

Wyatt, Rosie

From: Matt Farrell <mattfarrell922@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 9:47 PM
To: City Council; Clarke, Joe; Pedersen, Alexander; Gerry Jensen; Margaux Morgan; Melinda Orbach
Subject: [PDF] Please Approve Option A for the Park Avenue Alignment
Attachments: Capitola City Council Park Avenue 04172025.docx.pdf

Mayor Clarke and Councilmembers,

Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail supports the efforts of the city of Capitola, Santa Cruz County and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) staff to develop this alternative. It will save the city of Capitola an estimated \$80,500 and provide a multi-use trail serving pedestrians and bicyclists with an estimated value of \$3-\$5 million.

This project represents the county and the RTC contributing resources and staff time to perform safety work (crosswalks and pedestrian activated flashing beacons) to benefit the city's residents and visitors; and does not require a contribution from the city of Capitola.

We have attached a letter outlining our reasons for supporting this alignment and why we urge you to reject the pursuit of railbanking or adverse abandonment. Both county voters and Capitola residents overwhelmingly rejected this proposal in 2022.

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



April 15, 2025

Mayor Clarke and City Councilmembers
Capitola City Hall
420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, CA 95010

RE: April 17 Agenda Item 3b. Park Avenue Alignment of the Coastal Rail Trail
(Segments 10 and 11)

Mayor Clarke and Councilmembers,

Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT) is a local, non-profit community organization made up of over 12,000 supporters, 200 of whom live in the city of Capitola. These are people who agree with expanding Santa Cruz County's transportation system to include passenger rail service and a 32-mile multi-use trail as detailed in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan. We are excited to see the next segments of the coastal rail trail link more of the County together.

We urge the city council to approve Option A for the proposed Park Avenue Alignment of the Coastal Rail Trail. City, county and Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) staff have worked together to develop a solution which serves both the City Council's identified goals of increasing safety on Park Avenue and improving access for adjacent neighborhoods to the trail, all while reducing trail project costs.

City and County staff estimate that the RTC's offer to install these safety and traffic calming measures (improved crosswalk markings, pedestrian-activated flashing beacons) along with the multi-use trail will save the city \$80,500. These funds can be used for other needed projects in Capitola

We agree with city staff's analysis that this alignment conforms with Measure L. It preserves active transportation and recreation in the rail corridor; it is not a detour; and it does not propose construction on city streets or sidewalks.

Though the staff report offers you the option to hire a Surface Transportation Board (STB) attorney to look into railbanking, we strongly suggest you don't waste city resources on this dead end. The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) explored this option years ago and determined that the cost in time and resources were excessive in view of the risk and uncertainty of the result.

The decision to reject the "Interim Trail" was ratified by the vote on Measure D in 2022. Countywide, 73% of voters rejected this proposal. In the city of Capitola, 60% of voters rejected Measure D. Clearly the citizens of Capitola and Santa Cruz County want to preserve the opportunity for rail.

Railbanking the trestle effectively railbanks the whole line. Is Capitola prepared to be responsible for maintenance of the whole line? Is Capitola prepared to argue the case for adverse abandonment before the STB without the support of the RTC and against the position of Progressive Rail, Roaring Camp, and the majority vote of the community?

Pursuing adverse abandonment/railbanking will only delay moving forward on the trail for the benefit of the community of Capitola, and may jeopardize the largest Active Transportation grant in the history of the state.

Protect the safety of everyone who lives and visits Capitola. Move forward with the Park Avenue alignment. Please vote yes on moving forward with staff's recommendation: approve Option A for the Park Avenue alignment.

Sincerely,

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