



MEMO

To: NCRA Board of Directors

From: Executive Director Mitch Stogner

Date: December 12, 2012

Subject: **Agenda Item E. 1 – Discussion and Possible Approval of the Final Report of the Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee and Resolution No. 2012-13 Adopting the Findings and Recommendations Contained in the Final Report.**

At our meeting in Eureka on November 14, the Board invited public comment and had a lengthy discussion regarding the Findings and Recommendations contained in the draft report of the Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee.

The Board deferred final action on the draft report and companion Resolution to give the committee the opportunity to consider public comments and to make agreed upon changes.

The final report and Resolution endorsing its Findings and Recommendations are now before the Board for possible action.

Recommendation of the Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee (Directors Clendenen, Kier, McCowen)

The Committee recommends adoption of the final report, and adoption of the attached Resolution 2012-13 which incorporates the Findings and Recommendations outlined in the final report.

DRAFT PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
NORTH COAST RAILROAD AUTHORITY CONCERNING THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF ITS AD HOC HUMBOLDT BAY RAIL CORRIDOR COMMITTEE

WHEREAS, the County of Humboldt petitioned the North Coast Railroad Authority in June, 2012 to engage the community in an inquiry into how best to pursue public trail development in NCRA's northern Humboldt Bay rail corridor; and

WHEREAS, NCRA created a Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee with which to engage the Humboldt County community in response to its request; and

WHEREAS, NCRA's Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Ad Hoc Committee convened three well-attended public meetings in Eureka, California during September and October, 2012 for the purpose of receiving technical information and community guidance concerning the condition of NCRA's northern Humboldt Bay rail infrastructure, opportunities for trail development in the rail corridor; and the prospects for rail service resurrection in the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Committee's three public meetings made abundantly clear there is enormous potential for collaboration among community interest groups and public agencies, including trail advocates, rail advocates, the California Department of Transportation, the California Coastal Commission, the California Coastal Conservancy, local transportation planning and funding and public works agencies, for the purpose of defining rail restoration and trail development opportunities in NCRA's Humboldt Bay rail corridor and for pursuing funding opportunities to enable such restoration and development; and

WHEREAS, the NCRA board of directors, meeting in Eureka, California on 14 November 2012 accepted a draft report of its Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee and received comments on the report from its Operator and the interested public; and

Whereas, the NCRA Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee has incorporated comments received on its draft report into a final report of findings and recommendations in advance of the NCRA's board's 12 December 2012 meeting in Eureka,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NCRA welcomes the opportunity for community collaboration on this issue and hereby declares its policy concerning the aforementioned matters to be as follows:

- NCRA states its support for a broad-based community coalition to advocate for the investment of public and private funds to restore the Humboldt Bay rail corridor, in whole or in part, clearly incorporating rail and trail development into such restoration, generally consistent with NCRA trail policy;

- NCRA will work with the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Co., the Timber Heritage Association and others to build interest in, and support for the restoration of local freight and passenger excursion service;
- NCRA will authorize clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to its current trail policy to enable development of a trail in the Humboldt Bay corridor without compromising the prospects of rail service restoration;
- NCRA will prioritize rail infrastructure restoration and trail development in the Eureka to Arcata corridor to more clearly align its timing and objectives with those of the Humboldt County Association of Governments'/Caltrans' U.S. 101 Corridor Improvement Project.
- NCRA will also prioritize rail restoration in the Arcata to Samoa corridor in order to facilitate the restoration of passenger excursion service.



To: Board of Directors, North Coast Railroad Authority
From: Clif Clendenen, Chair, NCRA Board
Date: 27 November 2012
Subject: Final (December 2012) Report of NCRA's Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee Report

Attached please find the final report of your ad hoc Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee and an accompanying draft resolution, for your consideration, for implementing the report's principal recommendations. We have asked staff to post these materials, together with a 'redline' version of the report, showing the principal edits made to the Committee's 12 November draft report, to NCRA's website.

We will address this final report, as needed, together with the proposed policy resolution at our board's 12 December meeting in Eureka.

I would like once more to acknowledge the efforts of Bill Kier, the lead drafter of the report, who coordinated its completion closely with John McCowen and me.

You will recall that we released a draft of our report in advance of our 14 November, Eureka meeting and that we took comments on it from our Operator, John Williams of NWPCo., and the interested public at that meeting. We then invited commenters to submit their report improvement suggestions in writing to NCRA headquarters and, with good help from staff we have gathered those comments together, discussed them among ourselves and incorporated them as appropriate into the attached final report.

We look forward to discussing this final report at our 12 December meeting, as needed, and taking action then on the proposed policy resolution, with whatever improvements thereto are indicated.

