

Advocacy 2023 Annual Report

Advocacy for trails is another way the HTC supports trails.

The advocacy committee began work at the end of 2017. In March of 2018 Senator McGuire announced his desire to bring legislation (SB 1029) forward to replace the NCRA and eventually railbank the old NW Pacific RR line to create the Great Redwood Trail. The Advocacy committee jumped on board and have done all we could to fuel the change.

Meanwhile, at the same time we were hard at work in Humboldt County building the effectiveness of our committee.

The original 4 members of that group are here this evening and continue to meet monthly planning strategies. A fifth and newer member has jumped right in and become a significant contributor. I would like to acknowledge Michael Proulx, Korina Johnson, Bruce Silvey, Carol Mayes, and myself. This is the core group.

Frequently other board members participate in trail advocacy. Stevie Luther has followed the **North McKay Ranch Subdivision project**, and Kemset Moore has frequently helped with Caltrans meetings, and is a member of the McKay Community Forest Advisory Group. Their interest and expertise in these areas is invaluable. **All** our board members contribute to trail advocacy.

Five years ago, we also began reaching out to various agencies to make contact and build relationships with people involved with trails in the cities and county. These relationships have been built from Trinidad to Rio Dell, and even further south. Through the railbanking process we have contacts with adjacent counties and state officials. We work with these individuals and agencies in support of trail development, active transportation programs, trail accessibility, and working on connecting the regional trail network.

When I reflect on these past five years with the creation of that GRT trail and our work in support and development of our local trails -- it has been a heartening endeavor and is one that the Humboldt Trails Council takes great pride in.

What does the advocacy committee actually do?

We write LETTERS on behalf of the council in support of trail development. Our letters are grant support letters, comment letters, suggestion letters, nagging letters... and we encourage our base to write letters on various trail issues with calls-to-action requests.

Letters this year have included

- two grant support letters and partnering for the City of Fortuna for their Improvement for Kenmar Interchange

- couple of letters to the City of Eureka on their Bike Plan and their Draft Waterfront Specific Plan,
- Several letters to the BOS regarding the Fisher Road issue and support of river access recommendations made to them by the County Fish and Game Adv. Comm.

In addition, we also write news articles for our eNews, and our webpage, and letters to the editors of our various news outlets including “My Words” to the Times Standard. This is not only to provide trail updates, but also to counter the misinformation that can be spread regarding trails.

(Still working on the education of the public regarding how trails are financed.)

WHEN We aren’t writing letters WE ATTEND public meetings, events, and celebrations and frequently speak on behalf of HTC in support of trails and their development. Some meetings are virtual, some are in-person. It can range from formal comments at a BOS or City Council meeting to meeting in the field to view a future trail site or celebrate the opening of a trail.

This year we have attended meetings with

- Caltrans - **South Broadway Complete Streets** public meeting (2/16 Karen, Korina)
- City of Eureka and GRT master planners regarding – **GAP section** – C to X Street - 5/17 GAP - Bruce and Karen walked C St to Eureka Slough Bridge with Louisa, Simone, and Jason Liles to discuss our concerns with the -safety for pedest and bicyclist for that section.
- City of Eureka - public input meeting for the **Grace Marton Memorial Park** east of the Adorni Center. Carol and Michael 5/4
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy – “Trails Nations” – Bruce
- Redwood Unit of the Backcountry Horsemen - Karen
- Board of Supervisor meetings regarding the Fisher Rd issue
- County Fish & Wildlife Advisory Committee – Karen (4/18) - Presentation
- **Coalition for Responsible Transportation** Priorities webinar -Public Realm Accessibility 4/6 Karen
- MOST DELIGHTFUL were 7/22-25 – Walkability Audits and Public Presentation sponsored by HCAOG **Dan Burden** confirmed our views!

People seek out spaces near their homes to be active, and trails have proven to be important to so many---spaces to play, commute, walk, bike, run and explore. Trail use across the **country** is up and Humboldt County is no exception. And we continue to **focus** on accessibility issues and underserved communities. We want everyone to safely enjoy our trails.

PARTNERING WITH OTHER organizations and government entities has become a big part of Advocacy.

Many board members (some more than one) are on **advisory boards**:

- McKay Community Forest Advisory group – Kemset Moore, Carol Mayes - 1/24, 4/25, 7/21 (fieldtrip), 7/25
- Technical Advisory group of GRT Master planning – Bruce Silvey
- Eureka to College of the Redwoods Planning Study group 18 months Bruce Silvey 6/13, 8/24
- Eureka Bicycle Plan Task Force – - 7/6 Carol Mayes
- Arcata's Transportation Safety Committee - Korina
- USC Tech group meetings for two years. Students from USC designed a GRT mapping App with a geodatabase with 5 widgets (trailheads, weather, camping, parking, etc.). This App will go up online in the future. - Karen
- Humboldt Bay Trail Fund Committee – Karen

Besides those advisory boards we also partner with **other organizations** or are members of coalition

- Humboldt Bay Bicycle Commuters Assoc. – Korina
- HTC Founding member of **No Coal In Humboldt Coalition** which was successful proud of the work we accomplished: we
 - helped pass 15 resolutions and ordinances,
 - collectively submitted 21 filings with the Surface Transportation Board,
 - and rallied a strong show of community support to keep our air and water clean.
 - When threat was past this coalition disbanded.
- Founding coalition member of GRT – Friends Humboldt group – meets monthly

