Design Review Subcommittee (DRSC)

Meeting Date: June 10, 2015

PLANNER: Cliff Jones, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: **Conditional Use Permit 15-171, Southern Extension to the San Clemente Beach Trail** a request by the City to allow the extension of the San Clemente Beach Trail approximately 1,400 feet from Avenida Calafia to the State Campground railroad underpass.

BACKGROUND:

Project Description

San Clemente's beach trail terminates at the Calafia Beach parking lot. This project will extend the San Clemente Beach Trail south approximately 1,400 feet to a path that connects to the San Clemente State Campground railroad underpass.

The City Council directed staff to proceed with the project on September 16, 2014 and executed a professional services agreement with BGB Design Group to prepare the plans and environmental documentation on January 20, 2015. BGB Design group was selected to work on the project as they were involved with the first two phases of the beach trail.

Why is DRSC Review Required?

A Conditional Use Permit is required to extend the beach trail within the Publicly Owned Shoreline Zone (OS1-S1 (CZ)). The DRSC is tasked with ensuring the development is compatible and harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood and with reviewing the project for consistency with the Design Guidelines. DRSC comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration.

ANALYSIS:

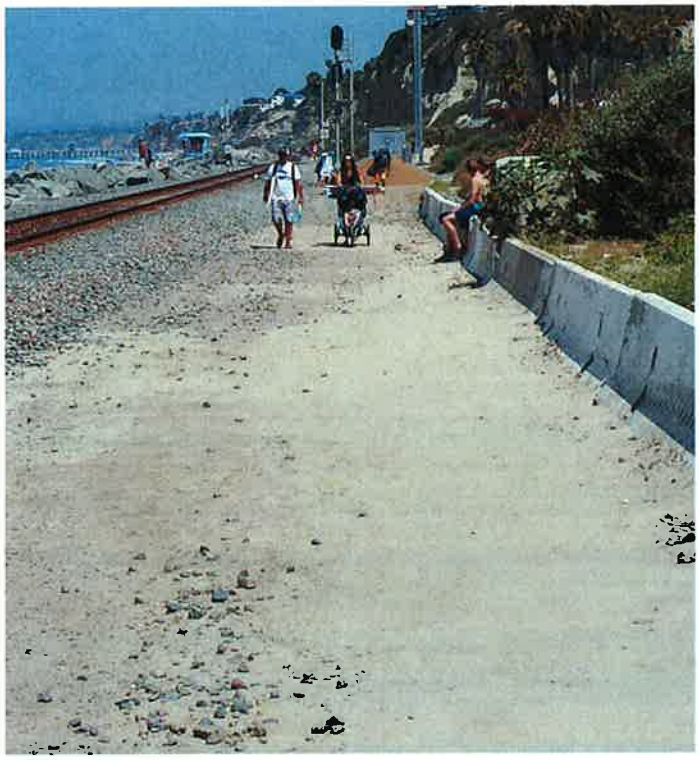
The project will extend the San Clemente Beach Trail south approximately 1,400 feet to a path that connects to the San Clemente State Campground railroad underpass. The beach trail extension accomplishes the following: 1) extends the beach trail for pedestrian and cyclist travel and adds an additional link in the California Coastal Trail; 2) provides safe access to and from the state beach and campground; 3) limits water, slough, and rocks from spreading from the hillside above onto the railway and proposed trail area; and 4) preserves the aesthetic beauty of the existing beach trail by including the same trail design components in the extension south.

There is no formal pedestrian/bike path adjacent the railroad between Avenida Calafia and the campground access. Users of the beach trail and the campground presently walk and bike close to the tracks along the rail bed as seen in Image 1 below.

Image 1: Pedestrians within the Railroad ROW South of Avenida Calafia

To prevent boulders and slough from falling onto the tracks, rail authorities have installed temporary concrete k-rails in the space between the rails and the sandstone bluffs, which narrows the space further as seen in Image 2 below.

Image 2: Temporary K-Rails and Informal Trail



To address the safety concerns and provide an accessible path towards the State Beach underpass the project incorporates extending the decomposed granite trail parallel to the railroad. The rendering below, Image 3, shows the envisioned trail extension and the needed safety improvements including cable railing, which preserves ocean views, and block wall/detention basin that captures rainfall and slough/rocks that fall from the hillside. This detention basin will help to ensure that significant rain storm events, such as a ten year storm, do not result in slough or rocks being spread across the railway thereby preventing delays for the railroad and its' users.

Image 3: Proposed Beach Trail Extension

As seen in the rendering above, the trail design is linear due to the limited construable flat area between the hillside and railway. Per railroad authority safety requirements, no structure or landscape can be erected within 15 feet of the centerline of the railroad; the cable railing is setback 15 feet from the center line of the railroad accordingly. Native and drought tolerant landscape that reinforces the existing beach trail landscape is proposed along the hillside edge behind the block wall/detention basin. The landscape will be established by use of Dri Water gel packs and may require periodic watering during times of drought.

