the Project objectives, and states the EIR must report a conclusion of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) if it is beholden to its stated purpose and environmental objectives.

As stated in Section 1.1, the purpose of an EIR is to serve as an information document that “will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.”

As stated in Section 5.3, CEQA requires an EIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative but does not stipulate the methodology. The County used two methodologies, and using the methodology of reducing significant and unavoidable impacts, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) was identified as environmentally superior. Also refer to **Response 224.7**.

It is up to the lead agency decision makers to make a decision on the Project and project alternatives.

From: [Richard James](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on Segment 10 and 11 Trail EIR
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 2:17:46 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

I have reviewed the draft EIR for trail development on Segments 10 and 11 of the Santa Cruz Branch Line corridor in Live Oak and Capitola and provide the following comments:

277-1 | 1. Pages ES-1 and 2-1 state that the Ultimate Trail alignment is consistent with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan trail alignment. In fact, the Ultimate Trail alignment at Capitola Village is treated as an interim alignment in the Master Plan. The map on Master Plan Page 4-63 shows the alignment on a bridge over Soquel Creek at Capitola Village, and the table on Master Plan Page 4-63 makes reference to the bridge. The text on Master Plan Page 4-61 states that the trail “will need to continue on existing surface streets and sidewalks to cross Soquel Creek and navigate through Capitola Village.” However, it is clear from the text on Master Plan Page 4-61 that the ultimate vision of the Master Plan is incorporation of a pathway on either a re-constructed rail bridge or a standalone trail bridge. The Ultimate Trail alignment at Capitola Village is **not consistent** with the ultimate trail alignment in the Master Plan.

277-2 | 2. Pages ES-4 and 2-4 present the Project Purpose, which is “to provide an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible bicycle/pedestrian path...” The Ultimate Trail interrupts the continuity of the trail at one of the deepest ravines on the Santa Cruz County coast, and diverts the trail down into and then back out of this ravine using steep streets and sidewalks. This route does not provide a suitable connection for persons with disabilities. I was confined to a wheelchair for a couple of months, and much gentler inclines than those on Cliff Drive and Monterey Avenue were impossible for me to negotiate; nor could my wife push me up (or safely down) either of these streets in a wheelchair. A bridge crossing of Soquel Creek at Capitola Village is imperative for trail continuity for persons with disabilities.

277-3 | 3. The Interim Trail project option (Section 3) and the Trail Only alternative (Section 5) are essentially the same. Both study a generally 16-foot-wide trail located where the tracks are currently situated. The principal difference is that the Interim Trail would be removed and re-constructed if railroad operations were to resume, which is presumed to take place about 30 years after the trail is built. The impact reduction on which the Trail Only alternative presented seems to rest on eliminating future de-construction and construction phases of the Interim Trail option in the body of the EIR. In fact, if freight or passenger rail is not resumed on the tracks in the future (and there are several factors that might make resumption of rail service infeasible), then the Trail Only alternative is identical to the Interim Trail, and adds nothing to the EIR's information.

The Trail Only alternative fails to meet critical requirements for a CEQA alternative. Alternatives presented in an EIR must be designed to reduce environmental impacts. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6 (b) and (f) read (emphasis added):

(b) Purpose. Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location **which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project**, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.

(f) Rule of reason. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a “rule of reason” that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. **The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.** Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The range of feasible **alternatives shall be selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making.**

The Trail Only alternative, by using a 16-foot trail instead of a Caltrans-standard 12-foot trail, has been designed to have the opposite effect – by using the wider 16-foot trail in this alternative, the alternative fails to reduce impacts that could be reduced with the narrower 12-foot trail, contrary to and inconsistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines sections 15126.6 (b) and (f). Furthermore, the 16-foot Trail Only alternative is strictly interpreted as being positioned on the railroad center line, whereas slight deviations of the trail to one side or the other could avoid impacts. This analysis provides a disingenuous, inaccurate, and misleading understanding of the relative environmental effects of constructing a trail absent a parallel railroad. The selection of an alternative that does not reduce the trail width to the normal state standard does not foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making – rather, it leads to misinformed public discourse and decision making. Study of a 12-foot wide trail makes infinitely more sense as an alternative because it matches Caltrans’ standard design for Class I trails, it would reduce the trail footprint by 20 percent, and have much greater potential to reduce impacts. The Ultimate Trail project includes a trail that is generally 12 feet wide, but the Trail Only alternative increases the trail width to 16 feet. The least impactful alternative option should be studied.

A Trail Only alternative using a 12-foot wide trail footprint would reduce a number of effects compared to the proposed project options and the 16-foot wide Trail Only alternative:

- Cut and fill would be reduced because the fill beyond the existing rail grade and ballast would be reduced.
- Tree removal would be reduced, including removal of trees that support Monarch Butterfly roosting habitat. This reduction in tree loss could be quantified and is likely to be a significant reduction. Impacts to Monarch Butterfly habitat is likely to be reduced to a very large degree (perhaps entirely), especially if a retaining wall rather than sloped sides from the trail were used in the location of Monarch Butterfly habitat. Reduced tree removal from a 12-foot Trail Only alternative could potentially avoid a significant and unavoidable impact from loss of trees.
- Construction phase air quality emissions would be marginally reduced.

- Impacts on numerous trail side biological resources would be reduced, and potentially avoided completely, due to a 20 percent reduction in the trail footprint.
- Potential for disturbance of buried human remains or cultural artifacts would be reduced because ground disturbance would be reduced.
- Construction phase greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced due to less ground work. Reduced loss of trees would reduce loss of carbon sequestration.
- Hazards impacts related to soil disturbance would be marginally reduced due to less ground work.
- Water quality impacts would be reduced due to a 20 percent reduction in impervious surface and associated storm water run-off.
- Potential for disturbance of tribal resources would be reduced because ground disturbance would be reduced.
- Water use for dust control would be marginally reduced.

277-3
cont.

The Trail Only alternative should be re-written with a 12-foot wide trail (eight-foot width trail surface plus two feet clear each side, consistent with Caltrans design manual standards for Class I paths). A trail narrower than the Interim Trail would result in numerous reduced impacts. The EIR should be re-circulated to provide the public with the opportunity to consider this new comparison.

4. Page 2-33 provides estimated project development timelines for the Interim Trail option, including initial construction, trail demolition, railroad reconstruction, and trail reconstruction. Trail reconstruction (estimated 2060 – 2064) would occur following trail removal/rail reconstruction (estimated 2056 – 2060), presumably because rail reconstruction would disturb the adjacent trail area and these two activities could not occur simultaneously. There would be no trail for up to eight years at this time. However, development of a passenger rail service would require demolition of the existing rails, half of the existing ties, and much of the ballast. Would this track rehabilitation take place adjacent to the Ultimate Trail, or would the Ultimate Trail likewise need to be closed for this work?

277-4

5. Page 3.3.45 states that pedestrians and cyclists could trample Monarch Butterflies while using the trail. This potential impact could be quantified through consultation with California State Parks, which has extensive experience with very large numbers of pedestrians on a boardwalk directly beneath and in the midst of the Monarch Butterfly roosting site at Natural Bridges State Park.

277-5

6. On Pages 5-23 and 5-24, the Trail Only alternative is said to impact Monarch Butterfly habitat at Escalona Gulch. Is this because the Trail Only alternative exactly follows the center line of the tracks, with no allowance for a slight diversion to one side at that location to avoid tree removal and the habitat destruction? It seems like applying a small amount of creativity in design could entirely avoid this impact. Refer to my comment regarding a 12-foot Trail Only

277-6

alternative.

277-7 | 7. Page 5-25, the Trail Only alternative should have significantly less impact on wildlife movement, since a safety fence separating it from the railroad would be unnecessary.

277-8 | 8. Page 5-30. Minor typographical error: “inconsistent” should read “inconsistency.”

277-9 | 9. Page 5-33. The statement is that the Trail Only alternative would not direct users through Capitola Village. Therefore, I believe the follow-on statement should read “Therefore Alternative 1 would not increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village or increase the existing user conflicts.”

277-10 | 10. In several locations the trail options and alternatives that utilize the Capitola Trestle bridge are characterized as requiring upgrades to the bridge, and thus resulting in impacts associated with the bridge work. The very same impacts would occur in order to restore rail service to the Santa Cruz Branch Line. The report that was prepared for RTC in 2012 addressing required maintenance on critical components of the rail infrastructure called for significant upgrades to this (and other) bridges. So is this really an impact of the trail’s use of the trestle, or an impact from the ongoing use of the trestle for any transportation purpose? This is an “active” rail line, and thus one would expect that a trestle that is in unsuitable condition for rail use would require maintenance measures, with or without development of a trail.

277-11 | 11. In several places the trail options and alternatives refer to impacts related to removal of the railroad’s steel track and wooden ties. The very same impacts would occur in order to restore rail service to the Santa Cruz Branch Line. The report that was prepared for RTC in 2012 addressing required maintenance on critical components of the rail infrastructure called for replacement of 100 percent of the steel rail and replacement of 50 percent of the wooden railroad ties, as well as replacement or augmentation of much of the ballast. These impacts occur with both the Ultimate Trail and the Interim Trail, and really amount to a difference in timing, whether they occur in the relative near term (approximately 2025 – 2026 for the Interim Trail option and the Trail Only alternative) or in the relative long term (approximately 2056 – 2060 for the Ultimate Trail). CEQA Guidelines Section 15003 (h) requires consideration of the whole of the project to the extent such information is known. In this case, even though the EIR addresses only the trail development, ultimate use of the rail is assumed in the future, and replacement of much of the rail infrastructure to that end is known to be required with or without development of a trail.

277-12 | 12. In the cumulative projects list, 9041 Soquel Drive is listed twice. Several major projects seem to have been omitted from the cumulative projects list: Aptos Village mixed use project currently under construction on Aptos Village Road; Soquel Senior Living independent/assisted living project currently under construction at 5630 Soquel Drive; and Park Haven Plaza assistive housing project currently under construction at 2838 Park Avenue.

277-12
cont.

Development of rail service within the railroad corridor is included on the cumulative list; however, it should be clarified that this includes rehabilitation of rail bridges (including rehabilitation of the Capitola Trestle and possible replacement of the La Selva Beach trestle), rehabilitation of the railroad track bed, replacement of all of the steel track, and half of the wooden railroad ties. This activity is known to be required (refer to the report that was prepared for RTC in 2012 addressing required maintenance on critical components of the rail infrastructure) and would occur within the same corridor as the proposed trail project. The timing noted in the cumulative list appears optimistic compared to timelines provided for the same work in the description of the Interim Trail option.

277-3

Conclusion. The EIR presents a Trail Only alternative that, with minor adjustments, has the real potential to completely avoid an impact that is identified as significant and unavoidable. The alternative presented unnecessarily studies a 16 foot wide path when a 12 foot wide path would conform to state standards, is the norm for such trails, and would reduce or eliminate significant impacts. A reasonable range of alternatives should include one that will reduce impacts to the greatest extent feasible, especially when such an alternative is readily available, and in fact just a standardized version of an alternative that is already included.

Richard James, AICP

Aptos, CA

Commenter 277

COMMENTER: Richard James

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 277.1

The commenter states that pages ES-1 and 2-1 of the Draft EIR state the Ultimate Trail Alignment is consistent with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan (MBSST Network Master Plan), but the diversion to the streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village is not.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on the Ultimate Trail Configuration's consistency with the MBSST Network Master Plan.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.2

The commenter states that the project purpose is to provide an ADA-accessible path, and the Ultimate Trail Configuration diverts the trail using steep streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village, which is not suitable for persons with disabilities, and a bridge crossing Soquel at Capitola Village is imperative for trail continuity for persons with disabilities.

Refer to **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety concerns in Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.3

The commenter states: 1) The Optional Interim Trail and Trail Only alternative (Alternative 1) are the same, except the Interim Trail would be removed if rail operations resume. 2) The Trail Only alternative adds nothing to the EIR's information and fails to meet requirements for a CEQA alternative, which must be designed to reduce environmental impacts (citing *CEQA Guidelines* section 15126.6). The Trail Only alternative should be 12 feet wide instead of 16 feet to reduce impacts, and the EIR should be recirculated to provide the public with the opportunity to consider this new comparison.

- 1) The commenter is correct. As stated in Section 5.2.1, the "Trail Only alternative is the same as implementing only Part 1 (but not Parts 2 and 3) of the Optional Interim Trail."
- 2) Refer to **Master Response H** regarding Trail Only width and the alternatives analysis.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 277.4

The commenter asks if the Ultimate Trail would remain open or closed during construction of passenger rail service.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decisionmakers.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.5

The commenter states that the impact to monarch butterflies could be quantified through consultation with State Parks.

Qualified biologists²¹ with EcoSystems West Consulting Group have conducted assessments of potential and known monarch roost sites, including buffer trees, within and near the proposed trail and have determined that proposed Project impacts associated with tree removal may modify habitat suitability. The DEIR has identified the impacts on the monarch butterfly as Significant and Unavoidable.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.6

The commenter asks if the alignment of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) could be adjusted to avoid tree removal and monarch habitat destruction at Escalona Gulch

As stated in Section 5.2.1 under *Biological Resources*, although the quantity of tree removal near Escalona Gulch for Alternative 1 would be less than the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the tree removal includes large eucalyptus trees north of the rail line that are autumnal roost sites for monarchs and serve as wind buffers for the overwintering roost trees south of the tracks. Of the 288 trees that would be removed for Alternative 1, 83 of the trees are native and Protected/Significant.

Also refer to **Master Response H** regarding Alternative 1 (Trail Only) width, and **Master Response A**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.7

The commenter states the Trail Only (Alternative 1) alternative should have significantly less impact on wildlife movement since a safety fence separating it from the railroad would be unnecessary.

As stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Features/Fencing and Guardrails*, the bottom of any fencing would be 16 inches above finish grade to allow for wildlife movement. Guardrails would be required for both Rail with Trail and Trail Only designs on viaducts and retaining walls for safety, and are likely to impact wildlife movement.

²¹ EcoSystems West biologists Erin McGinty and Justin Davilla have 18 years and 16 years, respectively, assessing monarch roost habitat in coastal California and, for this Project, have consulted with Hilary Sardinas, CDFW Monarch Conservation Manager, Terris Kasteen, CDFW Environmental Scientist, as well as with John Dayton, entomologist and recognized monarch expert.

As stated in Section 5.2.1 under *Biological Resources*, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would have similar and slightly less impacts to wildlife movement than the Ultimate Trail because it would be centered on the tracks and therefore result in less tree removal, but result in similar disturbance of wildlife movement habitat including understory vegetation.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.8

The commenter points out a typographical error on page 5-30 where the term “inconsistent” should be “inconsistency.”

The commenter is correct that the term “inconsistent” in the last sentence on page 5-30 should be “inconsistency.” This has been corrected for the Final EIR (Volume 2).

Response 277.9

The commenter points out a typographical error on page 5-33, where it should include the word “not.”

The commenter is correct, and the text on page 5-30 has been revised: “Therefore Alternative 1 would not be expected to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic along Cliff Drive and through Capitola Village . . .”

Response 277.10

The commenter states the trail options and alternatives that use the Capitola Trestle require upgrades to the trestle that causes impacts; and restoring rail service to the trestle would have similar impacts. The commenter asks: Is this really an impact of the trail’s use of the trestle, or an impact from the ongoing use of the trestle for any transportation purpose?

Refer to **Master Response D**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 277.11

The commenter states the trail options and alternatives have impacts related to rail removal; the same impacts would occur to restore rail service and for required maintenance; and these impacts would occur with both the Ultimate Trail and the Interim Trail.

The commentor is correct that the Optional Interim Trail would require rail removal. The Ultimate Trail Configuration would require realignment of the track in generally the same location (refer to DEIR Section 2.4.1, *Rail Realignment*). The analyses throughout DEIR Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, addresses the potential impacts of the Proposed Project, both the Ultimate Trail Configuration and the Optional Interim Trail as described in DEIR Section 2.4. The Draft EIR does not include an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of implementing rail service or rail maintenance. Refer to Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the project is a trail project and does not include rail service of any type. Therefore, rail service and rail maintenance are not evaluated in the DEIR.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

Response 277.12

The commenter points out a project (1041 Soquel Drive) was listed twice in DEIR Table 4-1; states several major projects have been omitted from the list; states development of rail service is on the list and would require rehabilitation of rail bridges and work in the same corridor as the Proposed Project; and notes the timing in the cumulative list appears optimistic.

The commenter is correct about the Project being listed twice, and the second occurrence of 1041 Soquel Drive in DEIR Table 4-1 has been removed. The list of projects in DEIR Table 4-1 and the timing were provided to the respective jurisdictions and planning departments. It is noted that rail service would require rehabilitation of rail bridges and work could occur in the same corridor as the Project.

From: Ron Burke <rburke477@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 7:29 PM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Rail Trail - segments 10 & 11

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Mr Tidmore,

Here I contribute comments to the proposed rail & trail design proposal options for segments 10 & 11.

278-1

I argue in full favor of the Ultimate Trail. *None* of the rail line should be railbanked. Across the US, railbanking has invariably led to making permanent trail replacing rail. Taking such an action will understandably require major changes to the Capitola railroad trestle, but we need to look to the future needs of our county. The nostalgia of the past should not dictate the needs of the populace looking forward.

278-2

With the vast increase in affordable housing RHNA counts across the developed areas of the county, the need for rail-based transportation on the rail corridor will become indispensable. Capitola, in which I reside, will undergo a transformation from what was 143 RHNA units this year becomes 1,336 units in next year's Housing Element update to the General Plan. As a former Capitola Planning Commissioner, I am appalled by what the State of California is forcing on our local communities, but we must plan for the additional circulation load. Higher density housing is commensurate with higher density circulation, and our rail & trail will 'drive' those commuting to use the rail. We just can not build enough roadway.

278-3

The one item in the Ultimate Trail I am not in favor of is requiring trail users to disembark the trail to not use the Capitola railroad trestle. Please consider prioritization of expanding the width of the trestle to handle both rail & trail. Even a cantilevered trail is possible as was built over the San Lorenzo River.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ron Burke

Commenter 278

COMMENTER: Ron Burke

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 278.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 278.2

The commenter opines that railbanking has led to permanent trail replacing rail, the increased requirements for affordable housing units., and need for rail-based transportation on the rail corridor.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 278.3

The commenter is not in favor of directing trail users the streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village, and suggests expanding the width of the trestle to handle both rail & trail, or install a cantilevered trail like over the San Lorenzo River Trestle Bridge.

