

MEMO

DATE: June 8, 2005

TO: Congressman Sam Farr
Attn: Alec Arago

FROM: Pat Dellin, SCCRTC Acting Executive Director

SUBJECT: Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail – Implementation Activities in Santa Cruz County

On behalf of the SCCRTC, I'd like to thank you once again for your leadership in funding and implementation of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail.

Recently, I and Tegan Speiser of my staff were able to meet with Alec Arago and Rachel Dann of your staff regarding the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's (RTC's) plans for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST). This memo summarizes our discussion regarding our plans to proceed with further planning and implementation of the transportation aspects of the MBSST in Santa Cruz County. Our work falls into three sequential steps: 1) Complete the rail line purchase; 2) Conduct a Master Trail Planning process; and 3) Fund and implement projects to complete the MBSST.

RAIL LINE PURCHASE

As you know, the process to purchase the Santa Cruz Branch Line Rail right of way is a major undertaking. We are currently in the midst of conducting a variety of due diligence activities required for a purchase of this magnitude. If the RTC's purchase of this transportation facility is successful, the opportunities for creating segments of the Sanctuary Scenic Trail will expand dramatically. The projected closing date for the purchase is November 2005. Thank you for your strong support of this project.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

Once the outcome of the rail purchase is known, RTC staff plans to recommend that our Commission follow the model set by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County for conducting a Master Planning process for the Santa Cruz portion of the MBSST. This process involves selecting a consultant to assist the RTC with developing the project objectives, identifying and assessing the possible segments, setting design standards, soliciting and incorporating the input of interested parties, and preparing cost estimates for segments. Part of this Master Planning process will be to inventory existing trail segments and to assemble all of the previous work done on the subject by local jurisdictions and various committees such as the Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Interagency Task Force and the MBSST Interpretive Work Group.

We will obviously work closely with TAMC to coordinate the trail link between the two counties at the Pajaro River.

The Master Planning process will involve all interested parties including the MBSST Steering Committee, the RTC's Bicycle Committee, the RTC's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC), the RTC's Interagency Transportation Advisory Committee (ITAC- which includes staff from all the local jurisdictions and other transportation agencies in Santa Cruz County), the County's Sanctuary Interagency Task Force and members of your staff. Public outreach will be conducted. Like TAMC, the RTC will use some of the funding from the initial federal appropriations for this project to conduct the Master Planning process.

At the conclusion of the Master Planning process, the RTC will identify a network of trails comprising the MBSST that meets the needs of different users. It is envisioned that some "leisurely" routes could be located right next to the ocean while other "express routes" may be located away from the shoreline. Creating links with other bike/pedestrian trails and to the coastal interpretive routes will be an integral part of the master planning process. The process will identify both the opportunities and constraints of various segment alternatives. Considerations such as ADA accessibility, managing traffic on mixed use trails, environmental constraints, agricultural impacts, priorities expressed by committee members and the public, and of course cost will all be part of the process. The result will be a prioritized list of short and long range projects.

FUND AND IMPLEMENT PROJECTS

Following completion of the Master Plan for the Santa Cruz portion of the MBSST, the RTC will be ready to allocate the remaining federal appropriations for the MBSST to construct segments of the trail. The RTC, local jurisdictions and other partners will also solicit other funding for MBSST implementation activities. We expect that the AMBAG region will want to conduct a coordinated public information program to promote the trail.

Thank you again for your strong leadership. If you or your staff have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or Tegan Speiser of my staff at 831-460-3209.

cc: SCCRTC
MBSST Steering Committee
Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Interagency Task Force
RTC Bicycle Committee
RTC Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&DTAC)
RTC Interagency Transportation Advisory Committee (ITAC)
Nick Papadakis, AMBAG
John Akeman, AMBAG
Bill Reichmuth, Transportation Agency for Monterey County