Safety Recommendations for the San Clemente Railroad Corridor

The Safety Recommendations for the San Clemente Railroad Corridor ("SRSCRC") is a document that was developed by local residents, railroad authorities, and City staff

within a mission to "reach consensus on the preferred solution to increase public safety and enhance public access within the railroad corridor in the City of San Clemente, while preserving the natural ambiance and natural beach resources." The SRSCRC contains design criteria for coastal projects that primarily relate to the coastal trail and contains recommendations for the beach trail between State Park and Cottons, Attachment 2. Staff evaluation of the project's consistency with applicable design criteria and recommendations, is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Project consistency with SRSCRC Design Criteria and Recommendations

Design Criteria or Recommendation	Project Consistency
All projects considered along the railroad corridor and on the beach should be natural in nature and not encroach onto the beach or tidelands. (SRSCRC Design Criteria, Page 10, Bullet #1)	Somewhat Consistent. The trail extension utilizes natural appearing design components of the existing beach trail to maintain compatibility with the context of the area. Components include cable-railing, decomposed granite trail surface, and landscape. The Enviro-Block retaining wall is proposed to be finished in an earth tone color to match the context of the surrounding environment. However, the linear appearance of the trail does not provide a natural appearance. Staff is exploring cost-effective opportunities to reduce the linear design of the trail with BGB Design that does not add significant height to the block wall.
Avoid the use of hard surface materials such as asphalt or concrete whenever possible. (SRSCRC Design Criteria, Page 10, Bullet #3)	Consistent. To construct the trail on a flat surface in the narrow space between the hillside and railway requires installation of concrete Enviro-Blocks to retain the hillside. To make the Enviro-Block retaining wall appear more natural, it is to be finished in an earth tone color to match the context of the surrounding environment.
Remove excess ballast on the inland side of the tracks because the ballast is difficult to traverse, and it forces people up onto the tracks. (SRSCRC Recommendations State Park to Cottons, Page 42, #1)	Consistent. The project will remove the excess ballast (rip rap) within the proposed beach trail extension area.

Design Criteria or Recommendation	Project Consistency
Provide drainage improvements on the inland side of the tracks to avoid muddy conditions that force people up onto the tracks. (SRSCRC Recommendations State Park to Cottons, Page 42, #2)	Consistent. The project incorporates a block wall/detention basin that captures rainfall and slough/rocks that fall from the hillside. These improvements will eliminate the muddy conditions and prevent persons from walking on the rip rap and tracks.
Encourage access along beach and not within the railroad right-of-way in this section due to the poor line of sight and the narrow space between the tracks and the coastal bluff. (SRSCRC Recommendations State Park to Cottons, Page 42, #3)	Consistent. The SRSCRC acknowledges that the narrow space between the tracks and coastal bluff makes it difficult to install a trail south of Avenida Calafia. However, the area between Avenida Calafia and the State Campground railroad underpass can accommodate a trail as shown in the project plans and as recognized by the City Council direction to move forward with the project. The recommendation suggests a future trail extension south of the State Campground railroad underpass will be challenging and costly as the space between the bluff and railline significantly narrows more than the project area.

Design Guidelines / General Plan Consistency

Staff evaluation of the project's consistency with Design Guidelines and the Centennial General Plan, is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Project consistency with Design Guidelines and the Centennial General Plan

Design Guideline or Policy	Project Consistency
The quality of site design is an important part of a project's impacts on the community. Projects should demonstrate sensitivity to the surrounding context and neighboring buildings. (Design Guidelines II.A)	Consistent. The trail extension utilizes design components of the existing beach trail to maintain compatibility with the context of the area. Components include cable-railing, decomposed granite trail surface, and landscape. The Enviro-Block retaining wall is proposed to be finished in an earth tone color to match the context of the surrounding environment.

Design Guideline or Policy	Project Consistency
Evaluate the feasibility of and work towards extending the Beach Trail north and south. (Beaches, Parks & Recreation Element, Implementation Measure 18)	Consistent. The project extends the beach trail south approximately 1,400 feet south to a path that connects to the San Clemente State Campground railroad underpass.
We protect, maintain and enhance public infrastructure that provides public access to the shoreline, beaches, coastal parks, and trails, including the City's Beach Trail. (Coastal Element, Coastal Access and Recreational and Visitor Serving Opportunities, Policy C-1.06)	Consistent. The project improves public access to the beach and extends the existing beach trail for pedestrian and bicyclists use.
Create minimal and appropriate signage along the Coastal Beach Trail and in the Vista Hermosa Sports Park for educational outreach about critical habitats and native plant and animal species. (Natural Resources Element, Implementation Measure 3)	Consistent. A condition of approval of the project will require signage to be installed that is consistent with existing beach trail signage and the intent of the implementation measure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff's analysis of the project is that it is consistent with Design Guidelines and the design of the existing beach trail. However, the project design can be improved to provide a more natural appearance as suggested within the SRSCRC. Staff is exploring cost-effective opportunities to reduce the linear design of the trail with BGB Design that does not add significant height to the block wall. Those concepts will be presented at the Design Review Subcommittee meeting.