Refer to **Master Response D** for a discussion on the Capitola Trestle and **Master Response F** for a discussion on safety in Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Mr. Rob Tidmore
County of Santa Cruz
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

December 14, 2023

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report, (EIR) for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

My name is Rory Anne Walsh and I live in Villa Santa Cruz Mobile Home Park at 2435 Felt Street, Space 27. My property directly abuts the rail corridor between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch Viaduct along the proposed Segment 10 of the new Rail/Trail proposal.

I support a public trail along the rail corridor to provide pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreation. I primarily support **the Optional Interim Trail, Part I (Trail on the Rail Line)** as described in the Draft EIR dated October 16, 2023 as the preferred alignment over the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

I further would support a trail on the rail line that was less than the 16 feet proposed. If the Optional Interim Trail, Part 1 were reduced in width in certain places to the 12-14 feet proposed in the Ultimate Trail Configuration perhaps some of the 288 trees proposed for removal could be saved, more of the monarch butterfly habitat and wildlife corridor could be saved, fewer or smaller retaining walls would be needed, less soil would be disturbed, less asphalt would be used and less maintenance would be required.

As described in the Draft EIR, I have grave concerns regarding the impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Specifically, regarding the proposed loss of 803 trees with this configuration and the associated loss of wildlife and monarch butterfly habitat, the proposed realignment of the railroad bed 5-8 feet closer to the rear of my property with associated noise, visual, and air quality impacts, and the expense of the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Again, I support the **Optional Interim Trail , Part 1, (Trail on the Rail Line)** for the implementation of the Coastal Trail and look forward to reviewing the Final EIR on this project.

Thank you,

Rory Anne Walsh
2435 Felt Street, Space 27
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
roryawalsh@gmail.com

279-1

Commenter 279

COMMENTER: Rory Anne Walsh

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 279.1

The comments are duplicative of **Comment 227-1**.

Refer to **Response 227.1**.

From: Sean Ages
To: RailTrail
Subject: Comments on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 10:32:03 AM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

Dear Mr. Tidmore,

As a homeowner and resident in Depot Hill, I have serious concerns about the preferred alignment of the Coastal Rail Segments 10 and 11.

280-1

1. Lighting: Light pollution is a serious concern for humans and wildlife. Having a lighted path in my backyard at all hours of the night would be disruptive to sleep and health, and there is no indication in the DEIR about the hours that trails and viaducts would be illuminated. With one such viaduct proposed in my backyard, and a vague reference to "low-level lighting" mentioned in the DEIR, I have serious concerns about the impact that this plan would have. Would lighting be timed? Would lighting be lit from sunset to sunrise? Would lighting be motion-timed? As a homeowner I don't want a constant source of light in my backyard where before there was a dark track.

280-2

2. Viaduct
My home is next to Escalona Gulch, and the DEIR calls for a viaduct to be built in my backyard. This viaduct is proposed to be some 15-20ft above the grade of my rear yard. I don't see any plans for mitigating the visual impact of this plan, nor do I see how this can be mitigated. Further, the DEIR makes numerous references to BP-4.01, the plan for the Grove Lane Viaduct. BP-4.01 appears nowhere in the DEIR document. How can there be a fair public comment process when the entire plan is not in the document?

280-3

3. Tree removal
The ultimate trail alignment calls for the removal of numerous trees in my section of the project. Not only is this area sensitive Monarch Butterfly habitat, the quality of life will decrease with the removal of the trees that make Depot Hill the green space it is special for. Why must we pursue the ultimate trail alignment when there are alternatives that lead to the destruction of these trees. Instead, we could do the interim trail on rail approach which has much less impact.

280-4

4. Privacy concerns
Constructing a walking and bike path in my backyard will lead to negative outcomes for me and my neighbors. As I mentioned, the rail is already above the grade of my rear yard. Path users will be able to see directly into my space, throw trash and debris, and bring noise pollution as well. The DEIR makes no mention of a privacy wall or screen to protect the privacy of residents of Depot Hill. I recommend that the county add such a privacy element to any plans going forward.

Thank you for taking the time to address my concerns.

Sincerely,

Sean Ages

714 Escalona Drive, Capitola, CA 95010
(908) 256-9489

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Sean Ages
sean.ages@gmail.com
(908) 256-9489

Commenter 280

COMMENTER: Sean Ages

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 280.1

The commenter (who lives in Depot Hill next to Escalona Gulch) is concerned about the lighted path, when it will be illuminated, and does not want constant illumination.

Thank you for the comments.

As stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Features/Lighting*, the alignment would be illuminated as determined necessary for trail user safety, either from existing light sources along adjacent roadways and crossings (such as Monterey Ave and Park Ave), or by installing new light fixtures. Any new lighting would be “dark sky compliant” in that it would minimize light pollution and offensive glare by directing light downward to reduce spillage. Overhead lighting would use house side cut-offs where applicable and light projection photometrics based on light mounting height to minimize impacts to adjacent properties. Generally, the trail will be lit sunset to sunrise and lights would dim when no trail users are detected.

Response 280.2

The commenter states the Grove Lane Viaduct will be built in their backyard. The commenter also states that they cannot locate BP-4.01, the plan for the Grove Lane Aqueduct, or mitigation for the visual impact of the viaduct in the Draft EIR.

The rail trail would be built entirely within RTC-owned rail corridor ROW, City road ROW, or County road ROW and would not be built on private property.

DEIR Appendix A includes the primary sheets depicting the full trail alignments, but does not include every sheet in the full package of preliminary designs (which are available on the County’s website (<https://dpw.santacruzcounty.us/Portals/19/pdfs/RailTrail/Schematic-Design-Plans/RTS-10-11-RSU-Trail-Design-next-to-Rail-Line.pdf>)). The location of the Grove Lane Viaduct is shown on sheets CP-1.19 through CP-1.20 in Appendix A.1 of the Draft EIR. The plan sheet for Grove Lane Viaduct (Sheet BP-4.01) has been added between Sheets BP-2.01 and BP-6.01 in Appendix A.1 to provide more information; and reference to Sheet BP-4.01 has been added to the Grove Lane Viaduct references in Section 2.4.1.

The Grove Lane Viaduct with FRP deck would be 240 feet long with seven piers and would extend parallel to Escalona Gulch at the top of the bank, south of Park Avenue in the City of Capitola. While the trail would be on a viaduct, the top of the viaduct (the FRP deck) would be at grade with the existing rail line and would therefore not obscure or substantially change existing views. Therefore, mitigation for visual impacts from construction of the viaduct is not required. However, as shown on Figures A.8-k and A.8-l, the Ultimate Trail would require tree removal in order to build the viaduct. As discussed under the *Trees* subheading under Impact AES-1 in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, following the removal of trees required to construct the rail trail, spaces left by the removed trees could degrade localized views (scenic resources). Tree removal would, therefore, make the alignment more visible from some of the adjacent roadways, and the expected changes to views would be moderate to substantial. Mitigation is therefore required for tree removal, including in the vicinity

of the Grove Lane Viaduct. As specified in Mitigation Measure BIO-7b, trees would be replanted at a minimum ratio of 1:1. Higher replacement ratios would be required for native, protected, and significant trees. Mitigation Measures BIO-7a and BIO-7c would minimize impacts to existing trees to be retained by requiring temporary protective fencing and other best management practices that would protect remaining trees, saplings, and mature trees to the extent feasible. Due to limited available space remaining within the corridor after construction, only a very limited portion of trees can be replaced on site within the rail corridor. The remaining trees would be planted elsewhere within proximity to the rail corridor either as urban street trees or as mitigation for sensitive habitats and wildlife movement corridors. The exact location of replacement trees is uncertain at this time, and timing of growth to maturity equivalence to the trees that would be removed cannot be predicted with certainty. Therefore, despite required tree replacement, the tree removal would affect public views of the Project corridor, degrade existing local scenic resources that include mature trees, and disrupt existing scenic vistas of mature vegetation. Therefore, impacts to scenic resources and vistas due to tree removal were determined to be significant and unavoidable.

As stated above, the plans for Grove Lane Viaduct (Sheet BP-4.01) have been added to DEIR Appendix A.1, between Sheets BP-2.01 and BP-6.01 in Appendix A.1; and reference to Sheet BP-4.01 has been added to the Grove Lane Viaduct references in Section 2.4.1.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 280.3

The commenter states the Ultimate Trail calls for removal of numerous trees in an area sensitive to monarch habitat, and suggests the Interim Trail would have less impact.

The EIR Team acknowledges that tree removal near monarch butterfly habitat at Escalona Gulch is Significant and Unavoidable for the Ultimate Trail, the Interim Trail, and Trail Only (Alternative 1). The monarch butterfly is discussed in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, in Section 3.3.1 (*Existing Conditions*) and Section 3.3.4 (*Project Impact Analysis – Impact BIO-1*), depicted on DEIR Figures 3.3-2b, 3.3-2e, and 3.3-2f and Figures 3.3-4b, 3.3-4e, and 3.3-4f and listed in Table 3.3-4 and Table 3.3-5 for each known or potential roost site. See also **Master Response A** and Chapter 5, *Alternatives Analysis*, for comparative impacts on the monarch butterfly, including for Trail Only (Alternative 1).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 280.4

The commenter is concerned about the trail being above grade near his backyard; trail users seeing into his space, throwing trash, and making noise; and they recommend the County add a privacy wall or element.

As described in Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, maintenance activities include trash collection. As described in Section 3.10, *Noise* (Impact N-2), the potential noise impact from trail users is determined less than significant. Refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

From: [STEVE COGLIATI](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Ultimate Trail
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023 5:12:56 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Mr. Tidmore,
We are writing to support the Ultimate Trail and to leave the tracks intact. Additionally, we support the use of the tracks for future rail transit and oppose any railbanking.
Thank you.
Sincerely,
Steve and Ann Cogliati
123 Cress Rd.
Santa Cruz

281-1

Commenter 281

COMMENTER: Steve and Ann Cogliati

DATE: December 14, 2023

Response 281.1

The commenters support the Ultimate Trail, leaving the tracks intact, and the use of tracks for future rail transit; and oppose any railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Aaron Johnson](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Please save the rails
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 7:34:23 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Dear Rob Tidmore,

I'm a big fan of bicycling, I bike for most local trips. The expanded trestle bridge over the San Lorenzo was a huge improvement, I've used it weekly for the past two years. And I'm looking forward to expansion of the trail through Live Oak, where my wife and I live near 17th Ave.

But, please no railbanking, please keep the rails intact!

I'm 62 now, and I hope that when biking becomes difficult rail will also be an option. Even now, if a rail was available I'd be using it, in both Santa Cruz Watsonville directions.

Having lived in Watsonville, I realize that many destinations are much closer to the rail line than the freeway, often more convenient than driving. When available, it should become a popular option.

If cyclists like myself sometimes divert onto city streets and other bike lanes that's fine. It is worth it to keep the rail option alive, it will be more accessible to all. And until then, I'm looking forward to continuing construction of trails alongside of the tracks.

Thank you,

Aaron Johnson

282-1

Commenter 282

COMMENTER: Aaron Johnson

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 282.1

The commenter supports expanding the trail alongside the tracks through Live Oak, keeping the tracks intact and rail option alive; and the commenter opposes railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: Cami Corvin
To: Rail Trail; info@sccrtc.org; Manu Koenig; Bruce McPherson; Zach Friend; citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us; samforcapitola@yahoo.com; margauxkeiser@gmail.com; brooksforcitycouncil@gmail.com; sbrunner@cityofsantacruz.com; Donna Lind; dtimm@scottsville.org; arl.parker@cityofwatsonville.org; jimmy.dutra@cityofwatsonville.org
Cc: Rebecca M; kdavis@havenms.com; ryan@alliancemh.com
Subject: Addressing EIR From RTC
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 5:07:47 PM

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.

To all concerned,

My name is Cami Corvin and I live at 1099 38th Ave, No.,81 Santa Cruz, CA 95062, My family has lived in SC for 100 years. Although I live in the unincorporated area of Capitola City, we also have a SC address. For that reason, I am addressing this email to the City I live in, Capitola, and the County that I live in, Santa Cruz, as well as the RTC and management/owners of Castle Mobile Estates. Thank you for your time in reviewing this matter.

I have several questions I would like to address with the RTC and the rail/trail that have been brought to my attention. It appears even though the County has not made a decision yet, this has caused quite a stir within the community and very much so with the folks living on the tracks. Because of this, I would like to ask the questions that are pertinent in the process if this were to come to fruition.

QUESTIONS OF COMMUTERS/AREAS

What studies have been done to show the commuters from:
Watsonville to Santa Cruz
Watsonville to San Jose

It would seem the percentage, if any for commuting trains, would be from Watsonville to Santa Cruz or visa versa. The traffic department can do this study to see where it is going to and from. From what I have experienced, the majority of traffic is coming from the San Jose commuters. Unless something is developed to address these commuters, the train will almost be irrelevant.

QUESTIONS OF STUDIES FOR NOISE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONTAMINANT/POLLUTANTS

What studies have been done for:

Noise pollutant to the area of Residents along the tracks? How long will a train run and until when during 24 hours? Will this go until 9, 10, or 11, or midnight each night?
What studies have been done on the cause and effect of constant noise on residents living along the tracks who are consistently exposed to these high decibels of noise each day?
What studies have been done to address the mental and physical stress effects of those residing on the tracks due to the consistent noise and contaminant pollution?
What studies have been done on the environmental impact on the animals that live and use the tracks, trees, and shrubbery that provide food and shelter to the animals in the area?
What studies have been done on the consistent impact on the foundation of the homes that reside along the tracks? Many of these homes are on block-type foundations and not affixed to the ground.
What type of barrier will be used if this encroachment takes effect and is within a foot of the bedroom window that I sleep under?

QUESTIONS OF SAFETY AND CLEANUP

What studies have been done for:
The safety of the people who will be using the train/walking bike path? For the safety of the residents that live along the tracks? Many of us are senior citizens and live alone.
What about the privacy that will now be violated by folks on the train and paths being able to look into my bedroom window and home?
What is projected to protect the people and keep the area free of crime and clean from homeless and drug addicts who currently use the tracks for such activities?

QUESTIONS REGARDING ALTERNATIVES

What studies or thoughts have been put in for:
The types of trains that could be used, ie., EV/Battery, electric, gas, etc.,
Having just the walking/bike path that would be used more than likely a train. Are the tracks going to be used for other transportation than commuting? Cargo etc?
What about keeping the tracks where they are and putting a one-way path on each side of the track?
Where are the stations going to be located and how many vehicles will it hold? How long can those vehicles park there? Overnight?
What thoughts have been studied to compensate those living on the tracks who will be dealing with the disruptive behavior of several trains going by each day?

These are the concerns and questions that should be addressed before ANY agreement and commitment is made to having the trail/rail.

I am writing this late on Friday and I apologize for any errors that may be here. It is apparent that much more study needs to be done and therefore, I ask that nothing be done until such studies have been completed. RTC is claiming an encroachment on the homes that are located along the tracks. Until and only then, nothing should be done as far as moving homes and correcting the alleged encroachments until these studies are completed and the construction of such rail/trail is approved and finalized.

Please feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions, or concerns. I thank you for taking the time to read this email and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Cami J. Corvin

283-1

283-2

283-3

283-2

283-4

283-2

283-5

Commenter 283

COMMENTER: Cami Corvin

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 283.1

The commenter asks what studies have been done to show commuters from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and from Watsonville to San Jose; and states the majority of traffic is from the San Jose commuters and unless something is developed to address these commuters, the train will be irrelevant.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore, this comment is outside the scope of the Project. However, as described in the Draft EIR Section 1.2.4, the RTC has conducted several studies since the MBSST Network Master Plan and Master Plan EIR were completed in 2013, including: Rail Transit Feasibility Study (2015), Unified Corridor Investment Study (2019), Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis (2021), and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (2022). Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding future rail operations.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 283.2

The commenter has several questions about studies conducted for rail operation and asks about noise, hours of operation, pollution, effects on plants and animals, effects on home foundations, and a barrier. The commenter also asks about the types of trains that could be used (e.g., EV/battery, electric, gas), if the tracks are going to be used for other transportation (e.g., cargo) than commuting.

As described in Section 2.5, *Project Operation and Maintenance*, the Project does not include rail service of any kind, and the normal operating hours would be dawn to dusk, with public “pass through” at all times to allow for early morning and evening commuting and transportation use. These hours are consistent with Segment 7 and the Arana Gulch trail in the City of Santa Cruz. The signage described above under *Trail Features* would include the hours and recommend that trail users use a light and reflectors after dusk and before dawn.

The potential project effects related to air quality and noise/vibration are addressed in DEIR Sections 3.2 and 3.10, respectively.

Refer to **Comment 283-1** and **Master Response E** for more information on future rail studies. Refer to **Master Response G** regarding barriers as it pertains to privacy and security. No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 283.3

The commenter asks what studies have been done for the safety of people using and residing along the tracks, what about privacy and security?

Refer to Section 3.11, *Public Safety and Services*, of the Draft EIR. Also refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 283.4

The commenter asks about keeping the tracks where they are and putting a one-way path on each side of the tracks.

Constructing a one-way path that is ADA-compliant on each side of the tracks would result in greater tree removal and ground disturbance than constructing a two-way trail on one side of the tracks, and thus would result in more impacts than the Proposed Project. Furthermore, Caltrans Chapter 1000, *Transportation Design*, Section 1003.1, states, "Development of a one-way bike path should be undertaken only in rare situations where there is a need for only one-direction of travel. Two-way use of bike paths designed for one-way travel increases the risk of head-on collisions, as it is difficult to enforce one-way operation."

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 283.5

The commenter states that RTC is claiming encroachment of homes along the tracks, and nothing should be done as far as moving homes until such studies requested in above comments are completed, and the construction of the rail trail is approved and finalized.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [J Lighthill](#)
To: [RailTrail](#); [Robert Tidmore](#)
Subject: Comments for Segment 10/11 DEIR
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 4:55:39 PM

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello,
Below are my comments on the SCCRTC MBSST Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR. Thank you for your consideration,
Johanna Lighthill

Comments on the SCCRTC MBSST Segment 10 & 11 Draft EIR

The Segment 10 & 11 Project, which includes the Ultimate Trail Alignment, is inconsistent with several goals, objectives and policies in the adopted MBSST Master Plan. Some of these are listed in the draft EIR (p.5-2) and others are not:

Master Plan Goal 1: Maximize safety and serenity for experiencing and interpreting the sanctuary and landscapes by providing a trail separate from roadway vehicle traffic. See comment A. Trail width, and comment B. Rail and Trail Interface.

Master Plan Objective 1.1: Provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design along the SCBRL railroad corridor. See Comment C. Discontinuous facility.

