

TO: Regional Transportation Commission

FROM: Tegan Speiser, Senior Transportation Planner

REGARDING: Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail - Committee Appointments and Draft Long Range Interpretive Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Accept this report on issues pertaining to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST);
 2. Appoint Piet Canin and Mike Dalbey, as member and alternate respectively, to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Government (AMBAG) Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Committee as representatives from the RTC's Bicycle Committee;
 3. Direct staff to continue outreach efforts to identify a local agricultural representative to be appointed by the RTC to the MBSST Committee; and
 4. Provide any comments on the draft Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail from Seacliff State Beach to Lovers Point.
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BACKGROUND

Visions of a continuous coastal trail network surrounding the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) have been taking shape over the past decade. Such a trail would provide a recreational, transportation and interpretive pathway for bicyclists and pedestrians extending from Wilder Ranch in Santa Cruz to Lovers Point in Pacific Grove. The 50-mile project, officially named the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST), is envisioned to connect existing trail segments with new trail segments and travel through several communities, jurisdictions and unique environments in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. As the Monterey Bay comprises 5% of the California coastline, our local trail is also a key piece of a statewide California Coastal Trail which is being planned by the California Coastal Commission and State Coastal Conservancy.

With the help of Congressman Sam Farr, recent federal funding authorizations for developing the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail have now provided our region with significant resources to transform this long-held community vision into a tangible reality.

DISCUSSION

Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Cooperative Agreement

The cooperative working relationships related to accepting these federal funds are spelled out in a Cooperative Agreement (Attachment 1) executed in the spring of 2004 between Association of Monterey Bay Area Government (AMBAG), the RTC and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC).

In addition to outlining the role of each organization in terms of funding and planning for the MBSST, the Cooperative Agreement also calls for the formation of a two-county MBSST Committee. This staff report addresses the RTC's two appointments to this committee. It also presents background on the MBSST planning to date including a recently released draft Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail from Seacliff State Beach to Lovers Point.

Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Committee

In September 2004, the AMBAG Board of Directors approved the creation of the Sanctuary Scenic Trail Committee that will help shape the development of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST). This new committee is the successor to the ad hoc Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Steering Committee formed and lead by Congressman Farr (and staffed by AMBAG) from July 2001 to August 2004.

The membership of the MBSST Committee includes representatives from local, state, and federal jurisdictions within the trail boundaries, as well as economic development, recreational, agricultural and conservation organizations interested in trail development. The Sanctuary Scenic Trail Committee will work in conjunction with AMBAG, TAMC the RTC, and the Santa Cruz County Inter-Agency Task Force to craft overall trail development policy and provide input on funding allocations for the project. A roster of the entities that comprise the Committee and appointments made to date are included as Attachment 2.

RTC Appointments to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Committee

The RTC has been requested to appoint two members to serve on the MBSST Committee: one representative from the RTC's Bicycle Committee and one representative from the County's agricultural community. Each of these members may also have an alternate.

At its March 14th meeting, the RTC's Bicycle Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the RTC appoint Piet Canin and Mike Dalbey, as member and alternate respectively, to the MBSST Committee. Both of these individuals are extremely well suited to represent the Commission on the MBSST Committee. Piet Canin has served on the Bicycle Committee representing Bike to Work since 2002. He has directed the Bike to Work program since 1998 and has been involved in other capacities since its inception 18 years ago. He is also a consultant for

the Electric Bike Program and coordinates the Santa Cruz Bicycle Industry Coalition. Mike Dalbey teaches Biology at UCSC; reports the bicycle as his mode of transportation for 80% of his travel in the County; is a board member of Friends of the Rail Trail; and is a new member of the RTC's Bicycle Committee.

Staff approached Supervisor Campos for recommendations about a representative of local agricultural interests to serve on the committee. While several contacts have been made by the Supervisor and his staff, to date no commitments to serve in this capacity have been secured. Staff will continue to work with Supervisor Campos to conduct additional outreach to the agricultural community.

Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Funding

To date, Congressman Sam Farr has helped the region secure two federal earmarks for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) with the understanding that the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) will serve as the lead agency for receiving and disbursing these funds. The first earmark (for Federal FY 04-05) is in the amount of \$400,000. The RTC, TAMC, and AMBAG entered into a Cooperative Agreement (Agreement) in May 2004 that outlines how funds for this project are to be divided between the three agencies. The Agreement specifies that AMBAG will retain 8% (or \$32,000) of the FFY 04-05 earmark for administrative purposes while the remaining funds will be divided evenly between the two Regional Transportation Commissions. The RTC's portion is \$184,000 and no local match is required. A second earmark (for FFY 05-06) provides an additional \$400,000 regionally for this project and, using the same distribution formula, results in an additional \$184,000 for the RTC's portion of the project.