CONCLUSION:

Staff seeks the DRSC's comments and recommendations.

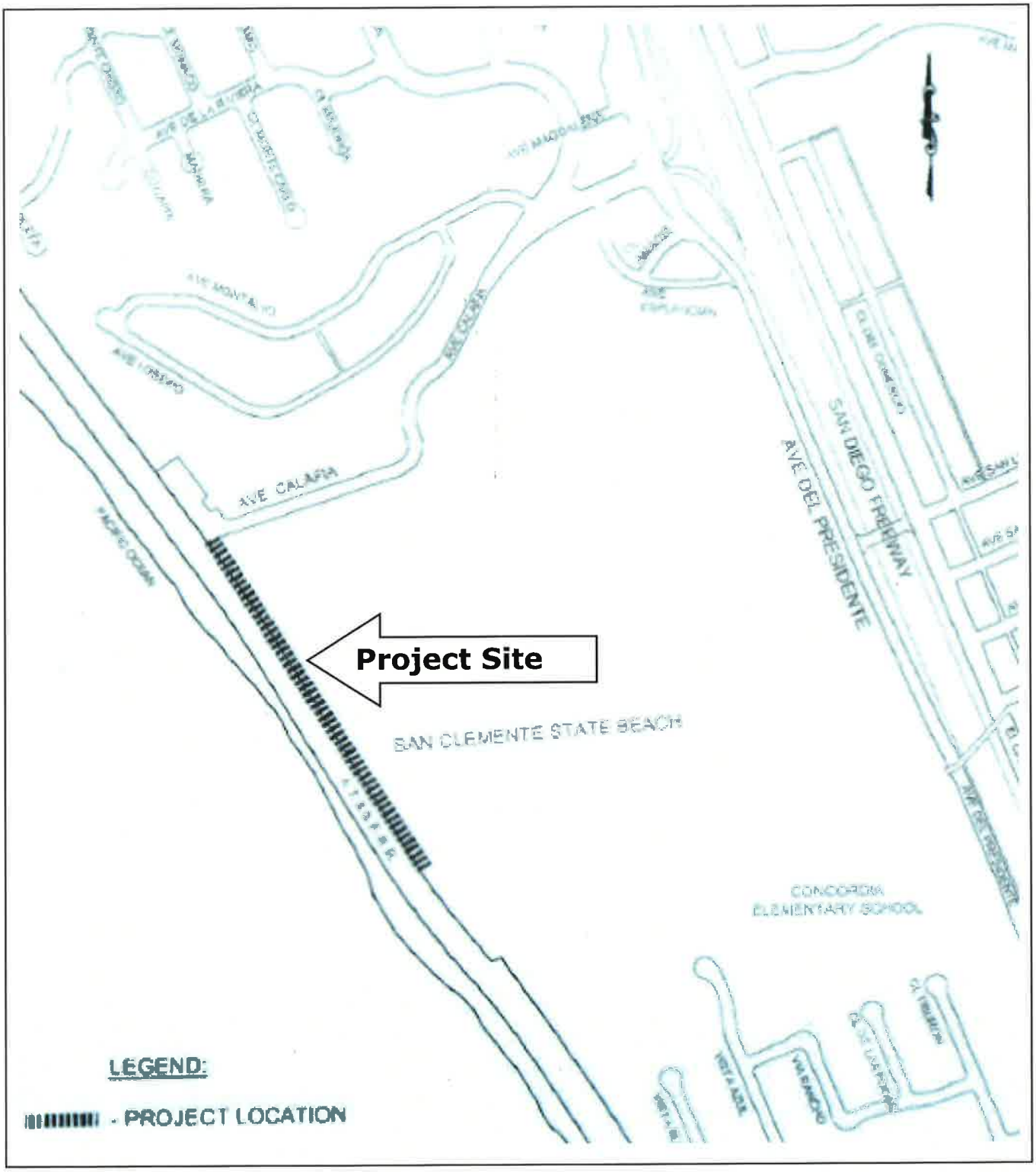
Attachments:

1. Location Map
2. Photos of Existing conditions
3. SRSCRC design criteria and recommendations (excerpted)
4. Plans

ATTACHMENT 1

LOCATION MAP

CUP 15 -171, Southern Extension to San Clemente Beach Trail
Railroad Identification: SBE 804-30-22D-POR.1



Photos of Existing Conditions

Photo 1: This photo demonstrates the high frequency of persons that trespass along the railroad corridor to access the beach, State Campground, and areas further south.

