



Build the Rail Trail ASAP & *Preserve the Rail Option*

October 1, 2015

The Land Trust is committed to building the Coastal Rail Trail as soon as possible. To do that – and to give future generations the possibility of having rail service – we need to build the Rail Trail as planned and preserve the rail option.

The Regional Transportation Commission's Rail Trail Master Plan is a plan for a trail alongside the rail line. This plan was adopted after a lengthy public and stakeholder review process involving thousands of community members and public agencies like the California Coastal Commission, California Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, and local jurisdictions. It has been adopted by Santa Cruz County and the three cities through which it will pass. It is established policy.

More than \$14.5 million in local, state, and federal funds from and \$3.6 million in private funds have already been committed to building the Rail Trail in accordance with the Master Plan. These funds will pay for the building of a quarter of the 32-mile Rail Trail, which are scheduled to be open for use by 2018.

Abandoning the rail line now will undo the public process that led to the purchase of the rail line and the development of the Rail Trail Master Plan. It will delay efforts to build the Rail Trail until a new plan is developed – a process that could take 10 years or more, as the RTC holds hearings, secures funding, designs the rail-less trail, and secures permits. The last time we went through this process the result was the current Master Plan for a trail alongside the rail line – and it might well be again.

During the period of delay, when there will be no plan, the RTC and local jurisdictions will be unable to submit grant requests and the Land Trust, which has committed more than \$3.5 million in private funds, will be unable to raise funds for future segments. To build the Rail Trail ASAP, we need to preserve the Rail Option.

The Land Trust takes no position on passenger rail, except that we believe it is wise to preserve this option. We don't know if passenger rail is right for Santa Cruz County. We don't know what kind of rail service could work. But we do know that there are not many options for getting around our county. Let's not eliminate this one forever.