Although not yet approved, the new 6-year federal transportation bill, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users (TEA-LU), has passed the House of Representatives and currently includes an additional \$6 million regionally for this project. The Senate transportation bill and earmarks are still being debated in committee.

In sum, \$368,000 has already been secured for planning, environmental, project development and construction work related to the MBSST in Santa Cruz County through two federal appropriations. Should the \$6 million in funds from TEA-LU be authorized as well, under the existing formula, an additional \$2.76 million would be allocated to the RTC for the MBSST project in Santa Cruz County. AMBAG will retain \$480,000 and \$2.76 million will be distributed to TAMC.

The Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Inter-Agency Task Force

Convened and staffed by the County of Santa Cruz, a Sanctuary Inter-Agency Task Force has been in place since the mid-1990s. This group's mission is to maximize the role of the national marine sanctuary in the local community and economy.

A key aspect of their work since 1996 has been to designate and develop a recreation and interpretive coastal trail along the Monterey Bay. This group was instrumental in helping create

the vision of a trail with interpretive elements that would allow both visitors and locals to experience the Sanctuary from the vantage point of the land and shoreline.

The Task Force identified an 11 mile multi-use recreational and scenic coastal trail along already established public access and pedestrian routes beginning at Wilder Ranch. This core route has links to parks, public places and recreational spots, coastal access areas and Sanctuary viewpoints and overlooks. In addition to designating a route, plans have been made to install a system of signage, interpretive exhibits and displays along with a logo and pavement markers as part of an interpretive and wayfinding program. To date, 9 displays have already been installed.

Master Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) in Santa Cruz County

Developing a comprehensive Master Plan for the alignment and development of the Sanctuary Scenic Trail in Santa Cruz will necessarily build upon the work which has been done to date. Public ownership of the Santa Cruz Branch Line rail corridor will add new options to the mix of possible trail routes and alignments in Santa Cruz. Planning for the MBSST in Santa Cruz County will involve consulting with both the new committee convened by AMBAG and with the long-standing Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Inter-Agency Task Force. Development of a Master Plan for the MBSST in Santa Cruz County is temporarily on hold while the RTC continues its work to acquire the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line.

Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Draft Long Range Interpretive Plan

The ad hoc Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Steering Committee, convened by Congressman Sam Farr in July 2001 and staffed by AMBAG, has had two working groups: one focused on trail alignment and one on interpretive elements. The group working on interpretive elements just released for public review and comment a draft Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (Attachment 3). This Plan was prepared to guide the development of interpretive features for the portion of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail from Seacliff State Beach located in southern Santa Cruz County to the City of Pacific Grove in Monterey County. (A similar plan has already been created by the Santa Cruz Sanctuary Inter-Agency Task Force outlining the interpretive elements for the northern trail segments located between Wilder Ranch and Seacliff State Beach.)

The Draft Long Range Interpretive Plan was created for two purposes: 1) to help guide the future alignment of the MBSST toward resources worthy of appreciation and protection; and 2) to provide local entities with direction for developing interpretive features within their jurisdiction by describing the significance of features along the trail and translating those into a set of compelling stories, or themes. The Plan is intended to offer each jurisdiction a “blueprint” for interpretation that is comprehensive, site appropriate, and meaningful throughout the trail corridor.

The Plan will be placed on the April meeting agendas of the Commission’s Bicycle Committee, Interagency Technical Advisory Committee and the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee for the review and input of these advisory committees. Public comment on the Interpretive Plan is accepted until April 15, 2005. Comments should be directed to Stacia

Fletcher in the MBNMS Santa Cruz office at stacia.fletcher@noaa.gov by the April 15th deadline. After consideration of public comment, the plan will be formatted, printed and distributed to each jurisdiction around the Monterey Bay Peninsula.

SUMMARY

A new committee, the successor to the ad hoc steering committee convened Congressman Sam Farr, has been created by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) to help establish overall trail development policy for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail and to provide input to the RTC and TAMC on funding allocations for their respective trail projects. The RTC has been requested to appoint two representatives (and alternates) to this committee, one member of the RTC's Bicycle Committee and one representative of the local agricultural community. The Bicycle Committee has recommended that the RTC appoint Piet Canin and Mike Dalbey to the MBSST committee as member and alternate respectively. RTC staff is continuing to conduct outreach to identify an agricultural representative and alternate to serve on the committee.

A Draft Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail from Seacliff State Beach to Lovers Point has been released for public review and comment by April 15th. Staff will place this item on the April meeting agendas of the RTC's three advisory committees for their input.

Attachments:

1. Cooperative Agreement between AMBAG, the RTC and TAMC
2. MBSST Committee Members and Appointments to Date
3. Draft Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (enclosed separately for Commissioners and posted on the RTC website)