We provide a summary of our findings and recommendations, taken directly from the final report, here.

FINDINGS:

1. The rail corridor infrastructure has suffered significant deterioration;
2. Restoration of rail infrastructure to operating standards will require a significant expenditure of public funds;
3. Interim repairs to prevent further deterioration of the NCRA rail prism in the corridor will require significant public funds;
4. Doing nothing will result in continuing deterioration of the rail infrastructure in the corridor, further diminishing the chances that rail service will be restored in the foreseeable future;
5. There is tremendous community support for rail and trail development in the Humboldt Bay

rail corridor, particularly the reach between Eureka and Arcata;

6. While trail development using the rail prism itself is inconsistent with current NCRA trail policy, clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to NCRA's trail policy may be practical in order to facilitate trail development in the corridor without compromising prospects for the restoration of rail service;

7. Local freight and passenger excursion service may be sufficient to cover operating and maintenance costs, but will capitalize only a relatively small portion of rail restoration costs, likewise, substantial public funding will be required for trail development;

8. Restoration of rail service and trail development in the Humboldt Bay corridor will require broad-based community support in order to secure the necessary funding;

9. Where funding, timing and logistics allow, the coordination of projects such as rail-and-trail, or rail, trail and highway can realize significant savings.

10. NCRA, NWP Co; THA, the Bay [T]rail Advocates, Caltrans and others have a common interest in that their diverse interests can best be achieved through close collaboration;

11. Humboldt County, HCAOG, the City of Eureka, City of Arcata, the Humboldt Bay Harbor District and others can provide critical logistical and political support to facilitate both rail restoration and trail development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. NCRA should state its support for a broad-based community coalition to advocate for the investment of public and private funds to restore the Humboldt Bay rail corridor, in whole or in part, clearly incorporating rail and trail development into such restoration, generally consistent with NCRA trail policy;

2. NCRA should work with NWP Co., THA and others to build interest in, and support for the restoration of local freight and passenger excursion service;

3. NCRA should authorize clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to its current trail policy to enable development of a trail in the Bay corridor without compromising the prospects of rail service restoration;

4. NCRA should prioritize rail infrastructure restoration and trail development in the Eureka to Arcata corridor to more clearly align its timing and objectives with those of the Humboldt County Association of Governments'/Caltrans' U.S. 101 Corridor Improvement Project.

5. NCRA should also prioritize rail restoration in the Arcata to Samoa corridor in order to facilitate the restoration of passenger excursion service.



NORTH COAST RAILROAD AUTHORITY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
AD HOC
HUMBOLDT BAY RAIL CORRIDOR COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 2012

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NORTH COAST
RAILROAD AUTHORITY'S AD HOC HUMBOLDT BAY
RAIL CORRIDOR COMMITTEE

CLIF CLENDENEN, HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CHAIR
BILL KIER, HUMBOLDT COUNTY, MEMBER
JOHN MCCOWEN, MENDOCINO COUNTY, MEMBER