Master Plan objective 1.2: Make the trail functional as a transportation facility. See comment A. Trail widths.

Master Plan Policy 1.2.3: Construct the trail according to Caltrans bikeway standards as described in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual Chapter 1000, Bikeway Planning. See Comment A. Trail Widths.

Master Plan Objective 1.3: Make the trail recognizable as a continuous facility. See comment C. Discontinuous facility.

Master Plan Objective 1.4, Policy 1.4.1: Minimize trail impacts to sensitive habitat areas and special-status plant and animal species. See Comment D. Paved width reduction.

Master Plan Policies 1.1.2 and 1.1.4, Objective 2.1: Maximize ocean views and scenic coastal

284-1

284-2 vistas along a coastal alignment for experiencing and interpreting the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, coastal environment, local history, and affected communities. The Project requires extensive removal of trees, installation of several miles of retaining walls and fencing, which may have negative impacts on coastal vistas of coastal environment and local communities.

284-3 Master Plan Objective 1.5: Minimize trail impacts to private lands, including agricultural, residential, and other land uses. Impacts to private properties are not adequately addressed in Draft EIR. Several homes have been determined to be encroaching on the SCBRL ROW, but impacts are considered less than significant. Other private property easements are required to construct the trail.

Master Plan Objective 3.2: Encourage use of trail for safe routes to school program. See C, Discontinuous facility.

A. Trail width

The Project does not provide a Class 1 bikeway.

The width of the Ultimate Trail does not meet Caltrans Class 1 bikeway minimum width *requirements* in several sections. The Ultimate Trail does not meet Caltrans width *recommendations* on any portion of either Segments 10 & 11.

Draft EIR P.2-14 includes “The trail widths meet the MBSST Network Master Plan trail classification of a Class I bikeway.⁴ Based on the design criteria for Class I bikeways, the minimum combined paved width would be 12 feet, including paved shoulders, or narrower at structures for stream crossings and areas with constrained ROW within the rail corridor, as allowed in the Caltrans Chapter 1000 Bicycle Transportation Design (July 1, 2020) and California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.”⁵

284-4 EIR footnote 5: “Trail paved widths may be reduced with the recommended striping per Caltrans Chapter 1000 Section 1000.3 (3) Clearance to Obstructions and recommended bicycle warning signs in CA MUTCD Chapter 9 Section 9B.19 Other Bicycle Warning Signs.”

Please cite where Caltrans specifies that Class 1 bikeways may be “narrower at...areas with constrained ROW within the rail corridor”, as EIR states above.

CalTrans Chapter 1000 Section 1000.3 (3) cannot be found. Section 1003.1 (3), however, explains:

“Clearance to Obstructions. A minimum 2-foot horizontal clearance from the paved edge of a bike path to obstructions shall be provided. See Figure 1003.1A. 3 feet should be provided. Adequate clearance from fixed objects is needed regardless of the paved width. If a path is paved contiguous with a continuous fixed object (e.g., fence, wall, and building), a 4-inch white edge line, 2 feet from the fixed object, is recommended to minimize the likelihood of a bicyclist hitting it. The clear width of a bicycle path on structures between railings shall be not less than 10 feet. It is desirable that the clear width of structures

be equal to the minimum clear width of the path plus shoulders (i.e., 14 feet).”

Caltrans’ minimum width for a bicycle path is 8 feet, 10 feet preferred. 12 feet is recommended where heavy bike and pedestrian use is expected. Two 2-foot shoulders (3 ft where feasible) must be included and **are not** part of the traveled way. Setbacks from fixed objects are described above.

The Draft EIR describes the typical width of the Ultimate trail as 12-14 ft wide inclusive of shoulders, and says the trail includes sections that are reduce to 8-12 ft wide, due to constraints or safety improvements. EIR P. 2-14 and 2-15. The Ultimate trail is 14’ wide from 17th to 47th Aves, for approximately 2640 feet. The trail is 8-12’ wide at various locations for a combined length of approximately 2875 feet.

Thus, a more appropriate description of the typical Ultimate Trail (path) width would be 8-14 feet inclusive of shoulders, or 4-10 feet with shoulders.

The Alternate 1-Trail Only (Alt 1) and Interim Trail, part 1 (Int 1), may be described as 16 feet wide inclusive of shoulders (staff confirmed), or 12 feet wide with shoulders. All shoulders are paved.

Please clarify in EIR that all paths are inclusive of shoulders.

Consideration should be given: since much of the Alt 1 and Int 1 trails do not have the fencing and/or setbacks as is required with the Ultimate trail, additional space, unpaved and adjacent to the trail, may be available to trail users. Pedestrians often prefer walking on unpaved surfaces.

State and Federal trail planning guides explain that paths 8 feet in width—as is the Ultimate Trail—should only be used “in very rare circumstances,” where “bicycle traffic is expected to be low,” and “pedestrian use of the facility is not expected to be more than occasional.” <https://njdotlocalaidrc.com/perch/resources/aashto-gbf-4-2012-bicycle.pdf>, p. 5-3. On such paths, “Significant user conflicts should be expected.” <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/pedbike/05138/05138.pdf>, p.15.

A narrow trail will be perceived as unsafe and will discourage use by the most vulnerable users, the elderly and children. The Ultimate Trail could not accommodate heavy traffic and thus, would not serve as a transportation facility nor provide safe routes to schools.

B. Rail and Trail Interface

The EIR specifies that no rail operation is included in the Project. Although the SCBRL is currently out of service, it is still an active rail line, and the RTC is moving forward with repairs to the line to restore freight movement and to implement passenger rail (Rail Concept Report underway). It is presumed that a train will return on the line—the reason given for the trail to be constructed adjacent to the tracks. The Project includes installation of new Class III track that is to accommodate rail at higher speeds. Yet, the EIR gives no consideration to

impacts related to safety of trail user and rail interface.

The RTC is currently in contract with a freight operator who owns a 20’ easement down the center of the tracks. The Project proposes to construct the trail within the freight easement. Please explain whether the CPUC, who has jurisdiction over the safety of rail operation, approved the 8’6” setback and all proposed rail crossings. The MBSST EIR provides several rail crossing treatments that are not discussed in the 10/11 Draft EIR. [Section 4.0-Environmental Impact Analysis](#), p 4.11-21. The MBSST EIR addressed this as “Impact T-4 Potential conflicts between trail users and railroad traffic could occur at any of the trail railway crossings. These conflicts could result in hazardous conditions for both trail users and rail operators and passengers.” MBSST EIR, p. 4.11-27. Please address Impact T-4.

It is inconsistent to plan rail operation without considering impacts of rail operation.

C. Discontinuous facility

The Project does not provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design.

This is inconsistent with Master Plans goals, objectives and policies. T-3 Diverting trail users onto existing streets and sidewalks through Capitola Village includes several road crossings that could be potentially hazardous. The MBSST EIR addresses this as Impact T-3 Potential conflicts between trail users and automobile traffic. MBSST EIR, P 4.11-16. Please include this impact in the 10/11 EIR.

T-1 Local Policy. The longer and discontinuous route, the difficulty of the terrain and additional safety risks through Capitola Village may discourage trail use. The Ultimate Trail would be inconsistent with the following 2045 SCCRTP targets:

Target 1.A. Improve people’s ability to meet most of their daily needs without having to drive. Improve access and proximity to employment centers.

Target 1.A.1. Increase the length of urban bikeway miles relative to total urban arterial and collector roadway miles to 85 percent by 2030 and to 100 percent by 2045.

Target 1.C. Improve the convenience and quality of trips, especially for walk, bicycle, transit, freight, and carpool/vanpool trips.

Target 1.C.2. Improve multimodal network quality for walk and bicycle trips to and within key destinations by increasing the percentage of buffered/separated bicycle and multiuse facilities to 42 percent of bikeway miles by 2030 and to 64 percent by 2045.

Target 1.D. Improve health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the percentage of trips made using active transportation options, including bicycling, walking and transit.

Policy 1.4. Transportation Infrastructure: Ensure network connectivity by closing gaps in the bicycle, pedestrian and transit networks.

Policy 2.4. Reduce the potential for conflict between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles.

Alternative 1 and Interim part 1 would be more consistent with meeting these targets.

D. Paved Width Reduction

The EIR explains that the Project is considered environmentally superior for Most Resource Topics because it requires less ground disturbance overall.

The EIR attributes this to the fact that The Ultimate Trail has a 12 foot width and the Alternative 1 and Interim part 1 trails each have a 16 foot widths. Increased environmental impacts are attributed to the greater width.

The Alternative 1 or Interim part 1 trails are 16 feet wide inclusive of paved shoulders. Please consider how, using a permeable surface (gravel, etc) for the shoulders instead of pavement, impacts may be modified: 12' paved path (the same paved surface width of the Ultimate) down the center of the track alignment, with two unpaved shoulders on either side might affect:

AIR-2 and AIR-3.

BIO-1. Monarch Roost Sites. Possible reduction in the number of trees removed for wider paved trail.

CR-2 and CR-3. Possible decreased excavation, less ground disturbance.

HAZ-1. Less demolition and ground disturbance.

HYD-1 and HYD-2. Groundwater quality and recharge affected by pavement reduction.

And more.

Other Considerations.

Transportation.

Project is inconsistent with local policy.

The 2045 SCCRTP identifies several targets below that are better met with Alternative 1 Trail only, or Interim trail part 1, that with Ultimate trail alignment:

Target 1.A.1. Increase the length of urban bikeway miles....

Target 1.C. Improve the convenience and quality of trips, especially for walk, bicycle, transit, freight, and carpool/vanpool trips.

Target 1.C.2. Improve multimodal network quality for walk and bicycle trips to and within key destinations by increasing the percentage of buffered/separated bicycle and multiuse facilities to 42 percent of bikeway miles by 2030 and to 64 percent by 2045. See comment C Discontinuous facility.

Target 1.D. Improve health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the percentage of trips made using active transportation options, including bicycling, walking and transit.

284-9
cont.

The Project is inconsistent with Santa Cruz County General Plan and Local Coastal Program, Objective 3.8a, System Development. "To develop a bikeway network maximizing the safety and convenience of users of all levels of experience within that system. The network should be primarily for commuter travel designed to increase the potential of combining bicycle travel with other forms of transportation and also include the opportunity for recreational use," as provided in the EIR. As discussed in Trail Width, Ultimate trail will discourage use and not meet shared path width requirements. As discussed in Trail Width, the Ultimate Trail width will not facilitate use by all users of all abilities (and speeds). Please consider these with impact T-1.

284-10

Ground disturbance.

On Segment 10, Project requires track, tie, and ballast removal; rail realignment; installation of upgraded track, ties and ballast; the installation of the Ultimate trail. Despite this the trail does still not meet Class 1 width specifications.

In table 5-3, the Ultimate trail is determined to have less impact on several topics than the Alternative 1 due to Alt 1's wider path. The rail relocation includes at least 17-20 feet width of ground disturbance and the Ultimate trail construction includes at least 12 feet width of ground disturbance, for a total of 29-32 foot width of ground disturbance. The Alternative 1 Trail only width is 16 feet. Segment 10 includes twice the ground disruption area than that of the Alternative 1 Trail only for 1.5 miles. Please explain how the Project has less impact.

284-11

Tree removal.

The Alternative 1 Trail only/Interim part 1 trail section between Monterey and Grove is shown on the schematics to veer off slightly from the center of the tracks northward toward Park Ave and its width increases to 16.5 feet, and requires excessive clearing and grubbing well beyond the trail's boundary. The railroad track in that area is on a flat section that measures approximately 16 feet wide, and is surrounded by steep berms with several Eucalyptus (Monarch sites). With a 16 foot trail that includes a 12 foot wide paved portion and two 2 foot unpaved shoulders (=16 ft inclusive of shoulders), please consider whether tree removal can be reduced.

Please explain why excessive clearing/grubbing beyond the trail's boundary is necessary to construct the Project (Ultimate Trail) near the New Brighton/Porter-Sesnon area. This work would be unnecessary with Trail only.

284-12

Access.

The inclusion of fencing required with the Project will potentially restrict access to the trail. Many residents who live adjacent to the line and currently access the corridor through gates or trails may be blocked off.

284-13

Track relocation.

Please consider the potential impacts to those whose homes will be 5-8 feet closer to the track that is being upgraded to accommodate higher rail speeds along Segment 10.

End.

Commenter 284

COMMENTER: Johanna Lighthill

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 284.1

The commenter states that the Ultimate Trail Alignment is inconsistent with several goals, objectives and policies, lists some, and elaborates on the inconsistencies in subsequent comments.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Response 284.2 to 284.13**.

Response 284.2

The commenter states that the Project requires tree removal, retaining walls and fencing which could negative impact coastal vistas and local communities.

The potential effects on scenic vistas and public views are identified in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, of the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 284.3

The commenter states that the impacts to private properties are not adequately addressed in the Draft EIR, several homes have been determined to be encroaching on rail ROW, and the impacts are considered less than significant.

Refer to **Response 234.1** regarding CEQA requirements regarding the focus on environmental impacts. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

Response 284.4

The commenter states the Project does not provide a Class 1 bikeway, and the width of the Ultimate Trail does not meet Caltrans Class 1 bikeway minimum width in several sections; and they ask for the cite where Caltrans specifies that Class 1 bikeways may be narrower in constrained areas, because the cite referenced in footnote 5 on page 2-14 cannot be found. The commenter further states that 8' wide paths should be used in very rare circumstances, a narrow trail will be perceived as unsafe and discourage users, and the Ultimate Trail could not accommodate heavy traffic and thus not serve as a transportation facility.

Refer to **Response 11.3**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

The DEIR Section 2.4.1, under *Trail Width and Materials*, has been revised to correct the typographical error. For the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue, the trail

width would be reduced to between 10 to 12 feet (not 8 to 12 feet), as shown in **Response 11.3**. Additionally, footnote 5 has been revised to include reference to Figures 9C-8(B) and 9B-3.

Response 284.5

The commenter states that the EIR should clarify that all paths are inclusive of shoulders.

DEIR Sections 2.4.1 (*Ultimate Trail Configuration*) and 2.4.2 (*Optional Interim Trail*), under *Trail Width and Materials*, states the paved width would be 12 feet and 16 feet, respectively, including paved shoulders.”

The following sentence has been added to DEIR Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, under *Trail Width and Materials*, to clarify the paths are inclusive of shoulders: “All shoulders are paved except at roadway crossings where chicanes are present and decomposed granite materials is used.

Response 284.6

The commenter states that although the project doesn’t include rail operation and the SCBRL is currently out of service, it is still an active rail line. The RTC is moving forward with repairs to restore freight movement and implement passenger rail. The project includes installation of a new Class III rail where the rail needs to be realigned in Segment 11 to accommodate the trail; and it is inconsistent to plan rail operation without considering the impacts of rail operation, including those related to safety of trail user and rail interface.

Refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operation.

Response 284.7

The commenter states that the Project does not provide a continuous public trail with continuity in design because of the diversion outside the rail corridor through Capitola, and thus is inconsistent with Project objectives regarding a continuous trail and maximizing safety, as well as 2045 RTP targets.

Most of the trail would be a continuous separate multi-use trail in the rail corridor (4.2 miles of the 4.7-mile-long corridor for Segments 10 and 11). The commenter is correct in that the exception is where trail users are directed outside the corridor to bike lanes and sidewalks through Capitola Village. The reason for the diversion, along with a discussion of safety through the village is explained in **Master Response D** for the Capitola Trestle and **Master Response F** regarding Capitola Village Safety Concerns.

The commenter is also correct in that Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) would remain in the corridor, rather than directing trail users through the village, and thus could be considered more consistent with those objectives. It should be noted that Design Option A of the Ultimate Trail Configuration would also retain the trail in the rail corridor, rather than directing users to surface streets through the village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 284.8

The commenter states the reason the Project (Ultimate Trail Configuration) is considered the environmentally superior alternative for most resource topics is because it requires less ground disturbance (for a 12' wide trail, compared to a 16' wide trail for Alternative 1 and Optional Interim Trail Part 1). The commenter suggests the impacts of a 16' wide trail (to air quality, monarch roost sites, cultural resources, hazardous materials, hydrology and more) could be reduced by using a permeable surface (e.g., gravel) for the shoulders instead of pavement, so the paved portion would be 12' wide like the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

The commenter is correct in that the increased width of the 16-foot-wide paved trail for Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and the Optional Interim Trail contribute to the increased ground disturbing activities, compared to the 12-foot-wide Ultimate Trail Configuration. However, removing the rail (required for Alternative 1 and Optional Interim Trail) and the two additional construction periods (required for Optional Interim Trail) result in a substantial amount of additional ground disturbance, compared to the Ultimate Trail Configuration. Revising the 16-foot-wide Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Optional Interim Trail to include a 12-foot-wide paved trail and 2-foot-wide unpaved shoulders on each side would not substantially reduce the impacts associated with ground disturbance.

Also refer to **Master Response H** regarding the trail width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and **Response 11.3** regarding trail width requirements. The comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 284.9

The commenter states the Project is inconsistent with local policy and transportation projects in the 2045 RTP (e.g., increasing length of urban bikeway miles, improving multimodal network for and quality of walk and bike trips) and Santa Cruz County General Plan Objective 3.8a to develop a bikeway network maximizing safety.

The Project generally would be consistent with these policies. Refer to **Response 284.7** and **Master Response D and Master Response F**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 284.10

The commenter states that on Segment 10 the Project requires realigning the tracks and still does not meet Class 1 width specifications, and suggests this includes twice as much ground disturbance than Alternative 1 (Trail Only) for 1.5 miles.

Refer to **Response 11.3** regarding trail width requirements. While the Ultimate Trail Configuration does require more ground disturbance in Segment 10 compared to Alternative 1 (Trail Only), for the Project as a whole, it requires less ground disturbance than Alternative 1. As stated in Section 5.3 under 2) *Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics*, Alternative 1 results in more ground disturbance than the Ultimate Trail Configuration, not only because it is 16 feet wide instead of 12 feet wide, but because it involves removal of tracks, ties and ballast the entire length of the project, Segment 10 and 11 (4.5 miles), instead of just Segment 10 (1.5 miles).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 284.11

The commenter asks questions about the Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) alignments between Monterey Avenue and Grove Lane in Segment 11, such as why it veers slightly off the centerline, why the width increases to 16.5', and if tree removal can be reduced by reducing the paved portion to 12' with 4' of unpaved shoulders. Additionally, the commenter asks why additional clearing/grubbing beyond the trail boundary is needed for the Ultimate Trail Configuration near New Brighton/Porter-Sesnon area, and states this extra work would be unnecessary with Alternative 1 (Trail Only).