Photo 2: This photo demonstrates how close persons are to passing trains and the prevalent safety concern.

Photo 3: This photo further demonstrates the high frequency of persons that trespass along the railroad corridor to access the beach, State Campground, and areas further south as well as the jagged, golfball-sized rocks stabilizing the railbed, which creates a shifty surface for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Photo 4: This photo demonstrates how the space between the bluff and railway narrows significantly, thereby placing people within an arm's reach of passing trains. Adding to the risks are the jagged, golfball-sized rocks stabilizing the railbed, which creates a shifty surface for pedestrians and bicyclists. Especially after rainfall, puddles several inches deep form on the inland side of the tracks, so people walking and biking often travel over the rocky rail bed, which presents additional risks of tripping/falling in close proximity to trains.

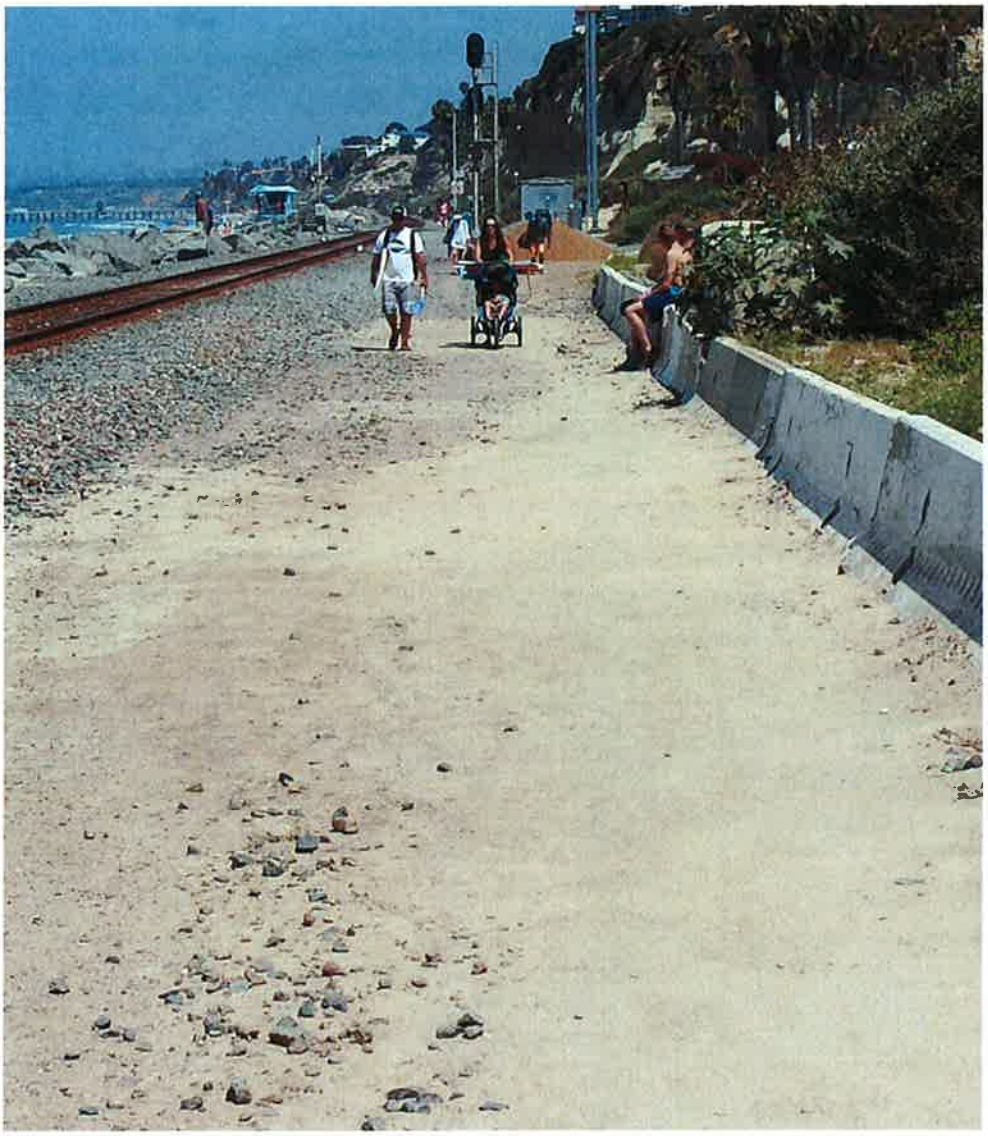


Photo 5: This photo demonstrates the jagged, golfball-sized rocks stabilizing the railbed, which creates a shifty surface for pedestrians and bicyclists. To protect trains from crumbling sandstone and rocks, railroad maintenance crews added temporary concrete k-rail barriers between the sandstone cliffs and the rail bed. The barriers narrowed the navigable path, safeguarding trains but increasing risks to trespassers who have been using the rail bed for decades.

