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Lia Graham

General Public Comment

From: Melissa Cunningham <melissa@coast-santabarbara.org>
Sent: Friday, August 26, 2022 10:43 AM
To: Hart, Gregg; Nelson, Bob; Lavagnino, Steve; Supervisor Das Williams; Hartmann, Joan; sbcob
Cc: Wageneck, Lael; Friedlander, Mark K.; Sneddon, Chris
Subject: Modoc Multi-Use Path

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Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

We wrote the following letter as a preamble to our petition which is still active. Since writing it 3 weeks ago, the county has shown additional willingness to compromise with the residents in favor of saving some trees while completing the path as set out in the grant application. We are pleased with the county's efforts and still feel very much in support of Alignment B. We feel the net benefits to the environment are best with this alignment and urge you to support it in November. At the bottom, I have included comments from the public our petition has received.

We at MOVE Santa Barbara County (formerly known as SBBIKE+COAST) support the County of Santa Barbara's grant-funded project to construct the 1 mile multi-use path along Modoc Road (the Modoc Path) connecting the City of Santa Barbara's path near Calle De Los Amigos to the widely-used Obern Trail at Encore Drive. This new path will provide safe, enjoyable, access along a corridor where sidewalks currently don't exist. It will enable the young and old, residents and visitors, able and less able-bodied to access the beach, the Mesa, schools, shopping, jobs and most importantly, the outdoors. The success of the Las Positas-Modoc path is evidence that we need to close the gap in our Coastal Route and connect the cities of Santa Barbara and Goleta with a safer, more accessible facility the whole community can enjoy.

The completion of the Modoc Path will provide equitable access to the public open space of the Modoc Preserve for users of all ages and abilities. The Modoc Preserve, owned by La Cumbre Mutual Water Company and managed by the Land Trust, is an undeveloped, open space with a network of trails for pedestrian and equestrian use. The Modoc Path will seamlessly integrate with the Preserve's natural areas and trail network and supports the Preserve's mission of nourishing lives and, by providing access by foot and by bicycle, will substantially decrease the need for land-intensive vehicle parking.

We value trees and their benefits to the environment. The County's preferred Modoc Path 'Alignment B' was chosen because it limits the impact to existing trees. The County, the Land Trust, and the project documentation commit to replanting trees with a focus on sustainability and restoring habitats.

The Modoc Path will create a vital link between two existing multi-use paths, creating a more complete network of safe, off-street facilities spanning from Carpinteria to Goleta. It will connect the Las Positas-Modoc, Obern and Maria Ygnacio multi-use path systems, providing a continuous connection between homes, jobs, schools and open spaces. The Modoc Path gap closure will result in 14.5 miles of linked multi-use paths.

The Modoc Path will replace unsafe on-road facilities and allow people of all ages and abilities to travel with ease by foot or by bicycle. This section of Modoc Road has discontinuous sidewalks and the bike lanes are narrow and unprotected. Bike lanes along roads with vehicle speeds in excess of 35 mph are not recommended for most cyclists, especially children. A crash between a vehicle and bicyclist or pedestrian at over 40 mph has an 80% chance of being fatal. On Modoc Rd, there have been 9 crashes involving cars and bicyclists in the last 11 years.

In California, 40% of our emissions come from our transportation system. This is substantially above the national average of 30%. Although California is doing a great job of successfully cutting emissions in other sectors, in transportation it is failing, and at our current rate, we will not meet our climate commitments. Automobile dependency is a major factor in our climate goal shortcomings. The more motor vehicle trips we can each replace by walking or biking, the better. If just one person replaces their daily drive and instead walks or bikes along this segment of trail, 400 lbs less of CO2 will find its way into the environment. In comparison, a tree will absorb 48 pounds of CO2 during the same period.

We find ourselves today in a world whose climate is changing more rapidly than ever, with dire results, and the single-most impactful thing any person can do to reduce carbon emissions is choose more often to travel by foot or bicycle. We owe it to our future generations, and our Earth, to support safe paths for walking and biking. While not ideal, sacrificing some trees, which will be replaced, to potentially save lives and enhance our community in untold ways is worth it. We urge the County Board of Supervisors, the La Cumbre Mutual Water Company, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County and the Santa Barbara community at large to support completion of the Modoc Multi-Use Path project without delay, while of course mitigating the removal of trees as much as possible.

Some recent comments from supporters of the path that reflect the need for this project to be completed:

I regularly use the bike path to commute to UCSB and this section is scary due to the speed and proximity of passing cars. Several years ago, I was struck by another bicycle and fell into the roadway. I narrowly escaped getting hit by a passing car, which would have been the end of me. Anyone who says this bike path is not needed has likely never ridden this section or does not bike at all. SB has plenty of non-native flora, why do we need to preserve more at the detriment of native Santa Barbarian humans!

Alternative B will be great, fully support it as a valuable community asset. While tree loss is always a bummer, they are being replaced with many, many other native species, and the couple decades while they grow in will be a blip in history compared to how it will look and benefit future generations.

Safe bike lanes are good for sustainability in the long-term and because the trees needed to build this bike lane are invasive eucalyptus species that will be replaced by native plants

I want the kids riding home from San Marcos to have a safe place to bicycle. I have never felt very safe along that section on my bike.

I think the Las Positas bike path is a fabulous success and will provide immeasurable community benefits going forward. Any additional opportunities we provide for outdoor recreation especially for our youth is a good thing. I love the trees along Modoc but the eucalyptus are an extreme fire hazard especially in a sundowner event like the Painted Cave Fire.

This Class 1 bike path is long overdue. Hard to believe people are opposed to this in any fashion. The trees can be moved or new ones planted nearby. If you ride through this area once, you will understand its need.

Cities need bike friendly paths. I would love to bike my way to work. but too many areas are risky. I would love to get rid of my car, because then we would need one less, just for travel. My husband already bikes to work downtown!

The individuals on the "other side" of this issue have become extreme to the max, irrational and totally unreasonable. The county is working hard to make this a good project for the maximum number of stakeholders. The other group is only interested in trees and birds and have lost sight of the positive impact the project will have on humans. The Alignment that they are promoting is neither accessible nor safe for many. The county is jumping through many hoops to make the removal of trees for the Modoc Alignment as close to zero as possible. We need to be reasonable, not hysterical.

The Modoc Path will provide safe, ADA-compliant access that is separated from fast-moving traffic for our schoolchildren and the whole community along a long stretch of Modoc Road where sidewalks don't exist.

Alignment B only requires the removal of seven, non-native trees and will preserve all of the canary palms along the proposed route.

I ride this path every day. The gap is dangerous and should be filled. Bike paths never leave a community worse off than before. This project checks all the boxes for making our community more accessible and climate resilient. Let's get this done.

Safety for all road users is critical in our community: what about our Vision Zero effort? There have been 9 crashes involving cars and bicyclists in the last 11 years on Modoc Rd!!! Such numbers show that Modoc Rd is not a safe place to ride a bike... Of course, nobody wants to remove trees but the completion of a multi-use path with all the benefits listed on this petition is needed without delay.

We can ride bikes 350 days a year here, but right now Modoc road is a death trap waiting to happen. Cut down on car emissions, promote healthier lifestyles, and create opportunity for more people to access Santa Barbara safely by bike! I love trees, but as long as the county plants some new ones, that will be fine.

Bike safety is critical for increasing bike riders in our community. More bike riders means less carbon emissions. I support completion of the Modoc multi-use path.

Thank you all so much,
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