



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
 ARROYO GRANDE | ATASCADERO | GROVER BEACH
 MORRO BAY | PASO ROBLES | PISMO BEACH
 SAN LUIS OBISPO | SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

March 19, 2021

Mitch Weiss, Executive Director
 California Transportation Commission
 1120 N. Street, MS 52
 Sacramento CA, 95814

SUBJECT: Letter of Support- Active Transportation Program Cycle 5 Funding Recommendations

Dear Mr. Weiss,

On behalf of San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, we are writing to lend our support for staff's recommendation to fund the construction of the *Bob Jones Trail Gap Closure Project*, submitted by the County of San Luis Obispo, and offer our response to public comments received by your staff. **We have solutions for all of the concerns raised.**

This project addresses a major gap in our regional active transportation network by constructing a class I trail parallel to the U.S. 101 that avoids multiple unsafe highway interchange intersections with a history of bicycle collisions and local roadways with less than adequate shoulder width and no pedestrian infrastructure. It is the region's highest priority active transportation project and is included in our fiscally constrained regional transportation plan. The project improves multimodal connectivity between southern San Luis Obispo County communities and the City of San Luis Obispo, the region's major economic center, which will encourage shifts to active travel modes and reduce highway traffic congestion and associated greenhouse gas emissions. The project also provides a connection from in-construction affordable housing and mixed-use developments in San Luis Obispo to Pismo Beach and other coastal visitor serving areas, where there's a concentration of hospitality, retail and other visitor serving industry jobs. It will enhance multimodal connectivity for service industry employees and tourists to these areas, which directly benefits a countywide tourism economy that supports over 13% of all jobs in the region and in 2017 accounted for nearly \$2 billion in visitor spending. The project has statewide significance as it aids in the development of the California Coastal Trail by providing an inland route around PG&E's Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant.

The project construction documents, which are currently at about 30% completion, are sensitive to several concerns raised by individual property owners. The project design features presented below are in response to concerns expressed by property owners and could be further evaluated as part of the design development process and incorporated into the final project:

- **Concern:** *Vehicle conflict with pathway users at the north end of Clover Ridge Lane where the pathway crosses.*
- **Solution:** Construct a pathway tunnel under Clover Ridge Lane to eliminate vehicle conflicts with pathway users.
- **Concern:** *Potential vehicle conflicts with pathway users along the in-road (class III) portions of the pathway on Clover Ridge Lane.*

- **Solution:** Shift the pathway to the west side of Clover Ridge Lane outside of the right-of-way, and construct a split rail fence between the pathway and Clover Ridge Lane to eliminate vehicle conflicts with pathway users.
- **Concern:** *Project will increase number of vehicles parking along the west side of Clover Ridge Lane to access the trail.*
- **Solution:** Eliminate parking along west side of Cloverridge Lane.
- **Concern:** *Pathway users potentially trespassing on private property.*
- **Solution:** Construct a no-climb fence along the east edge of Clover Ridge Lane and along the east edge of the trail abutting private property.
- **Concern:** *Pathway improvements could increase flooding.*
- **Solution:** The pathway will be designed based on hydraulic analysis and hydraulic study to mitigate the potential for increased flooding. In addition, Zone 9-San Luis Obispo Creek Watershed has designated funding, (approved in April 2019) to conduct studies for alleviating and controlling flood damage along San Luis Obispo Creek. Proposed tasks include: conducting field investigations; developing a baseline assessment of current conditions; developing recommendations to address critical issues; performing vegetation management (e.g., focused on removal of dead and down debris); and conducting outreach and distributing education materials to property owners about creek maintenance.
- **Concern:** *Property value and safety negatively impacted by pathway.*
- **Solution:** Research conducted by the County's design consultant (Wallace Group) provided studies and reviews that address concerns regarding home values and safety. The overall conclusions are that pathways have a beneficial impact on property values and safety. Below are also some local links showing realtors touting the Bob Jones Pathway as an amenity toward sale of a property:
 - <https://www.sanluisbayestates.com/kingfisher-canyon-avilabeach-ca-93424>
 - <https://www.century21.com/for-sale-homes/Avila-Beach-CA-837c>
 - https://www.tripadvisor.com/HotelsNear-g29124-d2516892-Bob_Jones_City_to_Sea_Bike_Trail-Avila_Beach_San_Luis_Obispo_County_California.html
 - <http://www.fissorihomes.com/avila-beach/>
 - <https://www.freitasrealestate.com/-/listing/CA-PISMO/PI17161318/6292-Twinberry-Circle-Avila-Beach-CA-93424>
 - <http://wilsonandcosir.com/properties/82-bluff-drive-pismo-beach/>

The EIR included the study of an alternative alignment on the local road network on the west side of U.S. 101. This alternative was eliminated due to the fact that it would not provide a multi-use trail separated from motorized vehicles. The land constraints between Ontario Rd. and U.S. 101 do not allow for a separated trail, but only bike lanes on the road or shared roadway with motor vehicles. This would not provide a safe bicycle and pedestrian route for a broad range of users.

The east side project alignment was approved unanimously, along with the certified EIR, by the Board of Supervisors. The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County has been acquiring land and easements along this route specifically for the Bob Jones Trail.