GRT – FRIENDS – HUMBOLDT

- A coalition of groups advocating for trail development that enhances environmental values, honors indigenous communities, provides safe alternative transportation, and connects communities along the 316-mile rail trail. We are helping with the building of that webpage, both with finances and member participation.
- Most recently this group partnered with KEET TV to put on a Community Event on Oct 14 at the Dyerville Overlook. Celebrating the success of the GRT. There were 10 Tabler's, a food truck, was family-centered, and speakers.
- Fisher Rd concern – river access from the Carlotta Branch to the Van Duzen River. (Pattons-vacate-deny public access- Co. Fish & Game Advisory Commission letter – BOS accepted letter 5/16- **Owners blocked public access**
BENEFIT THE TRAIL USERS OF THE CARLOTTA BRANCH

A great deal of our partnering this year has revolved around the GRT, its agency, its master planning, and its completion of its railbanking.

GRTA

When possible, we attend the agencies bimonthly meetings (via zoom or in-person 8/17), have lobbied for them to have hybrid meetings TBD, and this past year have actively worked on the railbanking of the final section of the GRT between Willits and Cloverdale. We filed a comment letter with the STB in regards to one of those steps. We feel that was helpful as the STB made a favorable decision in that regard. The final decision on the Adverse Abandonment that the GRTA brought forward to the STB - STD

7/24/23 – Bruce filed a comment letter with STB referring to two US Dist Court decisions involving Mendocino Railway in regards to the GRTA **Adverse Abandonment** (AB-1305 subno.1) It is the perspective of HTC that MR is not now, nor can be in the future, involved in interstate commerce.

GRT MASTER PLANNING

We have been very involved with the master planning portion and have attended their public meetings both virtual and in-person. We have reached out and gotten to know the project managers (Hannah Barbee and Louisa Morris). And look forward to the Draft Master Plan wrapping up next summer.

Rail Trails are **economic engines** for rural area. Alta Planning and Design (a nationally renowned firm focused on active transportation did a data-heavy 50-pg Economic & Vitality Benefit Assessment on the GRT.

- Total amount of benefits from trail: **\$102,568,000**
- New recreational, tourism and retail economic benefits: **\$61,693,000**
- Humboldt County will have **\$48 M** in benefits
- Total new walking/hiking trips per year: **5.3 to 7.9 million**
- Total estimated new bike trips per year: **900,000 to 1.3 million**
- Annual trips generated by residents: **4.1 to 6.1 million**
- Annual trips generated by visitors: **2.1 to 3.1 million**

There will be a live workshop Dec 7 (530-7:30) at Sequoia Conf Center in Eureka on with an online one to follow on Dec 13 (6-7 pm).

Other Communication

We communicate with the trail community via our eNews (writing articles), Calls-to-action, and we reaching out by phone to our friends and partners. We report annually to the community at our Trail Summit—June 1 this coming = year at the Sequoia Conference Center.

We use our webpage, FaceBook and Instagram accounts to get information out regarding advocacy issues.

There has been a lot to celebrate this last year- and the public has taken note. Lots of trails have come on-line since one year ago.

Ridge Trail ribbon cutting – Arcata Community Forest - 11/12/22

Northridge Trail Unit – McKay Community Forest

Manilla Trail (opening 12/6/22) – 0.6 mi Class 1

Elk River Extension Estuary Trail - extended the Bay Trail south one mile to Tooby Road near Humboldt Hill, along the restored Elk River estuary.

Most significant 5/17 – groundbreaking for Final Four at Brainard Mill site – Bay Trail Highlighted in a My Word article by a 6/11 - TS My Word – Final Four celebrated – Expected completion at the end of next year---Completing the Bay Trail has been a regional priority for more than 20 years for local governments, as well as trail and transportation advocates. Very gratifying.

Other developmental highlights that will result in ribbon-cuttings are----written letters for

- City of Arcata received a \$1M dollars grant improvement for the Carlson Park located off Guintolli Lane (4/6) Wrote letter for grant in 7/15/21
- The County secured mats down on Clam Beach for Wheelchair access (3/4) – we gave feedback one yr. ago
- Lanphere and Ma-le'l National Monument dedicated
- Arcata's Annie & Mary Connectivity Project is in the design and right-of-way phase. Construction, expected to start in 2025, will extend the existing Class 1 trail another 3.5 miles north from Larson Park to the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District's Park No. 1 along the Mad River.
- Eureka's Bay to Zoo Trail project received \$10 million to complete design, permitting, right-of -way, and construction. 2026-2027 estimated construction.

Advocacy reports back to the full board at our monthly general meeting each providing a review of that month's accomplishments. We communicate to the board during the month on items that come up with a short timeline. Often other board members alert us to items and actions that need a response or body present.

Goals for coming year

- Working on the Gap section in the Eureka Waterfront Trail between C Street and the Adorni Center where it is confusing for trail users to go. The Great RW Trail will fill in a section there.
- Continue the GRT - Master planning
- GRTA - Complete railbanking of last section (Willits to Cloverdale)
- Secure public access on Fisher Rd for the Carlotta Spur
- Continue to nurture and build relationships – that is the pleasurable part – working with such a great group of trail enthusiasts.

Our committee persists, guided by the spirit of the trails. We are encouraged by those who used the trails before us and dedicated to the folks who will use the trails after us.