

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

February 13, 2025

GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL – UKIAH, PHASE 4 PROJECT

Project No. 24-064-01

Project Manager: Louisa Morris

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$350,000 to the City of Ukiah to implement Phase 4 of the Ukiah Great Redwood Trail Project, consisting of construction of a 1.9-mile portion of the Great Redwood Trail between Plant Road and Commerce Drive in the City of Ukiah, Mendocino County and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: City of Ukiah, Mendocino County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Photographs](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

Exhibit 4: [Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) to the City of Ukiah (“the grantee”) to implement Phase 4 of the Ukiah Great Redwood Trail Project, consisting of construction of a 1.9-mile portion of the Great Redwood Trail between Plant Road and Commerce Drive in the City of Ukiah, Mendocino County (“the project”).

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (“the Executive Officer”) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.

2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Coastal Access Project Standards'.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding a system of public accessways.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the "Great Redwood Trail Ukiah Phase 4 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration" adopted by the grantee on October 16, 2024, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. The Conservancy finds that the proposed project, as designed and mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level, and that there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 Cal. Code Regulations Section 15382.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$350,000 grant to the City of Ukiah ("the City") to implement Phase 4 of the Ukiah Great Redwood Trail Project, consisting of construction of a 1.9-mile portion of the Great Redwood Trail between Plant Road and Commerce Drive ("the project") within the City in Mendocino County (Exhibits 1 & 2, Project Location Map and Photographs).

The project will be part of the Great Redwood Trail ("GRT") and will complete the GRT within the City. The GRT, a trail of statewide importance, is proposed to be developed along the rail right of way of the Great Redwood Trail Agency ("GRTA"), formerly the North Coast Railroad Authority, stretching 307 miles from San Francisco Bay north to the Samoa Peninsula on the North Spit of Humboldt Bay. When completed, the GRT will be the longest rail-trail in the nation. Along the way the GRT will pass through redwood forests, grasslands, agricultural lands, and the currently largely inaccessible wild and scenic Eel River Canyon, before skirting the edge of Humboldt Bay. Portions of the City of Ukiah and Humboldt Bay sections of the GRT have

already been built and are managed in partnership with a variety of public agencies and municipalities.

The project will complete the GRT in the City, as well as address safety and mobility challenges faced by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, and provide a continuous recreational and transportation trail that will be an amenity for residents and visitors. It will also connect to existing and future trails and pathways throughout the City and beyond. The City's goal is to make the trail easily accessible to neighborhoods, places of business, schools, and community parks. The trail will facilitate an increase in non-motorized transportation options, leading to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced public health.

The trail will be a Class I (pedestrian and bicycle), paved, multi-use trail, consisting of a 10-foot-wide paved asphalt surface with two 2-foot-wide shoulders, wide enough to accommodate two-way bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian travel. The trail will have a center stripe delineating the direction of travel as well as necessary regulatory, warning, and directional signs. The project includes construction of trail amenities including a trailhead, connections to existing businesses and parking, signage, rest areas, crossing improvements, waste and recycling receptacles, and lighting. The trail will be constructed 8-10 feet from and parallel to the existing railroad tracks within the rail right-of-way. Two new prefabricated bridges will be installed as part of this Phase 4 project. Construction of the trail will include tree and vegetation removal, grading/placement of fill, culvert repair/upgrades, concrete bridge abutments, and drainage/stormwater improvements.

The need for safe non-motorized transportation in the project area, approximately 80% of which is a 2016-2020 Census-designated disadvantaged community in the City and surrounding unincorporated areas, has been documented. Over the course of planning for the project, City staff and consultants engaged with hundreds of community members and held public meetings to share project information and receive and incorporate public comments and ideas into the project design.

Site Description: The project site is located entirely within the GRTA right-of-way adjacent to 1.9 miles of rail line that extends between Plant Road and Commerce Way. The railroad/GRTA corridor is adjacent to residential, commercial, industrial, and open space uses.

The project area contains sensitive natural resources regulated by federal, state, or local agencies, including wetlands, creeks, riparian corridors, and Valley Oak Woodlands. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to these sensitive natural resources.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The City has demonstrated experience administering federal, state, and local funding to support a variety of projects, including design, construction, operations, and maintenance of streets, bridges, sidewalks, trails, water and sewer infrastructure, parks, and airport facilities. City staff already successfully operates and maintains about two miles of existing Great Redwood Trail, which was funded by three separate State and local grants. GRT operation and maintenance activities include regular inspections, trash removal, vegetation management, fencing repair, landscaping, repaving, and restriping by Public Works and Community Development staff.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Strategic Plan” section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

The project provides important benefits to all Californians. In addition to being part of the GRT, the project will offer an extension of an existing non-motorized transportation route for pedestrians and bicyclists and a place where Ukiah residents and visitors can recreate and experience nature. Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2025. The budget for the project is reasonable and the project advances statewide goals of building the GRT and is consistent with regional and local plans.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

