



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Dawn Ortiz-Legg *District Three Supervisor*

4

March 18, 2025
 California Transportation Commission
 1120 N Street, MS 52
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Item 83 & 84 Support of Bob Jones Trail Gap Closure Project

Dear Honorable Commissioners,

On behalf of District 3, home of the Bob Jones Trail, I extend my sincere gratitude for the time and effort the CTC has dedicated to bringing this project to fruition for our community.

Your staff's remarkable generosity has been instrumental in helping us achieve a dream. The initial \$18 million Active Transportation Grant was an enormous boost, and then to continue to guide us through the challenges of establishing a safe, alternative transportation route for the southern portion of San Luis Obispo County.

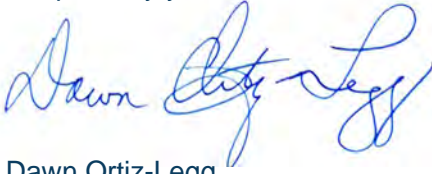
I speak for my office and the community when I say our local process has been both deeply frustrating and disheartening. I will state no more, other than the pressing need to reduce traffic on Highway 101 is undeniable, which is why Caltrans has stepped forward to provide us with a right-of-way.

Tragically, we recently lost another cherished member of our community in a cycling accident. Had the Bob Jones Trail been in place, there is a strong possibility that his life might have been spared. This is the second time we have experienced such a heartbreaking loss in this area.

Our commitment to the Bob Jones Trail remains unwavering. We honor the memories of Dr. Damian Hortsman and Saul Goldberg by providing a safe commuting route for workers throughout San Luis Obispo County and offering a valuable recreational asset for hundreds of community members—not to mention the seven and a half million visitors to our region. A trail like this benefits individuals from every socioeconomic background.

Thank you for your collaboration with our regional SLOCOG agency, SLO County Public Works staff, and the nonprofit Friends of the Bob Jones Trail. Your continued support in approving the trail is essential so that we can move forward as soon as possible.

Respectfully yours,



Dawn Ortiz-Legg
Chair, San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors



SIERRA CLUB
SANTA LUCIA



North County Watch
Looking Out Today For Tomorrow

March 14, 2025

California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, MS 52
Sacramento, CA 95814
Sent Via Email: ctc@catc.ca.gov

RE: March 20-21 meeting, Ref #4.20 Action Item

Subject: Resolution ATP-P-2425-06: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM – PROJECT SCOPE AND SEGMENTING AMENDMENT – SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY-BOB JONES TRAIL GAP CLOSURE PROJECT

Dear Chair Grisby and Commissioners,

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and North County Watch strongly support the Bob Jones Trail Gap Closure project (PPNO 3060), completing the Bob Jones Trail in San Luis Obispo County.

On March 5, 2025, the Board of the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments unanimously authorized a program adjustment up to \$7.8 million to back-fill Caltrans' efforts to secure SHOPP funding to complete Phases 1 and 2 of the Bob Jones Trail. SLOCOG's commitment to the completion of the Bob Jones Trail demonstrates the countywide commitment to the funding for the Trail.

Since its dedication, the Trail has been treasured by locals and visitors. Every day of the week, dedicated walkers, skaters and bikers take to the Trail to recharge and interact with nature.

Our organizations urge your Commission to adopt staff's recommendation to approve a project scope amendment and a segmenting amendment so that the Trail will function as intended by connecting the existing trailheads and linking the City of San Luis Obispo to the southern county areas, thereby achieving many benefits to community health and wellbeing.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Mila Vujovich-LaBarre
Chapter Chair
Sierra Club, Santa Lucia Chapter
Representing 3,000+ San Luis Obispo County members & supporters

DESMOND, NOLAN, LIVAICH & CUNNINGHAM

Sue Harvey
President
North County Watch, a 501c3 Public benefit Corporation

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

March 18, 2025

Via Email Only

CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS-
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
ctc@catc.ca.gov

RE: Reference Number 4.20, March 20-21, 2025 Meeting
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM – PROJECT SCOPE AND
SEGMENTING AMENDMENT SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – BOB JONES
TRAIL GAP CLOSURE PROJECT RESOLUTION ATP-P-2425-06

Gentlemen:

I. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Bunnell is the owner of the Bunnell Parcel as shown on Attachments A, B, and C of the request for project scope change prepared by the County of San Luis Obispo, Department of Public Works. Mr. Bunnell comes before the California Transportation Commission (Commission) in support of the Bob Jones Trail project based on the new trail alignment, which is referred to as the “CalTrans Bypass” by CTC Staff and the County. While the new design bypasses the taking of a portion of Mr. Bunnell’s property, it does not bypass impacting Mr. Bunnell’s property. His support, therefore, is based on the Commission requiring necessary safety features be included as part of the project design. Only then can the Commission and the County ensure the overriding public policy of maintaining the safety of trail users is satisfied.