Alternative 1 and the Optional Interim Trail alignments would be constructed in generally the same location as the existing tracks and may need to meander or narrow in constrained areas, such as just west of Grove Lane by Escalona Gulch. In order to minimize the amount of ground disturbance and retaining structures, the trail veers away from the track centerline to follow the existing grade. Additionally, Caltrans states, "A minimum 2 foot wide shoulder, composed of the same pavement material as the bike path or all-weather surface material that is free of vegetation, shall be provided adjacent to the traveled way of the bike path when not on a structure." Regarding the width increasing to 16.5 feet, this is a typographical error in plans. The trail width is 16.0 feet.

A preliminary analysis of reducing the width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) alignments from 16 feet to 12 feet shows that 47 additional trees may be protected in place throughout Segments 10 and 11. Specifically, from Monterey Avenue to Grove Lane, the width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) is generally 16 feet with 67 estimated tree removals. If the same alignment were to be 12 feet wide instead of 16 feet, an estimated 64 trees would be removed. Please also refer to **Master Response A** regarding tree removal and mitigation. Clearing and grubbing beyond the trail boundary is typically referred to as temporary impacts necessary to construct the trail. Areas subject to temporary impacts can be expected to regrow within 1 year vegetation of a similar stature to what preceded construction. Tree removal beyond the boundary of the trail may be required if the trees pose a safety hazard to the trail or if access is needed to construct critical trail infrastructure. Impacts from tree removal are considered permanent impacts. DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, addresses both temporary and permanent impacts.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 284.12

The commenter states that the inclusion of fencing required with the Project could restrict access to the trail for residents who live adjacent to the trail.

Refer to **Response 11.2**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 284.13

The comment states please consider the potential impacts of track relocation to the homes that will be 5–8 feet closer to the track in Segment 10.

The potential impacts of the Ultimate Trail Configuration, which requires track realignment in Segment 10 as described in Section 2.4.1, are addressed and disclosed throughout Chapter 3 of the Draft EIR. Also refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: B K G <bkbeachhouse@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 15, 2023 12:02 PM
To: Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>
Subject: Fwd: Comments on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10+11 DEIR

Forwarding this message again to confirm receipt.

285-1
285-2

I support the trail ONLY option on the existing rail line. The draft EIR does not show all existing conditions in segment 11. There is not room to accommodate the trail on the coast side or inland side without further

destruction to the environment / habitat. If trail were switched to the coast side it would push the trail dangerously close to residences and change the existing already steep elevation segment 11 and at New Brighton Road. The proposed viaduct and additional tree removal on coast side would be unacceptable. Additionally, there are safety concerns of moving a trail closer to residences. The draft EIR states "These sensitive habitat areas may be impacted by user activities including , but not limited to, unpermitted off-trail access, transient loitering and encampments, litter, and elevated noise." I have provided some photo's to show the existing conditions in the area behind Pine Tree Lane and New Brighton Road. Please do not exacerbate problems in the New Brighton Beach area. Thank you. Kim





Commenter 285

COMMENTER: Kim

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 285.1

The commenter supports Trail Only (Alternative 1) on the existing rail line.

Thank you for the comments. This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 285.2

The commenter supports Trail Only (Alternative 1) on the existing rail line and states the Draft EIR does not show all existing conditions in Segment 11; there is not room to accommodate the trail on either side without destroying the environment and habitat, and putting it on the coastal side would be too close to residents, where there would be safety concerns.

The Draft EIR describes the existing conditions (setting) in Appendix A, which includes the design plans showing the alignment relative to adjacent structures, and throughout Chapter 3 for each environmental topic. Photographs and graphic representations of existing conditions are shown in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics* (ground level photographs), and Section 3.3, *Biological Resources* (aerial photographs).

The impacts of the trail on the environment are described throughout Chapter 3, with impacts to habitat and other biological resources in Section 3.3 and impacts regarding public safety in Section 3.3.11, *Public Safety and Services*. Also refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

From: [Maria Reimuller](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Comments on the draft EIR
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 4:56:01 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

My name is Maria Reimuller and I've lived in Castle Mobile Estates for 23 years. We have a community of long term residents here at Castle but I never thought my community here along the tracks could be facing displacement AGAIN. We went through a protracted battle with a previous park owner who wanted to sell the land and evict us all. We were finally assisted by the City of Capitola and Millenium Housing, who purchased the park, to live out our dream of affordable home ownership. The Park has thrived since then. However, we are under THREAT once again with our homes being relocated or displaced because they are considered encroachments in the rail corridor.

The DEIR impact report does not have adequate information nor planning to realistically deal with the mobile homes along the corridor. It is assumed, for example that mobile homes can be relocated in Santa Cruz county.

From the DEIR:

"...Property owners could move the mobile home to another nearby mobile home park that has space to accommodate it". (3.15.9 Population and Housing -PDF page 646).

My research has shown no available spaces in Santa Cruz county. There were two impact reports done when the previous owner tried to close Castle Estates (the more recent report done in 2004), one impact report was done for Surf and Sand Park (14 years old) and one for Pacific Cove Park (after the flood 10 years ago). There were no identifiable spaces found in Santa Cruz county. There was mention made that there might have been 6 spaces in Marysville or possibly the Central Valley. Any new park that could be built in the county to accommodate displaced residents wouldn't be affordable for anyone in this park as new construction is not available for rent control. Santa Cruz County is now the most expensive place to rent in the country, with Monterey County sitting not far behind, according to a new report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC).Jun 27, 2023

I am also concerned that the RTC seems to be in a rush to remove the encroachments. If our fences are taken down and our back yards exposed to the rail corridor we will lose privacy and that becomes a significant safety issue. There are coyotes that roam the corridor at night and people, at times drunk and disorderly, camp out. Are there resources to hire security on the corridor? The 7 foot fence we currently have now provides adequate protection. A train while serving some of the public can also increase reasonable nuisance levels and noise. For these reasons I am not in support of the Ultimate Trail project.

Maria Reimuller
Castle Mobile Estates

286-1

286-2

Commenter 286

COMMENTER: Maria Reimuller

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 286.1

The commenter (who lives in Castle Mobile Estates) is concerned about being relocated or displaced due to encroachment because there are no identifiable spaces in the County and is concerned the RTC seems to be rushing to remove encroachments and existing fencing that provides protection from animals and people out at night, as well as a train.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process. Refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 286.2

The commenter does not support the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Michael Lewis](#)
 To: [RailTrail](#)
 Subject: Segment 10 & 11 DEIR Comment
 Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 12:47:35 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line) vs. Alternative 1

Optional Interim Trail

The description of the Optional Interim Trail approach to building the Ultimate Trail Proposed Project is as follows (Page 83, 2-17):

“... the County is considering an optional first phase of the Project, whereby an interim trail would be located on the rail line. This could occur if the common carrier files for abandonment of freight operations along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line with the Surface Transportation Board or if the RTC files for adverse abandonment. If this occurs, all or a portion of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line could be railbanked to preserve the corridor for future freight reactivation and then could be used for a multi-use trail as an interim condition.

“Therefore, this optional first phase includes three parts: (1) implementation of the Optional Interim Trail, which includes removal of the rail and construction of the trail on the rail line; (2) demolition of the Optional Interim Trail and rebuilding of the rail line; and (3) construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration alongside the rail.”

Comment: In reality, the Optional Interim Trail approach would include eight parts:

1. Abandonment of freight operations and approval of rail banking;
2. Demolition of the rails, ties and rail bed;
3. Construction of a 16 -12 foot wide paved bicycle/pedestrian trail on the rail centerline, except where the trail leaves the corridor and is routed through Capitola city streets and back onto the corridor;
5. Completion of the electric passenger rail Project Concept Report;
6. At some unknown time (estimated 30 years), as determined by the electric passenger rail Concept Project Report, demolition of the bicycle/pedestrian trail;
7. Demolition and rebuilding of the Capitola Trestle over Soquel Creek for rail and trail;
8. Construction of the rails, ties, rail bed and support infrastructure on the rail centerline to meet the requirements for resumption of freight and/or electric passenger rail service;
9. Construction of the 12 - 10 foot wide Ultimate Trail beside the rails.

In order to resume freight or initiate electric passenger rail service, the railway would have to be designed to meet the requirements of rail gauge, support infrastructure, acquisition of locations for rail stations and parking, sidings and switching, and roadway crossing warnings and barriers. These would have to be designed before the design for the bicycle/pedestrian trail is completed to accommodate the rail requirements.

287-1
cont.

The DEIR Purpose, “to provide an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible bicycle/pedestrian path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the existing rail corridor” does not include building a new rail facility, nor do the objectives reference building for rail.

Therefore, parts 7 and 8 of the Optional Interim Trail approach to building the Ultimate Trail (as outlined above) should not be included in this EIR, but should be addressed as separate project, if and when it is ever considered feasible. Removing the rail construction phase of the Optional Interim Trail makes this option the same as Alternative 1.

5.2.1 Alternative 1 (Trail Only)

The description of the Alternative 1 is as follows (Page 703, 5-31):

“Under Alternative 1, the railroad tracks and ties would be **permanently** removed, and a paved multi- use trail with a **typical width of 16 feet** would be constructed in generally the same location throughout Segments 10 and 11.

“Effectively, this Trail Only alternative is the same as implementing only Part 1 (but not Parts 2 and 3) of the Optional Interim Trail. Therefore, the trail alignment, width and materials, and features would be the same as that described in Section 2.4.2, Optional Interim Trail (Trail on the Rail Line), under Part 1) Implementation of the Optional Interim Trail. A summary has been provided below.

287-2

“Like the Ultimate Trail Configuration, the Alternative 1 trail alignment extends from 17th Avenue on the west to State Park Drive on the east. However, rather than directing trail users to sidewalks and bicycle lanes along surface streets through Capitola Village, the trail would continue along the rail centerline (tracks and ties removed) and across the Capitola Trestle Bridge. As described in Sections 2.4.2 and 2.6.2 for Optional Interim Trail Part 1, conversion of the existing Capitola Trestle Bridge from railroad use to trail use requires structural repairs to various parts of the bridge and installing FRP deck for the trail.

“The typical trail width would be 16 feet with striping in the middle to separate eastbound and westbound trail users. The width would be reduced to 12 feet in constrained areas, including various street and bridge crossings, as described in Section 2.4.2 for Optional Interim Trail Part 1. This is consistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan, which identifies 16 feet where space permits and reducing to 12 feet to minimize impacts. For comparison, the Ultimate Trail is mostly 12 feet wide but narrows to 10 feet wide in some areas due to constraints and widens to 14 feet wide where there is additional space (e.g., between 17th Avenue and Rodeo Gulch).

“As described in Section 2.6.2 for Optional Interim Trail Part 1, the physical elements of track removal would entail: 1) Remove rail, ties, signage, and equipment. 2) Excavate and redistribute ballast on site where feasible. 3) Regrade, add base rock, compact, and then pave the trail with asphalt.

“Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would require some retaining walls, tree removal (288 trees), and earth movement (7,363 cubic yards [CY] of excavation and 11,988 CY embankment construction/fill) for rail removal and trail construction, as described in Section 2.4.1 and Table 2-3 for the Optional Interim Trail Part 1. It is assumed that Alternative 1 would result in

the same amount of tree removal as the Optional Interim Trail Part 1 because it would be the same width (16 feet) and location.”

Comment: The statement “the railroad tracks and ties would be **permanently** removed” is inaccurate and improperly biased against this Alternative. Removal the tracks in this Alternative is no more “permanent” than removing the tracks in the proposed Optional Interim Trail. The trails could be removed and the railway built at any time in the future when rail use of the corridor is determined to be feasible, just as with the Optional Interim Trail.

Furthermore, with the tracks removed, there is no justification for constructing the bicycle/pedestrian paved trail on the centerline of the corridor. It could be placed to minimize impacts to Biological Resources, especially in the Escalon Monarch butterfly roosting area. This would result in even less environmental impacts than in the Alternative 1 described in the EIR.

Summary

- Remove “rebuilding of the rail line” from the three parts of the Optional Interim Trail.
- Remove the word “permanent” from the description of removal of the tracks in Alternative 1.
- Remove the specification that the bicycle/pedestrian trail be placed on the centerline of the corridor from Alternative 1.

With these changes to the DEIR, Alternative 1 meets the Purpose and Objectives of the Project and is the only Environmentally Superior Alternative.

Michael Lewis, PhD
Live Oak

Commenter 287

COMMENTER: Michael Lewis

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 287.1

The commenter states: (1) The Optional Interim Trail would include 8 parts, including completion of electric passenger rail. (2) The commenter states that to resume rail service, the rail would have to be designed before the design for the trail is completed to accommodate the rail requirements. (3) The Project does not include building a new rail facility, rebuilding the rail and building the Ultimate Trail should not be included as part of the Project nor evaluated in the Draft EIR, and instead should be evaluated as a separate project if and when it is considered feasible. Removing the rail construction phase of the Optional Interim Trail makes it the same as Alternative 1.

Thank you for the comments.

- 1) As described in Section 2.4.2 and throughout the Draft EIR, the Optional Interim Trail includes the following three parts: 1) Implementation of Interim Trail, 2) Demolition of Interim Trail and Rebuilding the Rail Line, and 3) Construction of the Ultimate Trail Configuration.

Part 1 requires the common carrier or the RTC to file for abandonment of freight operations with the STB, and then railbanking to preserve the corridor for future rail use, prior to use of the corridor for a trail as an interim condition.

- 2) As stated in DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and clarified in **Master Response E**, the project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project, including electric passenger rail which will be analyzed as a separate project if and when it is considered feasible. Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operations and railbanking, and for a description of how the location of the relocated tracks was determined.
- 3) Refer to and **Master Response I** regarding why the Interim Trail includes three parts. The commenter is correct that removing the rail construction phase (i.e., Part 2), as well as removing construction of the Ultimate Trail (Part 3), from the Optional Interim Trail would be the similar to Alternative 1 (Trail Only), as noted in Section 5.2.1.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 287.2

The commenter states that it is an inaccurate and biased statement that Alternative 1 (Trail Only) would permanently remove the tracks

Refer to **Response 274.1**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 287.3

The commenter summarizes: Remove building the rail line from the three parts of the Optional Interim Trail. Remove the word permanent from the description of Alternative 1 (Trail Only). Remove the specification that the trail be placed on the centerline of the corridor for Alternative 1.

With these changes, Alternative 1 meets the project purpose and objectives and is the only environmentally superior alternative.

Refer to **Response 274.1** and **Master Response H** for a general discussion on Alternative 1 (Trail Only). Regarding removing the specification that the Alternative 1 trail alignment be placed on the centerline, it was placed on the centerline to minimize impacts to the surrounding environment. Relocating the trail to one side or the other would increase impacts to biological resources (e.g., tree removal, habitat).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: nadene thorne <nadenethornedavis@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 15, 2023 11:55 AM
To: Robert Tidmore <Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: EIR Comments, Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

288-1

The Coastal Rail Trail Project is underpinned by a serious practical and logical misconception: building a trail so that “future rail transportation service along the corridor is not precluded” [ref: Monterey Bay Scenic Sanctuary Trail [MBSST} plan] does not in any way necessitate creating a plan for an “ultimate trail” which entails three stages of construction in preparation for future rail transportation. As with the federal railbanking guidance, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluating tentative plans which merely avoid causing or creating any such obstacles to future rail would meet the goals of the MBSST as stated in that document.

288-2

While the 32-mile long corridor was purchased with the express intention of installing passenger and freight rail service along with a bike and pedestrian trail, four studies to date have not clarified the prospects for rail. A fifth “Project Concept Report” is in progress. In the meantime, the result of this original misconception is that with each successive segment’s EIR on trail alone, more difficulties are discovered in the terrain, environment, track position, corridor encroachments, and the like, each necessitating more complex, more confusing, - and more expensive - Alternate Plans.

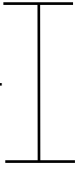
288-3

A significant fallacy that results from this misdirected and unresolved conception of what could be built in the corridor is the prescription by this EIR’s writers of an “environmentally superior alternative.” This determination is simply the result of measuring an academic set of standards, but does not take into account community values or preferences. The most glaring and misleading instance of this is the award of ‘environmentally superior’ to the ultimate trail’s greatest decimation of trees, vegetation, Monarch butterfly habitat and the like because it accomplishes all this in the initial trail construction rather than over the course of possibly replacing the interim trail. But until rail is found to be feasible, - or more significantly IF - the deceptively named interim trail provides the most community benefit soonest with the least environmental degradation. Most importantly here, the “environmentally superior” label has served to confuse and mislead the public about what may actually be built in the corridor and the extent to which that aligns with their wishes and expectations.

Among the many unresolved and ambiguous aspects of this EIR are these:

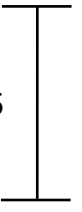
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288-4



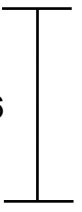
Why are the tracks being removed in Segment 10 and reinstalled with new material? Who pays for the difference between moving the old tracks and purchasing the new ones?

288-5



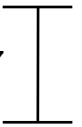
Why is railbanking not explored further? It could be a significant resolution to otherwise problematic issues like encroachments, the opening of the Capitola Trestle for bicycles and pedestrians, consequences of track removal, and others, as suggested by Guy Preston in reports included in RTC meeting minutes.

288-6



There doesn't seem to be a consistent standard in what pre-rail installations are included in this EIR: road crossing signals and barriers, fencing along the tracks separating rail from trail, etc. Why should any of these installations be included with this EIR planning, or paid for with active transportation funding?

288-7



The constraints of Measure L with regard to bike and pedestrian pathways through Capitola Village.

288-8



The greenhouse gasses released in the production of cement - of which there is a massive

288-8
cont.

24. amount prescribed for the corridor retaining walls. Dr. Carey Pico has calculated the estimated volume attendant to this project and will have reported this to you separately. To ignore the significance of these effects in this (and all associated EIRs)
25. is deceptive.
- 26.

Nadene Thorne
Santa Cruz CA

Commenter 288

COMMENTER: Nadene Thorne

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 288.1

The commenter states that building a trail so future rail transportation is not precluded does not necessitate creating a plan for an ultimate trail that entails three stages of construction in preparation for future rail. The commenter also states, as with federal railbanking guidance, an EIR evaluating tentative plans to avoid causing such obstacles to future rail would meet the goals of the MBSST as stated in the document.

Thank you for the comments. Refer to **Master Response I** for information on why the Draft EIR includes analyzing all three parts of the Interim Trail.