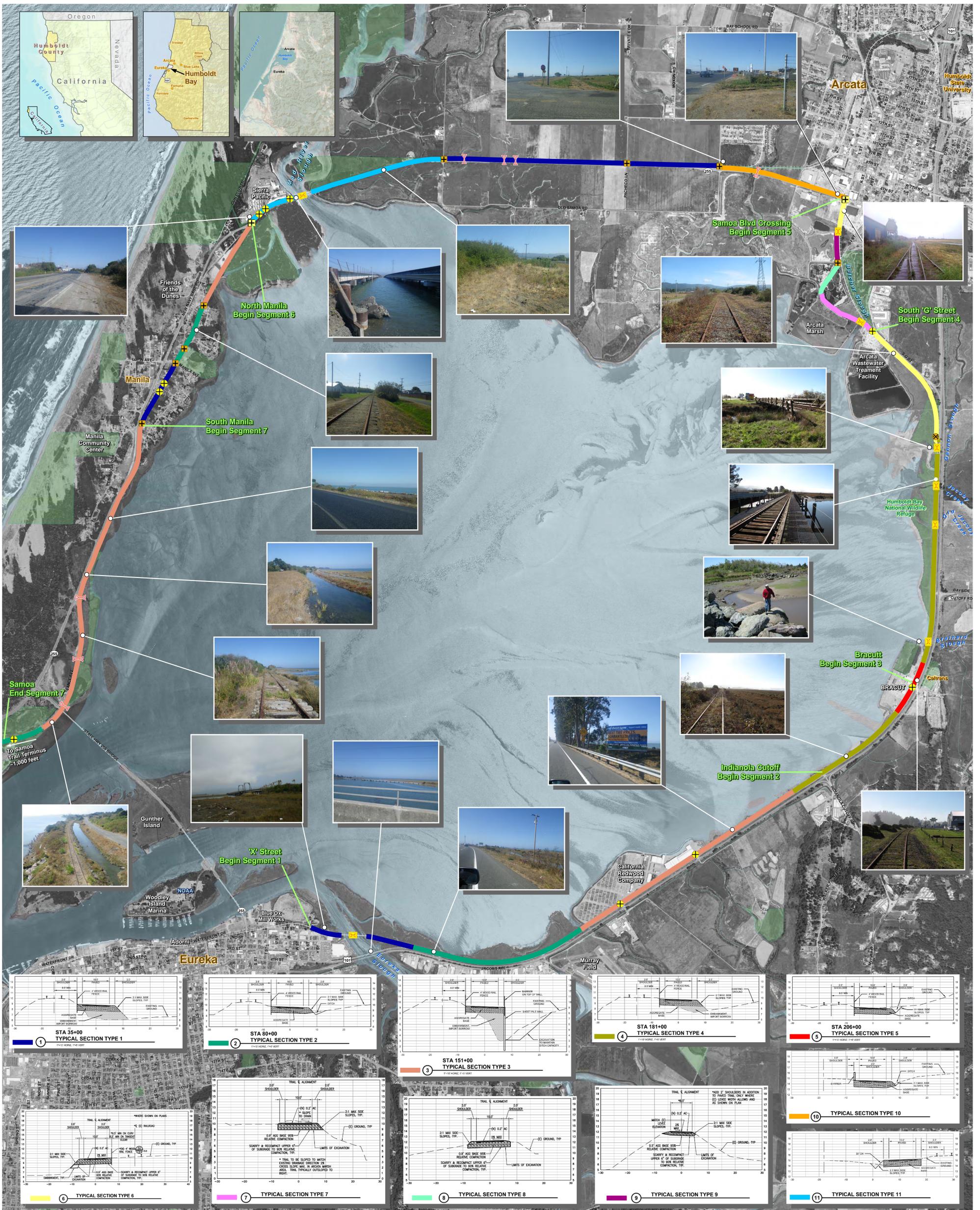
DECEMBER 2012

Cover photo courtesy of Dave Anderson, AndersonPenna Partners
Figure 1 map courtesy of Merritt Perry/GDH

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- State Highway Intersection
- Municipal Street Intersection
- Private Street Intersection

- Rail Road Intersection
- Bridge Crossing
- Covert Crossing

Proposed Alignment

- Typical Section Type 1
- Typical Section Type 2
- Typical Section Type 3

Typical Section Type 4

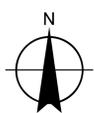
- Typical Section Type 5
- Typical Section Type 6
- Typical Section Type 7

Typical Section Type 8

- Typical Section Type 9
- Typical Section Type 10
- Typical Section Type 11

open space/parks

Paper Size 30" x 42" (ARCH E1)
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 Map Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
 Horizontal Datum: North American 1983
 Grid: NAD 1983 StatePlane California I FIPS 0401 Feet



Humboldt County Department of Public Works
 and North Coast Railroad Authority

Job Number 8410170
 Revision A
 Date 11 Oct 2012

Figure to Support Cost Evaluation for Humboldt Bay Rail-with-Trail Project

Figure 1

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 © 2012. While every care has been taken to prepare this map, GHD (and DATA CUSTODIAN) make no representations or warranties about its accuracy, reliability, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose and cannot accept liability and responsibility of any kind (whether in contract, tort or otherwise) for any expenses, losses, damages and/or costs (including indirect or consequential damages) which are or may be incurred by any party as a result of the map being inaccurate, incomplete or unsuitable in any way and for any reason.
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INTRODUCTION

THE HUMBOLDT COUNTY SUPERVISORS' REQUEST AND THE NCRA BOARD'S RESPONSE

On 26 June 2012 the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors wrote the North Coast Railroad Authority, noting that the northern portion of the NCRA rail system 'has seen little or no maintenance since railroad operations were discontinued nearly 15 years ago' and that the 'current physical condition of the rail infrastructure around Humboldt Bay is a concern due to the level of deterioration, which threatens the integrity of the rail corridor and poses risks to adjacent public and private property including Highway 101'.

The County's letter requested that NCRA form a 'Humboldt Bay Railbanking Committee' to determine 'whether railbanking makes sense for the corridor around northern Humboldt Bay'. The Supervisors noted that their request arose from a 'conceptual plan', the 'Bay [T]rail Plan'¹ presented to them by a Humboldt County group, the 'Bay [T]rail Advocates', interested in both rail and trail improvements in NCRA's Eureka, Arcata and Samoa corridor.²

At its 11 July 2012, Eureka meeting the NCRA board of directors deliberated the Humboldt Supervisors' 26 June request at length. In the end it was the sense of the NCRA board that a committee should be formed to work closely with the Humboldt County community but that its purview should not be narrowed to railbanking, but rather a broader examination of the status and likely future of the northern Humboldt Bay rail corridor, for both rail and trail uses.

