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Santa Cruz County Greenway Launches Today

Great Santa Cruz Trail Group Becomes Santa Cruz County Greenway; Over 2,500 County Residents Already Support Safe and Scenic Multi-Use Trail

May 31, 2017—Santa Cruz County Greenway, a new non-profit organization, announced the support of over 2,500 county residents and launched its website and social media pages today. Greenway's vision is to transform Santa Cruz County into a world-class active transportation community.

"We envision the Greenway becoming the backbone of a safe, scenic and efficient active transportation network," said Greenway board President Miles Reiter. "Santa Cruz County has an extraordinary opportunity to significantly reduce the devastating traffic congestion with which we somehow live while creating what will certainly become an iconic and much-loved pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare that runs almost its full length. With the support of a well-informed public, we can build the Greenway in just a few years."

Santa Cruz County Greenway will utilize the existing rail corridor and create a beautiful off-street transportation-optimized pathway from Davenport to Watsonville and then join Monterey County's trail that extends to Pacific Grove. Imagine a 65-mile bike and pedestrian pathway around the Monterey Bay!

The Regional Transportation Commission's (RTC) current plan has significant safety issues, extensive environmental impacts, enormous unfunded costs and provides little relief from our daily traffic crisis.

The Santa Cruz County Greenway organization hired Nelson Nygaard, a nationally recognized transportation consultant, to study the feasibility of a trail-only active transportation plan for the corridor in 2016 (a copy of the study can be found at sccgreenway.org). The study concluded that we can railbank the corridor to preserve future transportation options and use the full potential of the right-of-way now for a fraction of the cost of the current RTC plan.

"The RTC showed great wisdom when it purchased the Santa Cruz County Branch Line in 2012," said Greenway board member Bud Colligan. "According to the California Transportation Commission, Santa Cruz County may use the corridor 'for any lawful purpose.' We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to use the corridor to create a community asset that is safe, healthy, affordable and adapts to future electric and battery transit technologies. And we can pay for it entirely using funds voters already approved with Measure D."

"Measure D, which passed in November, is the game changer here," said Greenway Executive Director Gail McNulty. "The \$85M in Measure D allocated to build a trail in the rail corridor is enough to pay back the original \$11M in Proposition 116 funding used to purchase the corridor and construct the entire Greenway as envisioned by the Nelson Nygaard study."

Santa Cruz County Greenway is launching its new website and social media pages with broad support. Formerly known as the Great Santa Cruz Trail Group, its study has already been endorsed by over 2,500 county residents, five times the number of signatures gathered for the current RTC plan by Friends of the Rail Trail. SCC Greenway will be engaging in education and advocacy around its vision, and believes that as more people understand the trade-offs in safety, ecology, health, cost, and the potential to get people out of the daily Highway 1 traffic jam, it will continue to gain support.

From a standing start two years ago, the broad grassroots support SCC Greenway has received is unprecedented. Visit sccgreenway.org to learn more about our plan and how other progressive communities have created Greenway routes and redefined their transportation priorities with people-centered design.