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Memorandum

TO: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

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RE: California Coastal Trail Mapping Project

Introduction

The California Coastal Trail (CCT) mapping project is a collaboration between the Coastal Commission and the Coastal Conservancy, with the support of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and many other state and local agencies. The project completes a long-standing vision and mandate to map and advance the CCT. Given the many miles of coast, varied topography, multiple land ownerships, along with extensive research steps (on-line and in the field), information vetting between agency staffs, and technical GIS work, this product was created over a three-year long process. Four Coastal Commission units – Access Program, Statewide Planning, GIS/Mapping, and the Statewide Transportation Program worked together with several Coastal Conservancy staff members to complete this work.

The CCT is a network of trails that, when completed, will provide a multi modal opportunity to walk and bike the length of California's 1,230-mile-long coast. By providing this alternative transportation system, it importantly supports the State's goals to equitably provide affordable recreational and fitness opportunities as well as to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by reducing miles driven. In recognition of the importance of this trail system, the State of California designated the CCT as California's Millennium Legacy Trail in 1999, and many other local, State and Federal recognitions have been given to the trail in the years since, particularly through actions by the Coastal Conservancy and Coastal Commission.

What is the California Coastal Trail?

In 2001, pursuant to Legislation (SB 908), the State Coastal Conservancy was tasked with preparing a report on the status of the trail. The plan was to include at least the following elements:

- Determination of a primary hiking route for the trail including interim and permanent trail alignments where possible
- A designation of various alternative routes for the trail

The report was prepared in collaboration with the Coastal Commission and was the first comprehensive document to define the trail, as well as identify objectives and principles for the completing the trail system. *Completing the California Coastal Trail* report (2003) includes:

▶ Definition of the California Coastal Trail:

A continuous interconnected public trail system along the California coastline, a trail designed to foster appreciation and stewardship of the scenic and natural resources of the coast through hiking and other complementary modes of nonmotorized transportation.

▶ Objectives:

- Provide a continuous trail as close to the ocean as possible
- Create linkages to other trail systems and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility

▶ Principles for Designing the Coastal Trail:

- The Coastal Trail is not a single designated pathway; it is comprised of several different but parallel threads, each thread being a particular trail alignment that responds to a specific need to accommodate a particular purpose. One thread for beach walkers, one for bicyclists, etc. All threads form a coherent whole.
- Whenever feasible, the Coastal Trail should be in sight, sound, and smell of the sea; traveler should have a persistent awareness of the Pacific Ocean. It is the ocean that distinguishes the seaside trail from other visitor destinations.

▶ Mapping of the CCT:

The report includes six maps showing the status of the CCT, identifying it as either “improvement adequate” or “improvements needed” at a very large scale of 1:600,000.

► Description of the CCT:

The Trail system is located on a variety of terrains, including the beach, bluff top, hillsides providing scenic vantage points, and, as needed, within the highway right-of-way. It may take many forms, including informal footpaths, paved sidewalks, and separated bicycle paths. When no other alternative exists, it sometimes connects along the shoulder of the road. While primarily for pedestrians, the Trail also accommodates a variety of additional user groups, such as bicyclists, wheelchair users, equestrians, and others as opportunities allow. The CCT:

- Provides a continuous walking and hiking trail as close to the ocean as possible
- Provides maximum access for a variety of non-motorized uses by utilizing parallel trail segments where feasible
- Maximizes connections to existing and proposed local trail systems
- Ensures that the trail has connections to trailheads, parking areas, transit stops, inland trail segments, etc. at reasonable intervals
- Maximizes ocean views and scenic coastal vistas
- Provides an educational experience where feasible through interpretive programs, kiosks, and other facilities

CCT mapping updated 2021

The 2021 CCT mapping product builds upon linework developed for the *Completing the California Coastal Trail* report. The map scale used in the 2003 report was 1:600,000, whereas the 2021 Mapping Project uses 1:700 scale. Therefore the 2021 maps are prepared on a much smaller scale and thus viewers can identify the trail alignments down to the level of seeing pathways, stairways, and other specific features.

The CCT GIS mapping was conducted using ArcGIS desktop, a geographic information system software program. All linework in this 2021 mapping product is either located on public land or on public easements. Public land ownership was identified based on the California Protected Areas Database (CPAD) 2019 GIS data layer. The CPAD data includes all park and open space lands owned by public agencies and non-profits. All linework was digitized based on locating publicly accessible trails, paths, accessways, sidewalks, bikeways, and waterfront walkways visible on aerial photo imagery provided through ESRI World Imagery.

Digital trail data was provided by many public agencies, including federal (e.g., GGNRA, NPS, USFS, etc.), California State Parks, regional and county transportation agencies (e.g., TAMC, Ventura County Transportation Commission, Orange County Transportation Agency, etc.), local governments planning and parks departments, and land trusts (e.g. Redwood Coast Land Conservancy, Mendocino Land Trust, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, Peninsula Open Space Trust, etc.).

After determining that an existing trail met the criteria for a CCT segment, each line segment was attributed to identify the name of the segment, the length of the segment, which city it is located in, who the steward is, and other pertinent information. Then each line segment was characterized into one of six categories which are defined as:

► Primary CCT

Includes segments that are complete, safe to access, open to the public, and meet all other requirements listed in definition of the CCT. At a minimum, when traveling from point A to B along the coast, “a hiking and walking trail as close to the ocean as possible” must be available for any CCT strand in that section to be considered Primary CCT. This label does not indicate that there is a single “primary” strand of the CCT; instead multiple strands may be considered Primary CCT.