The commenter is correct that the Interim Trail does not preclude future rail because it accounts for Part 2 whereby the Interim Trail is removed and the rail line reconstructed, and Part 3 whereby the Ultimate Trail is constructed next to the rail line and thus meets the goals of the MBSST which is an identified project objective (refer to DEIR Section 2.3).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.2

The commenter states the rail corridor was purchased with the intent of installing passenger and freight rail service, along with a trail; four studies to date have not clarified the prospects for rail, and a fifth “Project Concept Report” is in progress; and this has resulted in more difficulties planning/designing and increased complexity and cost.

Refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operations and future passenger rail studies.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.3

The commenter states the prescription of an environmentally superior alternative is a fallacy, and this determination is the result of measuring an academic set of standards but doesn’t take into account community values or preference. The commenter also states that identifying the Ultimate Trail as environmentally superior is misleading, and the environmentally superior label has served to confuse and mislead the public about what may be built and the extent to which that aligns with their wishes and expectations.

As stated in Section 5.3, *Environmentally Superior Alternative, CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6(e)(2), requires the lead agency to identify an environmentally superior alternative that is not the “no project” but does not instruct how a lead agency must determine which alternative is environmentally superior.

The County chose two methods for identifying an environmentally superior alternative: 1) Minimizing Significant and Unavoidable Project impacts, and 2) Environmentally Superior for Most Resource Topics. The rationale for finding Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and Ultimate Trail Configuration, respectively, as environmentally superior is explained in Section 5.3 based on the information presented in DEIR Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, and Section 5.2, *Alternatives Evaluated in EIR*.

As stated in DEIR Section 1.1, the purpose of an EIR is to serve as an informational document that “will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.” As such, the EIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15121 of the *CEQA Guidelines* (Title 14 CCR Section 15000 et seq.), and the analyses are based on facts, established thresholds, relevant regulations, and objective professional judgment of technical experts in the field. It is not intended to account for or try to evaluate subjective community preferences.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.4

The commenter asks why the tracks are being removed in Segment 10 and reinstalled with new material, and who pays for the difference between moving the old tracks and purchasing new ones?

Refer to **Master Response E** regarding why relocation of rail infrastructure is required and why they are considered a Project cost.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.5

The commenter asks why isn't railbanking explored further, as it could be a significant resolution to problematic issues like encroachments, using the Capitola Trestle, etc.

Refer to **Master Response E** regarding railbanking and **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.6

The commenter states that there does not seem to be a consistent standard in what pre-rail installations are included (e.g., signals, barriers, fencing), and asks why these installations should be included or paid for with active transportation funding.

The planned fencing is described in Section 2.4 under *Fencing and Guardrails*, and the planned utility installations are described in Section 2.6 under *Rail Realignment and Utility Relocations and Installations* and in the design plans included in Appendix A. Refer to **Master Response E** regarding why relocation of rail infrastructure is required and why they are considered a Project cost.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.7

The commenter states the constraints of Measure L with regard to bike and pedestrian pathways through the village and appears to be stating that Measure L conflicts with the Ultimate Trail Configuration's routing of trail users through the Capitola Village.

Refer to **Master Response D** regarding Measure L.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 288.8

The commenter states that greenhouse gasses released in the production of cement should be included as a significant impact. The commenter refers to estimated GHG emissions provided by another commenter. Please see **Response 252.1** related to the referenced comment.

As discussed in Section 3.6.3, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds*, of the Draft EIR, the significance of a project's GHG emissions does not typically include sequestration or embedded and downstream emissions such as required construction materials. Statewide emissions inventories are primarily production and activity based, generally counting emissions where they enter the atmosphere, rather than consumption based, which would include lifecycle emissions regardless of where in the supply chain the emissions were produced. These inventories are the basis for statewide emissions reduction targets, and as such it is appropriate for Project-level analysis to only include emissions sources consistent with statewide inventories. The state inventories do not include embedded emission of goods consumed in California, or downstream emissions such as transportation of California goods outside the state.²² Similarly, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines note that CEQA and General Plan emissions inventories are traditionally production-based rather than consumption based.²³ As such, the Draft EIR correctly focuses on anthropogenic emissions from Project operation and does not include cement production in the Project's GHG inventory.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

²² Association of Environmental Professionals, California Chapter, Climate Change Committee (AEP). 2017. *Production, Consumption and Lifecycle Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Implications for CEQA and Climate Action Plans*. August 2017.

²³ Governor's OPR. 2017. *State of California General Plan Guidelines*. Sacramento, CA.

From: [Peter Walz](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Coastal Trail - please no rail!
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 4:37:29 PM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

Hello -

I am a Capitola resident, and I support the trail only option.

There are so many new and developing transportation options for personal transport. Ebikes, scooters, one wheel, and traditional pedal bikes are all available options and many other are being developed. A trail option will be used daily and enjoyed by all residents and tourists.

This corridor does not have adequate space for a rail train plus trail. Furthermore the infrastructure required for a rail service would require many years and significant modifications to this rail line. Passenger stations, parking lots, street crossings, and probably the most costly and challenging would be the various trestles and over-crossings that would need to be fully rebuilt and improved for passenger rail service.

People will see the benefits of a trail only option and be able to use and enjoy this corridor within the next few years, and with modest costs (compared to train plus trail).

Please stop this train and rail use fantasy that has consumed so many years and endless costs to evaluate.

Get the trail built !

Peter Walz
Capitola, CA

289-1

Commenter 289

COMMENTER: Peter Walz

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 289.1

The commenter supports Trail Only (Alternative 1) and states there is not adequate space for a rail train plus trail, and the infrastructure required for rail service would require many years and significant modifications to this rail line.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project.

The commenter's support for Trail Only is acknowledged. The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Phil Rockey](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Trail only please!
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 7:33:55 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

290-1 | We need a trail now--interim or whatever you want to call it. Trail with tracks does not work. We need room to walk or bike safely without tracks. Railbanking works--talk to Rail to Trails Conservancy.

Thank you,
Phil and Marilyn Rockey

Commenter 290

COMMENTER: Phil and Marilyn Rockey

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 290.1

The commenter supports a trail without tracks, and states railbanking works.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [samiradawn](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: DEIR Housing/Population (segment 10)
Date: Friday, December 15, 2023 9:17:30 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

291-1

Hello. I am a long time resident of Blue & Gold Star Mobile Home Park. I have lived at this location for close to 25 years where I currently raise my two school age children. Our home is situated along the ROW of rail line and considered as one of the encroachments in the ROW.

After reviewing the **DEIR(3.15.9) Population and Housing**, I have deep concerns about the potential displacement of families (45 homes) who reside along this narrow stretch of corridor as we are considered “encroachments”.

The proposed solutions mentioned in DEIR for said “encroachments” are simply not feasible. These homes can not be easily moved as they are manufactured homes, not trailers on wheels. Having trail only (threshold A) appears to have far less impact on residents than both rail & trail, in regards to “encroachments”. The threat of displacement to families would be non existent under threshold A.

291-2

I propose a trail only solution to minimize negative impacts on families residing along the ROW & as to avoid displacement/loss of property. Another option could be to divert the trail onto Brommer street (between Thompson Ave & 38th Ave) as an alternative.

291-3

As a whole, the DEIR greatly minimizes the grave impact this would have on residents along the ROW. The solutions to the encroachments are premature, especially when we don’t know, yet, the direction this project is taking or the final end result.

Sincerely,

Samira Totah

Sent from my iPhone

Commenter 291

COMMENTER: Samira Totah

DATE: December 15, 2023

Response 291.1

The commenter (who lives in the Blue & Gold Star Mobile Home Park) is concerned about being displaced because of the encroachment and states the solutions mentioned in the Draft EIR are not feasible, and the threat of displacement would be non-existent with Trail Only.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Response 234.1** regarding CEQA requirements regarding the focus on environmental impacts. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 291.2

The commenter supports Trail Only or diverting the trail onto Brommer Street between Thompson Ave and 38th Ave.)

Diverting from the rail corridor is inconsistent with the MBSST Network Master Plan's primary objective of "defining a continuous public trail alignment that maximizes opportunities for a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail separate from roadway vehicle traffic." With both Brommer Street and 38th Avenue being busy collector streets, detouring trail users onto an active roadway would not maximize, to the extent feasible, project objectives to provide a continuous trail, separate from roadway vehicle traffic.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary

Response 291.3

The commenter states that the Draft EIR minimizes the impact on residents, and the solutions are premature since we don't know the direction the project is taking.

Refer to **Response 234.1** regarding CEQA requirements regarding the focus on environmental impacts. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

From: [Kevin Brickley](#)
To: [RailTrail](#)
Subject: Support of Ultimate Trail Design
Date: Saturday, December 16, 2023 8:50:43 AM

*****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.***

292-1

Dear RTC Commissioners,
I am writing to express my support of the **the Ultimate Trail Design**, which preserves the tracks for electric rail transit, and **opposing rail abandonment, railbanking, and track removal**. With science telling us that humanity needs to cut emissions by 43% in this decade, and present plans only accomplishing a 10% cut, it is critical that we take every action possible to do our part. I am confident that the RTC can resolve the encroachment issues in ways that are supportive of any families that might be affected and hold mobile home park owners accountable for their illegal building activities. The EIR is well thought out and clearly shows that the Ultimate Trail is the option with the least overall long-term environmental impacts. With funding now in hand to build the trail from Aptos to Davenport, please keep the momentum going and support the Ultimate Trail as part of the Monterey Bay Scenic trails system.

Sincerely,

Kevin Brickley
Aptos

Commenter 292

COMMENTER: Kevin Brickley

DATE: December 16, 2023

Response 292.1

The comments are duplicative of **Commenter 258**.

Refer to responses to **Commenter 258**.

November 26, 2023

Public Meeting to Receive Comments on the Draft EIR

Zoom Transcript

The County of Santa Cruz held a public meeting on November 16, 2023, during the public review period of the Draft EIR, to provide a project update and receive verbal comments on the Draft EIR.

At the hybrid meeting, the County accepted comments from people in person and via Zoom Video Communications. The following transcript of the verbal comments received via Zoom may include anomalies and misspellings.

293

County of Santa Cruz: at 5 PM.

County of Santa Cruz: And so we'll we'll start with an in person comment, and then we'll go back and forth between in person and online by John Danforth. Again.

293-1 | County of Santa Cruz: I was going to talk about 3 things, the trees, the trestle, and the tracks.

County of Santa Cruz: But I want to start with something, I think is more critical, based on what I've heard from you tonight.

County of Santa Cruz: It seems to me that you're tilting the weights a bit

County of Santa Cruz: by assuming, in the analysis of the interim plan, that the interim plan will eventually become the ultimate plan. Because if you just look at the interim plan by itself on most measures, it is far less environmentally destructive.

293-1
cont.

County of Santa Cruz: particularly with respect to trees, 288 trees destroyed under the interim plan, according to your

County of Santa Cruz: slide versus about 800, under the ultimate plan, and I think it's

County of Santa Cruz: not fair

County of Santa Cruz: to to the analysis to say, well, the interim is ultimately going to end up as the ultimate plan, and therefore we're going to count those dead trees as well.

County of Santa Cruz: Second, the trestle.

County of Santa Cruz: I think that you're missing a page in your documentation.

County of Santa Cruz: You go from Cp. 1.1 6

293-2

County of Santa Cruz: to CP. 1.1 7, and you skip over the part

County of Santa Cruz: of the plan that I asked you to clarify earlier, which is, how does this trail enter into Capitola village that is invisible from the pages that you've given us? And I think that's a critical part. I live right by there, and it's already chaotic. And if you have people crossing over the street

County of Santa Cruz: to get as you currently, I guess plan, you're going to end up with cars backing into pedestrians and all kinds of other problems. Finally, the vote

County of Santa Cruz: someone named

County of Santa Cruz: Pauline said, well, we've already had a vote on this.

293-3

County of Santa Cruz: I would urge the people who did that election, who voted on that election and the Sierra Club which supported the

County of Santa Cruz: trail plus the rail option.

County of Santa Cruz: I would urge them to look at the number of trees being destroyed here under the ultimate plan. I don't think that was before the electorate when the vote was held. Thank you very much. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Next person online looks like Judy Gittelsohn.

294

Judy Gittelsohn: Hi, I'm Judy Gittelsohn. And I just have a quick question, is the environmental impact. Take into consideration the future reduction of car transportation daily. Like, they say that the use of the train will

294-1 Judy Gittelsohn: take 10% off highway one. Is there any valuation of

Judy Gittelsohn: if the rail gets put in. Thank you. If that's my question.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you very much.

295

County of Santa Cruz: Next person, Mr. Perry Scott, again, and pointing to what I think might be an insufficiency in the in the document under transportation. And I think there's a statement from the Coastal Commission that makes the same point, which is that removal of the existing and existing rail facility

County of Santa Cruz: that has a capacity to bring a

295-1 County of Santa Cruz: people in a greenhouse, gas-friendly way

County of Santa Cruz: to coastal features. And that's part of a regional network.

County of Santa Cruz: is a significant impact. That I don't believe is is fully addressed. The other thing that the Coastal Commission points out. Is that the constraints of rail banking need to be more thoroughly explained in the document.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Next person online.

County of Santa Cruz: Hello! Can you hear me? Yes.

296

Saladin Sale: I'm Saladin's sale, and I live in Santa Cruz.

296-1 Saladin Sale: I support the ultimate trail option only, and oppose postponing meaningful environmental progress in favor of an uncertain 25 to 30 year. Interim experiment.

Saladin Sale: Great progress has been made with design and funding of the rail trail since the overwhelming ballot defeat of Greenway's campaign to pull up the tracks and remove all references to rail transit from the county general plan.

296-2 Saladin Sale: Thanks to the resounding voter demonstration of agreement with multimodal transit around rail and trail. Major Grant, funding that rail opponents insisted would never materialize, is now in the hands of the RTC.

296-2 cont. | Saladin Sale: Our county's unity of purpose around rail and trail has been cited as highly influential by funding sources. We're now looking at completing our continuous rail trail from Davenport to Aptos. The most densely populated part of the county in the next 3 to 5 years. This is something to be proud of.

296-1 | Saladin Sale: The interim trail alternative with track removal is the expensive, inefficient remnant of the loud campaign by a few which would halt current progress.

Saladin Sale: Trigger, massive, sustained opposition by voters whose expressed will was being ignored, entangle the RTC. In long legal battles, and once again divide the Commission over the now settled question of ultimate versus interim.

296-2 | Saladin Sale: The issue here is long term livability. According to our housing element, update approved Tuesday. Our county, as a whole, is projected to add 42,240 households and 22,800 jobs between 2015 and 2045. How do we expect every one to get around?

Saladin Sale: We need to build housing along the corridor and build light rail trend.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you. Next person.

297

County of Santa Cruz: I'm Stacy Croft from Ben Lomond. I don't see in the yeah. EIR.

County of Santa Cruz: Where it's considering the number of trips required by by the the State to expand our population in the corridor. If the no project means that those trips would have to be taken by

297-1 | County of Santa Cruz: automobiles, and require parking and expanded roads which are going to cut down trees all along our streets and in our our villages, other than the ones that we could be.

County of Santa Cruz: I just don't see the the the alternative being be being balanced there

County of Santa Cruz: of the the trips generated and absorbed by the rail project.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

298

County of Santa Cruz: Next person online.

298-1 | Brian Peoples: Hi, this is Brian people with trail. Now we support trail only, which is obviously the best solution. But anyways specifically for the eir we don't think

Brian Peoples: when you include the ultimate trail and make the assumption as a part 3.

298-2 | Brian Peoples: That's incorrect planning in the sense of you're set dating that you're gonna have a train. And that train is gonna go exactly

Brian Peoples: where the tracks are today, we're actually moving the tracks.

Brian Peoples: in segment. 10. So it doesn't make a lot of sense for us to say that the interim trail should

298-2
cont. include the relocation, the conversion to the ultimate trail.

Brian Peoples: The second thing is, if you're going to include that, then you should do an E. The Eir should include actually the train operation.

Brian Peoples: And how will the train operate

298-3
Brian Peoples: with the trail? With the ultimate elevated trail? Basically 2 feet from these fast moving trains. you know. So we have to be realistic. So we think that your Eir should include the risk factor.

Brian Peoples: the narrowness, and of the the the elevated trail for the ultimate trail next to a moving train, because you're making the assumption that you're going to have a train because the ultimate trail is gonna eventually be there, and you're gonna have a train. And then finally.

Brian Peoples: the capacity you're not looking at.

Brian Peoples: adding the capacity of the trail only, and the internal trail with 16 foot wide capacity versus the ultimate, which is only 8 foot. And it's actually elevated. So it's less ability to have active transportation. So you don't include

298-4
Brian Peoples: the real

Brian Peoples: value of that active transportation for the trail only with a 16 foot capacity.

Brian Peoples: you know, theoretically, and the

County of Santa Cruz: thank you for your comment.

299

County of Santa Cruz: Sort of Brendan Bartle.

County of Santa Cruz: My parents have a house a block away from the tracks in between Seventh and Seventeenth. This is where I grew up. I've walked these tracks to school to work and friends houses thousands of times from 40, first to downtown. I've even hopped the train a number of times when it was running downtown, or all the way up North Highway, one

299-1
County of Santa Cruz: oftentimes, when walking, I would also have a bike or a skateboard, but I would take the tracks carrying them, even though it was difficult. because it was the most direct route.

County of Santa Cruz: If that corridor was paved smooth as a kid all those years it would have been a dream at first hearing that the smooth trail was being considered made me glad. Instead of trudging the tracks, you could glide down with no worries of cars for miles

County of Santa Cruz: alongside. The tracks have apples, plums, lemons, and enough blackberries to fill buckets. When the time is right.

County of Santa Cruz: the majestic trees and bushes make it feel like a nature walk. These are some of

the things that truly make the tracks great.

County of Santa Cruz: By the time you get to Pony Park you can really feel the old soul of Santa Cruz, where it has been left relatively untouched.

County of Santa Cruz: All that is needed is one lane of smooth pavement over the tracks, plus a few feet on each side. That's it. That would make it better. That would do the trick. Having crossing lights and fencing and painted lines, etc. All these details are arbitrary. The main problem is smooth and flat versus bumpy railroad tracks.

County of Santa Cruz: To pave one mile is about 20 grand, so to pave 5 miles should cost around \$100,000. But let's say we want the extra smooth stuff for small skateboard wheels, so we'll double it to 400,000

County of Santa Cruz: with 8 people they could pave one mile in a day. So in one work week this could be done and finished, for let's just round up to half a million dollars in 2 weeks, and that's it. We're done. You take out 0 trees, 0 bushes, everything is exactly the same but paved.

299-1
cont.

County of Santa Cruz: And now, with the advent of the electric bike, people can zip easily where they need to go without having to bring their bike on a train.

