

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP**

Of The Ventana Chapter

P.O. Box 604, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

<https://ventana2.sierraclub.org/santacruz/>e-mail: sierraclubsantacruz@gmail.com

October 19, 2016

Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: October 20, 2016 RTC meeting, agenda item #4 on the Great Santa Cruz Trail study

Dear Commissioners:

The Sierra Club emphatically supports the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan, widely adopted in 2014, which plans for rail-with-trail on the public rail corridor. That plan allows for a multi-modal transportation system that includes passenger rail.

We also observe that the Rail Transit Feasibility Study completed in November 2015 concluded that the combination of both rail and trail appears feasible, and merits additional study.

Unfortunately, the Great Santa Cruz Trail study proposes a project that would literally “derail” these plans.

We’re concerned that removing the existing tracks would have an adverse impact on the first eight miles of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail project currently underway and scheduled for completion in 2018. Any decision to remove the existing tracks would result in delays as the RTC works to resolve issues such as the repayment of Prop 116 funding, renegotiating the ten year agreement with Iowa Pacific, obtaining permission from the federal government to remove the tracks, and the required revision to the existing MBSSTN Master Plan and the associated EIR.

We support the existing rail-with-trail approach for a multitude of reasons, including diversifying away from reliance on the Highway 1 corridor, meeting the transportation needs of more residents, reducing per-person energy demand from mechanized travel, and thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Sincerely,

Greg McPheeters
Chair, Santa Cruz Group, Sierra Club