At its 8 August 2012, Novato meeting the NCRA board appointed three of its members, NCRA Chair Clif Clendenen and Bill Kier, both of Humboldt County, and John McCowen of Mendocino County³ to serve as NCRA's 'Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee'. The new committee made arrangements to engage the Humboldt County community on the issues spelled out in the 11 July motion and to have a report of findings and recommendations regarding the future of the Humboldt Bay portion of the NCRA line, including opportunities for trail development, ready for the board's consideration at its next scheduled Humboldt County meeting in Eureka on 14 November 2012.

VITAL ASSISTANCE COMES FROM HUMBOLDT COUNTY AND THE CITY OF EUREKA

The new Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee (an *ad hoc* committee⁴) agreed to carry out its charge in the following manner and sequence;

¹ See <http://baytrailplan.org>

² Humboldt County letter, 26 June 2012, to the NCRA board re 'Humboldt Bay Railbanking Committee'

³ Supervisor McCowen made the 11 July 2012 NCRA motion to support formation of a Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee to evaluate restoration of the Humboldt Bay rail prism, development of trails consistent with the NCRA Trail Guidelines, and restoration of rail service in the Humboldt Bay Area.

⁴ A committee to address a specific matter in a timely manner and to then conclude its work, not becoming a permanent NCRA fixture.

- determine the condition of the present-day NCRA assets – the rail prism, tracks, ties, bridges, culverts, crossings, etc. – in the rail corridor between Eureka and Samoa;
- determine the opportunities, constraints and preliminary cost estimates for developing a trail in the Eureka to Samoa corridor in conformance with the NCRA’s Trails Guidelines; and
- determine the prospects for restoration of rail service in the Humboldt Bay corridor.

The County of Humboldt’s Public Works Department graciously agreed to provide modest County funding to enable professional assessments for the first two elements of the Committee’s charge, the condition of NCRA assets in the corridor and the opportunities for developing trails in the corridor in accordance with NCRA’s Trails Guidelines.⁵

The City of Eureka, coordinated by City Manager David Tyson, generously provided meeting space for the Committee’s meetings in their comfortable, newly refurbished council chambers; used its resources for public noticing of the Committee’s meetings; and maintained a contacts list of the many Humboldt County citizens and officials that participated in the meetings. Marcella Clem, Executive Director of Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) also provided support services to facilitate the committee’s work.

THREE WELL ATTENDED MEETINGS

The Committee’s three meetings, convened between 28 September and 26 October 2012, characterized by the Committee as ‘listening and learning sessions’ for all, were well attended by the Humboldt County community, including local elected officials, the interested public, staff from the responsible State and local transportation planning and funding agencies, and representatives of the California Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy.

We note that, as with all other coastal California counties, Humboldt County’s regional transportation planning agency, the Humboldt County Association of Governments, is charged with incorporating segments of the California Coastal Trail in its regional transportation plan. Caltrans and the Coastal Commission are, in turn, charged with collaborating with the Coastal Conservancy in the timely completion of the California Coastal Trail.

The Coastal Conservancy regards development of the Humboldt Bay California Coastal Trail segment as a high-priority project.

THE CONDITION OF NCRA’S ASSETS IN THE NORTHERN HUMBOLDT BAY CORRIDOR

A field reconnaissance of the rail corridor was conducted by NCRA’s consulting engineer Dave Anderson of Anderson-Penna Partners, under contract to Humboldt County Public Works, on 24-25 September 2012. Mr. Anderson was assisted in his field assessment by railroad and bridge inspector Ian Anderson and Northwestern Pacific Railroad Co. (NWPCo.) railroad track inspector and road master Frank Lovio. Their assessment extended from C Street in Eureka north and west around the Bay to Cook House Road in Samoa.

⁵ NCRA’s Trails Policy may be found at http://northcoastrailroad.org/Acrobat/Trail_Guidelines_8-5-09.pdf

Mr. Anderson presented his preliminary findings to NCRA's Humboldt Bay Rail Corridor Committee's initial meeting on 28 September 2012. A copy of Mr. Anderson's presentation may be found here <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/nwp%20condition%20assessment%20presentation%2010-12-12.pdf>.

