Outlook

RTC Nov 5 2026 meeting Item #7 Rail Right-of-Way Policies

From [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 8:22 AM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Der Commissioners: It shouldn't be illegal to walk on the railroad right-of-way prior to the construction of a paved trail, especially now that there are no trains running.

If someone gets hurt on the property, most often you would not be liable. If there are some particularly dangerous spots along the right-of-way, they could be so signed.

As you revise the right-of-way policies, please decriminalize walking on the right-of-way.

Thanks,
Rick Hyman

Outlook

11/5 RTC meeting: consent agenda item 7 "Adoption of Rail Right-of-Way Policies"

From J Lighthill [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 5:33 PM
To [redacted]; Steve [redacted]; Kimberly De Serpa; Justin Cummings; Andy Schiffrin [redacted] Fred Keeley; Gerry Jensen; Rebecca Fabian Leonor; Shebreh Kalantari [redacted]

Dear Commissioners,

Please consider pulling consent agenda Item 7 "Adoption of Rail Right-Of-Way Policies."

I'm not opposed to the proposed policies, but believe additional time is needed to:

-Allow homeowners adjacent to the SCBRL corridor, including residents of Castle Mobile Home Estates and Blue and Gold Mobile Home Park, to review and comment on the proposed **Encroachment Management** policy.

-Allow commissioners to consider potential litigation costs and liabilities associated with these policies.

-Fully evaluate the **Railroad Crossing Responsibility** policy and its potential financial and operational impacts on state and local agencies.

These policies deserve thoughtful review and meaningful public input before adoption. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Johanna Lighthill

SCCRTC
1 Pacific Ave. Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Monday, November 2, 2026

Dear RTC Commissioners and Staff,

Friends of Rail & Trail has thoughtfully reviewed the Nov. 5th Agenda and packet of materials. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the public hearing process. With recognition of all the hard work that went into preparing these materials, we feel the need to point out several inconsistencies in the report that we believe warrant discussion and resolution.

AGENDA ITEM #25

Measure D: Five-Year Programs of Projects for Regional Projects and Lift Line.

TRAIL FACT SHEETS

The content of the Fact Sheets for Segments 8-9 and 10-11, (PDF pgs. 374 and 326) state that "the cost of constructing the Ultimate Trail Configuration exceeds available resources and therefore the Interim Trail Configuration is being advanced". It is our understanding that the RTC does not have regulatory authority to determine a definitive path forward for the trail construction as there is no final decision by the federal Surface Transportation Board regarding the RTC/Progressive Rail Discontinuance request submitted in June 2026.

At a minimum the fact sheet should mention unresolved regulatory hurdles required for implementation of the "interim" trail design.

CLARITY BETWEEN THE RAIL AND TRAIL FACT SHEETS

The Trail Fact Sheets for Segments 8-9 and 10-11, state construction will begin in 2027. Assuming a 3 year construction timeline, these trails will be ready for use in 2030.

The rail fact sheets say rail construction will begin in 2036 (pdf page 385). This timing underscores that the trail will only be in place for 6 years - an "interim" trail indeed!

Full transparency and accuracy about the timing and cost for both trail and rail construction is required for public trust. It is necessary to inform the public that the proposed 5 year Rail & Trail expenditure plan includes spending hundreds of millions of dollars for a 6 year trail. The trail expense is then immediately followed by significant cost to tear-up the interim trail and rebuild the tracks. We suggest both the approach and its consequences be explicitly and comprehensively acknowledged in the Measure D 5 year expenditure plan.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FACT SHEET

Currently, the Fact Sheet on the Climate Resilience plan, PDF pg. 383, is titled "Planning for Climate Resilience of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line Corridor" with no mention of the trail planning that also is required. Given that the rail and the trail are occupying the same right of way, any climate impacts will affect both the trail and rail design and construction. Both our trail and our rail are valuable assets in need of protection.

We strongly suggest that the Planning for Climate Resilience Fact Sheet clearly state that the climate obstacles presented as an issue for rail are also applicable to the trail.

PUBLIC NEEDS MORE FINANCIAL INFORMATION

As currently presented, the Measure D 5-year Program does not represent a full picture of where voter-approved Measure D funds have been, and are intended to be, spent. We suggest that all prior versions of the previous Measure D 5 year project plans be posted and made easily available along with a record of the changes to projects over time.