County of Santa Cruz: Disabled people can have electric wheelchair carts.

County of Santa Cruz: There could even be electric golf cart transportation for people with special needs. People could get exactly where they're going without waiting for other people, and they could stop midway and pick a blackberry, or sit under a tree and watch the people pass

County of Santa Cruz: around each other when they have to. There could be electric bike rentals for the price of a train ticket. Thank you, sir. Failure!

Johanna Lighthill: Can you hear me?

Johanna Lighthill: Can you hear me

County of Santa Cruz: pull under itself before is built. We need more. We don't need more condominiums along a rail line, giant apartment

County of Santa Cruz: event, or be around your comment in writing.

Johanna Lighthill: Can you hear me?

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Yes, go ahead, Johanna.

299-2

Johanna Lighthill: Thank you. As part of its contractual obligation with the current rail operator. The RC. Rtc. Currently holds a vegetation maintenance contract that includes clearing

299-2
cont.

Johanna Lighthill: and mowing a width of 17 to 20 feet down the center of the Santa Cruz branch rail line.

Johanna Lighthill: If this work has been done adequately, then it stands to reason that a 16 foot trail should fit within this cleared area without any tree removal.

299-3

Johanna Lighthill: although it may be reasonable that some trees maybe border the edge of the trail. The plan, Demo, shows that 288 trees need to be removed for the interim trail phase one

Johanna Lighthill: or trail only.

Johanna Lighthill: It shows several trees well outside the paths. Border

Johanna Lighthill: to be removed. The interim phase one or trail only trail designed for segmenting 11 between Monterey Grove, the Escalona Gulch area, where monarch roost tar sites are targeted is not centered on the tracks, but it's shifted north or inland.

Johanna Lighthill: This requires significantly more tree removal. I'd like to see one to I'd like to know why the trail was not centered on the rail line in this area. And again, if there's any modifications such as reducing trail width that can be made to minimize environmental impacts. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comments. Next person.

300

300-1

County of Santa Cruz: Hi! My name is Don Redman Watsonville. Monday.

County of Santa Cruz: Wife and I drove from South Watsonville up to the Sutter Health clinic

County of Santa Cruz: took us an hour and 10 min. That's 14.5 miles per hour

County of Santa Cruz: for the 17 miles.

County of Santa Cruz: I don't understand how we're not taking, how you think that putting a couple people on bicycles is going to

County of Santa Cruz: positively affect emissions when there are 60 to 70,000 vehicles on highway one between Watsonville and Santa Cruz every day. I don't hear anything about the working people of Watsonville who have to endure highway one every day being taken into account.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you, sir.

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Next person online.

County of Santa Cruz: Sorry, Morgan. Go ahead.

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: you know, and next we have Catherine.

301-1 | katharine parker: Hi, my name's Katherine Parker. I live in Capitola and we walk that area between Monterey Park and New Brighton Beach

301-1 | katharine parker: pretty much daily. That area is a that area. The proposed trail is a wildlife corridor. There's all kinds of animals that travel between the coast

301-1 | katharine parker: and highway, one even over to Cabrillo, through that area. Not just the monarchs, but all kinds of animals, and I haven't seen that this has been addressed in the Eir. I'm wondering if, if you know, you're talking about support walls, and fences to be put in. And how how is this gonna be mitigated? The wildlife flow along that area? Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment. Next person.

302-1 | County of Santa Cruz: Hi! My name is Tina Andreetta. I live very close to the rail, the Coastal rail trail in Aptos.

302-1 | County of Santa Cruz: I'm here because I think we should not forget our young. We're holding them hostage. That is why I support the ultimate rail and trail, and because it requires less ground disturbances, especially protecting the monarch butterfly habitat, and I want to just bring up.

302-1 | County of Santa Cruz: I live in Aptos, and right now along, I know this is unrelated, but it is related right now. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of mature redwoods and oak trees are getting cut along Highway one. So I feel that

302-2 | County of Santa Cruz: it's very important to go forward with the coastal rail and trail, and we cannot forget that California and the Santa Cruz voters approve. Proposition 1, 16. That stated, quote rail projects within Santa Cruz County, that facilitate recreational commuter, inner city and Inner

302-2 | County of Santa Cruz: Inter-county travel end. Quote the California Transportation Commission, released Funds.

302-2 | County of Santa Cruz: Sorry released funds to the Rtc. With the condition to initiate recreational passenger rail service, and to follow all prop 1 16 requirements. The tracks must not be removed and replaced with a trail. Only. Also California transportation plan 2050 aims to advance social equity for actively directing support

302-1 | County of Santa Cruz: resources and protections to disadvantaged communities, such as Watsonville and ensuring that the highest quality transportation options are available for those who need them. To most 30% of Watsonville residents do not own cars. Many of them commute up here 80% work at the boardwalk, and I think it's unconscionable to not want to have rail and trail. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comments

County of Santa Cruz: next person online, please.

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Rosemary.

Rosemary Sarka: Yes, my name is Rosemary Sarka. I'm speaking to night on behalf of Roaring Camp. Clearly as a railroad we favor any project that allows for the ultimate implementation of rail on the branch line.

Rosemary Sarka: We think that the environmental impact report should contain or the budget portion of it the full cost of returning, returning the line

Rosemary Sarka: to rail.

Rosemary Sarka: including all the repairs. That is

Rosemary Sarka: a part of it. its integral to the ultimate trail.

303-1 Rosemary Sarka: And we we note that access to the National Rail network is crucial

Rosemary Sarka: to Roaring Camp and to Big trees. and I think more information is necessary for the public on real banking. It is

Rosemary Sarka: a complicated issue, but I hear people discussing it

Rosemary Sarka: even at the Commissioner's level, on a theoretical level.

Rosemary Sarka: It you! You can't simply file for abandonment. When the Acl expires

Rosemary Sarka: you have to go through the surface transportation board. That's not going to be an easy thing. So any shortcut is simply not workable.

Rosemary Sarka: Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Next person.

County of Santa Cruz: My name is Brianna Burr. In the words of late, great Dr. Seuss, I speak for the trees. When folks think about Santa Cruz, they think about trees. natural and scenic spaces with access to outdoor wreck, make it a key tourist destination, and desirable place to live.

304-1 County of Santa Cruz: It is priority that open and natural spaces should be protected and enhanced.

County of Santa Cruz: Marina made a wise choice by turning their portion of the tracks into a now popular trail, only

County of Santa Cruz: an attraction known as the Monterey Bay Coastal Recreation Trail.

304-2 County of Santa Cruz: The population of Sc. Santa Cruz does not support the necessity of a train.

304-2
cont.

County of Santa Cruz: No one will ride it, not enough. People will get off of highway one to ride it and get out of their personal cars, where they have the freedom of their own schedules.

County of Santa Cruz: it will never be equitable. No one wants to pay more taxes for it. This will not benefit the community, but will instead cause significant and repairable environmental harm to existing and endangered species.

304-3

County of Santa Cruz: and protected. Not to mention a rail next to a trail, will always be a public safety hazard. Yet pedestrian access is a vital need for this town.

304-4

County of Santa Cruz: The paths and sidewalks along both East and West cliff are bustling public areas for obvious reasons, proximity to nature.

County of Santa Cruz: Locals and tourists alike are attracted to these areas.

County of Santa Cruz: This is a great opportunity for Santa Cruz to create a connection between these 2 bustling areas on each side of town.

County of Santa Cruz: It's not an opportunity for millions of people

County of Santa Cruz: to get to work.

County of Santa Cruz: because there's not millions of people here, and we don't need millions of people here.

County of Santa Cruz: Let us see the story of the tracks. Nest be a success story so that

County of Santa Cruz: everyone can feel good about it for future generations unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot. Nothing's going to get better. It's not

County of Santa Cruz: thank you for your comment.

305

County of Santa Cruz: Next person online.

305-1

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Next we have Sarah.

Sarah Church: Yes, Hi, my name is Sarah Church, and I live right along where segment 10 will run, I hope.

Sarah Church: I just really wanted to thank the design group, all the consultants, all the elected officials, everyone who's been putting a lot of effort into pulling together the Eir and to moving this project forward. I know it takes a lot of hands. I'm very supportive of the ultimate trail option, and and without option. A. Because I think it's important to not get into the rail banking and into the delays that would cause

Sarah Church: I, the Eir, really helped to illuminate, particularly the the benefit to the hopefully, not the

305-1 cont. | greatest impact on Monarch, the monarch butterfly population, which is important. And and that the ultimate trail will really have a great benefit. And then, I think, you know, just looking at the environmental benefit overall that we'd like to see, there will be such a great reduction in vehicle miles traveled and and increase in active transportation for our community. There are so many wins

| Sarah Church: associated with the ultimate trail option. Thanks so much.

| County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment. Next person.

306

306-1 | County of Santa Cruz: Hello! My name is Matt Farrell, and I would just like to speak and support of the

| County of Santa Cruz: finding in the environmental impact report that the ultimate trail configuration is the environmentally superior

| County of Santa Cruz: project for most resource topics.

| County of Santa Cruz: And I just like to summarize the 3

306-2 | County of Santa Cruz: statements in the summary of environmental findings. The first one is that the optional interim trail includes 2 additional construction periods.

| The wider construction footprint disturbs both sides of the tracks

| County of Santa Cruz: and rail demolition increases risk of a hazardous material exposure.

306-3 | County of Santa Cruz: And I just like to respond to an earlier comment in the environmental review process. You cannot

| County of Santa Cruz: isolate an interim project.

| County of Santa Cruz: You have to look at the full project because the impacts are associated with the full project by its name. An interim trail is only a temporary installation. So that's why the report looks at all the impacts

| County of Santa Cruz: affiliated as a result of

306-2 | County of Santa Cruz: an interim trail. Secondly, the report finds that alternative. One trail only also has a wider construction, footprint.

| County of Santa Cruz: and alternative to requires more. That's the trail rail trail on the opposite side

306-4 | County of Santa Cruz: of the tracks which requires more earthwork and ground resurfacing. So again, I wanna support the idea that also an earlier speaker said, design option a in the ultimate trail. Configuration is

| County of Santa Cruz: not acceptable because of the

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment. Next person.

307

307-1 County of Santa Cruz: Brian Sarnataro again.
County of Santa Cruz: first of all, the er's assumption that the interim trail will become ultimate is something that needs to be corrected because the interim trail may very well become the last disturbance of the corridor, and how you could actually assume that we're going to be able to get a train despite the the expense, despite the fact that the county population is so small compared to any other

307-2 County of Santa Cruz: rail project in the United States. The fact that there's been a failure of local systems that take a look at what's happened to the smart system. And right now, just today on Npr, they had a story about transit death spirals in areas where there's they are unable to have enough people to serve.

307-3 County of Santa Cruz: Another area of shortcoming is the utility of the interim versus the ultimate trail. Especially consider Ebikes, considering how many more people who use the the wider trail in terms of ground disturbance. Another area that I think you should reconsider is that you have to take a look at what the differences, including the disturbance required for retaining walls, which is, which is something that is required with the in quotes ultimate trail.

307-4 County of Santa Cruz: And finally, in terms of
County of Santa Cruz: politics measure d lost, due to a disinformation campaign with false claims of equity, as if a more expensive train with stations that are nowhere near the population is going to be better than the buses on our now expanded highway system.

307-5 County of Santa Cruz: And finally, just from an emotional point of view, the. you know, having all those trees removed, removing the pastoral nature of the corridor and replacing it with something industrialized
County of Santa Cruz: and
County of Santa Cruz: most likely unnecessary because of the inability of us to convince the outside world to give us a billion dollars to build a train. That's just painful.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for coming.

County of Santa Cruz: II just ask everyone. Please be respectful of everyone's comments. I know this is a very decite divisive issue. Having been involved in it for the last 3 years. But you know, we're all we're all members of the same community. Let's let's please be respectful of everyone's differences next person online, please.

308

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Next we have dead breath.

308-1 debra Young: where I would like to request, where in your findings is the impact on the eagles who have come back into our area. After many decades

308-1
cont.

debra Young: we see them across the street from us in Capitola and in Santa Cruz.

debra Young: They're living in the trees across the street from us. How are cutting down all the trees going to impact the eagles who are now making their homes here?

debra Young: Question.

debra Young: Thank you. Please answer my question.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank thank you for your comment. The comment will be recorded and responded to in the air. Thank you very much. Next speaker, please.

309

309-1

County of Santa Cruz: Hi! I'm Katie Kennedy. I live in Aptos and I have to agree with earlier speaker.

County of Santa Cruz: I drove north the other day, and it took me about 45 min to go 3 and a half miles.

County of Santa Cruz: I am a huge fan of the ultimate rail trail.

County of Santa Cruz: I think that the environmental impact of our not doing that is gonna far outweigh removing trees

County of Santa Cruz: and impact butterflies. I know that they're going to be working on replacing the trees. and ultimately our whole community will feel the impact if we don't actually do something, get us out of our cars

County of Santa Cruz: and make it much more feasible for those in the south part of the county to get to the north part of the county. Thanks.

310

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment. Next person online, please.

310-1

Brian Peoples: Yeah. Hi, this is Brian. I just like to comment that the Cal not included in the ir is the risk assessment associated with the viability of a train as well as the viability of the ultimate trail. According to sea level rising requirements by the California Coastal Commission.

Brian Peoples: California Coastal Commission will restrict

Brian Peoples: the construction of infrastructure that runs along the coastline. When you look at Park Avenue, the vibrations of a train man Resa Beach.

310-2

Brian Peoples: Secondly, I don't think you address

Brian Peoples: the California coastal. Restrictions on accessing the beach

Brian Peoples: when you create fences which you are creating for the ultimate trail and elevated platforms.

310-2
cont. Brian Peoples: you prevent the public access.

Brian Peoples: You've already been given 2 min to provide your comment. If you have additional comments beyond that, please please submit them in writing. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Next, Speaker, please.

311

County of Santa Cruz: Terry Wood.

County of Santa Cruz: and I'm in Section 10 in one of the Mobile home parks. I am a homeowner and a space renter.

County of Santa Cruz: and my home has apparently, and the lot has encroached

County of Santa Cruz: the rail. and

311-1 County of Santa Cruz: and so, in the name of equity. I will lose all my equity that I've worked hard for. Pay it off in full over the last since 2,000, and

County of Santa Cruz: Because I will be forced to leave. Okay when I to

County of Santa Cruz: to.

County of Santa Cruz: Based off what Gene said earlier is that

County of Santa Cruz: I didn't have any control over that. I had when the rail bought the bought. When the Rtc. Bought, bought the property, they did their due diligence and 2,012. They didn't notify any of the homeowners of this encroachment. Not until oh, we've got a project now where we're being funded for, do they? Oh, now we're gonna push the button and let everyone know.

311-2 County of Santa Cruz: Okay, so I was never informed of that. This impacts a lot more than just the people whose houses are actually going to be cut off. It's going to impact everyone along those 2 sides because there needs to be a 3 3 foot setback

County of Santa Cruz: for fire access in in behind the houses. So it affects a lot more. So I'm part of that habitat that's being affected. The environment.

County of Santa Cruz: And I

311-1 County of Santa Cruz: would like to see you know, as you guys say, less than significant without required mitigation.

County of Santa Cruz: Okay? And I'm one of those. Whoa.

County of Santa Cruz: well, sorry you're insignificant. Well, to the whole rail. Okay, to that section not insignificant at all. Most people are going to be affected by that and

County of Santa Cruz: longer time the project would take. Thank you. Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Next, speaker online, please.

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: Next you have Michael and Gene.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: Can you hear me now?

312

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: This is Jean Brocklebank in the EIR. I'm gonna quote from the Eir, because that's what we're supposed to talk about tonight.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: In segment 10, there are 2 mobile home parks on either side of the corridor.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: and there are

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: homes in those parks that

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: where the homeowner leases the land from the property owner, so they're not the property owner. These folks have not encroached on anything.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: The Eir says that there may be that that the homes can be physically moved.

312-1 Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: Several feet outside the. These are not mobile homes. They can't just be moved.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: They can't. And then it says they could be property. Owners could modify or replace the mobile home with a slightly smaller structure that fits within respective lock lines. This is not a simple thing to do, or they could move the Mobile home to another nearby mobile Home Park.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: This this statement.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: this statement is so unrealistic. Anyone who lives in a mobile home in a mobile home park knows that this isn't gonna work. But the summary is what really gets me in quote, the project would not result in the displacement of substantial numbers of existing people or housing. This project will probably involve close to 30 families overall.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: It says, therefore, the impact would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required. Well, less than significant to who, to each family that is going to be impacted by this. It's a hundred per cent. Significant. But there is no description in the Eir of how you propose to help these families move their homes.

Michael Lewis & Jean Brocklebank: It needs to be an EIR. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: forced to leave, and if I have to just give away my house because you can't put that Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: next. We have ben

Ben Vernazza: bed vernacular from Aptos. Since 1967 I've lived here. I have

313

Ben Vernazza: communicated with the RTC. That I feel that the ultimate trail is unsafe and dangerous.

Ben Vernazza: and I

Ben Vernazza: give about the reasons why. But that's not what I wanna talk about now, I wanna talk about because nobody's talking about safety on the trail. I wanna talk about the duty of public

Ben Vernazza: safety and necessity and the avoidance of public nuisances.

Ben Vernazza: public safety and necessity, necessity and public nuisance are legal concepts that refer to the duty of public employees and public agencies to protect the public from harm, and to ensure that public property is used in a safe and responsible manner

Ben Vernazza: in the contacts of trails. Public agencies have a responsibility to design safe trails, maintain trails in safe condition.

313-1

Ben Vernazza: Clear trails of debris and hazards, enforced trail regulations prevent crime and address public nuisance.

Ben Vernazza: Now, public agencies may also be liable if they're not careful. And the worst thing that could happen is to be in a situation of nonfeasance. And here's some. Here's an example of nonfeasance regarding trails. A public agency fails to design a trail in a safe manner. For example, the agency designs a trail that is too narrow, and is too enclosed.

Ben Vernazza: A public agency

Ben Vernazza: fails to meet its duty to act, and may be liable

Ben Vernazza: to be liable for non feasance. The public agency must have a duty act. It must have failed to act, and it's failure to act must have been the proximate cause of the injury and damage

Ben Vernazza: I'm concerned about children going to and from Jade Park and elderly people. and disabled being able to have their trail trip and a safe way. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Next, speaker, please.

314

314-1

County of Santa Cruz: My name is Terry Thomas. I'm a 50 year resident of Capitola, and I live on Park Avenue, across from Escalona Gulch.