IV. Design Criteria for RCSEP Recommendations and Future Coastal Projects

In conducting our work, the panel was mindful of the lessons learned in previous projects within the city, including the Coastal Trail. Also, there is a rapidly growing awareness of the need to avoid building on the beach as well as the damage that hardened coastal structures can cause to the beach. The community has spoken loudly and clearly that they want to retain the natural feel of our beaches. As such, the Panel has established design criteria to reflect this sentiment, and they have been incorporated into the development of our solutions. The application of these criteria were what allowed a consensus to be reached on the various projects presented herein. Therefore, the Panel recommends that Staff and City Council use the following criteria to insure consensus on an ongoing basis. The committee feels that these design criteria must be incorporated to the extent possible when implementing the RCSEP safety recommendations. In addition, there is a need to establish policy that insures the consideration of these design criteria to the extent possible in all future projects along our beaches.

- All projects considered along the railroad corridor and on the beach should be natural in nature and not encroach onto the beach or tidelands.
- No new seawalls, revetments, jetties should be utilized to construct improvements on the beach.
- Avoid the use of hard surface materials such as asphalt or concrete whenever possible.
- The use of fences should be avoided and in general the beach should not be fenced or blocked from the public, most barriers should take the form of wood and rope, rocks or natural vegetation.
- Always consider the natural feel and character of San Clemente's beach as an asset that shall be protected.
- Improvements to the beach should be minimal; less is more. (While opening up the beach to as wide a segment of the population is desirable, there are some areas that may not be amenable to access or travel by all without damaging the very beach we all love and, therefore, should not be developed).
- Improvements that come in contact with the forces of the ocean need to be stable but non-permanent and easily removable by design. When possible, the City does not want an increase in permanent coastal structures beyond what is currently present.
- To avoid future safety, erosion, and environmental problems, consider relocation when repairing, replacing, or upgrading existing facilities on the beach.

Within these guidelines and consistent with the mission and charge to the Panel, the Panel evaluated what the safety issues were along the stretch of beach within San Clemente. While some areas of the beach are not owned by the city (e.g. County or State), they are used by the residents of the city and, as such, should be addressed. The panel considered the entire length of the beach to come up with its list of safety issues and recommendations. Appendix A presents a matrix of the safety issues considered, along with solutions considered.

On a long-term basis, the city should explore the possibility of nourishing the beach with imported sand. This would significantly improve the primary means of travel along the beach in the safest manner.

Also, the continued presence of the railroad tracks on the beach will present a long-term sa problem as long as they remain. Relocating the tracks could result in improved efficienc railroad operations as well as increasing public safety. The Panel recognizes that relocatio the railroad would be a long-term project involving numerous issues such as technical proble financing, and environmental impacts. It is recommended that the City and other interes groups continue to monitor resources that might contribute to the necessary detailed studies t would be required with any relocation project.

In addition, the City, as a policy matter, needs to dedicate more resources to the beach maintain the quality beach environment we all want. This includes both financial and manpow resources. Community volunteers could be drafted in this effort, as is commonly done for tr maintenance in other areas.

The RCSEP will officially dissolve after the City Council receives and files the Panel's safe recommendations. Although the Panel will no longer be functioning as a group, the City Sta will from time to time need to consult members of the Panel for feedback. To facilitate this, th Panel has selected three of its members, Kathryn Stovall Dennis, John Dorey and Bob Noon, t work in partnership with the City staff, engineers and other consultants on future design an implementation of the Panel's recommendations as the need arises. This will provide a cohesiv transition and assure community character issues are addressed as Staff begins to implemen safety recommendations.

Recommendations

1. If it is not feasible to provide handicap access at Calafia, provide a DG surface trail that can accommodate wheel chairs to the State Park undercrossing.

2. Improve drainage between bluffs and the railroad tracks to prevent the trail from becoming muddy, forcing people too close or onto the tracks.

State Park:

Identified Problems

While the physical access is good, it is not clear to some visitors that the tunnel accesses State Park beach.

Recommendations

In order to clearly identify the access point, place signage on tunnel indicating State Park access.