Following consultation with NWPCo. President John Williams⁶ and others, Mr. Anderson, submitted his final report to County Public Works in October – see <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/railroad%20corridor%20condition%20assessment%20final.pdf>

Mr. Anderson, it should be noted, conducted a 'capital assessment' of NCRA's assets, including those of this northern Humboldt Bay corridor segment, in 2002 that served as a point of reference for the 2012 assessment reported here.

Mr. Anderson noted that he was surprised by the degree of deterioration of the line that had occurred in the ten years between his two assessments and concluded that there is clearly 'a cost of doing nothing'.

Mr. Anderson determined that restoration of the line to accommodate the resurrection of the lowest, slowest grade of freight rail service, Class 1, in the corridor between Eureka and Samoa would cost an estimated \$11,590,000, not including permitting, environmental review, and compliance with required mitigation and monitoring of potential environmental impacts. The report notes that environmental review and environmental mitigation and monitoring could add 7 to 10 percent and 15 to 30 percent, respectively, to the estimated construction costs. That is, with environmental compliance costs included the estimated cost for putting this segment of the northern Humboldt Bay rail line back into working railroad condition rises to between \$14.2 million and \$16.5 million.

Throughout the Committee's meetings community support was clear for the local non-profit Timber Heritage Association (THA), which owns various pieces of railroad and logging-related equipment, some directly tied to Humboldt County's early-day rail- and logging operations, and stores them in and around an historic roundhouse that is being converted to a rail-logging museum near Samoa.

For example, the 'Bay [T]rail Plan', mentioned above, advocated for development of trail with rail from Samoa to Arcata to enable the use of that reach for the 'speeder' rides that THA now offers the public and the excursion train rides they would like to provide in the future.

⁶ The Northwestern Pacific Railroad Co., 'NWPCo.' serves as NCRA's Operator under a 2006 'Agreement for the Resurrection of Operations Upon the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Line and Lease' between the two parties. While rail service has been resurrected under the terms of the Agreement on the southern most 62 miles of the line, severe damage to the line in the Eel River Canyon presents environmental and economic challenges that render reconnection of the south and north ends infeasible for the foreseeable future. Notwithstanding lack of a north/south connection, restoration of rail service in the Humboldt Bay area may be feasible as described subsequently in this report.

Mr. Anderson's report suggests that the near-term southern limit of THA rail operations will be Jacoby Creek, where a deteriorating 89-year-old timber trestle must be replaced with a concrete bridge at a cost of \$350,000, not including the cost of permitting, environmental review, and environmental mitigation and monitoring.

A good deal of discussion ensued following Mr. Anderson's presentation concerning the effect of sea level rise on the further deterioration of NCRA's bayside rail prism, and the risk that further prism deterioration poses for U.S 101, a vital transportation corridor which has experienced flooding in recent years. Several commenters referred to the rail prism as a levee, however, the railbed, although largely armored on the Bay side with rip-rap, is composed of river run material with rounded edges which makes it susceptible to erosion.

It was Mr. Anderson's opinion that were freight rail service to be resurrected on the corridor, normal track maintenance measures needed to replenish the rail ballast would continually lift the prism's elevation at a rate sufficient to outpace sea level rise.

The State of California's official estimate projects an average sea level rise of 14 inches by 2050, (i.e., over the base year 2000), and 55 inches by 2100. Just where and when the prism-protecting track maintenance suggested by Mr. Anderson might occur, whether it will arrive in time to protect the prism from irreversible destruction, and the degree to which such work might protect the Highway 101 corridor is unclear.

We are reminded here of Mr. Anderson's observation that there is 'a cost of doing nothing', not only to NCRA's assets, but, as the County noted in its letter to NCRA, potentially 'to adjacent public and private property including Highway 101'.

EVALUATION OF RAIL WITH TRAIL PROJECTS AROUND NORTH HUMBOLDT BAY

Merritt Perry and Rob Holmund of GHD Inc., (formerly Winzler and Kelly Consulting Engineers), presented their comprehensive findings concerning the estimated cost of developing a bicycling and hiking trail in NCRA's northern Humboldt Bay rail corridor, in accordance with NCRA's Trail Policy, at the Committee's second meeting on 12 October, 2012. The GDH team's October 12 presentation can be found at <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/2012%2010%2029%20rwt%20presentation%20final.pdf> and their 30 October final report, including detailed cost breakdowns and typical trail cross sections reflecting the varied site conditions encountered along the corridor, can be found at <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/20121030%20bay%20trail%20estimating%20summary%20memo%20v3.pdf>

The team broke the 16.4 mile run from X Street in Eureka to Samoa into seven segments with detailed cost estimates for each segment. The estimated cost-per-lineal-foot of trail development varies dramatically from segment to segment, from a low of \$247, to a high of \$1,151, depending on the development constraints encountered –stream crossings or tightly confined rights-of-way, for example –in each segment.