► Primary CCT - needs improvement

Identifies a segment of otherwise qualified Primary CCT that is unsafe or problematic for the public to navigate, such as sections that are damaged or not yet improved for public use.

► Secondary CCT

Includes segments that are not located “as close to the ocean as possible” but meet many other requirements for being part of the CCT. Secondary CCT is not the optimal alignment of Primary CCT but can include segments that are alternate strands in the CCT braided trail system or segments that act as interim trail until a Primary CCT can be developed, depending on the circumstances.

► Beach or shoreline route CCT

Includes only those beaches, bay, and waterfront shoreline routes on sand or unimproved surface that are accessible by a shoreline accessway.

► Beach or shoreline access CCT

Includes paths, stairways, ramps and other accessways to beaches, bay and waterfront shoreline identified in the California Coastal Access Guides (created by the California Coastal Commission), as well as publicly accessible piers and jetties.

► Bike only CCT

Includes segments designed exclusively for bicycle use that may not provide safe pedestrian access.

► Note: Other Trails: Identifies significant connecting trails that may be useful in planning or outreach efforts.

What is the Goal of the CCT mapping project?

The Coastal Act prioritizes providing public access to and along the coast. The main goal of the project is to complete the trail system by establishing where the trail exists so that future efforts can focus on bridging the gaps. At this point, there are 875 miles of CCT completed. Calculating the percent of miles left to bridge is a challenging task given that the Trail is a braided, multi-strand system which includes many parallel segments (e.g. bluff top trail parallel to a sidewalk parallel to a beach segment); at this time our best calculation is that the Trail is approximately 70% complete.

Uses of the CCT Mapping Product:

There are many uses for this mapping, including informing: CCC permits and planning; SCC grants, public outreach documents and apps; local governments LCPs and permits, Caltrans project designs and plans (particularly Active Transportation Plans), Regional Transportation Plans, and State Parks connections.

Is the CCT Mapping project finished?

The Mapping project is a “living resource” that will be updated as needed. We acknowledge that the coast is dynamic and thus circumstances and opportunities will change over time. That means that some CCT segments will relocate over time given impacts from sea level rise, shoreline erosion, construction of new CCT segments, increasing user needs, and other situations that will be sure to arise. Commission and Conservancy staffs wish to particularly acknowledge the importance of Caltrans interest and support in completing this project and look forward to the many opportunities for expanding our work together with our various shared trail partners along California’s coast.

The CCT Mapping Viewer contains a link to send comments or questions which alerts both CCC and SCC staff that there is a need to review and possibly modify the trail alignments and or characterization.

CCT Mapping Viewer (link)

To view the CCT data and/or download the GIS layers, go the Coastal Commission website. Link will be live by May 12, 2021.

<https://coastalcomm.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ef96f867a644cdeab90d213b7577ab4>

Appendix

CCT Legislative History:

Policy makers and coastal managers have long planned for a continuous coastal trail network in California.

The 1975 California Coastal Plan called for a system of coastal trails to make the coast more accessible to more people, link population centers with recreational facilities, and to allow people to enjoy the scenic qualities of the coastline. Policy 145, Coastal Trails System, states in part: A hiking, biking and equestrian trails system shall be established along or near the coast...ideally the trails system should be continuous and located near the shoreline...”.

The trail is recognized both statewide and nationally in 1999. California Governor Gray Davis and the White House Millennium Council officially recognized the trail in 1999; therefore, it is now designated as California’s Millennium Legacy Trail.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution 20 of the 2001–02 Regular Session declared the California Coastal Trail to be an official state trail and urged the State Coastal Conservancy and the California Coastal Commission to work collaboratively to complete the trail.

The California Legislature passed SB 980 (Chesboro) in 2001 which added PRC 31408 and directed the State Coastal Conservancy, in consultation with State Parks Department, the Coastal Commission and the California Conservation Corps, to complete a plan by 2003 for the development of the California Coastal Trail. The report, ***Completing the California Coastal Trail***, was submitted to the Legislature in 2003 by the Coastal Conservancy, prepared in collaboration with the Coastal Commission and State Parks Department. The report contains the founding principles for the California Coastal Trail, including defining the California Coastal Trail, identifying objectives and principles, as well as mapping the status of trail completion.

In 2007 the Legislature passed AB 1396 (Laird) which amended the Government Code by adding Section 65080.1 and amending Section 14012 as well as amending PRC 31408. These changes added requirements to assist with completing the CCT by: 1) adding Caltrans as another State agency (along with Coastal Conservancy - lead, Coastal Commission and State Parks) responsible for implementing the CCT and 2) ensuring that Regional Transportation Plans include the CCT as a component of the State's transportation system. To implement this second requirement, the existing Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines needed to be updated to conform. Those **Guidelines were revised and adopted by the California Transportation Commission in 2010** and defined the CCT as a trail network.

The California Legislature adopted Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 153 in 2008, proclaiming October 11, 2008 as California Coastal Trail Day.

California Coastal Trail resources:

California Coastal Commission webpage:

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/ca-coastal-trail/coastal-trail.pdf> (CCT)

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/coastal-trails/#/> (CCT video series)

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/> YourCoast app and California Coastal Access Guide (book) series

State Coastal Conservancy webpage:

<https://scc.ca.gov/projects/california-coastal-trail/>

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/coastal-trail-report.pdf> (Completing the California Coastal Trail, report - 2003)

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/coastal-trail-map.pdf> (Completing the California Coastal Trail, maps – 2003)

California State Parks webpage:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=91