State Park to Cottons:

Identified Problems

There is limited room between the railroad and coastal bluffs, and drainage is poor on the inland side of the railroad.

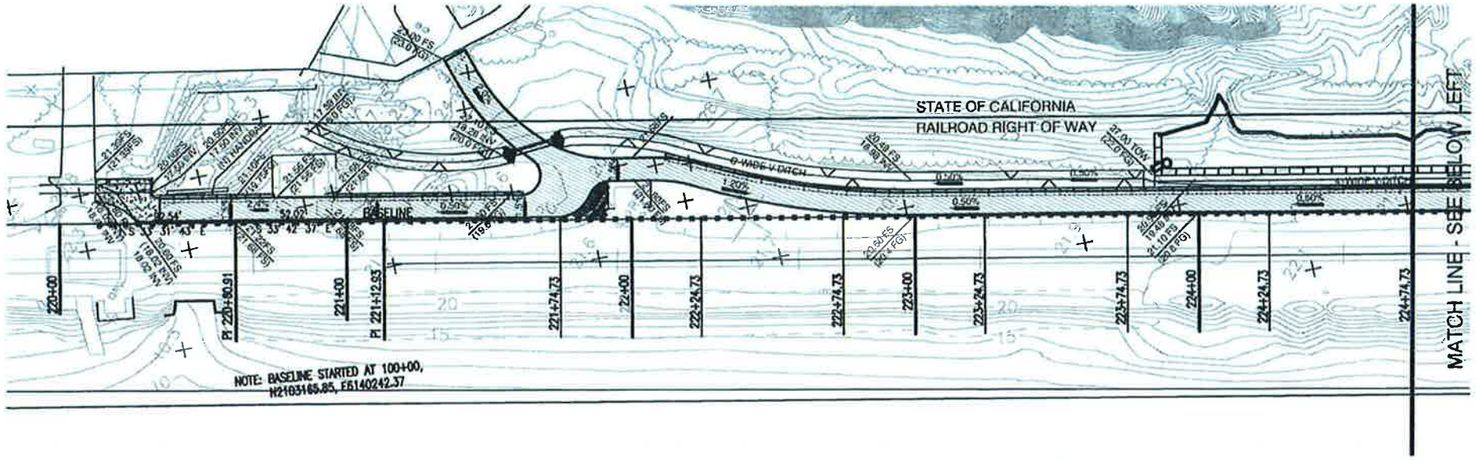
Recommendations

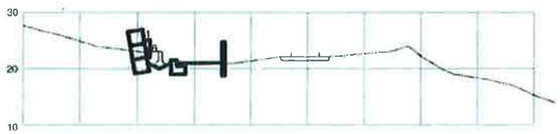
1. Remove excess ballast on the inland side of the tracks because the ballast is difficult to traverse, and it forces people up onto the tracks.

2. Provide drainage improvements on the inland side of the tracks to avoid muddy conditions that force people up onto the tracks.

3. Encourage access along beach and not within the railroad right-of-way in this section due to the poor line of sight and the narrow space between the tracks and the coastal bluff.

4. Work with OCTA to locate crossing signs and rubber mats for the two existing at-grade crossings as a pilot project that can be monitored and used as an example for future at-grade crossing improvements.





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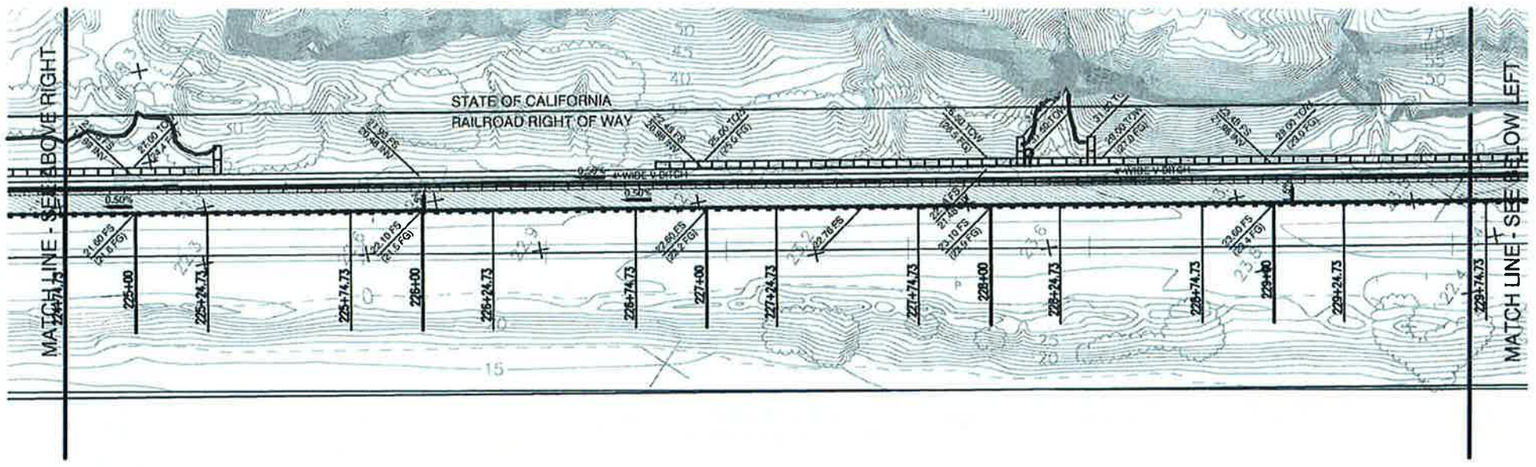

