

March 27, 2006

Susan Harris
City of Santa Cruz
Parks and Recreation Department
323 Church Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Arana Gulch Park Master Plan Draft EIR

Dear Ms. Harris,

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) staff would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Arana Gulch Park Master Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The Arana Gulch Park Master Plan DEIR supports several of the Santa Cruz County *2005 Regional Transportation Plan's* Goals and Policies. Please accept the following comments for your consideration:

- The RTC has programmed \$1.7 million to the Broadway-Brommer Bike Path to date over a period spanning many years. The RTC has protected funding assigned to this project even though transportation funding is very limited. RTC staff encourages the City of Santa Cruz to continue moving forward with implementation of this multi-use trail project as soon as feasible. Further delay could jeopardize some or all of the funding.
- RTC staff strongly supports the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Connection proposed in the Arana Gulch Park Master Plan. This path will help fill a critical gap in the regional east-west bicycle and pedestrian network. Currently, there is no continuous bike lane/bike path that connects Santa Cruz and the Live Oak/Capitola area. Hopefully in the future there will be several bikeway and pedestrian connections for convenient use by all users. The Arana Gulch bicycle and pedestrian path will increase the ease and safety of bicycle and pedestrian trips for transportation purposes in and between our communities. Providing a complete and convenient regional bicycle and pedestrian network increases the opportunity and attractiveness of bicycle and pedestrian trips for transportation purposes, thus allowing people a transportation option between Santa Cruz and the Live Oak/Capitola area in addition to cars and transit.

- The *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* supports the development of multi-use paths. “Universal access”, the goal of enabling all people, including young, old and disabled persons who may have diminished perceptual or ambulatory abilities, to travel safely to destinations served by our public street and pathway system, is desirable.
- RTC staff fully supports that the Arana Gulch multi-use paths provide ADA accessibility to wheelchair users. The DEIR notes that this will be the only greenbelt area in the City of Santa Cruz that will be accessible to wheelchair users, which shows how needed this project is. Although the proposed Arana Gulch multi-use paths meet the minimum width requirements for bicycle and pedestrian paths per the Caltrans’ Highway Design Manual, RTC staff suggests that the path be designed to have a width greater than eight feet where possible to better facilitate universal access. For example, the inclusion of some wider portions of the pathway on the bridge and in the sloped sections of the path would promote universal access.
- As noted on page 3-15 of the DEIR, the Arana Gulch Master Plan trail system is indeed consistent with the concepts for the Monterey Bay Scenic Sanctuary Trail (MBSST) which includes interpretive elements as well as transportation elements and recreation elements. Several interpretive elements for the MBSST have already been constructed. The RTC is expected to address the next step in trail planning for the MBSST next fiscal year

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions about the above comments, please contact Grace Blakeslee of my staff at (831) 460-3219.

Sincerely,

Pat Dellin
Acting Executive Director

cc: RTC Commissioner Emily Reilly
RTC Commissioner Mardi Wormhoudt
RTC Bicycle Committee
RTC E&DTAC Committee
RTC
Nick Papadakis, AMBAG
Susan Pearlman, Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Task Force