

From: [Trail Now](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Grand Jury Demands RTC Accountability
Date: Monday, August 3, 2026 1:18:11 PM



Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) meeting will be August 6th with public written comments due by August 5th (Noon) to info@sccrtc.org.

[AGENDA: "\[Click here and type the date\]"](#)

Trail Now responses:

Item #14: Chair Montesino to appoint Ad Hoc Committee of Commissioners to develop and review responses to the Grand Jury report on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line

Trail Now is asking Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) to publicly recognize their failures identified within the 2025–2026 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury report on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. The Grand Jury's findings raise significant concerns about the management, planning, and financial oversight of the rail project. The report makes clear that it is time for the RTC to stop spending taxpayer dollars pursuing an unfunded passenger rail system and expensive "rail-with-trail" projects that provide little public benefit while delaying completion of the Santa Cruz Coastal Trail.

"Our community has waited decades for a safe, continuous Coastal Trail and this Grand Jury report should be a wake-up call. The RTC needs to stop investing in costly rail planning and instead deliver the transportation project residents can actually use."

We ask that the RTC not elect Commissioners who advocated the rail projects over the last decade, specifically Felipe Hernandez, Justin Cummings and Andy Schfrinn. These individuals on the RTC should take responsibility for the failure of the RTC. Our expectation is that the RTC will not only elect Commissioners who publicly recognize the failure of the rail project, but also immediately shift the plans away from rail and to opening the Santa Cruz Coastal Trail from Watsonville to Santa Cruz.

RTC needs to end further spending on passenger rail planning and unnecessary rail infrastructure.

The Coastal Trail will provide immediate benefits for commuters, families, students, seniors, and visitors while improving safety, recreation, and active transportation throughout Santa Cruz County.

The Grand Jury has highlighted the need for greater accountability and better stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The RTC should seize this opportunity to complete the Santa Cruz Coastal Trail without further delay.

Item #17: Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project contract award (Riley Gerbrandt, Senior Transportation Engineer)

Trail Now supports the RTC staff recommendation to award Contract TP2603 to HDR Engineering, Inc. to complete the Project Approval and Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project between Aptos and Pajaro.

This action represents an important step toward advancing the long-awaited Santa Cruz Coastal Trail. We encourage the RTC to approve the staff recommendation and continue moving the project forward on schedule.

This email was sent to info@sccrtc.org

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Trail Now · 195 QUAIL RUN ROAD · Aptos, CA 95003 · USA

From: [Brian Peoples](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Agenda Item #17: Support Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project contract award
Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2026 10:37:02 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

RTC,

Trail Now supports the RTC staff recommendation to award Contract TP2603 to HDR Engineering, Inc. to complete the Project Approval and Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments Project between Aptos and Pajaro.

This action represents an important step toward advancing the long-awaited Santa Cruz Coastal Trail. We encourage the RTC to approve the staff recommendation and continue moving the project forward on schedule.

Best,

Brian Peoples





August 2, 2026

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Comment Letter on Item 17. Contract for Professional Engineering Services for the Coastal Rail Trail Southern Segments 13-20 Project

Chair Montesino and Commissioners,

Friends of the Rail and Trail strongly supports the staff recommendation to approve a contract for professional services for the Coastal Rail Trail Segments 13-20, from Rio del Mar to Pajaro Junction. We support this work because it will provide a critical active transportation link for south county and mid county residents to access schools, parks, shopping and transit. We also support including beach access as part of this trail network.

Friends of the Rail and Trail supports trail design alternatives which do not remove the rail line, especially the Segment 17b trail alternative between Buena Vista/San Andreas and Pajaro Junction. This alternative was suggested by, and has the support of, Watsonville leadership. A protected, multi-use trail along San Andreas Road would provide stronger connections to neighboring residences; schools, and the state beach. It also has the advantage of being less susceptible to rising sea levels and preserving the rail in the existing corridor. The Segment 17b alternative should also include beach access as part of its program criteria and design.

South county communities and their elected representatives have been strong advocates for both rail and trail. Their support has been demonstrated through consistent collaboration and cooperation with Regional Transportation Commission staff and partner agencies. We urge that the commission continue to reward this partnership and make this work a high priority.

Thank you for your service to our community,

Matt Farrell
Chair
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail

