



November 28, 2016

Regional Transportation Commission  
1523 Pacific Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: Options for use of the rail corridor

Dear Commissioners,

The Land Trust was an early and strong supporter of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network (MBSST) Master Plan and has, to date, committed \$5.8 million in donor funds to match grants for the North Coast, Watsonville, and Live Oak segments of the rail trail network spine. For the sake of clarity, the term "rail trail" refers to the rail-with-trail system as defined in the Master Plan and in the RTC's planning efforts to date.

We are concerned that the potential abandonment of the MBSST Master Plan will delay the completion of these segments and jeopardize the commitments the Land Trust has made, as donations received for one project cannot be automatically be transferred to another.

We expect the commission will consider this potential impact should you undertake a review of alternatives to the adopted Master Plan. We also have a number of questions promoted by the suggestion RTC may be considering abandoning this public policy.

- Will the already funded segments of rail trail in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, and along the North Coast be built as planned or will they be set aside and re-designed? When will it be decided?
- Would such a decision delay the construction of the currently funded segments? How much delay would result in the design and environmental permitting process for each project?
- Would it put at risk grants received from public entities for these projects?

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Stephen Slade

- Will RTC, the Cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville, and the County, as project leads, inform the California Transportation Commission before it decides on the Active Transportation Program grant being recommended for approve for the Boardwalk to 17<sup>th</sup> section that RTC may abandon the rail trail plan? What impact on the likelihood of getting this grant would be expected if RTC does so?
- Will the Environmental Impact Report for the MBSST Master Plan be impacted and need to be revised?

The Land Trust has followed the progress of the Rail Corridor acquisition and planning process for a number of years and supported efforts to expedite construction of the rail trail. The potential change in current funded segments of the rail trail is unsettling since the Land Trust has raised funds based on an approved plan. It places us in an awkward position with our donors and we cannot say whether all or even most of the donors would choose to allow their gifts to be directed to a different project or one that will be significantly delayed. We are evaluating if we should disburse any further funds for the rail trail project while it is under threat of being abandoned.

We look forward to your responses to these questions.

Sincerely,



Stephen Slade  
Executive Director