

'It's been  
a dream  
even  
before  
I got in  
Congress.'

REP. SAM  
FARR, D-  
Carmel

# Monterey Bay trail gets \$800,000 boost

*Trails* Project backers hope to one day ring the bay with a recreational path

By KURTIS ALEXANDER  
kalexander@santacruzsentinel.com

WASHINGTON — The \$1.1 trillion federal spending package that awaits the president's signature includes \$800,000 for a scenic trail around the Monterey Bay, some of which may

fund a parallel trail along the Union Pacific railroad.

The money was earmarked by Rep. Sam Farr, D Carmel, an advocate of the long-planned Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail.

"It's been a dream even before I got in Congress," Farr said Monday.

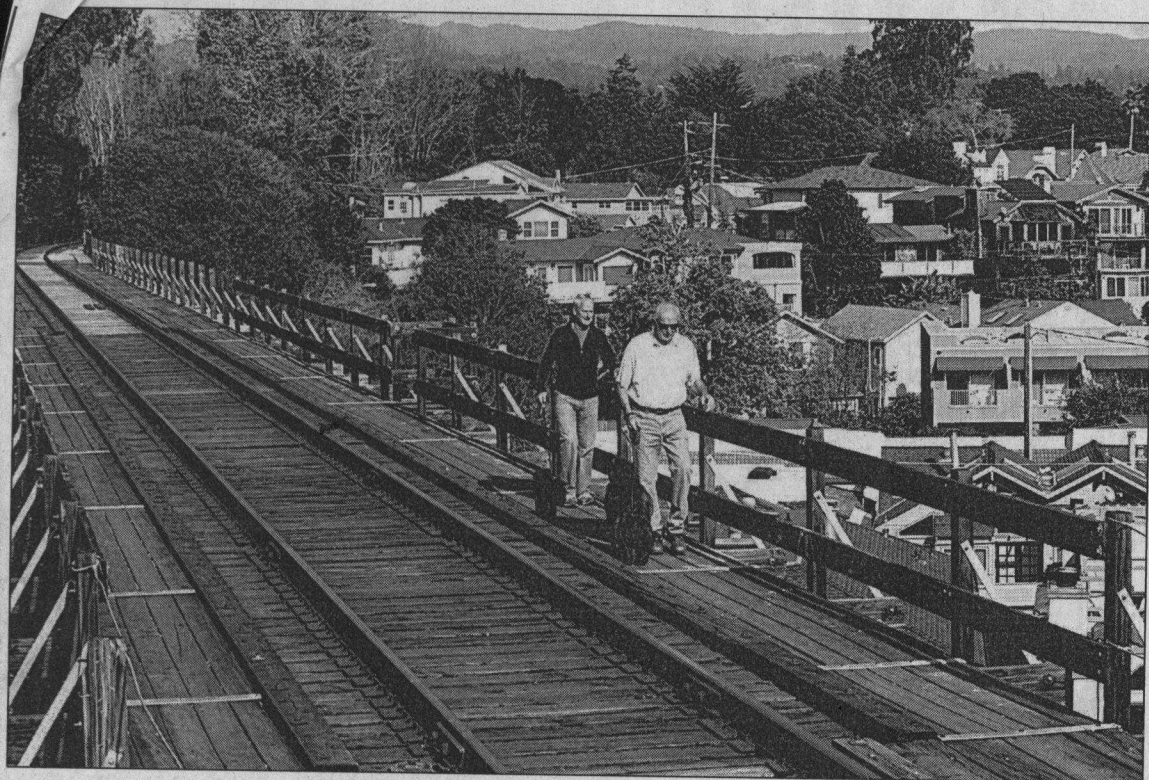
The trail, a nearly decade-old affair, seeks to link existing bicycle and pedestrian routes along the coast from the city of Monterey to as far north as San Mateo County, with spur trails connecting nearby points of interest. Already about 12 miles of trail in Santa Cruz County, like along West Cliff

12.15.09  
Drive and Pleasure Point, are designated as part of the regional network.

Backers of the plan see the trail as a way for residents and tourists to visit the region's most spectacular sites, from natural areas like Elkhorn Slough and Natural Bridges to commercial attractions like the Boardwalk

SEE TRAIL ON A2

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL



Rep. Sam Farr helped secure \$800,000 for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, which in spots would converge with the proposed county rail trail.

DAN COYRO/  
SENTINEL FILE

## TRAIL

Continued from A1

and Capitola Village.

"Imagine having West Cliff Drive that goes past 12 elementary schools and Simpkins Swim Center. Imagine having that level of pathway," said Micah Posner, head of bicycle group People Power. "It's the ultimate in green transportation projects."

Should the county of Santa Cruz acquire the Union Pacific property in the coming months, as expected, the Monterey Bay Trail would likely run along parts of the

rail corridor. Construction of a trail along the 32-mile rail line has been discussed by county transportation planners, but funding has remained elusive. The congressional earmark could help with the project.

The railroad purchase is scheduled to be taken up by the county Regional Transportation Commission in January, pushed back from proceedings originally slated for this month.

Meanwhile, the Regional Transportation Commission, which will receive half of the \$800,000 congressional earmark — the other half going to Monterey Coun-

ty's transportation agency — is laying out plans for the remainder of the Monterey Bay Trail in Santa Cruz County. A consultant is expected to be in place by January to help decide on a final route.

Planners in Monterey County recently completed their route plan.

The new earmark money brings the total raised for Santa Cruz County's portion of the Monterey Bay Trail to roughly \$6.5 million, much of it from Farr and most of it not yet spent. Until the county's route plan is completed, an accurate cost projection will not be known,

though Farr's office has estimated the total for both counties will approach \$50 million.

"The feds are never going to fund the whole thing," Farr said. "We need some local support."

President Barack Obama has indicated he will sign the omnibus bill passed by Congress last week. The money pays for the federal government's annual operations, but also includes billions for small projects nationwide.

Critics such as Sen. John McCain have criticized the bill for unnecessary earmarks that raise the cost to taxpayers.