As noted above, it is anticipated that the proposed trail will eventually become part of the GRT. As part of the GRT planning efforts, the Conservancy and its GRT Master Planning team have and will continue to engage with tribes that are culturally and traditionally affiliated with the entire GRT project area, with the purpose of developing long-term relationships and creating an ongoing, open, and thoughtful process for tribal representatives to participate in and contribute to the GRT. These GRT Master Plan outreach efforts include sending out two rounds of outreach letters to 37 Tribes and tribal community groups, an informational webinar for Tribes, six presentations to Tribal Governments/ the Northern California Tribal Chairperson’s Association, government-to-government consultations, and tabling and presentations at Tribal events. In 2024, the City sent consultation requests in connection with the proposed Phase 4 GRT project to two tribal governments that were identified by the Native American Heritage Commission, and no responses have been received to date. Impacts to cultural resources were analyzed in the CEQA document for the project and measures have been incorporated into the project design to avoid disturbance to cultural resources and human remains.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

The project will be sustainable and resilient over its lifespan. The trail will be composed of asphalt over Class II aggregate, a surface which is expected to last 20 years. The City will be responsible for coordination and financing for the long-term operations and maintenance of the project. Two bridges, three culvert extensions, and a trailhead at Plant Road are part of this GRT construction project. Landscaping will include native trees, shrubs, and grasses with low water and maintenance requirements. The trail will provide an option for the public to reach destinations without using a car and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the community.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The new trail will be a community asset and deliver numerous benefits over its lifespan, including reduced emissions from fewer automobile trips, a safe route for non-motorized transportation users, and increased accessibility for disadvantaged community members and those without vehicles to destinations including the local hospital, schools, parks, the public library, and places of employment. The project will lead to increased community health and offer a public space for community events, such as bicycle rides and bicycle safety trainings.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

To solicit community input on the project, the City developed and distributed online and printed surveys (in English and Spanish). Survey questions sought to understand existing and potential trail use, proximity of potential users to the GRT, community needs, and suggestions for future GRT-related amenities and park facilities. In addition, the City hosted an online community input forum.

Social media outreach was conducted through partner nonprofit North Coast Opportunities' Walk & Bike Mendocino and City of Ukiah Facebook pages and shared widely to reach a diverse demographic. A GRT advisory group composed of stakeholders, community leaders and organizations met twice via zoom and on two group bike rides on the GRT-Ukiah.

More recently, public engagement was conducted as part of the GRT Master Plan planning effort. This public meeting took place in March 2024 at the Ukiah Valley Community Center. Over 50 members of the public attended. The community meeting featured an open house format where community members could learn about the proposed project and discuss their ideas and concerns with involved staff, elected officials, and consultants.

All public input was considered, and where appropriate, incorporated into GRT Phase 4 design and planning.

The Mendocino Council of Governments, North Coast Opportunities, and Mendocino County Supervisor Maureen Mulheran submitted letters from their Great Redwood Trail- Ukiah, Phase 4 grant application to the California Natural Resources Agency to the Conservancy in support of the project, which are included as Exhibit 3.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$350,000
California Natural Resources Agency (planning)	\$554,680
California Natural Resources Agency (construction)	\$3,008,532
Project Total	\$3,913,212

The anticipated source of funding for the project is an appropriation of the General Fund to the Conservancy for community outreach, pre-trail development activities, and trail construction for the Great Redwood Trail (Budget Act of 2023, Chapter 12, Statutes of 2023 (SB 101) as

amended by Chapter 38, Statutes of 2023 (AB 102)). Consistent with the funding source, the proposed project will carry out construction of the Great Redwood Trail.

The City has also secured a \$3,563,212 grant for final plans and construction of this Phase 4 project from the California Natural Resource Agency, \$554,680 of which was used for planning and design and \$3,008,532 of which will be used for construction.

Unless specifically identified as “Required Match,” the other sources of funding and in-kind contributions described above are estimates. The Conservancy does not typically require matching funds or in-kind services, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders or of in-kind services. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete a project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400 et seq.) related to public accessways. Section 31409 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants and provide assistance to public agencies to establish and expand inland trail systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The GRT will connect to and include segments of the California Coastal Trail. Consistent with Section 31409, this authorization would allow the City, a public municipality, to construct an inland trail that will eventually become part of the larger GRT, thereby linking it to the California Coastal Trail.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#):

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will improve recreational conditions within the disadvantaged community of Ukiah and the surrounding area, including improved transportation options.

Consistent with **Goal 2.4 Build Trails**, the proposed project will build a new 1.9-mile-long trail that will increase access for both recreation and active transportation purposes. The trail will connect to existing GRT, which is one of five flagship trails identified in the Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

Consistent with **Goal 2.5 Recreation Facilities & Amenities**, the proposed project includes facilities that will enhance recreational opportunities, including benches, linear parks, education and interpretive facilities, public art, and signage.