Additionally, it would be helpful if this annual item included the 5-year plans prepared by the other recipients of annual Measure D funding: Santa Cruz Metro, Lift Line, and local jurisdictions (the County of Santa Cruz and Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville).

AGENDA ITEM #22

Given the complexities of advancing the Rail & Trail project, the future Chair and Vice Chair will require a deep understanding of transit policy and its ramifications. Since decisions of RTC Commissioners directly impact community members and their transportation options or obstacles, we believe it is critical that the future RTC Chair and Vice Chair have demonstrated willingness and capability to recognize and consider all voices and input.

AGENDA ITEM #10 CORRECTION

The "background" section of this agenda item (pdf pg 92) contains the following misleading statement, "*The RTC acquired the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) in 2012 for the purpose of providing transportation alternatives in Santa Cruz County.*" This is not accurate. The SCBRL was acquired to implement passenger rail consistent with statewide voter approval of Proposition 116. We have noticed this phrase appearing in other documents recently. We request that this statement be corrected in item 10 and in future background description of the SCBRL ROW.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking these suggestions seriously. They may seem small, but words have meaning and by honoring this request for clarity you will help the public to better understand the project plans and associated costs. Accurate public records build credibility and reflect the full spectrum of issues under consideration. The planning of a publicly funded, voter approved project as significant as the Rail & Trail Project deserves attention to detail. Thank you in advance for ensuring that the Five-Year Programs of Projects for Regional Projects and Lift Line is as accurate as possible.

Sally Arnold
Board Member
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail

[redacted]

Outlook

Error in Nov 5 Packet

From Trink Praxel [redacted]
Date Mon 11/2/2026 7:46 AM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Dear Director Christensen and Finance Officer Pearson,

We have noticed a small, but important error in the November 5, 2026 RTC agenda item, "**FY 2024-25 Fiscal Audit for the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission and FY 2024-25 Audited Financial Statements for the Measure D Fund.**"

The FY 2024/25 Measure D Management Discussion & Analysis report, (agenda page 14-100) states that the formula set forth in the voter-approved Expenditure Plan for Measure D is **7% for the Rail Corridor and 18% for Active Transportation**. Yet, the actual formula is **8% for the Rail Corridor and 17% for Active Transportation**, as shown on the Measure D Fact Sheet on the RTC's website.

The FY 2025 Measure D Distribution chart (page 14-119) shows the actual numbers spent (with administration) as 7.2% for the Rail Corridor and 17.5% for Active Transportation. While the report has received a passing review from the audit, it should be noted that the actual expenditures on these Measure D requirements require some full rounding to be seen as fully met.

We are sure that you agree how important it is to accurately state the legal requirements of all citizen adopted measures, and we point this out to encourage a clarification either before or during this upcoming meeting.

Trink Praxel

Friends of Rail and Trail

Civic Engagement Committee

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FRIENDS OF THE RAIL & TRAIL

SCCRTC
1 Pacific Ave. Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Monday, November 2, 2026

Dear RTC Commissioners and Staff,

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At a minimum the fact sheet should mention unresolved regulatory hurdles required for implementation of the "interim" trail design.

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The rail fact sheets say rail construction will begin in 2036 (pdf page 385). This timing underscores that the trail will only be in place for 6 years - an "interim" trail indeed!

Full transparency and accuracy about the timing and cost for both trail and rail construction is required for public trust. It is necessary to inform the public that the proposed 5 year Rail & Trail expenditure plan includes spending hundreds of millions of dollars for a 6 year trail. The trail expense is then immediately followed by significant cost to tear-up the interim trail and rebuild the tracks. We suggest both the approach and its consequences be explicitly and comprehensively acknowledged in the Measure D 5 year expenditure plan.

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We strongly suggest that the Planning for Climate Resilience Fact Sheet clearly state that the climate obstacles presented as an issue for rail are also applicable to the trail.

PUBLIC NEEDS MORE FINANCIAL INFORMATION

As currently presented, the Measure D 5-year Program does not represent a full picture of where voter-approved Measure D funds have been, and are intended to be, spent. We suggest that all prior versions of the previous Measure D 5 year project plans be posted and made easily available along with a record of the changes to projects over time.

Additionally, it would be helpful if this annual item included the 5-year plans prepared by the other recipients of annual Measure D funding: Santa Cruz Metro, Lift Line, and local jurisdictions (the County of Santa Cruz and Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville).