Mr. Bunnell’s concerns stem from the County intending to remove many of the safety features that were fundamental to the original grant approval. Based on our review of the materials presented to the Commission, the elimination of many of the safety features promoted by the County to the Commission in the original grant application are not disclosed in the Segmenting Amendment Application (Segmentation Request). Mr. Bunnell writes to apprise the Commission

March 18, 2025

Page 2

15th & S Building
1830 15th Street
Sacramento, California 95811-6649
Telephone: 916/443-2051
Facsimile: 916/443-2651
E-mail: bmanning@dnlc.net

Brian Manning
Kristen Ditlevsen Renfro
Benjamin C. Tagert
James Silverthorn
Talvinder Bambria

William W. Nolan (Ret.) (1895-1958)
Gary Livaich E. Vayne Miller
Edward K. Dunn (Ret.) (1904-1965)
Richard F. Desmond
(1923-2004)
William C. Livaich
(1950-2007)

of the current design because it creates safety and conflict hazards to trail users and presents liability and safety concerns for Mr. Bunnell and his agricultural operations.

II. PORTIONS OF THE TRAIL HAVE BEEN DOWNGRADED TO CLASS III

The original Active Transportation Program (ATP) Grant Application submitted by the County described the project as the “Bob Jones Trail Gap Closure” (Grant Application), which would close a 4.5-mile gap in the existing Bob Jones Trail.¹ The overriding public policy supporting the Grant Application and the Bob Jones Trail project was public safety. The ATP Grant Application

¹ The County described the project as follows:

“This project closes a gap between trail systems by constructing a connecting trail where non-motorized users are separated from high-speed motorists and eliminating intersection/freeway on/off ramp crossings. The BJT project will be constructed in accordance with Class I trail design criteria including appropriate sight distance standards. Class I paths, like this BJT project, have a proven track record for addressing these types of sight distance and visibility issues.”

“Non-motorized users are currently exposed to numerous motorist crossing conflict points as well as longitudinal risks due to non-standard shoulder/bridge widths on the existing US 101 frontage roads route.” [Grant Application, Page 25.]

² In the section of the Grant Application discussing safety and accident collision data, the County promised the entire 4.5 miles as Class I trail:

“By constructing a separated/Class I trail gap closure corridor the BJT project eliminates motor vehicle speed and volume exposure for non-motorized users.

The existing bicyclist/pedestrian route along this 4.5-mile corridor is a high speed US 101 frontage road system with multiple ramp intersections and 85th percentile speeds of 54 mph.” [Grant Application, Pages 24-25.]

represented to the Commission that the entire 4.5-mile gap closure would be a Class I trail. [Grant Application, Page 7.]² Originally, replacing at grade crossings with tunnels and separating trail users from motor vehicles by constructing a Class I trail along the entire trail were two of the foremost benefits of the project. Very recently though, the County informed the public that two lengthy sections of the trail will be constructed as Class III, and it appears that a separation/safety barrier between the trail and edge of travel along Clover Ridge Lane has been eliminated. Now, assuming the Commission approves the Segmentation Request without condition, trail users will be required to share the trail with motor vehicles and agricultural equipment, including adjacent to Mr. Bunnell's property on Clover Ridge Lane. Additionally, based on our discussions with County Staff, the County may well eliminate the Clover Ridge Undercrossing and replace it with an at grade crossing. There has been significant confusion on whether there will be an undercrossing at Clover Ridge Lane, as previously represented, or an at-grade crossing as shown on certain project plans.

Alarming, the Segmentation Request does not address these changes and leaves the Commission to surmise that the entire trail will Class I. The fact is the trail will now include Class III segments. These proposed changes, which eliminate important safety features, are inconsistent with the project described in the original Grant Application. It is the lack of safety features at Class III locations that cause Mr. Bunnell concern. If the Commission approves the Segmentation Request, approval should be conditioned on separation fencing, construction of the Clover Ridge undercrossing, and doing so while maintaining at least an 18-foot path of travel along Clover Ridge Lane for vehicles and equipment of husbandry.