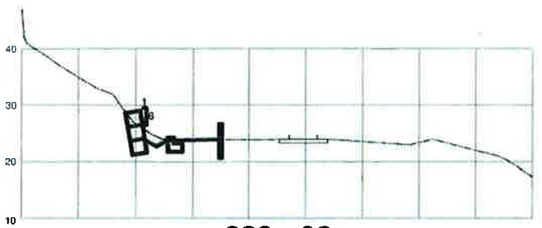

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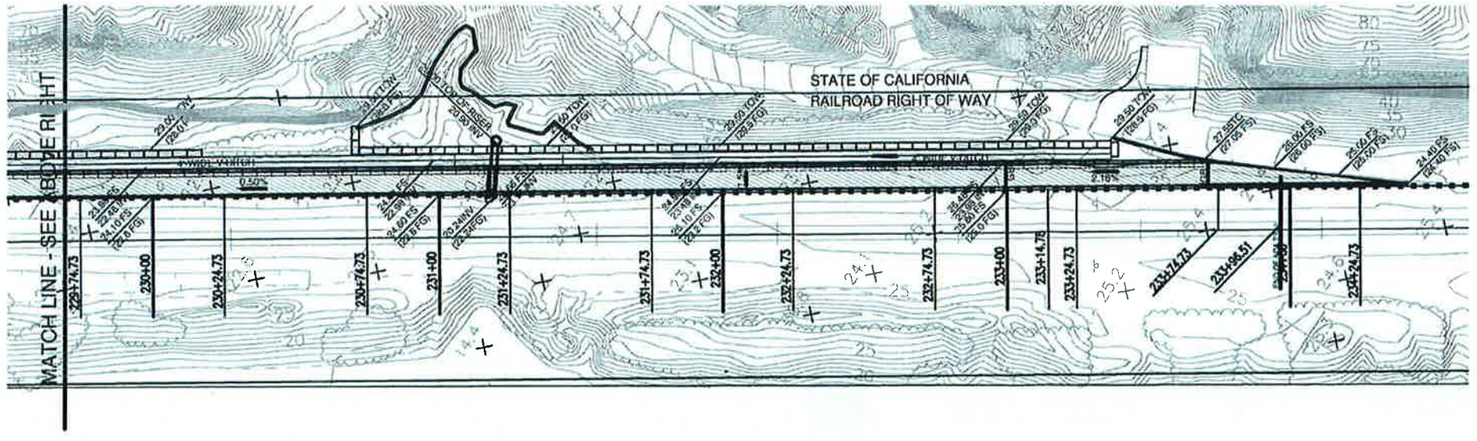

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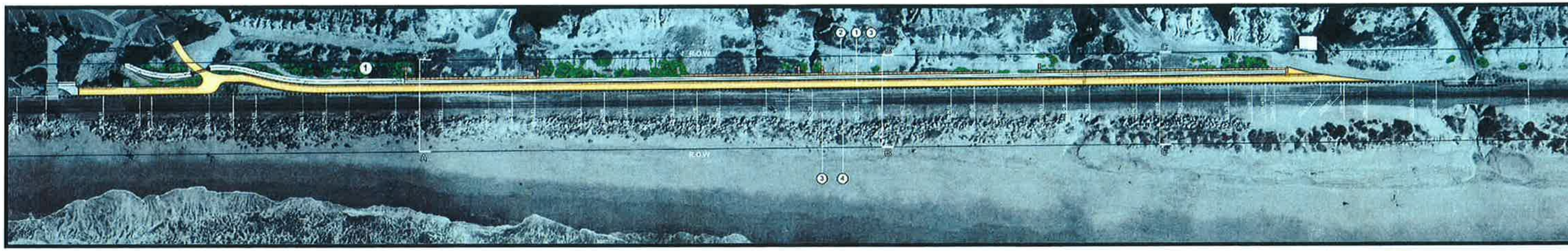
ALTERNATIVE 4