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Sally Arnold
Board Member
Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail

Outlook

Comment on 11/5/26 agenda item

From Dianne [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 11:27 AM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

To: Regional Transportation Commission and Staff

Regarding Agenda #25 Measure D Five Year Plan, I urge you all to keep long term transportation needs in mind as the most important priority. In the future, our county must have more alternatives than Hwy 1 and Soquel Avenue/Drive.

The obvious, climate smart and most popular alternative is rail transit. Don't throw it away by removing tracks and building a trail in their place! Build the trail next to the tracks, as planned for many years. Tearing out the tracks in mid county will make getting rail service harder, slower and more expensive. Think of the future....do not remove the tracks!!!

Dianne Dryer
[redacted]

Outlook

SCCRTC Meeting 11/05/26 Public comment Item #25 Measure D 5-year Plan

From Paula Bradley [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 4:34 PM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Dear Commissioners,

The proposed Measure D budget for the trail segments 8, 9, 10 and 11 includes track removal and construction of trail only. In 2022 county voters rejected the trail only plan by 73%. I urge you to listen to the public and preserve the rail right of way for future public transportation electric rail service. We oppose track removal. The rail corridor is our only alternative to Highway 1 gridlock and the negative effects of congestion on health, the economy, and the environment. A large number of residents are not able to drive or ride a bike.

Before you plan to remove the tracks consider the consequences to current and future funding. Removing the tracks will result in legal delays and may not be possible after lengthy delays. Please ask staff to report on the status of the Federal Corridor ID Program, step 2 and if track removal will result in losing the federal funding for our service, design, and engineering. Tearing out the tracks will make getting rail service harder, slower, and more expensive.Consider the hybrid plan as an option to track removal.

It's a waste of taxpayers' money to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to remove tracks, build an interim trail, then turn around a few years later to tear out that trail so you can rebuild the tracks you removed and build another trail next to the tracks. These costs also need to be factored in the cost estimate.

Thank you

Paula Bradley (she/her)
[redacted]

Outlook

RTC Meeting Thursday: Stop the Lawsuits, Build the Coastal Trail!

From Trail Now [redacted]
Date Sun 11/1/2026 12:01 PM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>



RTC MEETING NOVEMBER 5 — MORE LAWSUITS OR MORE COASTAL TRAIL?

The RTC's Thursday agenda includes closed-session discussions involving litigation against local property owners, including Bay View Hotel, and potential new litigation.

Trail Now is urging RTC Commissioners to:

STOP costly appeals and further legal challenges.

PROTECT private property rights and negotiate fair solutions.

INITIATE RAILBANKING and build the Coastal Trail!

After years of delays and costly decisions, it's time to stop fighting property owners and start building the trail.

TAKE ACTION — EMAIL RTC COMMISSIONERS!

info@sccrtc.org

DEADLINE: Wednesday, November 4, at NOON

Tell Commissioners: **No more legal challenges! Protect private property rights, initiate railbanking, and BUILD THE TRAIL NOW!**

Your voice matters. Please email RTC and share this post!

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Outlook

For the Commissioners November 4, 2026 meeting

From Walter J Smith [redacted]
Date Sun 11/1/2026 12:40 PM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Dear Commissioners: Please, No more legal challenges! Protect private property rights, initiate railbanking, and BUILD THE TRAIL NOW!

Thank you.
--
Walter J Smith
[redacted]

Outlook

RTC Meeting Nov 5

From Doug Huskey [redacted]
Date Sun 11/1/2026 1:08 PM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Dear Commissioners,

Please do not litigate against property owners. I would like to see a trail built over the tracks. Please initiate the railbanking process to protect railway rights and right away, but build the trail now.

Thank you,
Doug Huskey
[redacted]

Virus-free.www.avast.com

Outlook

RTC Meeting Items 27-29: End Costly Litigation, Protect Property Rights, and Initiate Railbanking

From Brian Peoples [redacted]
Date Mon 11/2/2026 7:34 AM
To Sarah Christensen [redacted]
Felipe Hernandez [redacted]
Kimberly De Serpa : Manu Koenig
Fred [redacted]
Steve [redacted]
Eduardo Montesino [redacted]
Rebecca Downing ; Gerry Jensen [redacted]
Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

Dear RTC Commissioners,

Trail Now urges the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) to reject further appeals involving the Trout Gulch and Bay View property owners, end costly litigation, protect private property rights, and initiate railbanking to accelerate construction of the Santa Cruz Coastal Trail.