GHD operated on a number of assumptions, including that the railroad will continue to exist and maintain the rail prism; that placing a trail on the bay side of the tracks is not permissible; that wetland and other environmental issues can be mitigated; and that drainage capacity in roadside ditches is sufficient to allow for partial filling.

The GHD team estimated a total project cost of \$44,571,000, evenly divided between construction and project contingencies, including design and surveying; right-of-way; engineering; and permitting, environmental review, and environmental mitigation and monitoring. The cost of environmental review and compliance, including conformance to an array of required environmental permits and studies, was estimated at \$8,436,500, which comes in at 38% of the construction cost and 19% of total project cost.

One of the most costly segments was that between Eureka and north to Indianola Avenue where, in order to conform to NCRA's Trail Policy, the trail would have to be cantilevered on the edge of the Eureka Slough bridge to provide sufficient separation from the tracks.

Where a 2007 Bay Trail feasibility study⁷ pegged the cost of rail-to-trail development between Eureka and Arcata at \$5 million, the GHD team estimated it would cost \$18.5 million to develop a trail in conformance with NCRA's rail-with-trail Policy in this same reach. The GHD team recommended⁸ that 'NCRA consider interim use of NCRA structures during a phased trail implementation if not in conflict with rail service'.

An example of such an interim use of NCRA structures might be rail-to-trail development at the Eureka Slough bridge because THA, the most likely train user for the northern Humboldt Bay rail corridor, may initially be operating only north of the Eureka Slough.

Among the many suggestions offered by those attending the Committee meetings two not altogether compatible views stand out.

On the one hand there are those who say that development opportunities must consider the timeframes in which they can reasonably be accomplished. Some level of trail development in NCRA's northern Humboldt Bay rail corridor may be more readily accomplished in the near-term given the mix of community support and at-hand public works regulatory necessity – the nexus between the pending adjacent Caltrans Highway 101 corridor improvement project, the Coastal Conservancy's Coastal Trail completion mandate and the Coastal Commission's interest in securing enhanced public access as part of its permitting responsibilities.

Such 'seize the opportunity' logic may well argue for trail-on-rail development until such time that planned freight or excursion passenger rail resurrection necessitates the relocation of the trail away from the tracks.

⁷ 'Humboldt Bay Area Trails Feasibility Studies' list provided by Redwood Community Action Agency http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/1-trailsrailsfeasibilitystudies9_5_12.pdf

⁸ GHD report Section 6, 'Design Opportunities for Cost Reduction'

Another school of thought asserts that ‘piece-mealing’ trail development in the corridor is not the way to go - that if the prism can be improved for both rail and trail, and adjacent public and private property protection purposes, then rail with trail should be the goal even if it is more costly. This position, clearly articulated by Humboldt County Public Works Director Tom Mattson, holds that the diverse community interests will best be achieved by working together to secure funding for both rail and trail.

There is a concern that if rail gives way to trail, pending future restoration of rail service, that the difficulties of permitting, environmental review, and environmental mitigation and monitoring for trail development will be greater, that is, if a trail already exists, Proponents of rails-with-trails maintain that the surest way to secure approval for the footprint needed to develop rail and trail, is for the diverse interests involved to form a unified front to advocate for both.

This committee comes down squarely on both sides of the debate. While trail development using the rail prism itself is inconsistent with current NCRA trail policy, clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to the current policy may be practical in order to facilitate trail development in the corridor without compromising prospects for the restoration of rail service. A possible example of where an exception to current policy may be in order is the Eureka Slough Bridge where the future trail footprint could be cantilevered off the existing bridge. This same exception could be used as an interim measure for other bridge crossings.

It is the hope of this committee that providing reasonable exceptions to NCRA’s current trails policy can provide the Humboldt county community sufficient flexibility to develop a plan that works for most interests and that by joining together the mix of community interests the community can then succeed in securing the necessary project funding.

THE PROSPECTS FOR TRAIN USE OF THE CORRIDOR

John Williams, President of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Co. (NWP Co.), was invited by the committee to make a presentation at its final meeting on October 26, 2012 on restoring rail service in the Humboldt Bay area. Additionally, on short notice, THA President Pete Johnston, Kimberly Floyd of Caltrans, Nick Angeloff representing East West Rail Advocates, and Rees Hughes of the Bay [T]rail Advocates graciously agreed to make presentations or provide comments at the final committee meeting.

