



Great Redwood Trail Agency

PRESS RELEASE

Surface Transportation Board rules in Great Redwood Trail Agency's Favor, Allowing Railbanking to Proceed

Decision puts public access ahead of private interests.

UKIAH, October 21, 2022 – Yesterday, the Surface Transportation Board, an independent federal agency charged with the economic regulation of freight rail and other surface transportation, issued a decision rejecting the Mendocino Railway (MR, or Skunk Train) Company's bid to purchase and control over 13 miles of the Great Redwood Trail near Willits.

The decision clears the way for the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) to proceed with railbanking the segment, a crucial step in developing the Great Redwood Trail, a 320-mile multi-use public trail that will connect California's San Francisco and Humboldt Bays.

"Mendocino Railway has made every attempt to thwart the public's right to access and enjoy this 13-mile segment of abandoned railway." said Caryl Hart, Chair of the Great Redwood Trail Agency Board of Directors, "The STB decision unequivocally rejects MR's various efforts to privatize and profit from a stretch of land that has long been intended for public use. This was a hard-fought battle, and we are gratified that the STB recognized what we have known for years – continuation of rail on this geologically challenged rail line is cost-prohibitive and futile. The GRTA welcomes and celebrates the decision that will keep us on track to create a flagship public trail traversing some of the most beautiful open space in the country."

California State Senate Majority Leader Mike McGuire issued the following statement on the action:

"This is a momentous day for the future of the North Coast and the Great Redwood Trail. With this proposal soundly rejected by the federal government, I'm thrilled that we'll once and for all start moving dirt and getting large swaths of the Great Redwood Trail built."

The Surface Transportation Board stated in the ruling: "Because MR has not demonstrated financial responsibility, MR's OFA will be rejected and the OFA process concluded."

Learn more about the Great Redwood Trail Master Plan at the [Kick-Off Town Hall on October 24.](#)