PERSPECTIVE

VIEW ①

PHILOSOPHY

THE PROPOSED [illegible] CORRIDOR COASTAL TRAIL IS AN EXTENSION OF THE PREVIOUSLY CONSTRUCTED 2.3 MILE MULTI USE TRAIL. COMMENCING ON THE SOUTHERLY SIDE OF THE CALAFIA AT-GRADE CROSSING, THE PROPOSED 8 FOOT WIDE DECOMPOSED GRANITE TRAIL WILL EXTEND 1,386 FEET, TERMINATING AT THE EXISTING STATE PARK CAMPGROUND ASPHALT ACCESS ROAD WHICH THEN LEADS TO THE BEACH ACCESS UNDER-CROSSING.

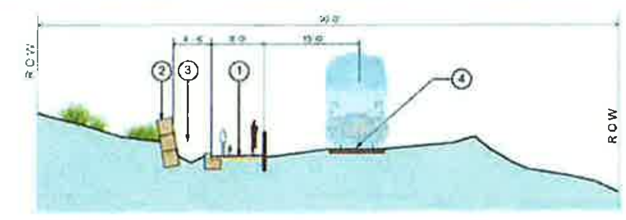
THE TRAIL WILL INCLUDE ADDITIONAL CABLE RAIL FENCING TO PROVIDE NECESSARY PROTECTION AS PART OF THE RECENTLY APPROVED FRA WAYSIDE HORN PROGRAM. THIS SECTION OF THE TRAIL TRAVELS ALONG THE BASE OF THE COASTAL BLUFF WHICH INCLUDES THREE DRAINAGES DOWNSTREAM OF THE STATE PARKS CAMPGROUND. THE EXISTING CONCRETE K RAILS PLACED BY METROLINK TO PROTECT FOULING OF THE TRACK FROM SEDIMENT FLOW WILL BE REPLACED WITH CONCRETE ENVIRO-BLOCKS™ AS A PREFERRED RETAINING WALL SYSTEM UTILIZED BY THE RAIL AUTHORITY. A HYDROLOGY REPORT WAS COMMISSIONED TO DETERMINE THE POTENTIAL SEDIMENT FLOW DURING A 25 YEAR RAIN EVENT. THE RESULTING DESIGN ESTABLISHES DETENTION BASINS FOR THE THREE MAIN DRAINAGES, REQUIRING PERIODIC REMOVAL OF SEDIMENT ONCE THE BASINS REACH [illegible] CAPACITY.

THE TRAIL ALIGNMENT IS LINEAR DUE TO THE LIMITED CONSTRUCTABLE FLAT AREA AVAILABLE WITHIN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY.

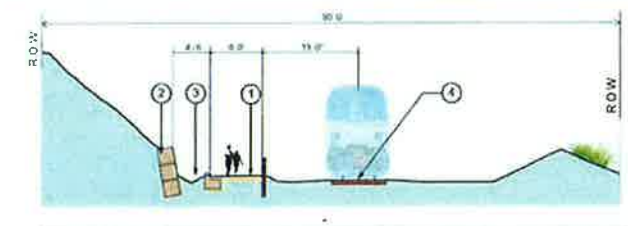
ALTHOUGH NO SUPPLEMENTAL IRRIGATION IS PROPOSED FOR THIS TRAIL SECTION, OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO OFFER SUPPLEMENTAL PLANTINGS OF NATIVE AND DROUGHT TOLERANT SPECIES TO REINFORCE THE EXISTING TRAIL LANDSCAPE. NEW PLANTINGS WILL BE ESTABLISHED USING DRI-WATER™ GEL PAKS.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

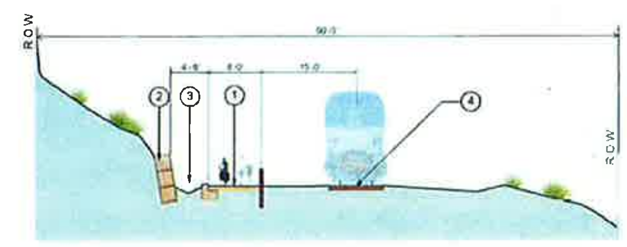
PROPOSED PLANT MATERIAL



SECTION A-A



SECTION C-C



SECTION B-B

LEGEND

① PROPOSED STABILIZED DECOMPOSED GRANITE TRAIL
② PROPOSED STACKED "ENVIRO - BLOCK" RETAINING WALL
③ EXISTING GRADE
④ CENTER OF RR TRACK

Scale: 1"-30'

TRAIL EXTENSION

CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE SITE PLAN

CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE

Trail Extension - San Clemente, Ca.

BGB | DESIGN GROUP
Landscape Architecture Planning Urban Design

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05-29-2015