



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

DATE: August 11, 2025

TITLE: **Adopt an Addendum to the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project; Adopt Resolution No. 256-04 Accepting a Public Access Easement; and Approve Necessary and Associated Related Actions.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1) Adopt the Addendum to the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project;
- 2) Adopt Resolution No. 256-04 accepting a public access easement on a portion of Assessor's Parcel Nos. 504-201-010 & 504-201-011; and
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

INTRODUCTION:

The City continues to advance the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project to provide a safe walking and biking route from the existing northern terminus of the Humboldt Bay Trail at the Arcata Skate Park to the Valley West neighborhood, the Aldergrove business park, and the Mad River at the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District's Park 1.

An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared for the Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Public Resources Code §21080(c), and on December 6, 2022, the City Council adopted the IS/MND. As design of the Project progressed, minor adjustments in the Project Study Boundary were identified based on final grading and the final plan for mitigation specific to wetlands and sensitive natural communities. The City evaluated potential environmental effects for each minor adjustment to the Project and prepared an Addendum to the 2022 IS/MND (SCH No. 2022110030).

BACKGROUND:

Completion of the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail has been a City Council priority for many years and has been a priority Capital Improvement Project. The Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project will provide a safe, separated non-motorized transportation route between downtown Arcata and Valley West and the Aldergrove Industrial Park employment center, and between affordable neighborhoods, including the Yurok Indian Housing Authority 30th Street Commons Improvement

Project, and Cal Poly Humboldt. The project will also provide a safe family-friendly connection to the nearby Mad River. The City has worked in partnership with the Great Redwood Trail Agency, Caltrans District 1, Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD), the County of Humboldt, Cal Poly Humboldt and resource agencies to develop the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail.

DISCUSSION:

Addendum to the 2022 Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)

An IS/MND was prepared for this project and adopted by the City Council on December 9, 2022. As project designs have progressed to 100% designs, several locations were identified for minor adjustments to the Project Study Boundary such as a 50 square foot area near where the trail meets Sunset Avenue, a 100 square foot area to enhance the connection to the Cal Poly Humboldt student housing on St. Louis Road, 380 square feet of additional area at the intersection of Giuntoli Lane and Boyd Road, and an additional area for sensitive natural communities mitigation along North Fork Janes Creek. All adjustments to the Project Study Boundary are directly adjacent to or immediately proximal to the Project Study Boundary evaluated in the 2022 CEQA IS/MND.

The City evaluated potential environmental effects for these minor adjustments to the Project Study Boundary in an Addendum to the 2022 IS/MND, see Attachment A. The Project changes, detailed in the addendum, would not result in new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of effects related to the mandatory findings of significance previously addressed in the 2022 IS/MND.

Public Access Easement

The City has completed designs, secured all rights-of-way for the Annie & Mary Trail project and released a construction bid on July 23, 2025. Staff anticipate that construction will commence in September 2025 and be completed by December 2026.

While the City has secured right of way to construct the trail on property owned in fee by the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, the City needs to complete a public access easement with the District in order to ensure trail connectivity to the Mad River for the long term. The District is a partner in the Annie & Mary Trail Project, and on June 10, 2025 the District Board of Directors approved the donation of the public access easement in concept and gave direction to their General Manager to finalize the public access easement language with the City.

The proposed easement is located outside of the city limits yet within the City's Planning Area and directly west of Park 1, the planned terminus of the trail. The proposed easement property lies directly adjacent to property owned in fee by the Great Redwood Trail Agency, over which the City has already secured a license agreement for a portion of the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail. A public access easement over District property will ensure the trail can 1) be routed around electrical infrastructure previously built on the GRTA rail corridor by the District under a license agreement and 2) be maintained in perpetuity.

This recommended action is consistent with the Arcata General Plan 2040 Parks and Recreation Element policy PR-2e with the intention to provide an interconnected, multi-purpose trail system with regional linkages. Acquiring an easement for the Annie & Mary Trail is also in line with the General Plan's Health Element, specifically policy H-2a which supports ensuring residents of all neighborhoods, ages, incomes and abilities have access to opportunities for daily physical activity and developing convenient access to safe and attractive outdoor spaces and places throughout the

city. Additionally, the City holds several similar public access easements for trail segments including along Humboldt Bay Trail North.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Initiating construction of the Arcata Annie & Mary Connectivity Trail Project is identified as a City Council 2025/26 Priority Project. Completing the Annie & Mary Trail is also recognized as a City priority in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The project is on the City CIP list (48-07). Finally, the Annie & Mary Trail is also a priority regional commuter trail project in the Humboldt County Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REVIEW:

On August 12, 2025, the Planning Commission found the acquisition of this public access easement to be consistent with the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared for this project and adopted by the City Council on December 9, 2022. Potential action by the Council to adopt the Addendum to the 2022 IS/MND would amend the initial CEQA action. The Project changes, detailed in the addendum, would not result in new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of effects related to the mandatory findings of significance previously addressed in the 2022 IS/MND.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding for this project is available and budgeted via a variety of sources including a grant from Caltrans' Cycle 5 Active Transportation Program, SHOPP funds secured with a partnership with Caltrans District 1, an MOU with Yurok Indian Housing Authority and City of Arcata Measure G funds.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to:

1. Adopt the Addendum to the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project;
2. Adopt Resolution No. 256-04 accepting a public access easement; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

Consent Calendar vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Arcata Annie Mary Trail Connectivity Project IS/MND Addendum
- B. Resolution No. 256-04
- C. Public Access Easement