Mr. Williams walked the Committee through the steps that would be needed to restore rail service in the Bay corridor, or elsewhere along the 67 miles of the NCRA’s ‘North End’ from South Fork to Samoa, including economic analysis, development of a business plan, recapture of freight rail clients who have turned to truck transport but could be brought back to rail; and the securing of funding for rail restoration and maintenance.⁹

⁹ Mr. Williams’ presentation may be found at http://northcoastrailroad.org/Agendas/2012/20121114_Item_E.1_206438_HUMBOLDT_POWERPOINT_OCT_26_2012.pdf

Based on his experience in restoring service to the southernmost 62 miles of line, which took five years, Mr. Williams estimated that it would take two to three years to restore rail infrastructure and commence operations in the Humboldt Bay area. Mr. Williams projected that freight rail service would rely on commodities such as lumber, logs, construction materials and aggregate, and that rail-barge transfer would probably be needed.

Mr. Williams ventured that rehabilitation of railroad infrastructure from South Fork to Samoa would require an investment of \$30 million and that freight and tourist train service in the Humboldt Bay area might support the private investment of \$5 million at a low interest rate. In response to a question, Mr. Williams' stated that he had listened to Merritt Perry's presentation and that he did not know if the estimated permitting and environmental cost estimates for trail development applied to rail restoration, but if they did, then his estimate of \$30 million would be low.

Assuming that funds can be found to restore rail infrastructure to operating standards, then Mr. Williams believes that local freight and excursion train operations can cover the cost of operations and normal maintenance. Mr. Williams also made the point that both rail and trail development are contingent on public funding. Mr. Williams also made the point that both rail and trail development are contingent on public funding.

Given that Mr. Anderson's estimate of the cost of restoring the Bay rail corridor to Class I serviceability from Eureka to Samoa came in at \$14.2 million to \$16.5 million, Mr. Williams' estimate confirms the obvious – that substantial public investment will be required to resurrect rail service in the corridor.

Mr. Williams noted that he served as NCRA's executive director and chief financial officer from 1991 to 1995, that NCRA operated two freight trains daily during that period around the Bay between Eureka, Arcata and Samoa, and that NCRA operated frequent passenger excursion trains around the Bay with occasional service to and from Scotia. Mr. Williams regards the Timber Heritage Association as an experienced tourist train operator; and he believes that NWP Co., under its 2006 Agreement with NCRA, could provide operational and technical support to any excursion train use of the track.

Pete Johnston's presentation was an informal introduction to THA, a description of the equipment the non-profit has acquired over the years and the effort being made by volunteers to restore not only the equipment but a large warehouse in the Samoa area to serve as a rail-and-logging museum, the 'speeder'¹⁰ ride program that THA has initiated in the Samoa-Manila, downtown Eureka, and, most recently, Loleta communities; the significant number of people who ride THA's speeders each year; and the non-profit's desire to operate excursion trains with an initial focus on Samoa to Eureka.

¹⁰ 'Speeder' is the name given to small rail cars once used to carry loggers to their work in the woods.

THA has a locomotive that should be suitable for excursion train service. Additionally, THA has a number of cars, in excellent condition, ideal for excursion train service geared towards the tourist market. Excursion service would arguably provide a significant economic boost to visitor serving facilities in the Humboldt Bay area. Mr. Johnston concluded by saying that THA was ready to operate (pending FRA inspection, of course) as soon as the rail infrastructure is restored.

The California Department of Transportation was represented by Kim Floyd, project manager of Caltrans' U.S. 101 Eureka Arcata Corridor Projects. Ms. Floyd explained Caltrans' planning efforts, beginning in the late 1990s, to initiate a major capital improvement project in the Eureka-Arcata reach of U.S. 101. Work programmed in the immediate future is in the nature of preventative maintenance, however, rather than capital improvement. Caltrans' major capital improvement project for this section of U.S. 101 will, according to Ms. Floyd, require a 'Federal Coastal Consistency determination for the NEPA 404 approved Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative'.¹¹

In the interim, Caltrans has implemented Safety Corridor improvements, but remains committed to the more ambitious Corridor Improvement Project, which will include construction of a grade separation at the Indianola Cutoff, a half signal at Airport Road, and closure of the remaining median openings. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in phases. Construction cost for phase one has been programmed for the 2015-2016 fiscal year in the amount of \$16.5 million utilizing State Transportation Improvement Funds.

Caltrans hopes that NCRA will 'continue discussion on the subject of the existing infrastructure and rail with trail potential' in the Bay corridor. Caltrans was circumspect regarding discussions it may be having with the Coastal Commission regarding the aforementioned Federal Coastal Consistency determination, but considerable synergy exists concerning the desirability of Caltrans and the Coastal Commission to collaborate with the State Coastal Conservancy in the completion of the California Coastal Trail, particularly since the Conservancy regards trail development along this reach of Humboldt Bay as a very high priority.

