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CITY OF CAPITOLA

**City Council Meeting 1/22/26, Public Comment - Item 8B Support for SCCRTC Direction on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10–11 and Evaluation of the Capitola Trestle**

Dear Council Members,

Like many people I would like a multi-use trail including the Capitola trestle. Supporting the RTC 12/04/25 actions seem like a positive idea; however, the RTC is risking federal rail funding if the tracks are removed. The RTC has stated they will look at options to keep the tracks with the interim trail, but removing the tracks is still on the table. A decision to remove the tracks instead of keeping them as part of the interim trail will put our progress in the federal Corridor ID Program and federal funding for future rail service at risk.

At the December RTC meeting, Rob Cunningham from the Caltrans Office of Rail Planning and Implementation gave a presentation about the federal Corridor ID program. Santa Cruz is part of the Central Coast Corridor, one of only five rail projects in the state that qualified for the program. The Central Coast Corridor will advance to the next phase (step 2) of the Corridor ID Program: the Service Development Plan. This is fully funded by state and federal grants.

The Caltrans Office of Rail Planning will use and review the work done in the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Concept Study (ZPERT) and will do independent value engineering to look for cost savings and will examine options for project phasing. If we remove or cover the rails, the FRA could consider our rail project as failing to make progress, and we would not be competitive to move forward Step 3, which includes federal environmental (NEPA) review and 30% engineering. The federal program pays 80% of the cost and the remaining 20% is shared between Caltrans and the RTC (local match). Completing this step makes our system eligible to apply for 80% federal grants for final engineering and construction.

I am concerned that the Corridor ID Program has been downplayed in all of the talk about the overblown \$4.1 million cost estimate - it was barely mentioned, when instead we should be celebrating it.

Please support the Corridor ID program and the Ultimate Trail and, where needed, an interim trail which reserves the rails for the future benefit of the County and as a destination for visitors. The Coastal Rail and Trail project benefits the entire county and beyond including the economy, the environment by reducing greenhouse gases, (as we are mandated to do), and benefits the health of residents. I am an avid cyclist and would like a great recreational trail but not at the expense of losing the rail corridor for public transportation. Not everyone can ride a bike or drive a car and fewer younger people desire car ownership. With all the new planned higher density housing, an efficient public transportation system including an electric passenger train is more critical than ever. Our Coastal rail trail project has consistent voter and widespread support in Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,

  
Paula Bradley