Rather than spending additional taxpayer dollars on legal challenges against local property owners, RTC should pursue fair, negotiated solutions that respect private property rights, reduce unnecessary expenses, and allow Coastal Trail construction to move forward.

Trail Now respectfully requests that Commissioners take four actions:

1. Reject further appeals involving the Trout Gulch and Bay View property rulings.
2. Direct RTC staff to negotiate fair and practical agreements with affected property owners.
3. Initiate railbanking to preserve the rail corridor and facilitate Coastal Trail construction.
4. Prioritize trail construction over additional litigation, legal expenses, and delays.

The community deserves progress on the Coastal Trail—not more years of litigation and uncertainty.

RTC Commissioners have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by resolving property disputes cooperatively, protecting taxpayer dollars, and focusing resources on completing the Coastal Trail.

Stop the appeals. Initiate railbanking. Build the Coastal Trail.

Sincerely,

Brian Peoples


TRAIL NOW
SANTA CRUZ

Outlook

Prioritize the Coastal Trail

From Brian Friel [redacted]
Date Mon 11/2/2026 9:00 AM
To Regional Transportation Commission <info@sccrtc.org>

You don't often get email from [redacted] Learn why this is important

Dear RTC Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concern over the continued legal disputes and delays surrounding the Coastal Rail Trail. As a Santa Cruz County resident, I am frustrated by the amount of time and public resources being spent on litigation rather than making meaningful progress toward completing this important community project. This process over the past 5+ years has been atrocious to watch and an embarrassment for our community as a whole.

I urge the Commission to reconsider its approach and prioritize practical, collaborative solutions that respect private property rights and serve the broader community.

Specifically, I ask that the RTC:

- **Stop pursuing costly appeals and additional litigation** that further delay progress and consume public funds.
- **Respect private property rights** and work toward fair, negotiated resolutions with affected property owners.
- **Initiate the railbanking process** and prioritize the timely completion of a safe, continuous, and accessible Coastal Trail.

Our community deserves a functioning coastal trail, not more years of legal battles, uncertainty, and escalating costs. It is time to focus on achievable solutions and tangible results.

I strongly encourage the Commission to demonstrate leadership, fiscal responsibility, and a commitment to moving this project forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

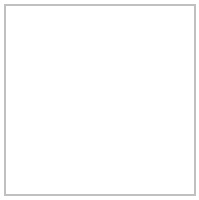
[redacted]

Brian Friel
Architect, Partner

YAC Architecture

[redacted]

[redacted]



Outlook

Agenda Items 27, 28, & 29, 11/5/26 RTC Meeting

From nadene thorne [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 7:35 PM
To [redacted]

Commissioners,
This is to urge you to refuse to promote further litigation or negotiation to acquire rail adjacent property along the Aptos Segment 9 rail corridor. Now is the time to specify that Segment 9 will be designed and built in the Interim trail configuration, as are Segments 8-11, saving time and money. Additional property is not needed for this trail project.

Future rail is the only justification for holding out for this property acquisition. The ZEPRT study made clear that passenger rail is many, many years away, if ever, will carry far fewer passengers than the expense would justify, and there is no prospect whatsoever for achieving several billions in construction funding or community approval of a 1-2% additional sales tax.

Your own ongoing climate resiliency study confirms that the rail corridor cannot be made serviceable for rail without substantial relocation - a prospect that it is clear has no viable path forward for possibly 50 or 100 years? - Or more?

Spending more time and money on these small Aptos parcels holds the entire present and future of the rest of the rail trail hostage. It's time to finally focus on what can be achieved in our lifetimes with the resources we have and refuse to undermine prospects for the countywide boon this trail will be.

Finally, the RTC commissioners have known about the benefits of railbanking since the corridor was first purchased. It seems like 14 years, a lot of wasted money, and considerable community division over misleading information and unreasonable expectations, with only a few miles of trail constructed - and NO prospects for rail - should be enough for you to finally face facts.

Refusing to continue to pursue these Aptos parcels represents your critical opportunity to move forward with a clear direction in constructing the rail trail. It's time to put railbanking on the agenda and protect the corridor for the trail, and for rail someday if it should ever occur.

Nadene Thorne