County of Santa Cruz: I got involved in politics

County of Santa Cruz: in the late seventies because somebody destroyed some vegetable, a lot of vegetation in Escalona Gulch, and I was involved in trying to mitigate the situation by helping with planting of

County of Santa Cruz: vegetation to replace what was taken out, and were still waiting for that to work.

314-1
cont.

County of Santa Cruz: It would appear that much of the tree removal in the corridor will occur along Park Avenue 42 trees in Escalona Gulch area alone.

County of Santa Cruz: and the trail width be reduced to 12 feet instead of 16 feet. If it's just the OIT, in order to minimize this negative impact.

County of Santa Cruz: I'm still waiting for the monarchs to come back.

County of Santa Cruz: and taking out 42 trees in the Wind corridor and along the trail of the Park Avenue railroad tracks. Is not helpful.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: not seeing anyone else on line.

County of Santa Cruz: So if you're online, you have a comment you wish to make. Please raise your hand. We'll come back to you next person in the audience, please.

315

County of Santa Cruz: Hello! My name is Brad Clausen. I own a piece of real estate at the corner of State Park drive 2, 34 State Park drive.

315-1

County of Santa Cruz: I'm really in favor of the trail. I'm not sure what what configuration I'm in favor of, but I think it's a great, a great asset to the county that can help people get back and forth, and I think it's a very positive thing. It just has to be, you know, put together in the right form that everybody can get along with.

County of Santa Cruz: The biggest concern I have is right now. I have a county drainage ditch that runs through the center of my property, and it's 60 inches in diameter. I've had several meetings with the county. I've talked to with the planning department. I've talked to several people about getting this. This drainage repaired right now. It's destroying my property. We've had to rent steel plates to cover the property so that we can still, our tenants can still access it.

315-2

County of Santa Cruz: And it's it's failing even further. And the county is avoiding this. My biggest concern is that the trail puts a lot more water through this pipe because that section 11 is gonna have. It has an open ditch that runs right to this situation. And with, you know, the more permeable

County of Santa Cruz: product that you put down for the trail. It's gonna cause more runoff. And we're gonna be in big trouble. So the only thing I would really like to see is, I'd like to see the county step up

315-2 cont. and fix this drainage before this trail gets done because it's already wiping out my property and several other properties in the area. And I think it's something that needs to be addressed. And this is the time to do it because of the funds that we have to do it with. That's what I'd like to see done. Thank you. Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Okay, we got a couple more people hand raised online next person online, please.

316

David Casterson: That might be me. I'm David Casterson. Can you hear me? Yes, we can.

David Casterson: I'm a biologist, also former chair of the Sierra Club and the Rctcs. By committee. I congratulate all those who develop the er ir.

David Casterson: and I'm very impressed with how you took so many of the wide range of impacts.

316-1 David Casterson: And included them into the report. The development of the real trail has been painstakingly slow.

David Casterson: and the ultimate trail option that I'm in favor of is the

David Casterson: quickest and least environmentally damaging

David Casterson: method to take again. I applaud your work. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for coming

317

County of Santa Cruz: next person.

317-1 County of Santa Cruz: Hi! I am Deborah Christie, and I am in support of the rail trail. The ultimate trail have been since the beginning.

County of Santa Cruz: But the gentleman that talked about safety concerns, I guess you know, always trying to figure317-1 here to fit in the you know this Eir, I, you know

317-2 County of Sant : conversation. Yeah, I guess cause I'm a part of the environment. I'm a human. I live next to Orana Gulch and I love the Broadway to Bromer Path, but now that everybody seems to be riding e-bikes, it has become really hazardous. Especially when you're on a slope, and II think that

County of Santa Cruz: there, there! The signage. I don't know. There needs to be some kind of training etiquette, trail etiquette it's multi use, I mean, I see people with strollers, people with a dogs on leash where you know the leash retracts, you know.

County of Santa Cruz: for many feet. And I just think that an accident is just waiting to happen. So that really needs to be a part of the design. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Next person online. Please

318

Morgane Staake, RRM Design Group: believe it's Dean.

Dianne Dryer: Hi, my name is Diane Dreier, and I just wanted to say that I hope that there will be a much more extensive

Dianne Dryer: explanation and detailing of what rail banking actually means.

Dianne Dryer: What it takes to get through that process. The expense. The interim trail is a big waste of money, because that's

Dianne Dryer: we would never get

Dianne Dryer: a rail passenger rail service in the future

318-1 Dianne Dryer: with rail banking.

Dianne Dryer: I think that we were given a lot of money by the State and the Feds, and we will be given a lot of money because we have

Dianne Dryer: ownership of the rail corridor already, and we are set to go with both the trail and passenger rail.

Dianne Dryer: So funding is going to be coming our way. It has just in the last year, once we

Dianne Dryer: showed our broad community support for alternatives to highway one.

Dianne Dryer: The future is what's most important

Dianne Dryer: for our kids and future residents here. Thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment. Next, speaker, please.

319

County of Santa Cruz: Hi, Charlie Wilcox, King.

County of Santa Cruz: I'd like to expand on a couple of the concerns specifically around sufficiency of the yeah. Ir that have been addressed

319-1 County of Santa Cruz: public safety pieces that were brought up by a couple of people. I really would like to echo. When the Rtc. Obtained ownership and rights of way, they also obtained a responsibility that came with that to deal with existing situations. I feel very deeply for

County of Santa Cruz: people who would have their homes affected by this people have their businesses affected by this. Our business is affected by one of the legacy issues having to deal with drainage that Brad mentioned. It's something that really needs to be addressed, and as a responsibility of the county and

319-1
cont. | the Rtc. And any of the entities involved

319-2 | County of Santa Cruz: to make you take this opportunity. While we're making this investment in all of our future. We don't really take a position

County of Santa Cruz: about which way the rail wants to go. We want to see an improvement happen in our lifetimes. So that would be, you know, a real bonus. Lastly, I

319-3 | County of Santa Cruz: you know, the the sufficiency of the Ir, I think, should address the global effects being broken up in individual sections.

County of Santa Cruz: gives the opportunity to miss some really important pieces. So I think that's something that needs to be addressed. And then, you know, lastly, I just, I want to say that while this has been a very divisive process for a lot of people.

319-4 | County of Santa Cruz: Ultimately, we are trying to come together to bring something that's going to improve all of our lives, and I do appreciate all of the hard work that people on both sides of every side, because there's like 16 sides to this have gone through and put together and thank you for that time and attention. We really appreciate it. Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: I'm not seeing any hands online, so we'll go to another in person. Speaker, anyone online wishes to speak. Please raise your hand.

320

County of Santa Cruz: Hi, I'm Sally Arnold and I.

County of Santa Cruz: I wanna you know, I wanted to talk about the Eir, of course, but I just want to say that I really feel for people who didn't know that their homes were located in the right of way, and I. But I feel like it's not the fault of the rail company that used to own that right of way. It's not the fault of the Rtc. It seems to me their beef is is with whoever sold or rented that property to them, you know. It's like they took some land that wasn't theirs. They represented it as if it was available

320-1 | for rent or sale to somebody else who has a home there. And now suddenly they found out that they got bad. They got kind of defrauded by somebody, which is terrible. And it's obviously a major impact to those people. But

County of Santa Cruz: I hope they can get compensation from the person who defrauded them. It's it's, you know, somebody took land that wasn't theirs, and then started making money on it. And that's a really unfortunate situation. And I just want to acknowledge that.

County of Santa Cruz: As for the Eir, I want to thank you for your thorough comparison of the different impact the impacts of all these different alternatives.

320-2 | County of Santa Cruz: you know the point, that of of the the really wide trail only actually cuts down more trees is really important for people to understand. The idea that you know, explaining how you can't have an interim thing that if it's interim obviously has to eventually get to the finished product, and that, you know, sequel requires you to cover the whole thing. You know, you've really done a nice job of

320-2
cont. explaining these these details.

320-3 County of Santa Cruz: I favor the ultimate trail without rail banking, not option a. Because I wanna get this trail faster, not later. And we need to keep the options open for the later for future transit. And you know, I think almost everybody here wants some kind of trail, and we'll get it faster without rail banking. So thank you.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Hey? I'm not seeing any hands up online, and I'm not seeing up. Yes, ma'am, all right.

321

County of Santa Cruz: Good evening. My name's Becky Steinbruner. I live in Aptos.

County of Santa Cruz: I want to just point out that there is no hard copy of this draft Eir in the Public Library.

321-1 County of Santa Cruz: We have communicated about that, Mr. Tidmore, but I just came before this session to from the Capitola Library. It is still not available. There's a significant part of our population that does not use the computer

County of Santa Cruz: and cannot access this document unless there is a hard copy. So please do all that you can to make it available in a hard copy in the libraries, not only Capitola, but but others because it affects our our whole county.

321-2 County of Santa Cruz: I would like an explanation in the air as to why the county is the lead agency rather than the Rtc.

County of Santa Cruz: And I am a bit uneasy

321-3 County of Santa Cruz: that the County Board of Supervisors in March of 2024 will make the determination on this sufficiency of the Eir. When 3 members of that board will be up for

County of Santa Cruz: 2 are not even going to be running for reelection. One is running for reelection, but I think that it should not be done by the Board of Supervisors at a time when there is a significant shift in the Board's composition.

County of Santa Cruz: I also would like to see, and maybe it's in the document.

321-4 County of Santa Cruz: But I would like to see some hypothetical visual models.

County of Santa Cruz: Not just plan view things of what these improvements would look like in critical areas. I want an explanation of why the width is what it is and why it has

321-5 County of Santa Cruz: seems to be held to that. Why, it couldn't be restricted in critical areas and save some of

321-5

cont. | County of Santa Cruz: reduce some of the environmental impacts.

County of Santa Cruz: Thank you for your comment.

County of Santa Cruz: Okay, I'm not seeing any hands online. And I'm not seeing anyone else lining up the microphone. So I'll do a last call for verbal comments on the draft. Yeah, Eir.

County of Santa Cruz: all right. Well again. Thank you. Everyone for attending tonight.

Commenter 293

COMMENTER: John Danforth

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 293.1

The commenter thinks the County is tilting the weights by assuming the Optional Interim Trail will eventually become the Ultimate Trail, thus resulting in more tree removal than the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Response 174.4**.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 293.2

The commenter states that the document may be missing a page because it goes from CP 1.16 to CP 1.17 and does not show the trail entering Capitola Village.

The commenter is referring to sheets CP-1.16 and CP-1.17 of the trail design plans presented in Appendix A. The trail design plans are for the trail in the rail corridor. Therefore, the design plans for the Ultimate Trail Configuration (Appendix A.1) do not include the portion of the rail corridor where there would be no trail (between the Cliff Drive parking lot and Monterey Avenue, sheets CP-1.16 to CP-1.17), because trail users are directed to surface streets through Capitola Village. This is described in Section 2.4.1 under *Cliff Drive Plaza/Capitola Connection*, and the reader is directed to Figure 2-3, which shows how trail users are directed through the village, and the safety improvements that will be made.

The design plans for the Optional Interim Trail (Appendix A.2) do include the portion of the rail corridor (between the Cliff Drive parking lot and Monterey Avenue, sheets CP-1.16 to CP-1.21).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 293.3

The commenter suggests that those who voted for trail plus rail in the election look at the number of trees to be removed.

Refer to **Master Response B** regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 294

COMMENTER: Judy Gettelson

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 294.1

The commenter asks if the environmental impact analysis considers future automobile travel reduction because of rail service.

Thank you for the comment.

Although the SCBRL is considered an active rail line, there is currently no rail service within the Project corridor, and the Project does not include rail service of any type. Therefore, the analysis of Project impacts does not consider rail service and potential reduction in traffic, including on Highway 1. However, as discussed in Section 3.12, *Transportation*, of the Draft EIR, the transportation analysis considers the impacts of the trail. The trail would provide an alternative mode of travel. Any increase in vehicular trips to the trail by recreational users would be offset by the availability of the alternative travel mode, and the Project would result in an overall improvement to the existing circulation system. While the Project-level analysis does not include future rail service, future rail service is considered in the list of cumulative projects (DEIR Table 4-1) in the cumulative analysis in Section 4.1, *Cumulative Impact Analysis*, of the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 295

COMMENTER: Perry Scott

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 295.1

The commenter claims that the transportation section may not have sufficiently addressed the adverse effects of removing the rail, which has potential to move people in a greenhouse gas friendly way, and that railbanking should be more thoroughly explained.

Thank you for the comment.

As a general rule, environmental impacts are assessed based on the existing environmental conditions as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation is published (*CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15125[a][1], 15126.2[a]). The Draft EIR appropriately analyzes the Project compared to existing conditions. Because there is currently no rail service within the Project corridor, the Project does not analyze impacts related to removal of rail service. While the Project-level analysis does not include future rail service, future rail service is considered in the list of cumulative projects (DEIR Table 4-1) in the cumulative analysis in Section 4.1, *Cumulative Impact Analysis*, of the Draft EIR. The DEIR appropriately analyzes the potential for the Project and alternatives to result in impacts related to GHG emissions compared to existing conditions. An objective of the project is to develop a trail that does not preclude rail service; however, rail service is not a component of the project and maintaining the rail line as part of the Project does not necessitate that future rail service would be provided. As such, the contribution of speculative future rail operation to changes in regional GHG emissions is not considered as a potential impact of the Project or any alternative.

Refer to **Master Response E** for an explanation of railbanking.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 296

COMMENTER: Saladin Sale

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 296.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and opposes the Interim Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 296.2

The commenter opines that progress has been made with design and funding the trail, voters demonstrated of agreement of rail and trail, and we need to build housing along the corridor and light rail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 297

COMMENTER: Stacy Croft

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 297.1

The commenter states that they do not see in the EIR the number of trips required by the state to expand our population in the corridor, and if the no Project (alternative) means those trips would be taken by cars and require parking, expanded roads, etc.

Thank you for the comment.

We are not aware of any state requirements regarding number of trips required to expand our population in corridor, nor to develop a trail or other transportation uses such as rail transit in the rail corridor. The Project is a trail project and does not include adding housing, other occupied structures, rail service, or other transit in the rail corridor.

As described in Section 5.2.3, *Alternative 3 (No Project)*, there would be no new trail constructed in the rail corridor, and the RTC would maintain and operate the rail corridor in accordance with current policy and legal obligations, which could include rail operation. In other words, rail service is not a distinguishing factor between the Proposed Project and Alternative 3, and future rail is equally likely to occur in the foreseeable future under both the Proposed Project and No Project scenarios. Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operation.

As stated in the Transportation discussion in Section 5.2.3, because there would be no new trail to provide an alternative means of travel, No Project would not reduce VMT in the vicinity of the Project corridor, and there would be improvements to bike lanes and pedestrian paths through Capitola Village. Thus, the trips taken by cars and required parking would be similar to existing conditions.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 298

COMMENTER: Brian Peoples

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 298.1

The commenter supports Trail Only (Alternative 1).

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 298.2

The commenter does not think the Optional Interim Trail should include the Ultimate Trail as part 3.

Refer to **Response 174.4**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 298.3

The commenter states if Optional Interim Trail includes Part 3, Ultimate Trail, then it should include train operation, and the risk factor should be analyzed in the EIR.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** regarding rail operations.

Response 298.4

The commenter states the EIR does not include the value of active transportation that the Interim Trail has with 16 feet wide capacity versus the Ultimate Trail which is only 8 feet.

The typical width of the Ultimate Trail Configuration would be 12 feet and in no location reduces to 8 feet. Refer to **Response 11.3**.

The purpose of the EIR is to identify the environmental impacts of both the Optional Interim Trail and the Ultimate Trail alignments, with their respective widths, and not speculate regarding the value of one over the other. It is up to the reviewers and decision-makers to make their own determination regarding the merits and value of the Project. The EIR tries to facilitate this by providing a comparison at the end of each impact discussion under *Comparison of Proposed Project Impact with/without Optional Interim Trail*.

The DEIR Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Material* has been revised to correct the typographical. For the 50 feet approaching the eastern side of Monterey Avenue, the trail width would be reduced to between 10 to 12 feet (not 8 to 12 feet), as shown in **Response 11.3**.

Commenter 299

COMMENTER: Brendan Bartle

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 299.1

The commenter opines about growing up and walking the tracks, how nice it would have been and would be if it were paved smooth, and speculates about the cost and duration to build it. The commenter also states we do not need more condominiums along a rail line.

Thank you for your comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 299.2

The commenter states that as part of its contractual obligation, the RTC holds a vegetation maintenance contract that includes clearing and mowing; and if this work had been done adequately, a 16-foot trail should fit without any tree removal.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 299.3

The commenter states that the plans show 288 trees need to be removed for the Interim Trail and several trees are well outside the path border. The commenter asks why the section in the Escalona Gulch area is not centered on the rail line, and if there are any modifications such as reducing the trail width that can be made to minimize the environmental impacts.

Alternative 1 (Trail Only) and the Optional Interim Trail alignments would be constructed in generally the same location as the existing tracks and may need to meander or narrow in constrained areas, such as just west of Grove Lane by Escalona Gulch. In order to minimize the amount of ground disturbance and retaining structures, the trail veers away from the track centerline to follow the existing grade. Throughout the Project, grading extents for excavation and/or fill conditions, drainage systems, retaining walls and similar features contribute the construction disturbance area's variability. Refer to **Master Response H** for a discussion on Alternative 1 (Trail Only). Specifically, from Monterey Avenue to Grove Lane along Park Avenue, the width of Alternative 1 (Trail Only) is generally 16 feet with 67 estimated tree removals. If the same alignment were to be 12 feet wide instead of 16 feet, an estimated 64 trees would be removed.

Commenter 300

COMMENTER: Don Redman

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 300.1

The commenter laments the time it takes to drive from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and disagrees with the conclusion that a trail would reduce GHG emissions based on the daily volume of vehicles using Highway 1.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Response 274.4**. Active transportation routes are generally regarded as a strategy to reduce VMT, including strategies in the County's CAAP, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (AMBAG 2045 MTP/SCS), and the California Air Resources Board 2022 Scoping Plan. It would be speculative to quantify the Project's specific impact to Highway 1; however, the Project would result in an overall improvement to the existing circulation system due to the reduction in vehicular traffic and the option for alternative transportation modes.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 301

COMMENTER: Katharine Parker

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 301.1

The commenter states the proposed trail is a wildlife corridor and is concerned about the project impacts (e.g., retaining walls) to wildlife movement.

Thank you for the comment.

The DEIR authors concur that portions of the rail line currently serve as a de factor corridor for wildlife movement and impacts on wildlife movement cannot be fully mitigated; therefore, these impacts were determined to be Significant and Unavoidable.

