



MENDOCINO COUNTY *MEMORANDUM*

Date: January 21, 2019

To: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor McCowen

Subject: North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA)

SB 1029 (McGuire) was adopted by the State legislature on August 24, 2018, signed by Governor Brown on September 29 and took effect January 1, 2019. SB 1029, also known as the North Coast Railroad Authority Closure and Transition to Trails Act requires the Transportation Agency, in consultation with the Natural Resources Agency, to conduct an assessment to determine the best way to dissolve NCRA and dispense with its assets and liabilities and to report its findings to the legislature before July 1, 2020.

The legislation prioritizes assessment of the southern portion of the rail corridor from Willits south and authorizes the Transportation Agency to separately report information related to the potential transfer of the southern portion of the rail corridor to the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District (SMART). SB 1029 specifically authorizes the continuation of freight rail service where it currently exists and appropriates four million dollars (\$4,000,000) to assist SMART with the acquisition of freight rights and equipment from Northwestern Pacific Company, the current freight rail operator. The legislation further requires an assessment of the viability of constructing a trail on the entirety of, or a portion of the rail corridor, options for railbanking and the governance structure or ownership structure of a new or successor entity that is necessary to railbank the rail corridor.

NCRA Board of Directors meeting January 9, 2019 – The Board considered the following items:

- 1) City of Blue Lake grant funding proposal and draft license agreement for the “Annie & Mary Trail.” Direction to staff to agendize the license agreement for formal approval subject to California Transportation Commission (CTC) approval and the potential need to railbank the trail corridor.
- 2) Rail Runners Humboldt Bay presentation regarding pedal rail bikes that would operate on existing rail lines in partnership with Timber Heritage Association. Referred to the Humboldt Bay Rail and Trail Corridor Committee.
- 3) Elected Richard Marks of Humboldt County and David Hegele, city representative from Healdsburg, as chair and vice chair for 2019.

- 4) Discontinued several committees that are no longer needed in view of the changed mission of NCRA. Appointed Director Caryl Hart Chair of a new Trails Committee with Directors Fennell, Breen and McCowen as members. Appointed Director Hart chair of the Legislative Ad Hoc Committee with members Fennell, McCowen and Marks for the purpose of working with Senator McGuire's office and the relevant state agencies to assure compliance with the requirements of SB 1029.
- 5) The Board approved a calendar of "speeder" rides operated by the Timber Heritage Association (THA) for areas around Humboldt Bay. The rides are popular with tourists and residents alike and have resulted in THA assisting with vegetation management and trash removal.
- 6) Approved a request to include NCRA utility boxes in the City of Eureka Community Art Program to allow local artists to paint utility boxes through sponsorship funding from local businesses.
- 7) Referred a request to abandon or relocate a portion of the railroad right of way on the Samoa Peninsula to accommodate an economic development project to the Property Committee.
- 8) Considered a request from the City of Ukiah for a permanent easement for property on Mason Street adjacent to the existing Rail Trail. The Mason Street property has limited commercial value. The City of Ukiah proposes to use the property for trail related functions including parking, covered seating/picnic area, bicycle racks and other improvements that will enhance the public benefits associated with the Rail Trail. Directed staff to begin the process of seeking CTC approval which is required for granting the easement request.
- 9) Announcement out of Closed Session: Conference with Legal Counsel – Existing Litigation – Chair Marks stated that NCRA would seek substitution of counsel for the lawsuits brought by Friends of the Eel River and Californians for Alternatives to Toxics.

It was announced at the meeting that the CTC will consider approval of funding for completion of the final four miles of the 14 mile Humboldt Bay Trail that extends from downtown Arcata to southern Eureka. CTC staff is recommending approval.

Great Redwood Trail

Senator McGuire has convened a series of meetings for preliminary discussions regarding the process for public engagement and development of the Great Redwood Trail (GRT). The attached overview of the Great Redwood Trail was presented by Alta Planning and Design at the latest meeting convened by Senator McGuire's office. Friends of the Great Redwood Trail has been formed to promote interest in and development of the GRT. The central portion of the Ukiah Rail Trail, from Clara Ave. to Gobbi St. has been constructed. Funding has been secured and design work begun for the north and south Ukiah segments. The City of Willits has applied for funding for the first segment of the Willits Rail Trail and is recommended for approval.