III. SAFETY MUST BE A PRIORITY ALONG THE ENTIRETY OF THE TRAIL

Clover Ridge Ln serves two farming operations, one on the Maino property and one on the Bunnell property. The Maino farming operation is an intensive row crop operation which generates a substantial amount of farmworker, agriculture, harvest, and delivery traffic, as well as the Maino residential traffic. The Bunnell property supports residential uses, both long-term and short-term rentals, a large horse boarding facility, and farming operations. The horse boarding facility serves approximately 25 clients at any given time and generates a large amount of daily traffic for clients, deliveries, and associated veterinary and farrier services. The Bunnell field crop farming operation generates a substantial amount of ag equipment traffic including large pieces of tillage, and harvest equipment, some of which are in excess of 18-feet wide.

The original Grant Application depicts the Clover Ridge undercrossing, and a Class I trail separated by a split rail fence from Clover Ridge Ln for safety reasons. Contrast that design with the current proposal, which eliminates the safety barrier along Clover Ridge Lane, thereby requiring trail users to share the trail, with no separation, with all of the above vehicle and agricultural uses. There is simply no explanation justifying why there will be no barrier between trail users and vehicle traffic on the two sections of the trail that will now be constructed as Class III. Furthermore, if the Clover Ridge undercrossing is eliminated, the County will force all trail users to use an at grade crossing where they will encounter all of the above-described residential, vehicle, and agriculture constituents of Clover Ridge Ln.³

Critically, Mr. Bunnell wants to make sure the Commission knows he is not an obstacle to a barrier being erected. He has gone above and beyond to try and work with the County to design the segment that fronts his property along Clover Ridge Lane to ensure it is as safe as possible. Mr. Bunnell, along with the adjacent Baron Canyon HOA, even offered to donate real property along the new Caltrans Bypass alignment in order to facilitate placement of the trail so there is a separation barrier between it and Clover Ridge Lane, while adequately maintaining sufficient travel way for agricultural equipment. The County rejected Mr. Bunnell's proposal. Oddly, the County, in this one section of the entire trail, has refused to install any security fencing between the trail and the adjacent private properties. No explanation has been given for the refusal to install the security fencing. As such, Mr. Bunnell is at the mercy of the Commission to require some sort of fencing between the private properties and the new trail.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mr. Bunnell agrees that the new alignment on the "Caltrans Bypass" is preferable to the original alignment. Mr. Bunnell's input into the project is one of the reasons the County selected the new Caltrans Bypass route, which is less expensive, more direct, and requires less construction in the environmentally sensitive San Luis Creek riparian area. Unfortunately, the County's updated design eliminates basic safety components, and it should not be permitted. These changes violate the spirit and intent of the original Grant Application and defeat the main public policy behind

³ The County also proposes to use a Class III trail configuration adjacent to the Pollard and Warren properties and force all trail users to share the trail, without separation, with vehicle traffic and agricultural equipment.

March 18, 2025

Page 5

the original grant. Tellingly, removal of these particularly important safety features is not disclosed in the Segmentation Request. No explanation has been given by the County as to why these important safety features should be removed from the project and trail users placed back on public streets shared with all vehicle traffic.

In sum, Mr. Bunnell, on behalf of the public, and all future trail users of the Bob Jones Trail, respectfully requests that the Commission only approve the Segmentation Request on the condition that the County is required to adhere to the spirit and intent of the original Grant Application. Specifically Mr. Bunnell requests the Commission condition approval of the Segmentation Request on (1) construction of the Clover Ridge undercrossing, (2) the entire length of the new trail being constructed, as represented in the original plans and Grant Application, so the trail is completely separated from vehicle traffic, which at a minimum means that security fencing is placed between private property and the trail alignment including, but not limited to, along the Baron Canyon HOA and Bunnell properties, and (3) the County construct these safety features while maintaining at least an 18-foot wide path of travel along Clover Ridge Lane for vehicles and equipment of husbandry.

If any of these safety features are eliminated, then the foremost goal of the project, public safety, will be eliminated, and the grant funds should be withdrawn, and redirected to a more deserving project. We thank you for your consideration and appreciate your willingness to listen to us to ensure all safety concerns are addressed.

Very truly yours,

DESMOND, NOLAN, LIVAICH & CUNNINGHAM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Manning', is written over the printed name.

Brian Manning

BTM:mj

DESMOND, NOLAN, LIVAICH & CUNNINGHAM

Attorneys at Law

15th & S Building

1830 15th Street

Sacramento, California 95811

Telephone: 916/443-2051