



County of Santa Cruz

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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PAIA LEVINE, ACTING PLANNING DIRECTOR

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NOTICE

Date: November 5, 2021

To: Interested Parties
All Recipients on the Distribution List

Lead Agency: County of Santa Cruz

Contact: Rob Tidmore, Project Manager
701 Ocean Street, Room 410, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2340, Robert.Tidmore@santacruzcounty.us

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an EIR and Scoping Meeting

Project Title: Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the County of Santa Cruz (County) will be the Lead Agency and will host a scoping meeting and prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the potential project impacts of the project described below on the environment, pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

THE PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE IS to solicit public input on environmental concerns and alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR for the Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project. Responsible agencies may need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the project, and trustee agencies should plan to review and comment on the EIR with respect to trust resources within their jurisdiction.

The focus of this notice and the scoping meeting is specifically to gather input on potential environmental issues and project alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental review process, not the merits of the project itself or the project design. There will be future opportunities for community input on the schematic plans.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT IS to provide an accessible bicycle/pedestrian path for active transportation, recreation, and environmental and cultural education along the existing Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) rail corridor, consistent with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) Network Master Plan.

PUBLIC INPUT DUE DATE: Written comments should be submitted or postmarked within 30 days of the receipt of this Notice, as provided by State law, and thus should be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2021. Please submit your comments in writing to the contact person's name and address below. Please include the commenter's name, agency or organization (if applicable), phone number, and email (typed or written legibly) in your response. The focus of the NOP and your comments is specifically to gather input on potential environmental issues and project alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR, not the merits of the project itself or the project design. There will be future opportunities for community input on the design.

County of Santa Cruz Project website
<https://www.dpw.santacruzcounty.us/RailTrail>

or

Rob Tidmore, Project Manager
County of Santa Cruz, Department of Public Works
701 Ocean Street, Room 401
Santa Cruz, California 95060
RailTrail@santacruzcounty.us

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The **Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project** is an approximately 4.5-mile bicycle and pedestrian system that generally extends along the SCBRL corridor, from the eastern side of 17th Avenue to the western side of State Park Drive in unincorporated Santa Cruz County (**Figure 1**).

The project is part of the larger MBSST Network, for which a Master Plan was adopted and a programmatic EIR was certified in 2013 by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC). In 2014, the SCCRTC made minor revisions to the Master Plan and prepared an EIR addendum. The Master Plan was prepared to establish a continuous alignment, including a bicycle and pedestrian trail, along the SCCRTC-owned SCBRL extending the length of Santa Cruz County. Information from the Master Plan EIR will be used as appropriate in the EIR for Segments 10 and 11.

The EIR for Segments 10 and 11 will evaluate the proposed project, called *Rail with Trail*, as well as a *Railbank with Trail* alternative, at an equal level of detail. When an alternative is evaluated at an equal level of detail, CEQA requires that the lead agency identify a preferred alternative. The County considers the proposed project, *Rail with Trail*, the preferred alternative for purposes of environmental review.

- **Proposed Project: Rail with Trail.** The multi-use trail would be located alongside the railroad tracks. The trail would be 10-12 feet wide (but may be reduced to 8 feet in areas with existing constrained conditions). The Project may include shifting of the tracks within the right-of-way as necessary to accommodate the trail.
- **Alternative 1: Railbank with Trail.** The multi-use trail would be located generally along the rail centerline, and the existing tracks and ties would be removed to enable construction of

the trail. The trail width would be determined during preliminary design, with the goal of reducing significant project effects in accordance with CEQA Guidelines (Sec 15126.6). This railbanking alternative allows for future installation of tracks and relocation of the trail alongside the tracks.

As required by CEQA, the County will also consider other project alternatives, which must meet most of the project objectives while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant impacts of the proposed project. As part of this scoping process, the County is soliciting input from agencies and the public on additional alternatives that should be considered for evaluation within the alternatives section of the EIR. Comments regarding suggested alternatives should include a clear description in narrative and graphic formats to the extent possible. Comments on this subject will be most helpful if they include the author's thoughts regarding how well they might meet the requirements of CEQA.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

Although, at this very early stage of the environmental review process, it is impossible to know with certainty the precise nature and extent of the environmental effects that will be identified as preparation of the Draft EIR gets underway, it is possible to identify key categories of environmental effects that the proposed project may affect. These include Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology/Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Recreation, Transportation/Circulation, and Tribal Cultural Resources.

SCOPING MEETING:

Pursuant to the public participation goals of CEQA, as set forth in particular in Public Resources Code section 21083.9, subdivision (a), the County will host an EIR Scoping Meeting at the date, time and location indicated below to gather additional input on the scope of the EIR analysis. The meeting will be held virtually due to public health concerns.

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 5:00-6:30 PM

Click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://rrmdesign.zoom.us/j/83193208360>

Webinar ID: 831 9320 8360

Call-in Options via Telephone: +1 408 638 0968 or +1 669 900 6833

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. If you are a person with a disability, specifically a communication disability, and you would like to request a reasonable modification or accommodation to fully participate in the meeting via videoconference or telephone, please contact the Department of Public Works at (831) 454-2160 or robert.tidmore@santacruzcounty.us at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to discuss your accessibility needs. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda and presentation in an alternative format.

Figure 1. Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project Location Map

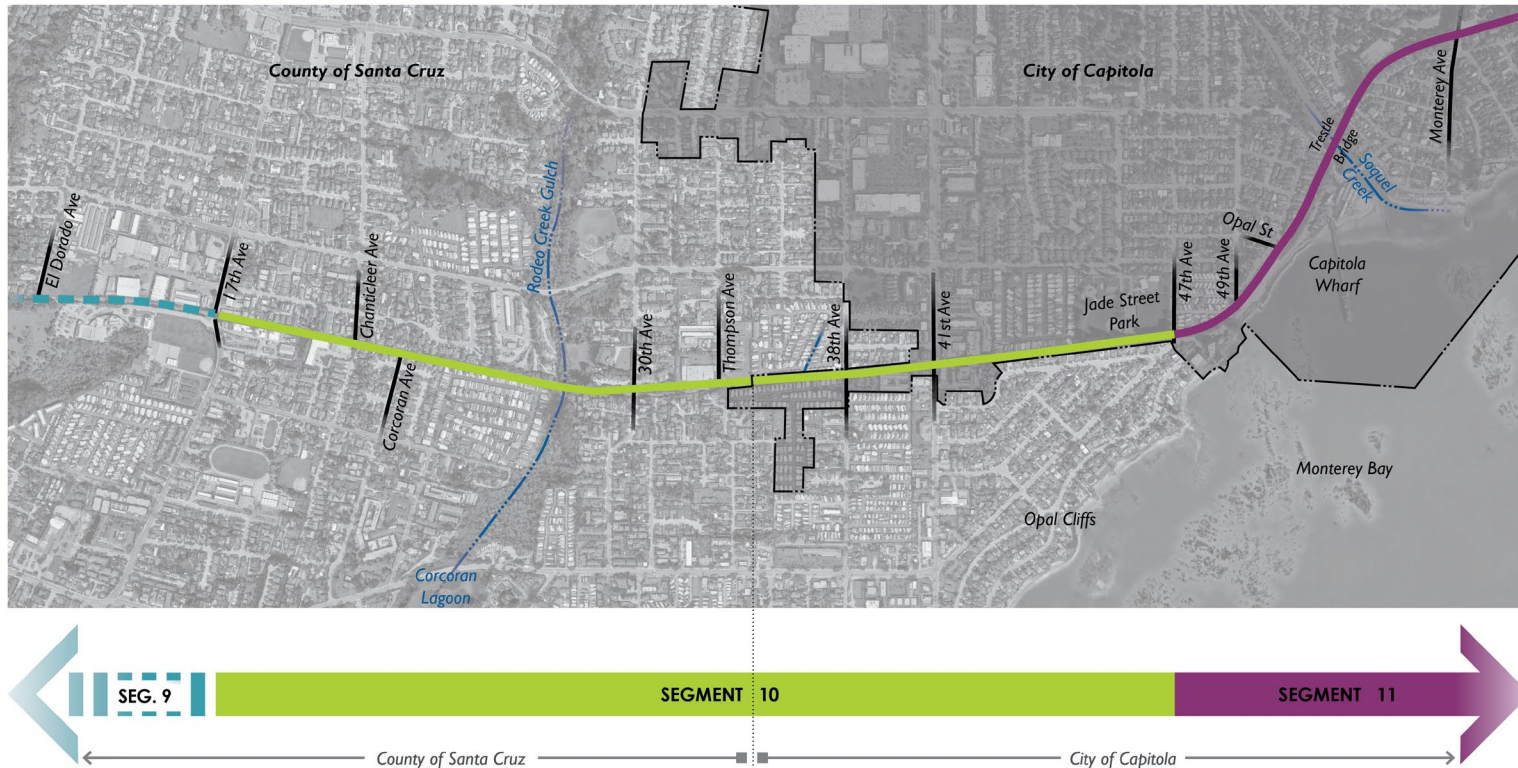


Figure 2. Rail Trail Segments 10 and 11 Project Location Map (continued)

