

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 22, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Support for Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Direction on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10–11 and Evaluation of the Capitola Trestle

Recommended Action: Adopt a resolution expressing support for the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's December 4, 2025 action advancing an Interim Trail configuration for Coastal Rail Trail Segments 9–11 and directing evaluation of the historic Capitola trestle for interim bicycle and pedestrian use.

Background: The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) owns and manages the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line includes of the Capitola trestle and serves as the lead agency for planning and coordination of the Coastal Rail Trail in partnership with local jurisdictions.

On December 4, 2025, the RTC approved a resolution accepting the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Final Project Concept. As part of that action, the RTC approved multiple implementation directions affecting Coastal Rail Trail Segments 9–11, including:

- Directing staff to return within approximately two months with a proposal that would allow construction of an Interim Trail without the need for railbanking or adverse abandonment of the freight easement;
- Directing staff to bring forward a final design and take actions necessary to implement the Interim Trail on Segments 9–11 as expeditiously as feasible, while pausing further work on the Ultimate Trail configuration in those segments;
- Directing staff to pursue revised cooperative agreements with the City and County of Santa Cruz to implement the above direction; and
- Directing staff to pursue and return with options for retrofitting the historic Capitola trestle for interim bicycle and pedestrian use, either as part of Segment 11 or as a separate project.

The motion passed on a 7–5 vote.

At the City Council meeting on December 11, 2025, Councilmember Jensen requested a future agenda item for the City Council to support for the direction the RTC is taking related to advancing the Interim Trail and evaluating the Capitola trestle as part of the project.

The historic Capitola trestle is a key structure within the rail corridor and is necessary for long-term continuity of the Coastal Rail Trail through Capitola. At this time, the trestle is not included in the scope of the Coastal Rail Trail projects currently advancing through design and funding, though the project EIR includes an option in Alternative One that includes routing the trail over the trestle.

In November 2018, Capitola voters approved Measure L, codified as Capitola Municipal Code Chapter 8.72, which establishes requirements governing use of the rail corridor within City limits.

At a Special City Council meeting on April 17, 2025, the City Council affirmed its interpretation of Capitola Municipal Code Chapter 8.72 when considering rail trail alignment options. The Council confirmed the RTC/County trail may be built within the rail corridor in the City of Capitola, but not on City property or City rights-of-way, and that the City may construct and maintain its streets, sidewalks, and bike paths as the City Council sees fit.

Discussion: Expressing support for the RTC's direction to construct the Interim Trail communicates the Council's view of the project direction while preserving discretion over future project actions.

This action does not commit the City to a specific design, funding contribution, schedule, construction activity, or execution of agreements. The RTC has indicated it will return with additional proposals related to Interim Trail implementation, cooperative agreement updates.

Staff will continue to monitor these efforts and participate in coordination as appropriate. Any proposed agreements, funding participation, or project implementation actions affecting City property, regulatory authority, or financial resources would be brought forward to the Council for separate consideration and direction.

Any future actions related to the Coastal Rail Trail or trestle within the City would remain subject to applicable City policy and regulatory requirements, including Capitola Municipal Code Chapter 8.72.

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact associated with this action. Any future fiscal impacts would be evaluated and presented to the City Council as part of separate actions.

Attachments:

1. Resolution Supporting RTC Direction on Coastal Rail Trail Segments 10–11 and Evaluation of the Capitola Trestle
2. Excerpt of Santa Cruz County RTC Draft Minutes – December 4, 2025 (Item 26)

Alignment with 2025-2029 Strategic Plan Priority: Accountable Government; Attainable Housing; Community Safety; Economic Opportunity; Healthy Families, Community, and Environment; Sustainable Infrastructure

Report Prepared By: Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk; Marc Tran, City Attorney

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager