



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

December 21, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

DATE: December 09, 2022

TITLE: **Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project.

INTRODUCTION:

The Environmental Services Department continues to advance the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project (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) have been prepared for the Project pursuant to CEQA and Public Resources Code §21080(c). On November 2, 2022, the City noticed the availability of a Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration for the construction of the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project. The public draft was circulated for comments November 2–December 2, 2022. City staff outreached to property owners adjacent to the proposed project and community members who had previously participated in meetings and planning for the Annie & Mary Trail Project. City staff also hosted opportunities for comment on the IS/MND at the November Parks & Recreation Committee meeting and a pop-up event on December 1 at the Arcata Skate Park.

BACKGROUND:

The Arcata Annie & Mary Trail has been a City priority for many years and a regional trail priority for over two decades. The Annie & Mary Trail is envisioned to connect Arcata to Blue Lake. In 2018-2019 the City utilized a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to engage community members and plan an improved non-motorized connection between the Valley West neighborhood and downtown Arcata. In September 2019 the City Council approved moving forward with the recommended railroad corridor alignment alternative to locate the trail on the rail corridor.

In 2021 the City was awarded an Active Transportation Program grant for the environmental compliance, design, right-of-way, and construction phases of the Project.

The City proposes to construct approximately 3.5-miles of Class I bike path through north Arcata and the unincorporated County including improvements on the Giuntoli Lane overpass over State Route 299 and the Sunset Avenue overpass over Highway 101. The Project is located along an inactive segment of railroad corridor within the Great Redwood Trail Agency right-of-way and properties held in fee, between Sunset Avenue and Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District's Park 1 on West End Road. In addition to safety and connectivity improvements, the trail would provide opportunities for nature study and recreation.

DISCUSSION:

The IS/MND document with figures and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is included with this staff report. Additional appendices for the IS/MND can be found on the Project webpage at <https://www.cityofarcata.org/831/Annie-Mary-Trail-Connectivity-Project>.

The IS/MND document outlines a clear project description and analyzes the environmental impacts of the planned Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project. The project description incorporates feedback on trail alignment and other concerns the City heard during the outreach process. The trail designs remain at the 30% design conceptual level and the City looks forward to working with project partners, adjacent property owners and community members to refine the trail designs during the design phase of the Project, which is anticipated to occur throughout 2023.

During the public comment period for the IS/MND, the City received no formal comments from agencies or the public. During the public outreach at the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting and the tabling at the Arcata Skate Park several comments were recorded and will be considered during the design phase of the project. The City also conducted AB 52 consultation with the Blue Lake Rancheria, Wiyot Tribe and the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and also engaged staff at permitting agencies including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board and the US Army Corp of Engineers.

The CEQA review process and technical studies determined several areas of potential environmental impact (including potential impacts to wetlands and biological resources) for which detailed measures have been included to minimize, reduce, and where necessary mitigate. The City has prepared a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures identified and proposed in the IS/MND.

On the basis of the evaluation in the IS/MND, City staff determined that with the mitigation measures that the City has imposed, no significant adverse effects to the environment are expected from the Project. The Project would not have a detrimental effect upon either short-term or long-term environmental goals.

The Arcata Annie & Mary Trail would provide a safe, separated non-motorized transportation connection between the Valley West neighborhood, Aldergrove industrial park, Cal Poly, downtown Arcata and the Mad River. The portion of the Project through City limits would be located along the NCRA rail corridor, now operated by the Great Redwood Trail Agency. The portion of the Project through the unincorporated County to Park 1 is planned to follow the Arcata & Mad River rail corridor and be located on Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District property. The County of Humboldt, Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, and Caltrans District 1 are partners in the Project.

Senator McGuire's office and the GRTA have been advancing railbanking to preserve the NCRA between San Francisco Bay and Humboldt Bay. The federal Surface Transportation Board have

made interim rulings supporting the proposed railbanking and are expected to issue a determination soon on railbanking the NCRA corridor between Willits and Humboldt Bay. Railbanking would secure right-of-way for the Project for the City to collaborate with the GRTA to construct the trail. If railbanking is delayed, the City would work with the GRTA to secure a license agreement to build and operate a trail consistent with the City's current license agreement for the Humboldt Bay Trail North. During the next project phase, the City will work with HBMWD and adjacent property owners in the unincorporated County section of the Project to secure right-of-way for the trail.

Following approval of the IS/MND for the Project, the City anticipates the Project will be on the January California Transportation Commission agenda for consideration of funding allocation for the design and right-of-way phases of the Project. Following design and right-of-way phases the City anticipates construction will commence in 2024/25.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Finalizing the Environmental and Design plans to construct the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail is identified as a 2022/23 Priority Project. Completing the Annie & Mary Trail is also recognized as a City priority in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) have been prepared for this project. The proposed action is to adopt the IS/MND.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

This project is funded by a \$4.2 million state Active Transportation Program grant, a \$1 million contribution from the Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities grant for the 30th Street project, and a \$35,000 matching contribution from the City's Streets Fund. Funding for the environmental approval and design phases are included in this fiscal year's budget.

ATTACHMENTS:

Arcata Annie Mary Trail Connectivity Project Final ISMND (PDF)