Consistent with **Goal 4.3 Multi-benefit Nature-Based Climate Adaptation**, implementation of the proposed project will increase community resilience, offering people-powered, non-motorized transportation options that are multi-benefit and integral to nature-based climate adaptation.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The August 29, 2024 Great Redwood Trail - Ukiah, Phase 4 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (“IS/MND”) identified potentially significant impacts of the proposed project on Air Quality, Biological Resources, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, and Hydrology & Water Quality. The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (“MMRP”) identifies mitigation measures that the project will implement to reduce these potentially significant impacts to less-than-significant levels. With respect to the Mandatory Findings of Significance, the IS/MND concluded that the potential for project-related activities to degrade the quality of the environment, including wildlife species or their habitat, plant or animal communities, or important examples of California history or prehistory would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through implementation of the recommended mitigation measures. Each of these potentially significant impacts and mitigation measures are discussed below.

Air Quality

The project would generate particulate matter (“PM10”) emissions during construction activities, including site preparation (e.g., demolition, clearing/grubbing), grading, excavation, bridge construction, and asphalt paving. Because construction activities could temporarily increase levels of PM10 in a region designated as non-attainment for PM10 (Mendocino County), the impact is considered potentially significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, which require the City and its contractor to implement airborne dust control and emission reduction measures during construction activities and specific Best Management Practices, would reduce this potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.

Biological Resources

It is anticipated that project construction could impact special status wildlife species through physical disturbance or displacement of habitat areas. In addition, wildlife and plant species could be permanently or temporarily displaced, injured, or killed, during habitat clearing and grubbing, earthmoving activities, and other construction activities. Mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels are discussed below.

Wildlife

Mitigation Measure BIO-1 requires that all project work adhere to California Department of Fish and Wildlife Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement Notification (LSAA) measures to protect fish and wildlife, including avoidance of nesting birds and nesting bird surveys prior to any vegetation maintenance or removal between March 16 and August 31. The LSAA also requires sufficient water be in place to maintain any aquatic life and daily monitoring for stranded aquatic life.

Habitat and Wetlands

To ensure protection of habitat and wetlands, Mitigation Measure BIO-2 requires the City’s Construction Contractor to develop a Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and comply with conditions of the City’s North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (“Water

Board”) permit. In addition, BIO-3 requires all project work to adhere to the Avoidance and Minimization Measures as approved by the Water Board.

Valley Oak Woodlands

BIO-4 requires the construction contractor to prepare a Tree Protection and Replacement Plan, consistent with the City’s General Plan and Tree Management Guidelines, for City Public Works Department review and approval.

Local Policies/Ordinances Protecting Biological Resources

The City of Ukiah Tree Management Guidelines (City of Ukiah, 2023) provides policy guidelines for the preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of the urban forest in parks and other areas maintained by the City. As discussed above, BIO-4 requires the construction contractor to prepare a Tree Protection and Replacement Plan, consistent with the City of Ukiah’s General Plan and Tree Management Guidelines, for City Public Works Department review and approval.

Hazards & Hazardous Materials

The project is located along an industrial railroad corridor, which is known to include past use of heavy metals, creosote wood products, and other substances associated with historical railroad activity and construction. In addition, it is possible that certain offsite properties with contaminant concerns may have impacted groundwater and/or soil within the project area. Therefore, construction activities may encounter residual concentrations of hydrocarbons, creosote wood products, and/or other hazardous materials in soil and/or groundwater. Mitigation Measure HAZ-1, which requires the City or its contractor to prepare a Sampling Analysis Plan (“SAP”) to define sample locations, boring depths, soil volume estimates, and number of borings, prepare a site-specific Soil and Groundwater Management Plan (“SGMP”), if necessary, to address the proper handling and disposal of impacted soil and groundwater, prepare a Soil Excavation, Stockpiling and Transportation Plan, if necessary, and implement other measures related to the proper management and disposal of contaminated materials (including water, if dewatering is to occur as part of construction), will reduce this potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.

Hydrology & Water Quality

Construction activities such as site clearing, grading, excavation, site contouring, and material stockpiling could leave soils exposed to rain or surface runoff that may carry soil contaminants (e.g., nutrients or other pollutants) into waterways adjacent to the project site, degrade water quality, and potentially violate water quality standards and/or waste discharge requirements for specific chemicals, and suspended sediment. Nutrients and polluted runoff could also substantially degrade water quality in the local storm drain system. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1, -2, and -3, as well as HAZ-1, which are summarized above, will reduce potential construction-related water quality impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Staff has independently evaluated the August 29, 2024 Great Redwood Trail- Ukiah, Phase 4 Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) adopted by the City on October 16, 2024 and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the

environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the project as mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 15382.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Determination.