SLOCOG has committed \$1.25 million toward the design and construction of the project. The environmental phase is complete, the design phase is expected to be complete in February 2022, and the project will be ready for construction in 2023. The completion of this project is a long-held priority for SLOCOG, San Luis Obispo County, and community members, as is evidenced by the number of letters of support and public engagement detailed in the application. The County has also received federal high priority funds for preconstruction work from now retired Congress member Lois Capps.

Thank you for supporting your staff's funding recommendation for this project and we hope the Commission also recognizes this projects value at the local, regional, and statewide scale and strongly considers adopting the funding recommendation to them on March 24th.

Sincerely,



Pete Rodgers
Executive Director
SLOCOG



Dawn Ortiz-Legg
District 3 Supervisor
County of San Luis Obispo

Cc: Nick Franco, SLO County Parks Department
Shaun Cooper, SLO County Parks Department
John Waddell, SLO County Public Works
Rich Murphy, SLOCOG
Stephen Hanamaikai, SLOCOG
Gus Khouri, Khouri Consulting

March 20, 2021

ATTN: Laurie Waters (laurie.waters@catc.ca.gov)

Re: Item 19, No 4.9

ATP Funding for Bob Jones Trail (San Luis Obispo County)

California Transportation Commission

Dear Commissioners,

The current proposal for the Creekside Bob Jones Trail in San Luis Obispo is ill advised. Years ago, when the trail was first proposed to follow a path near San Luis Creek, property and home owners near the creek were not made aware of all of the ramifications that would go along with the proposal. Now, as we see homeless encampments, crime, pollution, trash and lawlessness that has taken place along the creek, the time has come to change the proposal. A route that follows the west side of Highway 101 along Ontario Road would be a much better location for the trail and less opportunity for encampments. This route is already being used by many bicyclists and walkers. It avoids the FEMA flood plain and protects the environment.

Also, more public hearings should be conducted to gather input from affected homeowners and land owners to add legitimacy and support for a project of this proportion. The hearings that are currently being conducted should be publicized so that more interested and affected property and home owners could be allowed attendance and input. It was almost by accident that we found out about your hearings last week.

I know that you want full disclosure on the important decisions that you are to be making. Funding this project at this time is pre-mature and needs to be delayed until more information is gathered from citizens that will be directly affected by the current proposal.

Sincerely,

Kirt L. Collins

the proposed trail or how close they are, but would need to know that they remain secure, accessible and serviceable.

2) We see a sharply increased fire danger as access to the area is opened, both from trail users and from potential homeless encampments.

3) Security of our mailboxes and gate house and means of preventing the area from becoming a parking lot for trail users.

My level of concern is now heightened as I learn “through the grapevine” that a critical funding meeting is happening this week. I do not see how this meeting and funding would make any sense without the knowledge and consent of impacted property owners. Just today I received an invitation to meet on March 31st with Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Nick Franco and Shaun Cooper to discuss the project. It seems that a series of such meetings would be required before funding.

Please consider delaying this funding.

Thank you,
Bill Chadwick

March 22, 2021

ATTN: Laurie Waters; laurie.waters@catc.ca.gov

California Transportation Commission; ctc@catc.ca.gov

RE: Item 19 Ref. No. 4.9
ATP Funding for Bob Jones Trail
Application ID 5-San Luis Obispo, CO-1
Bob Jones Trail Gap Closure

Dear Commissioners:

After reading though most of the many pages in the application for this grant, one thing popped out at me. It states the users will have much less stress on the proposed route along the creek on the east side of the highway because of it being separated from motorized vehicles.

What is not mentioned is the drastic increase in the stress level of the property owners and residents who live along the proposed route. In many cases they will suffer a lifetime of stress dealing with the constant threat of a potentially disastrous fire, crime, trespass issues, pollution, and the constant need for added security, as well as the loss of currently enjoyed privacy. This affects over 30 property owners, plus non-owner residents.

These people will be affected by this unneeded stress for many years while a large portion of the trail users will be moving on to other places as they graduate from college, change job location, etc.

The EIR for this proposed project is now approximately 10 years old and should be updated to reflect current conditions, as well as a more serious study of improving the existing route along Ontario Road.

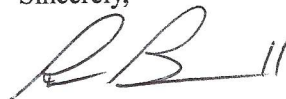
Conditions have changed drastically in 10 years. The City and County of San Luis Obispo have failed at, and seem incapable of, keeping the existing trail clean and safe. There needs to be more study and input from all affected property owners and residents who live near the proposed trail.

It was noted in the submitted plans and statements that Cal Trans is allowing some encroachment into the highway right of way. I believe this would also be possible on the west side of the highway to provide more space for a separated trail. Retaining walls could also be utilized to provide more space.

The bottom line is that the County does not have all the easements that would be required for this project, and it is not likely they will be able to acquire such without very doubtful litigation success. The County has consistently promised they will not take property from unwilling property owners. More than half of this 4.9 mile route is owned by property owners opposed to the project.

This application should be removed from the agenda and postponed or denied.

Sincerely,



Ray Bunnell

cc: Baron Canyon Estates Homeowners Association
James Maino
Edward Pollard
Kirt Collins
Bob Kruse
Cole Warren