A description of wildlife movement in and near the Project Area and potential impacts to wildlife movement are discussed in DEIR Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*. Section 3.3.1, *Existing Conditions (Wildlife Movement)*, describes wildlife movement from local to regional scales, while Impact BIO-9 addresses impacts on wildlife movement, with Table 3.3-10 summarizing these impacts. Measures to reduce these Significant and Unavoidable impacts are included in the DEIR; Mitigation Measure BIO-7a, Mitigation Measure 7c, and Mitigation Measure BIO-8a protect wildlife and habitat during construction, and Mitigation Measure BIO-7b calls for the develop of a Mitigation and Management Plan for the project, including strategies to protect wildlife movement.

In certain locations, proposed retaining wall designs (e.g. along Park Avenue and along Tannery Gulch in New Brighton State Beach) perch the trail above the rail line with guard rails on top for safety. This combined height is likely to constrain wildlife movement (restrict wildlife from crossing the trail) and direct wildlife along the trail (either above, on, or below the trail). Wildlife species may move under fencing, jump over or attempt to jump over fencing, climb retaining walls, jump/fall off retaining walls, and/or may move along the constrained area until reaching a crossing or opening across the trail. The authors acknowledge this impact to wildlife movement. Along Park Avenue the longest retaining wall north of the trail is approximately 1473 feet (0.28 miles) and south of the trail is approximately 944 feet (0.18 miles). Along New Brighton State Beach, the longest retaining wall is 1001 feet (0.19 miles). Wildlife would be able to cross the trail after these distances.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 302

COMMENTER: Tina Andreatta

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 302.1

The commenter supports rail and trail.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 302.2

The commenter states it's important to go forward with the coastal rail and trail as the voters approved Proposition 116. The commenter also suggests quoting rail projects within the County that facilitate recreational/commuter travel, the CTC funds released and requirement to keep the tracks, and the California Transportation Plan 2050 that aims to advance social equity, referencing disadvantaged communities such as Watsonville.

Refer to **Master Response E**.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 303

COMMENTER: Rosemary Sarka

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 303.1

The commenter states that they think the EIR should contain budget information on the full cost of returning the line to rail, including repairs; access to the National Rail network is crucial to Roaring Camp and Big Trees, and more information is necessary for the public on railbanking.

Thank you for the comment.

Regarding the cost of returning the line to rail, it is unclear if the commenter is speaking about repairs needed for the existing rail to accommodate rail operation, or removing and rebuilding the tracks as required to implement the Optional Interim Trail. Regardless, the Project (with or without the Optional Interim Trail) does not include rail service of any type, so it would be inappropriate and speculative to estimate the full cost of returning the line to rail, as requested.

Funding sources for the project are identified in Section 1.2.4. Also refer to **Master Response E**.

Moreover, nothing in CEQA requires a lead agency to discuss funding, particularly not for activities that are not part of the project in an EIR. (See, e.g., *Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment v. County of Los Angeles* (2007) 157 Cal.App.4th 149, 163.)

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 304

COMMENTER: Brianna Burr

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 304.1

The commenter states that when folks think about Santa Cruz, they think about trees, natural and scenic spaces with access to outdoor recreation; these spaces should be protected and enhanced; and the City of Marina made a wise choice turning their portion of the tracks into trail only.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 304.2

The commenter states the population of Santa Cruz does not support a train, there are not enough people who will get out of their cars and off Highway 1 to ride it; nobody wants to pay more taxes for it; it will not be equitable; and it will not benefit the community but instead cause environmental harm.

As described in DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and clarified in **Master Response E**, the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. The potential impacts of the proposed trail (with and without the Optional Interim Trail) are disclosed throughout Chapter 3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. Also refer to **Response 294.1**. and refer to **Master Response E and Master Response D**.

Response 304.3

The commenter states that rail next to a trail will be a public safety hazard and that pedestrian access is a vital need.

The potential impacts associated with public safety are identified in Section 3.11, *Public Safety and Services*, of the Draft EIR. Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore, the analysis does not consider public safety impacts related to trail users in proximity to an active rail line. Regardless, fencing and/or guardrails would be installed along the sides of bridges, viaducts, tops of retaining walls, and other areas along the trail alignment for safety and security in accordance with the MBSST Network Master Plan. Safety fencing would separate trail users from the rail, as needed. Safety fencing separating the trail from the rail would not be needed until if and when rail service is restored on the rail line. Refer to **Response 11.2** for further discussion on fencing and guardrails. Further, the Project would increase access by clearing the areas around the existing rail and adding access points, enhancing overall safety.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 304.3

The comment opines that the paths and sidewalks along East and West Cliff are bustling; this is a great opportunity to create a connection between these two bustling areas on each side of town, and let the tracks be a success story for future generations.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 305

COMMENTER: Sarah Church

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 305.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail Option (without Design Option A); opposes railbanking and the delays it would cause; thanks the design group, consultants, elected officials, and everyone who has been working on the EIR and moving this Project forward; and opines on the overall benefits.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 306

COMMENTER: Matt Farrell

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 306.1

The commenter supports the EIR finding that the Ultimate Trail Configuration is environmentally superior for most environmental topics.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 306.2

The commenter states information from the EIR, including the Optional Interim Trail includes two additional construction periods, the construction footprint disturbs both sides of the tracks, rail demolition increases risk of hazardous materials exposure, Alternative 1 (Trail Only) has a wider construction input, and the rail trail on the opposite side of the tracks (Alternative 2) requires more earthwork and ground resurfacing.

The commenter's statements are correct.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 306.3

The commenter states the Interim Trail is temporary, you cannot isolate an interim project, and you have to look at the full project.

The commenter's statements are correct.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 306.4

The commenter states that Design Option A of the Ultimate Trail Configuration is not acceptable.

For clarification, Ultimate Trail Configuration Design Option A would continue the trail along the rail corridor, including the Capitola Trestle Bridge, rather than directing trail users to bike lanes and sidewalks along surface streets through Capitola Village.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 307

COMMENTER: Brian Sarnataro

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 307.1

The commenter states that the assumption the Interim Trail will become the Ultimate Trail needs to be corrected because the Interim Trail could be the last disturbance of the corridor.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response I** regarding the CEQA requirement to analyze the whole of the Project, as well as **Master Response E** regarding future rail operation.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 307.2

The commenter asks how a train can be assumed despite the expense and County population, and states there's been a failure of local systems (e.g., SMART) and transit death spirals where there are not enough people to serve.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Also refer to **Master Response E** re rail operation and future passenger rail.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 307.3

The commenter states that an area of shortcoming is the utility of the Interim Trail v Ultimate Trail, considering more people use the wider trail in terms of ground disturbance, and should look t the differences in disturbance required for retaining walls for Ultimate Trail.

Although the Ultimate Trail Configuration requires ground disturbance associated with constructing retaining walls that would not be required for the Optional Interim Trail Part 1, the overall ground disturbance for the Ultimate Trail would be less than the overall ground disturbance for the Optional Interim Trail when considering all three parts. This is because the Optional Interim Trail requires two additional construction periods to be fully implemented, including additional demolition and deeper excavation associated with removing the rails during Part 1 and removing the interim trail during Part 2, and includes an additional 0.5 mile of this ground disturbance between the Cliff Drive parking lot and Monterey Avenue, where the interim trail would continue in the rail corridor, rather than directing trail users to surface streets through Capitola Village.

Regarding the utility of the 16' Optional Interim Trail (part 1) versus the 12' Ultimate Trail Configuration, refer to **Response 298.4**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 307.4

The commenter states that Measure D lost due to disinformation.

Refer to **Master Response B** regarding Measure D.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 307.5

The commenter states removing the trees and pastoral nature of the corridor and replacing it with something industrialized and unnecessary is painful.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 308

COMMENTER: Debra Young

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 308.1

The commenter asks about the impact from tree removal on the eagles that are living in the trees across the street.

Thank you for the comment.

Potential impacts to wildlife are discussed in Section 3.3, *Biological Resources*, and impacts on sensitive and native nesting avian species, including bald eagles, are discussed in Impact BIO-4. Measures to avoid and protect wildlife and nesting avian species are described in Mitigation Measure BIO-1a and Mitigation Measure BIO-4. Per Mitigation Measure BIO-4, if active bald eagle nests are present in or near the Project Area, consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service and/or CDFW would be required, the nest site would be protected during construction, with a protective buffer implemented (typically 1,320 feet) and a biological monitor present to ensure no nest disturbance occurs, until young have fledged and are independent.

In addition, as stated in Section 3.3.2, *Regulatory Setting of the DEIR*, the Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 further protects inactive nest sites of bald eagles, i.e., a tree with an inactive bald eagle nest shall not be removed if this site has documented nest fidelity by a bald eagle pair.

During biological surveys, no active or inactive bald eagle nests were observed in trees planned for removal, although eagles were observed within the Project Area. Per Mitigation Measure BIO-4, prior to tree removal, a breeding bird survey will be conducted to ensure that no new bald eagle nests are present in trees slated for removal.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 309

COMMENTER: Katie Kennedy

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 309.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail and things the impact of not doing it outweighs the impacts of removing trees.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 310

COMMENTER: Brian Peoples

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 310.1

The commenter states that not included in the risk assessment is the viability of a train as well as the Ultimate Trail, and the Coastal Commission will restrict construction of infrastructure along the coastline and references the area of Park Avenue and Manresa Beach.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type is proposed as part of the Project. Therefore the DEIR does not include an analysis including a risk assessment of analyzing a train.

The Draft EIR discusses the coastal bluff erosion along Park Avenue between Grove Lane and New Brighton State Beach in Section 3.5.1 under *Coastal Bluff Erosion* and Section 3.5.4 under Impact GEO-3 (Operation). As stated in Section 3.5.1, the RTC in coordination with the Coastal Commission is analyzing the potential risk of bluff erosion, including consideration of sea level rise in this area. Additionally, Design Option B (Inland Side of Track between Grove Lane and Coronado Street in Capitola) was analyzed in the Draft EIR as part of the Ultimate Trail Configuration due to the potential for the Ultimate Trail Configuration on the coastal side of the tracks in this location to be impacted by bluff erosion in the future.

The Project does not propose improvements at Manresa Beach and therefore does not include an analysis of this area.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 310.2

The commenter states there are restrictions on accessing the beach when you create fences for Ultimate Trail and elevated platforms.

Refer to **Response 11.2** regarding fencing for the Ultimate Trail. Refer to DEIR Section 2.5, *Operation and Maintenance*, and **Master Response E** for clarification that the proposed project is just a trail project, and no rail service of any type nor platforms for rail service are proposed as part of the Project.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 311

COMMENTER: Terry Wood

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 311.1

The commenter (who lives in one of the mobile home parks) is concerned that the lot has encroached, they will lose the equity they established, they were not notified of the encroachment until this Project review, and they are part of the habitat that is being affected that is considered less than significant without mitigation.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 311.2

The commenter states this impacts people on both sides because there needs to be a 3' setback for fire access behind the houses.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Commenter 312

COMMENTER: Michael Lewis and Jean Brocklebank

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 312.1

The commenters states that the mobile home residents are not encroaching on the rail corridor because they are not the property owner and moving the mobile homes or replacing with smaller structures is unrealistic. The commenter disagrees that the Project would impacts related to the displacement of substantial numbers of people would be less than significant. The commenter also states that there is no description in the EIR of how these families will be helped in moving their homes.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

CEQA requires analysis of physical impacts to the environment and does not require evaluation economic impacts, including economic hardship (California Public Resources Code, Section 21082.2[c]; *CEQA Guidelines*, Sections 15064[e], 15131, 15382).

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 313

COMMENTER: Ben Vernazza

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 313.1

The commenter feels the Ultimate Trail is unsafe, and public agencies and employees have a duty to protect the public from harm and nuisance, ensure the public property is used in a safe and responsible manner, clear trails of debris and hazards, and enforce trail regulations. The commenter also states that designing a trail that is too narrow and enclosed is an example of “nonfeasance” (presumably stating “non-defense” in this context).

Thank you for the comment.

The trail width has been designed to meet Caltrans Class I bikeway requirements for a separate multi-use path that is ADA accessible. Refer to Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials*.

The trail will include fencing and/or guardrails as necessary for safety and etiquette signage with speed limit and operational guidance, and other signage would be determined as necessary for public safety. Refer to Section 2.4.1 under *Fencing and Guardrails*.

The trail would be maintained based on jurisdiction (County or City of Capitola). This includes clearing the trail of debris and hazards, inspecting for damage, and taking appropriate action to minimize risk to trail users. Refer to Section 2.5 under *Trail Maintenance*.

Public safety is addressed in Section 3.11, *Public Safety and Services*. Also refer to **Master Response G** regarding privacy and security.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 314

COMMENTER: Terry Thomas

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 314.1

The commenter states they were involved in replanting vegetation in Escalona Gulch in the late seventies, it appears much of the tree removal will occur along Park Avenue with 42 trees in Escalona Gulch area alone, and suggest the trail width be reduced to 12 feet instead of 16 feet to reduce this impact.

Thank you for the comment.

To clarify proposed trail widths, the Ultimate Trail is typically 12 feet wide, as stated in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials*. The Optional Interim Trail Part 1 and Trail Only (Alternative 1) are typically 16 feet wide, as stated in Section 2.4.2 and 5.2.1, respectively.

Reducing the width of the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) or Trail Only (Alternative 1) from 16 feet to 12 feet would reduce the amount of tree removal. Although not based on engineering plans and calculations, a general qualitative estimate indicates that approximately 47 additional trees may be protected in place overall along the entire trail alignment, including approximately 3 additional trees along Park Avenue near Escalona Gulch. Therefore, reducing the width of the Optional Interim Trail (Part 1) or Trail Only (Alternative 1) from 16 feet to 12 feet would not reduce impacts below a significant and unavoidable level. Also refer to **Master Response A**.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 315

COMMENTER: Brad Clausen

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 315.1

The commenter states they are in favor of the trail but not sure what configuration.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 315.2

The commenter is concerned about the needed repairs to the 60-inch drainage ditch that runs through their property (on State Park Dr) and the Project adding more water.

Refer to **Response 6.1** regarding hydrology and Project impacts.

Commenter 316

COMMENTER: David Casterson

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 316.1

The commenter commends those who worked on the EIR and the wide range of impacts addressed, and they support the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comment.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 317

COMMENTER: Deborah Christie

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 317.1

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail.

Thank you for the comments.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 317.2

The commenter noted another commenter's safety concerns and opines on signage, training on trail etiquette, and trail design.

Refer to **Response 313.1**.

Commenter 318

COMMENTER: Diane Dreier

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 318.1

The commenter would like a more extensive explanation detailing what railbanking means. The commenter also states that the Interim Trail is a waste of money because passenger rail will not be realized with railbanking, and we received a lot of money from the state and federal government and will be given more because we showed broad community support for alternatives to Highway One.

Thank you for the comment.

Refer to **Master Response E** re railbanking and rail operation. Also refer to **Master Response B** for Measure D clarification.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 319

COMMENTER: Charlie Wilcox King

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 319.1

The commenter reiterates concerns expressed by others regarding public safety, ROW encroachments, and drainage.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Response 313.1** and **Master Response G** regarding public safety and **Responses 6.1 to 6.3** regarding drainage. Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 319.2

The commenter does not take a position about which way the rail wants to go but wants to see an improvement happen.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 319.3

The commenter states the EIR should address the global effects being broken up in individual sections.

The cumulative effects have been addressed in Section 4.1, *Cumulative Impact Analysis*. As stated in Section 4.1, the term “cumulative impacts” refers to “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15355). A cumulative impact can result from the combination of two or more individually significant impacts or the combination of two or more impacts that are individually less than significant but constitute a significant change in the environment when considered together.

To analyze a proposed project’s contribution to cumulative impacts, the County, RTC, and City of Capitola identified past, present, and probable future projects within the vicinity—including the other rail trail segments—in DEIR Table 4-1.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 319.4

The commenter states this has been a divisive issue, we are trying to come together to bring something that is going to improve all our lives, and they appreciate all the hard work of people on all sides.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 320

COMMENTER: Sally Arnold

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 320.1

The commenter sympathizes with people who did not know their homes are located in the ROW and thinks the responsibility is with whoever sold or rented them the property, not the RTC or rail company.

Thank you for the comments.

Refer to **Master Response C** for information on encroachments in the rail corridor. As noted in **Master Response C**, RTC will address encroachments on the SCBRL a part of a separate process.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 320.2

The commenter appreciates that the EIR provides a thorough comparison of the different alternatives, and states it is important for people to understand the wide trail cuts down more trees and the Interim Trail has to include the whole thing.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 320.3

The commenter supports the Ultimate Trail, but not with Design Option A that requires railbanking.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Commenter 321

COMMENTER: Becky Steinbruner

DATE: November 16, 2023

Response 321.1

The commenter states that there is no Draft EIR in the public library, and there is a significant part of our population that does not use the computer and cannot access the document unless there is a hard copy.

Thank you for the comments.

Physical copies of the Draft EIR were available for public review at four locations: the Capitola Public Library, the Live Oak Branch Public Library, County Parks' Offices, and the County Government Center. The commenter emailed the County (Rob Tidmore) on November 18, 2023, to state that they were able to view the Draft EIR at the Capitola Library.

This comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 321.2

The commenter would like to know why the County is the lead agency rather than the RTC.

The County is the lead agency for CEQA for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project, because the County is the agency intending to carry out the Project, not the RTC.

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 321.3

The commenter is uneasy that the County Board of Supervisors will make the determination on the sufficiency of the EIR in March 2024 when there is a shift in the Board's composition (i.e., some will be up for re-election and are not running for re-election).

The comment does not relate to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the CEQA process. However, the comments are noted and forwarded to decision makers for consideration.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 321.4

The commenter requests visual models of the proposed improvements.

Graphic representations of the Project (Ultimate Trail Configuration and Optional Interim Trail) are provided on Figure 2-2 in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR. CEQA requires the analysis of aesthetic impacts, which is provided in Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, of the Draft EIR. The *CEQA Guidelines* do not include any requirements for how an aesthetics analysis should be prepared, including preparation of

visual simulations. It is the discretion of the lead agency to determine when visual simulation should be prepared and used in analyses of aesthetic impacts. The County and City determined that the qualitative analysis in Impact AES-1 Section 3.1, *Aesthetics*, contains sufficient detail to assess the level of significance of aesthetic impacts and visual simulations are not needed required.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are necessary.

Response 321.5

The commenter would like an explanation why the trail width is what it is and asks cannot it be restricted in critical areas to reduce impacts.

As described in Section 2.4.1 under *Trail Width and Materials* (beginning on page 2-14), the typical width would be 12–14 feet.

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