East West Rail Advocates were represented by Nick Angeloff¹², who explained that EWRA emerged last winter to give new life to an old idea - that of developing rail connectivity between Humboldt Bay and the Sacramento Valley, rather than to the south, as was accomplished a century ago. EWRA's campaign appears to spring from an increasing sense among the Humboldt County community that resurrection of rail service through the Eel River canyon is highly unlikely.

¹¹ Ms. Floyd captured her 26 October presentation in a 30 October memo. See http://northcoastrailroad.org/Agendas/2012/20121114_DOT_HBRCC.pdf

¹² http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/docs/east-west%20rail%20advocates_prez%20to%20ncra%27s%20humbbayrailcorrcte_10-26-12.pdf

East West Rail Advocate members who were present voiced their support for restoration of Humboldt Bay rail infrastructure, which they saw as complimentary to their plans for a future east/west rail line. EWRA have compiled an impressive list of endorsements

The EWRA campaign has concentrated on recruiting resolutions and letters of support, including those from the counties of Tehama, Trinity and Humboldt, in support of public funding of a 'feasibility study' of the proposed 'Humboldt and Eastern Railroad'. Mr. Angeloff offered to provide assistance to NCRA to help garner support for restoration of rail infrastructure in the Humboldt Bay area, including assistance with grant writing.

Finally, on behalf of the Bay Trail Advocates/Bay [T]rail Plan, they who early in 2012 re-kindled community conversation concerning development of a trail within NCRA's northern Humboldt Bay corridor, Rees Hughes advocated that consideration be given to the interim use of NCRA structures to facilitate trail development if not in conflict with planned rail service.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Findings:

1. The rail corridor infrastructure has suffered significant deterioration;
2. Restoration of rail infrastructure to operating standards will require a significant expenditure of public funds;
3. Interim repairs to prevent further deterioration of the NCRA rail prism in the corridor will require significant public funds;
4. Doing nothing will result in continuing deterioration of the rail infrastructure in the corridor, further diminishing the chances that rail service will be restored in the foreseeable future;
5. There is tremendous community support for rail and trail development in the Humboldt Bay rail corridor, particularly the reach between Eureka and Arcata;
6. While trail development using the rail prism itself is inconsistent with current NCRA trail policy, clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to NCRA's trail policy may be practical in order to facilitate trail development in the corridor without compromising prospects for the restoration of rail service;
7. Local freight and passenger excursion service may be sufficient to cover operating and maintenance costs, but will capitalize only a relatively small portion of rail restoration costs, likewise, substantial public funding will be required for trail development;
8. Restoration of rail service and trail development in the Humboldt Bay corridor will require broad-based community support in order to secure the necessary funding;
9. Where funding, timing and logistics allow, the coordination of projects such as rail-and-trail, or rail, trail and highway can realize significant savings.
10. NCRA, NWP Co; THA, the Bay (T)rail Advocates, Caltrans and others have a common interest in that their diverse interests can best be achieved through close collaboration;
11. Humboldt County, HCAOG, the City of Eureka, City of Arcata, the Humboldt Bay Harbor District and others can provide critical logistical and political support to facilitate both rail restoration and trail development.

Recommendations:

1. NCRA should state its support for a broad-based community coalition to advocate for the investment of public and private funds to restore the Humboldt Bay rail corridor, in whole or in part, clearly incorporating rail and trail development into such restoration, generally consistent with NCRA trail policy;
2. NCRA should work with NWP Co., THA and others to build interest in, and support for the restoration of local freight and passenger excursion service;
3. NCRA should authorize clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions to its current trail policy to enable development of a trail in the Bay corridor without compromising the prospects of rail service restoration;
4. NCRA should prioritize rail infrastructure restoration and trail development in the Eureka to Arcata corridor to more clearly align its timing and objectives with those of the Humboldt County Association of Governments'/Caltrans' U.S. 101 Corridor Improvement Project.
5. NCRA should also prioritize rail restoration in the Arcata to Samoa corridor in order to facilitate the restoration of passenger excursion service.

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

1. Dave Anderson 28 September 2012 presentation;
2. Dave Anderson final report to Humboldt County Department of Public Works;
3. GHD, Inc. 12 October 2012 presentation;
4. GHD, Inc. final report to Humboldt County Department of Public Works;
5. John Williams 26 October 2012 NWP Co. presentation
6. Kimberly Floyd 30 October 2012 letter memorializing her 26 October 2012 Caltrans presentation;
7. Nick Angeloff 26 October 2012 EWRA presentation;
8. Bay [T]rail Advocates Bay [T]rail Plan
9. List of Humboldt Bay Area Trails Feasibility Studies submitted by Emily Sinkhorn of the Redwood Community Action Agency