Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12: *Moving Forward*

The Regional Transportation Commission remains committed to building Segment 12 of the Coastal Rail Trail, a safe, car-free path from State Park Drive through Aptos Village to Rio del Mar at Sumner Avenue.


Before


After

AI generated photo

What the community gains:

A SAFER WAY TO GET AROUND
Car-free path for people of all ages and abilities

CONNECTS NEIGHBORHOODS
From State Park Drive through Aptos Village to Rio Del Mar

MORE VISITORS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES
Brings more walkers and bikers to Aptos Village

WHY KEEP THE CURRENT TRAIL DESIGN

Segment 12 is already designed and funded in the Ultimate Trail configuration (trail in alignment next to tracks).

Switching to an Interim Trail design (trail constructed in location of existing tracks) would:

- still require the need to acquire additional property rights and only save a few parking spots
- require redesign
- add about $250,000 per month of delay in cost escalation to the $50 million construction project
- need a state time extension that is not guaranteed

FUNDING AT STAKE

$27.5 million
in competitive state grants

JAN 2027
Right-of-way work must be complete

JUN 2027
State deadline to allocate construction funds


Segment 12 rendering – tied arch bridge over Aptos Creek at Soquel Drive.

RECENT COURT DECISION

Court found the RTC does not own a small section of property in Aptos Village needed to build the trail; instead, RTC has a railroad easement over the two properties.

WHAT'S NEXT

The RTC will work to acquire the additional rights needed to build the trail as designed. Affected property owners will be contacted directly and offered fair market value based on independent appraisals.

RAIL LINE STATUS

The Santa Cruz Branch Line is still legally an active freight railroad while federal filings with the Surface Transportation Board are pending. Segment 12's current design does not depend on those decisions.

Learn more: https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/hwy1/state-park-dr-to-freedom-blvd/ • info@sccrtc.org

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Segment 12?
Segment 12 is a section of the Coastal Rail Trail. It runs from State Park Drive, through Aptos Village, to Rio del Mar at Sumner Avenue. It will give people a new safe, separate path for walking and biking.

What was the recent court decision regarding property rights in Aptos Village?
The court decided that the RTC does not own some property along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line that the agency believed it owned and needs to construct Segment 12 of the Coastal Rail Trail.

Is the trail still being built?
The RTC is continuing with project development activities. Construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2027.

What does that mean for the two nearby property owners?
The RTC is in contact with each owner. Owners will be offered fair market value, based on an independent appraisal.

Is there a deadline that needs to be met to construct Segment 12?
Yes. Segment 12 is paid for with $27.5 million in state grant funds. To keep that money, the Commission must finish getting property rights in early January 2027 so the state can release the funds by June 2027.

What happens if you miss the deadline?
The state may withdraw the $27.5 million. Those competitive funds would be very hard to replace, and the trail could be delayed for years.

Is the railroad still active?
Under federal law, the Santa Cruz Branch Line is still an active freight railroad. Paperwork has been filed with the federal Surface Transportation Board to change that status, the timing of which is unknown. Segment 12's design does not depend on that decision.

In December, the Commission decided to move forward with the Interim Trail design for Segments 9-11. Why is Segment 12 not being advanced in the same way?
The December decision directed staff to pursue the Interim Trail (trail constructed in location of existing tracks) for Segments 9–11, and to pursue the ultimate trail (trail in alignment next to tracks) configuration where feasible. Design for Segment 12 is already completed in the Ultimate Trail configuration. The project is also fully funded and has a firm deadline it must meet in order to receive $27.5 million in grant funds. Building Segment 12 as designed follows the Commission's December direction.

Would switching to the Interim Trail design get rid of the need to acquire additional property and save parking spaces in Aptos Village?
The RTC would still need to acquire some property rights if the trail were built in the Interim Trail configuration. Switching to an interim trail configuration would save a few parking spaces but would require redesign and depend on federal rail filings that are still pending. That delay would add about $250,000 per month of delay to construction costs and require a state time extension that is not guaranteed. It puts the $27.5 million in grant funds at risk.

How will construction affect Aptos Village businesses?
We will coordinate closely with businesses on access and timing and share construction plans well in advance.

When will Segment 12 open?
Construction is scheduled to begin in 2027 and be completed in 2029.

How can I stay informed or share my thoughts?
View project updates at https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/hwy1/state-park-dr-to-freedom-blvd/

Sign up for email updates at https://www.sccrtc.org/about/esubscriptions/